

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The LORD is My Shepherd (p. 3)

The Importance of Israel (p. 10)

Cyrus King of Persia (p. 14)

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 humankind; to call attention to the divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn people that soon Christ will return to earth as judge and ruler of God's worldwide Kingdom.

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The Glad Tidings Publishing Association
A registered charity—Number 248352

The LORD is My Shepherd

KING DAVID of Israel was arguably the greatest king the world has yet seen. Not because of the extent of his kingdom or the greatness of his wealth, but because of the attitude he had.

David was the son of a farmer, and he spent his youth tending sheep in the wild and dangerous hill country around Bethlehem. It was an upbringing that made him courageous, resourceful and deeply caring.

You may be familiar with the account of his victory over the Philistine giant Goliath, which propelled him into a position of command in the Israelite army when he was still young (1 Samuel 17).



He established himself as a capable commander who inspired the affection and loyalty of his men: *'All Israel and Judah loved David, for he*

went out and came in before them' (1 Samuel 18:16). That term *'went out and came in'* is shepherding language—he led his soldiers from the front, sharing in their dangers and hardships and caring for them as he had for his flock in the Judean hills.

It wasn't long before King Saul grew madly jealous of David, perceiving that he was a threat to his throne. David had to flee for his life. He and 400 loyal men became outlaws (1 Samuel 22). The remainder of the book of 1 Samuel contains the account of Saul's increasingly desperate attempts to destroy David. But it ends with Saul's death in battle against the Philistines.

The Shepherd King

2 Samuel is the account of David's rise to the throne and his long glorious reign. He ruled for seven years in Hebron during a period of civil war against Saul's son, then the time came for him to take the throne of the entire kingdom.

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel'" (2 Samuel 5:1–2).

So David became the shepherd king. The qualities which he developed as a shepherd, and honed as a military leader, equipped

him for his illustrious reign. In contrast to his power-corrupted predecessor Saul, throughout his reign David saw his role as tending, nurturing and protecting his people (2 Samuel 24:17).

He was also a musician. He was skilled at the lyre (1 Samuel 16:23), and many of the Psalms in the Bible are his.



But he was not just a military hero, benign monarch and supremely gifted musician. The thread that runs through his life is his absolute faith in God. It was God Who strengthened him to defend his flock and fight his battles: *'The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine'* (1 Samuel 17:37). It was God's Law that gave him the wisdom to reign: *'I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart'* (Psalm 40:8). And it was God Who inspired him to write

his songs. This is the beginning of his final Psalm, which he wrote in his old age:

Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: "The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth" (2 Samuel 23:1-4).

The Good Shepherd

Perhaps David's most famous song is Psalm 23. In this Psalm he muses on the job of the shepherd. Perhaps he wrote it in his youth, during long nights alone under the stars guarding his flock. But in this Psalm he sees himself as the sheep, and he recognises that God is his shepherd.

He observes the sheep in his care. He knows where the pastures are, they will never go hungry (v. 2); he tends them when they're hurt and retrieves them when they wander off (v. 3); he can lead them through the desert's dark hazardous ravines, his weapons always at hand to fend off anything that might attack (v. 4). As long as they know he's there, they're content and at ease because they have absolute trust in him.

Certainly one of the reasons for the enduring appeal of this beautiful Psalm is that every believer can recognise in it their own life, and their own relationship with their God.



Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Questions? Comments? We'd love to hear from you!

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Godliness with Contentment

THE APOSTLE PAUL gave an invaluable piece of advice to his young friend Timothy:

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content' (1 Timothy 6:6–8).

The message for Timothy (and us today) is that if we love God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ we should not be worried about the cares of this life—we should be more concerned with living a godly life and casting our cares upon God, the Creator and Sustainer of all life upon earth.

Jesus himself gave a similar message to his disciples:

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into

barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:25–33).

The advice is clear, but are we able to follow it?

Godliness

When we follow Jesus, we must obey his commandments. Jesus said, 'I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me' (John 12:49–50). And again, 'If you keep my

commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love' (John 15:10).

A life of godliness is a life which is God-focused, keeping Him uppermost in our thoughts each day. The Apostle Paul put it like this: *'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' (Colossians 3:1-3).*

To love God is what He requires of all true believers, it is a major part of godliness. Someone asked Jesus a question: *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets"* (Matthew 22:36-40).

Godliness means striving to love the Lord God and His Son Jesus Christ, and showing that love by trying as hard as we can to keep their commandments; and an essential part of this is showing love to other people.

Forgiveness

There is another side to godliness, which is the reason the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world. No one is perfect, there are times when we all fall down and fail to keep their commandments. Paul says, *'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...'*

(Romans 3:23). God gave His only Son to be a sacrifice for the sins of the faithful and to be their redemption. Paul continues, *'and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (v.24).*

John writes, *'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:8-9).* It is the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from all sin (v. 7).

Contentment

Living the Christian life without worrying about cares and troubles may be easy to do for some, but perhaps not so for others. Some people are just "born worriers", but for all of us there are so many things in life to be anxious about.



True contentment comes from having complete trust in God and accepting whatever comes our way as being God's will. Regular daily Bible reading and thinking on what we read, is a great help to increasing our faith and helping us achieve

1 Peter

THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN to Jewish believers scattered across Syria and Asia Minor (1:1). Though many Jews opposed the preaching of Jesus Christ, some responded to the Gospel. They had been exiled from their homes by Roman persecutions.



All Christ's true followers are 'exiles', looking for the future Kingdom of God (2:11). They take no part in the politics of this world; on the other hand, they submit to kings and governors so long as their commands do not conflict with the laws of Christ (2:13–17). As "sojourners and exiles" in this world they must maintain their faith patiently until Christ returns, when he will grant a place in God's kingdom to all who are accepted by God's grace (1:7–9). Meanwhile, they must be prepared for persecution—those to whom Peter wrote had already experienced suffering (1:6–7; 2:11–23; 4:12–19). In this they were following in the steps of their Master, who *'when he was reviled, he did not revile in*

return... He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree' (2:23–24).

Chosen People

In words once used to describe Israel, the followers of Christ are called '*a chosen race, a royal priesthood' (2:9)*. Christ is the Chief Shepherd, who cares for the sheep, and who even died for them (2:24–25). Church elders also must care for the flock, by being good examples and by feeding them with God's word (5:2–3).

God's special people are being prepared as a spiritual temple in which God can eventually dwell; Christ is the corner stone of that building (2:4–8). They must endeavour to show God's ways in their lives (2:9–12). Those who believe in God's word and are baptized (1:23, 3:21) will be granted an eternal crown of life when Christ comes (5:4), if they have remained faithful.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ 1 Peter 1:3, 23—see John 1:13; 3:3; James 1:18.
- ◆ 1 Peter 2:9—see Exodus 19:5–6; Revelation 1:6.
- ◆ 1 Peter 3:20–21—see Genesis 6:5–8; Hebrews 11:7.

The Importance of Israel



WHEN WE HEAR the name 'Israel', we may have many conflicting impressions. The modern state of Israel is often controversial. And since the beginning of Christianity, the Jews have been in conflict with it—after all, it was the Jewish rulers who caused Jesus Christ to be crucified. And yet Israel plays a key part in God's purpose, as revealed in the Bible.

The Bible is clear: it promises a great future for all people, both Jew and Gentile (non-Jew). That future is bound up with the future of Israel. The present nation of Israel is flawed, and Christians have no business supporting it politically—but the fact is, the Jewish people and their nation will be central in the glorious future which God has in store for the world.

There are some who say that Israel is no longer important in God's purpose. They are wrong:

Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name: "If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the

LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me for ever." Thus says the LORD: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:35–37).

Chosen With Purpose

Let's start at the beginning. God made a set of promises to a faithful man called Abraham, which hinged on a land and a nation that would be descended from him (Genesis 12:1–3). One of his grandsons was called Jacob, and had his name changed to 'Israel', which means 'ruling with God' (Genesis 32:28). His family grew into a nation during their slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1), from where God called them to the Promised Land. Speaking to Moses, God clearly identified Israel as His people:

I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob... I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters (Exodus 3:6–7).

One obvious question is why God chose Israel, of all the nations. The simple answer is that God loves them and is keeping His promises to Abraham.

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to

be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers (Deuteronomy 7:6–8).

Another question: why did God want to choose a nation at all, what was the point? The answer is clear: *“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD’ (Isaiah 43:10).* The people of Israel were chosen to be witnesses to the fact that God exists and of how He wants people to worship Him.

Imperfect Witnesses

Israel were supposed to be a model for others to follow, of how to be in a relationship with God. He gave them His Law through Moses, which showed them how to please Him, how to worship and how to behave in daily life (Exodus through Deuteronomy). There were times when they did this well, such as during the great reigns of kings David and Solomon. In fact we read of kings and queens coming from all over the world to visit Solomon, to see the temple of God and to hear the word of God (see 2 Chronicles 9).

Sadly, even wise king Solomon struggled to stay close to God, and throughout their history the people of Israel largely failed to be faithful. Their Old Testament history stretches from Moses (about 1500 BC) to the time of the return of the Jews from exile (about 400 BC), and is marked largely by unfaithfulness and failure to follow God’s Law. It’s a pretty sad

story and results in judgements by God. They were repeatedly invaded and exiled and suffered terribly under the Assyrians and Babylonians in particular. But God never gave up on them completely, and He said:

I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished (Jeremiah 30:11).



Unwitting Witnesses

However, this difficult history was in itself a witness to the existence and plan of God. He sent prophets who foretold what would happen in their own days, such as invasion and exile, which came true with amazing accuracy. They also made specific longer-term prophecies about the return of Israel to their land, about the empires that would come and go, and about the coming Messiah. Again, all of these came true in great detail. No human could make up these prophecies—they had to come from an all-knowing God.

This is still the case in our own day. Ezekiel prophesied in chapter 37 that Israel would undergo a national 'resurrection' after a long exile and be returned to their land before the second coming of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Speaking of the same period, Jesus said:

They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled... And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory (Luke 21:24–27).

The Jews returned to their ancient land after the Second World War, and the State of Israel was established in 1948. The fact that Israel exists and is in the land promised to Abraham is a sign that Jesus will come to fulfil God's purpose soon.



Jews celebrating the establishment of the Israeli state, 14th May 1948

Israel's Status With God

This still leaves us with the question: what is Israel's position with God now? They were so often faithless, and indeed were the ones to condemn Jesus and hand him over to the Romans for that unjust, cruel death by crucifixion. The dreadful events of

70 and 138 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the nation of Israel, and the Jews were scattered around the world, are well documented.

The Apostle Paul asked exactly this question, and provided the answer: '*I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!... God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew... So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace*' (Romans 11:1–5).

God has not rejected Israel, but Jews who want to be in a relationship with Him, since the work of Jesus, do so 'by grace'. This means by God's good favour. As far as salvation is concerned, they are in the same position as Gentiles. To be part of God's plan requires that we admit our sin, accept Jesus as the sacrifice for forgiveness of that sin, and are baptised in demonstration of this.

We are not under the Old Testament Law (although many of its directions hold true), but we follow the commandments of Jesus Christ. This is the same now for Jew and Gentile, described in detail in Romans chapters 5 & 6. These two chapters end like this:

As sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:21).

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

A Shared Hope

So in terms of their position with God, there is no longer any distinction between

Jews and Gentiles. Anyone who wants to come to God must do so through the Lord Jesus Christ:

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Galatians 3:27–29).

When we are baptised, we become 'children of Abraham' and become heirs of the promises that were made to him. Believers are sometimes referred to as 'spiritual Israel'. This is a wonderful prospect, and when Jesus comes back to set up God's Kingdom, he will include all who have come to him faithfully.

Israel as a nation today is largely godless and the Jews as a religion do not generally recognise Jesus. They clearly will need to be reconciled to God and be sorry for what their ancestors did to Jesus. Zechariah chapters 12–14 speak extensively about a national spiritual revival which will happen at the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn... On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness... Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against

Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths (Zechariah 12:10, 13:1, 14:16).



So what should be our attitude to Israel today? Not political support, nor animosity either. Israel is still part of God's purpose and will be in the future. Our hope lies in being part of 'the hope of Israel' (Acts 28:20) as preached by Jesus and his apostles: to be part of God's plan and promises, and eventually in His Kingdom.

Andrew Hale

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Cyrus King of Persia

ONE OF THE MOST iconic objects in the collection of The British Museum is a small clay prism—the Cyrus cylinder. It is about 22cm long and 11cm in diameter, and is covered by neat cuneiform writing. It was found in Babylon in 1879. It complements the Bible narrative and is a witness to its accuracy.

Cyrus was the king of Persia, who captured the city and empire of Babylon in 539 BC. On the cylinder

Cyrus claims that Marduk god of Babylon turned away from Nabonidus the last king of Babylon because of his injustices, and appointed Cyrus to replace him. He states: *"Without any battle he (Marduk) made him (Cyrus) enter Babylon sparing Babylon any calamity."*

Isaiah 45 is an amazing Bible prophecy. It was written around 200 years before Cyrus, but it describes Cyrus and what he was to do: *'Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed' (Isaiah 45:1).*

In the concluding section of the cylinder Cyrus describes his new religious policy of tolerance, reversing the Babylonian policy of carrying away captive gods and peoples from subjugated lands. It records

how he returned a number of god images collected by Nabonidus to their original temples throughout Mesopotamia and western Persia. The cylinder is regarded as a symbol of "tolerance and respect to different peoples and different faiths", and has been described as the "first charter of human rights".



Although the Jews are not mentioned on the cylinder, we know that they were involved in the policy he describes. Cyrus was

instrumental in the return of the Jews to Israel after the Babylonian captivity:

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah"... (Ezra 1:1–2).

The Bible had foretold that the temple in Jerusalem would be rebuilt. It also tells us that it will be rebuilt again, in the Kingdom of God. This time it will be a place of worship for all nations (Isaiah 2:1–4).

Tom Ingham

Promises

WHAT DO YOU THINK of people who make promises but don't keep them?

God is not like that. He makes promises, and He keeps them. *'God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?'* (Numbers 23:19). Let's consider some promises God has made.

Abraham

Abraham lived in the city of Ur in present day Iraq. God commanded him, *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12:1-3).



Abraham obeyed, and the promises were fulfilled. He became the ancestor of a number of nations, including the Jews. It was through the Jews particularly that the promises were and will be fulfilled. The Apostle Paul wrote about those promises, *'And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed"'* (Galatians 3:8). According to Paul, those promises to Abraham anticipated the Christian Gospel.

When he arrived in the land which God had directed him to, Abraham received another promise from God: *'To your offspring I will give this land'* (Genesis 12:7). Notice those two important words, "offspring" and "land". At that time Abraham was an old man and had no children, so God was severely testing his faith.

Concerning the land, Abraham never inherited even a single field. But God repeated the promise with greater emphasis, *'Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you'* (Genesis 13:17). What did God promise? Was it a place in heaven? No! God promised to give him the land under his feet! But Abraham never did receive that land. Two thousand years later the Christian martyr Stephen commented, *'Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring*

after him, though he had no child. (Acts 7:5). Remember this problem, and let's move on.

Twenty years later the promise of a son was fulfilled: Isaac was born. But one day, God gave Abraham another command: 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you' (Genesis 22:2). What a test of Abraham's faith! But in obedience to God, Abraham prepared to make the sacrifice. At the last moment an angel of God intervened and saved Isaac. Abraham noticed a ram caught in a bush by its horns and he sacrificed that instead.



Then God made the greatest promise of all: 'By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice (Genesis 22:15–18).

Perhaps the full depth of these words does not strike us immediately, but we have the inspired words of Paul to guide us:

Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"... Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham... It does not say, "And to offsprings", referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring", who is Christ... for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Galatians 3:6–29).

The promise of a descendant, therefore, was only partly fulfilled with the birth of Isaac; the promise was fully fulfilled with the birth of Jesus, and through him great blessings have come to us all—the blessings of unity with God and of the forgiveness of sin. Jesus himself is the promised "descendant".

But God promised that this descendant would 'possess the gate of his enemies' (Genesis 22:17). What do those words mean? In the language of the time, if one king defeated another king in battle he would take possession of that king's city. To show his possession of the city he would sit in its gate. Abraham's descendant would defeat his enemies. Well, the 'enemies' defeated by Jesus were the greatest enemies of all—temptation, sin and death. As Paul explains in another place, 'As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will

be made righteous (Romans 5:18–19). If we belong to Jesus Christ, the obedient Son of God, we are no longer condemned for the disobedience of our ancestor Adam.

But there is another important point. Remember the problem: Abraham believed that God would fulfil His promises and give him the land, but he never received it. So when will Abraham receive this promise? Of course, in the day of resurrection, Jesus will establish the Kingdom of God and Jerusalem will be its capital city; then, and only then, will Abraham receive the land (Matthew 8:11). By his faith Abraham honoured God. All those who trust God honour Him and their faith will be counted as righteousness (Romans 4:18–25).

David and Mary

God made promises to other faithful people, building upon the promises He made to Abraham, all of them looking forward to the descendant who was to come. God said this to King David:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son (2 Samuel 7:12–14).

And these promises were brought into sharp relief when the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was going to have a son:

You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:31–33).

It is wonderful to see how the Bible’s message fits together. To Abraham God promised the land and a descendant who would bring great blessings. To David a thousand years later He promised a descendant who would rule for ever on his throne. And after another thousand years, He revealed to Mary that her son would fulfil all these promises.

Abraham, David, Mary and all the faithful men and women of old still lie sleeping in their graves. They are waiting for the time when those promises will be fulfilled—to them, and to us as well if we want to be part of them. *‘All these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect’ (Hebrews 11:39–40).*

David Budden

HS

You're on a train with an atheist, a Muslim and a Jew. Which would you rather talk to?

Ed

THE FOLLOWER of Christ should respect everyone regardless of who or what they are, and treat everyone as they themselves would like to be treated (Matthew 5:43–48, 7:12). This is the way Jesus himself lived. He told the famous parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) which showed (among other things) that we cannot predict what kind of people will behave well or badly.

It's good to talk to people, it's interesting to listen to their points of view and their beliefs, and of course it's good to take any opportunity to share the Gospel message to anyone who will listen. As Jesus said, *'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation'* (Mark 16:15). If the Gospel is true, which it is, there is no need to fear having it challenged.

The Apostle Paul exhorted his young friend Timothy to be always ready to tell people about his faith—not bombastically, but with patience and humility: *'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching'* (2 Timothy 4:2).

The Apostle Peter urged his readers to show their faith both by the things they said and by the way they behaved—and to be prepared for people not to like it: *'In your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame'* (1 Peter 3:15–16).

The Apostle James warned about our tendency to make judgements about people based on our preconceptions (James 2:1–4). The fact is, we don't know who will listen. When Saul of Tarsus was raging against Christianity, persecuting and blaspheming and locking up any Christians he could find (Acts 8:3), who would have thought that it would be any use preaching to him? But the Lord knew his potential. Acts 9 relates his conversion, and his transformation into a devoted follower and preacher of Christ.

Wordsearch references: Joshua 2:10; Titus 1:4; Ruth 1:16; Acts 10:28; 2 Kings 5:15; Acts 16:14.

Jews and Gentiles

1 HERE ARE 12 people who pleased God. Six were Jews and six were non-Jews (Gentiles). Find all 12 names in the wordsearch.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CORNELIUS | S | Z | A | C | C | H | A | E | U | S | B | S |
| DANIEL | X | U | I | U | N | M | A | W | T | X | Z | A |
| ELIZABETH | E | P | I | L | X | L | I | B | L | T | W | M |
| LYDIA | Z | L | K | L | S | M | K | Y | N | G | P | S |
| MOSES | U | X | I | I | E | R | Y | A | Y | M | A | O |
| NAAMAN | A | P | G | Z | A | N | M | O | S | E | S | N |
| PETER | I | W | B | H | A | A | R | D | E | Q | R | J |
| RAHAB | D | K | A | U | A | B | A | O | Z | A | U | K |
| RUTH | Y | B | L | N | G | N | E | M | C | Y | T | W |
| SAMSON | L | N | V | T | I | R | E | T | E | P | H | N |
| TITUS | R | V | K | E | K | X | T | O | H | E | R | B |
| ZACCHAEUS | R | V | L | M | V | F | S | U | T | I | T | B |

2 HERE IS something that was said by or to each of the Gentiles in the list. Match the verse to the name. (References are on the facing page.)

‘We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt.’

‘My true child in a common faith.’

‘Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.’

‘God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.’

‘Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.’

‘The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.’

(Quotations are from the ESVUK: other versions might be slightly different.)

Anna Hart

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