

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

Why Democracy is Wrong (p. 3)

The Problem of Suffering (p. 9)

Invasion of Israel (p. 16)

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.

Table Of Contents

Why Democracy is Wrong		3
Fitness and Faith		5
Lot and Sodom		6
The Problem of Suffering		9
Joy Comes in the Morning		14
Invasion of Israel		16
Your Questions		18
Bible Reader's Wordsearch		19

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Why Democracy is Wrong

DEMOCRACY—government of the people by the people! It makes so much sense, why would anyone argue with it?

It was developed as a system of government in classical Greece, but it was only relatively recently that it took serious hold. During the European Enlightenment in the 18th Century, philosophers sought to improve society by an emphasis on the individual, rather than the monarchy or the church; the French and American revolutions challenged traditional authorities; and the rise of liberalism promoted the individual freedoms and rights of ordinary people. Now, democracy is the dominant form of government in the world. It's seen as enlightened and progressive. People who live under authoritarian governments yearn and fight for it. Democratic states view it as self-evidently right to seek to impose it on other states where it does not yet exist.

You might be surprised to learn what God thinks of democracy.

Rebellion in the Wilderness

The Bible story belongs to an age which was generally dominated by authoritarian rulers—kings and chiefs. But there is one episode in the Bible in which we perhaps see the democratic spirit fully flowering (long before the Greeks

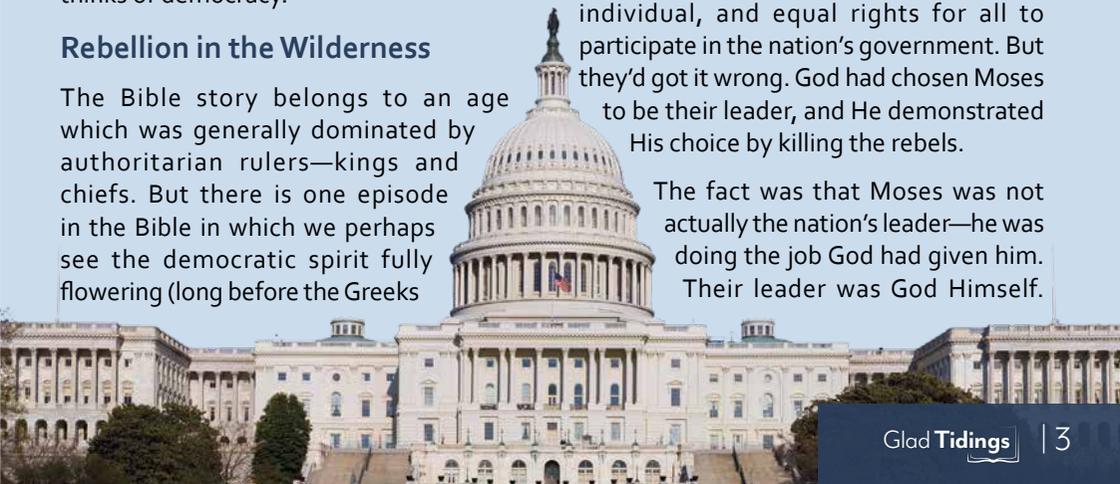
invented it). The account is in Numbers 16.

The nation of Israel was travelling through the wilderness, from Egypt to the Promised Land. God made a covenant with them that He would be their God and they would be His people (Exodus 6:7); He gave them a Law, and instructions for their life and worship, and He looked after them (Deuteronomy 8:4). Moses was their leader, and Aaron was their priest. But the journey was long, and the people became disgruntled. Some of the chief men banded together, drummed up a following, and confronted their leaders:

They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (Numbers 16:3).

They accused Moses of authoritarianism. They advocated the freedom of the individual, and equal rights for all to participate in the nation's government. But they'd got it wrong. God had chosen Moses to be their leader, and He demonstrated His choice by killing the rebels.

The fact was that Moses was not actually the nation's leader—he was doing the job God had given him. Their leader was God Himself.



'I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people' (Leviticus 26:12).

The principle of democracy assumes that people are capable of wise self-government. The Bible disagrees with this. *'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?' (Jeremiah 17:9).*

Example of Israel

Many nations and empires came and went while the Bible was being written. Some were more powerful, more successful, more benign than others. The Bible does not pass comment on the value of their governance. Its focus is on just one nation—Israel—and its evaluation of their success or otherwise is based on their godliness. This tended to depend on their leadership. Their story provides a worked example of successful and unsuccessful government.

Following Israel's conquest of the Promised Land, there was a period in which *'there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes' (Judges 17:6).* The book of Judges makes depressing and sometimes revolting reading.

After the time of the Judges, Israel was ruled by kings. The most celebrated and illustrious king was David, whom God called *'a man after his own heart' (1 Samuel 13:14).* Under his rule the nation flourished, spiritually and materially. After him, his son Solomon ruled on the *'throne of the LORD as king' (1 Chronicles 29:23).* God was the actual ruler of the nation.

But the spiritual tone of the nation declined, as its kings wandered away from

God. Some were better than others, and in their reigns the decline was slowed; but eventually God gave the nation over to be destroyed. He said to the last king, *'Thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted. A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it. This also shall not be, until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him' (Ezekiel 21:26–27).*

That future king is of course Jesus Christ—of whom it was said, *'the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David' (Luke 1:32).* His return to establish God's Kingdom on earth was a central theme of his preaching (Luke 4:43), and is the theme of many Bible prophecies (for example Psalm 72). It will be the culmination of world history. A time of worldwide peace and prosperity, under strict, authoritarian, godly rulership (Micah 4:1–3).



The British prime minister Sir Winston Churchill once told Parliament, "Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." It may be fair to say that democracy is the best form of government available in this present age. But it is fundamentally flawed, it's doomed to failure, and some day soon it will be replaced by something much better.

Fitness and Faith



WHEN IT COMES to salvation and fitness, both involve transformation—but the way we engage with each is fundamentally different.

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross did what no one else could do: he bore the weight of sin and conquered death once and for all (Romans 5:10). The heavy lifting of our salvation is already accomplished.

Jesus' death and resurrection are a gift. The Bible tells us we are saved by grace through faith—not by works, so no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8–9). This means we don't earn our way into God's favour. Jesus has already paid that price. Think of it as showing up to a gym and discovering someone has already bought your lifetime membership, paid for a top-tier personal trainer, and stocked the fridge with all the right nutrition. Access has been granted. All you need to do is show up.

But here's where the gym analogy takes a sharp turn. While salvation is a gift we can't earn, fitness isn't. No one else can go to the gym for you. No one can squat, run or stretch in your place. If you want to get stronger, healthier, or build your endurance, the burden of work is fully yours. There's no shortcut, no substitute. You have to do the reps. You have to sweat. You have to push through the soreness.

Fitness, unlike grace, is not free.

This contrast draws out an important spiritual lesson: grace isn't opposed to effort—it's opposed to earning. Just because Jesus did the work for us doesn't mean our lives should be passive or lazy. In fact, as the Apostle Paul writes, *'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Philippians 2:12–13)*. That doesn't mean we earn our salvation. It means we respond to grace with action.

Fitness and faith do intersect in one key way: discipline. Getting up early to train, resisting unhealthy cravings, and staying consistent all require intentional choices. And living a Christ-like life does too. While Jesus made a way for us, discipleship still calls for self-denial, daily faith, and sometimes even suffering. The difference is that the end goal—eternal life—has already been secured. All we need is to remain faithful. In fitness, you're still working toward a result that can fade if you stop.

You don't work to be saved—because your salvation has been achieved, you work. You sweat in the gym. You serve in life. Not to earn love, but because love already found you.

Joanne Wale

Lot and Sodom

ABRAHAM AND HIS NEPHEW Lot travelled south through the land of Canaan as far as Egypt, and back again. By this time their flocks had multiplied so much that there was insufficient pasture to support all of them. Abraham politely suggested that Lot should take his animals, and strike out on his own (Genesis 13:1–9). With true generosity, he offered him first choice of the best grazing country.

Lot chose to go east, down to the Jordan valley, which at that time was extremely fertile, *'well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD'* (v. 10). Abraham stayed behind on the mountainous peaks of the central highlands. Before long, *'Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom'* (v. 12). A few chapters later, and we find him settled down in Sodom. But *'the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD'* (v. 13). Lot was not only settled in the city, he sat in the gate (19:1)—a biblical expression for being a ruler or a judge. The old life had called him back—the security of solid walls and the stimulus of urban society.

The return to city life did not make Lot as happy as he hoped. Ironically, he was

to prove less secure in the city of Sodom than Abraham in his tent. The fourteenth chapter of Genesis describes an invasion of the land by an army which swept down from the north, pillaging and burning as it went. Pressing southwards down the east side of the Dead Sea valley, the enemy fell upon Sodom, sacked and looted it, and took captive all the inhabitants—including Lot. Imagine his feelings, trudging northwards in chains, his house ruined, all his possessions lost, and doomed to be a slave! If only he had stayed in a tent like Uncle Abraham, safely camped up at Hebron, out of the way of the invaders!

To the Rescue

Fortunately for Lot, Abraham was both a courageous and a great-hearted man. It would have been easy for him to have washed his hands of his nephew. Had not Lot turned his back on the promises of God, and joined himself to the Canaanites? He might have said, "He's made his bed, so let him lie on it!". In any case, to interfere would be to risk his own life. What could one man and his household do against an army? But family ties are strong, and Abraham was absolutely confident in the guardian power of God. Quickly arming his



servants, he set off with his neighbours to rescue Lot (Genesis 14:13–14).

He came across the invaders over 100 miles north at Dan. He attacked them with a classic manoeuvre, employed by his descendants right down to the present day. To make the best use of his small force against a much larger one, he attacked by night, when the enemy were not expecting trouble. He also divided his men into two groups, to confuse and distract them. The result was a rout, and Abraham was able to rescue all the prisoners. We can imagine him searching up and down for his nephew, and the amazement on Lot's face when he realised it was his uncle who had risked everything to bring him home. Afterwards Lot was able to return to Sodom with his family. What a hero was Abraham, to set out on such a mission, and pull it off, when as far as we know he had no previous military experience!

Significantly, when he arrived back at Hebron, *'the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great"'* (15:1). The God who had watched over him all the way from Ur, was still there, and he need fear no reprisals from his enemies.

As for Lot, his troubles were not yet over. In spite of God's warning in the shape of their narrow escape from the invaders, the wickedness of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah now rose to a desperate

pitch. Their acts of sexual perversion have become a byword in history. Lot saw it all around him, hated it, and yet could not bring himself to leave. Peter tells us that he was *'greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard)'* (2 Peter 2:7–8). But God was about to act in a decisive and dramatic way that would impress all subsequent generations.

The End of Sodom

Two angels visited Sodom late one evening (Genesis 19:1). In the morning they persuaded Lot to leave, leading him out by the hand, together with his daughters and his wife. Scarcely had Lot reached the shelter of the small town of Zoar further along the valley, when the earth erupted and the sky turned black with fire and smoke. Abraham, camped at Hebron high above the great rift valley, saw the conflagration next morning. *'And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace'* (v. 28). Sodom and Gomorrah disappeared in a sulphurous combustion that left the whole region blasted and sterile. To this day, that formerly green and fertile valley remains a searing, white, tortured landscape of twisted rock and crusted salts, one of the





most inhospitable regions on the earth. The heavy waters of the Dead Sea eventually sealed off the site of the cities of the plain.

There are two lessons we can draw from the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Firstly, we must be warned by the judgement of God against the immorality of their inhabitants. God's standards do not change. *'For you may be sure of this,'* wrote the Apostle Paul, *'that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience'* (Ephesians 5:5–6). This is not a popular message in our age, but there can be no compromise for Christians. They are not called to self-indulgence, but self-denial.

Secondly, there is the pointed truth that in overthrowing Sodom for its unrepentant sins, God spared Lot and his family. In spite of his weakness, Lot was basically a God-fearing man, and just as Noah had been saved from the Flood, so Lot was taken out before the judgement fell.

Jesus himself used Sodom as an illustration of what the world would be like in the day of his return to judge the world: *'Just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from*

heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed' (Luke 17:28–30). He continued his prophecy with these remarkable words: *'Remember Lot's wife'* (v. 32). When you read through the account in Genesis, you find Lot's wife lingered as they toiled towards Zoar. She had left behind in Sodom her house, her possessions, and her friends. Perhaps she did not really believe God would do what He said. Her heart was still in the doomed city, and dallying, she was overtaken by the sulphurous fumes and rapidly coated with salt (Genesis 19:26). *'Remember!'*, warns Jesus. Soon he will be knocking on our door. Our civilisation is doomed to be swept away, and replaced by the Kingdom of God. This is the final hour.

Followers of Christ must be ready at any time to leave this materialistic, selfish age, with its empty rewards. Like Uncle Abraham, they are called to be sojourners, *'as in a foreign land'* (Hebrews 11:9). Their hope lies in the age to come, in the *'city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God'* (v. 10), when Christ will reign over God's Kingdom.

David Pearce
(to be continued)

Questions? Comments?
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The Problem of Suffering



PAIN AND SUFFERING are one of the great problems of life. They often cause people to doubt the love of God. Even a devout believer, looking at the suffering of one who is near and dear, can be moved to ask why God allows it.

The Bible answers the question in several ways, and we can learn some important lessons from its teaching. The Bible alone explains why people suffer, and what really is God's attitude to it. It assures us that there is a day coming when there will be no more pain and suffering, following the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to reign on earth. And it illustrates, in the lives of faithful people, that suffering can sometimes bring people closer to God—strange as that may seem.

The Origin of the Problem

Much of human suffering results from people's own actions, or those of others. We might think of:

- war and civil strife
- powerful and ruthless people exploiting others
- everyday accidents caused by carelessness or foolishness
- illness resulting from self-abuse or neglect
- illness resulting from the unnatural stress of many people's modern lives.

We see that we are the cause of much of our suffering, directly or indirectly. But often we can't see any explanation, and so it's natural to ask "Why?".

The book of Job follows the sufferings of a man who is described as '*blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil*' (Job 1:1). He could not understand what was happening to him, but he expressed his faith: '*Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?*' (2:10).

However, this is not an answer to the problem. And there are more questions: why, for example, does an activist for the poor die from an assassin's bullet, and his murderers go free? Why does a sickness strike unexpectedly and with no apparent cause? Why are some people

born disabled? Why are accidents allowed to happen? Why do some people suffer agonizing pain with no relief?

For those who believe there is no God, it is a problem without an answer. The universe is simply a harsh and meaningless place in which tragedies happen for no reason. But the Bible provides an explanation, and a solution to the problem.

If you remove an entire ring of bark from a tree, it will die. If farmers work their land year after year without rest or fertiliser, the land will deteriorate. If you work 20 hours a day, week in and week out, you will ruin your health. We understand the law of cause and effect.

The Bible shows that trouble, sickness and death had a cause. They came about when our first parents, Adam and Eve, broke God's law. The account is in Genesis chapter 3. They brought upon themselves and the world the curse of mortality. We are all sinners like them—we are all involved in the rebellion they started, and the curse they brought upon the world. The answer to our problems and the world's problems is the coming Kingdom of God (Romans 8:20–22).

Freedom to Choose

God is our Creator. He has told us what is right and wrong, good and bad. If Adam and Eve had done right, there would have been no curse. The Bible explains that God has given us freedom of choice within our environment. He

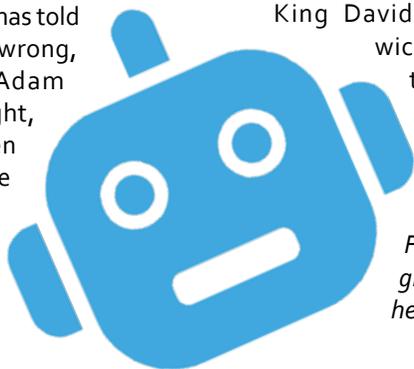
could have created a race of automata, people who were forced by their very nature to obey His will. But He chose instead to seek for free-will obedience. He wants people to obey Him because they want to, because they love Him. Thus, God created us in His own likeness (Genesis 1:26). He gave us the ability to reason, and the opportunity to exercise choice.

If there is the opportunity to choose to do right, there must necessarily be the opportunity to choose to do wrong. And because of the way we are, we have consistently preferred to do wrong throughout our history.

If we could only see it, suffering reminds us of our fallen nature. It teaches us that we are creatures of the dust (Genesis 3:19)—and that if we disregard God, we will certainly return to the dust from which we are made, without hope of any further existence.

But once we are able to recognise what our nature really is, and to understand that God wants us to become different people, to attain to a better nature—then suffering becomes something which needs to be borne in patience, because it is a means to an end.

King David once wondered why the wicked seemed to prosper and the righteous suffered. But then he saw the end of the matter: *'Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb'* (Psalm 37:1–2).



Response to Suffering

For followers of Christ, how they turn out depends upon how they face up to the challenges of life. The formation of character depends not only upon the degree of suffering but on their reaction to it. Character has been defined as the sum total of the use of our individual life in all its complexities and problems.

God is well pleased with the person whose character is formed after the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ. And you may be surprised to learn that Jesus became the person he is, partly because of his reaction to the suffering he endured.



Jesus suffered intensely. Yet the Bible does more than detail that suffering: it explains why it was necessary. In part that was because Jesus died for each of us, so that our sins could be forgiven (Acts 13:38). But it had another effect too:

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source

of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8–9).

As Jesus is the example for believers, can we wonder when we too have to endure suffering? In fact, discipleship sometimes brings extra suffering into the lives of his followers. He predicted this:

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:10–12).

Here is the crux of the matter. What matters is how we endure under stress. The example of Jesus leads us on, as he 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).

Suffering For Christ

The Apostle Paul had much that he could have complained of, if he was so minded! Once a wealthy, privileged Jew he became a social outcast for Christ's sake. He was beaten, stoned, reviled, imprisoned and shamed (2 Corinthians 11:23–27).

Yet he had all his sufferings in perspective: *'This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison' (2 Corinthians 4:17).*

Like his master Jesus Christ, Paul went bravely in the face of his trials, suffering and eventual death. Travelling to Jerusalem,

knowing that imprisonment awaited him, he said:

I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

You may think that he was not like us—his were big trials, he was not bothered with the irritating or throbbing daily pains of common life. But elsewhere Paul speaks of a “thorn in his flesh” which was always there (2 Corinthians 12:7). He had a perpetual nagging problem which he had asked the Lord repeatedly to remove. Yet he did not brood over it. Instead, he saw in it God’s goodness, because it kept him from being proud of himself.

Perhaps you have some disability or persistent problem that will not go away, even though you may pray hard about it. If so, remember Paul’s witness: *‘He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of*

my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me’ (v. 9).

Patient Endurance

Which of us has not seen someone in great sickness of body, who has endured it patiently and smiling? I recall the case of a bedridden man whose faith in God was unshaken. His sickness brought him nearer to God, he said, for he took the view that “He is good to even allow us to live from day to day.”

This is a point that many overlook. It indicates that we may be inclined to ask the wrong question. The question should not be “Why does God permit suffering?” but rather, “Why does God permit sinful people to persist on the earth?”

The Christian, though not exempt from universal suffering, can, as we have seen, make it a means to an end. Our evil world is the testing-ground. Tomorrow will see the Kingdom of God on earth, with Jesus as its king and freedom from all sorrow (for example Isaiah 35, Revelation 21). Meanwhile God, in His kindness, has promised that He will never test us more than we are able to bear. Paul declares:

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

What a comfort these words have been to faithful Christians down the years.

Of course there is much more to the problem. We have only dealt with it briefly, but I hope you have been given something



to ponder. Obviously we still can't always understand "Why?". God alone knows that, for the moment. The whole picture of human endeavour and challenge must be set against the gracious purpose of Almighty God. He is working things out for the best, and He knows best.

We have seen how the law of cause and effect works in general terms, and how naturally we love darkness rather than light. As the prophet says, *'They sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind'* (Hosea 8:7). This is the experience of nations as well as individuals. For the Christian, taking such trials as a part of their lot, suffering can be seen as a means to grow in grace before God.

It is only those who suffer who can endure.

The End of Suffering

King David said, *'Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning'* (Psalm 30:5). The Apostle John foresaw a time when *'death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away'* (Revelation 21:4).

That will be the experience of those who obey the call of the Gospel and submit themselves wholly to God. The time is coming when they will reap the reward of their labours and enjoy the banishment of worry, sickness and death. Of those who are privileged to enter the coming Kingdom of God on earth it is said, *'These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'* (Revelation 7:14).



If we want to be there in that day, we must come to God on His terms, accept His offer of salvation in Jesus Christ, and live a life of faith and hope, attuned to the eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

May our prayer be that of David:

O LORD, make me know my end
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting I am!...

And now, O LORD, for what do I wait?
My hope is in you (Psalm 39:4-7).

Ken Quixley

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'Glad Tidings Magazine'

Joy Comes in the Morning

AS HE SHARED the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus said to them, *'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy' (John 16:20)*. He explained why: *'You have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you' (v. 22)*.

Earlier he had said, *'Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you' (14:19–20)*. He was speaking of his forthcoming death and resurrection.

What was this permanent joy that Jesus promised to his disciples?

It came from the knowledge and the experience of the fact that the Lord Jesus, after he had died on the cross, would be raised to life again. Moreover, *'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him' (v. 23)*.

And if Jesus rose from the dead, so also will those who are his followers when he returns: *'Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep... Each in his own order: Christ the*

firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:20–23).

The Truth of God's Word

Jesus told his disciple Thomas, *'I am the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 14:6)*. Jesus embodied truth and all the words he spoke were truthful—as he said to Pilate at his trial,

'For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice' (John 18:37).

The Bible is the word of God and therefore the word of truth. As Peter told Jesus, *'You have the words of eternal life' (John 6:68)*.

The promise of eternal life for faithful believers was an important part of Christ's teaching. For example:

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John 17:1–3).

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me



has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself (5:24–26).

It is not the case that all who believe will be saved. *'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' (Matthew 7:21).*

But of those who do God's will he said, *'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly' (John 10:10).*

For Those Who Love God

So, what will it be like for those who are given eternal life at Christ's return; for the people who love God and His Son?

The apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers, *'No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him' (1 Corinthians 2:9).*

The Kingdom of God will be a wonderful place to live in, beyond anyone's imagination—it will be full of the glory of God, and those who in this life love Him and obey His commandments will be immortalised on that day.

The Lord God offers salvation to all, as Paul said to Timothy: *'We have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe' (1 Timothy 4:10).* But it is a conditional gift.

Baptism into the Father, the Son and the

Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), and a faithful life of obedience (Matthew 25:21), are the necessary requirements for the gift of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

That day will be a time of great rejoicing for the recipients of God's gift of life. They will rejoice along with the Apostle Paul:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7–8).



This is a prospect that will see the faithful disciple through even the most difficult times of life: *'Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning' (Psalm 30:5).*

Grahame A Cooper

erratum

According to Page 10 of issue 1692, Tyndale's translation of the New Testament was published in 1525. This was an editorial error. The translation was completed and printing commenced in 1525, but it was published in 1526.

Invasion of Israel

Have you heard or read about Gog in the Bible? (It's usually pronounced with a long 'o', like 'boat'.) The prophecy about Gog was written about 2,600 years ago by Ezekiel the prophet. It has continued to fascinate Bible students because other than Ezekiel 38 and 39, there is no other place in the Bible where we read of Gog.

Bible students through all ages have wondered who Gog would be. Where will he come from, and could there be a living candidate today that will fulfil his role?

Gog's Mission

God says to Gog:

Be ready and keep ready, you and all your hosts that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. After many days you will be mustered. In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them. You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you (Ezekiel 38:7–9).

A general overview of the prophecy tells us that

in the last days, that is after the Jews are restored back to their land and Israel re-established as an independent nation, a certain character by the name of Gog, together with his allies, will invade Israel and seek to destroy the nation. But they will eventually be defeated by plagues and supernatural punishment from God (v. 22).

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him and say, Thus says the LORD God: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords. Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you (vs. 1–6).

About 11 nations or groups of people are mentioned in Ezekiel 38. Eight of them are clearly presented as Gog's allies, but the other four appear to be indifferent:

Thus says the LORD God: On that day, thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil scheme and say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will fall

upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates,' to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell at the center of the earth. Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all its leaders will say to you, 'Have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your hosts to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to seize great spoil?' (vs. 10–13).

Interestingly, all these nations can be identified from the list of nations that were descended from Noah in Genesis 10:2–7, with the exception of Persia. They are all descended from Noah's two sons Ham and Japheth. Israel (and certain other Middle Eastern peoples) are descended from Noah's third son Shem.

Gog and His Allies

Gog is identified as someone from the far north of Israel: *'You will come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you' (v. 15).*

As for the nations that are Gog's allies, some of the names are familiar to us, the identity of others requires more research. It is clear that they are located around Asia Minor and northern Africa.

Whichever way we look at it, we must make sure that we are not too focused on determining the modern equivalence of the kingdoms mentioned and miss the all-important message of this prophecy, which is that God will surely destroy every opposition to His plans.

Fulfilment of the Prophecy

Part of the prophecy has already been fulfilled. Israel was restored to its land in 1948 (v. 8). What is left is for Gog to muster its forces for an invasion of the land. The problem with Gog's evil ambition is that in the plan of God, Israel will exist as a nation before Jesus comes to establish God's Kingdom:

Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply (Jeremiah 23:3).

Gog and his allies think otherwise, they would rather destroy the nation of Israel!

Today, the spirit of Gog is thriving in the world as more and more people wish to put an end to the Jewish people and their nation. But God's plan is that Israel will remain in the land. Not because they deserve it, or because of any merit of theirs. But God has promised that His Son Jesus Christ will return to bring them to repentance (Zechariah 12:10) and take his throne in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1–4). The war-torn land of Israel will then be the focus of His Kingdom, which will bring blessing to all nations (Genesis 22:18).

Peter Ojike

MG *If Satan doesn't exist, how come he's in the book of Job?*

Ed JOB (pronounced 'Jobe') was a God-fearing man who endured horrendous trials, as everything was taken away from him—his possessions, his family and his health. Through the book, we hear his complaints and finally we see God's answer. In the first two chapters we see that the trials were inflicted by a character called Satan.

Satan is viewed by many as a fallen angel, God's enemy who is on a mission to lead people away from God. I don't agree with this: the idea of a fallen angel is a contradiction in terms; the devil and Satan in the Bible are usually a figurative way of describing sinful human nature (which is another subject).

The account of Satan in the book of Job is actually very problematic if you view him as a fallen angel. Why would God allow him into His presence, and give him the permission and the power to destroy the life of a good man? Why would Satan need to use God's power, rather than his own? Why is Satan not mentioned again throughout the book? And why are we specifically told that Job's calamities came from God (Job 42:11)?

A better explanation is that Job's trials were given by God, for a purpose. God tests His servants (for example Genesis 22:1, Deuteronomy 8:2). God instigated the process by asking Satan

what he thought of Job (Job 1:8). Satan responded with a suggestion we might all secretly have had in the circumstances—Job is only a good man because he's been so well blessed (vs. 9–11). God invited Satan to put Job to the test by bringing calamity upon him. Job passed the test: he maintained his faith and integrity throughout his ordeal. But there was still a lesson to learn. Satan had suggested that Job feared God because he was well blessed; Job believed that he should be blessed because he feared God. In the end, God intervened and taught Job, and the other characters in the book, and us the readers, that not even the best of us can have confidence in ourselves. We have no rights in God's sight, He is at liberty to do whatever He wants with us, and He does what is right.

Satan was the agent God used to teach the lesson. Who was he? We don't know. He came among the sons of God (Job 1:6), so he was probably a son of God. 'Sons of God' is a term which the Bible uses of believers (for example Romans 8:14). Perhaps he was a jealous fellow believer, maybe even one of Job's friends who speak with him throughout the book. The term 'sons of God' is also used of angels (for example Job 38:7). Perhaps he was an angel—he is presented as inquisitive, not necessarily wicked. Sometimes God uses angels to bring destruction (for example Psalm 78:49). It's one of those questions the Bible leaves unanswered.

HOW TO ATTAIN SALVATION

The following eight words are in the Wordsearch.

AND FEAR OUT SALVATION TREMBLING WITH
WORK YOUR



Rearrange them into a crucial statement. Who wrote this, and to whom?

L U F Y K D W W S
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 M W R H V R R O V
 R A E F W O U T A
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Anna Hart

Answers: Philippians 2:12;
Paul and Timothy to believers in Philippi.

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