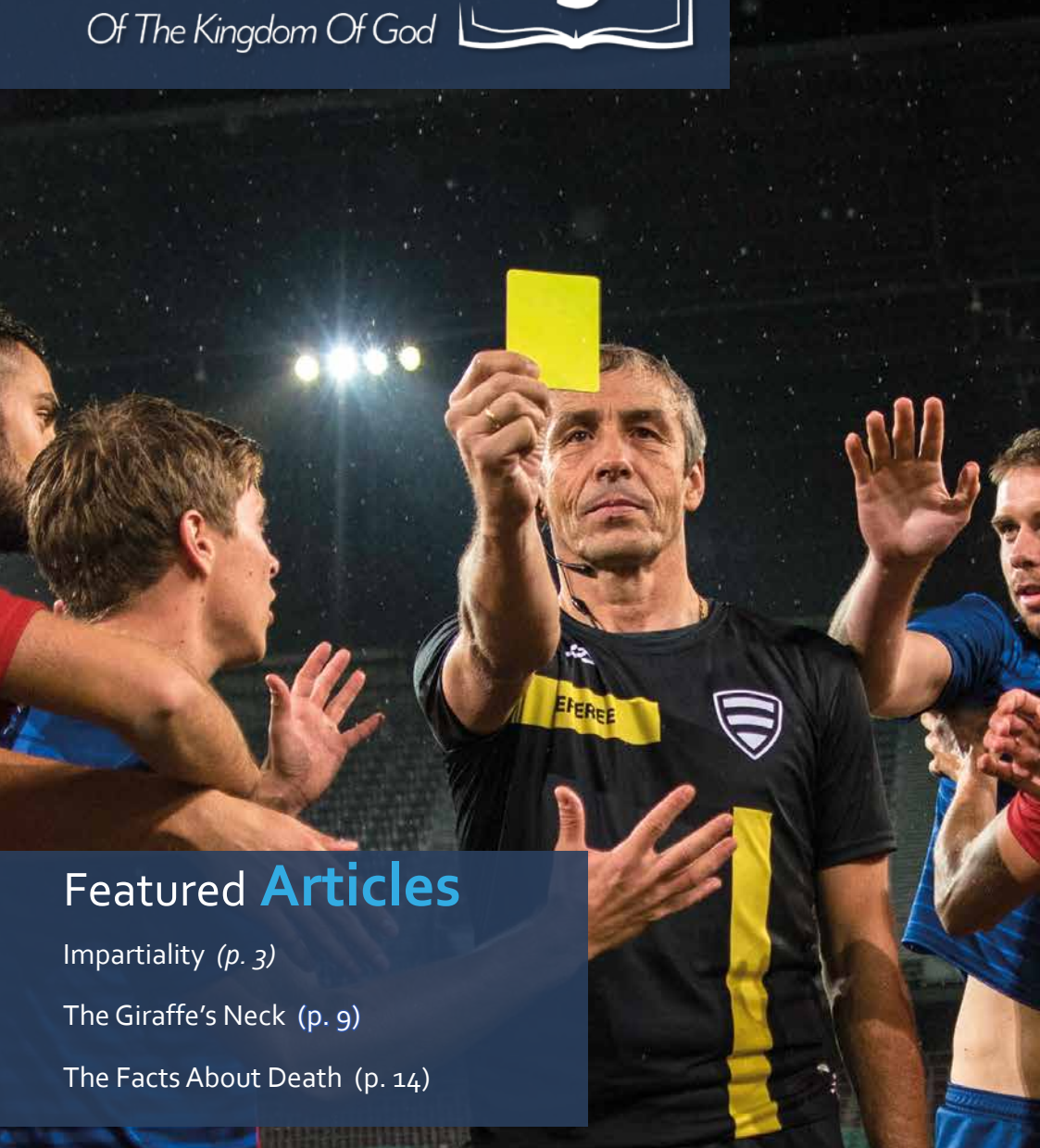


Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured Articles

Impartiality (p. 3)

The Giraffe's Neck (p. 9)

The Facts About Death (p. 14)

A monthly magazine written and published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to humankind; to call attention to the divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn people that soon Christ will return to earth as judge and ruler of God's worldwide Kingdom.

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The Glad Tidings Publishing Association
A registered charity—Number 248352

Impartiality

SUPPOSE YOU'RE A REFEREE in a football match. A player is rolling on the floor clutching his ankle, and you're deciding whether to show a yellow card for a foul. You must assess what you saw, listen to the linesmen, ignore your gut feeling (who do you trust more, the player who claims to have been fouled or the player who appeared to commit the foul?), and ignore the crowd and coaches who are yelling at you from the sidelines.

It's essential that referees are impartial. Let's just remind ourselves what that is. Dictionaries define impartiality as 'a quality of not being biased'; 'fairness'; 'the equal treatment of all rivals or disputants'.

The problem is, impartiality is surprisingly difficult. We're emotional creatures, and we're inclined to act on feelings rather than evidence. Also there's the fact that we're very good at deceiving ourselves: *'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?'* (Jeremiah 17:9). That's God's assessment of us, not everybody likes it but if you really think about it you have to admit it's true—if it's in our interest to believe something, or

if it corresponds with our world view, then we are more likely to believe it. For example, if the player on the ground is a nice guy,

and the player who appeared to foul him is a bad-tempered thug who has already insulted you twice during the match, you may well be biased and you may be completely unaware of it.

In the Law of Moses

When God delivered to Israel the Law which was to govern their national life, He stressed the necessity for impartiality. *'You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour'* (Leviticus 19:15).

There is the obvious temptation to favour the wealthy and influential, because they may have the power to reward you if you favour them, or punish you if you don't. If you favour the powerful, that's corruption. But there's also the danger of being biased in favour of the 'underdog', and this is perhaps less obvious because it often seems right. Everybody 'roots for the little guy'. (This is no doubt one reason for antisemitism: Jews are often successful people, and the nation of Israel is prosperous and powerful, and so in any situation people's sympathy is likely to be with their opponents.)

God told the judiciary they must judge *'in righteousness'*. The Hebrew word He used means fairness, equality: the word is used of fair weights and measures. In the days when goods were sold by



weighing them in scales, a favourite trick of dishonest merchants was to have two sets of weights—a slightly overweight set against which to weigh the goods they were buying (so the seller would have to give them more in order to balance the scales), and a slightly underweight set for weighing the goods they were selling (so they would have to give the buyer less in order to balance the scales). God said, *'Unequal weights are an abomination to the LORD'* (Proverbs 20:23).

In the Early Church

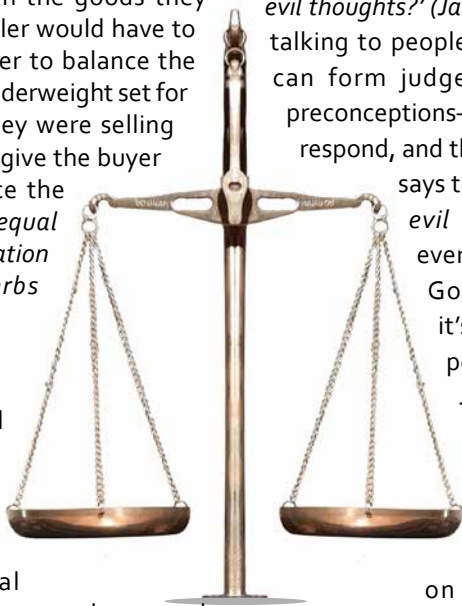
The Apostle Paul had left the young disciple Timothy in the congregation at Ephesus, and he wrote with practical instructions for the conduct and nurturing of the brothers and sisters there. *'In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality'* (1 Timothy 5:21). Impartiality is essential in any organisation, and especially in God's family.

The Apostle James gave an example of prejudice in action: *'My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place", while you say to the poor man,*

"You stand over there", or, "Sit down at my feet", have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?' (James 2:1–4). When we're talking to people about the Gospel, we can form judgements based on our preconceptions—maybe this person will respond, and that person won't. James says that is to be a *'judge with evil thoughts'*. God wants everyone to hear about the Gospel, and sometimes it's the most unexpected people who respond.

The ultimate example of all that is good and fair, of course, is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the model on which his followers build their lives. He showed impartiality throughout his life, as he healed, rebuked and preached to anyone he came across—rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles. When he returns to establish God's Kingdom, he will rule on the same principle:

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice! Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness! May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor! May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!' (Psalm 72:1–5).





Christian Discipleship

WHAT IS THE MAIN characteristic that should distinguish a follower of Christ?

Think of the original apostles who were his companions during his ministry. They all had very different characters. There was the impetuosity of Peter, the fiery tempers of James and John, the simple devotion of Thomas. They were all different, but they were faithful men, they were good material to work with. They needed development and training. They needed the prayers, guidance and sometimes the reproaches of their Master. He declared his love and his intention for them:

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:13–15).

In order to be his friends, they must follow his commandments. This involved self-

denial, the suppression of natural impulses, the surrender of their worldly ambitions, a genuine effort to live after the perfect example of their Master.

The Need to Strive

In his teaching the Lord repeatedly stressed the need for an active personal commitment. What makes a good disciple is not saying “Lord, Lord!” but doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21). It is to hunger after righteousness, to be merciful and pure in heart, to be peacemakers, to be prepared to be persecuted for the sake of their faith (Matthew 5:6–11). It is to choose the path which is right, even though it may be difficult.

Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able (Luke 13:24).

That word “strive” is connected to the Greek word from which we get our word “agony”. It means that our seeking for the Kingdom of God should be as strenuous,

as determined and with as much effort as that of the athlete who agonises in the final effort to win the race.



Some suggest that “Jesus has done it all”. He has paid the price for our sins, and all we have to do is accept him as our saviour and we will be saved. That is not what the Bible says. It is true that we cannot earn salvation by our own efforts, we are entirely dependent on God’s grace: *‘For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all’* (Romans 11:32). But we need to make the effort ourselves:

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life (Romans 2:7).

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (Galatians 6:8).

The book of Revelation opens with a series of letters written by Jesus Christ

to seven congregations of believers in Asia (Revelation chapters 2 & 3). He has a specific message to each one, but to each he holds out the promise of the reward to *‘the one who conquers’*. That word ‘conquer’ means to be victorious in a conflict. Jesus’ followers are involved in a conflict with their sin-prone human nature, just as he was.

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne’ (Revelation 3:21).

It is not a battle we can win by our own efforts, but if we strive for the victory Christ will allow us to share in his.

Intention and Achievement

There is a great contrast between the way of life that is natural to us and the way of Christ to which we are called. Discipleship is not just a case of curbing the grosser desires of the flesh. We must address the more subtle faults of mind and spirit—pride, anger, selfishness, selfish ambition, envy, resentment when injured or criticised. But more than this, discipleship calls for a complete change in the direction of our thought. A disciple needs to live as in the presence of God. The Lord Jesus said, *‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work’* (John 4:34).

It is sometimes suggested that the way is more difficult in our day and age than it was in the First Century, because we have so many more human inventions to distract us from our discipleship. If we fail, however, it is not often the result of modern inventions. It is more usually the old, well-known enemies that pull

us down—*'the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions'* (1 John 2:16).

Jesus imposed a test of discipleship upon his disciples. *'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another'* (John 13:34). He showed the extent of his love by giving his life for us, and he calls us to show this love to each other. It is relatively easy to show love to those who are lovable; it is not at all easy to show it to those who are not. But if we can begin to understand our own faults, and so to appreciate the miracle of Christ loving us, we can begin to follow his example.

The Judgement

After we have noted all these exhortations to righteousness, there is still another factor of supreme importance in the call to discipleship. It is the fact that this life we live now is a preparation for the future.

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19–22).

Those who follow Christ are being shaped and prepared for assembly into a spiritual dwelling-

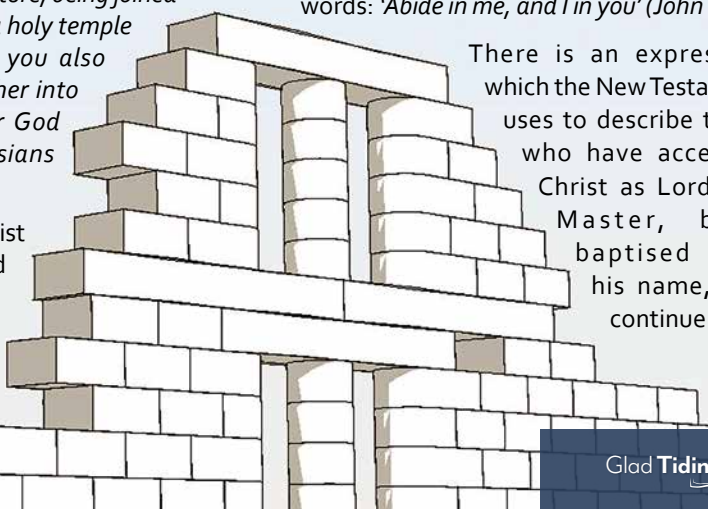
place for God. The community of believers now is that dwelling-place, but it will be fully realised when Christ returns to establish his Kingdom, to take to himself those who are his and bestow upon them eternal life (Matthew 25:21). We must ask ourselves how well we are allowing him to shape us.

If we have heartily and eagerly accepted the revealed truth and have made an honest struggle toward the Christian ideal, Christ will help us, for *'he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him'* (Hebrews 7:25). When he returns, some will be chosen and some will be rejected (Matthew 25:31–46). The one who has opened the way to the Kingdom, and who is himself the door of life (John 10:9), will easily decide who are such true disciples that they should be welcomed to spend eternity with him.

Christ In Us

This brings us to a final thought, which is put forward repeatedly in John's Gospel record. It may be suggested that it is the profoundest thought ever put before the human mind, expressed in the simplest of words: *'Abide in me, and I in you'* (John 15:4).

There is an expression which the New Testament uses to describe those who have accepted Christ as Lord and Master, been baptised into his name, and continue in his



commandments: they are 'in Christ' (for example Romans 8:1). The expression is easily understood.

The question whether Christ is in us is more searching and difficult. It is not a mere figure of speech. The phrase represents a tremendous reality, for just as material food is absorbed into the body, so thought is absorbed into the mind. Character and personality are of far greater importance than bodily strength. It is the personal character of which we think when we speak of friends whom we love.



For the disciple, Christ should be the dominating influence of our life. His teaching should be our guide, and thoughts of him are ever with us. When we are familiar with him, through our reading of his life and words, we know him as our constant companion, helping us to overcome in the struggle of life. A glance of reproach from him is more potent than the most furious rebuke from anyone else;

a word of encouragement from him more helpful than the kindest efforts of all other friends.

When Christ is truly in us he can cast out all that is unworthy, develop all that is fit to endure, and effect in us a transformation of character:

We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Then when he returns to take us to himself, he will complete the process of transformation:

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

If Christ is in us we shall be his disciples indeed, both now and for ever.

Islip Collyer

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The Giraffe's Neck

Praise the LORD from the earth...

Beasts and all livestock,

creeping things and flying birds!

(Psalm 148:7–10)

THE GIRAFFE is one of the iconic animals of the great African plains, roaming the open grasslands in small groups of about half a dozen, and using its extraordinarily long legs and neck to browse high up in the acacia trees.

Giraffes are the world's tallest mammals: males can grow up to 5.5 metres in height, with a neck length of 1.8 metres. Giraffes are already 1.8 metres tall at birth; female giraffes give birth standing up, and the newborn calf drops head first to the ground from a height of around 1.8 metres, which causes it to take its first big breath. Newborns are up and walking around after about one hour.

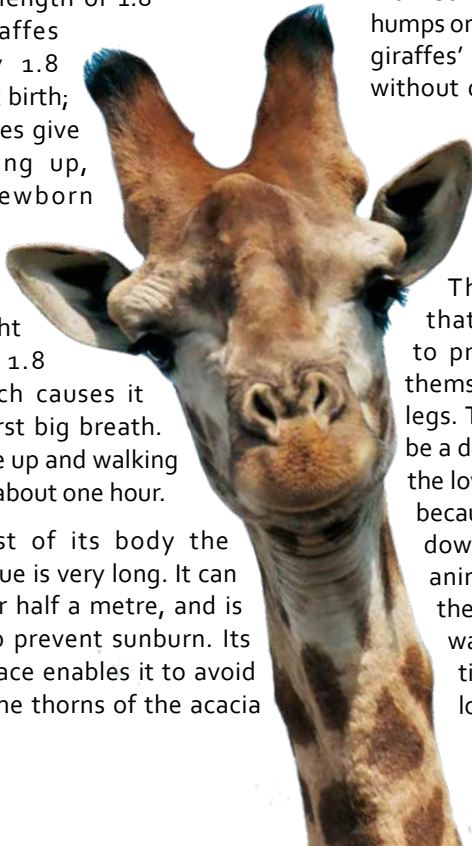
Like the rest of its body the giraffe's tongue is very long. It can measure over half a metre, and is blue-black to prevent sunburn. Its leathery surface enables it to avoid injury from the thorns of the acacia

and other food plants. Giraffes eat most of the time, and, like cows, they regurgitate their food and chew it as cud. A giraffe eats hundreds of kilos of leaves each week and must travel many miles to find enough food.

The generic name, *Giraffa camelopardalis*, means 'one who walks swiftly, a camel marked like a leopard'. Giraffes have humps on their backs like camels (although giraffes' humps are smaller), and can go without drinking water for long periods, surviving on the moisture content of their diet of acacia leaves.

Circulation to Match

The giraffes' stature means that they are generally immune to predators, and they can defend themselves by kicking with their long legs. Their height, however, can also be a disadvantage. The blood vessels in the lower legs are under great pressure because of the weight of fluid pressing down on them from above. In other animals such pressure would force the blood out through the capillary walls. Giraffes, however, have a very tight sheath of thick skin over their lower limbs, which is able to retain



the extra pressure, in addition to which all the arteries and veins are routed unusually deep within the legs.

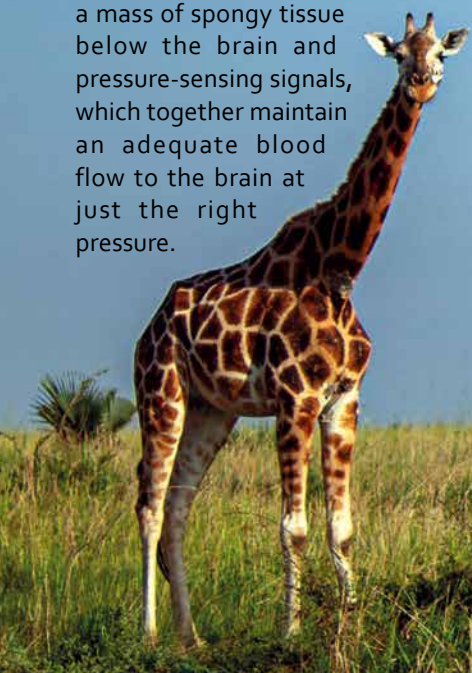
To drink at a water hole they must spread their legs and bend down in an apparently awkward position. This introduces one of the most remarkable features of the giraffe anatomy, the blood circulation system. To ensure that blood reaches the brain, up to 5.5 metres above the ground, the giraffe has a large heart which maintains a very high blood pressure, double that of the average large mammal. This means, however, that when the giraffe bends down to drink or to browse low-growing plants its brain would normally be subjected to such high pressure that haemorrhage and death should instantly follow. But this problem is averted by a unique system, the *rete mirabile* (or 'marvellous net'), a collection of reinforced artery walls, special valves, a mass of spongy tissue below the brain and pressure-sensing signals, which together maintain an adequate blood flow to the brain at just the right pressure.

Another problem caused by the long neck is the large dead volume of air in the 3.5-metre long trachea. When the animal takes in a fresh breath, the oxygen-depleted previous breath cannot be totally expelled. Consequently there must be enough lung volume to make this "bad air" a small percentage of the total, and the giraffe's lungs are indeed very large, about eight times the size of those of humans.

Divine Design or Evolution?

Naturally, the unique neck and leg length of the giraffe have fuelled great interest among evolutionists. They have interpreted these features as a classic result of natural selection: the giraffe must have acquired its height in order to feed on leaves beyond the reach of competing browsers such as antelope and gazelles.

But in fact this claim for evolution is based less on evidence than on armchair reasoning, and it turns out to be unsafe: for field research has shown that, although their height does confer an advantage when lower leaves have already been eaten, giraffes actually prefer certain types of leaves rather than those at particular heights. During the dry season, when



competition is most intense, they generally feed on low shrubs and spend much of the time with their necks horizontal!

A more recent popular suggestion has been that sexual selection drove the development of the giraffe's neck. Male giraffes compete for females by 'necking' and 'head clubbing' one another, those with the longest necks and heaviest heads tending to win. However, a study has shown that long necks are no more exaggerated in males than in females, and that the theory fails to meet a number of tests for this type of selection. The researchers conclude that there is still no consensus on the origin of the giraffe's neck, and it still presents a major problem for Darwinists.

Biologists seek in vain for evolutionary explanations of these remarkable features: there is no known decisive selective advantage in the giraffe's long neck, and natural selection would have had to alter the legs, tongue, muscles, lungs, heart and blood-flow system simultaneously in order to achieve success.

Remarkably, there is only one species of giraffe, with nine subspecies recognised by their different patterns of spots. There

is no other species of animal sharing its unique features of length of legs and neck. Its nearest relative, the okapi, is a resident of the dense African forests, not the plains; it has a long tongue but normal leg and neck lengths. Everything about the giraffe points to a creature whose anatomy and features are unique and designed as a complete package.

The authors of one study, in dismissing sexual selection, concluded that "Better explanations for neck elongation must be sought elsewhere."* That 'elsewhere' is in the Word of God, which assures us that '*God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good*' (Genesis 1:25).

God made the beasts of the earth for His (and our) pleasure.

David Burges

from *Wonders of Creation*

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* G Mitchell, S J Van Sittert, S D Skinner, *Sexual selection is not the origin of long necks in giraffes: Journal of Zoology* Volume 278 Issue 4 2009





Bearing Your Cross

TWO FRIENDS were commiserating about difficulties in their lives. One said, “Oh, well! We all have our cross to bear.”

This is a fairly common expression, which originates from the words of Jesus: ‘*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*’ (Matthew 16:24).

What did Jesus mean by this? Was he, as the friend implied, referring to the common problems in life that we all face— or was it something more than this?

Crucifixion

Crucifixion was common in the Roman world, chiefly inflicted on slaves and the worst kind of criminals. It was a horrific and shameful way to die. Part of the process was that a convicted man, condemned to death, was compelled to carry his cross publicly to the place of execution. This is what Jesus did (John 19:17–18). But owing to the sufferings he had had to endure since his arrest the previous evening, he was so weak that the soldiers recruited a passer-by to help him (Luke 23:26).

Jesus knew in advance that he would die this cruel death. He told his disciples,

The Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day (Matthew 20:18–19).

And he was innocent of all accusations. His execution was illegal and unjustified. It was dreadful and humiliating. But he did it willingly for us, and in total obedience to God (Isaiah 53:4–9, 1 Peter 3:18).

Self Denial

Jesus did not mean that we have to be literally crucified as he was. But his words say that believers are to ‘follow him’, that something has to be ‘crucified’, and that this involves ‘denying self’.

It is an unpalatable fact that the Bible view of our natural ‘self’ is not pleasant. We are not intrinsically good (Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 15:19). The Apostle Paul said, ‘*I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out*’ (Romans 7:18).

In fact he said we are, by nature, ‘*slaves to sin*’. He describes baptism like this: ‘*We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin*’ (Romans 6:6).

Slaves did always and exactly what their master wanted: they had little or no choice

in the matter. They were owned by their master. So, in other words, we follow sinful ways slavishly, willingly and almost without question. And our master 'sin' only leads us to death: permanent death (Romans 6:23).

So it is our 'old self' that has to be crucified. Then our new master, Jesus, can lead us to everlasting life.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him (Romans 6:8–9).

Jesus spent his whole life obeying God and never, ever sinned (Hebrews 4:15).

He said, 'I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me' (John 5:30). As he faced his death he prayed in agony that God's will be done, not his own (Luke 22:42). He instructed his disciples to pray likewise for their Father's will to be done, when he taught them to pray: 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:10).

Paul puts it beautifully: 'Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross' (Philippians 2:8).

Suffering For Jesus

There is no intrinsic merit in crucifixion. There was no glory in public execution. Similarly, there is no human accolade for following the example of Jesus. His principles about loving enemies, doing good to those who hate us, and praying for those who ill-treat us (Matthew 5:44); putting God first and loving Jesus more than anyone else

(Matthew 10:37); and suffering for doing right (1 Peter 2:20), make no sense to many people. But this is what Jesus asks of us. God's way is better; is right; is holy; but is counter-intuitive to us. It is '*bearing our cross*', denying self and following Jesus.



There is a danger that we might water down the words of Jesus into a kind of self-righteous abstention from one or two of the good or not so good things of life. Then we might be proud of our piety. Actually that would not be self-denial, that would be self-exaltation! In so doing, we would also under-value the magnitude of what Jesus achieved for us.

Self-denial is more than this. If we have committed our lives to God, we should face hardships and trials with courage. And Jesus is asking for more even than this. He is asking that we gladly accept extra suffering, should it come because of our discipleship, just as the disciples did when they were persecuted for their faith:

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name (Acts 5:41).

Anna Hart

The Facts About Death

WHEN ADAM AND EVE sinned, death entered the world (Genesis 3:19). Notice that death was introduced into the world as a punishment. It was a curse and not a blessing. To argue otherwise, as philosophers and priests have tried to do for thousands of years, is to claim with the serpent 'You will not surely die' (v. 4): the first and greatest lie. Death is not the threshold of another life. It is ugly, wretched and final, a dissolution of all that has been acquired through years of experience. The artificer's skill, the ruler's wisdom, the scientist's knowledge, the fashion model's beauty, all crumble into dust and stay there. There is no mention here in Genesis, or anywhere else in the Bible, of passing on to an afterlife beyond the point of death.

Where then do we find a gleam of hope in this dark cloudbank of sorrow? Is there no hope at all of living again? Has God no mercy? To these questions, the Bible has a positive answer. We can live again, not as a matter of right, but on God's terms. He has planned an end to the curse, for those who do take Him at His word. As the Apostle Paul writes:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory

that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:18–21).

And remarkably Adam and Eve, in the very hour of their desolation, were given clues, as we shall see, to this master plan of God to take away, in mercy yet with perfect justice, all the evil that they had brought into the world.

Garments of Skins

It is a curious fact that only humans wear clothes. Alone amongst the teeming millions of animals inhabiting this planet, we cover our skin from sight with an artificial outer layer. The origin of human modesty is puzzling to those who prefer to believe in life by evolution rather than God.

It is very clear in the Bible. When Adam and his wife had sinned by breaking God's law, they became aware for the first time of that peculiar embarrassment with which we can all identify: 'When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it

was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths' (Genesis 3:6–7).

The connection between the sinning and the sensation of nakedness was strong and immediate. Their reaction was to fabricate a makeshift garment of the first material to hand—large leaves. In this strange garb they faced their Creator for sentence, and were doomed to sorrow and death.

But the record in Genesis is explicit that when it was all over, and before they were dismissed, *'the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them'* (v. 21).

For some compelling reason their home-made clothes were not good enough. It can hardly have been warmth that they lacked, in that eastern climate. There must have been some deep principle that they were to learn, right at the outset of the history of the world. A moment's reflection will suggest an answer, and reveal a jewel of truth that transformed with its light that sombre day. To make coats of skins, an animal must have been killed. Subsequent events suggest it was a lamb. With some horror they must have watched a strong, healthy animal cut down in the prime of life, its blood staining the ground, and from its limp body the garment wrought that covered their nakedness. Remembering the connection between nakedness and sin, we can see the Lord teaching them that their sin would be hidden away, and

themselves made presentable before Him, only by means of the death of a lamb. Vegetation was not good enough to hide sin from His sight.



The provision of the sin-covering garment was to be His own gracious deed, not their own inadequate work. With the hindsight the New Testament gives us, we can appreciate rich symbols here of the work of Jesus Christ. Innocent, morally perfect, like the spotless lamb, he was to give his blood to save his people from their sins. He would cover with his own goodness our ugly deeds and disobedient ways. Under his cloak, as it were, we can stand in the presence of God. God Himself would provide him, sending him into the world to suffer and die.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgement he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a

rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth (Isaiah 53:7–9).

And John the Baptist, pointing out Jesus to his disciples three years before the crucifixion, identified in one sentence his great work: *'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'* (John 1:29).

Hope of a Redeemer

So, in the misery of their expulsion from the garden of God, the man and his wife were left with a ray of hope, a cryptic hint of a redeemer, one who would make amends for the evil they had brought into the world. Having gathered to himself the sufferings of mankind, and yet having conquered sin in himself, Jesus Christ was able to be raised by God with perfect justice, triumphant out of death, and thus would neutralise the curse for all who down the centuries have loved and believed in Him.

One other item from the record of that fateful day demands our attention. It must have rung strangely in Adam's ears at the time, and have been the subject of much debate between him and his wife through the years. It was the extraordinary phrasing of the curse God had placed upon the serpent. It is found in our Bibles in Genesis 3:14–15: *'On your belly you shall go,' He said, 'and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.'*

It was the serpent that had brought sin into the world. By his plausible lie, Eve had been brought to question the word

of God, and embarking on that downward path, had fallen into temptation. Now the deceiver was being relegated from his position as the most subtle of the beasts to the lowly reptile of today. But what of this enmity, this perpetual war between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent? How was the offspring of the woman to bruise him, the serpent, in the head (a mortal blow)? And how was the serpent to bruise him, singular, the woman's offspring, in the heel? It was a dark oracle, pregnant with meaning.



Again, with the benefit of the New Testament we can identify the characters in the drama. Jesus, beyond a doubt, was the 'woman's offspring'. *'When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law'* wrote Paul (Galatians 4:4). By the unique action of the Holy Spirit on Mary's womb, Jesus was both Son of God and also able to trace back his descent on his mother's side (as Luke does in the third chapter of his Gospel) to Adam and Eve. As for the serpent's offspring, Jesus identified these with his enemies the rulers of the Jews. They were motivated by the same sin that the serpent had brought

into the world. They were plotting to kill him. *'You serpents, you brood of vipers,'* he labelled them, *'how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?'* (Matthew 23:33).



The End of Death

The serpent had come to stand for human nature—that selfish, proud, rebellious heart within us that hates what is good. Sin was to rear up, venomous like a snake, and pin Jesus hand and foot to the cross. Yet its triumph would be short. The wounds would be healed, and he would rise again the third day. But on his part, he would deal the serpent a deadly blow. First, he would conquer sin in himself, never letting himself go down the path of self will and rebellion. Then in his glorious resurrection, he would toll the death knell of the serpent's power. *'O death, where is your victory?'* sang the Apostle, *'O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'* (1 Corinthians 15:55–57). Paul could comfort the Christians at Rome, with a direct allusion to the promise in Eden—*'The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet'* (Romans 16:20).

The believers' part in the triumph was assured. At the return of their Lord, they will rise again, to live with him in a Kingdom where sin will be restrained for a thousand years, and all God's enemies rooted out from the earth. In the end death itself will be removed from the earth for ever. Eden will be restored, and its gates reopened for those who lived for their Lord. This is what it says, right at the end of the Bible:

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him... death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 22:3, 21:4).

What a wealth of comfort and hope was condensed into that prophetic verse in the beginning! If we take up the fight against sin in ourselves, seeking forgiveness through the Lamb of God, we too can share in the victory.

David Pearce
(to be continued)

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

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Will only Christadelphians be saved?



NO.

When Jesus Christ returns to establish God's Kingdom there will be a judgement (2 Timothy 4:1). Some will be given eternal life, and some will be condemned (Matthew 25:46). We don't know who will be accepted and who will be rejected. Our business is to '*work out our own salvation*' (Philippians 2:12). In the Bible, God tells us all we need to know in order to work out our salvation. Here are some key factors:

- God is on our side. He wants us to be saved (Luke 12:32).
- In order to be saved we must believe what God tells us (Hebrews 11:6).
- Baptism is essential for salvation (Mark 16:16).
- Salvation is the gift of God by grace (that is, undeserved favour)—it's not something we'll earn by our own virtue, or deserve because of anything we've done or because of membership of any community (Ephesians 2:8).
- At the judgement there will be those who expect to be saved who will be rejected (Matthew 7:22–23).
- Those who are accepted will be those who have done God's will in their lives (Matthew 7:21).

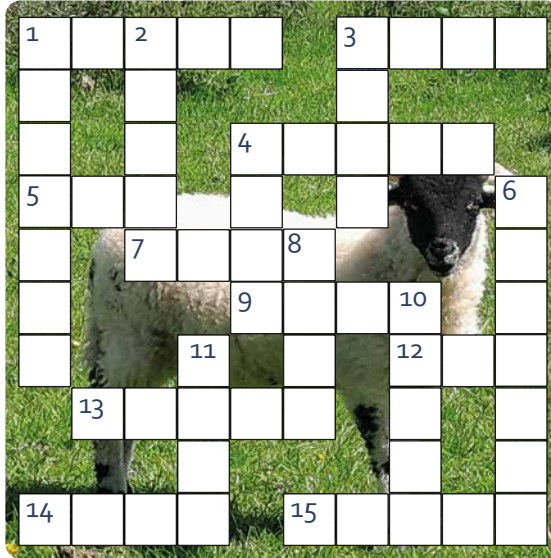
- Of course God will forgive any sin if we repent (Ephesians 1:7), but if we wilfully persist in sin we will not be saved (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).
- We need to show our love for God by our love for our brothers and sisters in the faith (1 John 3:14–16).
- Those who do not accept that Jesus '*has come in the flesh*' (that is, that he had human nature (Hebrews 2:14)), are called '*antichrist*' (1 John 4:1–3).
- Those who add to or take away from God's words will be rejected (Revelation 22:18–19).

Christadelphians believe that we are a community which holds to the beliefs and practices of the First Century Christians. We believe that beliefs and practices are important. We are what some call an '*exclusive fellowship*', because we don't share fellowship with those who hold different beliefs.

We are responsible for our own lives. We know what the Lord requires of us, as we wait and prepare for his return (Matthew 25:14–30). We know that when he returns, his judgement will be fair and right. We each pray that on that day we will receive the answer we're longing for: '*Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master*' (Matthew 25:21).

Across

- 1 Shortly before the crucifixion, he denied being one of Jesus' disciples (John 18:25)
- 3 The soldiers put this garment on Jesus (Matthew 27:28)
- 4 One of the languages in which the inscription was written over the cross (John 19:20)
- 5 One of the words Jesus spoke on the cross (Matthew 27:46)
- 7 Jesus sat on this animal to ride into Jerusalem (Mark 11:7)
- 9 The soldiers did not break those of Jesus as he was already dead (John 19:33)
- 12 Jesus said, '*what is written about me has ... fulfilment*' (Luke 22:37)
- 13 A soldier pierced Jesus' side with this (John 19:34)
- 14 One of the officers struck Jesus with this (John 18:22)
- 15 It was prophesied that not one of these would be broken (John 19:36)



Down

- 1 Pilate told these people that he found no guilt in Jesus (Luke 23:4)
 - 2 The soldiers took this garment from Jesus (John 19:23)
 - 3 The soldiers put this in Jesus' right hand (Matthew 27:29)
 - 4 Jesus was offered wine to drink, mixed with this (Matthew 27:34)
 - 6 Jesus warned that his followers would be persecuted and put in these (Luke 21:12)
 - 8 The soldiers decided not to do this to 2 down (John 19:24)
 - 10 He was compelled to carry Jesus' cross (Matthew 27:32)
 - 11 An inscription was put over that of Jesus (Matthew 27:37)
- (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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