

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*



## Featured **Articles**

The Rhythm of Life *(p. 3)*

The Trinity *(p. 7)*

The Jews in God's Purpose *(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 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 Rhythm of Life

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED why we have seven days in a week? The reason is, that's the way God designed it.

The Bible begins with the account of God's creation of the heavens and the earth. The work was done in six days, then He rested on the seventh. *'So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation'* (Genesis 2:3).

There have been other calendar systems through history with different week lengths, but the seven-day week has prevailed. Somehow it seems right—one (or two) days off the daily routine, every seven days, provides a healthy rhythm to life and enables you to 'recharge and reset'. Can you imagine life without weekends?

## The Sabbath Law

The law which God gave to Israel, known as the Law of Moses, is recorded in the books of Exodus through to Deuteronomy. In it, the Sabbath was formalised as a law: *'The seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates'* (Exodus 20:10).



The Sabbath provided a rhythm for the nation's life. It was a time of physical and psychological rejuvenation, and it also carried lessons for Israel: they could contemplate the perfection of God's creation (Exodus 20:8–11), and their deliverance from slavery (Deuteronomy 5:12–15). It provided a time to think and talk about the things of God (Isaiah 58:13); and for those who meditated on its spiritual significance, it gave them a glimpse of the Kingdom to come (Hebrews 4:1–11).

Observance of the Sabbath was a command for Israel in the Old Testament. The New Testament concerns the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and his followers. Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses in a wonderful way, showing the true spiritual meaning behind its rules. For example, he broke the Jews' strict interpretation of the Sabbath law by healing people on Sabbath days, which they counted as work (for example John 5:1–17). But actually he was fulfilling the true meaning of the Sabbath, by bringing joy and glory to God. He showed himself to be *'lord of the Sabbath'* (Matthew 12:8).

## Lord of the Sabbath

Followers of Christ are not obliged to observe the Law of Moses. This was decisively demonstrated by a council

which considered the matter, which is recorded in Acts 15. Christians do not need to keep the Sabbath. *'Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ'* (Colossians 2:16–17).

However, we know that a special day of the week was observed by the First Century believers. There's a glimpse of this in the record of one of the Apostle Paul's journeys: *'On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day'* (Acts 20:7). Other early writings outside the Bible confirm that the first Christians held the first day of the week as special, and met then to "break bread".

## Sunday and the Sabbath

The first day of the week, of course, is Sunday. Nowadays Sunday is sometimes called the "Sabbath". This is a mistake—Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath, Sunday is never known as the Sabbath in the Bible. We don't definitely know why the first Christians held Sunday as special, but it's probable that it was because the first day of the week was the day Jesus Christ rose from the dead (John 20:1)—what better reason to celebrate it?

We know what form their celebration took. They shared a meal. Eating together is very often a sign of fellowship in the Bible—as it is throughout the world. This particular meal was called *'the Lord's supper'*

(1 Corinthians 11:20), or the *'breaking of bread'* (Acts 20:7). On the night before he died, Jesus shared the Jewish Passover meal with his disciples. He gave it a special meaning, and commanded them to observe this meal in memory of him (Matthew 26:26–29).



He gave no instruction about how often they were to do it. Indications are that initially it was held very frequently (Acts 2:42), then as life settled down they fell into the weekly rhythm.

There's an interesting section in one of Paul's letters (1 Corinthians 11:17–34), where he gives instructions about the breaking of bread. It seems that the meal was being misused, and was becoming a cause of disharmony. He spelled out the meaning behind the ceremony:

*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (vs. 23–26).*

It was perhaps at this point that the meal was distilled into the simple ritual of

sharing a loaf of bread and a cup of wine, which is the way it's been observed over the centuries since.

## Fellowship with Christ

When you commit your life to Christ and are baptised, you enter his family. You commence a new life, dedicated to him. And from then on, this celebration of the breaking of bread is at the centre of your life—he commanded you to do it.

It's not a rule that you do it on Sunday, although that is the norm. If you can, you'll share it with fellow believers, because it's about fellowship. If necessary, this may be via internet conferencing. If there's no other option, you may participate alone, knowing that as you do so you're in fellowship with Jesus Christ and his Father, and your family worldwide.

The breaking of bread is laden with meaning. It echoes back into the Old Testament, for example the priests shared a meal in God's presence in the tabernacle every Sabbath (Leviticus 24:8–9). Also the bread and wine themselves have huge significance. For example, God fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness as they travelled to the Promised Land (Exodus 16), so the bread is a reminder among other things of God's blessings; the cup of wine is often associated in the Bible with a life that has been poured out in the service of God, like a drink offering, to give God the glory (Matthew 26:28).

## The Rhythm of Life

God has shown us, by the Sabbath law, that if it's possible it's a good and healthy discipline to take one day off every

week and devote it to Him—but it's not a commandment. *'One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind'* (Romans 14:5).

On the other hand, keeping the breaking of bread is a commandment: *'Do this in remembrance of me'* (Luke 22:19).

When you share the breaking of bread, it's as though you're there, on that first Passover night, sharing intimate fellowship with Jesus and his disciples. It's a solemn and joyful occasion. There's nothing special about the bread and wine, and it doesn't miraculously change into anything—if your mind is elsewhere at the time, you derive no benefit from it; if your mind is focused on the profound significance of what you're doing, it's an exhilarating experience. You're symbolically taking into yourself the body and the blood of Jesus Christ himself. You're connecting with God. You meditate on your Lord—his life, his teachings, the death that he was about to endure as a sacrifice for your sins, his resurrection to glorious life, and his longed-for return. You taste afresh the calm of all your sins forgiven. You're ready to go back out into your life, refreshed and spiritually equipped to tackle whatever might come your way in the week ahead.



# Wartime Spirit

IN A CRISIS we change our behaviour. A crisis can bring out the best or the worst in us. Some people are selfish and will disobey authority for their own pleasure or personal gain. Others are altruistic, selfless and self-sacrificing.

There are many conflicts raging in our world today. Perhaps you are affected. If not, can you imagine how you would respond to having an enemy intent on harming you?

It's shocking to read in the Bible that we are naturally "enemies" of God! How can this be? Of course, we can never be a threat to God, because He is the One who gives us life. Nor can we limit His power and knowledge, because He knows everything and nothing is too hard for Him. But we are, by natural instinct, opponents of God, "not on the same side", disobedient. This would seem like a desperate predicament. We are powerless against Him.

*You... once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds (Colossians 1:21).*

This is talking about believers who have been transformed by their faith in Jesus Christ. They were enemies of God, but are now on God's side. And in this honoured



position they are guaranteed the love of Jesus (Romans 8:35-39).

This is all possible because of the ultimate act of selflessness. Jesus gave up his life on the cross to reconcile us to God (Romans 5:10). And this is the only way that we can be saved from our natural predicament.

We all have the common enemy of death. And because we all disobey God we all deserve to die. But God promises that one day even this enemy will be taken away:

*The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:26).*

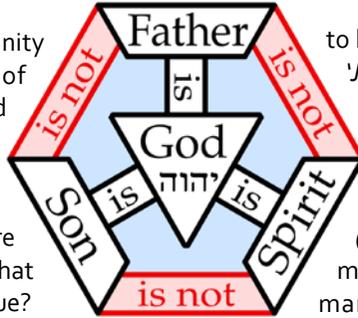
God has a plan for His people: those who believe Him and follow Jesus. In the meantime we have still to work at not being His enemies. We have to fight against our natural ungodly attitudes.

*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm (Ephesians 6:13) (see also 1 Timothy 6:12).*

This sounds impossible, but God has promised success to those who really believe and truly try to do what He asks. And we have a guidebook for the wartime spirit we need: the Bible.

**Anna Hart**

# The Trinity



THE DOCTRINE OF the Trinity states that God consists of three co-equal persons—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is a fundamental teaching of most churches. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we ask the question—is it true?

In one word—no! When we look to the Bible's Old Testament, we see that the Jewish God was emphatically one God: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one' (Deuteronomy 6:4). There is no hint in the Old Testament that God consists of three persons.

So we turn to the New Testament. Jesus Christ endorsed the Old Testament's statement. When he was asked, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one'" (Mark 12:28–29).

## Jesus the Son of God

Jesus Christ is presented as the Son of God. For example, 'These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' (John 20:31). Nowhere does the phrase "God the Son" occur in the Bible.

The Apostle Peter, speaking to the crowds in Jerusalem after the ascension of Christ

to heaven, referred to him thus: 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst' (Acts 2:22). Explaining the miraculous healing of a lame man Peter said, 'The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus' (3:13). The Apostle Paul, too, wrote thus: 'There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 2:5).

It is argued that Jesus was not merely revered but worshipped, and that he is therefore God. It is true that men worshipped Christ (for example Matthew 14:33), but that did not make him God.

## The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is presented in the Bible as the power of God, not as a person within the godhead. The power of God was exhibited by Jesus in the 'mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him' (Acts 2:22). He explained, 'My Father is working until now, and I am working' (John 5:17).

He said to his disciples before he ascended to heaven, 'Behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power

from on high' (Luke 24:49). This was fulfilled shortly afterwards on the day of Pentecost, when 'they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance' (Acts 2:4).

There is no suggestion of personality in the Bible's description of the Holy Spirit. A man named Simon actually offered the Apostle Peter money, saying 'Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit', and received a well earned rebuke, 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!' (Acts 8:19–20).

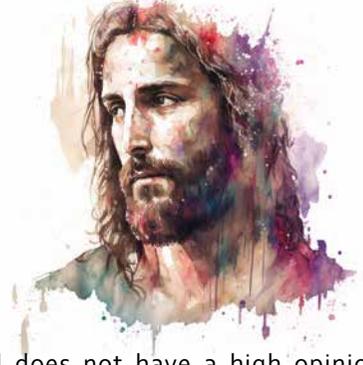
It was this Holy Spirit which came upon Mary the mother of Jesus: 'And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God"' (Luke 1:35).

## Mystery

Proponents of the doctrine of the Trinity admit that the distinctive characters of the three persons within the Godhead are not shown in the Bible—but they claim that the Trinity is implied. When challenged to explain it in simple understandable terms, they decline to do so on the grounds that it is "a mystery".

There is nothing mysterious, or complicated, or impossible to express clearly, about the simple truths in the Bible. God is revealed to us as the Creator and Sustainer of all things: 'In him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). His relationship with His Son is clearly expressed:

*God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*



God does not have a high opinion of those who construct clever arguments which serve to obscure His truth. 'Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?' (1 Corinthians 1:20). The doctrine of the Trinity presents a false idea of God and His beloved Son. This is a serious matter. Jesus himself once said, 'This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (John 17:3).

**John Owler**

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Glory and blessing be  
Ever ascribed to Thee,  
Uncreate unity,  
Father of all.  
Angelic spirits bright  
Gaze on Thy living light—  
Veiled from our mortal sight—  
And prostrate fall.

*Revelation 7:12*

*Deuteronomy 6:4*  
*Acts 17:28*  
*Matthew 18:10*

*1 Timothy 6:16*

Strength, honour, majesty  
Ever beseemeth Thee,  
Uncreate unity,  
Fountain of life:  
Mighty of mighties, Thou,  
From Thee all blessings flow,  
To all—above—below,  
Healer of strife.

*Psalm 96:6*

*Psalm 36:9*

*James 1:17*

*Isaiah 2:4*

Source of salvation free,  
Word of infinity,  
Uncreate unity,  
Author of peace.

*Luke 3:6*

*John 1:1*

*1 Corinthians 14:33*

Thy grace and truth became  
Flesh for a saving name,  
Jehovah Elohim,  
Never to cease.

*John 1:14*

*Philippians 2:9*

Holy of holies, we  
Worship and bow the knee,  
Uncreate unity,  
Spirit divine.

*Revelation 4:8*

*John 4:24*

*Daniel 7:9*

*Isaiah 62:7*

Ancient of endless days,  
Remember Zion's ways,  
And for her children's praise  
Arise and shine.

*Isaiah 29:23*

*Isaiah 60:1*

Glory to the Father be  
By the Son's supremacy  
In the Spirit's mystery:  
Hallelujah! Yea Amen.

*Philippians 4:20*

*Philippians 2:11*

*1 Timothy 3:16*

*Revelation 19:1*

**David Brown**

*Hymn 83 from the Christadelphian Hymn Book. Reproduced by permission of The Christadelphian*

# The Nomad



ABRAHAM AND HIS wife Sarah (their original names were Abram and Sarai) were well over 70 years old. They were at an age when most people want to stay in familiar surroundings, comforted and sustained by family and friends. Yet here they were, selling

off their house and furniture, about to emigrate to some foreign land a thousand miles away. And it was not a case of boarding a jet and arriving at their new destination a few hours later. Abraham and Sarah proposed to travel by camel caravan, taking many months to get there. Even more bizarre, they had no idea at all where they were going to stay! *'He went out not knowing where he was going' (Hebrews 11:8).*

## Into the Unknown

We now know something of the wealth and the beauty of Ur of the Chaldees, the city they were leaving behind. Archaeologists have been staggered at its civilised amenities in the time of Abraham, with multi-storey houses fitted with lavatories, kitchens, and private chapels, well managed irrigation canals, and a thriving economy. It really would seem crazy for

Abraham to be uprooting himself. Why did he do it?

The answer is, he was asked to go by the LORD his God. Abraham lived in a society where people worshipped idols. Chief of these at Ur was Nanna, the moon-god, whose ziggurat temple dominated the city. But there were thousands of lesser deities as well. Centuries had passed since the Flood, and the old, pure, one-God faith of Noah had been replaced by the popular fertility gods with their outward show of religion, and no moral demands on the worshipper.

Somehow Abraham still worshipped the one true God. He once declared in the audience of kings and nobles, *'I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth' (Genesis 14:22).* His belief in this God made him stand out among his fellows.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, reminded his hearers about the call of Abraham. *'The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia,'* he said (Acts 7:2). Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers, included Ur, Abraham's home town. Here, one day, the angel of God brought him the message: *'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'* Abraham's response was decisive. *'So Abram went, as the LORD had told him' (Genesis 12:1–4).*

How would you react if you were leading a settled life and one day an angel of God knocked on your door and told you to move? What about your job, the children's schooling, your parents, your house and your friends? You might be inclined to wait a week, or a month, just to see if God really meant what He said. But that was one of the great facets of Abraham's character. He never hesitated. He had the vital quality of faith—a trust in God so strong that he could shrug off the fear of the unknown that would have kept a lesser man wavering in indecision.

That faith would bring him rewards greater than he could ever have enjoyed in Mesopotamia. It would even earn him the title of *'friend of God'* (*James 2:23*). The apostle in Romans says that through the righteousness of faith Abraham will inherit the world! (*Romans 4:13*). Think of that—the world, in exchange for a few more years of luxury in Ur of the Chaldees! Most people would say “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”. It takes courage to make the break.

As we delve into the Bible, we find that Abraham's decision is repeated again and again in the lives of people of God. In fact, it is one we must all make if we want to share in the Kingdom of God. *'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house'* was the actual wording of the command to Abraham (*Genesis 12:1*). Centuries later, Peter the fisherman left his business behind to be a disciple. *'See, we have left our homes and followed you!'* he reminded Jesus. Jesus replied, *'Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for*

*the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life'* (*Luke 18:28–30*).

It can be very hard to give up all we have worked for, and harder still to have our relatives refuse to follow us in the pilgrim way. But always there must be a point of departure, a committal of our future into the hands of God, like plunging off into the deep water where we cannot touch the bottom. That is what faith is all about—not just believing the facts about God, but testing His promises in our lives.

## From Haran to Canaan

So, Abraham journeyed northwards up the Euphrates valley. Only Terah, his ageing father, and his nephew Lot, decided to go with him. They broke the journey at Haran for a while, where Terah died, and Abraham and Lot then pushed on southwest into the land of Canaan, which we know as Israel.



The country was not empty. *'At that time the Canaanites were in the land'* (*Genesis 12:6*). The Canaanites worshipped

idols, and practised sexual immorality and bestiality that were offensive to God the Creator. Abraham's first recorded act on entering the land was to build an altar to God. It was a testimony to all around him that he was different. His God had promised to give him the Canaanites' houses and fields. *'To your offspring I will give this land,'* the angel had told him (Genesis 12:7). But he was prepared to wait, and meanwhile he was making his position clear.

He is an example to all followers of Christ, who find themselves in new surroundings among new people—perhaps when they move to university, or into a new job, or to a different part of the country. If they state clearly early on that they believe in God, and worship Him, they do not have later to be embarrassed by compromising conversations or extricate themselves from invitations to join in inappropriate pursuits. Indeed, others may see their testimony, and be drawn to enquire about their God. It was a pattern Abraham followed throughout his life. It was repeated frequently in the early months as he travelled up and down to inspect the land that God had promised to give him.

## The Land of Promise

His old life in Ur of the Chaldees must have seemed remote and unreal as he tramped up and down with his flocks through the green valleys and the broad coastal plain.

The land in which he had grown up was flat, drab and uninteresting compared with the mountains, streams and tiny villages that now confronted him in ever changing landscapes. The prospect of possessing this beautiful countryside for himself must have enthralled him.

How had he adjusted to a nomadic life, sleeping under the stars? Did the joy of the promised land compensate for the discomforts of a tent? Did he never hanker for the soft city life, with its comforts and amenities, its solid houses and social whirl? Camping is exciting for a few weeks in the holidays, but to live under canvas (or goats' hair) for years on end is a different story. The writer to the Hebrews suggests it was some sacrifice:

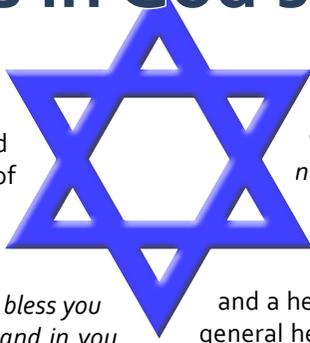
*By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Hebrews 11:9–10).*

The reward to which he looked forward, in the goodness of God, had a solidity and permanence that would outlast even the great man-made metropolis of Ur. Abraham believed in it, and was prepared to wait for it, in a tent.

**David Pearce**  
(to be continued)



# The Jews in God's Purpose



FOUR THOUSAND YEARS AGO, God commanded Abraham to leave the town of Ur to go to 'the land that I will show you'. God also made great promises: 'I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed' (Genesis 12:1-3).

We can see for ourselves how those promises have been fulfilled. Abraham became the "father" of the Jewish race (among others), and his name is widely known to this day. And Abraham was the ancestor of Jesus Christ—the greatest blessing God could possibly have given to humankind.

## The Law of Moses

God's intention was that the Jewish people should become a "model" society and be an example for others to follow. God gave them the Law of Moses, which was thousands of years ahead of its time. For instance, the Law required careful washing after contact with a corpse—it seems obvious to us today, but the principle of avoiding cross infection was only discovered relatively recently. The Law required that the poor should be treated with compassion: 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge... You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner...

*you shall not deal falsely... The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning... (Leviticus 19:9-13).* The Law required high standards of hygiene and a healthy diet. Without doubt, the general health of the nation would have been upheld if those high level laws were followed.

But great blessings brought great responsibilities. God's purpose was that other nations would learn of Him through the Jewish people and that they, too, would enjoy those blessings. 'Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people' (Deuteronomy 4:6). Sadly, the Jewish people often ignored God's Law. Instead of being a "model society", they copied the shameful behaviour of the surrounding nations, even sacrificing children to idols (2 Kings 17:17).

During those years God sent prophets, for example Isaiah and Jeremiah, to teach the people, but often the prophets were persecuted. Finally God sent His son Jesus, but they crucified him. Therefore God brought the Romans against His people. They destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, and 65 years later the nation was finally crushed. All Jews were expelled from the land, and

by way of insult to them the land was renamed Palestina (a tribute to their old enemies the Philistines).

In the year 135 AD the city of Jerusalem was destroyed and a furrow was drawn right across the site. The Jewish people were scattered world-wide. The land which had been known as 'a land of milk and honey' (*Exodus 3:8*) became a land of barren, stony hillsides and malarial marshes.



A Roman coin showing two bullocks drawing a plough over the site of Jerusalem in 135 AD. The coin was propaganda—a warning to other subject nations. It was also a fulfilment of a Bible prophecy written 800 years previously:

*'Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height' (Micah 3:12).*

## Exile and Regathering

Nevertheless, throughout the years of worldwide scattering, the Jewish people always remained a separate race; they never became absorbed into their host nations. *'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... If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever' (Jeremiah 31:35–36).* Have the sun or the moon ever failed to rise or set? Has the Jewish nation ever disappeared? Here is the certainty of God's Word.

During the years of scattering, Israel was like a "ghost" nation—no land, no leader, no laws—yet always separate, completely unique. Then remarkably, after many centuries, the Jews returned to that ancient homeland—not through their own merit, but through the force of circumstances, in the wake of dreadful persecution in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With the establishment of the Jewish State in 1948, the land which languished largely waste under the Ottoman Empire through the previous centuries became fertile; marshes were drained and stony slopes were ploughed. Now fruit and flowers grown in Israel can be bought in the shops of many countries.

What is even more marvellous is that the Bible foretold this in detail. So the people of Israel have become a witness—through their suffering, their scattering and their constant separation—to the reliability of God's Word. Here are more quotations which you might like to check for yourself: Deuteronomy 28:49–51, Leviticus 26:14–46, Jeremiah 16:14–17, 31:35–37, 30:10–11, Ezekiel 36:6–10, 37:1–14, Psalm 83:1–4.

Jesus Christ himself foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, but he added this: *'Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled' (Luke 21:24).* We are now living at the last time, when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The Jewish nation is unique in many ways:

- It had a definite beginning—the call of Abraham out of Ur approximately 4000 years ago.
- It had a unique, advanced law—a law thousands of years ahead of its time.

- It has been scattered worldwide, nevertheless its national identity has been preserved. Usually after scattering, national identity is lost through intermarriage in host nations.
- It has suffered persecution and attempts at extermination. The first attempt is recorded in the book of Esther (about 500 BC). Hitler sought to exterminate the race. Hitler is dead—but the Jewish race lives on.



- Through its unique history Israel has become a witness to the truth of God's Word. *"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and I am God"* (Isaiah 43:12).

The 'land flowing with milk and honey' has now regained its former fertility. But Israel is surrounded by enemies determined to destroy it.

Israel today is largely a godless nation. Bible prophecies suggest that finally their enemies will almost destroy them, but a Saviour will appear—a Saviour having scars in hands and feet. Then they will accept Jesus: *'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' (Zechariah 12:10).*

*I am about to act... for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came... I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you... And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh' (Ezekiel 36:22–26).*

Jesus, he who was born 'King of the Jews' (Matthew 2:2); he who has the right to the throne (Ezekiel 21:25–27), will save Israel. He will establish the Kingdom of God; Jerusalem will be the world's capital city.

*And many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths"... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:3–4).*

**David Budden**

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

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# Late—But Not Too Late



LATE ONE NIGHT, as outside the wind and rain beat against the windows, an elderly couple sat by their fireside in their dressing gowns, ready for bed, sharing a few last thoughts and prayers about the world and friends over mugs of cocoa. Suddenly there was a loud banging at the front door.

“Oh! No!” was their joint exclamation as they and their cocoa jumped and drinks were spilled. “Whoever can that be at this time of night?”

The man rose from his chair, brushing off droplets of cocoa with a handkerchief, and went to the door. He opened it just in time to prevent it being hammered again.

“Hello, what can I do for you?”

In front of him was the bedraggled figure of a young man, who looked decidedly rough and seemed somewhat unsteady on his feet. He said,

“My father said to come here if I ever came on hard times. Well, he was right. I’ve made a mess of things and now I’m here to find out what to do.”

There was an edge almost of resentment in his voice, as if it was with the greatest reluctance that he had finally heeded his father’s advice.

“At this time of night?” was the response: “Have you somewhere to sleep tonight?”

“Yes, just about!”

“Well this is what I want you to do, go and sleep off whatever it is you’ve been drinking. Then come back, this same day next week—earlier in the day, please—smarten yourself up and in the meantime I want you to read the Gospel of Mark. I bid you good night.” And so saying, the door was firmly shut.

For a few moments the young man paused on the doorstep, then he turned away back into the night, pondering the encounter. It wasn’t quite what he had expected.

The following week he did return. He had smartened himself up. He had read the Gospel of Mark.

He was ready to listen about what he should do. Over a period of weeks his situation was discussed. Together with his new friends, he opened up the Bible and discovered its teaching. Bit by bit, almost unconsciously he started to get his life back on track. There was a marked change in his attitude, and his state of mind. His mentors were Christadelphians, and he was eventually baptised into Christ in a Christadelphian meeting.

## The Question

But there was always a question at the back of his mind, which he never did seem to have the opportunity to ask. Why had he been asked to read the Gospel of Mark?

Why don't you try the same thing? I'll be reading it at least twice this year, as I follow the daily readings in the Bible Companion. Choose yourself a Bible version—whatever you have on the shelf, or if you don't have one you can download an app. (This magazine uses the English Standard Version.) Find the Gospel of Mark, which is the second book in the New Testament, and start reading.

As you read, ask yourself why that young man was asked to read it before they started to talk.



So you've come to the end of your journey in the Gospel of Mark. What's your answer to that question?

Perhaps it was because by reading one entire book of the Bible the man could demonstrate that he was serious about wanting the help his mentor could give. Perhaps it was that Mark is the most straightforward and the shortest account of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The actual answer was this, in the old man's own words: "I wanted you to have an encounter with my Saviour."

**David Nightingale**

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

"Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased"...

*Mark 1:1–11*

The Wilderness of Judea

**SA** *Should people who commit murder be put to death?*

**Ed** **FIRSTLY**, individuals must not take the law into their own hands: *'Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord"' (Romans 12:19)*. The follower of Christ must always be ready to live in peace and to forgive. Judgement of criminal cases is for the judiciary to carry out.

But should the law of the land contain the death sentence for serious offences such as murder?

There has been just one occasion when God has made a national law—when He gave the Law of Moses to Israel, to govern the state of which God Himself was actually the ruler (1 Chronicles 29:23).

The purpose of the Law was to imbue the nation with God's values, and this was done in two complementary ways. First, there was an insistence on kindness: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18)*. Second, on an absolute standard of morality: *'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy' (Leviticus 19:2)*. The Law was permeated by commands to be generous and forgiving; and also its criminal justice system contained the death sentence.

Taking a life is of the utmost seriousness (Genesis 9:5). But as the Creator, God has the prerogative to take life.

The Law's approach to criminal justice was different from the approach we're likely to be familiar with. There were no prisons. Usually, the penalty for a crime was direct reparation to the victim, for example, *'If a man steals an ox or a sheep and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep' (Exodus 22:1)*. But there were crimes for which the death sentence applied. These included being a medium or necromancer (Leviticus 20:27), cursing God (24:16), murder (24:17), idolatry (Deuteronomy 17:2–7), rebelliousness against parents (21:18–21), and sex outside marriage (22:13–24).

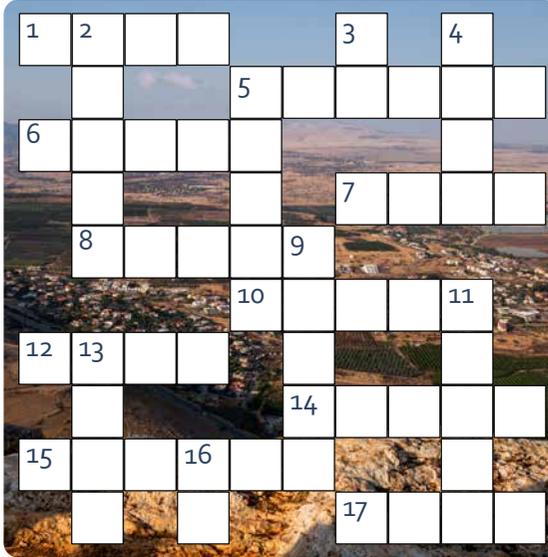
These are not all crimes which would always be viewed as particularly serious today, but it's instructive to consider why God evidently viewed them as such.

The reasons for the ultimate punishment are given: they were a deterrent for others against doing the same thing (Deuteronomy 13:11), and also they were to *'purge the evil from your midst' (17:7)*.

There is no state in today's world which is ruled by God, so the requirements of the Law of Moses don't apply. Different countries' judicial systems have different approaches to criminal punishment. Followers of Christ are citizens of God's Kingdom which is to come, and while they wait they live as *'strangers and exiles'* in this world (Hebrews 11:13–16). They must respect and obey the law of the land where they live (Romans 13:1).

**Across**

- 1 *Sarai's relationship to Abram* (Genesis 11:29)
- 5 Abram moved to the hill country on the east of this place (Genesis 12:8)
- 6 God confused the language of all the earth here (Genesis 11:9)
- 7 *'They went both together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go \_\_\_ the land of Canaan'* (Genesis 11:31)
- 8 God said He would do this to whoever dishonoured Abram (Genesis 12:3)
- 10 Sarai's name was changed to this (Genesis 17:15)
- 12 *'So Abram \_\_\_ as the LORD had told him'* (Genesis 12:4)
- 14 *'So he built \_\_\_ an altar to the LORD'* (Genesis 12:7)
- 15 From end to end, of which God told Abram to walk through the land (Genesis 13:17)
- 17 God told Abram to go to this that He would show him (Genesis 12:1)



**Down**

- 2 Abram's son through whom God's promises were fulfilled (Genesis 17:19)
- 3 *'Abram passed through the land to the place \_\_\_ Shechem'* (Genesis 12:6)
- 4 After obeying God's instruction, Abram lived in this (Genesis 12:8)
- 5 God said that He would do this to Abram and make his name great (Genesis 12:2)
- 9 God said that through Abram, all families of this will be blessed (Genesis 12:3)
- 11 Abram's father died here (Genesis 11:31)
- 13 God told Abram to lift up these and look in each direction (Genesis 13:14)
- 16 *'Now the LORD said to Abram, "\_\_\_ from your country and your kindred"'* (Genesis 12:1)

(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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