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GLAD

Issue 1703

TIDINGS

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD



FEATURED ARTICLES

Reflections

Why did Jesus Have to Die?

Worship in the Temple

WHAT IS GLAD TIDINGS?

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 mankind; 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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YOUR QUESTIONS

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EDITORIAL

REFLECTIONS

There’s a belief that humans are essentially just like other animals. In the evolutionary struggle, so the thinking goes, we acquired bigger brains and became the dominant species. But basically we’re just animals.

The Bible says different. In its first chapter, it tells how God created the world and all life upon it—and the final, crowning act of creation was humankind.

‘Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them’ (Genesis 1:26–27).

In the Image of God

According to the Bible, we’re not just animals—unlike all the others, we are made in the image of God.

What does that mean? It could be physical appearance. The angels were God’s workers when He created



the world (Job 38:7), and we know that we look like the angels (Hebrews 13:2). But it’s more than that. We, alone among all animals, have minds that are in a way like God’s—we are able to appreciate and respond to Him: *‘You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour’ (Psalm 8:5).*

What does this mean for you and me? Or to put the question another way, why did God make us like this? Firstly, He gave us ‘dominion’ over the rest of creation—we have a responsibility to look after it. Secondly, He wants us to respond to Him.



REFLECTIONS OF A MAN OF FAITH

Part 1

Genesis 3 tells how our first parents Adam and Eve rebelled against God and opened the gulf of sin between humanity and God. The whole of the rest of the Bible story is about God repairing the damage.

Being Holy

When God brought the nation of Israel out of slavery in Egypt He made a covenant that they would be His people and He would be their God (Exodus 6:7). He gave them a Law to teach them His ways, and He gave them the instruction: *“Be holy, for I am holy”* (Leviticus 11:44).

That is our purpose in life. We are made in the image of God—because He wants us to be like Him, to be reflections of Him.

The fact is however that the gulf is too wide. We are not capable of being holy. *‘For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’* (Romans 3:23). We need help. This, of course, is why He gave us His

Son, Jesus Christ. *‘God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us’* (5:8).

When we’re baptised and become followers of Christ, we enter into a relationship with God. The Bible speaks of us as His ‘children’. As children, we are learning from Him and learning to be like Him. Because of the way we are, we’re not going to be very successful, but God knows this. He has made a promise to those who faithfully try to live lives that reflect His holiness (1 Peter 1:15). When Christ returns, God will remove our sinful nature and at last make us perfect (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

Then, at last, we will fulfil our purpose. We’ll reflect the excellence of God Himself. The Apostle John urges us to consider what this means. *‘Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is’* (1 John 3:2).



Eighteen years ago I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. The surgeon said he should be able to add 15 years to my life. I consider myself truly blessed!

Since the diagnosis I have become a walking medical dictionary, and made considerable use of the health service, with such things as migraines, high blood pressure, nosebleeds, pleurisy, a badly broken leg, an eye defect, a cyst behind an ear, a heart attack, cataracts, and now a diagnosis of mesothelioma—a particular form of lung cancer for which there is no cure.

This might seem to be a list of complaints, but in fact it is not. During this time my wife and I have been truly blessed in many ways, and have been able to carry on with our life of faith. We have had constant reminders of our mortality, but these are also reminders of just how much we need our heavenly Father’s care. All life, including this one, is in His hands, and I am so thankful to have been blessed with a happy life of over 80 years.

Four important observations arise from thinking about my situation, as a Bible believer.

1. ENCOURAGEMENT FROM OTHERS

In the Bible’s letter to the Hebrews there is a list of people who served God in their lives—they were ordinary men and women who became extraordinary because of their faith in what God had promised (Hebrews 11:39–12:7). Why not read chapters 11 and 12? Elsewhere in the Bible we read about these people’s lives. They were not easy by any means. But they all died in faith (11:13), awaiting the resurrection from death. The Bible urges us to share their faith.

One of the blessings of this faith is the love and care of those who share it, who are thinking about us and praying for us and sending messages of encouragement and support.

2. ON THE FOCUS LORD JESUS CHRIST

The key figure of faith is of course the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am happy to consider him as my Saviour. He was born into humble circumstances and lived a life representing all that God, his Father wished—his Father’s

grace and truth, love and mercy (John 1:14).

Jesus underwent cruel torture, mocking and death upon the cross. He did all this without once succumbing to his human nature, without sin or complaint (1 Peter 2:22). He gained a great victory, rose from the dead and lives for ever, providing us with the hope of life everlasting. Now he overrules his new creation, his bride, the community of his disciples, the church (Ephesians 5:25–30). He is the Great High Priest ministering before God on behalf of all faithful believers (Hebrews 2:17). His victory over sin and death shows us the Father's love and gives us the hope of life, through resurrection, in the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15).

3. THE DISCIPLINE OF THE FATHER

This was all done out of God's love, not just for His Son but also for all of us (John 3:16). But it isn't just plain sailing into the Kingdom of God. We have to prepare, making God's will our number one priority, showing to

others the love we have received through Jesus (Acts 14:22). In addition, we must recognize that our nature is weak so must be overcome—quite a challenge! We have been promised support with this. There is the Bible's message, then there is prayer, with the promise that the Lord Jesus will be our constant companion (Matthew 28:20), and he has sent angels out to help us.

But this passage in Hebrews tells that God disciplines us. *'It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons'* (Hebrews 12:7-8).

This is right at the heart of the many things that appear to have gone wrong in my life—actually they are opportunities, challenges to develop the faith I have in God and the Lord Jesus.

4. HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

One of the prime examples in Hebrews 11 is Abraham (vs. 8–12). God made him certain promises, and

by belief and baptism into Jesus we too can inherit those same promises (Galatians 3:29). Through resurrection at the return of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:23) we have the hope of everlasting life in the Kingdom of God on earth, a world at peace reigned over by King Jesus, fully restored and beautified, as it was when God first created the earth. Instead of being afflicted with human nature we will be transformed by the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), in company with all those who down the ages have lived by faith and have longed for this time of righteousness and peace.

Let's now simply share the passage of Hebrews together with the above in mind:

'These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth...

'And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect...

'Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God' (Hebrews 11:13, 39–40, 12:1–2).

DON'T forget

'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives' (12:5–6).

What an amazing and humbling thing it is for the disciple of Christ, that our heavenly Father loves us enough to keep us on the right track, so that by faith, we will attain to that Kingdom He has promised!

There is a passage that I have found particularly helpful, during this period of my life; it's worth reading it in more than one version. This is from the *New Testament in Modern English* by J B Phillips:

'As you live this new life we pray that you will be strengthened from God's boundless resources, so that you will find yourselves able to pass through any experience and endure it with courage. You will even be able to thank God in the midst of pain and distress because you are privileged to share the lot of those living in the light. For we must never forget that he rescued us from the power of darkness and re-established us in the kingdom of His beloved

GETTING COMFORTABLE

Son, that is, the kingdom of light. For it is by His Son alone that we have been redeemed and have had our sins forgiven' (Colossians 1:9-11).

All this has come from knowing what the Bible teaches us, reading it expectantly, hopefully and with a determination to follow its teachings by faith in daily life. What a privilege it is to be told these things and to know that, however challenging this life becomes, we travel hopefully. There is a vision ahead provided by God's promises to us.

DAVID NIGHTINGALE
(to be concluded)

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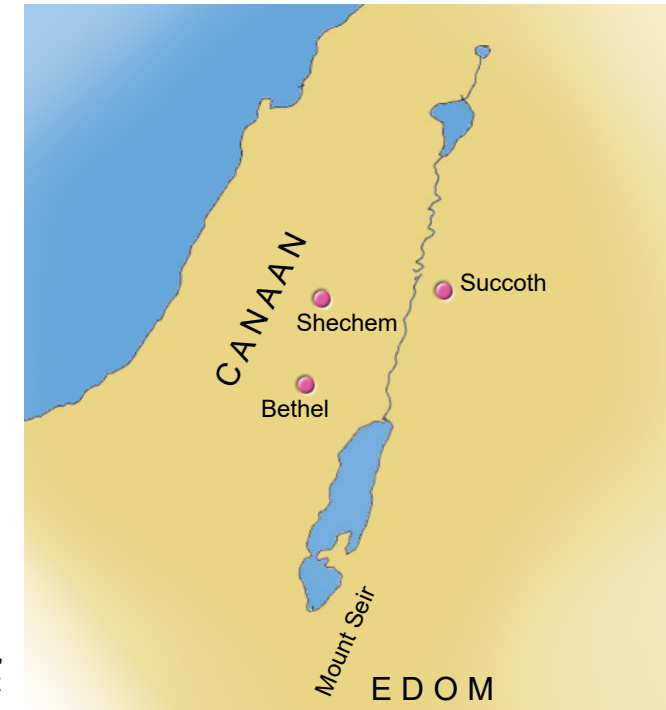
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Jacob was immensely relieved to see Esau departing to his base at Mount Seir, south of the Dead Sea. Even though the present he had given his brother had cost him dearly, he felt it was a small sacrifice to be rid of his company. Furthermore, he had no intention of following Esau home, in spite of his brother's polite invitation. Instead, he stopped at Succoth, east of Jordan, built himself a house, and settled there with his flocks.

It sounds perfectly natural for Jacob to want to build a house on his return to Canaan. A close follower of these studies, however, might raise an eyebrow at this detail (recorded in Genesis 33:17). Abraham and Isaac, Jacob's forefathers, had been careful only to live in tents. They were waiting for God, in His good time, to give them the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (Hebrews 11:8–10). As sojourners and pilgrims, they would not force God's hand by presuming to settle down in a permanent dwelling. Perhaps Jacob was shaken by his recent adventures, and felt the need of



four solid walls. His proper destination was Bethel, where he had an appointment with God to repay the vow made there 21 years before when he first left home. But Succoth seemed safer, and he stopped there for a long while.

At Shechem

When eventually he did move on, it was across the Jordan westwards to Shechem, where he pitched outside a prosperous city of the Canaanites.



visiting Jerusalem to hand over a collection of money for the poor Christians in Judea, found himself arrested, and spent the next five years or so in prison, giving him opportunity to write his finest epistles (Acts 21).

We are told in Psalm 34 that

'The angel of the LORD encamps round those who fear him, and delivers them' (v. 7). The writer to the Hebrews adds that the angels are 'ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation' (1:14). One of the greatest comforts for disciples of the Lord is the knowledge that, all unseen, the angels are watching over their lives, arranging events for their good. If the hand of the Lord sometimes deflects us from an evil path back into the right way by just such a painful situation as that which brought Jacob once more on the pilgrim road to Bethel, we can be thankful.

Taking Stock

Jacob seems to have felt the need himself for a spiritual overhaul at this time. Before leaving Shechem for Bethel, he gathered his household

Again, this seems to have been a mistake. If he craved human company, the Canaanites were not the best friends to cultivate. Before long, Jacob's daughter Dinah was abducted by a young nobleman from the city, and when two of his sons rescued her by trickery and murder, Jacob found himself forced to flee for fear of reprisals (Genesis 34).

Could it be that God was moving him on? So often in the Bible a change of circumstances swings a person round in their tracks. Saul went looking for his father's lost asses, ended up in the presence of the prophet Samuel, and found himself anointed king (1 Samuel 9). Joseph, abandoned by his brothers to die in a pit in the wilderness, was hauled out again and sold to a caravan of merchantmen who happened to pass by at the critical moment, thus preserving his life (Genesis 37). Paul,

together, and commanded them to hand over all the heathen idols they had acquired during the last years. *'So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem' (Genesis 35:4).* They then purified themselves, and put on a change of clothes (v. 2). So cleansed, they felt prepared to go to worship the great God who had befriended them so well.

This little episode is instructive. There are periods in the disciple's life when they need to take stock of progress. They can accumulate idols almost without realising it—that is, objects or habits insignificant by themselves and yet which in combination weigh down and crowd out the service of God, like a fruit tree overgrown with a tangle of criss-crossing branches. At such times drastic pruning is called for—a ruthless purging in the home and the diary of those things which they know in their heart are wrong. They need to look themselves squarely in the mirror, and ask whether they are ready to meet God. Christ could come any day!

Jesus makes this point himself, in one of his more pointed parables. A man came to a wedding feast who had not bothered to put on the clean white robe provided for the guests. Perhaps he thought his ordinary clothes were good enough. He had made no effort to get ready. *"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matthew 22:11–13).*

If you, reader, have done nothing to make ready for the Kingdom of God, there is still time to cleanse your life. Since the time of Christ, the waters of baptism have been the appointed





way in which we can wash away our sins, and put on the clean white robe of the name of Christ (Romans 6). And even if we are a seasoned disciple who long ago fulfilled this command, we sometimes need to haul the boat out of the water and scrape off the worldly barnacles that hinder our progress, before it is too late.

Back to Bethel

Jacob journeyed southwards and eastwards through the land of the Canaanites, thrilled, no doubt, by the green, terraced vineyards and olive groves, the clean outline of the mountains and the shimmering purple of the Dead Sea, reflecting the distant hills of Moab. These views he would remember from his younger days, and gratitude would fill his heart. He came to Bethel, from whence he had departed alone in weariness and fear over 20 years

before (Genesis 28:10–22). God had promised him at that time, *“I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land”* (v. 15). Now Jacob had become a great company, with wives, children, servants, herds and flocks, and his life had been preserved. He built an altar, pouring out his thanks, and set up a pillar at the same spot where he had once slept exhausted with a stone for a pillow (35:7).

To his great joy, the angel of God appeared again, repeating the Abrahamic promise of a numerous seed and the possession of the land, and confirming his new name, “Israel”, a prince with God (vs. 9–15). Jacob’s cup was full to overflowing, and his faith had never been so strong.

DAVID PEARCE
(to be continued)

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

A fundamental teaching of Christianity is that Jesus died *“for us”* (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18). What does this mean?

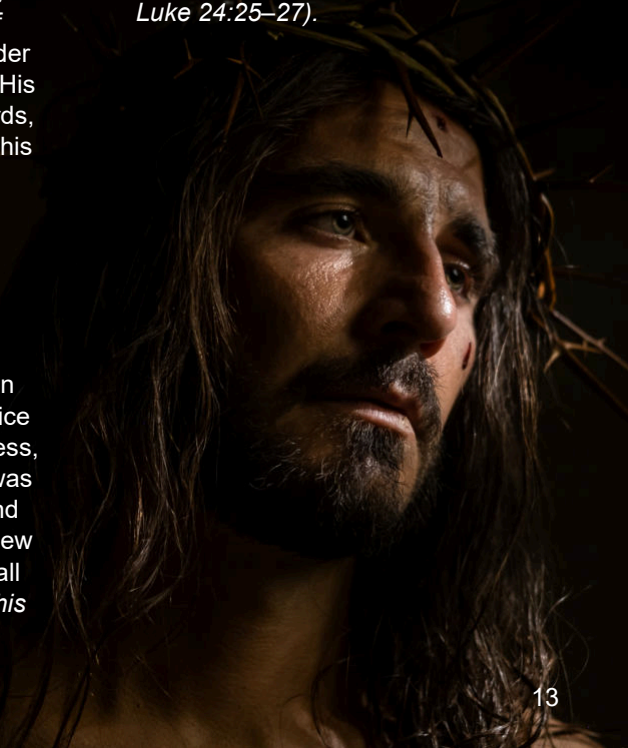
Jesus was mortal, so in the natural course of events he would—like us—die (Hebrews 2:14–18). But he did not die a natural death. Jesus was crucified—executed by the Romans. Moreover, according to the Bible, this sacrificial death was essential for our salvation. Many people struggle with this. Was God being cruel, or unfair? Was Jesus our substitute—that is, was God punishing him instead of punishing us? Did Jesus die in order to appease God’s anger with us? His death was horrific, by any standards, so WHY did Jesus have to die in this way?

It Was God’s Will

Jesus’ death was no unfortunate accident. The men who were responsible for torturing and murdering this totally innocent man were ‘wicked’, as they all had choice and made bad choices. Nonetheless, it was not a mistake of history. It was not merely a huge human error and miscarriage of justice. For God knew how they would react, and it was all part of the explicit plan of God: *‘This*

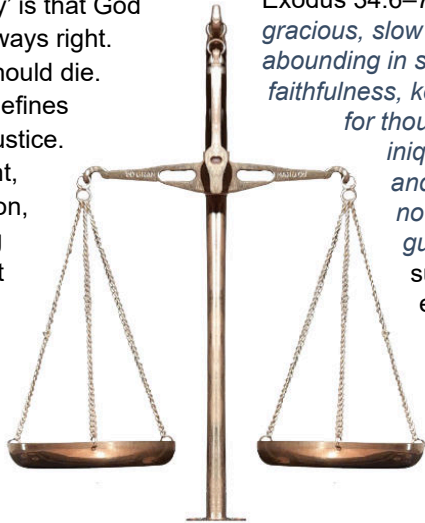
Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men’ (Acts 2:23).

This is a clear message of the Bible. It runs through the whole of the New Testament. It starts with the Gospels, is taught in the Acts, it’s reiterated in the letters by the apostles, and it’s a key theme in the Bible’s final book, Revelation. It had been prophesied in the Old Testament in many places, and Jesus himself said that it had to happen so that *‘the Scriptures should be fulfilled’* (Matthew 26:54–56; Luke 24:25–27).



God gave us His Son to offer us salvation (John 3:16). And this was to be by the sacrificial death of that altogether lovely man (John 12:27–33).

The simplest, and undoubtedly correct, answer to ‘why’ is that God said so, and God is always right. God said that Jesus should die. The God of the Bible defines moral standards and justice. He defines what is right, and so Jesus’ crucifixion, and everything leading up to it, was ‘right’. Not morally right on the part of those who did it, but ‘right’ in the sense that God actually asked it of His beloved Son, for His awesome purpose of salvation.



We could stop there, and humbly accept what God has said. But the Bible contains much more information than this. God has told us very much more about the death of His Son, Jesus. We do well to take note, because the Bible was written so that by ‘reproof, correction, and training in righteousness’ we can be ‘complete, equipped for every good work’ (2 Timothy 3:16–17). The historical accounts of Israel are ‘for our learning’ (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11). Much more so, the prophecies and accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion.

Our Natural Alienation from God

Throughout the Bible God shows us His character. The Bible is the only way we can find out about God. His characteristics are described in Exodus 34:6–7: ‘merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty...’ This is subsequently exemplified in His dealings with individuals and nations.

God is merciful, gracious, kind and full of compassion. But

He is righteous. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He has to behave in accordance with His moral standards. Unlike every one of us, He cannot do otherwise.

The death of Jesus was horrific. And the reason for it was dire. If we can comprehend this then it should evoke the correct response in us.

First of all, God hates sin. He cannot ‘look at wrong’ (Habakkuk 1:13). Of course, He can see sin. He knows everything, even what we are going to do or think (Psalm 139:1–6). But He shows great displeasure and wrath toward sin, and He does not (cannot) tolerate, delight in, or have fellowship with sin.

Adam and Eve had one simple commandment, and if they broke this the punishment was to be death. They broke it, and they died (Genesis 2:15–17, 3:1–19). They were changed. From that point they were both under God’s death sentence and were prone to sinful thoughts.

Their offspring inherited these characteristics, and so we are all mortal (1 Corinthians 15:21–22). With the one exception of Jesus, every human being having been tempted to do wrong has succumbed. We have all, like them, disobeyed God (Romans 5:12). This situation is extremely serious.

So much so, that in our natural state we are described as being ‘enemies of God’ (Romans 5:10). We are alien to His ways and thoughts; hostile to Him (Colossians 1:21–23). We are naturally opposed to Him. We do not please Him. That is why, without the Bible, we cannot work out a system of godly morality. It is not natural to us. The teaching of Jesus in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ (Matthew 5:1–11) is completely counter-intuitive to our natural inclinations—albeit that is the way he himself lived every day.

We might think that we, or others, are ‘nice, decent people’. But God’s assessment is different. Jesus himself said that only God is intrinsically good (Mark 10:18). The prophet David, quoted by Paul, said that ‘none is righteous’



(Romans 3:12, quoting Psalm 14:3). And the older I get, the more I realise how true this is of myself. This could be a source of deep depression. It could make one feel useless, a great failure and hopeless. But that is not what God wants. He wants a relationship with us, in which we acknowledge our unworthiness; and He asks for a humble, grateful response to the sacrifice of His Son at Calvary. And the more we understand what Calvary was about, the more we are likely to respond in the right way.

God cannot tolerate sin. That is why He cannot let sinners live for ever. He cannot. It is that simple. Death is the correct outcome (Romans 6:23). It is what we have earned by sinning. It is what we deserve. You have earned death. I have earned it, and earn it

every day. We cannot argue with God. He owes us nothing. Everything we have is from Him, and any blessings are more than we deserve. The blessing of Jesus is far, far more than we deserve.

In this sin-death state there was never anything we could do to save ourselves (Psalm 49:7–14). But God provided the solution, right from the Garden of Eden.

The Need for Sacrifice

Noah offering sacrifice after the Flood



The solution involved sacrifice. The Old Testament has many, many examples of animal sacrifices, starting in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:21). Faithful men like Noah and Abraham offered sacrifices to God (Genesis 8:20, 12:7–8). In the Law of Moses which God gave to Israel in the books of Exodus through to Deuteronomy, sacrifices were an integral part of worship.

Some people think that this is cruel. Why should an innocent animal have to die because of us? Many of the sacrifices were because people had done wrong things. They had to put their hand on the head of the animal as it was killed (Leviticus 1:4, 3:2, 4:4, 4:24). This was an admission of guilt: a statement that they, themselves, deserved to die for what they had, or had not, done. Blood had to flow (Hebrews 9:22). The Law also taught that life was in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). So when blood

flowed the life was lost. Sin caused death. And if people offered these sacrifices in obedience to God, then He forgave them their sins.

However, the New Testament explains that the sacrifices of bulls and goats could not actually 'take

away' sins (Hebrews 10:1–4). In fact, the animal sacrifices should have heightened awareness of sin and its associated guilt. Those who thought about this would have realized the need for an ultimate, perfect sacrifice. Not the sacrifice of an animal, but of someone who was like them.

The apostle states categorically that the sacrifice of Jesus was different from animal sacrifices. It could and

did remove sin for those people who believe and try to obey (Hebrews 10:12–14). This is because Jesus was just like them. He could have sinned, but did not. He was totally obedient, even to death (Philippians 2:8). Jesus was not God. He showed us the character of God, but—unlike God—he was flesh and blood. He was tempted but did not succumb (Hebrews 4:15). He could, and did, die. But God raised him from the dead. Now, like God, he has divine nature. Now he cannot be tempted. He cannot sin. He cannot die. A member of the human race who lived a perfect life and died voluntarily for us.



What God Wants

In fact, God never took any delight in the blood of animals or even their death. It was not dead animals that He really wanted (1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11–17). What He wanted

was the correct response in the man or woman making the sacrifice. A humble and repentant heart and a willingness to obey Him (Micah 6:8).

That is exactly what Jesus did:

'When Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book"' (Hebrews 10:5–7).

So Jesus died as a loving act of obedience, because God asked it of him, because he knew that God was right.

God asks us to follow Jesus.

God's mercy is always with judgment. He has to judge sin. That is necessary in order to declare His righteousness. It is horrific to read the details of Jesus' death. We should find them hard to read. But in his death, he declared publicly that "God is right". And in that awesome act there was absolutely no disagreement between the

Father and the Son. It was the ultimate loving act of them acting jointly together.

This is explained in Romans 3:21–26, a very important passage. Here is an excerpt:

Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified... through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation* by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness... so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

I know people who are traumatized by the knowledge that they have killed someone by tragic accident. In order to try to make up for their guilt they may work tirelessly for a charity. How much greater should our reaction be to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ! Because as sinners we are all, every one of us, responsible in part for the death of Jesus.

There is a lovely old hymn, which reflects these sentiments:

*"Was it for me thy flesh was wounded sore, thy body lifted high on cross of shame... Was there no other way for any man to live but thou must die, no joy but through thy grief?... Lord, let me... come to take the pardon thou didst gain..."***

*'Propitiation' means 'to appease', to cover over wrongdoing.

**Hymn 221 in the Christadelphian Hymn Book.



The events at Calvary were awesome. It was the plan of God with which Jesus lovingly complied. They both worked together to offer us eternal life. To reconcile us to God. Without this sacrifice we would perish, as we deserve. Jesus died that we might live. May we respond with gratitude, humility, and a determination to obey.

ANNA HART

Questions?

Comments?

We'd love to hear from you!

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WORSHIP IN THE TEMPLE

Then he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel.'
(1 Chronicles 16:4)

It was King David's vision to build the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem and provide a permanent resting place for the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was a gold-clad box, with a lid called the "mercy seat" which was made from one piece of solid gold and included two inward-looking winged figures—cherubim. The Ark represented the dwelling place of God. It had been made during the wilderness journey to the Promised Land, and was sacred to the people of Israel. Years earlier, the wicked sons of Eli the High Priest had taken the Ark into battle against the Philistines as a talisman to try to ensure their success (1 Samuel 4:2–11). Israel was routed in the battle and the Ark was captured by the Philistines. 1 Samuel chapters 5–7 tell how God brought the Ark back into Israel.

David was a man of great faith. He wanted to bring the Ark into his capital city, Jerusalem. He pitched a tent, and brought the Ark into it as a temporary home in preparation for building God's temple (1 Chronicles 15:1). But he was not able to build the temple: God told him, "You may not build a house

for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood" (28:3). Undeterred, he set about making preparations so his son Solomon could build it.

Generous Contributions

David made financial and other necessary preparations for the building of the temple, with its worship and organisation. He had evidently discussed this with Samuel the prophet, before Samuel died several years earlier (1 Chronicles 9:22). Together they established the working



King David bringing the Ark into Jerusalem

arrangements of the new temple which was yet to be built. He obtained from Ornan the Jebusite the threshing floor on the top of Mount Moriah, where the temple should be built (1 Chronicles 21:18–30). This was probably the very place where Abraham had taken his son Isaac when he was instructed to offer him as a burnt offering, a thousand years before (Genesis 22). Although the temple would be for the worship and instruction of the Jewish people, the fact that it was built on land purchased from a Jebusite anticipated the inclusion of Gentiles (non-Jews) into the overall purpose of God.

Appointments

The final entrance of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem was a time of great rejoicing. It was secured in its tent, and the people offered their worship and thanksgiving, through their sacrifices and peace offerings. It was an occasion when fellowship was shared and enjoyed by the people, with the distribution of bread and wine supplied by the king. It was also the time when the music, singers and musicians for the temple were appointed. The leader of the choir and orchestra in Jerusalem was Asaph the Levite, along with other Levites (men from the clan of Levi), and priests (Levites from the priestly family of Aaron).

At this time the tabernacle, which previously housed the Ark, was located in Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39). Heman and Jeduthun were based there, with Zadok the priest. As well as an orchestra consisting of lyres, harps and cymbals, the choir of

288 singers with their teachers was divided into 24 groups of 12 in each, who played and sang *‘for the service of the house of God’* (1 Chronicles 25:6). The aim of this was to teach the people the things and ways of God, but principally to be to the praise and glory of God Himself.

The Hymn Book

‘Then on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the Lord by Asaph and his brothers’ (1 Chronicles 16:7). This was the start of the formalisation of the Jewish hymn book, which was to be used in temple worship. This first provision of words and music was a

collection of songs which are now included in the book of Psalms in the Bible. They were parts of what we know as Psalms 96, 105, 106, 107, 118, 136, and possibly 132.

These are all psalms of rejoicing and hope, of praise and thanksgiving to God for His mercy and truth towards His people Israel. They look back to the sad and disappointing way Israel behaved during their time in Egypt and then during the wilderness journey. The psalms recall the people’s difficulties and afflictions, how their cries to God were heard and answered, and how He saved them out of all their troubles. But the

psalms also look forward to the time of peace and safety when the promised Kingdom is established in fulfilment of the ancient promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God also made a specific promise to David himself (2 Samuel 7:12–16)—a prophecy which looked into the future *‘for a great while to come’* (v. 19). This promise looked forward to David’s descendant Jesus Christ who will sit on his throne for ever (Luke 1:31–33).

Praise

In these psalms David is fulsome in his praise of the wisdom of God for all that He had done and will do. David believed that God is faithful and steadfast. He was confident in his faith and commitment to the promises of the God of Israel. He wanted the singing and music in the temple to reflect and redound to the goodness of God, and for the praise of the choirs and orchestra to be fulfilling and inspiring for the people. For far too long they had been astray from the true worship of God, and David saw his role as to bring the people back to God. The king was concerned that the nation should be true to the covenant which they had willingly embraced, and which had been confirmed at Horeb in the wilderness journey, when the people promised, *“All that the LORD has spoken we will do”* (Exodus 19:8).



Model of Solomon's Temple on Mount Moriah by Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology

VIC AUCOTT
(to be continued)

YOUR QUESTIONS

God said, 'Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!' (Isaiah 10:5). He said this, then the Assyrian army ransacked, pillaged and massacred Israel. Why should we worship a God who does that?

AC

→ Editor

God is at work in world affairs in many ways. 'The Most High rules the kingdom of men' (Daniel 4:17). He uses human politicians and militaries to carry out His purpose. Inevitably, this means that He uses human wickedness—if He only used virtuous authorities, He would be able to do nothing!

And He doesn't just use people's good deeds. He used the Assyrian army to judge the nation of Israel for its rebellion. The Assyrians were famously cruel, and history shows that the Assyrian invasion of Israel was horrific.

Isaiah continues: 'When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes' (Isaiah 10:12). God used the Assyrians to punish Israel, then He punished the Assyrians themselves.

What do we learn from this? God does not only give blessings, He also executes justice. And He may use wicked people to do that work. That does not mean He condones their wickedness.

The crucial point is this: as the patriarch Abraham said, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:25). Unpopular though it may be in our day and age, the fact is that God knows best, and what He does is right.

Perhaps the ultimate example of God using human wickedness to carry out His will is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter told a crowd of Jews shortly afterwards, "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23). It was God's will that His Son should die as a sacrifice for our sins. He used the jealous Jewish rulers to engineer it.

God operates in our world. Because it's a world of violence and suffering, His work may result in suffering. But we have the guarantee that He does what is right, and the promise that it won't always be like this. The prophet Isaiah looked beyond his own age, beyond our age, to the Kingdom which God has promised to establish when Jesus Christ returns: 'The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.' (Isaiah 32:17).

CROSSWORD



13 "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not ..." (Hebrews 11:1)

14 11 down occurred at this time in Joseph's life (Hebrews 11:22)

15 To relate (Hebrews 11:32)

16 "Whoever would draw near to God believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Hebrews 11:6)

DOWN

2 The previous name of the woman who received power to conceive when she was old (Genesis 17:15)

ACROSS

1 One of the sons in 7 across (Hebrews 11:20)

3 Abraham was told that his descendants would be innumerable as the grains of this on the seashore (Hebrews 11:12)

5 By faith, Noah made this to save his family (Hebrews 11:7)

6 By faith, he offered a more acceptable sacrifice than his brother (Hebrews 11:4)

7 By faith, he invoked future blessings on his two sons (Hebrews 11:20)

10 By faith, she gave a friendly welcome to the spies (Hebrews 11:31)

3 Those who are faithful must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who do this to him (Hebrews 11:6)

4 A faithful king, an ancestor of Jesus (Hebrews 11:32)

6 In the distance (Hebrews 11:13)

8 The brother of 6 across (Hebrews 11:4)

9 By faith, Moses left here (Hebrews 11:27)

11 By faith, Joseph gave directions concerning these (Hebrews 11:22)

12 By faith, the walls of Jericho did this (Hebrews 11:30)

(These clues use the ESV Bible. If you're using another version, some words may not be quite the same.)

COLIN JANNAWAY



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