

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God

Featured **Articles**

Different Points of View (p. 3)

Does it Matter What we Believe? (p. 5)

The Danger of Crowds (p. 8)

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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Different Points of View

IT'S GOOD TO BE able to see other people's points of view. If we all did this more often there would be more understanding and less confrontation in the world.

People with strong opinions can be particularly bad at seeing different points of view. They can be intolerant of those who disagree with them. Perhaps, deep down, this is because they are afraid of having their beliefs challenged.

Some of the most opinionated people you'll meet are religious people. And as it happens, religious people can be some of the most intolerant. You only need to think of the brutalities of the Church Inquisitions over the last few centuries, or the so-called Islamic State in recent years.



Reacting against the intolerance and bigotry that's undoubtedly characterised many churches in the past, many modern Christians make a point of being non-confrontational and inclusive—to the extent

that it's common to hear phrases such as “Who's to say that we have a monopoly on truth?” and “Different faiths are simply different paths to God.”

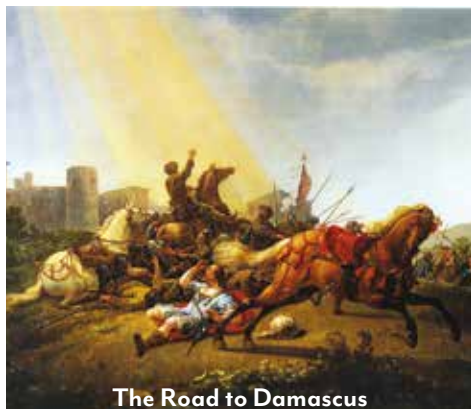
Is this the right approach for a Christian to take? A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ, who said “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). You cannot look far into the Bible without realising that it is a book with an opinion. It claims to be the Word of God, and based on that authority it spells out what is right and what is wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, the way of life and the way of death. There's no getting away from it—to be a true follower of Christ is to be convinced that you are right, and that therefore those with opposing views are wrong. It also means you're keen to tell people about it.

For this reason there are those who suggest that to be a Christian is to be narrow-minded and intolerant. Is that fair? Let's look at the example of one man who was as devoted a follower and preacher of Christ as it's possible to find.

The Example of Paul

The Apostle Paul began his career as a fanatical enemy of the new movement which was to become known as Christianity. He was a fundamentalist who was devoted

to the strict Jewish traditions, and this new movement was a threat to all he held dear. He was on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus with a warrant from the High Priest to search out and arrest members of the new movement. Acts chapter 9 relates how he was confronted by a blazing light from heaven, and Jesus Christ himself spoke to him. Paul was converted, and from that time he devoted his considerable strength, energy and intellect to defending and preaching the Christian faith.



Much of the remainder of the book of Acts is concerned with Paul's travels and preaching. We see in detail the way he spoke and the things he said—he did not threaten or insult his opponents, and he never tried to convert anyone by force. He reasoned and debated, pointed out where they were wrong and urged them to see the truth. We see him preaching to Jews (Acts 9:22, 14:1, 17:2, 18:4, 19, 19:8, 28:17), to eminent philosophers in Athens (17:22), to a raging crowd in the temple in Jerusalem (22:1), to the Jewish High Council (23:1),

and to two Roman governors and a king and queen (24:10, 25:8).

We also see in detail the opposition and outright hatred which his preaching attracted. He was expelled from at least one city (Acts 13:50) and had to flee for his life on a number of occasions (9:25, 14:6, 17:6). He was attacked by angry mobs (14:19, 21:31), beaten and imprisoned (16:23), and escaped plots to kill him (23:12, 25:3). He accepted all this as the consequence of his preaching, and he never used force or violence himself. This way he followed the example of his master, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:23).

All Things to All Men

Describing his method of preaching, Paul wrote: *“To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law... that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”* (1 Corinthians 9:20–22).

Paul was able to see other people's points of view, that's why he was so good at talking to everyone—Jews, Romans, Greeks, soldiers, peasants, nobles and royalty. The fact that he was entirely confident that he was right meant that he did not feel threatened by people who disagreed with him, so he was always happy to talk to them. What do you think—is that intolerance?

Does it Matter What we Believe

THIS IS A QUESTION that is often asked as part of an argument along the lines of “You Christians are always talking about being saved and believing the Gospel, and yet the world is full of people who seem to want to argue about what the Gospel is. There are scores of different religions and sects, and they all claim to be true. Surely, if you just try to do what is right, and lead a good life, then when the rewards are given out God will see that you get your fair share.”

When you think about it, the suggestion that it does not really matter what we believe is based on the assumption that we are all acceptable to God in our natural state. This is a very attractive thought—but that of course does not make it true. The vital question is this: how does this assumption compare with what God has revealed about the relationship between us and Him? For the answer we need to turn to His Word, the Bible.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:5–8).

The word ‘carnal’ has to do with flesh, or a body—it means what is in our physical nature, what comes naturally. Here then is the judgement of the inspired writer: the natural human mind is ‘at enmity against’ (that is, opposed to) God. In this same letter to the Romans the point is stressed: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). We see then that good people and bad people (humanly speaking) are all alike in God’s sight from the point of view of salvation. We are all sinners.



We need to change if we are to become acceptable to God: “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by

the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8:13–14).

It is not a palatable truth. It strikes at the very root of human pride. But the Bible is clear that we are not acceptable to God in our natural state. We have to come to Him in the way He requires. The man who comes to God with the attitude of “Now then, let’s see if we can come to terms”, is a fool.

The Way to God

Those verses from Romans we looked at place emphasis on the “*things of the spirit*”. Only those who are “*led by the Spirit of God*” are acceptable to Him. We may well ask, what is this? Here is an answer from another letter, in which the Apostle gives instructions to believers on how they are to live:

That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22–24).

The natural, carnal man or woman cannot please God. What is required is a change of mind, a change of life, a change of spirit. In chapter 6 of Romans the Apostle explains how this begins: “*Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:4).

A recognition that we are naturally alienated from God; belief and repentance; then baptism—as a symbol of putting to death our old way of life and being raised up to a new way of life—that is the beginning of the way to God.



And then it is a continual, daily process of putting off the ‘old man’—because he’s still there and he doesn’t want to go away—and putting on the ‘new man’, by aligning our heart and mind and life to the ways, thoughts and things of God.

Dennis Gillett

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Haggai

HAGGAI WAS SENT by God to the Jews who had returned from captivity in Babylon. They had been led back by Zerubbabel (of royal descent) and Joshua (a High Priest). The foundations of the new temple had been laid in Jerusalem, but after opposition from neighbouring nations enthusiasm for the building work had waned. Now, 18 years on, God's message through Haggai and Zechariah (see Ezra 5:1) was intended to stir the nation into action.

“Consider Your Ways!”

Not only were the returned exiles distracted by adversaries hindering the work, but they were becoming comfortable and complacent: *“Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: ‘This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built.”’ ... Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?”* (Haggai 1:2, 4).

They did respond, and the temple was finished.

Look Ahead

God strengthened Zerubbabel and Joshua for the work, and helped His people. He told them of a great King-Priest who would build an even greater “house” for God (Haggai 2:6–9). This was a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ, as High Priest

for God's people and the future King of all nations.

Haggai, as well as other prophets, foretold the building of a future temple at Jerusalem. It will be a focal point for the worship of God by all nations. See for example Isaiah 2:2–3; 56:7; Ezekiel 40–48; and Zechariah 14:16–21.



The Temple in the Kingdom

Jesus Christ is a descendant of Zerubbabel (Luke 3:27) and is the one spoken of as God's chosen representative, having God's royal authority, appointed to rule as King of Israel and of the world (Matthew 28:18).

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Haggai 1:1—see Ezra 4:24; 5:1; Zechariah 1:1.
- ◆ Haggai 1:4—see 2 Samuel 7:2, 12, 13; Psalm 132:1–5.
- ◆ Haggai 2:6–7—see Joel 3:16–17; Hebrews 12:26–28.

The Danger of Crowds

WE ARE USED TO CROWDS in our busy lives. Crowds in shops, at sporting events, at concerts, and in holiday resorts. During the Covid crisis crowds suddenly became hazardous, and we were urged to avoid them in order to avoid spreading the disease. They can also be hazardous in other ways: people have been crushed while panicking and fleeing from danger, as well as while rushing together towards something they want.

There is another hazard associated with crowds. Being in a crowd affects how we feel, and in a crowd we can do things that we would not do when alone. It is easy to get drawn along instinctively by the mood and emotion generated by large numbers of people. This can give us a sense of courage, and engender strong feelings about things which have previously been of little interest to us. We can be drawn into doing things of which we would normally disapprove.

Crowd Behaviour

Ironically, the majority is not always right. The writer Mark Twain said:

“Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.”

Years ago, a crowd contributed to the worst crime in history. They repeatedly cried out for the crucifixion of the totally innocent Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. They had been incited by the religious authorities, and we wonder how many people in that crowd would have intended to do this on their own.

Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?” So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!” (Mark 15:9-13).

In fact, such behaviour was forbidden in their law: “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice” (Exodus 23:2).

Not long before this, the crowds had gathered to see Jesus. He had miraculously



fed more than 5,000 people with only five loaves and two small fishes, and straight afterwards they had wanted to use force to make him king (John 6:10–15). But Jesus knew that most of them were more impressed by the plentiful food than by the meaning of the miracle (John 6:26).

But although he had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in him (John 12:37).

Majority Decisions

There is nothing new in this. Thousands of years earlier, the Israelites in the wilderness faced disaster for following the majority. They were near the end of their journey from Egypt to Israel. God had rescued them from cruel slavery in Egypt, led them across the Red Sea, and for months in the wilderness kept them safe and provided their food and water. But they still doubted the power of God. Moses sent out 12 spies to reconnoitre the land of Israel (then called Canaan). They came back with the report that it was a good land. Ten told them it was populated by giants and would be impossible to conquer. Two reminded them that God had promised to give it to them. The people believed the majority, not trusting in God (Number chapters 13 and 14). As a consequence they had to stay in the wilderness for a further 40 years until those who had disbelieved died.

... all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the

wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it (Numbers 14:22–23).

Following Jesus

Decisions have consequences. Important decisions can have life-changing consequences. We need to think carefully about what we are doing in life and why. We need to evaluate what we believe and why. We cannot just instinctively ‘go along’ with everyone else, however attractive that way may seem. No wonder that Jesus gave a stark warning about the life-threatening consequences of following the majority:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it (Matthew 7:13).

Jesus warns that most people just follow the crowd and reject him, his teaching and his amazing offer of salvation. But following him can lead to life—eternal life.

Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:14).

It might not be easy to go against the crowd. We might face ridicule or worse. But the benefits far, far outweigh any risks in this life. So we do well to be brave and sometimes not to follow the crowds.

Anna Hart



The Governor's Memoir

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor who sentenced Jesus Christ to death. This is an imaginary memoir, but it is based on the facts as we know them from the Bible and archaeology (except the ending, for which there is no evidence.)



The Bible verses are given for reference.

You can catch up with the previous parts at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

Part 4

I ORDERED WINE, and as I drank I summoned a scribe. Over each cross we wrote the crime for which the prisoner was being executed. I dictated to the scribe: *JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS*. I had it written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. I knew it would enrage the Jews. Sure enough during the afternoon a deputation from Caiaphas came with a demand: “*Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’*””. I sent them away ([John 19:22](#)).

I drank heavily, and lay down, and darkness descended ([Matthew 27:45](#)). I presumed it to be the wine. The panicked whisperings

of the servants outside my apartment flitted around the periphery of my dazed thoughts.

Then the daylight returned, but it was still afternoon. I winced groggily as my secretary ushered someone in. This time it was a lone Sanhedrin member, and he obviously wasn't there with his fellows' blessing ([Matthew 27:58](#)). He was nervous. He wanted permission to have the body of Jesus. I was confused, and checked the hour. Crucifixion is one of our most ingenious inventions, it's a death that lasts for days, I would not have expected even someone in Jesus' state to be already dead. I called the centurion who'd been on duty, and he confirmed that the victim had died mid afternoon.

I waved the Jew away and said he could have what he wanted. Then I quizzed the centurion—what had happened up on the hill? He was agitated, and unwilling to say more than protocol dictated. The experience had clearly affected him ([Matthew 27:54](#)). I dismissed him, and drank some more.

The following day I was keen to forget the whole episode. The sun shone, the world carried on. But I was not allowed to forget. Caiaphas was not content with his achievement. A deputation arrived—not just priests, this time there were Pharisees

as well ([Matthew 27:62](#)). Now they'd had what they wanted they were in very much more conciliatory mood: "Sir, we remember, while he was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."

I had no respect for the way they had treated that man, and I was still smarting at the way they'd humiliated me—but I could see that life was quieter with him gone, and nobody wanted a gang of extremists claiming that their Messiah had risen from the dead. I said, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how."

I devoutly hoped that that would be the last I heard of the matter. Three days, they had said. On the third day the report came that the guard had been breached and the Galilean's tomb was empty. Bemused and, I admit, fearful, I ordered an enquiry. But then another visit from the priests, and the weight of gold this time was substantial ([Matthew 28:14](#)). The brigade of guards escaped execution, and I acquired a sum on which I could have happily retired.

I tried hard to forget that day. Every day I tried to forget it. Time went by, and reports came in with regularity: the Galilean's disciples were turning Jerusalem upside down, preaching that he was alive ([Acts 2](#)). The priests were stamping hard on the movement, but the more they stamped the more it grew ([Acts 4](#)). Soon

it was not just Jerusalem, the whole world seemed to be on fire with their preaching ([Acts 17:30](#)). I could not forget.

As for me? I'd been warned these people were ungovernable. They called my judgement into question, they said I was too heavy-handed, and perhaps they were right. I became increasingly nervous. Shortly afterwards there was a gathering on Mount Gerizim, I crushed it with force and the Samaritans lodged a complaint with the Legate. I was recalled to Rome, and my career was over.

The world was ablaze. Everywhere the Christians were preaching that the man from Nazareth was alive. That awful day was constantly in my thoughts. There came a moment when I could resist no longer. I sought out a congregation of believers.

I could not avoid confessing to them who I was. It was difficult for all of us, but the mercy and love of Christ prevailed. I believed, I threw myself on the mercy of God, I was baptised, and the crushing weight of my guilt fell away.

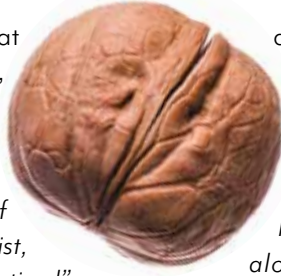
I'm old now. I ache and creak. I can't do much, but I do what I can to serve my master and my brothers and sisters. I know that one day I shall stand before the judgement seat of the Galilean. And I trust that by the grace of God I shall receive an answer of peace.

Katie Cabeira

Concluded.

The Bible in a Nutshell

WE KNOW WHAT IT WAS that the first apostles preached, which stirred people to believe and be converted: *“When they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized”* (Acts 8:12).



angels to do His duty, they are His ‘ministering spirits’ (Hebrews 1:14).

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

What are the *“things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”*? The following list is a brief summary of the basic teachings of the Bible, together with a selection of Bible references in connection with each teaching.

The Bible

It is the Word of God and is unique. It contains God’s message to humankind for our salvation. It was written by many men over the centuries whom God used as instruments for the writing of His Word.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

God

He alone is God. He is all powerful, the Creator and Sustainer of all life. He has no beginning and no end. He is holy and true, kind and merciful. God uses his

The Spirit of God

This is an expression of God’s power by which He created and sustains all things.

The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life (Job 33:4).

The Holy Spirit

This term is usually associated with the use of God’s power for specific tasks.

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

Jesus Christ

The Son of God, Saviour and coming King of the world. His mother was Mary, so as well as being Son of God he was a descendant of Adam. He possessed the divine character and attributes of his Father, but he was also mortal and subject

to death like his mother. He was capable of sin and was tempted just as we are—but he never did sin.

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

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

The Sacrifice of Christ

Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Humankind became mortal, and our sin separates us from our Creator. In God's mercy He gave His Son as a sacrifice for sin.

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).

Human Nature

We are descendants of Adam and Eve, and we live under the “law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). If we do not take advantage of God's offer of salvation, we shall perish.

For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

The Soul

The ‘soul’ is an expression for the life of a person or animal.

Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4).

The Devil and Satan

The words ‘devil’ and ‘satan’ are Bible expressions for anything or anyone that opposes God. It could be human nature, a particular human being or a political power. The word ‘devil’ means ‘false accuser’ and ‘satan’ means ‘adversary’. In the Bible these words portray the effect of sin. It is not a supernatural being.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an offence to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:23).

Temptation and Sin

If there's not a supernatural being, where does all the wickedness come from?

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed (James 1:13-14).

Hell

The English word ‘hell’ in the Bible is usually a translation of the Hebrew word

‘Sheol’ or the Greek word ‘Hades’. These words mean ‘an unseen or covered place’—and often they are translated as either the ‘grave’ or ‘pit’.

For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks? (Psalm 6:5).

Resurrection

The Bible’s promise of life after death by the physical raising of the body to life again. Jesus Christ was raised to life after his crucifixion because, being sinless, he had not earned death. Those who take the opportunity to share in his victory over death will be raised to life at his return.

God raised [Jesus] up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it (Acts 2:24).

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at his coming (1 Corinthians 15:22–23).

What Jesus is Doing Now

Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of God. He acts as mediator for his people, and awaits his return to receive his Kingdom.

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24).

Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come

in like manner as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

Immortality

Immortality is a gift of God, it is not a right and cannot be earned. It will be given at the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).

The Judgement

Jesus Christ will return from heaven to set up the Kingdom of God. At this time he will judge those who have had the opportunity to respond to the Gospel.

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved his appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).

Those who have not heard the call of the Gospel will not be judged.

They are dead, they will not live; they are deceased, they will not rise. Therefore You have punished and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish (Isaiah 26:14).

The Kingdom of God

When Jesus Christ returns he will reign over all the earth.

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Daniel 2:44).

Jerusalem

The city chosen by God as the capital of the Old Testament kingdom of Israel, and the capital of His future Kingdom.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations 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 the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Micah 4:1-2).

The Jews and Israel

This nation and land are special in the eyes of God. The Bible contains their history, and promises concerning their destiny.

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 7:6).

What We Must Do

God has invited you and me to be part of His plans for the future and to obtain

eternal life in His Kingdom on the earth, whether Jesus Christ returns before or after we die.

We must **believe**:

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).

We must **repent** of our sins, recognise our unworthiness and turn to God:

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

We must **be baptised** as a symbolic burial in water which identifies us with the crucified and risen Jesus Christ our Saviour:

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

We must **live a new life** of obedience to the way of God.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8).

This is a short summary of the Bible's teaching. You can search for articles which deal more thoroughly with each subject at <https://gladtidingsmagazine.org/previous-articles/>

Peter Fry





The Light of the World

The Gospel of John records a number of sayings of Jesus which begin “I am...” In this series we think about some of the profound things he said about himself.

You can catch up with the previous articles at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

JESUS SAID, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).* What did he mean by this? He didn’t mean it literally, because he was not actually a physical light, but he meant it spiritually.

Jesus himself said of his cousin John the Baptist, *“He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light” (John 5:35).* John was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus. John was a burning lamp who shone for a time: Jesus was the light of the world who gives the light of life to those who come to him.

The prophet Isaiah, who lived 700 years before Jesus was born, looked forward in time and declared: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (Isaiah 9:2).* This was a prophecy of the ministry of Jesus (as

we learn in Matthew 4:15–16). That was what Jesus was when he walked the land of Israel and taught its people: he was a spiritual light shining in the darkness of the evil world.

Remember what Jesus said—those who follow him will have the ‘light of life’. That means eternal life. As long as they live in that light, they have the hope of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Let Your Light Shine

On another occasion Jesus said to his followers: *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).*

So those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father have a responsibility to serve them as good servants. By keeping their commandments and being true followers of Christ they, just like Jesus, will shine forth for all to see, by which means



they show the world the glory of their Father in heaven.

Light and Darkness

The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble (Proverbs 4:18–19).

Sin—disobedience to God—is represented by darkness in the Bible. This is from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the believers in Ephesus:

You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them (Ephesians 5:8–11).

Arise, Shine!

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. When he walked the streets and hills of Palestine he shone spiritual light in a dark world. Now that he is in heaven, his followers have the privilege and responsibility to shine

the same spiritual light in the dark world around them.

The prophet Isaiah looks forward to the time when Jesus will return from heaven to establish his Kingdom on earth:

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising (Isaiah 60:1–3).

Grahame A Cooper

Questions? Comments?

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AM

How did people in the Bible tell the time? What is the ‘third hour of the day’ (Mark 15:25)?

Ed

THE SYSTEM of dividing the day into 24 hours is ancient. It would have been in use when Abraham lived in Ur (Genesis 11:27–32), and when the Israelites lived in Egypt (Exodus 1). The one clock that’s mentioned in the Bible is the sun-dial in Jerusalem in the time of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:11), and it’s likely it would have used this system of counting the hours.

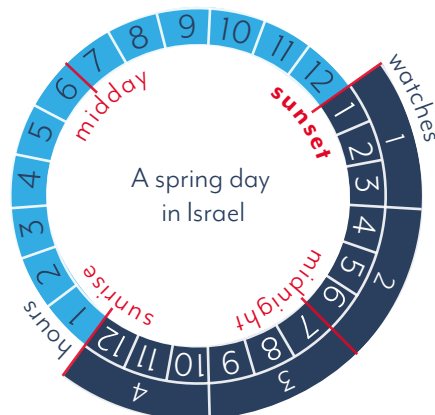
However the Israelites in the Old Testament, in common with people generally at the time, appear to have had a relaxed approach to timekeeping. References to the time of day are generally not more specific than to morning, noon, evening, night, early and late.

When we come to the New Testament it’s the First Century AD and Israel is part of the Roman Empire. Timekeeping was important to the Romans, and as we’d expect in the Gospels and Acts there are many references to the time of day.

The Jewish day began at sunset. There were 12 hours of the night which finished at dawn, then 12 hours of the day. This meant of course that the hour was not a fixed time period, its length varied throughout the year—in the summer, hours of the day were longer than hours of the night, and in the winter it was the other way round. This

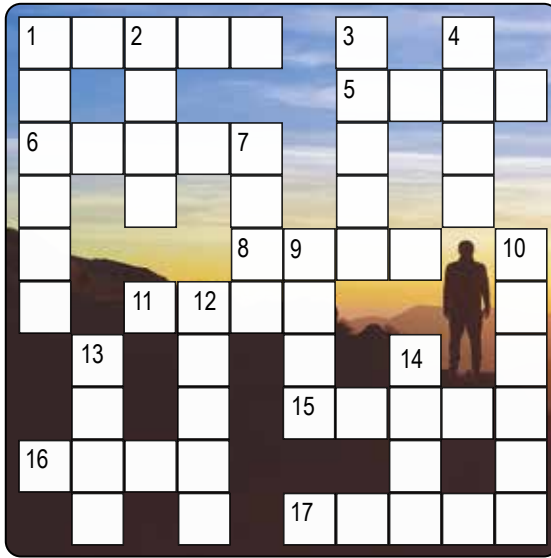
may seem odd to us, but it’s actually a very ‘user-friendly’ system: the first hour of the day always begins at dawn, whatever the time of year; the third hour is mid-morning; the sixth hour is always noon; the ninth hour is mid afternoon; the eleventh hour is the last hour of the day, just before sunset (which is why the ‘eleventh hour’ is used proverbially as the latest possible time before it’s too late).

The night was also divided into ‘watches’, which originated with the military. Originally the Jews had three watches: the beginning watch (Lamentations 2:19), the middle watch (Judges 7:19), and the morning watch (1 Samuel 11:11). The Romans had four watches, and it seems to be the Roman system which is used in the Gospels. When Jesus says “*Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the cock, or in the morning*” (Mark 13:35), it’s suggested that these were the names of the four night watches.



Across

- 1 Jesus said that he is this of the world (*John 8:12*)
- 5 John's description of *I across* (*John 1:9*)
- 6 As well as *I across*, Jesus is to be this to God's people Israel (*Luke 2:32*)
- 8 "He bowed the heavens ____, and came down with darkness under His feet" (*Psalms 18:9*)
- 11 "For you ____ once darkness, but now you are the light of the world" (*Ephesians 5:8*)
- 15 During the ninth plague there was this kind of darkness (*Exodus 10:22*)
- 16 The Psalmist said that God's word was this to his feet and a light to his path (*Psalms 119:105*)
- 17 Jesus said that he is this of life (*John 6:35*)



Down

- 1 God made these to rule the day and night (*Genesis 1:16*)
- 2 Let your light shine, that these works may be seen (*Matthew 5:16*)
- 3 God gives the sun for a light by day and the moon and these at night (*Jeremiah 31:35*)
- 4 The path of these people is like the shining sun (*Proverbs 4:18*)
- 7 God crowns this with His goodness (*Psalms 65:11*)
- 9 "Walk while you have the light, ____ darkness overtake you" (*John 12:35*)
- 10 The way of these people is like darkness (*Proverbs 4:19*)
- 12 The darkness in *15 across* was in this country (*Exodus 10:22*)
- 13 The Psalmist asked God to let His light do this to him (*Psalms 43:3*)
- 14 Jesus said that whoever follows him will have the light of this (*John 8:12*)

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

Colin Jannaway

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