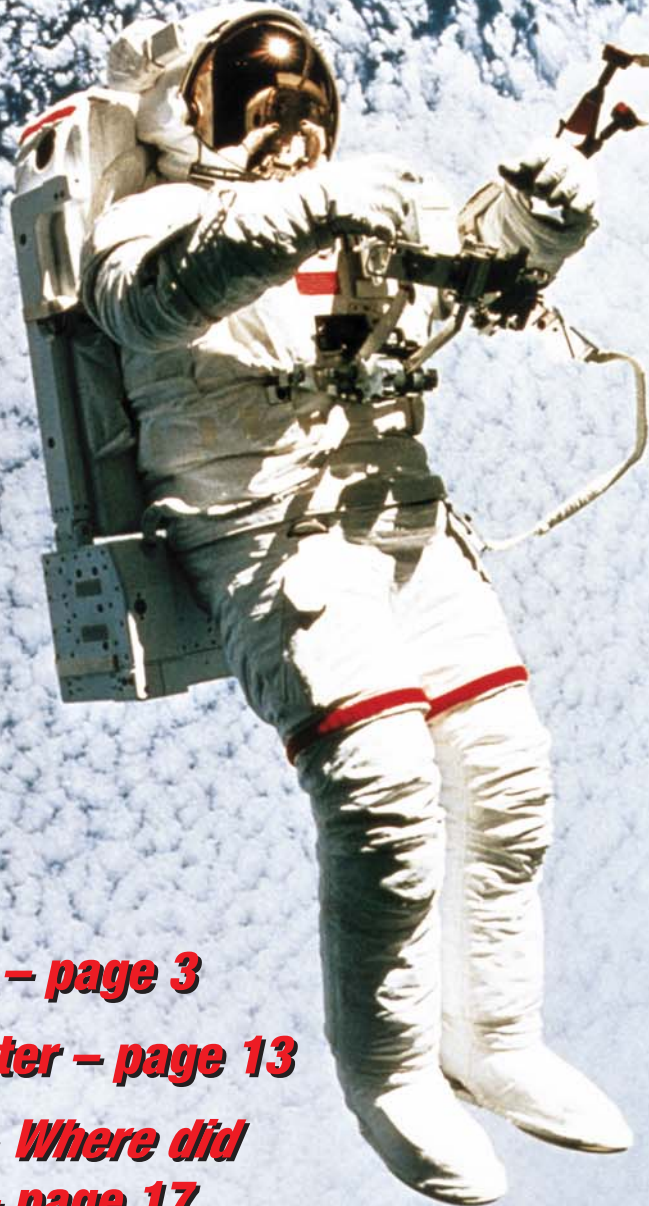


# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1470



***High and Lifted Up – page 3***

***Walking on the Water – page 13***

***Christadelphians – Where did they come from? – page 17***

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

122nd Year

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1470

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage study of the Bible as God’s inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God’s world-wide Kingdom.

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# High and Lifted Up

**Only a few people have had the opportunity to view the world from space and even fewer have walked there, either to prove that it could be done or to repair some space equipment.**

Getting there and moving about in such a hostile environment is still a marvellous achievement yet, like so many other marvellous things in life, we soon become accustomed to it.

## Taken for Granted

Another launch of the shuttle, a probe to Mars, a change of personnel at the Space Station ... these things go by with hardly a mention, as far as many people are concerned. Yet it was only April 1961 when the 27 year old Soviet astronaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man to fly in space, by orbiting the earth for about 90 minutes in the capsule Vostok 1.

That was less than 50 years ago, yet now we take space travel for granted. Such is our ability to adapt to changes in human achievement, and such is our expectation about what man can achieve. But do you know what happened to the first spaceman? Seven years after his spaceflight, at the age of just 34, Yuri Gagarin was killed on a training flight in a jet fighter. Man had not mastered a hostile environment; he had merely survived it.



It's an ancient proverbial saying that the higher you climb, the further you have to fall; and that has proved true time and again. The more mankind asserts itself and takes pride in its accomplishments, the more danger there is that everything will come crashing down. "Pride comes before a fall."

## The Master

There was once a man who mastered a hostile environment and who did so by being lifted high. That man was Jesus Christ. Born the Son of God, of the virgin Mary, he never once exalted himself and was never once proud about anything he accomplished. Scripture says of him that he:

*"humbled himself and became obedient" (Phillipians 2:8);*

*"did not please himself" (Romans 15:3);*

*"committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22); and*

*"though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).*

All of those are remarkable statements and things we should never take for granted. They designate the Lord Jesus as someone who is the Master of mankind; for Jesus achieved perfect obedience when everyone else has failed. And he did that in the most hostile environment – in the very nature that we bear and that he too shared (Hebrews 2:14; 4:15).

Jesus was obedient to the point of death, for although he could have resisted capture and crucifixion (he once said that he could have summoned the angels of God to assist him, had he so decided), he willingly laid down his life. It was all part of God's great plan of redemption, which required his willing involvement; and it was all done for us.

## Lifted High

In what must have seemed a difficult saying at the time, Jesus once said to his followers:

*"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14,15).*

He was referring to an occasion when Israel was travelling through the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. Their sin had brought Divine judgement upon them and the only remedy was for Moses to make a bronze serpent just like the serpents that were biting the people, and then to hoist it up on a pole. Anyone who looked at it would then be saved from the serpent's poison – it was a case of "look and live!"

Now, Jesus was saying, *he* must be lifted up if the effects of sin were to be neutralised – if sin, and its companion death, was to be destroyed. And the "lifting up" of which he spoke was the cross upon which he would be crucified, as he later explained just a few days before his execution (see John 12:32-34). For Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin, to condemn sin and to make it possible for sinners like us to be forgiven

(Romans 8:3). If we look to this man who has been lifted high above humanity, and who is deservedly on a higher plane than anyone else, we too can be raised to a new life.

## Heavenly Places

Scripture uses the language of space and height to describe the status of those who have become believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Writing to baptised believers – men and women who had pledged their lives in his service – the apostle Paul said this of them:

*"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).*



Jesus has been lifted high after his death and resurrection. For he now sits in glory at the Father's right hand in heaven: he has been highly exalted indeed, and those who look to him, who believe and are baptized into his saving name, become members of God's family. They come to share in his victory and have an exalted status indeed, as sons and daughters of the Almighty. They may not walk in space, but now they can walk with God, making sure their steps are ever leading onwards and upwards towards better things, both in this life and in the life to come.

**Editor**

# Did Christ Die for You?

Here are five key teachings about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, with some Scriptural references in support:

- 1 The Bible makes it clear that the Almighty gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for the sins of the whole world. John the Baptist declared him to be *“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).
- 2 In our natural state, we all inherit death as the rightful wages for our sins (Romans 6:23).
- 3 Death is the end of all activity (see Psalm 146:4 and Psalm 6:5).
- 4 But God is all-merciful, He does not want any of us to die (see Ezekiel 18:32).
- 5 Through His beloved Son’s sacrifice, God offers us the marvellous free gift of being treated as righteous (see Romans 5:18).

Now let’s explore what all this means, in particular whether or not this ‘taking away of sin’ means that all of us became entitled to live forever.

## Belief

The verse in the Bible which is often said to be the best known verse of all says: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Properly read this explains that there is more to being saved from death than merely having Jesus come into the world.

A person has to believe in him to be saved. The Lord himself said, *“He who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life”* (John

5:24) and elsewhere we are told that: *“by him (Christ) everyone who believes is justified (treated as righteous) from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses”* (Acts 13:39).

So, escape from death requires belief or faith, for *“without faith it is impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:6).

Unless we have faith we cannot please God.

## Obedience

The Lord Jesus was a great teacher but he expected people to do more than listen to him. Offering them eternal life, he once said: *“If anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death”* (John 8:51). *“Blessed...are those”*, he said on another occasion, *“who **hear** the word of God **and keep it”*** (Luke 11:28). So there is more to belief in Christ than just believing: we have also to do what Jesus commanded.

Through his sacrifice, the Son of God became *“the author of eternal salvation to all **who obey him”*** (Hebrews 5:9), and this is what he commanded, right from the beginning of his teaching: *“Repent and believe in the gospel”* (Mark 1:15). Repenting means turning away from our sins, and trying to change our way of life.

We have said that our Creator does not wish us to die; we are told He is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). And that is the stark choice that faces us: repentance or everlasting death, for to “perish” means just that – to cease to exist for

ever! Once the Lord Jesus was told about some unfortunate folk who had died when a tower had collapsed on them and he answered: *“Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). So, to be saved from our sins by the death of Christ, we must have a change of heart and give up our selfish ways. We are promised that eternal life will be granted to those who *“by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour and immortality”* (Romans 2:7).

## Following Jesus

When he was talking to the Pharisees, who largely rejected his message, the Lord Jesus Christ said, *“You are not willing to come to me that you may have life”* (John 5:40). Following the Master is an active, not a passive, thing and involves a commitment to deny our natural selves, and shouldering our cross each day, as his disciples (see Matthew 16:24).

*“Lord, are there few who are saved?”* his disciples once asked Jesus, and he surely meant “Yes”, when he told them: *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many will seek to enter and will not be able”* (Luke 13:23,24).

Everything the Saviour preached, the example of the way he lived his life, all the miraculous acts of healing he carried out, even raising the dead, demonstrated the love of God for mankind. He showed that the way it was to be in God’s kingdom, was very different from the way it was under man’s rulership. But, perhaps above

all, Jesus made it clear that he was achieving, on our behalf, what we could not achieve for ourselves. We are, after all, nothing but sinners and try as we might to follow Christ’s teaching and imitate His example, and we must try to, we will all fail.

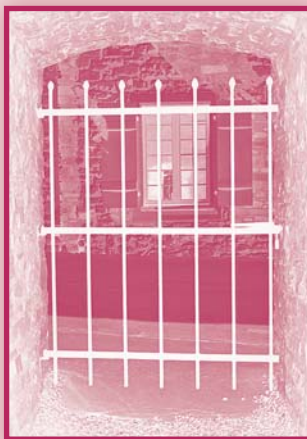
## Christ in Us

We are told by the Apostle John that *“he who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life”* (1 John 5:12). But what does it mean, to *“have”* Christ in this sense? It means that we have to develop the life of Christ in us, or to become like-minded with him. Various terms are used to describe this process by which we become like him (see, for example, Romans 8:9-11) but it is a vital development that has to take place in the life of every believer.

The apostle Paul described this hope of daily identification with Christ – the life of Christ in the believer – as *“the hope of glory ... Christ in us”* (Colossians 1:27). And he said that if we are Christ’s, and if we belong to him, we will be made alive at his coming (1 Corinthians 15:22,23). Even though we may sleep the sleep of death, if we die before Jesus returns to earth, we shall be raised to life. This is what our Lord meant when he said that if we keep his word we will not *“see death”* (John 8:51).

## Baptized into Him

But first we have to identify with our Lord’s sacrifice by dying with him in symbol. To be baptised into Christ Jesus is to be baptised into his death



(Romans 6:3), and if we have died with him, we believe that we shall also live with him (verse 8). Baptism has to be by full immersion; it must be a burial in water if that symbolism is to be satisfied.

The same chapter of Romans tells us that we have to “obey from the heart that form of doctrine to which we were delivered.” Being set free from sin we are to become servants to God and to righteousness. This is the “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” on which the Saviour’s preaching was based (Luke 3:3; 5:32). Jesus even allowed himself to be baptized, explaining it was essential to fulfil all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), and he taught that a person can only enter the Kingdom of God if he is born again, of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5).

## Living in Him

Having set our feet on the right path, we must not continue our old selfish habits. As we discovered before, believing is not enough:

↳ We must make a practice of reading the Bible, so that we can appreciate what God requires of us, for “*the scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation*” (2 Timothy 3:15).

↳ The Apostle Paul talks about Christ being “*formed*” in his followers (Galatians 4:19) and this is the effect that God’s Holy Word can have upon us (see also Romans 12:2).

↳ We must continually pray to our Father for guidance (Psalm 25:4,5); always in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:23).

↳ It is also essential that we continue to repent for, despite our new commitment, we shall

certainly continue to sin. We must constantly seek forgiveness, as the Lord’s Prayer teaches us (Matthew 6:12).

↳ As disciples, we also have to assemble ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25), and break bread in obedience to Christ’s command (Acts 2:46).

↳ And however much we try to live a life of faith, we must realise we can never earn a place in the Kingdom. Eternal life comes only by God’s grace (His unmerited favour).

## Friends of Jesus

So, although the Lord Jesus Christ was sent to take away the sins of the whole world we all need to associate with his sacrifice if we are to benefit from the gift of salvation. Jesus laid down his life for his friends, and his friends were those “*who would do whatever he commanded them*” (John 15:13,14). When he returns to the earth to judge us, Romans 2:16, he will “*take vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey his gospel*” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Baptism is only the start of a lifetime of discipleship, which will involve commitment on our part, but bring untold rewards in this life as well as in the age to come. The apostle Paul sums it all up by explaining:

*“The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us ... that being justified by his grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7).*

**Liz Robinson**

# Do you really know Jesus Christ?

Over the centuries there have been many debates and conferences about the nature and work of the Lord Jesus and his precise relationship to the Father. People have drawn up complicated creeds and statements about this which have split the Christian world, for some people have believed these creeds and others have not found them to be Bible based. In this article **Ken Quixley** examines some of the Scriptures which tell us about Jesus and his relationship with the Father.

## The Eternal God

It is said about Almighty God that he is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:15,16).

❖ He is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2), the God who has neither beginning nor end.

❖ He has always been and always will be.

But there is much more to Almighty God than just His existence, marvellous though that is. He is a God with a plan and purpose; a God who makes things happen and who knows from the very beginning what He will do and how it will be accomplished. That is the reason why the promises of God are certain and unshakeable – because He always knows what is best for us, and because he has the power to make it happen exactly as He purposes.

## Plan and Purpose

One of the Scriptures that has caused confusion for a lot of people is to be found at the opening of John’s account of the gospel. Where the other records begin with the circumstances of Jesus’ early life, or the beginning of his earthly ministry, John starts his account right at the very beginning by detailing what God had in mind from the outset.

In John Chapter 1, he speaks of this purpose as the “Word of God,” that which existed from Eternity.

Some have linked this “Word” with a glorious

pre-existent Christ, and have thought that John was saying that Jesus existed from all time. But John’s record says something quite different. Whilst the intent was there from the outset, it was only when the Word “was made flesh” that Jesus came to exist as a person.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).



*The Bible is the Word of the living God.*

*Jesus was the embodiment of that Word*



## The Word of God

Anybody who thinks of the Bible as the Word of God, which it most certainly is, can recognise this terminology and it is that very language John is using when he says that God's Word was with Him from the very beginning:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).*

In Old Testament terms, that is precisely what we are told about God's wisdom or understanding. It accompanied Him at creation, and by that wisdom all things came to be. Everything God did was purposeful and full of meaning. A key to understanding this is in the Book of Proverbs where we read:

*"The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the depths were broken up, and clouds drop down the dew" (Proverbs 3:19,20).*

And later Solomon speaks of wisdom as though it was a person, just as John personifies the same thing in his gospel:

*"The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth ... When he prepared the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep" (Proverbs 8:22-27).*

Then, speaking of God's creative work, the personified Wisdom says:

*"Then I was beside him, as a master craftsman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in his inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men" (8:30-31).*

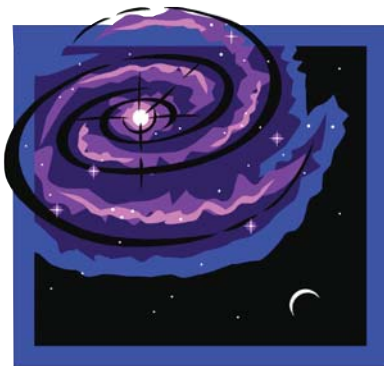
Such is the excellence of Divine Wisdom, an essential attribute of God. But how very much like the opening words of John's Gospel. Here it is God's wisdom – His plan and purpose – of which John is writing: a plan that resulted in the birth of Jesus, when the time was right. For, in the fullness of time, God caused His Son to be born of the virgin Mary (Galatians 4:4).

## The Wisdom of God

Jesus was the very embodiment of Divine Wisdom. He always knew what to do and say, because he constantly listened to his heavenly Father, and remarkably and wonderfully he always chose to be obedient to his Father's commands. The Bible states that the all-knowing God in His Wisdom has a glorious eternal purpose which is centred in Jesus Christ. When Jesus came he was

the willing embodiment of the Purpose. In Jesus, the glory of the Father was made visible to men.

God knows everything from the very beginning – His knowledge is that wonderful and all-embracing. He once told Jeremiah the prophet that He "knew" Jeremiah before ever he was born (see Jeremiah 1:4,5). And the apostle Paul declares that God even knows those of us who will become believers from the very outset of everything:



*“For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he predestined, these he also called; whom he called, these he also justified; and whom he justified, these he also glorified” (Romans 8:29,30).*

Mark that well. One writer has described that passage as one of the most remarkable ever written. For it tells us much about the mind of Almighty God. His knowledge is so far-reaching and so forward-looking that He already knows which of us will be glorified in His coming Kingdom, when Jesus reigns on earth. In his mind’s eye, so to speak, God has already glorified those people; for he speaks of future things as though they were a present reality (Romans 4:17).

## **The Glory of God**

Jesus was the perfect expression of the wisdom of God and he also displayed the glory of God – a term which means the moral excellence and Divine character of the Almighty. That is what John says in the opening of his gospel account:

*“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ... For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. **The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him**” (1:14-18).*

When Jesus lived on earth, his life was such that it “declared” to those who

knew him just what God is like. We can’t see God, but we can understand Him by thinking about Jesus and getting to know him, the very point that Jesus himself made when his disciples asked if they could see Almighty God:

*“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ‘Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I do*



*not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does the works” (John 14:9,10).*

This was no claim to equality or identity, as a later verse in the same chapter makes clear (see verse 28). It was a claim to be declaring what God is like. And when Jesus comes again, this time to reign on earth over God’s kingdom, he will come in his Father’s glory, once again to show mankind what his Father is really like and what he means to do for all those who want to be part of the new world:

*“Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26).*

*“And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ... when he comes, in that Day, to be glorified in his saints and to be admired among all those who believe,*

because our testimony among you was believed. Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-12).

What a prayer that is for all of us who want to be found acceptable at that Day of the Lord. Jesus said that it is Life Eternal to know and believe (John 17:3). We must come to understand that:

❖ *God is the unchanging and eternal Unity, the Father in heaven.*

❖ *The Holy Spirit is the power of God expressed in all His works.*

❖ *Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son, conceived and empowered by the Holy Spirit.*

He is now the very living embodiment of God's Word, and in him the promises of God come to their intended climax. Know Jesus and by knowing him you can get to know what God is really like and how great His love is to each of us. It really matters that we know about Jesus and that we come to know him as a companion and friend who will stick with us all our life long.

**Ken Quixley**

## **Days that Changed my Life**

# **Isaac, son of Abraham**

Father had woken me very early in the morning and he seemed agitated. He was in a hurry to get organised. A teenager at that time, sunrise was just a bit too early for me to be rushing around. "We are going to a mountain," father said, "It will take three days and so we shall need food, water and men servants to organise the animals for transport. We start immediately".

Mother was quiet as we parted. My parents were very old, but still full of fun and laughter. I'd always known that my birth had brought them special happiness. I was the child promised to them by God. She gave me a strong hug, appearing reluctant to let me go, but she smiled as she watched our departure from the tent opening.

### **Journey's End**

The first two days were pleasant. We

walked from the desert into greener plains, grasslands and water brooks; but by the third day the terrain became bleaker as we climbed the mountain father called Moriah. Although he was agile, for a man over a hundred, he found the climb increasingly hard. There were more frequent stops and he became increasingly tense. The serving men had stayed at the bottom of the mountain, as father had said we would make better progress alone. In any case he preferred just the two of us to go into the mountain to pray to God.

I had noticed the wood and the container of fire he was carrying and although initially I had assumed that it was to help us cook food, it became apparent that it was a sacrificial bundle. I had grown up knowing about the sacrifices we offered to God. My

parents had been faithful to the God of Heaven all their lives and had taught me from the time I was a toddler that He had made them special promises. God regarded my father as a friend, for his faith and his faithfulness.

### **“Where’s the Lamb?”**

I can’t remember when I asked the question. I couldn’t work out where the lamb for the sacrifice was, but father replied that God would provide it. My father had that sort of faith in God. So we continued the steep climb. On reaching the top, father and I, very slowly it seemed to me, built the altar for the sacrifice, putting the wood in the accepted order, but still there was no lamb. Then suddenly father sat me down and explained. God had asked him to sacrifice me as the offering! It was a test of his obedience, and mine as well I suppose.

Never were two men so torn. Father, at the very idea of having to kill me, his long-awaited and much-loved son and me horrified at what I would have to go through if I was to obey his wishes and let him offer me. I could have stopped him. He was old. I was young and could have run away or forced the knife from his hand.

For a long time we discussed the promises God had made to my father about his seed. He was to have descendants that were as numerous as the stars and like the sand on the seashore. And we talked about the resurrection: something which we both understood and believed. Perhaps God would raise me from the dead after my father had sacrificed me. Finally, with heavy hearts we concluded that God

had a reason for his command and I agreed that we should go ahead as God wanted.

### **Ram in the Thicket**

We would carry out the task together. I allowed my father to bind me to the wood and he took out the knife which he had specially sharpened so as to cause me less pain. In great terror, but calm less I frightened him, I watched his distressed body and tearstained face as he raised the knife. And then it happened. We both heard it – a voice that was loud and insistent: *“Abraham, do not kill or hurt Isaac”*. My father jumped in shock, and when the command came again this time we saw the angel. *“Do not hurt your son: now God knows that you really will give Him all that you hold precious.”*

God provided a sacrifice after all. There was a ram, caught by its horns in some scrub bushes nearby. You can just imagine how I felt as that sacrifice was being made! God had made arrangements that meant that I could live and not die. Those

experiences on that mountain made me think hard about my relationship with this all powerful but deeply caring God. If I was a special instrument in His plans I needed to get to know Him better.

Maybe the incident had some other symbolic meaning, though I’m not sure quite what. Father is relieved but needs to explain things to mother. One thing I’ve learned: trusting in God and doing what he asks can be tough, but very rewarding.

**Cynthia Miles**

*See Genesis Chapter 22*



## The Miracles of Jesus 5

# Walking on the Water

*Among the many marvellous miracles or signs recorded in the gospel of John is one that is quite different from the others. We read of Jesus turning water to wine, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind and feeding a great multitude of people. But in John chapter 6 (verses 17-21) we find the miracle of Jesus walking on the water.*

### Five Thousand Fed

Jesus had just performed the miracle of feeding 5000 people who then wanted to make him king. At this point Jesus needed the privacy of a nearby mountain retreat where he would pray to his Father in heaven. He had sent his disciples away, so they went home without Jesus which meant crossing the Sea of Galilee by boat to Capernaum, a distance of about six miles. It was dark; a strong wind was blowing and rowing was hard work even for the seasoned fishermen among them.

They were about half way across the sea when they saw Jesus coming towards them walking on the water! (John 6:19). They were all startled, to say the least. They couldn't believe their eyes, thinking it just could not be true! It was not until Jesus called out to them, *"It is I; do not be afraid"*, that they were reassured. Yes, it was really true that Jesus had come to them walking on the water.

### Peter's Involvement

John is not the only one who recorded this extraordinary miracle. Matthew also records it (Matt. 14:24-33) and adds an interesting incident involving

the impetuous disciple Peter, who so much wanted to be with his Master. He may have thought it would be wonderful if he could enjoy the novelty of walking on the water too. Yet he evidently realised the risks involved, so he cautiously asked, *"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water"*. Jesus just said, *"Come"*. Here was an opportunity for Peter to demonstrate his faith, so his Lord invited him to do so. But how strong was his faith?

Peter climbed out of the boat and actually walked on the water; but when he saw that the wind was boisterous and the waves were high, his courage failed him and he began to sink! He

immediately cried out to the only one who could save him, *"Lord, save me!"* And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. (Matthew 14:30-32). No wonder the disciples worshipped Jesus saying, *"Truly you are the Son of God"*.

### Another Miracle

The miracles did not end there, for John adds: "Immediately the boat was



at the land where they were going” (John 6:21). This sort of thing – instant travel – is really beyond our comprehension. The miracle involved overcoming the law of gravity and dealing with the weight of water if this was displaced in the process, etc. The divine power that Jesus possessed was truly wonderful, even awesome. We would surely want to be friends of his and this is indeed possible if we do everything he has commanded us.

## Looking for Jesus

Some of the five thousand who had eaten of the five barley loaves may have noticed that when the twelve disciples left the boat for home the previous day, Jesus was not with them. They did not want to lose track of their possible king so they made the crossing to Capernaum looking for him.

The next day they saw him with his disciples! The discerning among them must have come to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus was able to arrive without the need for a boat. He therefore must have had other wonderful powers besides the ability to feed five thousand people.

So they put the intriguing question to him, “*Rabbi, when did you come here?*”(v.25). Jesus made no attempt to satisfy their curiosity but since they wanted to talk to him he responded by telling them not to labour for natural food but to make the effort to obtain the spiritual food which he was able to give them in his teaching. He said, “*Do not labour for the food which perishes,*

*but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you”* (v.27). That is to say, they should not concentrate all their effort on working to obtain natural food that could only sustain their natural bodies for a limited time during their lifetime. They (and we) should rather make a special effort to absorb the spiritual food – the teaching of our Lord which, when accepted and obeyed, will lead eventually to eternal life in the glorious Kingdom of God which Jesus will establish here on earth when he comes again.

## Our Dependence on Jesus

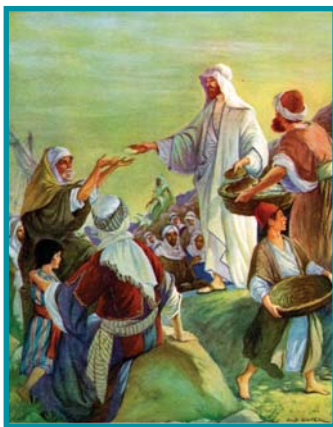
To emphasize our dependence on Jesus for spiritual sustenance, he likens himself in his metaphorical style to ‘*bread from heaven*’ and to the ‘*bread of life*’ (v.32,34). He adds, “He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst”. Jesus sums up his discourse with the most encouraging words:

*“And this is the will of Him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him*

*up at the last day”*(v.40).

It does not matter, therefore, if death should overtake us in our pilgrimage before the Lord Jesus returns. Jesus can and will raise us up again together with all the worthies of old. May that wonderful time come soon!

**Ralph Green**



*Jesus had fed the multitude with bread and fishes; now he urged them to feed upon him*

# More about the Council in Jerusalem

*A Conference has been convened in Jerusalem where the apostles and representatives of different congregations can discuss the way in which Jewish and Gentile believers can live together in harmony. It was an important test for the new community and a good example of how to resolve difficulties, by patiently listening to different points of view and then examining the Scriptures for guidance and help. As **John Hellawell** now explains the outcome was most satisfactory, under the hand of God.*

## **Council Speeches**

### ★ **Peter**

*“When there had been much disputing...” the Apostle Peter stood up and rehearsed his experiences in the case of Cornelius and his family and friends. The key part of Peter’s address was that God had “made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9) and he then went on to make this appeal:*

*“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our forefathers or we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they ” (Acts 15:10,11).*

### ★ **Barnabas and Paul**

Then Barnabas and Paul addressed the assembly, relating how they had been able, under God’s hand, to perform miracles for the benefit of the Gentiles amongst whom they had worked.

### ★ **James**

At this point the apostle James addressed the assembly. It seems likely that he had presided over the Council and now took the opportunity to sum up the evidence and offer a solution that might satisfy both sides.

First he reminded them of Simon Peter’s contribution regarding the conversion of the first Gentile, Cornelius. He then stressed that the acceptance of Gentiles into the family of God had been part of His plan from the beginning and that this was evident in the Old Testament prophecies. By way of demonstration of this, he cited a passage from the prophecy of Amos (9:11,12):

*“After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord who does all these things” (Acts 15:16,17).*

There are many other passages in



the Old Testament that indicate that it was always God's intention that the Gentiles would be included in His purpose. The Jews had a duty to convey God's word to the rest of humanity; but they were blinded spiritually by their obsession with their position as the "chosen race". They tended to focus on their being selected by God, not on what they were chosen to do!

## **Practical Propositions**

James suggested a very simple but effective solution. The Gentiles would be sent a letter which would require that they complied with four "necessary things," but otherwise they were to be free from observing the details of the Law of Moses. These necessary things were to:

- abstain from things polluted by idols*
- sexual immorality*
- things strangled and*
- blood.*

All these things were associated with heathen worship and caused offence to Jews. Put very simply: The Gentiles were not required to become Jews but they had to stop being Pagans.

These proposals were welcomed by everyone and a group consisting of Paul, Barnabas, Judas Barsabas and Silas, was selected to convey the Council's conclusion in a letter addressed to the churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.

## **Content of the Letter**

The letter read as follows:

*"The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,*

*To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:*

*Greetings.*

*Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying 'You must be circumcised and keep the law' – to whom we gave no such commandment – it seemed good to us, being of one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay on you no other greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these you will do well. Farewell" (Acts 15:23-29).*

## **Return to Antioch**

The small party set off to Antioch and, on their arrival, gathered everyone together and delivered the letter. After reading it, everyone rejoiced and they were further strengthened by words from Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets. It was fitting that these should have been involved since they represented the Jerusalem church.

Eventually it was time for Judas and Silas to return to Jerusalem, carrying greetings from the members of the church at Antioch. However, Silas decided to stay longer, supporting the work of Barnabas and Paul. Under the hand of God everything had worked out better than might have been expected and now there was an agreement that should allow Jews and Gentiles to live and work together as members of the family of God

**John Hellowell**



# Christadelphians

## – Where did they come from?

You may be thinking that the very name “Christadelphian” is strange and might wonder where it came from and who started this community of Bible-based believers. In this article **Robert Tarrant** deals with the origin of the community and in the next issue he explains a little more about the development and beliefs of Christadelphians .

### Christadelphian Origins

We travel back in time to the year 1805 when a boy was born on the 12th April, one of a family of seven children, by name John Thomas. His father was a very talented man with an energetic mind whilst his mother was a very amicable lady. It was said that John Thomas inherited the fire and energy of his father and the softer qualities of his mother.

It was at Chorley, in Lancashire, England, that John Thomas began his medical studies at about the age of 15. At the same time he became a member of the Baptist Church where his father was a paid minister, though one member of the Church commented that John had a “profound ignorance on the whole subject of theology.” That early assessment turns out to be a very interesting comment in the light of later developments.

At the age of 23 John had obtained his diploma in anatomy and surgery, reaching a very high standard. He possessed a tremendous capacity for study and had a formidable intellect. In 1832 his parents were seized with the American emigration fever of that time

and the doctor decided to spy out the land for his parents, and so began what proved to be a providential journey. That May he boarded the ship “*The Marquis of Wellesley*” which was setting sail for New York, acting as the ship’s surgeon for the 70 passengers and 19 crew. It was foul weather for most of the journey,



*“The Marquis of Wellesley”*

so much so that the main mast was snapped off, sails were lost, the ship was blown off course and, as the storm intensified, terror set in amongst the passengers.

The chances of survival began to look grim and Dr. Thomas faced for the first time the reality of death.

Profoundly ignorant about what might become of him after death, if anything, he vowed that if he reached land safely he would not rest until he found out the truth of the matter. That was a life-changing resolution.

### New York, New York

After a journey of 8 weeks, the ship reached the safety of New York’s harbour. His parents arrived very soon afterwards, having had a much smoother passage and the young doctor set about

his theological education with enthusiasm. It was not long before he was baptized, though he then discovered that he had really just become a member of the group known as “The Campbellites.”

As it turned out, that baptism was premature. He had not finished his enquiries and he had not properly believed what the Bible teaches. Baptism without proper belief had, he later discovered, neither value nor meaning.

The years that followed, some 15 in all, were ones that not only included travels and many difficulties but also involved him in constant debates and discussions. The result was that he left the Campbellites in 1847, having already started his own Christian magazine called “*The Herald of the Future Age*.”

His close study of God’s Word, led him to understand that “*we are saved by hope*” (*Romans 8:24*), and he realised that he had not fully understood at that baptism some 14 years earlier what constituted the true Christian hope. By studying the Bible, he found out just what it teaches about the promises of God, the Kingdom of God and the nature of man – to mention just three aspects of that hope.

Convinced he had now found the Truth, John Thomas asked a friend to baptize him into the true hope of the Gospel and so, after a journey of discovery which lasted some 14 years, he found what he had been searching for, and he did not intend to keep that discovery to himself. He promptly issued a declaration of what he believed to be the true teaching of God’s Word.

## **Christadelphians**

In 1848 Dr Thomas visited England where he stayed for some two years, giving 13 lectures at Nottingham and 4 at Glasgow, attended by about 5,000 people each time. That was the measure of religious interest in those days, which is very different now, sad to say. As a result of these addresses, he published a book entitled “*Elpis Israel*” (the title means “The hope of Israel”) and the combined effect of this book (which is still available today) and his many lectures, small groups of believers began to be formed. They were known as “*ecclesias*” (from the



*John Thomas as a young man*

Greek word for congregations). In 1849 John Thomas spoke at Aberdeen and in the audience was a young boy of 10 years old, who slept for most of the address (addresses in those days were very long, anything up to 2 hours or more). This boy later said that he was only interested in the speaker’s beard and not in what was being said!

## **Back in America**

Returning to America Dr. Thomas continued his preaching work until 1862 when the American civil war broke out and conscription to military service was introduced. During this period believers needed a name which they could present to the authorities in their appeal for exemption from this service. Dr. Thomas decided that “Brethren in Christ” would be a correct description and as he had a tendency to use the original Greek he expressed that phrase in one word – “Christadelphian”.

The name is in fact based on the two Greek words “*Christos*” and “*adelphos*”, meaning Christ’s brethren or followers

(it is a word which includes men and women). Those words are found in the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, where he writes to: *"the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse"* (Colossians 1:2).

So the name of our community was born out of conflict. It was around this time that Dr. Thomas made a second visit to England, preaching and teaching in various places, including Huddersfield where he stayed with a young Christadelphian and his wife, Robert Roberts by name. He was now 23 years old and was that very young boy of 10 who first heard Dr. Thomas preach at Aberdeen. By now he was interested in much more than his beard!



*John Thomas, aged 64, on his third visit to Britain*

Acting on the suggestion of Dr. Thomas, Robert Roberts started a community magazine in 1864 which, five years later, became known as *"The Christadelphian"*, a monthly magazine which is still in publication today.

The last few years of the Doctor's life were fraught with ill health, as the result of which a projected third visit to England never came to pass for, in March

1871, Dr. Thomas fell asleep and was laid to rest in New York Cemetery to await the promised day of resurrection. His work was a pioneering one which resulted in the founding of the Christadelphian community.

**Robert Tarrant**

## Walking With God

Think how many times we dwell upon  
The things that we go through:  
Why certain things should happen  
Or 'Is *this* the thing to do?'  
But David always had in mind  
God – that *He, His purpose* would fulfil:  
So everything that happened  
Was 'according to His will'.

If we go through life  
Thinking – '*God is always near*  
*And is guiding all our actions*',  
Then we have no need to fear;  
We do not walk uncertainly  
Nor 'with every wind be blown'  
For, we have the consolation  
That we never walk alone.

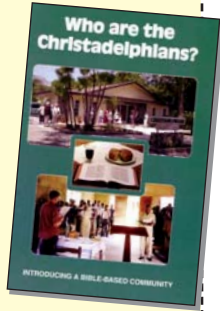
**Peggy Rawson**



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The Christadelphian community has no paid ministry, no elaborate ceremonies, nor any "head of the church" or legislative council. Each congregation organises its own affairs and wherever they exist throughout the world they have an agreed basis of belief, based on Bible teaching.



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