

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God

Featured **Articles**

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People Like You (p. 13)

The Future Is Certain (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.

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Publisher

The Glad Tidings Publishing Association
A registered charity—Number 248352

The Forbidden Book

DURING A GAME of football at Rugby School in 1823, so the story goes, William Webb Ellis picked up the ball and ran with it. It was entirely against the rules of the game, but it caught on. The game of Rugby football spread through English public schools and universities, and was exported around the world. In 1900 it was included in the Olympic games, 1987 saw the first Rugby World Cup, and it is now established as one of the world's most popular sports.



*Statue of
William Webb
Ellis outside
Rugby School*

Four hundred years or so before that celebrated game at Rugby School, and eight miles up the road in the village of Lutterworth, another departure from tradition caused shock waves which travelled around the world.

The Word of Life

In the 14th Century, Christianity was dominated by the orthodox church which controlled how people lived and what they

believed. The Bible was only available in Latin, and only the church hierarchy was allowed to read it.

John Wycliffe was the rector of St Mary's Church in Lutterworth. He was a scholar and a reformer. He became dissatisfied with the power, wealth and corruption of the church of which he was a member. He read the Bible, and saw that the way the church was organised and operated was completely unlike the original Christian church in the First Century—in fact, the things it taught went against the teaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles. Wycliffe came to the conclusion that the Bible is the only reliable guide to the truth about God, and he railed against the church for making it inaccessible to ordinary people. He determined that the Bible should be available so everyone could read it (or have it read to them). Probably with assistance from other scholars, he produced the first ever translation of the entire Bible into English, which he published in 1382.

Wycliffe's English Bibles were printed by means of wood blocks, and so their production was arduous. They were distributed by an organisation of devoted supporters, and they were greeted with enthusiasm by a public that was hungry to know what the Bible really said.

The church was furious. It saw Wycliffe's work as a threat to its authority. He was lambasted and harassed. He died

of a stroke in 1384, and shortly afterwards the church declared him to be a heretic. His body was dug up and burned, and his publications were banned.



But Wycliffe had been instrumental in beginning a movement which could not be stopped. Increasingly people became suspicious of the church, and unwilling to be told what the Bible said—they wanted to read it for themselves. The early 1500s saw the beginning of the Reformation in western Christianity, which resulted in the rise of Protestantism in its various forms.

The Reformation was a time of turmoil. It was not a straight struggle between the Catholic church and the reformers who wanted to free themselves from its grasp. Inevitably, people being people, it involved political and military ambitions, agendas and vendettas, compromises and betrayals. But running through this turbulent period was the vision of Wycliffe—of a world where people would no longer need to be told what was God's will, but could read it for themselves. Many people were persecuted, suffered and died for the cause. And Wycliffe's vision was brought closer to realisation in 1539 when King Henry VIII published his 'Great Bible' and ordered a copy to be made available and accessible in every church in England.

The book that was suppressed for centuries is now freely available, in print and online, in hundreds of languages.

The Age of Light

The medieval period in Europe is sometimes referred to as the 'dark ages'. This is apt because it was a period of spiritual darkness. The brilliance of the work of Wycliffe and those like him was that they enabled the light to shine in a world where it had been obscured for centuries. People could at last read for themselves of the life and words of the Son of God, who said '*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*' (John 8:12).

That's all history. But this is the 21st Century. There are those who suggest that the world has moved on, and the Bible is no longer relevant today. And even that it's dangerous because it's out of step with modern values. In Europe where once people were forbidden to read the Bible, the mood is once more turning against it, even within some churches.

But it cannot be suppressed—it's out there, and freely available. If you look into it you will discover that it's unlike any other book—as should be expected, because it's the Word of God—and you will appreciate what the Psalmist meant when he said, '*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*' (Psalm 119:105).

And if you allow it to do the work for which it was designed, you will come to understand the wonder of the Apostle Paul's words: '*God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*' (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The Bible—World Bestseller

ACCORDING TO the Guinness World Records, the Bible is the best selling book of all time with calculations of between 5 and 7 billion copies printed, and about 80 million copies continuing to be printed each year. It has obviously withstood the test of time, but let's look at what it is and why it is held in such high regard.

What Is the Bible?

The Bible we read today consists of the Old Testament (containing books written before Jesus was born) and the New Testament (books and letters from Christ's birth onwards). It was written over a period of approximately 1,500 years by many different writers from various backgrounds, all of them inspired by God.

What does it mean to be "inspired"?

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

The words and message of the Bible have been 'breathed out' by God, received by faithful scribes and written for our learning.

How do we know that we can trust the Bible?

There are a number of different lines of evidence, but we will consider just two. The first is the accuracy of the text which shows that the Bible we have today is basically the same as the original; and the

second is the evidence of fulfilled prophecy which shows that it is the work of God.

1. Accuracy of the Text

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is believed by many to be the most significant archaeological find of the 20th Century. In 1947, ancient manuscripts were found by a Bedouin shepherd boy in caves near Qumran on the north-western shore of the Dead Sea. The boy was actually looking for his lost goat, and threw a stone into a cave expecting to hear the reaction of a startled animal, but he instead heard the sound of broken pottery.



On further investigation, the caves yielded earthenware pots containing parchments. They were hidden there 2,000 years previously, and were remarkably well preserved due to the dry conditions of the desert caves.

Many of the fragments have since been pieced together by teams of scholars, and they have been shown to be incredibly similar to the Hebrew manuscripts on which the Old Testament of the Bible is based, which date to 1,000 years later. This demonstrates that the meticulous copying of the manuscripts by Jewish scribes had faithfully preserved the original text.

Further discoveries in the area have led to a collection of approximately 1,000 manuscripts preserved in over 25,000 fragments, including every book of the Old Testament apart from the book of Esther.

The Great Isaiah Scroll is one of the original seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered, and is believed to be one of the oldest, as well as being one of the best preserved. It is also the largest, at 734 cm long. It contains 54 columns showing all 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah. Isaiah is a prophetic book, foretelling the birth of Jesus:

Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

Much of the book of Isaiah speaks of Jesus, his suffering and also his death. However it also has much comfort for its readers: *'Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live' (Isaiah 55:3).*

The Bible has much more manuscript evidence than other contemporary writings. For example, there are believed to be 5,600 copies of the New Testament writings, with less than 100 years between the original texts and the oldest existing copies. By comparison, there are just seven copies of the works of Plato, with over 1,200 years between the original text and the oldest existing copy. For scholars of ancient texts the Bible has a wealth of manuscript evidence to corroborate the original message.

2. Prophecy Fulfilled

Daniel was a Jew who was taken into captivity in Babylon in approximately 605 BC. He worked in the court of Nebuchadnezzar who was the King of Babylon, and his life is recorded in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. In the second chapter of this book we have the most remarkable example of fulfilled prophecy. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a mighty statue made up of different metals; for example, the head was made of gold and the arms were silver. In the dream, a stone hit the feet of the statue causing it to topple over, and it was ground into powder. A wind blew the powder away and the stone grew into a mountain that filled the whole earth. As strange as this dream may



The Great Isaiah Scroll

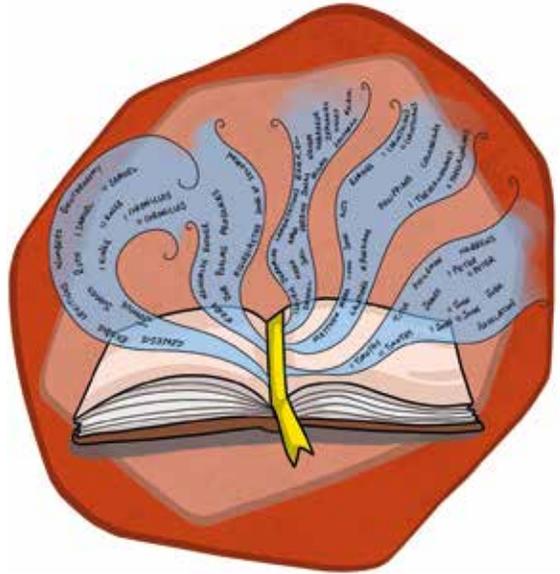
sound, Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar a detailed explanation of its meaning:

You, O king... you are the head of gold. Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these (Daniel 2:37-40).

Daniel explained that Babylon was the head of gold, and the other metals were a succession of kingdoms that would come afterwards: Persia, Greece and Rome. If we look in our history books, we can see that this prophecy accurately described the succession of world powers over the centuries. However the dream doesn't stop there: its fulfilment extends to our own time and beyond, as the stone that demolished the image grew into a mountain. This is describing to us the hope of the Bible which is the establishment of the Kingdom of God:

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold (vs. 44-45).

Having looked at such a powerful prophecy and its fulfilment in world history, we can have confidence that the future part of the prophecy will happen, and we could be alive to witness it!



What does This Mean for Us?

We have shown that the Bible is very relevant to us today, and it is appropriate that it continues to be the best selling book of all time.

The Bible assures us that Jesus will return to the earth, as his disciples were told by the angels when he ascended to heaven:

Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

The Bible is God's message to humankind. It tells us His purpose and gives us a sure hope for the future. So, be sure to get a copy of this remarkable book and start reading it for yourself!

Miriam & Laurence Davenport

Can There Be True Peace?

WHAT DOES PEACE look like to you? What does peace sound like? I'm sure everyone pictures something different, but I'm sure we can all agree that it's something to look forward to. You won't be surprised to know that the Bible has a lot to say about peace. Ultimately, it's what the Bible promises for the whole earth.

Sadly though, we live in a world which knows no peace on many different levels: personal, local, national and international. Again, the Bible promises solutions for all those things. In this article we're going to consider 'inner peace' and 'world peace'. How might our knowledge and understanding of the Bible help us with our inner peace, and how might the promises of the Bible give us hope for future world peace?

Inner Peace

The economy of the developed world relies largely on dissatisfaction, and the idea that we should always be looking for (and ideally buying) the next big thing. Whether it's a kitchen utensil, a new pair of trainers, or a new self-help book or gym membership—there's always the next thing to have. How can we have peace within when this is the world around us? How can we find peace



and happiness now, when this is what we are exposed to on the radio, TV or social media? Social media particularly has lots to answer for when it comes to our inner peace, with influencers sharing their 'perfect' bodies or their idealised family lives. Things seem hopeless from that point of view!

What might be the answer to this? While we can't say that a belief in God and a life following the example of Jesus is going to solve all these problems, we can find comfort in our lives now from what we read in the Bible. Peace in the Bible is often put alongside 'righteousness', the idea of being right in God's sight. How different this sounds from the world around us now. Looking forward to a time in the future, the prophet Isaiah was moved to write that *'the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever'* (Isaiah 32:17). This is

something we can try to live up to in our lives now to help us with our inner peace, in spite of what others around us might be chasing after.

Something the Bible encourages us to do, which will help us find 'inner peace', is to change our perspective from looking for the next new thing, to looking forward to the coming

Kingdom of God. Jesus teaches that we should not worry about our lives and possessions now. In Matthew 6:31 we read, "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" Instead Jesus tells us to look only for the Kingdom of God. If this becomes our focus, our worries and concerns about today or tomorrow can begin to drift away.

Throughout the Bible there are examples of those who rejected the riches that were on offer to them, instead throwing their cares upon God. We're told that Moses 'considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward' (Hebrews 11:26). The change of focus from the here and now to the things of God can enable us to find inner peace today.

World Peace

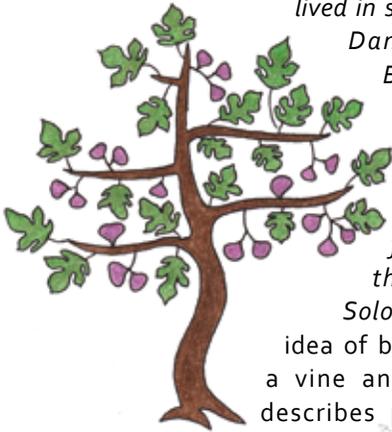
Having considered the idea of inner peace, what about peace on a global scale? Some parts of the world have enjoyed a sustained period of peace for many years following the Second World War, and many have known the threat of war. However, there are many conflicts in progress across the globe—some of them we hear about in our newsfeeds, others we don't. The idea of lasting world peace is a foreign concept, even for those who enjoy peace at home.



The Bible's promise is for war and conflict to cease, for there to be lasting world peace. The Bible makes reference to this promise many times, and of course it is the hope of the Christian. As God created a paradise in the Garden of Eden way back in the beginning, as recorded in the first chapters of Genesis, so He will make the earth like this again. In the prophecy of Isaiah, God describes the wilderness becoming like Eden—a paradise, a place of real and lasting peace (51:3). Isaiah is full of pictures of peace. In chapter 2 we see there is going to be a wonderful change in the earth when Jesus is king. We're told in Isaiah 2:4 that Jesus will 'judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more'. This will be the time when there is true and lasting peace. When Jesus will rule as king with love and integrity from Jerusalem, and the nations of the earth will be interested in ensuring their people have enough to eat, rather than worrying about weapons and warfare.

We might be able to think of times of peace and prosperity which have existed on the earth before. However, any time of peace has ultimately come to an end. The Bible records one of those times, during the reign of King Solomon. As a wise and faithful king, he was able to rule over the nation of Israel, making peace with the nations around him, and making sure his subjects were able to benefit from this peace. In

1 Kings chapter 4, we read of the great abundance that there was during the reign of Solomon and of how people came from all around to hear what he had to say. And what of his subjects during his reign? Their happy existence is described in verse 25 of 1 Kings 4: *'And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.'* This



idea of being under a vine and fig tree describes peace and prosperity. No need to worry about attack, or of shortage of food. Those things will be in the past.

Of course, in the time of Solomon it came to an end, just like all periods of peace have done. But there is a time of everlasting peace to come, when people will again sit under their vine and fig tree. We're told this in Micah 4:4: *'They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.'*

The Bible assures us that this time is coming, so we can be certain of it. While the world around is uncertain, and weapons of war are proliferating, we can have the quiet assurance that these things won't last for ever, and the peace promised by God will become a reality in the earth.



Peace On Earth

We have seen then, that the Bible promises peace. A lasting peace for all the earth. Leading this peace will be Jesus as he rules with justice and integrity from Jerusalem, and his subjects will enjoy lives of unprecedented peace.

To conclude I want to share two lovely pictures of this peace to come, firstly from the Psalms: *'Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other'* (Psalm 85:10). And finally to Revelation, looking forward to a time of inner peace, as well as global peace: *'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away'* (Revelation 21:4).

We began with the question, can there be true peace? The answer is of course, yes, and this can give us comfort and confidence now, as well as a sure hope for the future.

Tim Sutcliffe

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

e-mail editor@gladtidingsmagazine.org
or connect with us via our web site
gladtidingsmagazine.org
or write to the Editor—address inside front cover

May 1948 the reborn state of Israel was declared. We believe that this is one of the strongest evidences that the God of the Bible is still active in the earth today and is working out His plan. There are today over 7 million Jews living in the land. Israel is a prosperous nation whose economy is the envy of the whole Middle East. However, they are yet to recognise that their Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth!

This recognition must be in the future, and when they accept Jesus as their Messiah, God will be reconciled to the nation. Jeremiah also wrote of this time:

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jeremiah 31:33).

Thus the future, permanent occupation of the land of Israel will only happen after Christ has returned to the earth and he has been recognised and accepted by the Jews.

Another Promise

The promise of the land was not the only promise made to Abraham. God also promised that in him and in his offspring all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). This is a tremendous promise which affects the whole world, not just the Jewish people. The Apostle Paul said that this is in fact the Gospel:

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).

In this wonderful chapter, God also shows us that there was a single very particular offspring of Abraham through whom

the promises would be fulfilled: *'Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings", referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring", who is Christ' (v. 16).*

Christ is due to return to the earth and rule it in righteousness as the King of the Jews with a worldwide dominion. Thus he will bring blessings to all the peoples of the earth.

Our Part in God's Plan

We can be part of this marvellous plan! Later in that chapter of Galatians we read:

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (vs. 27–29).

This is a remarkable statement. Everyone, whether or not they are Jews, can be counted as Abraham's offspring by baptism into Christ. Thus if we share Abraham's faith we can be part of God's plan to bless all peoples of the earth.

When Christ returns to the earth Abraham will inherit the land that God promised him 4,000 years ago (Matthew 8:11). However, in order to do that, he must be raised from the dead and given an undying nature fit for an everlasting inheritance. It is our hope that we may also be granted immortality and share these blessings with him.

This was the marvellous hope for which the Apostle Paul was bound with a chain.

Chris Davenport

People Like You

DO YOU FIND IT HARD to relate to the Bible? After all it's a book that was completed nearly 2,000 years ago, and it describes many events which most people these days would dismiss as impossible.

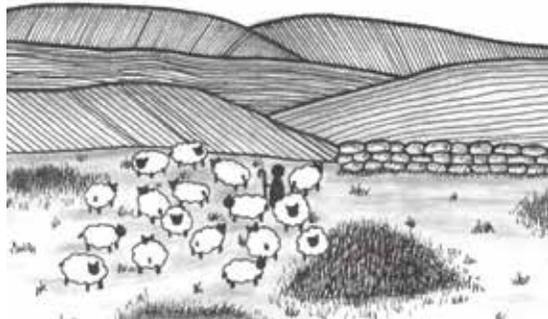
We have Sarah and Abraham in the book of Genesis who had their child at the ages of 90 and 100 (Genesis 21:5). We have strongman Samson who killed a lion with his bare hands, 1,000 men with the jawbone of a donkey and then single-handedly demolished a temple (Judges 13–16). Then of course we have Jesus in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) with his miracles of turning water into wine, healing and raising people from the dead.

Most people in the Bible though, even those who did amazing things, were very human. We will look in detail at two.

David

1) In 1 Samuel 16 the prophet Samuel is sent by God to the house of Jesse to declare which of Jesse's sons will be the new king of Israel. Jesse brings his sons in and Samuel speaks to them all. However, God finds none of them suitable. *'Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here" (v. 11).*

Have you ever felt left out because you are young, not as "educated" or as tall or good looking? Here David was overlooked by his own father when someone came to make a family member King!



2) God of course was not wrong, and David was made King over Israel. You can read of his adventures on his way to the throne in the remainder of 1 Samuel. He became a great and godly king, but he was not perfect, and he faced the same temptations we do. *'It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing... And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her' (2 Samuel 11:2–4).*

To compound this sin, David had Bathsheba's husband killed to try

and cover it up (vs. 14–21). Adultery and murder! Have you ever done something so awful and shameful that you think you can never be forgiven? David repented, and God forgave him (for example Psalm 51).

- 3) David had many children. One of them, Solomon, took over from him as king and was known to be one of the wisest rulers the world has ever known (1 Kings 4:29). However David faced one of the greatest tragedies a father can when another of his sons, Absalom, turned against him and was killed in an insurrection. In 2 Samuel 18:33 we see David in despair: *'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!'*

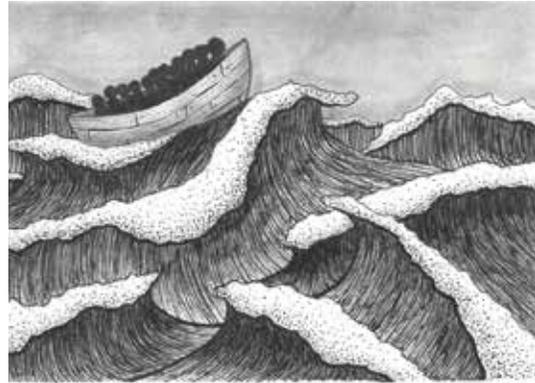
So David was seen as a nobody by his family in his youth; he took another man's wife and had the man killed, and lost a son on the battlefield. Surely God really had no time for David? Wrong! In Acts 13 we read God's assessment of David: *'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will. Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised'* (vs. 22–23).

This man, who had difficulties and weaknesses and tragedies in his life just like us, was nevertheless a man who lived his faith, and he was therefore commended by God. He was a direct ancestor of God's own Son Jesus Christ!

Peter

- 1) Peter's faith wavered whilst performing a miracle. There was an occasion when Jesus walked to his disciples whilst

they were on a boat in the middle of a stormy sea. Peter called out to Jesus, *"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."* He said, *"Come."* So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, *"Lord, save me."* Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* (Matthew 14:28–31).



So like any of us who might have faith in any given situation, Peter found his faith overcome almost immediately when given the opportunity to doubt.

- 2) After Jesus was condemned to death, Peter three times denied knowing him. He had boasted that although others might deny their master, he never would (Matthew 26:35). But when he was put to the test, his courage failed. The third time he was challenged *'he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus,*

"Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly' (vs. 74–75).

So, like David, Peter had his faults. He lost faith on the stormy sea with Jesus right by him, and he denied even knowing Jesus three times when Jesus was arrested.

But for all his faults and weaknesses, when Peter recognised that Jesus was the Messiah Jesus said: *'And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matthew 16:18–19).*

A Bible-Based Community

Ask any member of the Christadelphian community what makes them "different" from people of other faiths or no faith, and the answer will be universal. It is not the person who is different but their beliefs.

There are Christadelphians all over the world, and we come from a wide variety of walks of life, for example teachers, farmers, craftsmen, labourers, nurses, doctors, scientists, cooks, care workers, homemakers, retired and students. In order to be baptised and become a true member of the community you need to be old enough to understand that life-changing commitment (Mark 16:16), but the community also embraces the children of its members.

In a Christadelphian congregation there is no hierarchy and there are no paid positions. There are many tasks and roles,

such as spiritual leadership, teaching children, preaching to others, caring for those in need and upkeep of premises.

The community is a body. As the Apostle Paul says, *'As in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another' (Romans 12:4–5).* As such, different members have different functions and different aptitudes. But they are all of equal value to each other and to God: *'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' (Galatians 3:28).*

Christadelphians are distinctive because of our faith, which we believe is the same faith as was held by the First Century Christians, and the way we live which springs from our faith. But we're not special—we are people like you.

Rich Lawson

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The Future Is Certain

THE STATESMAN Benjamin Franklin wrote, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

Yet for Bible believers there is a greater certainty—the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up God's Kingdom on earth. As we shall discover in the Bible, the Lord God has promised that this will happen and we can therefore rest assured that it will.

The angel Gabriel, speaking at the command of God, was very specific in what he promised to Mary about the child to whom she was to give birth:

And behold, 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).

David was a great king over Israel, and God made wonderful promises to him:

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 (2 Samuel 7:12–13).

A long line of his descendants succeeded King David, but eventually Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king,

conquered Israel and ended the kingdom—but not for ever!

A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it. This also shall not be, until he comes, the one to whom judgement belongs, and I will give it to him (Ezekiel 21:27).



After a period of captivity in Babylon, many Jews did return, but never as kings. They were subject to the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. It was while under Roman rule that the Lord Jesus

was born. He was of the lineage of King David (Matthew 1:1).

Yet although the sign at his execution read 'King of the Jews' (Matthew 27:37), he did not reign as king. He rose from the dead on the third day, and 40 days later his disciples asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:6–7).

As he ascended to his Father, two angels reassured the disciples that 'This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11).

They could now understand why Jesus had told his disciples to constantly pray for his coming again: *'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'* (Matthew 6:10). This is the time when the Lord Jesus will be back to set up this Kingdom. Then all peoples will praise and worship God and will be obedient to His wishes, just as the angels in heaven work to please God.

The Bible prophesied that Jesus would return at a time when the land of Israel is occupied by Jews (for example Ezekiel 38:12, Luke 21:24–27). We have seen, over the past one hundred years or so, the preparations that God is making for His Son to return. In 1917 the British and allied forces pushed the Ottoman Turks out of Palestine, and allowed Jews to return to their homeland. Many returned, but others were happy with their lives in Europe.

Following the terrible events of the Holocaust, there was an urgency to return. In 1948 the State of Israel was established. In 1967, attacked by its neighbours and



against all odds, in six days Israel overcame its enemies, taking control of Jerusalem and what is termed the West Bank. In 2021 several Arab nations made peace with Israel, under the Abraham Accords. Now almost half of the world's Jewish population lives in Israel.

Each step has brought the nation of Israel closer to the return of their Messiah and King. Prophecy after prophecy has been fulfilled. We can be sure that God will keep His promise—Israel's King will return and rule not only Israel but the whole world.

We read of the day when God's nation accepts their King, having rejected him for 2,000 years:

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).

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the great blessings of the Kingdom age:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, 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." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Isaiah 2:2–4).

Now that is a certain future that we can all look forward to.

Don Pearce

2 Peter

WRITTEN FIVE OR SIX years later than Peter's first letter, it tells us that *'false teachers' (2:1)* were threatening to divert the churches from the truth.

The Apostle Peter, inspired by God's Holy Spirit, proclaimed true teaching, like the prophets of God in Old Testament times (1:21). This letter, meant for believers everywhere, reminds us that God's word of prophecy is like a lamp shining in a squalid world (1:19), to which we need to give careful attention.

Precious and Very Great Promises

Peter reminds his readers of the *'precious and very great promises' (1:4)*—*'the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles' (3:2)*. Faith in these things comes first; then there must be a response (1:5–7), if our *'calling and election'* is to be made sure (verse 10).

Peter was one of three apostles who saw Jesus "transfigured", while they were with him on a high mountain (see Matthew 17: 1–9). In this vision Jesus appeared in glorified immortal nature, as he will be seen in the future Kingdom on earth. Peter refers to this incident (1:16–18), which



underlines the promise that believers might also be made *'partakers of the divine nature' (1:4)*.

Those to whom Peter wrote needed reassurance that, though the faith was threatened by evil influences, God will judge the wicked and preserve the righteous—just as Noah was saved from the Flood (2:5), and Lot from the destruction of Sodom (2:6–8).

There were some who were starting to doubt that Christ would return: *'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation' (3:4)*. Peter assures them: *'The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise... But the day of the Lord will come like a thief' (3:9–10)*.

In the concluding few verses, Peter makes an interesting 'cross-reference' to Paul's letters (3:15–16)—an incidental confirmation that the apostles knew of each other's writings.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ 2 Peter 1:19—see Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 6:23.
- ◆ 2 Peter 1:21—see 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:11.
- ◆ 2 Peter 3:13—see Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1.

Across

Down

1 In his second letter, Peter thought it right to do this (2 Peter 1:13)

3 Following Jesus' ascension, the apostles went to this room (Acts 1:13)

7 Seeing Peter by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus told him to do this (Matthew 4:19)

8 Peter healed a man who was this (Acts 3:2)

9 Peter did this to his sword (John 18:10)

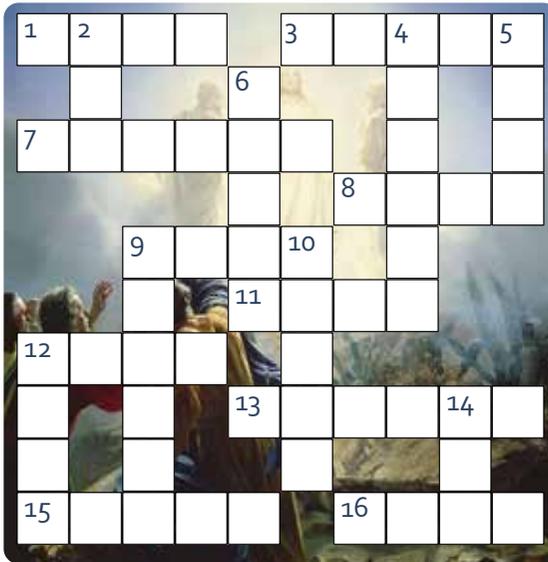
11 On account of what was happening in 12 across, Peter asked Jesus to do this (Matthew 14:30)

12 When Peter started walking on the water, he began to do this (Matthew 14:30)

13 God does not wish anyone to do this (2 Peter 3:9)

15 This city was condemned (2 Peter 2:6)

16 Peter got out of this to walk on the water (Matthew 14:29)



2 This number of men were sent to fetch Peter (Acts 9:38)

4 The chief priests gathered in that of the high priest (Matthew 26:3)

5 Peter told the man in 8 across to do this and walk (Acts 3:6)

6 This man appeared during Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:3)

9 Peter did this to Jesus shortly before the crucifixion (Matthew 26:70)

10 Due to the wind, 16 across was beaten by these (Matthew 14:24)

12 Peter urged the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of these (Acts 2:38)

14 Peter saw Jesus walking on this (Matthew 14:26)

(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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