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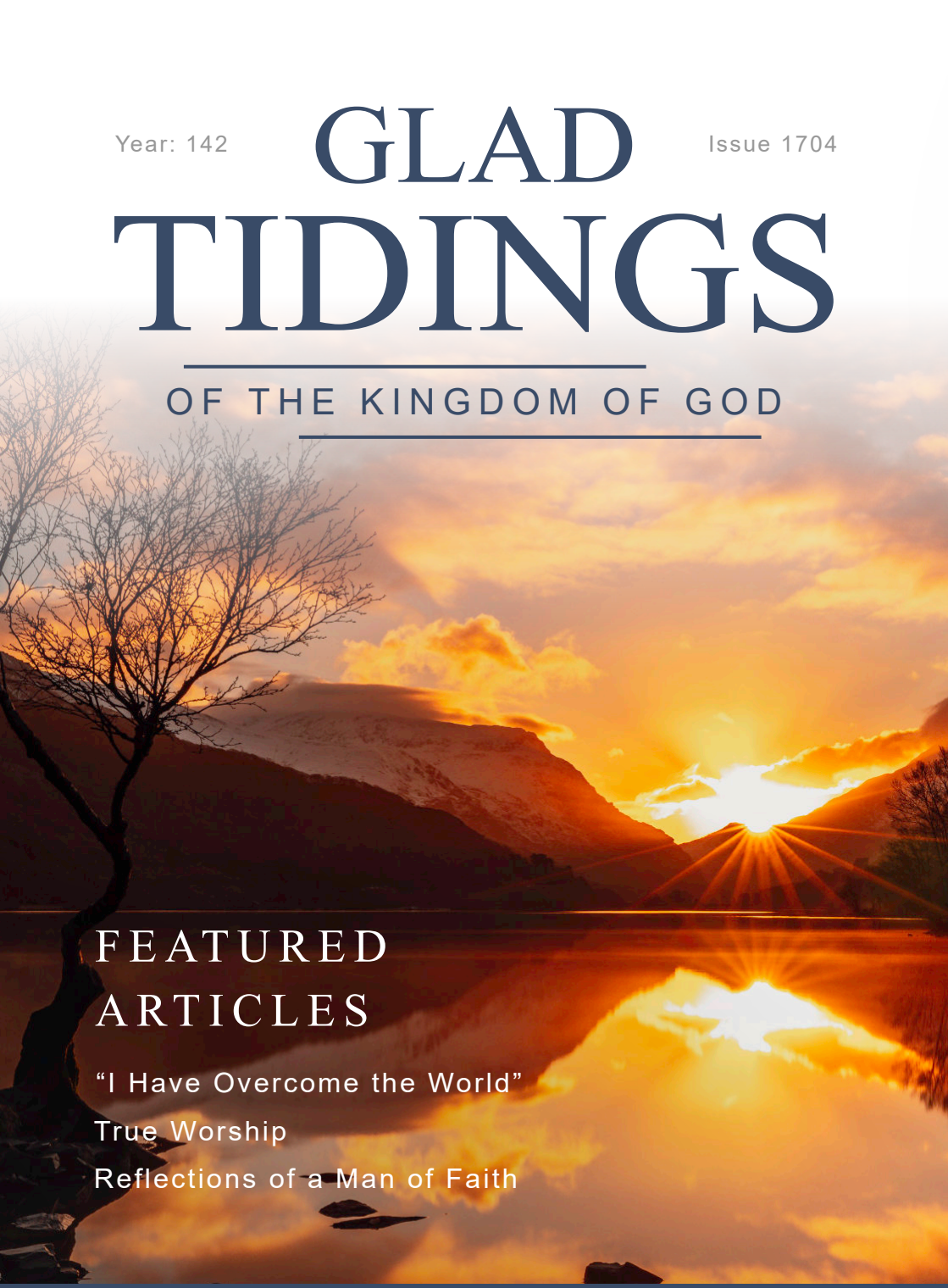
GLAD TIDINGS

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD



FEATURED ARTICLES

"I Have Overcome the World"
True Worship
Reflections of a Man of Faith

www.gladtidingsmagazine.org

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ISSUE 1704

3
"I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD"

5
THE JOURNEY OF REDEMPTION

9
TRUE WORSHIP

12
TRAGEDY STRIKES

14
LUKE THE PHYSICIAN

16
REFLECTIONS OF A MAN OF FAITH

22
YOUR QUESTIONS

23
BIBLE READER'S WORDSEARCH

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"I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD"

As he shared his last evening with his friends, Jesus Christ told them, *"Take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).* That night he was arrested, and the following day he was executed.

What went wrong?

Let's join him in the upper room in Jerusalem, on the night before the Passover feast. *'When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end' (John 13:1).* All four Gospel records present accounts of that precious evening. Jesus washed their feet, comforted them, prayed with them, shared a meal and gave them the commandment, *"Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19)*. Ever since, his faithful disciples have shared that simple feast to celebrate their fellowship with him and with each other.

And he warned them of what was approaching:

"Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:32–33).

Preparation For His Death

He knew that he was going to die, he was prepared for it (John 10:17–18). He was concerned to prepare his disciples for it, as well as he possibly could. They did not yet understand what he had to do—that he was the Lamb of God, who was going to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Fifteen centuries earlier, God delivered the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The first chapters of Exodus describe how He sent His servant Moses with the demand, *"Let*

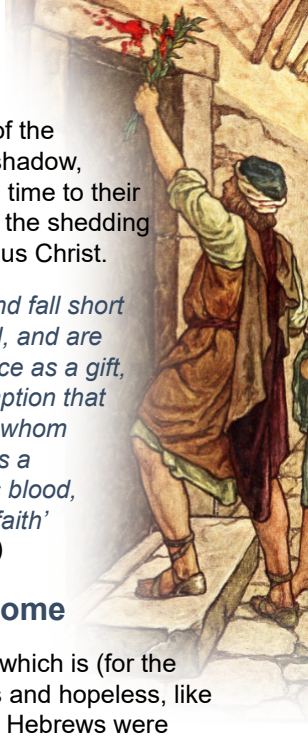
my people go!" (Exodus 9:1). Pharaoh refused, and God entered a trial of strength with Pharaoh and his gods, by means of a series of plagues by which Egypt was systematically humiliated and demolished. In preparation for the tenth and final plague, which finally forced the Egyptians to let them go, God told the Israelites to kill selected lambs and daub their blood on their doorways.

"For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt" (12:12–13).

That was the origin of the Feast of Passover, which Jews have observed on that day of the year ever since.

On the afternoon that Jesus died on the cross, Jews all over Jerusalem were slaughtering their lambs in preparation for keeping the feast. None of them would have any idea that that year, God Himself was participating in the ritual—not with a lamb, but by the death of His Son, the perfect man, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 3:16).

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



The great events of the Passover were a shadow, pointing forward in time to their ultimate fulfilment: the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ.

'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith' (Romans 3:23–25)*

How to Overcome

We live in a world which is (for the most part) godless and hopeless, like Egypt in which the Hebrews were enslaved. If we do nothing, we are under sentence of death. But if we put our trust in God's power and promise, and take refuge in the blood of the Lamb which He has provided, then we will be saved from death and freed from tyranny. The Exodus story is not just history, it's an illustration of God's plan of salvation.

There is a magnificent vision in the Bible's final book, in which a song is sung to Jesus Christ: *"You were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).*

So, far from being a defeat, the obedient sacrifice for sins of Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, was a momentous victory. He has overcome the world, and he invites you and me to share in his victory.

THE JOURNEY OF REDEMPTION

Everyone is in need of redemption. Our nature is characterized by sin: *'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23).* But God can redeem us, being *'justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (v. 24).*

Redemption holds profound spiritual meanings. The concept is found throughout both the Bible's Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament it refers to regaining possession of something in exchange for payment or clearing a debt. In the New Testament it takes on added meaning—to be delivered from the bondage of sin and death through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Meaning of the Word

The English word 'redemption' comes from the Latin *redemptio*, which literally means 'buying back'. In the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, the word *gâ'al* is often used to denote buying back property. For example, *'If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold. If a man has no one to redeem it and then himself becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it, let him calculate the years since he sold it and pay back the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and then return to his property' (Leviticus: 25:25–27).* It is also used of delivering someone from loss or slavery. For example,

"Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement'" *(Exodus 6:6)*. The word signifies God's powerful act of delivering His people from slavery, fulfilling His role as their Divine Redeemer.

In the Greek New Testament, the word *apolytrosis* signifies release obtained through the payment of a ransom, ultimately fulfilled in Christ's redemptive work. For example, *'justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus'* *(Romans 3:24)*. In this context, the 'ransom' is the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus, which makes forgiveness and reconciliation with God possible (1Timothy 2:5–6).

The Greek noun *apolytrosis* appears ten times in the New Testament and is used primarily by the Apostle Paul in his letters, to describe the release or deliverance that God provides through Christ.

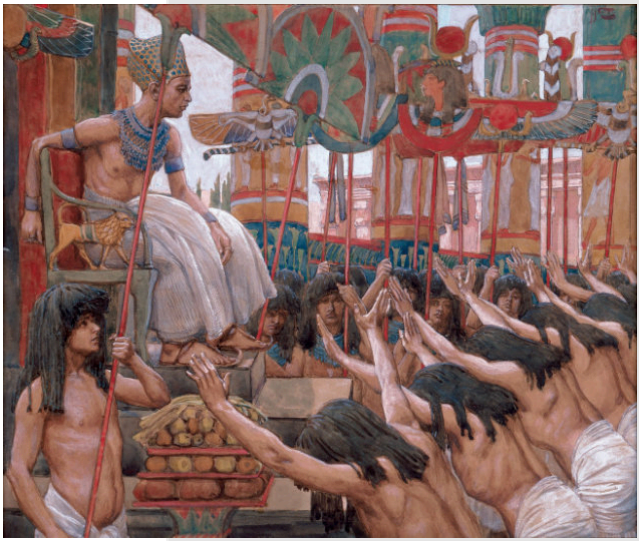
A related Greek word is the verb *ōlytropö*, which means 'redeemed' or 'ransomed'. It refers to God delivering believers from the bondage of sin and death through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, *'You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot'* *(1 Peter 1:18–19)*.

Peter teaches that Christ offered his life—his precious blood—by which our redemption was accomplished.

Old Testament Pictures

The Bible is filled with stories that exemplify the theme of redemption, from Genesis to Revelation. These stories show God's unfailing love, abundant grace, compassionate care and transformative power in the lives of individuals and entire nations.

In Genesis 37–50 we find the story of Joseph and his brothers, which illustrates how God intervened in



Joseph reunited with his brothers

events to bring about redemption. Despite being sold into slavery and facing numerous trials, Joseph persevered, and throughout his journey the phrase *'the LORD was with Joseph'* is repeated, highlighting that God's constant presence and intervention sustained him through every hardship.

Ultimately, Joseph forgave his brothers and saved his family from famine. In Genesis 50:20 we read, *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."* This powerful and beautiful quote reveals how God transforms human evil into a redemptive purpose.

In the book of Ruth, we encounter a lovely story of redemption through the relationship between Ruth and Boaz. Ruth, a Moabite widow, found herself in a vulnerable and poor position, relying on Naomi's God for guidance. Yet through God's providential care, she met Boaz, a kind, generous and righteous man who acted as her kinsman-redeemer (the word is *goel,* which is related to *gaʾal)*. Ruth explicitly recognised him as a redeemer in Ruth 3:9, asking him to take responsibility for her protection. Boaz, following God's law and acting with integrity, redeemed *(gaʾal)* both the land of Naomi's family and Ruth herself through marriage (Ruth 4:3–10). Taking place at the city gate, the act was lawful and publicly recognized, with elders witnessing the transaction. This redemption is remarkable in several ways. It restored not only property but also Ruth's dignity and security. She entered the family line that ultimately led to the Lord Jesus Christ, showing how God's providence works through human actions to accomplish His redemptive plan.

Ruth gleaning in Boaz's field

New Testament Parable

In the New Testament, one of the most well known stories of redemption is a story of Jesus which is sometimes known as the "parable of the prodigal son" (Luke 15:11–32). Although the parable does not use the word 'redemption'

Return of the prodigal son

directly, it gives a symbolic picture of what redemption looks like.

Jesus' story depicts a young man who squandered his inheritance in a sinful lifestyle—symbolizing the way people drift from God and become trapped in their fleshly desires. However, upon realizing the error of his ways, he humbly returned to his father—a symbol of repentance and turning back to God. The father lovingly welcomed him, restored him, and celebrated his return—symbolizing God's mercy, forgiveness and the full restoration He offers to those who come back to Him. In simple terms, the story shows how God redeems us in real life: He receives us with love, frees us from our past and gives us a new beginning.

Redemption and salvation are closely linked, but they are not exactly the same. Redemption is more specific than salvation. It refers to the purchase or release of someone through the payment of a price. The Lord Jesus directed us to the very centre of his redeeming work when he said that the Son of Man came *"to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*. Redemption, then, is the act—Christ offering himself as the ransom. Salvation is the result—the deliverance, forgiveness and new life we receive as that price has been paid for us. The story of redemption reminds us that every ending in God's hands becomes a new beginning.

BAHAR RAEISI

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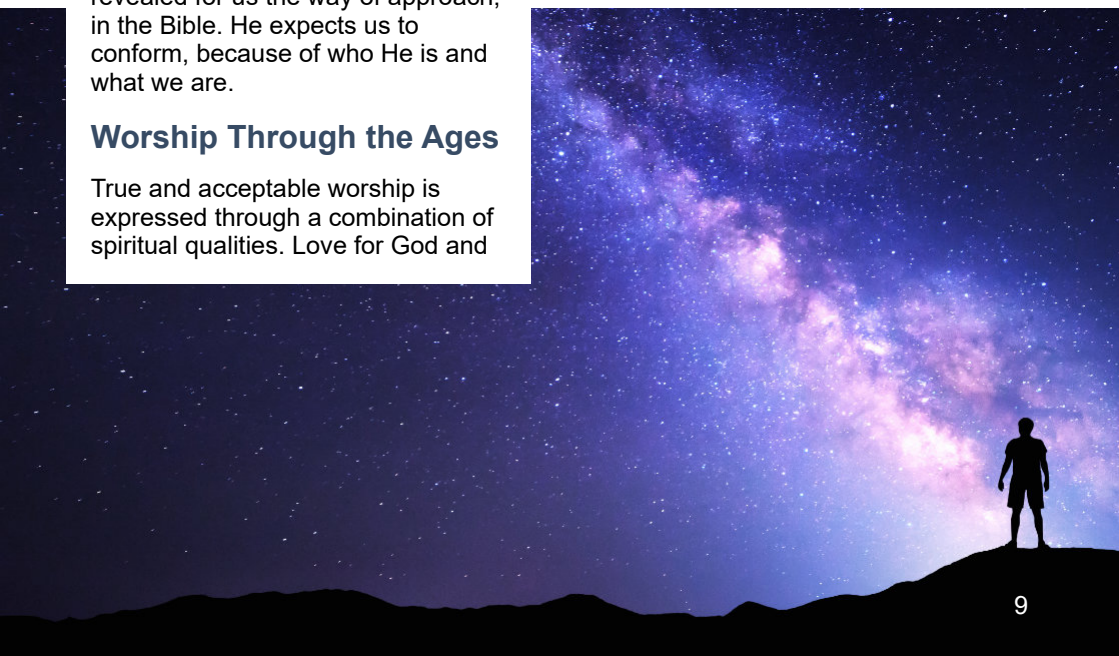
TRUE WORSHIP

'Worship the LORD in the splendour of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth! Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."'
(Psalm 96:9–10)

To worship God is a freewill choice. How to worship God is quite different. It is a matter of a good heart and conscience, which are attuned to the ways and thoughts of God. We must not be casual or careless in the way we express our worship. We need to remember God is the Sovereign Creator of the Universe, and by comparison, we are only specks of dust. We must not dictate to God and tell Him how we propose to worship Him—especially since He has revealed for us the way of approach, in the Bible. He expects us to conform, because of who He is and what we are.

Worship Through the Ages

True and acceptable worship is expressed through a combination of spiritual qualities. Love for God and His praise are essential, mixed with humility, obedience and faith. Under the Old Testament Law of Moses, it was necessary for the priests to offer burnt offerings daily, then weekly on the Sabbath, monthly on the new moon and annually on the Day of Atonement. In addition, there were extra days when other sacrifices were required. In the New Testament, when the Lord Jesus and the Apostles came and the Gospel spread across the Roman world, it was the recognised practice that the believers met regularly on the first day of the week to share the *'Lord's supper' (Acts 20:7)* in memory of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was an act of obedience to the Lord's commandment to remember him, and



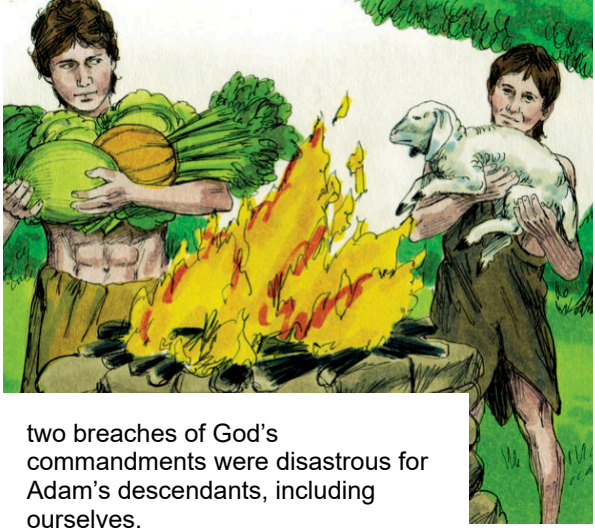
an occasion of faithful worship (1 Corinthians 11:20–25).

Due to our weakness, we need regular reminders of what we are about when we approach God. There have been different requirements in different ages and among different peoples. But one thing remains constant—the need to worship God as commanded. This is a matter of conscience, and must affect our outlook.

As the children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, Moses in his last message to them emphasised the importance of remaining true to the Word of God. He said, *"You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you… See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'"* *(Deuteronomy 4:2–6).* It is not without significance that the Lord Jesus repeated this command not to add or take away from God's Word, in Revelation 22:18–19 when he gave his final message and spoke of judgement to come.

Cain and Abel

There are early examples in the Bible in connection with worship, about the dangers of deviating from the commandments of God. In Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve took of the forbidden fruit after Eve was beguiled by the serpent; and again, in Genesis 4:1–7 when their children Cain and Abel brought offerings to God. Abel offered *'of the firstborn of his flock'*, and was accepted by God, but Cain brought *'of the fruit of the ground'*. We read that God did not accept Cain and his offerings. Probably Cain offered the best of his crop as a sacrifice, but it was not what God wanted. There is no doubt that they understood the principle of animal sacrifice, in view of Genesis 3:21. Cain was judged to be disobedient and unfaithful. His act of worship was marred because he disregarded what God wanted and did what he himself wanted. These



two breaches of God's commandments were disastrous for Adam's descendants, including ourselves.

"I Delight to Do Your Will"

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament Law, and introduced a new arrangement of worship which revolved around his own perfect sacrifice, rather than animal sacrifices. The accounts of the early church in Acts and the letters show that some Jews found it difficult to adjust to the new arrangement.

Jesus' mind was saturated in the teaching of the Old Testament, which so frequently referred to himself. Before his ascension to heaven, he instructed his disciples *"that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).*

One of the Psalms to which he may have been referring was Psalm 40: *'Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart"' (vs. 7–8).* This is a prophecy about his life, and expresses the discipline of love and the total commitment needed by him to faithfully serve and worship his Father. It also reveals his personal delight and freedom of spirit in the worship he offered. Jesus was a faithful Son who did not waver from the role his Father had determined for him, that he should be *"crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23).*

It was this singlemindedness and love for his Father, which encouraged him to fulfil the great purpose of being the one and only acceptable sacrifice which could ensure the redemption God had promised. His whole life was a devoted act of true worship, faithfully lived day by day according to the scriptures.

VIC AUCOTT

(to be continued)

G L EA N ING S

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TRAGEDY STRIKES

In that very hour of rejoicing, disaster struck. For months, since they returned from Laban, Rachel had been expecting a baby. They had looked forward to the great event, a sibling for little Joseph. Now, as they journeyed on to Bethlehem, her labour began. It was a difficult birth, and the hours passed without progress. The midwife applied all her knowledge and skill, but remorselessly her patient grew weaker. Jacob's heart sank in the grip of an icy fear. At last, as in a great convulsive pain a boy came into the world, his mother slipped away into the sleep of death, whispering his name, *Benoni*, 'Son of my sorrow'. Jacob had lost his beautiful Rachel, and numb with grief, he bowed under the weight of his tragedy. How he faced up to the will of God, we must leave to the next study.

The distance between life and death can be a few inches, or an hour. Each of us can be struck down without warning by a swerving car or a violent heart attack, one moment in full progress, absorbed and intent on the business of living, and the next gone beyond recall. Only those who have experienced the sudden loss of a close relative can share the feelings of Jacob, as, shattered and numb, he came back to his father Isaac at Hebron after the death of Rachel, his favourite wife. The cries of her motherless baby would add to his pangs as he thought back over the past days—his triumphant return to Bethel, where they had worshipped together, the unease of her approaching confinement, the anxiety of the long travail, and the stabbing pain of her unexpected death. For years he had painted for her a glowing picture of his native land. The rushing winter brooks and cool mountains sloping down to the sea, the rich sheep pastures and the black goat hair tents dotted on the hillsides had been the dream of his exile, and he had longed to share the reality with her. Now it was not to be. Soon, his aged father also passed away.

Life After Death?

What hope did he have of seeing Rachel again? This question is not easy to answer, as the information we have about the beliefs of these early men of God is mostly indirect. However, there are one or two pointers to show they really did expect to live again. For example, Abraham was promised the land of Israel for himself, yet never received it (as we saw in *part 15*). The writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham died believing it would still be his. He died in faith, *'not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar' (Hebrews 11:13).* This implies that he believed in the resurrection of the dead, for only thus could he inherit the land after his death. Jesus confirms this deduction, for he says *"Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).* Now, Jacob is linked with Abraham in the passage in Hebrews (Hebrews 11:9), so we can safely deduce that he too looked forward to the resurrection. Certainly when he eventually died, in Egypt, as we shall see later, he was very particular that his bones should be laid to rest in the Promised Land, which fits the idea that he expected to come back to life there.

There is one other line of evidence, to be found in the book of Job, which is widely acknowledged to belong to the same historical period as Genesis. Job, in a memorable passage, argues his righteousness before God. He wants to inscribe a record of his claims. *"Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth" (Job 19:24–25).* Clearly Job expected a day of judgement at the end of the world, when, long after his death, he would be brought to account for his deeds. Then, in his fine rhetoric, the inscription in the rock would be there to justify him before his judge. Again, the evidence is indirect, but it certainly looks as though Job expected to come back to life again at the last day. So we can safely conclude that though Jacob sorrowed bitterly over his lost wife, he would be comforted by a strong faith that they would be reunited in the day of promise.

DAVID PEARCE

(to be continued)

LUKE THE PHYSICIAN

Luke is the writer of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Many writers comment on the accuracy of the details in his narratives. It is said he writes with the compassion and warmth of a family doctor, as he carefully shows us the story of Jesus Christ and his followers. Luke records many of the most memorable parables of Jesus. He provides an account of the ancestry of Jesus Christ, all the way back to God (Luke 3:23–38).

Beloved Physician

Luke is a Greek name with a spiritual meaning: 'light giver'. We know little about him—because of his humility he hardly refers to himself. We know that he was a Gentile from Antioch. He possibly converted to Christianity during Paul's first missionary journey. He is the only Gentile writer in the New Testament.

Paul calls him *'Luke the beloved Physician' (Colossians 4:14)*. That word 'physician' implies he was a 'skilled healer'. When travelling with Paul he would provide medical care for him and others. His writings reveal that he was highly educated, especially in medicine, literature, historiography, and geography; he had outstanding command of the Greek language, and his writing is noted for its detailed descriptions of medical conditions and treatments.

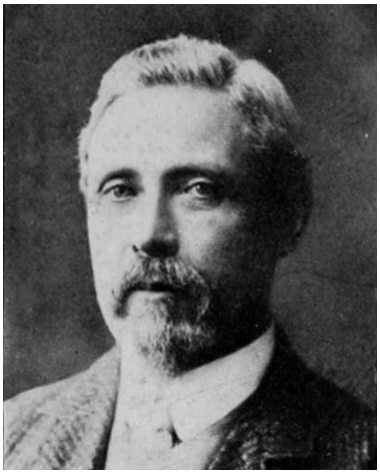
He did not witness Jesus' ministry, but he carefully investigated various accounts to provide an orderly and detailed historical record of it (Luke 1:1–4). He was personally involved in many of the events recorded in the book of Acts, as we see when the narrative slips into the first person:

- Acts 16:10–15: Luke joins Paul in Troas and travels with him to Philippi.
- Acts 20:5–16: Luke is with Paul again in Philippi, travelling with him to Troas and then sailing to Jerusalem.

- Acts 21:1–18: The narrative continues with the "we" group on their way to Jerusalem.
- Acts 27:1–28:16: Luke is with Paul during his imprisonment and voyage to Rome.

Luke was a loyal companion of Paul. In his last letter as he was awaiting execution in Rome, Paul wrote, *'Luke alone is with me' (2 Tim 4: 11).*

The Acts is the very important record of the beginning of the Christian community. It records the last words of Jesus before he ascended to his Father, as he gave his followers the commission to take his Gospel message across the world (Acts 1:8).



Sir William Ramsay

Accurate Historian

Luke's writing has influenced many readers. Sir William Ramsay was a British archaeologist and Bible sceptic. He believed the Bible writers invented facts and stories. The book of Acts, he declared, was full of errors, and to prove this contention, he travelled to Asia Minor to demonstrate Luke's unreliability.

He understood he could not prove or disprove miracle accounts, but if he could show Luke was a sloppy historian on facts that could be verified (geographical and historical), he felt he could discredit Luke's writings.

Ramsay the sceptic returned to Great Britain a believer. He had been unable to discredit any of Luke's writing. He found Luke to use specific and accurate terminology that reflected a careful chronicle of events. There were proconsuls in senatorial provinces (Acts 13:7), Asiarchs in Ephesus (Acts 19:31), and politarchs in Thessalonica (Acts 17:6). His conclusion was that Luke was a highly reliable historian, and consequently the story of the early church in the book of Acts is a remarkably clear one.

TOM INGHAM

Questions? Comments?

We'd *love* to hear from you!

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REFLECTIONS OF A MAN OF FAITH

Part 2

It is important when we wish to reflect on our lives that we can do so with knowledge which is straight and true. In this world there are so many voices that loudly clamour for our attention, from those who want our money to those who regale us with ‘fake news’. Our own memories and perceptions also may be faulty. What we really need is a voice that speaks clear truth with an understanding of our human condition and what we might need. What about …

Human Knowledge?

The first thing that stands out is the importance of knowledge in all our experience of life. In my case, throughout my illness I have been supported by medics, paramedics, nurses and surgeons, doctors and many ancillary staff, who have shown us a great deal of thoughtful kindness and patience, and always taken the time to carefully explain all about the condition and its treatment. It is factual knowledge, and most of it simply has to be accepted. This is the way things, the future in particular, have to be. The outcomes depend on the medics’ skill, and possibly my resilience.

In their hands (and we are most thankful for all they have done and are doing), sadly, mortality is high on the agenda. Knowledge by itself can be stark.

Unfortunately, most of us come with baggage to a diagnosis such as cancer, and generally that induces negative feelings. How important then that we get the really positive messages from the word of God!

Knowledge of God

Bringing God into the picture opens up the future. Yes, we still have to face up to the realities in this life, but we have God’s help and support, and we have hope and a vision of a better world to come.

Let's simply follow a few Bible references, and we will see how important is the knowledge of God to us. The Apostle Peter says to believers:

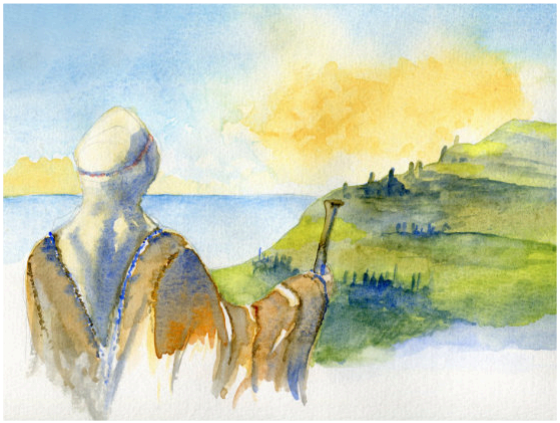
> *'May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.'*
>
> *(2 Peter 1:2–4)*

As an example of this we are able to read and find out about Abraham, in the Old Testament. The promises given to him involved:

- The land of Promise (Israel)
- The place of eternal happiness on earth
- A time when all nations will be settled and at peace on earth—all nations will be blessed (Genesis 12:1–7).

Abraham's faith in God was accounted as righteousness (Genesis 15:6).

All true believers are accounted as descendants of Abraham, by being baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27–29).



Abraham surveying the Promised Land

When Jesus returns, those who have died will be raised from the dead and granted everlasting life in the kingdom of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23).

Everlasting Life

That phrase really rings a bell doesn't it! Instead of our corrupt human nature we can be transformed into beings with God's nature (vs. 50–55). And it's all because we know, we have learned of God's great and precious promises and taken them to ourselves through faith. But then there is a journey that also involves faith. Peter goes on:

> *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are*

increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

(2 Peter 1:5–8)

This is a list of characteristics we are required to develop during our faith journey.

Actually underlying that word 'supplement' is the idea of an orchestra playing a great symphony. Each instrument, playing its part in the music, is there all the time, being called forth by the conductor—through each movement the instruments harmonize together, gradually coming to a grand climax with the full orchestra playing a final chord. All through the music the base line is supplied by knowledge—the true knowledge of God.

This is a wonderful picture of our faith's journey towards its conclusion—in the Kingdom of God which will be established at the return of Jesus Christ.

Peter's Knowledge

'Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.'

(2 Peter 1:12–15)

While ever he has opportunity, Peter wants to remind the believers of how valuable the hope is that they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has described the promises as great and precious! They lead to everlasting life in the Kingdom; how much more valuable is the hope of being fully part of that Kingdom, than is this earthly life.

But this life is a necessary precursor, in which our faith is developed through trials and the pressures of now. Our present life is a temporary dwelling, a tent, and it has to be put off and the new eternal life put on. We need to be transformed. We put off the old life in death, and put on the new through resurrection from the dead. How much more these things become important to us, when, as Peter, there is an immediate threat to life—his was through persecution and execution, mine is through disease and a terminal prognosis.

Jesus' Transfiguration

'For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased", we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.'

(2 Peter 1:16–18)

Peter is recalling an actual incident in his life, one of his greatest experiences, when one night he witnessed Jesus Christ being glorified (Luke 9:28–36). This episode is known as Christ's 'transfiguration'. The Gospels present it to us as two things:

Christ's transfiguration

1. A preparation for his death on the cross, and
2. A foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

We are told that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in glory, in shining brightness. The two men who at important times in Israel's history had shown the whole nation that there was no other God worth having aside from the LORD God of heaven and earth, Who would save the nation if they would truly believe. Alongside this was a clear vision of what the relationship with God could mean, both then and for the future (Exodus 33–34 and 1 Kings 18:20–46).

Although Jesus knew what lay ahead for him, he undertook the task given him by his Father. He had the vision of the new world order which would

come into being because of him, beginning with all those who would respond by faith to the Gospel message (Hebrews 12:2). Eventually, through the resurrection of the dead, this will lead to all the earth being filled with God's glory.

Peter had his knowledge of Jesus confirmed by these events. There was absolutely no doubt about why Jesus had come, who he was and what he would accomplish by his death and resurrection.

Not Fables

What an amazing thing to have been there when these things happened! Of itself it is transforming knowledge which, if acted upon in faith, will lead to Peter's (and all believers') personal transfiguration—being utterly changed to an immortal being, made like the angels (Matthew 22:30), fulfilling perfectly the will of God and being given the dominion that was given to our first parents Adam and Eve when they were created but lost through sin (Genesis 1–3). But their problem is also our problem. Let's read together the next few verses. Following on from his recollection of the transfiguration, Peter says:

> *'And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.'*
>
> *(2 Peter 1:19–21)*

We can't have the first hand experience of Jesus that Peter had, but readily available to us we have the Bible, the source book of all knowledge about God and His purpose through Jesus Christ. Just to emphasize, our dark hearts can be transformed by the knowledge we gain from the Bible, and through it, by faith, we have full access to the great and precious promises made to us through Jesus. Truly wonderful!

'So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ' *(Romans 10:17).*

Final Reflections

I know, more certainly than ever before, that I need to put off this earthly temporary tent so that, by grace, I might put on my eternal dwelling through resurrection when Jesus comes.

In the meantime the Lord still has work for us to do, our lives are entirely in His hands. He will decide when it is time for me to go. I still hope that the Lord Jesus will soon be here, bringing with him the precious gift of eternal health, when we will be changed in a moment, *'in the twinkling of an eye'* *(1 Corinthians 15:52).*

> *'And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away… The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son'"* *(Revelation 21:3–4, 7).*

DAVID NIGHTINGALE

Regular readers of *Glad Tidings* will be familiar with David Nightingale's articles. He wrote engagingly about his faith, often drawing on recollections of friends he'd known and episodes from his work as a Bible missionary, about his reverence for the Bible, and his deep love for God his Father and for his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

David died shortly after completing this two-part article *"Reflections of a Man of Faith".* He now sleeps, awaiting his resurrection (Ephesians 5:14). As he was fond of reminding people:
"The best is yet to come!"

YOUR QUESTIONS

Does the Bible teach predestination? That is, has God already ordained who will be saved and who will not? Do we have free will?

EE → DMP

The Apostle Paul writes that God *'chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will' (Ephesians 1:4–5).*

And again, *'Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified' (Romans 8:29–30).*

Because God is not bounded by time, He can see into the future and the past. He knows who will be good material for His Kingdom. In Romans 9:21 He is likened to a potter selecting clay for different kinds of pottery. We are the clay. He puts the clay on His wheel and starts it spinning. How we respond to the pressure of His fingers will decide how we turn out. If we are hard and resistant (as were Israel, for example, in the analogy of the potter in Jeremiah 18:3–10), we shall be downgraded or thrown on the rubbish heap. If we accept the discipline of the Lord, we will turn out as a beautiful vase.

The point is, although God knows how we will turn out, He also knows that we do not know the future, so our responses to the crises in our lives, the temptations and the calamities, are entirely our own decisions. Remember, even God cannot make us love Him and obey Him. It has to be voluntary. And our voluntary love and obedience give Him pleasure.

WORDSEARCH

J	H	G	M	H	R	L	R	M
N	E	A	S	W	I	U	I	A
I	A	R	I	S	O	A	M	N
B	L	H	O	A	Q	S	O	A
I	U	S	A	B	S	M	O	S
E	J	K	E	H	O	I	W	S
A	H	A	B	L	A	A	V	E
I	I	R	O	O	Y	Z	M	H
Q	T	S	H	A	I	Z	Z	U

Words

baha

ahza

moboraej

hesanasm

lusa

nmoloos

hazziu

God commanded the Jews to obey and worship Him and only Him. Few of their kings were faithful; many led the nation into idolatry.

The grid contains the names of seven bad kings, and a faithful prophet who warned the people about the folly and perils of idols. Clues to the kings are below. The prophet's name is on the back page.

- Disobeyed God to the extent that God rejected him and refused to answer his prayers *(1 Samuel 28:6)*.
- Allowed his non-Jewish wives to turn him to idolatry *(1 Kings 11:1–8)*.
- Built two golden calves to prevent people from going to worship in Jerusalem *(1 Kings 12:26–33)*.
- Married a wicked queen, worshipped the idol Baal and erected an altar to it *(1 Kings 16:31–33)*.
- Desecrated God's temple and built his own altar *(2 Kings 16:10–17)*.
- Burnt his son, consulted mediums and put idols in the temple *(2 Kings 21:1–7)*.
- Was struck with leprosy for taking on the role of a priest *(2 Chronicles 26:16–21)*.

ANNA HART

Wordsearch answer: Isaiah

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