

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*



## Featured **Articles**

The Environmental Crisis (p. 3)

Who Will Be In the Kingdom of God? (p. 10)

Bread From Heaven (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 Environmental Crisis

THE PLANET IS IN PERIL, and something needs to be done about it.

It is generally agreed that the temperature of the earth's surface is rising, along with the temperature of the oceans. Polar ice and glaciers are melting. Sea levels are rising, presenting a danger to low-lying land, and the world is experiencing a dramatic increase in extreme weather events such as heat waves and storms.

It is also generally agreed that climate change is due to humans loading the atmosphere with carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as a result of burning fossil fuels, intensive agriculture and deforestation, and modern industrial processes.

And most experts agree that unless swift action is taken to limit the rise in global temperature there will be an environmental catastrophe. The 2021 COP26 Climate Summit established targets which nations are working towards. All over the world concerned people are taking action, in a bid to confront the climate crisis.



What should the follower of Christ do? Many churches are throwing themselves wholeheartedly into tackling climate change, believing that it is their Christian duty to help save the planet.

## The Close of the Age

Would you be surprised to learn that the Bible predicted the crisis which confronts us today?

*And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains (Matthew 24:6–8).*

This is a prophecy which was given to his disciples by Jesus Christ. The chapter starts with a dark warning that the temple in Jerusalem was going to be destroyed (v. 2). Then 'as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"' (v. 3).

In the ensuing prophecy Jesus gave them specific pointers which would show them that the destruction of the temple was near (for example vs. 15–28). History shows that

this prophecy was fulfilled in detail in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

For the Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem was the end of the world as they knew it. But the prophecy opens out beyond the First Century, and we realise that Jesus is also speaking of another ‘close of the age’—his Second Coming.

*Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (vs. 30–31).*

Remember that in verse 7 we read, ‘*nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places*’. History shows that these pointers came true—the years before AD 70 were characterised by political restlessness in the Roman empire and upheaval in the natural world. Jesus said to look out for them again as our world approaches the ‘close of this age’, and we are seeing them now on a scale never before experienced.

## The Kingdom of God

This prophecy is one of many in the Bible which speak of the return of Jesus Christ to establish the Kingdom of God. Some others are Daniel 2, Psalm 72 and 1 Thessalonians 4. When this happens, the chaos of humanity’s misrule will be undone and the world restored to its

original perfection. There is absolutely no doubt that it will happen, and it’s hugely encouraging to know that the fate of the world is not something that God is going to leave to the greed, carelessness and incompetence of humankind. He is going to intervene, and save the world from us. If ever you’re feeling glum about the state of the planet, have a look at a prophecy about the future God has in store, such as Psalm 72.

So what should the follower of Christ do about the environmental crisis? It stands to reason that we should use the world’s resources carefully and wisely. Recycle, reduce consumption of energy and materials, reduce our carbon footprint, live as sustainably as we can. By doing this we show respect to God Who created the world, and to our fellow humans who share it with us. But we should not imagine that by doing this we will save ourselves.

This earth will be restored to paradise, when Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God. What is important is that we make sure we’re prepared for it: ‘*Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*’ (Matthew 24:44).



# Climate Change

WE HEAR SO MANY promises of changes yet to be, but the evidence of climate change is here for all to see.

The greed of mankind caused this, and our planet groans in pain; can governments be trusted to restore the earth again?

Can we trust mere mortals to restore what nature badly needs? I think we have to turn to God, if only we will read.

It's all there in His written word, but so few want to know. They think that they can solve the mess, but time will surely show.

It must cause grief to God to see the wickedness of man. He sent His Son to save us, and look at what we've done!

The kingdoms of the earth, we're told, by God alone are ruled.<sup>1</sup> Things will get worse until at last by God, the earth is cooled.

You may well ask how this will be, well God will send His Son, the faithful now are waiting for this promised time to come.

There will be scoffers, this we know, it's there in Peter's letter,<sup>2</sup> so few now still believe God and it won't get any better.

<sup>1</sup> *Daniel 4:17*

<sup>2</sup> *2 Peter 3:3-10*

<sup>3</sup> *Acts 1:11*

<sup>4</sup> *Micah 4:1-5*

<sup>5</sup> *Matthew 24:6-22*

<sup>6</sup> *Mark 13:20*

<sup>7</sup> *Daniel 12:1-3*

<sup>8</sup> *Luke 11:2*

We read so many times about the coming of the end. Things won't go on for ever, a solution God will send.

The Bible tells us plainly that Christ will come again,<sup>3</sup> so let's have faith in what is said. We all must take some blame,

For causing what has happened and for going our own way. The Bible tells us many things which one day we'll obey,<sup>4</sup>

When Christ returns in glory to rule the earth in peace, a very different earth we'll see, all wickedness will cease.

Jesus said there will be wars and pestilence and pain,<sup>5</sup> men's hearts fearful at that time—but who are they to blame?

Those days must be shortened,<sup>6</sup> or no one would be saved; then the righteous will reign with Christ and many will be raised.<sup>7</sup>

So let us heed what's written. Without God we will fail, and only when the Lord returns will righteousness prevail.

Let's pray each day "Your kingdom come".<sup>8</sup> Then suffering will end, all tears will then be wiped away with Jesus as our friend.

Mollie May Wilkinson

# Saul on the Damascus Road

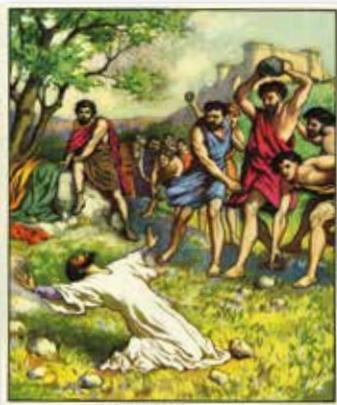
This must be one of the most amazing and moving stories in the Bible—except for the life of the Lord Jesus. It is a story of power, zeal, religious passion and hatred, and it ends with humility, grace and love. You may be more familiar with Saul by his later name—the Apostle Paul.

To fully appreciate the incident we need to examine his background, and very interesting it is. Saul was born in Tarsus in the province of Cilicia, said to be ‘no obscure city’ (Acts 21:39). By birth a Jew of impeccable pedigree, his father a Pharisee, a Roman citizen. He quoted this when arrested (Acts 16:37, 22:25–26).

It was the Jewish custom to teach boys a manual trade, and Saul was a tent maker (Acts 18:3). He would have left his home as a young man and gone to Jerusalem, where he would be educated in the Jewish laws and in particular the Law of Moses. He became a top student, as he sat at the feet of Gamaliel who was the most outstanding teacher of the day (Acts 5:34, 22:3). It was in this religious environment that this young man was educated and grew in knowledge. He later tells us he thrived on it: *‘I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers’* (Galatians 1:14).

## Saul the Persecutor

Saul makes his sudden appearance in the Bible record at the stoning to death of the Christian martyr Stephen (Acts 7:58). It appears that Saul was the ringleader.



The Jews believed that God would one day send their Messiah to deliver them from all their enemies. They expected the Messiah to be a good well-educated Jew, possibly a Pharisee. But here were these new uneducated preachers teaching that the Messiah had come already, and he was a carpenter from Nazareth who had been crucified and rose from the dead! Now they were attracting many Jews as converts. This preposterous new teaching was against all that Saul had been taught. He felt that it was his duty to God to stop it.

Saul's mentor Gamaliel offered wise advice to the Jewish council: *'Keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them'* (Acts 5:38–39). But Saul ignored this advice. He later recalled: *'I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities'* (Acts 26:11).

Saul belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. It is interesting to note the ancient prophecy of the Jews' ancestor Jacob. Describing the character of Saul's tribe he said *'Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil'* (Genesis 49:27).

*'Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison'* (Acts 8:3). Having wreaked havoc in Jerusalem, he obtained permission to seek out Christians in Damascus. Damascus is said to be one of the oldest occupied cities in the known world. It was described as "a lovely white city in a green plain, a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald". In the First Century there were 10,000 Jews in residence and 40 synagogues.

His epic journey was about to begin, a journey which would change his life. God works in mysterious ways: who would have thought that in a short time this Christian persecutor would be joining them and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the one he wanted to eradicate?

The journey is approximately 150 miles, it would possibly take a week. But Saul in this angry mood would make shorter time with speed. Sensible travellers would rest at midday (Acts 26:13), but not Saul! Imagine him fuming, raging in himself, striding ahead of his group in his zeal.

## Conversion and Surrender

Suddenly from the heavens came a blinding flash, a light above the brightness of the sun (Acts 26:13). *'And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting"'* (Acts 9:4–5). Can you imagine this amazing scene?



Saul went to conquer Jesus, but Jesus conquers him and brings him to his knees. He is blinded (v. 8), and now this raging persecutor is unable to do anything for himself.

Recounting the episode later Saul recalled further words of the Lord who spoke to him:

*‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads’ (Acts 26:14).*

We can picture the scene of the farmer wielding his long pole with its sharpened iron end, to urge his animal along. If it kicks against the goad it is hurt and stops kicking—surely a picture of a man angered and wounded by his conscience. In his youth in Tarsus Saul may well have been familiar with this Greek poem:

“With God we may not strike,  
But to bow down the willing neck  
And bear the yoke is wise,  
To kick against the goads will prove  
perilous emprise.”

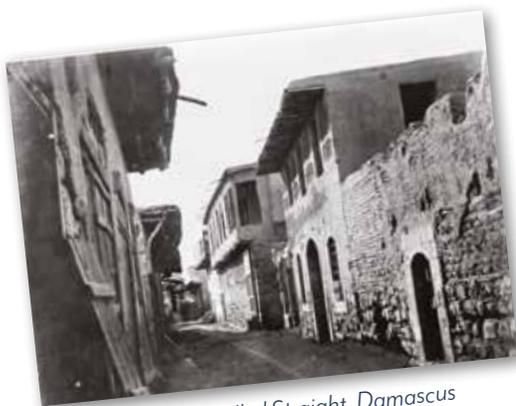
What were the goads he was kicking against? The wise words of Gamaliel? The speech of Stephen which had so angered the Jews that they had stoned him to death (Acts 7)? The daily example of the believers who did not resist arrest, and even gave their lives for their faith in this new religion?

*The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd (Ecclesiastes 12:11).*

## **Saul and Ananias**

It was now that Saul realised he had been fighting the will of the One Whom he worshipped. For him it was a total surrender. All his anger was gone. Instead of entering Damascus ahead of his company he was led by the hand (Acts 9:8); instead of giving orders, he was told what to do (v. 6).

*Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying (Acts 9:10–11).*



*The Street called Straight, Damascus*

It is difficult to imagine how Ananias felt. He knew of Saul’s fearsome reputation and he protested, but the Lord reassured him (v. 15). So he went with confidence, and how wonderful it would have been to baptise Saul (v. 18). Possibly Saul now shared the ‘Lord’s supper’ for the first time (v. 19, see Luke 22:9).

It was now that this learned Pharisee realised what the prophets had foretold concerning the Messiah. He realised how wrong he had been. Having been commissioned to preach to the Gentiles, he would henceforth use his Roman name Paul rather than his Jewish name Saul. He dedicated his life to the service of his new master:

*I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1:12–14).*

What an honour and privilege to be in the presence of the risen Lord and hear his voice. In his new life Paul suffered many of the things he had inflicted on Christians, and more besides.

Saul had set himself against Christ, but the Lord prevailed as he always does. Even while he was persecuting the Christians Saul was actually assisting the spread of this new teaching, because wherever the scattered believers fled and settled, there they preached the Gospel (Acts 8:4). Then when the time was right the Lord confronted him and converted him, and he became a fearless, tireless preacher, taking the Gospel far and wide throughout the Roman Empire. And he left a priceless wealth of letters which are preserved in the New Testament, which are invaluable for us today if we, like him, choose to turn from our old lives and follow the Lord.



**Tom Ingham**

*“ If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ”*

*Paul—Philippians 3:4–11*

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# Who Will Be In the Kingdom of God?

THE GOSPEL is about the Kingdom of God. That is what Jesus and the apostles preached (Mark 1:14–15; Acts 28:30–31). It is what disciples died for. We know the names of some people who will be in the Kingdom. For example, Jesus named ‘Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets’ (Luke 13:28).

He also said of the faithful apostles:

*... when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).*

Hebrews chapter 11 lists faithful people (in the Old Testament) who were, and still are, dead awaiting the fulfilment of God’s promises. They will be in this kingdom (Hebrews 11:4–16 and 39–40).

## Immortal Saints

In order to live in the Kingdom, all of these named, and many more unnamed, faithful people need to be raised from the dead. The Bible calls them saints (for example Ephesians 1:1). This is what the apostles taught. Like Jesus, these faithful

are to be raised from the dead and given immortality together with the faithful who are alive when Jesus returns. And once immortalised they will be changed—to be like the angels. This means that they will no longer be able to sin; they will not marry or have children. They will not be flesh and blood, but spirit; not requiring food to live, but sustained by God’s spirit power (Mark 12:25; 1 Corinthians 15:42–44; 2 Peter 1:4).

But this raises a question. There are several prophecies about how the world will be transformed when Jesus reigns as king (for example Micah 4:1–4; Joel 3:17–18). There will be plenty of food (Psalm 72:16; Isaiah 35:7); justice (Psalm 72:2–4 and 12–14; Isaiah 11:3–5;); children playing (Isaiah 11:8; Zechariah 8:3–5); less illness (Isaiah 35:5–6); and people living many years (Isaiah 65:20). Moreover, nations who are defiant of King Jesus will have to take the divine consequences (Zechariah 14:16–19). This is clearly not talking about faithful believers, saints, who have been judged worthy by Jesus and given eternal life. They are people who are in many ways like we are now.

## Mortal People

These passages do not refer to immortal people. When Jesus comes back there will be a time of trouble as he establishes his reign in the face of opposition. Some people will survive and be ruled by Jesus in the first phase of God's Kingdom on earth. The saints, immortal and in total harmony with God, will help him. And the remaining human beings, subject to sin and death just as we are now, are to be taught God's ways. They then, like us now, will be given opportunity to commit their lives to Almighty God and to His Son Jesus the king. But, unlike now, they will live in a world transformed into a much better and fairer, and consequently happier, place. This is not, however, the culmination of the Kingdom of God.

After a period of time, given as 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4–6), this phase ends. Death is finally completely abolished. All sin and sorrow and sadness are over (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:1–5). And the faithful from this period are also given eternal life. Then Jesus delivers the Kingdom to his Father. And 'God is all in all'. We are not told much about this final stage of God's plan, but it is most certainly promised:

*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed*

*is death... When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24–28).*

## We Can Be There

We need to ask ourselves where we stand. Where do we want to stand? If Jesus came back tomorrow would he find us ready and waiting for him? The apostles did not offer people the hope of a mortal life in the kingdom of God, wonderful though that may be. Their offer—the same offer to us now—was eternal life with Jesus in his kingdom: through the first phase into the 'all in all', and thus for ever. People say that they would not want to live for ever in the world as it is. That is not what God wants either. He will change it. The world will be much better and, finally, indescribably perfect. Even if we die before Jesus returns, the promise is just as valid as it is to Abraham Isaac, Jacob, the prophets and apostles. Jesus will raise the dead.

We do not know how many people will survive the time of troubles when Jesus comes back in order to be given opportunity to continue their mortal lives in the Kingdom. That is not our concern. For you and me the offer of the Gospel is the gift of immortality for those who have responded to its call now. The question is, do we want to be there?

**Anna Hart**

# Romans



Remains of the Roman Forum

PAUL SENT THIS LETTER from Corinth during his third missionary journey. He hoped to come to Rome (15:22–29), but when he eventually came it was as a prisoner to await trial before the Emperor Nero (see Acts 28:17–20).

Romans is Paul’s magnificent summary of the way God’s righteousness is shown in the death of Jesus Christ; how salvation is by God’s grace, and is dependent on faith, not on the works of the law; and that it is available to Gentiles as well as Jews.

## Israel in God’s Purpose

Now that the Law of Moses has been fulfilled, some were asking “*has God rejected his people?*” (11:1). With obvious emotion, Paul points out that the Jews, if they believe, are most certainly still within God’s purpose—“*to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises*’ (9:4). Using the symbol of an olive tree, Paul shows how some of the “natural” branches (Israel) have been broken off, and “wild shoots” (Gentiles,

that is non-Jews) grafted in—but he adds that the natural branches can still be grafted in again. ‘*Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity towards those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off*’ (11:22).

The later chapters give sound advice about discipleship, including the relation of believers to the state in which they live and its laws (for example 13:1–7).

**Norman Owen**

*By kind permission of ‘The Christadelphian’*



## Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Romans 2:5–10; 14:10–12—see 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1.
- ◆ Romans 3:4—see Psalm 51:4; Luke 18:19.
- ◆ Romans 6:3–4—see Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:27.

# Bread From Heaven

AN EMINENT PSYCHOLOGIST has promoted the idea that people have a hierarchy of needs. By this he means that some human needs are basic to existence, and take precedence over everything else. Others are less vital, and only begin to be important to a person when they have satisfied the basic ones. One of the most fundamental needs of all, he said, is food. He pointed out that a starving person will steal, fight, and even kill to satisfy his hunger, overcoming all his normal, civilized restraints.

## Hunger Strikes!

Well, the people of Israel began to go hungry, six weeks after leaving Egypt. The euphoria of the escape from slavery had worn off, and many miles of footslogging across a bleached, sterile wilderness had tried their patience. Now a serious threat hung over them. The supplies of grain and dried food they had brought with them from Egypt were dwindling fast. They started to ration what they had left. The cattle had to go hungry. It is unpleasant to have to refuse children food they desperately need, and an empty stomach makes the sweetest person irritable and cross.

Once again Moses bore the brunt of their complaints. *‘And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses*

*and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger”’ (Exodus 16:2–3).* Moses, helpless, prayed to the Lord. The answer was swift and impressive. God promised Moses He would satisfy their hunger the very next morning. *‘Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not’ (v. 4).*



Next morning they crawled out of their tents at first light, curious to see if anything had happened. As usual, the dew lay sparkling in the sun. But this time, as it evaporated, *‘there was on the face of the wilderness a fine,*

*flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground'* (v. 14). It was like nothing they had ever seen before. 'What is it?' they asked (v. 15), and the phrase stuck. "What is it?", or "Manna" in our anglicised Hebrew, is the name by which it became known. The description of manna is unique: white in colour, sweet to taste, and the size and shape of coriander seed.



It had to be used fresh, but could be baked or boiled (Exodus 16:20, 23, 31). This remarkable substance was provided six mornings a week until the people reached Canaan (Joshua 5:12). On the Sabbath days (Saturdays), no manna fell (Exodus 16:26).

## Bread From Heaven

The gift of manna is an interesting study from three points of view. Firstly, despite naturalistic suggestions as to what manna might have been, there is no doubt that the provision of it was a miracle. One theory is that manna was a secretion of the tamarisk tree, which grows in the wilderness and which does exude a sweet-tasting substance when its bark is punctured by insects. Some claim the manna was

secreted by the insects themselves, like the honeydew that falls from lime trees in summertime. But there are several objections to these 'explanations'. Firstly, the manna failed to appear on Saturdays. Then, the plant secretions described above are highly seasonal. They are not there in winter. In any case, sheer scale rules out this approach. With well over two million people to feed (Exodus 12:37), there could never have been enough secretion within range of the camp to provide their staple diet for 40 years.

Why should we need to question the simple statement that God fed them with 'bread from heaven'?

## Daily Bread

Secondly, the subject of manna crops up in a passage in Deuteronomy, which Jesus quoted during his temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4).

*[God] humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD (Deuteronomy 8:3).*

Moses is saying that God quite deliberately allowed the Israelites to run out of food, to teach them that their lives hung upon His word. He was testing them. They could not go back to Egypt, because they had no food left for the journey. They were stranded in the desert. They were 100% dependent on Him.

The sober fact is that for all of us, this is always true. Where does our daily bread come from? We plough the fields and put seeds in the ground, or if we do not do this ourselves we pay farmers to do it for us. In either case, having planted the seed, we assume (usually without surprise or gratitude) that it will rain to help the seed



germinate, and that the sun will shine, to allow the wheat to grow and produce grain.

Yet neither of these vital factors is under our control. Both depend on God's promise that seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease (Genesis 8:22). It is God who provides the energy that keeps the ecosystem fuelled, permitting us to live.

Now we can see why Jesus advised us to pray to God for daily bread (Matthew 6:11). It is not ours by right. It comes because God graciously keeps His word. And as Jesus pointed out, such is His grace that He sends His rain on the just and on the unjust

(Matthew 5:45), giving even His enemies life, and with it time to repent.

But the Israelites' case was still more impressive. God had promised that He would bring them safely across the wilderness to Canaan. Faced by a bread shortage, they doubted His power to keep that promise. They moaned that they were going to die in the wilderness. Jesus, hungry in the wilderness, was in a similar position (Matthew 4:1-11). God had given him a great work to do, which he had begun 40 days before at his baptism. Now, weak from hunger, he was tempted to use his new powers to turn stones into bread, to make sure he would not die prematurely. But Jesus had more faith than the Israelites. Although he was very hungry, he knew his Father would not let him down. He was prepared to wait for God. He was right. When the temptations ended, *'angels ministered to him'* (v. 11).

The great lesson we have been shown is that, despite appearances, the demand for food is not actually the most basic of human needs. Even before that, we need God. When we face disaster or tragedy like the Israelites, we need to go down on our knees and seek the help of God. Sometimes He allows us to run out of our own resources, to teach us to trust in Him. There is a saying: 'Sometimes God sets us on our back, so that we can see his face!'

## The Bread of Life

This brings us to the third, and most important, aspect of the manna in the

wilderness. The heavenly food that saved the lives of the people was, says Jesus, a foreshadowing of himself.

*I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die (John 6:48–50).*

The manna in the wilderness only kept the people alive from one day to the next. It did not change them from mortal to immortal. But Jesus promises us he will do precisely that if we really believe in him. He was the living Word of God, created in the womb of Mary by the power of his Father. He teaches us the words of eternal life (John 6:63).

Jesus' loving sacrifice of himself is remembered by his followers each week in the service that is known as the Breaking of Bread, or Communion.

The bread they share, the symbol of Jesus' body nailed to the cross, reminds them that Jesus has brought salvation, not from mere hunger, but from the power of the grave. *'Whoever feeds on this bread will live for ever,' he promised (John 6:58).* As it was with the people in the wilderness, we are 100% dependent on the goodness of God in sending the bread of life. We did not plough the field or sow the seed that brought the bread from heaven. *'By grace you have been saved through faith,'* says the Apostle Paul. *'And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:8).*

**David M Pearce**



*“ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” ”*

*Matthew 26:26–29*

**Questions? Comments?**  
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LP

**Jesus says a lot about hell fire and brimstone as the punishment for the wicked. Why don't Christadelphians believe in it?**

Ed

JESUS MADE IT CLEAR that when he returns there will be a judgement of those who know the Gospel. And he described this judgement in very colourful ways:

*But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matthew 5:21-22).*

*The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:41-43).*

*And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched' (Mark 9:47-48).*

*Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life' (Matthew 25:41, 46).*

The Bible's promise to those who faithfully follow Christ is eternal life in the Kingdom of God: *'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom' (Luke 12:32)*. The Kingdom is described in detail in many places in the Bible; but what are we to make of the fate of those who are condemned at the judgement of Christ?



Medieval illustration of hell

As always, the key is in the Old Testament. The prophecy of Isaiah abounds with pictures of the Kingdom (for example in chapters 2 and 35). Isaiah's final chapter is a vision of the beautified city of Jerusalem, a place of pilgrimage for the blessed peoples of the Kingdom. But it ends on an unexpected and shocking note: *'And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh' (Isaiah 66:24)*.

Putting this vision together with other passages which describe the establishment of the Kingdom, such as Psalm 2 and Ezekiel 39, we see that it will not be a peaceful process: the nations of the earth will oppose Christ when he returns, and there will be terrible carnage. The aftermath of the battle will not be immediately taken away—it will become a visual aid for the warning and education of the earth's population.

It seems as though the fate of those who are rejected at Christ's judgement is to be released into the devastation of the final battle, and perish along with Christ's enemies. This is the fate that is described as the 'hell of fire' (Matthew 5:21–22) and the 'fiery furnace' (Matthew 13:42). 'Hell "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched"' (Mark 9:48) is a direct reference to Isaiah 66:24.



For the Jews of Jesus' time there was a real life example of 'hell'. It was the Valley of Hinnom on the south of Jerusalem, which was the city's rubbish dump. It would stink, and fires were continually breaking out there due to the gases released by the decomposing matter. The Jews called this

place Gehenna, and when we read in an English Bible Jesus speaking of 'hell', he was usually using this word 'Gehenna'. He was not describing an actual place, he was using a familiar visual aid.

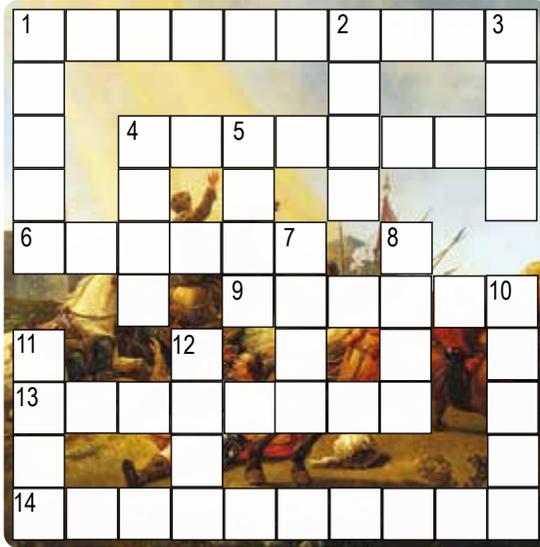
The phrases 'eternal fire' and 'eternal punishment' in Matthew 25, which are contrasted with 'eternal life', seem at first reading to be describing an unending state of torture for those who are condemned at the judgement.

However this is not compatible with what we know of God's character: *'The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger for ever'* (Psalm 103:8–9). Also, we know that God's ultimate purpose with His creation is to be "all in all" in a perfected universe (1 Corinthians 15:28). There will be no place for hell when God is "all in all". So it appears that the phrases 'eternal fire' and 'eternal punishment' describe not an ongoing punishment but an ignominious and permanent death.

So the eternal hell-fire of popular culture is not correct. However, we should be in no doubt as to the horror of the fate that awaits those who are condemned by Christ when he returns. He presents us with a stark choice in graphic language—there are those who will be thrown into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and those who will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:41–43).

**Across**

- 1 Those who were with Saul on the road to Damascus were this when they heard the voice (*Acts 9:7*)
- 4 Immersed, as Saul was (*Acts 9:18*)
- 6 Saul was sent here for his safety (*Acts 9:30*)
- 9 Ananias spoke to Saul while doing this with his hands (*Acts 9:17*)
- 13 Barnabas took Saul to these men (*Acts 9:27*)
- 14 Saul proclaimed Jesus in these buildings (*Acts 9:20*)



**Down**

- 1 After seeing the light, Saul was without this for three days (*Acts 9:9*)
- 2 When Dorcas died, they did this to her (*Acts 9:37*)
- 3 When Peter was in prison, an angel struck him here (*Acts 12:7*)
- 4 Saul was this in Tarsus (*Acts 22:3*)
- 5 Saul's name was changed to this (*Acts 13:9*)
- 7 Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus (*Acts 9:4*)
- 8 These are washed away at your baptism (*Acts 22:16*)
- 10 The Jews watched these in order to kill Saul (*Acts 9:24*)
- 11 Following his baptism, Saul stayed for several of these in Damascus (*Acts 9:19*)
- 12 Paul stayed here for two years, preaching the Gospel (*Acts 19:10*)

(These clues use the English Standard Version of the Bible. If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

**Colin Jannaway**

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