

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Value of Friendships (p. 3)

The Good Life (p. 5)

The World's Decline (p. 9)

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 Value of Friendships

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY makes for a successful life? In surveys, the most popular answers people give to that question are wealth and fame. But the evidence shows that they're wrong.

In 1938 researchers in Harvard, USA started studying the lives of a group of teenagers from various social backgrounds.* By means of regular questionnaires, interviews and analysing medical records, the study tracked them throughout their lives, and now that most of them are dead it's tracking their children. The results are clear.



Money is important. Your quality of life increases the more money you have, until you have sufficient to be comfortable—enough to eat, a place to live and a measure of security. After that, increasing wealth makes very little difference to your wellbeing. Fame seldom makes people happy, in fact it often brings stress. The Harvard Study decisively shows that the

* The Harvard Study of Adult Development—<https://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org>

biggest factor that goes to make a good life is the quality of your human relationships.

Interestingly, good relationships make for more than just emotional wellbeing. People who have them are not only happier, more content and psychologically robust: their physical health is measurably better, and they live considerably longer than people who don't have them.

The Bible Model

To most of us, these findings will not be a complete surprise. They confirm what we expect. Certainly, anyone who knows the Bible knows the value of relationships: *'By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13:35).*

According to the Bible, companionship is a basic human need. When God created the first man Adam, it wasn't good for him to be alone so He created Eve to be his wife, and that was the beginning of marriage: *'they shall become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24).* At the core of God's design for the human race is a lifelong, thick and thin, sickness and health, man and woman companionship, which is the basis of a stable and loving family.

Let's just pause here, because there's a crucial point to make. Many people don't find a life partner, and they may or may not be content like that. Some marriages don't work out, families break

up. These things happen. Many people find themselves isolated, for one reason or another. Loneliness is recognised as an epidemic of the 21st Century. We must not judge ourselves or anybody else for being isolated. But when we look into the Bible, we see not just an ideal but a practical route to obtaining a better life, whatever our situation may be.

It's about family—God's family. He is calling out from the world's population '*a people for his name*' (Acts 15:14). That includes you and me if we will come to Him and embrace His offer of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ (John 14:6). When we're baptized, we become His children. '*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are*' (1 John 3:1). And with our new Father comes His family.

God's Family

There's an idea that religion is an individual and personal thing. Many people in the modern world have withdrawn from organised religion—perhaps because they don't like the image of the churches and what happens there, perhaps because they don't want to subscribe to defined beliefs, or maybe they just don't want the hassle of attending. But what's clear from the Bible is that God deals with communities.

He chose the faithful man Abraham and brought him and his family into Canaan (Genesis 12). Abraham's family became the nation of Israel. God said to them, '*If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured*

possession among all peoples' (Exodus 19:5). The Law which He gave Israel (in Exodus through to Deuteronomy) shows how their civil, cultural and religious life was to operate as a community.

The Bible's New Testament shows how God extended to the whole world the invitation to come to Him (Galatians 3:8–9). The book of Acts and the letters show how the first Christians were organised in close-knit congregations, with the distinguishing characteristic of mutual love and care. '*Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us*' (Ephesians 5:1–2).

This is the character which Christadelphian congregations strive to possess. (Their success depends on the efforts which each of the members make to '*be imitators of God*' and to '*walk in love*'.) Whatever an individual's circumstances, when they come to Christ they join a family, and they acquire a host of brothers and sisters—with all the privileges and responsibilities that brings. '*God settles the solitary in a home*' (Psalm 68:6).

The most important relationship a believer has, of course, is with God their Father and Jesus Christ His Son, their lord. '*I will never leave you nor forsake you*' is God's promise (Hebrews 13:5). Through prayer and reading the Bible—talking and listening—a relationship develops which is deeper and more profound than any other, and which need never end: '*This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*' (John 17:3).



The Good Life

BACK IN THE 1970s there was a British television series called "The Good Life". It featured a couple, Tom and Barbara, who were tired of the rat-race and tried to live a simpler, self-sufficient style of life in suburbia, growing their own vegetables and keeping their own livestock. Their lifestyle was in contrast to that of their stiffly middle class neighbours, Margo and Jerry. The show was a light-hearted comedy, but it demonstrated the futility of many people's efforts to maintain their high living standards.



Treasure in Heaven

It is a basic human need to be comfortable. Many in the world don't have the basics—sufficient food and drink, adequate shelter and clothing. Others live in comparative luxury, with food and drink to spare, large houses and more clothes than they realistically need, as well as easy access to entertainment and travel.

Those who are trying to follow Jesus Christ need to keep these things in perspective. In God's word, the Bible, all human ambitions are evaluated. Jesus' teaching on riches astonished his disciples:

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:23–27).

Wealth can be used wisely to do good. Christians should not trust in it. As Jesus said to a rich man, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' (Matthew 19:21).

Jesus himself lived in poverty during his ministry: 'And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"' (Matthew 8:20).

True Wisdom

Some people hanker not so much after riches as after fame: to excel in their field,

intellectual, sporting or musical. Excellence in anything brings a certain sense of satisfaction, especially if it is recognised by others. But fame fades. Human skills are temporary and other younger stars soon take the stage. The apostle Paul knew these truths from his reading of the Old Testament:

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:23–24).

Paul gives us clear advice on the Christian's attitude to riches:

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness... As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life (1 Timothy 6:9–11, 17–19).



Wealth and human achievement can bring us pleasure now, but they are transitory. It is faith and trust in God that leads to eternal life. So which will we choose?

Marion Buckler

g l ea n ing s

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Mortality

THE BIBLE TEACHES that we were made by God from the dust of the ground: *'The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature'* (Genesis 2:7).

That blind chance could conspire to bring about such a phenomenally complex organism as a human being remains an unlikely theory. Within limits, living creatures can adapt to their surroundings, but such adaptations do not bring about fundamental developments in species.

Creatures of Dust

The first man, having been created, was given by God a simple law. *'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'* (Genesis 2:16–17). The serpent deceived Adam and Eve by lying, *'You will not surely die'* (3:4). They ate and the sentence of God was given: *'Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return'* (Genesis 3:17–19).

The Bible gives no evidence for a conscious existence in any form after death. Its

teaching is that we are mortal, dying creatures, and in death we cease to be.

The Psalmist says, *'Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish'* (Psalm 146:3–4).

The Sleep of Death

When Jesus' friend Lazarus died, Jesus went to visit his family. He told his disciples,

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died" (John 11:11–14).

Stephen, the first recorded martyr for the Gospel of Christ, was stoned to death. The Bible says he *'fell asleep'* (Acts 7:60).



The Bible uses the illustration of sleep as a figure for death, and of awakening from sleep as a figure of resurrection from the dead.



Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead (Isaiah 26:19).

This was David's expectation: *'As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness' (Psalm 17:15).*

Jesus 'slept' for three days in the tomb, then God raised him from the dead—as Paul said, he was *'the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep' (1 Corinthians 15:20).*

It can be seen that none of these passages from the Bible give any support to the idea that immortality is our inherent possession. Many people believe that they possess an immortal soul which will go to heaven when they die. This belief owes its origin to Greek philosophy, which infiltrated the Christian church in the second and third centuries AD. However, the Bible is clear that Jesus is the only man who has

ascended to heaven, after his resurrection (John 3:13, Acts 1:11).

So what is the true Christian hope of eternal life? Quite simply, it is the resurrection of the dead at the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven.

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17).

Paul Downer

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The World's Decline

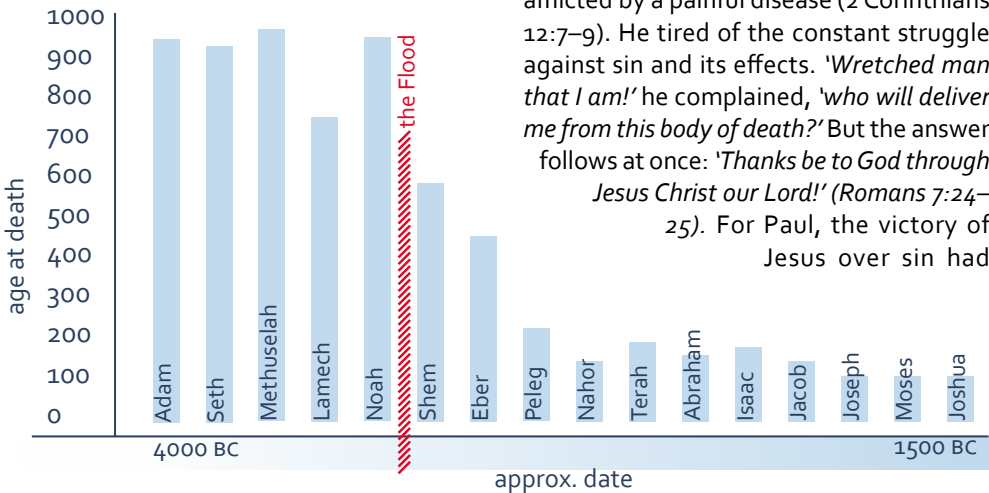
YOU MAY HAVE HEARD of Methuselah, the oldest man who ever lived. He lived to the age of 969 (Genesis 5:27). But it is surprising to find that most of his contemporaries likewise survived to a very great age. Enos, for example, was 905 (Genesis 5:11), and Jared 962 (verse 20), and most others died after at least five hundred years.

The graph below shows people's stated longevity generation by generation from Adam to Moses. It continues steady around the 900-year mark right down to the time of the Flood, at the time of Noah in Genesis chapter 6. At this point it plunges steeply downwards for about six generations, then levels out to 80 to 100 years by the time of Moses. This is not the place to discuss the possible physical explanation

for the dramatic change in lifespan after the Flood, but the phenomenon draws our attention to the frightening potential for evil possessed by a criminal who could live for hundreds of years. Think of the time they would have to perfect their techniques of robbery, extortion and violence! No wonder the earth in the time of Noah is said to have been '*corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence*' (Genesis 6:11).

But think, too, of the frustration and pain we can encounter in these mortal bodies. To live for ever would be no blessing in the bodies we have today. But God has promised His children a new, perfect body in His Kingdom (Mark 12:25). Only then will we be set free from our slavery to sin, with its weary battle of the 'spirit' against the 'flesh' (Romans 8:1–11).

The Apostle Paul himself was permanently afflicted by a painful disease (2 Corinthians 12:7–9). He tired of the constant struggle against sin and its effects. '*Wretched man that I am!*' he complained, '*who will deliver me from this body of death?*' But the answer follows at once: '*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*' (Romans 7:24–25). For Paul, the victory of Jesus over sin had



brought him the promise of resurrection and a body like the new body of the risen Christ (1 John 3:2).

Lamech's Firstborn

That struggle against the curse, so keenly felt by Paul, brings our thoughts back to Genesis and to the next notable character in the generations following Seth. Lamech, son of Methuselah, was 182 years old when his first child was born (Genesis 5:28). Like Paul, he felt depressed and bowed under the burden of mortality. It was a great joy to him when they told him his wife had borne a son.



Perhaps it made him think of the deliverer promised to Eve, the offspring of the woman who would conquer the curse for mankind (Genesis 3:15). At any rate he decided to call the baby 'Noah', which means 'Rest', for, he said, *'Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands'* (Genesis 5:29).

He may seem only to have been thinking of the practical help his son could one day give him on the farm. But it is a remarkable fact that Noah was destined to become, in a sense, the saviour of the human race. Like Jesus (whose destiny stretches into our own future), he was to be head of a family of righteous people who would survive the forthcoming day of judgement, and repopulate a cleansed and restored earth.

Lamech must have died very shortly before the Flood (compare Genesis 5:30 with 7:11). He would be aware of God's warning of the impending catastrophe and His instructions to Noah to prepare by building an ark (Genesis 6:13–21). He would have seen the preparations Noah made to preserve life through the waters of death. He would know now that God's purpose, the promise to Eve, was not going to be cut off by the coming catastrophe. The line of Eve's offspring was going to be preserved through his own God-fearing son.

Like his fathers, Lamech died in faith. He is asleep even now in the peace of death that ended his toil and tears. But he awaits with confidence another, more permanent rest. *'So then,'* as the author of the Hebrews writes, paraphrasing Lamech's prophetic words, *'there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God'* (Hebrews 4:9). That perfect rest will be the Kingdom of God, that will finally take away the curse that came with Adam's sin.

Intermarriage

Sixteen centuries had passed since Adam and his wife had been expelled from the Garden of God (Genesis 3:24). The population of the earth had grown slowly

in the early years, but now it had begun to expand at a spectacular rate. The descendants of righteous Seth had not multiplied as fast as Cain's offspring. For most of this period it seems they had kept themselves strictly apart. Unhappily, there was now a change.

It appears that intermarriage with Cain's family, the *'sons of men'* had always been frowned upon as a dangerous step, a sign of neglecting the holy way of life established by the great patriarchs. But as Seth, Methuselah and Lamech died out, and their influence disappeared, a new generation arose with weaker faith and fewer inhibitions. *'When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose'* (Genesis 6:1-2).



The effect was disastrous. Instead of the good influence of the Sethites uplifting and reforming the descendants of Cain, as they may have hoped, the opposite

was true. The intermarrying of the two families of humankind produced offspring of tremendous physique, renowned for their stature and might in war, but as depraved as Cain in their selfish greed and arrogance. With the rest of humankind, they treated the generous and patient God with contempt.

There is a lesson here which is repeated elsewhere in the Bible. To choose a marriage partner merely because of physical attraction is a great mistake. Solomon was a connoisseur of beauty. Yet he eventually admitted, *'Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain'* (Proverbs 31:30). Marriage is set out in the Bible as a lifelong contract, lasting beyond the years when merely physical attraction will pall. Nor will a difference between the partners in religious beliefs automatically resolve itself with time. Ahab King of Israel married Jezebel, the charming but idolatrous princess of Zidon (1 Kings 16:31). Her introduction of Baal worship to Israel stained a whole century of the nation's history.

Time for Judgement

With the degradation of the family of Seth, there was no redeeming feature left to sweeten the seething mass of humanity upon which the Lord gazed with sorrow. *'Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth'* (Genesis 6:11-12). 'Corrupt' is an ugly word. We use it of a corpse. God had given good, wholesome laws upon which people could base their lives, but they had twisted them. According to some

translations, all flesh had corrupted *HIS* way on the earth.

Eventually, the Creator had had enough. It was time for a clean sweep. He would hose the whole earth down with a flood of water, and cleanse the filth out of His sight. *'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever,'* he declared, *'for he is flesh; his days shall be 120 years'* (v. 3).

An alternative translation reads *'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever'*. God's Spirit striving with flesh is an idea that runs through the Bible. God did not sit back casually while people became engrossed in wickedness, and then suddenly drop on them without warning and blot them out. Throughout those centuries of rebellion, He had been steadily pleading with people to repent. His spirit, through Enoch the prophet, had sounded the warning of approaching judgment (Jude :14–15).

In the last generation, Noah, too, according to the Apostle Peter had been *'a herald of righteousness'* (2 Peter 2:5). God never destroys people without giving them every chance to repent. And even now, if we take

a simple interpretation of Genesis 6:3, He was going to hold off the day of wrath for another 120 years, just in case one or two more might change their way.

It is a very different picture from the harsh and vengeful God of the Old Testament which modern critics of the Bible usually paint. In fact, they are wrong. He always has been *'merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness'* (Exodus 34:6). These were the characteristics of God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. He went on to demonstrate His mercy in His repeated forgiveness of the grumblings and rebellions of the Israelites in the wilderness.

But justice too must have its place, and when people stubbornly harden their hearts, there is no remedy but to punish them. So, the deadline was ringed way ahead in the divine calendar. Meanwhile people butchered their fellows and blood-stained the fair earth.

David Pearce
(to be continued)



Abraham—Friend of God

THE NAME ABRAHAM occurs so many times in the Bible, that he is obviously a very important character. The man Abraham was originally called Abram, and his name first occurs in Genesis 11:26: *'When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.'* (The date is about 2000 BC.)

Terah, his father, led his family out of their home in Ur, in Babylonia, and they all headed north between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. But in the New Testament commentary on this event we learn that God had previously instructed Abram to go on this journey (Acts 7:2–3), and so we must note that Abram was doing God's will.

The family arrived in Haran, and settled there, and after Terah had died Abram led a group, including his nephew Lot and his family, south-west until they reached Canaan (the land that we know as Israel). Genesis 12:1 is again a record of God telling Abram: *'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'* God stresses to Abram that he must leave his previous life behind, and names three components of his previous life:

1. *your country* = Ur
2. *your kindred* = the family who settled in Haran
3. *your father's house* = Lot.

And it was in Canaan that God told Abram, *'To your offspring I will give this*

land' (Genesis 12:7). So this was to be their Promised Land.



There are three very important mentions of Abraham that we must now look at:

1. *'He was called a friend of God'* (James 2:23). This is the only occasion where this wonderful title is used of anybody.
2. *'In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'* (Genesis 12:3). So Abraham was to be a key link in God's dealings with all people.
3. *'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham'* (Matthew 1:1)—the first words in the New Testament. Abraham was clearly therefore an ancestor of Jesus.

Living in Canaan

Abram's nephew called Lot had journeyed with him to Canaan, but as both their herds of animals were very large, this caused a rift in the family, and Abram suggested that they separate. Lot chose to go east, but shortly afterwards *'The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever"'* (Genesis 13:14–15). We must notice that God included 'east', showing that even Lot's area was in the future to become Abram's.

God performed a special miracle for Abram and his wife Sarai when they were both very old, and baby Isaac was born. God then changed Abram's name to Abraham (which means Father of a Multitude), and Sarai's name was changed to Sarah (Princess).

Abraham lived until he was 175, and was privileged to see his twin grandsons Esau and Jacob grow up for their first 15 years. God's chosen line for the promises he made to Abraham was through Jacob. Jacob's name was later changed to Israel, and that is why the nation has been known as Israel. Their other name 'Jews' was probably derived from the area where the tribe of Judah (one of Jacob's 12 sons) settled.

A Brief History

When we're introduced to Abram the world had progressed approximately 2000 years since God made Adam and Eve. God gave the first couple the ability to choose their actions. We call this "free will". Of course God could have made us differently and programmed us to do certain things, but then He could not have rewarded or punished us.

We are not told much about that first 2000 years, except that people chose not to obey God, and so He sent the devastating flood which destroyed all except Noah and his family (Genesis 6). It was when God again saw that the new generations were not obeying Him, that He chose the godly man Abram, and told him to leave his home in Mesopotamia and to travel to Canaan. From that time onwards the rest of the Bible is about Abraham's family and their near neighbours. About five hundred years after Abraham, Moses led the nation of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt, and gave them God's system of laws and religious life known as "The Law of Moses".

About 1000 years after Abraham, King David played an important part in Israel's development, and then, to cut a long story very short, Jesus Christ was born to a Jewish woman called Mary. Christianity split away from Judaism, and both systems

of belief have existed side by side until now.

The Importance of Abraham

God made a number of promises to Abraham, which are an extremely important part of the Bible. Three of these are:

1. *Abraham's family were promised their land (Israel) for ever*
2. *they would become a very large nation;*
3. *and through him all families of the earth will be blessed.*

The more we consider the man Abraham, the more we realise the greatness of his faith. He left the sophisticated, prosperous city of Ur, and lived for the rest of his life in tents. He *'died in faith, not having received the things promised'* (Hebrews 11:13). Abraham and others are still asleep in death, waiting for the time when Jesus returns and raises the dead. Until that time Abraham, David, Mary and all those of us who believe, have to wait to receive the promises.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians (in modern day Turkey), he used Abraham's name eight times in chapter 3. He quoted God's blessing to Abraham from Genesis 12:1-3:

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 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." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Galatians 3:7-9).

When God said *'In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'*, this was in fact the Gospel (or 'Good News'). This shows that those of us who are Gentiles (not Jews), also have real hope. It's a lovely link between the Old and the New Testament.

Believers in Jesus Christ must be baptized, showing their commitment to Jesus and the Lord God. In baptism we wash away our old life, and its politics and human aspirations, and become a part of God's family. Then, as Paul concludes:

In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise' (Galatians 3:26-29).

So we too will inherit those promises God made to Abraham.

David Simpson

Titus—A Faithful Companion

WE KNOW VERY LITTLE about Titus, compared with prominent disciples such as Peter, John and of course Paul. But what we do know about him is not only interesting and instructive, we see a wonderful example. We see him as a tireless worker for the Lord Jesus, and as a reliable companion for Paul in his work of preaching the Gospel.

Titus was a Greek from Antioch, probably one of the first of Paul's converts. We find him first as a pupil, and then called by Paul '*my true child in a common faith*' (*Titus 1:4*). Although he is not mentioned in the book of Acts, which is the account of the growth of the early church, Paul mentions him several times in his letters, and obviously trusted him and gave him much responsibility.

A Faithful Companion

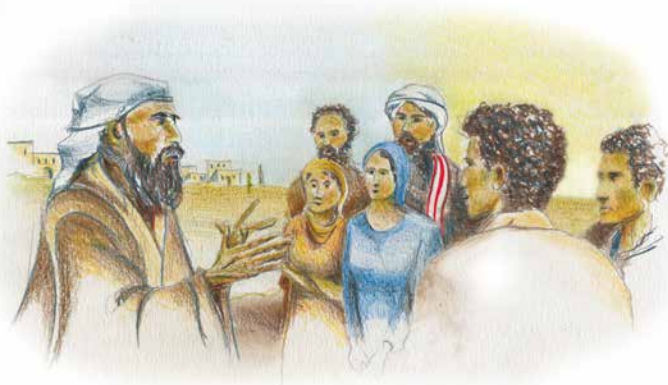
Titus was one of Paul's companions with Barnabas on their journey to Jerusalem

(Acts 15:2 and Galatians 2:1–3). Here they had to deal with the problem of circumcision. There were Jewish Christians who were insisting that when Gentiles (non-Jews) became Christians they must become Jews and be circumcised. It seems as though Paul deliberately took Titus, a Greek, in order to demonstrate that this was not necessary.

It is difficult to establish the chain of events in his life. When we see him as Paul's companion, he would be learning from Paul and Barnabas how to deal with the various situations and problems which arose during their preaching and pastoral work. He would learn tact, wisdom, humility, patience, and a Christlike attitude. He was evidently an able administrator and a trustworthy messenger. He probably carried Paul's first letter to Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:6–7)

There is a suggestion that he may have been the brother of Luke, the writer of the

Gospel of Luke and the Acts, who was also a Greek. Luke does not mention himself in Acts, but we know when he's present because the narration switches from 'they' to 'we'. There are occasions when Titus was probably present but he is not



mentioned, so perhaps Luke's modesty extends to both of them.

'My True Child'

Paul addresses him as *'my true child in a common faith'* (Titus 1:4). He was probably baptised during Paul's first missionary journey. More than half of the mentions of his name are in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. It is known that he visited Corinth at least three times. Such was his influence at Corinth that Paul wrote, *'Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you... he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit'* (2 Corinthians 8:16, 23).

From these few references to Titus there emerges a record of one of the most trusted and valuable helpers anyone could have in the important work of preaching the Gospel of Christ. He was a true lifelong servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is much to appreciate about a person who dedicates their whole life to the tremendous responsibility they carry, and working alongside the Apostle Paul would have been a wonderful experience.

After Paul's release from his first imprisonment, his two companions Titus and Timothy were with him. Timothy was left at Ephesus, then Paul and Titus visited the island of Crete. They found that there were issues to deal with among the new congregations. Titus was the ideal person for this task, and Paul left him there with a job to do: *'I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into*



order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you' (Titus 1:5). The last we see of him is in Paul's final letter, in which he mentions that Titus has left for Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10).

Tradition has it that Titus died of old age in Crete.

He was a truly remarkable brother in Christ, who along with his companions was willing to dedicate his whole life to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and serving his brothers and sisters. He provides a lesson and an example for all followers of Christ.

Tom Ingham

Questions? Comments?

We'd love to hear from you!

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MG

The devil is an angel who rebelled: *'How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!... You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high..." But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit' (Isaiah 14:12–15).*

He was not alone, other angels joined him: *'Another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth... Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him' (Revelation 12:3–9).*

God has not destroyed the devil because He is merciful and wants him to repent: *'As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live' (Ezekiel 33:11).*

Ed

GOD HAS GIVEN US freedom of choice, whether to obey Him or not. There is no indication in the Bible that the angels have that freedom of choice. They're always referred to as God's servants who do His will (for example Psalm 103:20, Psalm 104:4).

Death is the consequence of sin (Romans 6:23); the angels are immortal (Matthew 22:30), therefore they don't sin.

Some people assume that Isaiah 14 is referring to a fallen angel. However, if you look at the context (v. 4) it's clear that this is actually a colourful and symbolic prophecy about the king of Babylon.

Likewise, some people assume that Revelation 12 is a description of Satan being cast out of heaven in the beginning. But there are problems with this assumption. Revelation is a prophecy of things that were in the future when the book was written (Revelation 1:1)—not things that were in the past. Revelation 12 is a complicated vision which, along with the rest of Revelation, draws heavily on symbology from the rest of the Bible. If part of the vision is describing a pre-history angel rebellion, it's very difficult to imagine what the rest of the vision could be about. (According to a common interpretation, chapter 12 is actually a prophecy of the Christianisation of the Roman Empire in the 4th Century AD.)

God is supremely merciful. The Bible tells us a lot about His mercy towards humans. It says nothing about His mercy towards fallen angels. The devil is going to be destroyed (Revelation 20:7–10). I believe the devil is a picture the Bible uses for human sinfulness. I suggest the passages you've quoted, along with all the other references to the devil in the Bible, make far more sense when you look at it like that.

Bible Firsts

IN MANY COUNTRIES January is the first month of the year. The first month of the Jewish religious calendar was ABIB. ADAM was the first man; JESUS the first to be raised to eternal life.

1. Match these other 'Bible firsts' to the words in the blue strip below. The first: **woman; Jewish month (alternative name for Abib); named priest; woman mentioned in the New Testament; named city; church to receive a letter in Revelation; son of Abraham; person to see the risen Jesus; murderer; Christian martyr.**

**CAIN ENOCH EPHESUS EVE ISHMAEL MARY
MELCHIZEDEK NISAN TAMAR STEPHEN**

2. Anagram: **doomed fog knight.**

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus says we should seek this first. The 7-letter word in the answer, together with the other 13 words in the blue strip, are all in the Wordsearch.

**B Q M V S U S E J N C
K I X A N F E A W E A
K A B E R C Z M H H I
R A M A T Y Z O A P N
K E D E Z I H C L E M
A D A M E S N W T T S
H M Q N V A R O O S I
J D O I S H M A E L J
W C E I S U S E H P E
H V N Q X O N E A A X
E K I N G D O M N J O**

References: Genesis 3:20, 4:8, 4:17, 14:18, 16:15; Esther 3:7; Matthew 1:3; Mark 16:9; Acts 7:54-60; Revelation 2:1.
Answer to anagram: KINGDOM OF GOD

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