

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured Articles

The Value of Money (p. 3)

On Mount Moriah (p. 10)

The Writing of the New Testament (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 Value of Money

THE VALUER wandered around the house, then strolled back into the kitchen and shrugged. "There's some stuff we can sell, you might get a couple of hundred." That would go a small way to offsetting the cost of the house clearance.

So that was the value of a lifetime's accumulated possessions. The furniture they'd scrimped and saved for, the treasured knick-knacks, the "That'll be worth something one day", the tools he'd bought over the years and cared for so well, the kitchen stocked with outdated gadgets, all the things they'd held on to just in case... In the end, they had to pay to dispose of it. What had it all been worth?

Some people, on the other hand, manage to bequeath big estates to their families. This counts as success. But again—what is it worth? The Preacher who wrote Ecclesiastes gathered huge wealth, but then sat back and took stock:

I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool?... This also is vanity (Ecclesiastes 2:18–19).

Most of us would agree that there's more to life than money. Most would agree that actually there are

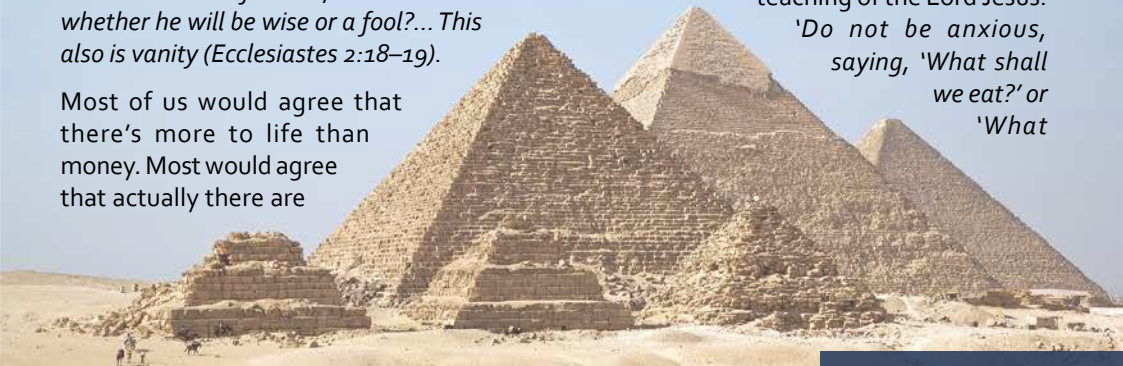
many things that are more important—family, friends, health and happiness, for example. A life spent chasing money is a life wasted. *'Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf' (Proverbs 11:28).*

A Successful Life

This is the timeless advice of the Apostle Paul: *'Godliness with contentment is great gain' (1 Timothy 6:6)*. That, says Paul, is what makes for true success in life: to be at peace with God, and content with what He has provided. He continues: *'For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world' (v. 7)*. People have tried. The Egyptian pyramids were stocked with treasures which generations of Pharaohs buried alongside themselves in the hope of carrying them into the afterlife—but which only ended up as booty for grave-robbers and archaeologists.

Paul goes on: *'But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content' (v. 8)*. He's probably referring to the teaching of the Lord Jesus:

'Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What



shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you’ (Matthew 6:31–33). So Paul says, even if you only have life’s basics, you know that God is looking after you. When your priorities in life are right, the outcome will be contentment.

He continues: *‘But 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’ (1 Timothy 6:9–10).*

A Wasted Life

It happened in the First Century, in the time of the apostles when the Christian faith was new and vibrant, and it still happens now. People lost their faith and wandered away. There are various reasons this might happen, and one of them is *‘the love of*

money’. As Jesus himself said again, *‘No one can serve two masters, for either he will*

hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money’ (Matthew 6:24). To serve God is to ‘seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness’—to look forward to the Kingdom of peace, justice and godliness which is to come, and attend to living your present life in preparation for that time. This brings contentment. To serve money will lead to being ‘pierced with many pangs’.

Paul himself was probably a wealthy man, one of the elite of his generation. When he was converted and became a servant of Christ, he abandoned his prestige and wealth. He later recalled:

Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:7–11).

Paul’s second letter to Timothy was written while he was a prisoner, awaiting execution. He died with no wealth to his name, and nothing to pass on—except this: *‘Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing’ (2 Timothy 4:8). His had been a worthwhile life.*



Ordinary People— Extraordinary Encounters



JESUS DIDN'T SPEND his time with the influential or powerful. He walked dusty roads with fishermen, paused for widows, stood still for the suffering, and reached out to people whom society had pushed to the margins. To meet Jesus was to be truly seen, despite one's weakness, and not to be condemned but helped. His power was not only in his miracles, but in his insight. He knew what people were going through, and he knew what they could become.

These encounters weren't random. They were signs of something much greater: the good news of God's coming Kingdom, a day when sorrow, injustice and death will be no more. Until then, Jesus calls his followers to live out those Kingdom values by acting with his compassion, particularly toward those in need.

Broken But Not Beyond Reach

Whether it was leprosy, poverty, depression or shame, Jesus met people in their lowest places.

One man, ostracised with a disease no one could cure, approached Jesus and said, *'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean'*

(*Luke 5:12*). Jesus didn't recoil, he touched him. That one moment broke a lifetime of isolation.

A woman, weakened by 12 years of bleeding and humiliation, reached for the hem of his garment. She was healed by her faith, but also restored, noticed, honoured (*Matthew 9:20–22*).

There was Mary Magdalene, released from deep inner torment (*Luke 8:2*). Jesus didn't just heal her, he gave her belonging and purpose. She stood by his cross when others fled (*Mark 15:40*). She was the first to see him risen (*16:9*).

And there was the criminal on the cross. A dying man, whose life had unravelled, he saw something in Jesus that no one else there recognised: a coming king. In one of Jesus' final acts, he turned to the man beside him and spoke hope: *'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise'* (*Luke 23:43*).

None of these people came from privilege or power. They came as they were, hurting, desperate, open-hearted. And they were changed.



Called From the Everyday

Jesus didn't recruit his disciples from the corridors of influence, but largely from the shores of Galilee. Peter was impulsive and outspoken, full of hope one moment and full of fear the next. Thomas doubted. Judas couldn't let go of his own agenda.

Yet Jesus chose them, not for their perfection, but their potential.

Peter denied knowing Jesus, not once but three times (Matthew 26:69–75). Yet the risen Jesus didn't cast him aside. He cooked him breakfast by the sea (John 21:9) and gently restored him, telling him, *'Feed my sheep'* (vs. 15–17). Peter went on to lead and suffer for the Gospel with conviction and humility.

Thomas missed the Lord's first resurrection appearance. Doubting, he wanted proof, and Jesus gave it. *'My Lord and my God!'* Thomas confessed (John 20:28), in one of the most heartfelt declarations in the New Testament.

The message is clear: Jesus doesn't wait for us to be ready. He calls us now, with our questions, flaws, and fears. He invites us to grow into the people God created us to be.

A Hope That Transforms

These encounters weren't ends in themselves. They pointed forward: to a world healed, restored, and ruled by justice and love.

The hope of the Gospel is that Jesus will

return to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, which will be a perfect realm where death and sorrow no longer exist. He invites us to be part of that future. Not because we're good enough, but because we believe, we follow, and we're willing to be changed.

Until that day, we are called to be his hands and heart in the world: bringing hope to the discouraged, kindness to the forgotten, and truth to those seeking it.

Someone Like Us

Maybe you've felt invisible, unworthy, ordinary. The people who followed Jesus weren't polished experts, they were people like you and me.

Have you written yourself off as too ordinary for God to use? Jesus' closest followers were fishermen and former outcasts. He sees who you are and who you can be.

Where have you felt unseen or disqualified and how might Jesus respond to that? His response is never rejection. It's restoration.

What would it mean for your life to be part of something bigger, God's coming Kingdom, and a community of believers until then? Jesus is still meeting people today through his words, his people, and his promises. And he's still changing lives.

Perhaps it's time to let him meet someone like you.

Richard Webb

Value For Money



ANTIQUE FAIRS are ever popular. People bring along their family heirlooms, often with interesting back stories. The articles are assessed by experts, and the final piece of the conversation is a pronouncement of their value in financial terms. It can be anything from a pittance to a “small fortune”.

What happens with the articles is down to the owner. There are comments such as,

“It will be passed on to the next generation.”

“It will remain in the family.”

The item may be sold, and its financial value realised. But whether or not it's sold, the family will acknowledge that its real value lies in its history and the associations it has, perhaps of a beloved parent or grandparent.

When items are brought which represent wartime service, for example medals and

flight logs, the approach may be different. Both expert and owner respect the item's history, and may not either suggest or seek a financial value. What the individual did is beyond price—“Priceless!”, they say.

Beyond Price

One day a really rich young man came to Jesus and asked, *‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’* (Matthew 19:16).

Jesus responded with a challenge. *‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’* He proceeded to explain: *‘You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*

The young man assured him that he had kept all these commandments. Was there anything else he needed to do? Jesus said, *‘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.’*

When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful, because he was very rich. And Jesus then said, I believe with sadness, *‘Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven’* (v. 23).

The real values here were to be found in spiritual things. Materially the young man had it all: wealth, education, position, a positive spiritual background, the desire to find something which was beyond price—eternal life in God’s Kingdom.

But the price was too high. The balance sheet looked like this:

Material Wealth

Comfort and ease

Respectability

Status with friends

A conscience untroubled by the poor and needy of the world

Resources to use how I see fit.

Spiritual Wealth

Following Jesus - a life of giving and serving

Personal self sacrifice

Facing the challenges which come with the Christian life

Faith that God will provide

Loving to the uttermost

Forgiveness and freedom from guilt

The prospect of eternal life in God’s Kingdom.

True Riches

All this is ultimately challenging. Where do we begin finding out

about the true riches? Firstly there is God’s example:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (John 3:16–17).

Jesus told a parable:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (Matthew 13:44).

The man finds something that is more precious than everything else he has. Obtaining it will require sacrificing everything. At first at least it will require a single-minded sense of purpose—nothing should be allowed to get in the way of having this treasure.

What we should realise is that Jesus is not talking about material treasure. He is talking about the Good News of the Kingdom of God—the most amazing hope that God has held out to us, by giving His Son to die to save us—as our balance sheet above clearly shows.





The Source Book

These true riches are not readily recognised in our world. Sadly it is not a place where wonderful spiritual truths are easily seen and obtained. Perhaps we would not value them at all if they were obviously available. And of course we all get embroiled in providing the material things of life. Happily, we do have a source book, in the Bible, God's message to us. It contains the key to the real treasure, the secret of everlasting life.

When the kings and queens of the United Kingdom are crowned they are presented with a Bible with these words: "We present you with this book, the most valuable thing this world affords. Here is wisdom, this is the Royal Law. These are the lively oracles of God."

What the new monarch does with this book is for them to decide. For us it is worth reflecting with Bible in hand on each of those phrases which describe the Bible itself.

Wisdom. *'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding' (Psalm 111:10).*

The Royal Law. The Apostle James identifies this: *'If you really fulfill the royal law*

according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well' (James 2:8).

Lively oracles. "Lively" is an old word that means "living". *'As good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 4:10–11).*

It is good and well to acknowledge that the book is God's message to us, but its real value is only revealed when we get to know its teaching, and then use it as a spring board for all our hopes in this life, and for living daily to the honour and glory of God. It shows us especially who the Saviour is, and what he can do for us. Jesus said, *'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6).*

Jesus showed us the way, lived the way, and shows us the truth. Clearly we need to search for him and find him. It is through him that we will find God and build a relationship with Him. Here we will find true riches.

David Nightingale

On Mount Moriah

ISAAC STOPPED SUDDENLY. For some time he had been climbing with a vague feeling of unease, as though something was not quite as it should be. Now it had come to him in a flash. Of course! They had forgotten to bring a lamb.

He and his father Abraham had set out three days ago, travelling north to some destination which had been kept from him. This morning they left the servants behind, and his father indicated that they were going to ascend a hill to offer a sacrifice. It was a routine they had followed many times at the altar in Beersheba, and although Isaac had never been to this place before, he cheerfully shouldered the sticks they would need to burn the offering when they got there. Walking with a load on his back made conversation difficult, and his father had

kept up a good pace, in spite of his advancing years. In any case, the old man seemed to be wrapped up in his thoughts. So they mostly climbed in silence. Not until they were well on the way did it occur to Isaac what was wrong. They had brought the fuel, and his father had picked up the knife, and the fire was smouldering in its travelling pot, but by a strange lapse of memory, Abraham had come without an animal to sacrifice.

Isaac called, *'My father!'* Abraham answered, *'Here I am, my son.'* Isaac said, *'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?'* Abraham's reply was slow but firm: *'God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son'* (Genesis 22:7–8). It was a strange answer,

and Isaac had plenty of time to ponder it as they headed towards Mount Moriah.



What God Was This?

When we stop to look into the background to this incident, we are at first shocked, then deeply moved, and at last overwhelmed.

It all began four days before, at Beersheba. That evening the heavenly messenger had appeared to Abraham after a lapse of many years. He left him one clear, simple instruction: *'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you'*

(v. 2). Abraham was stunned. How could he kill his son, his only son, the child he and Sarah had waited for all those years? What God was this, to give him an heir, and then to snatch him away in such a monstrous way? Nor was that all. What of those promises that God had made about the great nation that was to descend from Isaac? How could they be fulfilled if Isaac was to be killed? We can imagine the confused and nightmarish night that Abraham passed, his soul torn between heartbreak, doubt and his reverence for God.

Let us make it plain before we go any further that the God of the Old Testament is not a cruel, barbarian deity demanding human sacrifice from His worshippers. God abhorred the child sacrifices of the Canaanites and the other nations round about. This is what He said to the Israelites in later years, when they had turned to human offerings in their depravity: *'They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire,*

which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind' (Jeremiah 7:31).

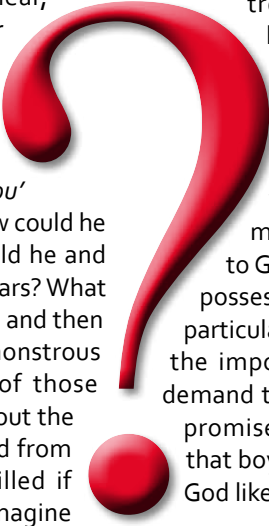
Why?

Why then did God ask Abraham to do this terrible thing? The first answer is that *'God tested Abraham'* (Genesis 22:1).

He was putting Abraham's faith under tremendous pressure, to see if he would still stay loyal. How easy it would have been for Abraham to have shut his mind to the word of the Lord, or to have waited a few days to see whether God would change His mind. How many of us would give to God on request the most precious possession we have, without a fuss? In particular, how could we have reconciled the impossible conflict between God's demand that we slay our child, when the promises He had made depended on that boy's survival? Could we still trust a God like that?

To his eternal credit, Abraham showed his faith to be that strong. The record states that he rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey (v. 3). His solution to the problem of the promises was simple, but full of trust. This is how the writer to the Hebrews puts it:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back (Hebrews 11:17-19).



Abraham had decided that even if Isaac had to be put to death, God would be able to bring him to life again, and so ensure the fulfilment of the promises. What tremendous faith this man had!

Isaac Foreshadows Jesus

We have still not exhausted the depths behind God's request. As we come to expect when we study the Bible, there is more to those incidents than meets the eye. The other reason why God asked Abraham to offer his son, was to teach us all a little more about what it would cost when God gave up the life of His dear son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you notice the similarities between Isaac and the Lord Jesus? Both were born miraculously by the power of God. In Isaac's case, God revived the fertility of Abraham and Sarah. For the birth of Jesus, God's Spirit created life in the virgin Mary's womb. Both men were dearly loved by their fathers. Both climbed a hill in order to die, and both carried the wood for their great sacrifice upon their backs.

In fact, we can at this point press the comparison further. For it transpires from the Genesis account that Isaac turned out a willing victim. He co-operated with his father in meeting the will of the Lord. When they reached the top of the hill, there was no lamb waiting there. As Abraham began to bind him hand and foot, Isaac would realise that he was the intended sacrifice. It would have been very easy for the strong young man to have struggled with his father and escaped to safety. The fact that he accepted and obeyed God's requirements, even into the jaws of death,

strengthens this wonderful allegory of the sacrifice of Christ.

What happened in the end? Did Isaac die? The drama heightens. Abraham laid Isaac on the altar, and actually reached the point of raising the knife to slay his son, when the voice of the angel came to him again: *'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me'* (Genesis 22:12). Abraham's faith had stood the test, and he was spared the agony of watching Isaac die. Instead, he looked around and discovered there was a ram there all along, hidden behind him in a bush. He offered this to God instead of his son. But his prophetic words, *'God will provide for himself the lamb'*, would come true one day. Jesus was the Lamb and the Son, provided by God as a sacrifice for our sins (John 1:29).



Meaning For Us

What is there in this incident that has meaning for us? Firstly, we need to grapple with the fact that sometimes God will ask of His servants a sacrifice that hurts. Sometimes it is wealth or career or fame. It may be family or a friend. Sooner or later, and perhaps many times, they will have to choose between what they want to do themselves and obeying what they know to be the will of God.

The other lesson that speaks to our hearts, springs out of the pain that Abraham suffered as he faced the prospect of cutting off the life of his son. Every parent will understand the cost of the decision he had to make. Yet only thus, and still but dimly, do we reverently taste the depth of the love of God Himself, when He gave up His Son into the hands of cruel men to die. It was the only way to conquer sin—for a perfect man to suffer death, and to overcome with love the hatred of his enemies. But the consigning of His Son, His only Son, that He loved, to that fearful end, is a measure of the mercy of God to us all.

David Pearce
(to be continued)

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

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g l ea n ing s

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The Writing of the New Testament

THE BIBLE is divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. This article is focused on the New Testament, which commences with the record of Jesus Christ's ministry on earth, in the four Gospel records.

Each Gospel is named after its writer: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They each give their own account of Jesus in their own way. It is not always clear how we know who did the writing, but they do give clues. It is clear that all four have their own style and each represents Jesus in a different way, so that we can build a complete picture of his ministry. This picture is consistent with what was written beforehand in the Old Testament, and what was written afterwards in the rest of the New Testament.



*The oldest known New Testament manuscript—
a fragment of John's Gospel dating from
the early 2nd Century AD.*

There are in excess of 5,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts, ranging from fragments to copies of whole books. We can be certain that the text we have is at least 95% genuine. There is more evidence for the writing of the New Testament than for the complete works of Shakespeare—which, of course, were written much nearer to our own time.

True Accounts

Are the Gospel records true and authoritative? We have not only the testimony of the Bible itself, but scholars agree:

"About the end of the second century the Gospels were revered as sacred books by a community dispersed over the whole world, composed of men of different nations and languages."

*(A Guide To The Gospels by
WG Scroggie D.D.)*

The following accounts of the writing of the Gospels are by two Second Century scholars:

"Those that contained the genealogies (Matthew and Luke) were first written; it is understood that Mark wrote his Gospel from matter preached by Peter; and that John last of all... wrote a spiritual Gospel."

(Clement of Alexandria)

Matthew issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and laying the foundation for the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, a companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence in Ephesus in Asia."

(Irenaeus of Lyon)

From the Gospels themselves we get the picture of the Lord Jesus, the circumstances in which he worked, and the audience for which they were intended. Each Gospel writer was one of the first disciples who laid the foundations of the Christian community, and each presents an eyewitness account in his own way.

The Jesus of History

"At this time [33 AD] there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people amongst the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who became his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have reported wonders. And

the tribe of the Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day."

(Josephus, the Essential Works by Paul L. Maier, 1988)



Roman bust, said to be Flavius Josephus, the First Century Jewish historian

It is important to note that people were writing and making records of what happened with regard to Jesus, and the Gospel records can be verified through that background.

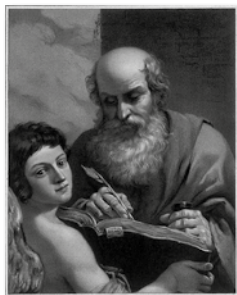
The Gospels were written soon after the events they describe, when eyewitnesses would have been available to challenge inaccuracies.

Those who know the Bible would acknowledge that although Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were willing authors they have been helped by God, through His power, the Holy Spirit. This has ensured the accuracy of their statements and also that the Gospel records tie in with all that has been written in the Old Testament and indeed the rest of the New Testament.

As Jesus himself said, *'These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you'* (John 14:25-26).

The Living Lord in the Gospels

Let's look at how the Lord Jesus is presented with a different emphasis in each of the Gospel records.



Matthew
(*surnamed Levi*). He was a converted tax collector, one of the disciples of Jesus. He represents Jesus as the King of the Jews, the Messiah (Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27).

The Lord Jesus is the one who is to be the King of Israel in the future Kingdom of Heaven. In his Gospel we have the genealogy of Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus. We see Jesus' baptism, messages, and miracles. He is the one who has conquered sin and death, and as a consequence he has been raised from the dead and his return is confidently expected.



Mark
(*also known as John Mark*). There is no definite reference to the author in the Gospel itself. In the rest of the New Testament there are references to him (for example

Acts 12:12, 25).

A key verse in Mark's presentation of the Lord Jesus is, *'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'* (Mark 10:45). Frequent

use of the words *'immediately'* and *'straightaway'* indicate Jesus' dynamism.

Jesus ministered to the needs of others by preaching, teaching, healing and ultimately giving his life. After his death and resurrection he commissioned others to follow in his steps, with his authority.



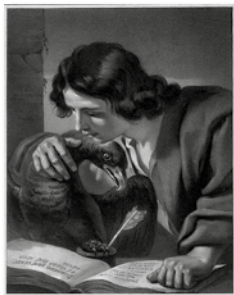
Luke
is called *'the beloved physician'* (Colossians 4:14). He portrays Jesus as the Son of man. It is well worth noting the way in which he introduces himself

to the readers of his Gospel: *'Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught'* (Luke 1:1–4). 'Theophilus' means "Lover of God".

Luke takes a great deal of trouble to show us the compassionate Saviour in his historical context, with careful reference to the Old Testament. From the Lord's birth through to his death and resurrection, Luke demonstrates that *'the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'* (Luke 19:10).

Luke was also the author of the Acts of the Apostles. There he is often to be

found together with the Apostle Paul, as can be seen from the passages where the narrative slips into the first person (for example Acts 27:1). Paul mentions him a number of times in his letters (for example 2 Timothy 4:11).



John

is described as a 'son of thunder' (Mark 3:17), and also 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (John 21:20). He, along with Peter, was a fisherman. Whilst Luke pre-

sents us with a picture of the Son of man, emphasising his humanity, John presents Jesus as the Son of God. This is how John presents his purpose to us:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30–31).

John's Gospel is renowned for this statement: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16).

John was not only a Gospel writer but also he wrote three letters which are preserved in the New Testament. At Jesus' command he also wrote the book of Revelation.

Unified Message

Each of the Gospel records provides its own unique witness to the ministry of

Jesus, and yet it clearly is the same Jesus throughout them all. They present the Serving Messiah, the Son of man and Son of God, who died for us on the cross and then, the third day, rose bodily from the dead and is alive for evermore.

He ascended to heaven and left on record a command and two great promises:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28: 18–20).

When the Lord Jesus was taken up to heaven, after he had been raised from the dead, angels said to his watching disciples, '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 Gospel writers present eyewitness accounts of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The most important event of all time so far, is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. He is now alive for ever. That, ultimately, is the witness that all those who knew him give us through the Gospel records. It is the same message that runs through the rest of the Bible.

Jesus, as a Jew, would be fully instructed in the Old Testament. Much of his teaching and his life is a fulfilment of promises and prophecies made in the Old Testament.

There is one other reason why we can be absolutely sure of these accounts of the

life of the Lord Jesus. They are God-given records, and what the early believers wrote about Jesus is what God intended us to have. As Paul wrote to Timothy:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3: 16–17).



The whole focus of history is upon another great event—more important even than Christ’s resurrection, but actually a consequence of it. He will return. We have seen that promised (Acts 1:11). There is no question of it. He will come at a time of world chaos and warfare, at a time when the people of Israel, though in their own land, will be in dire distress, apparently on the brink of total destruction as a nation (Zechariah 12–14). Jesus will return to Jerusalem and usher in a period of judgement to restore order to the world and ultimately a new age of peace throughout the whole earth (Isaiah 2).

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by

a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:30–31).

What of You and Me?

So however unlikely it may seem to you right now—there is a real possibility that soon you will meet Jesus Christ face to face.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil (2 Corinthians 5:10).

What a prospect! Happily for us, God has shown us His love in giving Jesus to die for our sins, and through our belief and God’s grace we have the prospect of everlasting life in the Kingdom of God which Jesus Christ will establish at his coming. This was also the hope of those who first met Jesus long ago:

Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:22–23).

David Nightingale

Questions? Comments?

We’d love to hear from you!

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Important Things Jesus Said to People

Here are seven people who met Jesus. They're all in the grid.

CLEOPAS MARTHA NICODEMUS PILATE CRIMINAL
LAWYER SAMARITAN

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

Match the people to important things
Jesus said to each of them:

- The greatest commandment is to love God (Matthew 22:35–38).
- True believers must be born again by water and spirit (John 3:3–5).
- Jesus is 'the Christ' (Messiah) (John 4:7–26).
- 'You will be with me in Paradise' (Luke 23:39–43).
- Moses and all the prophets foretold what would happen to Jesus (Luke 24:13–27).
- Jesus' kingdom is not like ours, and is not obtained by fighting (John 18:35–37).
- Jesus is '*the resurrection and the life*' (John 11:21–27).

Anna Hart

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