

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*



## Featured **Articles**

How to Find God (p. 3)

Will You Go to Heaven? (p. 6)

True Peace of Mind (p. 9)

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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# How to Find God

I KNEW A MAN who was a Christian, and proud of it. But he swore and cursed more than almost anyone else I've ever known, and he was particularly imaginative in finding ways to abuse the name of God.

I reminded him of the third of the Ten Commandments: *'You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain'* (Exodus 20:7). He smiled and said, "It's just the way I am. I live hard and talk hard. God won't hold it against me."

The fact was, this man was entirely confident because he was a Christian, and a good man—as evidenced by the fact that he had been christened as a baby, attended a couple of church services a year, and had never committed a very serious crime. There was no reason therefore why he should not 'get into heaven' (as he put it).

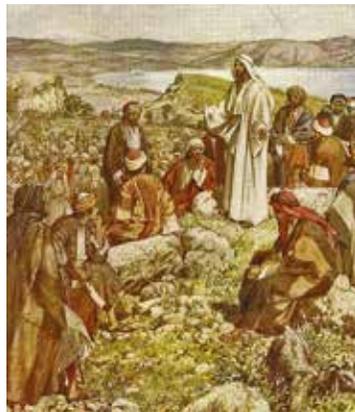
But was his confidence justified? It's worth asking the question—who decides what makes us a Christian. Is it us, or is it God?

## 'I Never Knew You'

Jesus Christ once said: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons*

*in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'"* (Matthew 7:21–23).

He said many uncomfortable things, and this is one of them. You might like to have a look at the context—this saying is part of a wide-ranging discourse which occupies Matthew chapters 5 to 7 and is often known as the 'sermon on the mount'. It's a description of the way of life which Jesus expects of his followers, and it is probably the most challenging manifesto for life that anyone has ever given.



The standard of Christian life is so high that nobody has ever managed to keep it (except the Lord Jesus himself). Some find that worrying, but it's no cause for worry. God knows what we're made of, He doesn't expect that we will never fail. That's why

Christ gave his life as a sacrifice for our sins. It's why forgiveness and the grace of God are central to the Gospel:

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23–24).*

We are incapable of pleasing God by our own merit, that's a basic fact. But He expects us to try. Jesus said, *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:13–14).*

## How to be Jesus' Friend

When Christ returns, some people who expect to be rewarded will be rejected. Who will they be? Those who have not obeyed his commandments. What are his commandments? We need to read the Bible to find out! Only by doing that will we learn the truth about God, the world and ourselves. By reading the Bible we will learn what God expects of us, and also—because Christianity is not just about following rules—we will align our minds with His, and learn to become like Him in our thoughts and ways. Christianity is a faith that transforms life. As the Apostle Paul puts it: *“We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18).*

## Different Paths to God

Nobody likes to be told what to do. We like to do things our own way. This applies

particularly to deeply personal subjects such as religion. Many people today hold the view that we're all on different paths which will lead us to God by different routes. Each to their own, follow your own heart. It's an appealing philosophy, but it's wrong.

Jesus said: *‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (John 14:6).* In order to come to God, we need to come in the way that He has prescribed—the way He shows us, in the Bible.



This is not necessarily a popular idea. Some prefer to be free to follow their own way. That is of course their prerogative. But there's an irony, which you begin to appreciate as you look into the Bible and see the way to God revealed there. The irony is this: following your own way will get you nowhere, but the way of Christ is the way to true freedom: *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32).*

# Taking God's Name in Vain

WE LIVE IN a world which is increasingly atheistic. Fewer and fewer people identify with organized religion, or any faith at all.

But strangely, the names of God and of Jesus Christ feature very commonly in everyday speech. They are used mostly as casual exclamations. People who use this language are generally oblivious to the fact that it is offensive and upsetting to those who believe in and worship God.

Why would someone who believes in God use His name as a swear word? After all, people don't swear and curse in the name of the Queen or the King or the President. Then again, why would someone who does not believe in God use His name as a swear word? What is the point?

It is not just believers who find this language offensive. The Bible makes it clear that God hates it. The Israelites had to use the name of God with great reverence. It is one of the Ten Commandments which God gave His people through Moses:

*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain (Exodus 20:7).*

Respect for God's name is emphasized throughout the

Old Testament, for example Deuteronomy 28:58, Malachi 4:2, and Psalm 8:1: *'O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!'*

In the 'Lord's prayer' which Jesus gave his followers as an example of how we should address God, he began with the phrase, *'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name' (Matthew 6:9)*. 'Hallowed' means 'greatly revered', and if we remembered that we would never use God's name carelessly.

It is not only God's name which must be treated with respect. Of Jesus himself we read:

*God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Philippians 2:9-10).*

God loves us so much that He gave His only Son to die to save us from our sins (John 3:16). Jesus Christ showed his love for us by

willingly laying down his life for us (John 15:13). What does it say about us, if we repay that love by using their names as swear words?



Notice rescued from a Victorian workhouse

**Marion Buckler**

# Will You Go to Heaven?

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE who believe in life after death, even if they do not believe in God. Many people take great comfort after the loss of a loved one in the thought that they are still alive, somehow, somewhere.

It's a sensitive and emotive subject. But we need to ask the question—what does God actually tell us about the afterlife? For the answer, we need to look in the Bible.

## What the Bible Says

Here are some Bible passages which you may find surprising:

*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. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and for ever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6).*

*For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness (Isaiah 38:18).*

*Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish (Psalm 146:3–4).*

King David was a great man of God. It's interesting to note what the apostles in the New Testament say about David, a thousand years after his death. '*David did not ascend into the heavens*' (Acts 2:34). '*For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption*' (Acts 13:36). When David died he did not go to heaven. Instead his death is described as 'sleep'. We understand what that means—sleep is a temporary period of unconsciousness.

So when do Christians go to heaven? The short answer is they don't. The Bible's definition of the 'afterlife' is what takes place when we awake out of our sleep. '*Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you*' (Ephesians 5:14). This will be when Christ returns to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God. When we read about the Kingdom of Heaven in the Bible, it is referring to the future Kingdom of God on earth (for example Matthew 3:2, 8:11, 18:23, 25:1).

Awaking from death is called 'resurrection'. Some people find it difficult to believe that this is possible. This has always been the case. There was a group called

the Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection, and they once confronted Jesus with a hypothetical question to prove their point. If a woman is widowed and marries again, when she's resurrected which of her husbands is she married to? Jesus answered plainly: *'The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:34–36).*



## Sons of the Resurrection

Resurrection to life in 'that age' is something that will be given to 'those who are considered worthy'. It will not be granted automatically. On what grounds will we be 'considered worthy to attain to that age'?

When Jesus Christ returns there will be a resurrection. Speaking to his friend Martha about her dead brother Lazarus, *'Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."* Martha

*said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world"' (John 11:23–27).*

There will also be a judgement. *'Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement' (John 5:28–29).* Jesus used a number of parables to describe this separation of those who will be granted eternal life from those who won't be. For example he will divide the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31–46), the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24–43). And this is from Paul's letter to the Romans: *'He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury' (Romans 2:6–8).*

## How to Live for Ever

Eternal life in the age to come is not something that can be earned, it is a gift from God. The Apostle John tells us: *'This is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11–12).*

Belief in Jesus Christ and obedience to his commandments are the way to obtain eternal life. As John 5 says again:

*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:3–5).*



John uses the term ‘the world’ to mean all that is ungodly in this world: *‘For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world’ (1 John 2:16).* The child of God must strive to be ‘in the world but not of it’—they have to live in the world with all its ungodly influences and they should not try to cut themselves off from it, but they must remember that they really don’t belong to it. They belong to Jesus Christ, and they are citizens of his coming Kingdom. Jesus put it this way: *‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me’ (Luke 9:23).*

The Bible says nothing about us going to heaven. But we are urged to live with our eyes set on heavenly things, so that when Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of Heaven we will be there: *‘If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1–4).*

**Grahame A Cooper**

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# True Peace of Mind



ETHEL'S EYE was caught by an advert in the paper. "I must buy that—it will solve all my problems!"

"No, mother" exclaimed her longsuffering son, "it's a funeral plan. It won't stop you falling over or getting ill or worrying about the state of the world. Pass it here. Oh, you can't buy it anyway, you're too old."

It may be a comfort to know that your funeral expenses are paid in advance. However, this comfort is limited in its scope and only lasts for your lifetime. The 'for ever' is relatively short.

In contrast the Bible talks of things, including life, which really can last for ever. God has always existed and always will exist. Jesus, now raised from the dead, cannot die and shares God's divine nature (Romans 6:9). This all-powerful God offers us a peace beyond our natural experience: *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7)*. This peace is the serenity that comes from being 'at peace' with God.

Jesus told his disciples not to be afraid because he would give them peace (John 14:27). He also said:

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have*

*tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).*

There is not much peace in this life. We are all surrounded to some degree by trouble, illness and injustice. Christians are not protected from these troubles. Indeed many are persecuted or even killed for their faith (Matthew 5:10–11, Acts 12:1–2). But followers of Christ are assured that God is in control of their lives and can use the troubles for good:

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).*

And the purpose of God is to offer us eternal life—like Jesus—in a world that will ultimately be free of sorrow, pain and death itself: in fact total world peace:

*He will swallow up death for ever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces (Isaiah 25:8)*. See also Revelation 21:4 and Isaiah 35:10.

Unlike the offer that caught Ethel's eye, God offers us peace of mind now and complete peace for ever. And age is no barrier—anyone who believes and tries to follow Jesus can accept his offer.

**Anna Hart**

# Jesus the Saviour

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD it said more than once that the Bible teaches that we are all sinners. That there is none that is good and that all are equal in the sight of God. Equally sinners. That this is true there can be no doubt, but sometimes sinners can be encouraged by the knowledge that they are sinners amongst so many others. Looked at like this, being a sinner does not seem half so bad. But to be a lone sinner—a personal sinner—is a very different matter. In such a situation our sins take on a different hue and our position takes on a different perspective. It is true that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, but if you are to be saved he died for your sins in particular. If he is to save me personally, then his sacrifice could not have been avoided, even if I was the only sinner in the world.

I say all this to bring me to the point—that Christ is interested in you personally and wants more than anything else to save you, from your sins. He is not saving vast multitudes of human beings in great blocks—he is saving individuals because that is the kind of Saviour he is. That is what he was like in the days of his life on earth. A Saviour interested vitally in other men and women. It was not a list of doctrines that attracted his disciples, it was not some great theological treatise that drew them

to him but himself—the person they saw and heard and touched.

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*

They trusted in a person, not in an organisation; they had faith in him and not in one another. To them he was a personal Saviour because that was the kind of person he was.

The prophet Isaiah said of him:

***Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.***

***(Isaiah 42:1–3)***

If you have any doubt as to whom the prophet is speaking of, look at Matthew 12:18–21. Matthew tells us that Isaiah's prophecy found very literal fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The spirit of the prophet's words were fulfilled in the tenderness, hopefulness and skilfulness of Jesus in his

mission as Saviour among the men and women of his day.

## A Bruised Reed

Let us think firstly of his tenderness—‘*a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench*’.

The reed was a common plant in Israel. It was found in marshes and waste places, where it was exposed to every sort of mischance, and it was very fragile. The wind dashed it; the wild beast trampled upon it; the wayfarer broke it off.



The reed was used for three purposes: as a staff, as a pipe and as a pen. The traveller sometimes, when he grew weary, turned aside and broke off a reed to help him along, but if he leaned heavily upon it then it gave way. It was fractured, but who would think of mending a fractured reed—he would discard it. The shepherd sometimes cut a reed and used it as a pipe to play upon and while away the tedious hours of his occupation. But the pipe was soon damaged and he threw it away. The scribe would have a number of reeds hanging from his girdle, which he used as quills. When the point of his quill got blunt he would cast it away and take another.

Reeds were plentiful. Bruised reeds could be seen lying about everywhere in the land of Jesus and nobody gave them a second thought.

The prophet Isaiah says that human life is a bruised reed, a fragile thing, a damaged thing, counted by many people as cheap. It is bruised by the wind of adversity. It is crushed by evil. Many lives have never had a chance. They are exposed on every side; they have never known what it is to be sheltered. Temptation is sometimes ruthless and crushes the soul. There are people who will use their fellows for their own convenience or their own amusement, as the wayfarer or the shepherd used the reed and then flung them aside.

Jesus when he was on earth found himself moving among bruised reeds. Amongst men and women dashed against the traditions of false religion; trampled by worthless teachers; crushed by selfish rulers, damaged by their own habits and sins. As we read the Gospel story we cannot escape the realisation that no one felt the pathos of life—of injured, fractured, bruised life—as Jesus felt it. No bruised reed was ever broken by him. He never accentuated any sorrow. He never aggravated any wound. No sincere human being was ever made worse by Jesus Christ.

## A Faintly Burning Wick

The Jews of Jesus' time used oil lamps—a wick was placed in a pot of olive oil, the oil soaked up the wick and when a flame was applied the oil burned. The flax plant was

often used for wicks. When the oil failed the flame flickered, the wick dried up and gave off a noxious smoke. The natural impulse was to quench it. Human life, the prophet tells us, is not only a bruised reed, damaged in itself—it is a smoking wick offensive to others and only fit to be put out.



Jesus was not only interested in bruised reeds but in sputtering wicks. When he came to Israel the spiritual life and fire of the people was well nigh extinguished. The false religion of the Pharisees had almost choked and smothered everything divine, and yet here and there indications of life could be seen—a Zacharias and an Elizabeth (Luke 1:5–25), a Simeon and an Anna (Luke 2:22–38)—smoking wicks. Jesus never quenched a smoking wick. No matter how feeble the spark, no matter how doubtful the indication, Jesus never discouraged, never thwarted any Godward tendency. He said of one who did not walk with him, but who used the name of Messiah, *‘Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you’* (Luke 9:50).

Consider then the hopefulness of Jesus. The wayfarer, the shepherd, the scribe said of the reed ‘it is bruised’. Jesus said ‘it

is only bruised’. The housewife said of the wick ‘it is smoking, put it out’. Jesus said ‘it is smoking, it has life’. Jesus saw potential as no else did. Who but Jesus would have said to the headstrong Simon, *‘You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church’* (Matthew 16:18).

Observe Jesus’ treatment of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10). While his neighbours were describing him as *‘a man who is a sinner’*, Jesus who knew his heart said *‘he also is a son of Abraham’*. Again, notice how Jesus dealt with the woman of Samaria (John 4:1–42). She had had a chaotic life and many would regard her as beyond hope. He spoke to her and said *‘give me a drink’*. And from that saying he found his way into her heart, to the one article of faith to which she in all her failures had clung: ‘I know that Messiah is coming.’ And Jesus told her frankly something that he had not yet told anyone else: ‘I who speak to you am he’—and she believed him. Jesus does not despair of any man or woman. When others may be at their wits’ end with us, Jesus has hope of us—he is a hopeful Saviour.

## Binding the Broken

Consider also his skilfulness—it is a bad word to use of Jesus and yet I cannot think of a better one. *‘A bruised reed will he not break.’* The prophet means, of course, not only will he not break it, but he will bind it up. *‘A faintly burning wick he will not quench.’* That is a poetic way of saying that he will fan it into flame. As he said, *‘I came not to call the righteous but sinners’* (Matthew 9:13).

Jesus was vitally interested in mending human lives.

The way in which human lives are mended through the Gospel is one of the wonders of grace. What can a bruised reed do for itself? A gentle hand must take hold of it and straighten it and bind it up. What is needed to transform a smoking wick into a shining light? That the oil should be replenished and a soft breath should blow upon it. When we read through the Gospel story we see Jesus working in this skilful way. Operating upon people's consciences and giving them sensitiveness. Flooding the intelligence with new light, giving to people the desire to turn Godwards. Time and again in the Gospels you can see Jesus actually at work, picking up bruised reeds and tenderly repairing them. He is an incomparable Saviour. There is none like him. What others cast away he retains and makes anew. What others extinguish, he transforms into a shining light. The tender, hopeful, skilful Saviour.

### **'Whoever Comes to Me'**

Remember that Isaiah declared *'he will bring forth justice to the nations'*. The Saviour whom we have seen working among the broken in Israel two thousand years ago is also ready to work with anyone, anywhere in the world.

Does this Jesus mean anything to you? It may be that you are well acquainted with the Bible. The Gospel is more than a book, or a message or a creed. It is a reality and an experience. It is possible to hear a

message and yet be unaffected by it. Do you feel in your more honest moments you know yourself to be a bruised reed—or that there are times in your life when you more resemble a smoking flax? Jesus invites you to receive him as your Saviour: *'All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out'* (John 6:37).

Sin has affected every life and none but Christ can do us any good. Once when the crowd thronged round Jesus he asked *'Who touched me?'* (Luke 8:45). Someone had touched him—although they were all jostling him. He knew someone had touched him in a special way—someone touched him in faith. But when he asked them, the record says *'all denied'*. And then a poor broken reed came forth and trembling confessed that she had touched him, and why—so that she might be healed. The Saviour was tender and comforted her. She had got all she came for. She was satisfied with receiving for she was healed of her disease, but Jesus was not yet satisfied. He told her *'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace'* (v. 48). Imagine the effect of those words upon that broken reed, as she carried them with her throughout her life.

The Gospel announces to us the magnificent truth that God sent His Son to be a Saviour—it announces the pardon of sin through the cross of Jesus Christ. Anyone can repent, be baptised, and start anew. When we acknowledge ourselves as sinners, he is ready and waiting to heal us.

**Dennis Gillett**

# The Law of Moses

ALTOGETHER, Moses was away for six weeks in Mount Sinai. The people last saw him climbing up into the dense cloud that covered the mountain. They began to wonder why he was gone so long. In fact he was remarkably busy. He was writing down hundreds of major and minor laws from God. There are whole chapters of these commandments in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. As chief judge and administrator, he was entrusted with setting up a system for teaching them, and for courts of justice to deal with offenders.

## Wise Laws

Some of the laws were concerned with ceremonial matters, such as the rules of sacrifice, the great religious festivals, and the organisation of the priesthood. This area of Bible research is fascinating, because in many subtle ways the ceremonial laws spotlighted the ugliness of sin, and pointed forward to the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ. However, it is also instructive to look at the more practical aspects of the Law of Moses, to see the way it dealt with theft, murder, duty to parents, care for the aged and all the other social interactions that cause so much trouble today. Take, for example,

the subject of theft. We are perhaps used to the depressing statistics of muggings, break-ins and shoplifting in society. In some countries the authorities react ruthlessly; in others it seems the courts think more of the offender than the victim. How did the Law of Moses deal with such offences?

The treatment of this crime perfectly illustrates the wisdom of God. Firstly, if



a thief was caught with the goods in his possession, he was brought before the judges, and when found guilty, obliged to restore to the owner exactly twice what he had taken from him. If he had disposed of the goods before he was apprehended, he had to pay 'five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep' (Exodus 22:1). The principle was restitution. 'He shall surely

pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft' (verse 3). The victim had his loss restored, with damages to compensate him for the inconvenience. Note how the Law of Moses dealt with the possibility that the thief might not be able to pay. In that case, he was to be 'sold'. In other words, he was to enter service as a bondservant to an employer in return for his food and accommodation, but with all his wages

stopped and diverted to the victim until the fine had been paid. If exact replacement was not practicable the value of the animals or property lost could be converted into money terms by the judge. Interestingly prison sentences do not feature in the Law of Moses.

One cannot help admiring the simplicity and justice of this procedure. In a small and close community, where escape from the sentence would be difficult, it was a strong deterrent for the offender and provided reassurance of recompense for the victim.

However, this was not the only section of the Law of Moses dealing with theft. In the book of Leviticus, where the rules of sacrifice are explained, provision was made for a conscience-stricken thief to put things right with his victim voluntarily. If he repented, he could go to the priest and confess his deed. Arrangements were then made for two separate events. Firstly, he had to restore the goods to the victim, plus a 20% fine, representing compensation for damages. Secondly, he had to offer a ram out of the flock to God Himself, as a sacrifice. *'And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven'* (Leviticus 6:7).

This point is quite fascinating. It implies that theft was not just a social matter, an injustice to the victim. It was also an

offence before God Himself, which had to be put right. It was a sin, as well as a crime. To the Israelites, God was an ever-present fact of life, watching their actions and weighing their motives. They were continually exhorted that to respect their neighbour was to please God, the God of love.

A law with a 'conscience' section such as this could only exist in a nation trained to know and love God. The Law itself required this respect. In practice, much of the Law was taken up, not with 'thou shalt not', but with positive exhortations to show love, toleration and respect for others.



We might imagine that protection of racial minorities is a recent innovation. But here is what the Law of Moses decreed, over 3,000 years ago: *'You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and*

*you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God'* (Leviticus 19:34). The same love God had shown to Israel when they were an oppressed minority in the land of Egypt, they must show in turn to the minorities amongst them, by law!

Look at this beautiful example from the book of Exodus: *'If you meet your enemy's ox or his ass going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the ass of one who hates you lying under its burden... you shall*

help him to lift it up' (Exodus 23:4-5). The same principle lay behind this decree. The Israelites themselves frequently became the enemies of God through their sins. Yet he had mercy on them.

## Jesus and the Law

The first and greatest of all the commandments, the very cornerstone of the Law, was this, by Jesus' own decree: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind' (Matthew 22:37). That was every Israelite's foremost duty. And Jesus added alongside it a second, which he said was like it. It is a tiny commandment from an obscure passage in Leviticus: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18). Whether facing a foreigner sojourning in their cities, or the man next door, or even an enemy, nothing less than the love that God Himself shows would do.

As we leave this subject, we must go to the New Testament to summarise the teaching of Jesus about the Law of Moses. 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets', he said: 'I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them' (Matthew 5:17). He insisted that the requirements of the Law of Moses were important for his followers. But they were not enough. He looked for an even higher standard. He gave an illustration. The Law allowed a person compensation for an injury caused

by violence: 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' (Exodus 21:24). It prevented the aggrieved person from taking action until the case had been examined with proper witnesses in a court of law. Compensation was limited to the extent of the injury that

had been suffered. The victim could not, for example, kill a man in revenge for a wounding. In this way the Law prevented family feuds that could escalate and run on for decades. But Jesus insisted on a much higher standard than that. 'If anyone slaps you on the right cheek,' he said, 'turn to him the other also' (Matthew 5:39).



The Law of Moses controlled the grosser forms of crime, and maintained peace in the nation. But in its 'exhortation' sections it already contained the higher standards of morality which Jesus laid upon his followers. The Law was a 'guardian', to use the words of the Apostle Paul (Galatians 3:24), to bring Israel to Christ. Now, in his own self-sacrifice, he was showing people that the Law had to be left behind as they progressed even higher, to the likeness of God Himself. 'You shall not kill' and 'you shalt not steal' were not to be abolished, but to be made obsolete by the love that God shows to us (Matthew 5:21-22).

**David M Pearce**

# 2 Corinthians

BETWEEN the two letters to Corinth we have in our Bibles, it seems there was another letter which has not been preserved—evidently even more severe in tone than the first letter (see 2 Corinthians 2:3–4). In 2 Corinthians the Apostle Paul admits his great relief that, according to news brought to him by Titus, the ‘in-between’ letter had been well received (see 7:6–15). Though Paul is reassured about the spiritual development of the Corinthian believers, there is still much for them to learn. They have to learn that discipleship of Christ is not easy, and that all true believers must expect opposition (4:7–18).

## Suffering for Christ

In Corinth, opposition would mainly come from those who had leanings towards Judaism. The ‘Judaisers’ would insist that believers are bound by the rituals of the Law of Moses. Paul shows that the Law was only of a temporary nature, whereas those things which have to do with Christ are eternal (see chapters 3 & 4).

The letter contains answers to objections by those who refused to acknowledge that Paul was a true apostle. In chapter 11, Paul defends his apostleship and lists some of the sufferings he has already endured for the sake of Christ. All believers can expect persecution if they stand up for the truth.

But there will be a Day of Judgement, at which true and faithful followers will be recognised by Christ (5:10).



## Collection for the Needy

During his journeys Paul collected money from the various congregations he visited, to aid the poor believers in Judea. In this letter (chapters 8 & 9) he encourages the Corinthian believers to give heartily to this fund: ‘Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver’ (2 Corinthians 9:7).

## Norman Owen

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

- ◆ 2 Corinthians 4:6—see Isaiah 40:5; John 1:14; 17:4.
- ◆ 2 Corinthians 6:18—see Jeremiah 31:9; Revelation 21:7.
- ◆ 2 Corinthians 11:3–4—see Galatians 1:8; 1 John 2:24.



**JB** **Jesus said at the Last Supper ‘Do this in remembrance of me’. The Last Supper was the Passover. Surely you should keep the Last Supper once a year, at Passover, not every Sunday?**

**Ed** EVERY YEAR on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the Jewish month Nisan religious Jews share the Passover meal. It is a ceremony that dates back 4,000 years to the meal their ancestors ate on their last night of slavery in Egypt. A central element in the Passover meal is the Passover Lamb, which recalls the lamb whose blood was used to protect the Israelite families from the final plague which God brought on the Egyptians. The record is in Exodus 12.

The Passover Lambs were actually only pointers to the ultimate Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ (John 1:29). He was the supreme sacrifice, whom God has provided to save us from death (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus died on the afternoon of Passover day, as the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in Jerusalem.

The meal which Jesus shared with his disciples on the night before his death, which is known as the Last Supper, was probably a traditional Passover meal (Luke 22:15). He picked out two particular elements of the feast—the broken bread and the cup of wine—and commanded his disciples: ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ (v. 19). Ever since, his followers have shared a symbolic feast in obedience to his command. It’s known by various

names such as the ‘Lord’s Supper’ and the ‘breaking of bread’. Traditionally this is done weekly on a Sunday. But if the Last Supper was a Passover meal, should the Lord’s Supper be celebrated just once a year, on 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan?

It’s important to note is that Jesus was not commanding his disciples to hold the Passover meal in remembrance of him—he was referring specifically to the bread and wine, because they are reminders of his body and his blood (1 Corinthians 10:16). When the Apostle Paul gives direct instructions about the conduct of the feast (1 Corinthians 11:17–34), it is clear that he is only interested in these two key components.

How frequently did the first Christians keep the feast? We don’t know exactly. It seems from Acts 2:42 that in the very early days of the Jerusalem congregation it was a regular, possibly daily occurrence. By the time we get to Acts 20:7 it appears they had settled on a regular meeting on the first day of the week (Sunday). The writings of the early churches confirm that this became the accepted practice—for instance Didache 14:1 (early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD).

We are forgetful and we need regular reminders of what is important in life, which is why Jesus instituted the feast and why his followers down through the ages have made it the central focus of their weekly lives.

**Across**

- 1 A leper was to live on this side of the camp  
(*Leviticus 13:46*)
- 5 God's name must not be taken in this  
(*Exodus 20:7*)
- 7 The priests were not to shave off these parts of their beards  
(*Leviticus 21:5*)
- 10 Aaron was to do this to the linen sash around his waist  
(*Leviticus 16:4*)
- 11 He received the Ten Commandments  
(*Exodus 19:20*)
- 14 The mountain where the Law was delivered  
(*Exodus 19:20*)
- 15 The Israelites were not to do this to their neighbours  
(*Leviticus 19:13*)
- 17 A warning about letting your beast \_\_\_\_\_  
(*Exodus 22:5*)
- 20 Grain offerings were baked in this  
(*Leviticus 7:9*)
- 21 11 across did this to the cloud on the mountain  
(*Exodus 24:18*)



**Down**

- 1 A man was to repay five if he stole one  
(*Exodus 22:1*)
- 2 To observe  
(*Exodus 23:5*)
- 3 The first woman  
(*Genesis 3:20*)
- 4 God is slow to this  
(*Exodus 34:6*)
- 6 If your enemy's animal is going \_\_\_\_\_, return it to him  
(*Exodus 23:4*)
- 8 If a man borrowed an animal and it did this, he must make restitution  
(*Exodus 22:14*)
- 9 If a man was found with a stolen animal, he was to pay this amount  
(*Exodus 22:4*)
- 12 Transgressions  
(*Leviticus 16:34*)
- 13 A small stream  
(*Leviticus 23:40*)
- 16 If you could not make restitution for a theft, you would be this  
(*Exodus 22:3*)
- 18 'There is \_\_\_ God, the Father'  
(*1 Corinthians 8:6*)
- 19 One of the animals sacrificed for a cleansed leper  
(*Leviticus 14:10*)

(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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