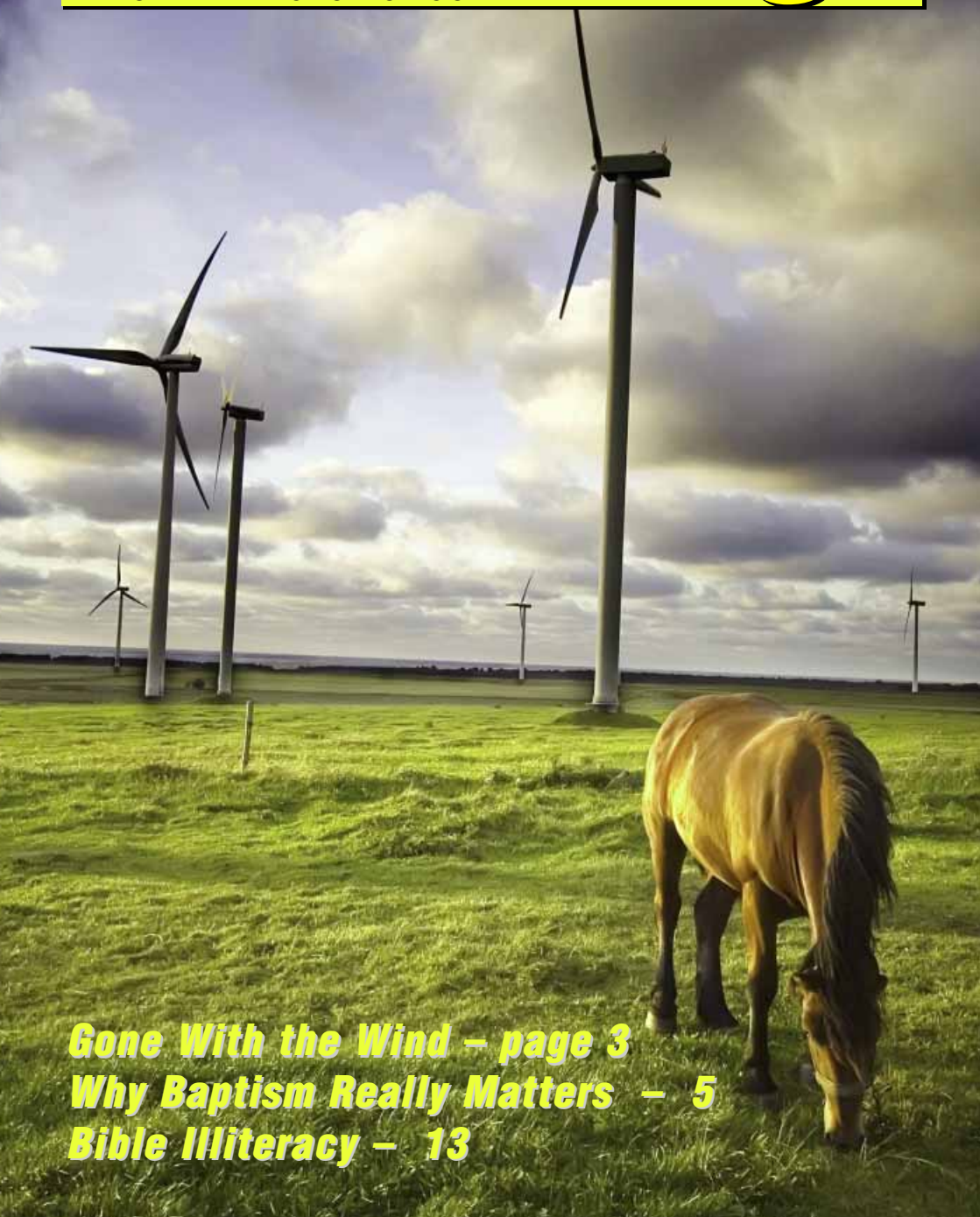


Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1487



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Bible Illiteracy – 13

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

124th Year

DO8

1487

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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Publisher: The Glad Tidings Publishing Association (a registered charity) Number 248352

Bible Talks, Study Classes, Sunday Schools and Youth Clubs are held regularly by Christadelphians worldwide. The address of your nearest group can be obtained from either the Distribution Secretaries or from the local agents or information addresses given above.

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Acknowledgements

Photographs:

*Wind Farms don't scare the horses
istockphotos*

Illustrations:

*istockphotos pgs 9-11; Clipart.com
3-8, 12-14a, 18-19; Christian
Clipart 17*

Bible Versions

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Gone With the Wind

As the quest warms up to find new sources of energy, businesses and governments are increasingly looking to wind farms as a source of clean renewable energy.

This has in turn provoked a lot of opposition from people who might be affected by the construction of massive windmills, soaring into the sky, and many other pressure groups have joined in. There is concern about migrating birds; the way the landscape would be changed; the possibility of offshore structures; and about the financial viability of the large schemes that are being proposed.

Some time ago the curator of a Windmill Museum wrote to a national newspaper in Britain to say: *“There is an old saying: ‘No one ever built a windmill if he could build a watermill.’ The wind is an unreliable source of power. It seldom blows steadily and sometimes not at all ...The wind can never become a major source of power”.*

Lacking Energy

The trouble is, of course, that every available source of new energy has its problems. Nuclear energy creates huge waste disposal issues. Wave power stations are tricky, because the sea is variable, and can be very destructive. Solar energy power stations are very expensive to build and

are, of course, limited to daytime use when the sun is shining. In a cloudy environment they are less effective than in those places where the sun shines all day long.

But something has to be done to secure the energy resources that are needed for the next generation. That is why there is such an energetic debate taking place on the various options; for oil and gas resources are finite and the demand for them is increasing all the time, even though they are getting more and more expensive.

The Wind Blows

Late one night an important Jewish official came to see the Lord Jesus and was challenged to reconsider his position in the most forthright terms. Jesus said that he must be born again and, when Nicodemus asked for clarification, he made this comment:

“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:5-8).

Rebirth from Above

Notice that Jesus said that two things are needed:



- 1 Rebirth by water;
- 2 Spiritual rebirth.

The first requirement is adult baptism – the very baptism then being practised by John (the Baptist) and later by Jesus and his disciples (see John 3:22,23). There is an article about the importance of baptism later in this issue.

The second – the need to be born of the Spirit – is about developing a spiritual relationship with God, through the Lord Jesus. The New Testament is full of references to *‘life in the Spirit’* or *spiritual-mindedness* (e.g. Galatians 5:16-25 and Romans 8:6).

But did you notice the Lord’s reference to the power of the wind? It blows, he said, where it pleases to blow, and it is beyond human control. That’s the very point the curator made, when he commented about the unpredictability of the wind. Try as we might to control the forces of nature – the various sources of energy that God has brought into existence – we cannot call them up, or calm them down. Such powers are well beyond our control and at times we have to cower before them. When such powers are unleashed in all their fury, there is little that we can do to resist them.

God’s Life Force

God has that sort of power, whether we care to recognise it or not. He offers us, in the Bible, a way of changing our lives for the better. He can cause that change to happen, if we want it to. And He has the power to raise us to a vastly superior life – one which will be achieved by the power of His spirit, when the Lord Jesus returns to remake our troubled world. That transformation has been promised for a long time, well before people began to be con-

cerned about an energy shortage. For there is no energy shortage where God is concerned:

“The palaces will be forsaken, the bustling city will be deserted. The forts and towers will become lairs forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks – until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest” (Isaiah 32:14,15).

“The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might he increases strength ... those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:28-31).

God’s Power Revealed

When God takes control of our troubled world by sending the Lord Jesus to reign here as King from Jerusalem, the energy problems of the world will be resolved, and so will all the other problems that now confront us. But, like the coming of the wind, we cannot be sure exactly when Jesus will come or precisely what circumstances will then prevail.

We have to prepare ourselves now, by learning from the Bible about God’s purpose, and getting our lives right with Him. That is the way to find a new and lasting source of energy – one that will lead to eternal life by the grace of God.

Editor

Why Baptism Really Matters

Once upon a time there was a certain king who felt so unwell one day that he asked that a minstrel be called to play for him and when he arrived the king mentioned a few of his favourite pieces.

“Oh your majesty,” said the minstrel, “those pieces are very old fashioned. I have brought some new pieces for you and I am sure that you will enjoy them”. He then played those pieces to the king and, at the end of the evening the minstrel approached the king to collect his fee.

“No,” said the king, “there is no fee. You performed your will, not mine.”

Humble Obedience

That simple story contains a profound truth. It is reminiscent of the story of Naaman in the Old Testament (2 Kings, Chapter 5). Naaman the Syrian was an eminent man but he had a major problem – he was a leper. He was told about a prophet in Israel who could help him, and he eventually arrived at the prophet Elisha’s door. But Elisha merely sent a servant with a message. “Go,” he told him, “and immerse yourself in the River Jordan seven times and you will be cleansed.”

Naaman was outraged by such off-hand treatment and left the prophet’s house in a towering rage. But he must have been a good master for all that, for later one of

his servants approached him and said:

“Master, if you had been commanded to do some great deed you would have done it. All you have been told to do is to ‘Wash and be clean’”.

Much to his credit, Naaman was a good enough man to see the sense in that. Humbly he acknowledged the wisdom of those words and went to the River Jordan, did what the prophet had commanded, and was healed of his leprosy. Notice the words of the prophet Elisha: He said to Naaman: “Wash and be clean”. His leprosy was spoken of as if it were something that had dirtied him and immersion had cleansed him of that defilement.

Remarkable Turnaround

In the New Testament we read of a man who was conducting a vicious campaign against the Christian Church. He was rounding up men and women indiscriminately, throwing them into prison and hounding many of them to their deaths. He was flogging people in the synagogue – in the Jewish synagogue of all places!

And he witnessed the stoning to death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 22:4,19-20).

But, on the road to Damascus, this man’s life was turned around by a vision of the risen Lord. It was then that the enormity of his



previous conduct weighed him down: he had been persecuting the followers of the Lord who had appeared to him! Whatever could be done about that? He certainly couldn't undo what he had done. What had been done was done, and it was impossible to put the clock back. But there was a remedy, which was now presented to Saul the Pharisee, and this is how he recalled it:



“Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwell there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight ... And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord’” (Acts 22:12-16).

Notice how the language of washing features once again, suggesting that baptism is a cleansing process.

Pentecost Persuasion

On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter stood up in Jerusalem and fearlessly proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah. He reminded the crowd of the miracles that Jesus had performed – miracles that demonstrated God's power. Yet in spite of all this, the Jews had engineered the crucifixion of Jesus and some of Peter's hearers could have been among the mob who had screamed for his blood. “Let him be crucified”, they had hurled back at the Roman governor Pilate, when he was trying to set Jesus free.

Now Peter confronted them with the enormity of their crime: that they had the blood of the Son of God, the Messiah, on their hands. But, once

again, what had been done was done and could not be undone. So, in their anguish, they appealed to Peter, who said to them:

“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ... Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:38,41).

So, through the simple process of being immersed in water – which is what baptism requires – even such guilt as theirs could be washed away. Just two things were necessary:

- ❖ *There must be repentance: deep regret for what has happened, and*
- ❖ *This must be followed by humble obedience to God's Word.*

The Lord's Commission

After his resurrection, Jesus gave his disciples clear instructions about what was to be done after his ascension to heaven.

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned’” (Mark 16:15,16).

The disciples were to preach so that their hearers would listen and understand. Those who believed the message would demonstrate their faith by requesting baptism. Obviously, those who did not believe would not want to be baptised – for them, it

would be pointless.

The apostle Philip did as Jesus had commanded and he went into the territory of Samaria. Endowed with the Holy Spirit, he was able to perform miracles giving authority to his preaching. The people listened attentively to Philip, they understood his message and then, we are told:

“When they believed Philip as he preached the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12).

There is a careful sequence recorded here:

- ❶ they listened,
- ❷ they believed, and
- ❸ they were baptized.

Ethiopian Eunuch

Shortly afterwards Philip was instructed to go south to the road going through Gaza (Acts 8:26-40). There he met a traveller who had been to Jerusalem to worship and was now making the long journey back to his country of Ethiopia. But he was not wasting his time for, as he journeyed, he was reading from the prophecy of Isaiah (Chapter 53), all about the suffering servant of the Lord: *“a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ... wounded for our transgressions ... bruised for our iniquities”*.

It has been said that this chapter might well have been written at the foot of the cross. In fact it was written about 800 years before the time of Jesus. But the Ethiopian knew nothing



about Jesus and he was puzzled, so he enquired, *“of whom does the prophet say this”*.

With that marvellous opening, Philip told him about the life and mission of Jesus. Clearly Philip broached the subject of baptism because by and by they came upon an oasis. Overjoyed, the Ethiopian cried out:

“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36).

Philip’s answer was simple and to the point, *“If you believe with all your heart, you may”*. Notice again, the man had eagerly listened to Philip; he understood the message and he believed it. His response was an urgent request for baptism and following a simple declaration of faith, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”*, Philip baptised him. But notice how emphatic the description of the baptism is:

“... both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water...” (Acts 8:38,39).

There is no question of just sprinkling him with a few drops of water (which they would certainly have been carrying). The record is emphatic, that the Ethiopian was immersed.

Baptism = Immersion

A certain amount of confusion has developed over the years, because of varying practices, but in Bible times the practice was crystal clear. A person who was baptized was buried in water. The original Greek word “baptize” or

“immerse” is a word used in the dyeing industry. Material to be dyed was ‘immersed’ in a vat of dye and it came out of the vat with a new colour. It was vital that immersion was complete – it would be useless just sprinkling dye on the material.

But why would God want people to be baptised? Well, first of all we have no right to demand that God should tell us His reasons! If God says, “I want you to be baptised”, then our place is to show a humble and obedient spirit. Nevertheless, God does tell us why He requires this of us.

Burial and Resurrection

Baptism is an enacted parable; it is a ‘picture’ of a burial and resurrection. In submitting to baptism we in effect are saying to God:

“I believe that Jesus led an unblemished life, and that his life was completely without sin even though he was sorely tempted.

“I believe that he presented that life to You on Golgotha’s hill.

“I believe that because he did not deserve death You raised him from the dead.

“I believe that if I accept him

as my saviour, then my own sins and faults can be washed away and I can become clean before You.

“I believe that the way You have appointed for us to demonstrate that we believe these things is by showing a humble spirit and submitting to the water of baptism; that in this way we can “put on Christ,” as if we were being clothed with his righteousness”.

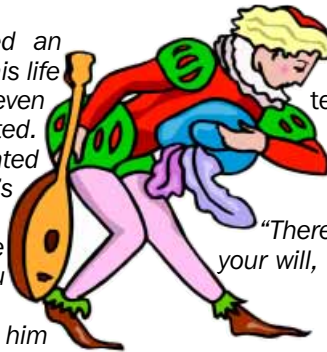
This is explained for us in more detail in Romans chapter 6:1-11 and in Galatians 3:27-29.

Summary

Remember Naaman – he wanted to be healed of that terrible disease and healing was available on God’s terms. A humble and obedient spirit was essential. We too have a terrible disease – the disease of sin. Healing is readily available – but on God’s terms, not our own.

Remember too the minstrel, and what the king said to him:

“There is no fee, you performed your will, not mine.”



David Budden

Glad Tidings

Earth shall be filled
With the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea;
These are the good tidings
That God has willed –
Redemption that shall make man free

By grace, through faith
In Jesus our Saviour
Who shall return to be the King:
The ones who are faithful
Then shall be saved,
For eternal life Christ shall bring

Gwen Marley

Part Three

The Problem of Suffering

In earlier articles **Lawrence Cave** examined the ways in which suffering can come about because of our own actions or as a result of actions taken by mankind in general. But what about that category of suffering which results from happenings which are beyond our control? And what, if anything, is God going to do to stop them happening?

Floods and Earthquakes

Jesus gives us help when thinking about suffering from events, such as floods and earthquakes, over which we have no control.



Following on from the incident we looked at in an earlier article, Jesus mentions the suffering caused by a tower falling on some people:

“Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4,5).

Jesus repeats the warning that he gave in the previous incident. What he is saying is this: ‘Stop and think about the end of your life’. Ultimately it does not matter whether we die from an accident at 20 years old or in bed at 95. The end result is the same. We all tend to put out of our minds the fact

that our life will end. Suffering can be a warning that interrupts our normal routines. It can make us stop and think about the fact that our lives will end one day.

The good news is that death need not be the end for us. The purpose of these articles, and others like them, is to provide you with the evidence that there is a trustworthy message in the Bible and that its message gives a true hope of life after death.

Illness and Death

Some people endure far more illness than others. They can be in difficult situations for long periods of time with no apparent hope of release. This suffering is not necessarily as a result of something they have or have not done. The Bible tells us that suffering can be for our own good, even if we can't see the reason for it. Here is one such explanation:



“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness” (Hebrews 12:7-10).

As we will see in the next section, children sometimes can't see why they are being disciplined. In the same way we sometimes can't see the reason for God's discipline. It may be that God knows we need some problem or other to make us stop and think what life is all about.

Coming Trouble

Most of us suffer more and more personal illness as we grow older. This also can make us realise that our bodies are wearing out and that we will eventually die. When we see storm clouds on the horizon, it is a warning to expect rain. If we don't have clothes suitable for rain, then we should do something about it.



Seeing other people suffer and die is a much more important warning. We are also going to die and should do something about that. We should consider whether or not we can trust the various ideas in our world about life after death.

What we have seen so far is that:

- Suffering and death can serve as a warning
- We should consider whether or not we can trust ideas about life after death
- Suffering disturbs our routines and makes us consider what life is all about

The Implications of Choice

We all value the freedom of choice that we have been given. Our loving Creator wants us to love and respect Him by choice. In the same way, loving parents want their children to respect them. Parents can enforce obedience on their children by a harsh, rigid upbringing. But this is hardly likely to encourage children to obey out of love and respect. It will certainly not be by choice.

There are times when loving parents need to show their children that they are in danger. They want to get the child's attention before disaster happens. They tell the child to stop before harm is done. If the comment is ignored, they may try to restrain him or her physically. The motives are for the child's good, but he or she may see it very differently at the time. The child may see it as undesirable, interrupting what he wants to do. Suffering in our lives can be like this. It can upset our routines and make us stop and think.

The Bible tells us that we are like

wayward children. Left to ourselves, we would become like spoilt children and selfishly destroy ourselves. We are dying creatures because, as we have seen, we all like our own way. Our loving Creator allows suffering to show us that there is something wrong with our world.

Because we can choose, suffering is a way that a loving Creator can get our attention and make us think about His offer of life after death.

- ⇒ *We can choose how we live our lives;*
- ⇒ *We all like to have our own way; but*
- ⇒ *Having our own way is not always the best option for us.*

Promised End of Suffering

If we trust what the Bible tells us, we can be assured that one day suffering will end.



The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ will come back to the earth eventually to remove all of our world's imperfections, including pain and death.

Two examples of this comforting message are:

"He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces" (Isaiah 25:8)

"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

- The Bible promises a time when there will be no more suffering
- We should consider whether or not we can trust this promise

Freedom of Choice

The Bible makes it plain that our Creator gives us the choice of whether to obey Him or not. The position was made plain to the early Israelites, when Moses said, on God's behalf:

"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to him, for he is your life and the length of your days" (Deuteronomy 30:19,20)

They could either love and obey God and have the hope of life, or disobey and have no hope of life. The writer of one of the Psalms says:

"I have chosen the way of truth; your judgments I have laid before me. I cling to your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame!" (Psalm 119:30,31)

The book of Proverbs tells us that those who ignore God are free to choose to do so:

"Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof" (Proverbs 1:29,30).

Summary

- We live in an imperfect world.
- We have freedom of choice.
- Our Creator wants us to choose to respond to His love despite our selfish tendencies, so that we walk with Him through life.



- The Bible tells us that suffering will end when Jesus returns to remove the imperfections in our world.
- We need to study the evidence which establishes the truth of the Bible.

Suffering

- can make us stop and think
- sometimes it warns us that things are not right
- it may make us stop and consider risks we are taking
- it can make us think about the effect of our actions on other people
- it disturbs our routines and can make us realise:
- that our lives are not endless
- there is something wrong with our world
- it can make us stop and think about our loving Creator's offer of life after death which we can choose to accept or reject

Lawrence Cave

Look at the website
www.theevidence.org.uk
to help you trust the message of
the Bible about suffering.

Bible Illiteracy

The Bible has long been the English-speaking world's best selling book. Over 900 English translations have been produced, from the dignified prose of the Authorised or King James Version to versions which attempt to render God's Word in colloquial street-slang.

In the United States a prayer book has been published which utilises the vernacular of hoodlums. For example it renders the well-known Twenty Third Psalm in these terms:

*"And even though I walk through
The Hood of death
I don't back down
For you have my back."*



Psalm 23 is about a shepherd but this new version makes it refer to a hoodlum

More Translations

Efforts to make the message accessible to as many as possible are not limited to the production of modern translations. Parents can buy their children Jesus dolls that recite Bible passages, while one enterprising evangelist has developed a Bible-based

juke box that allows one to select and play their favourite Scripture passage. In 2002 the well-known publisher Thomas Nelson began publishing Bible-zines – an amalgamation of the Bible and teenage magazines where Bible extracts mix with lifestyle articles for adolescents.

Many find the more colloquial translations and these commercial gimmicks disrespectful. There might be some justification for them if they led to more people reading God's Word. There is evidence, however, that this is not the case. In spite of the book's best-seller status, Bible literacy is in decline around the globe.

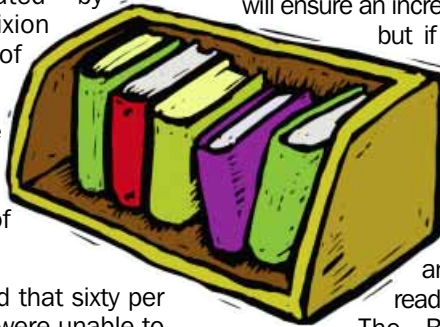
Many of the largest and most respected publishing houses such as Oxford University Press and Collins produce Bibles in a wide range of versions and styles. In addition to the major publishing houses there are organisations such as the Bible Society and Gideons International that foster the production and distribution of Bibles. In the United States alone more than 20 million new Bibles are sold annually, in spite of the fact that the average American home is estimated to already have at least four copies.

Understanding God's Word

Despite all the Bibles in America, however, a recent Gallop survey confirmed that the average person has only limited knowledge of what the Bible says. The survey found that:

- Less than half could name the first book of the Bible (Genesis)

- Only one third knew who gave the Sermon on the Mount (Jesus). Billy Graham was a popular alternative!
- One quarter were not aware of the event commemorated by Easter, (the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ); and
- Twelve per cent were under the impression that Noah was married to Joan of Arc!
- The survey also found that sixty per cent of respondents were unable to name five of the Ten Commandments.



George Gallup, founder of the polling firm behind the survey and a prominent American evangelical, was dismayed by the results, concluding that it confirmed the United States as ‘a nation of biblical illiterates’.

On the Shelf?

The results of this survey might reflect the stringent measures taken by authorities to keep religion out of American classrooms, but it is doubtful

whether the result would be better if the survey were conducted in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia or other English-speaking nations.

Printing, selling and giving away Bibles will ensure an increasing stock of books, but if all those Bibles are left on the shelf they will have no impact on their owners. Dolls, juke boxes and other paraphernalia are no substitute for regular and committed Bible reading.

The Bible has a vital message for men and women. It offers peace of mind now, forgiveness of sins and life eternal – but its message cannot be imparted unless it is read. We are very privileged to live in an age when Bibles are readily available to almost anyone who wishes to possess one, but reading God’s word is what is important.

Bible literacy is not just something that is desirable – it might literally save your life!

Geoff Henstock

Paul’s Second Missionary Journey



In the next article, John Hellowell traces the events that resulted in the apostle Paul leaving Corinth, calling in at Ephesus and heading home to Antioch. It marked the end of Paul’s Second Missionary Journey.

From Corinth to Ephesus

*We left the apostle in Corinth resisting opposition to the gospel message but, as **John Hellawell** now explains, things got far worse for him there and it was only a matter of time before he moved on to pastures new.*

Paul in Court

During the proconsulship of Gallio “*the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court*” (Acts 18:12, NIV). The charge which the Jews made was that Paul was “*persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law*”.

It is not clear whether they specifically meant their own Mosaic law or Roman law, for they may have suggested that Paul was introducing an illicit religion – one that had not been approved by the Roman authorities, as Judaism was. Either way, the charge would have put Paul in difficulty, or so they thought. Gallio’s response to their indictment seems to show that he thought they were accusing Paul of persuading Jews to abandon their Jewish law.

Gallio was a “*Deputy*” (KJV) or, as other versions translate it, a Proconsul. This detail is another example of Luke’s accuracy, for Achaia was a Senatorial Province under Augustus and an Imperial Province under Tiberius. After AD 44 it was restored by Claudius to the Senate and, therefore, governed by a Proconsul. The judgment seat of Gallio is still visible among the ruins of Corinth.

“Case dismissed”

Gallio was an amiable and gracious man but probably experiencing ill-health at this time. He made it quite clear that he was not prepared to hear

cases involving technical aspects of Judaism. The Jews already had a bad reputation for troublemaking, especially in Rome. Gallio had a shrewd idea of the kind of case it was:

“When Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters.’ And he drove them from the judgment seat” (Acts 18:14-16).

He dismissed the case forthwith and there was a rather unusual sequel. The Gentiles that were present took their revenge. Perhaps they nursed a grievance against the Jews and this presented them with an opportunity to settle old scores, or maybe this was simply anti-Semitism rising to the surface. They seized Sosthenes, who had succeeded Crispus as the chief ruler of the synagogue and was probably the spokesman who formally presented the case against Paul, and began to beat him before the Proconsul (18:17).

The KJV comments that “*Gallio cared for none of those things*” which the NIV renders “*But Gallio showed no concern whatever*”. This implies that he was indifferent but the text is, literally “*and not one of these (things) mattered to Gallio*”, which could suggest that he was impartial rather than indifferent. If he was indifferent, it

was perhaps because the Jews had wasted the time of the court in bringing the case under the guise of a breach of Roman law when, in fact, they were merely trying to get the Romans to punish someone with whom they disagreed. Gallio saw through their attempt, as Pilate had done previously in the case of the Lord Jesus, but Gallio was not to be outmanoeuvred as Pilate had been.

Travel to Ephesus

Paul stayed on “*yet a good while*”. The chronology given by some writers suggests that he stayed about another eight months. Then he decided to return to Syria to his home church in Antioch. Priscilla and Aquila – his close friends in Corinth with whom he had worked as a tent-maker in order to support himself and not depend on others – sailed with him as far as Ephesus, where they stayed. One wonders whether this was because they already had a branch of their business there or they went in order to establish one.

Paul had shaved his head in Cenchrea (the port from which they sailed) because he had a vow. It seems that a Nazarite vow, extending for a minimum period of thirty days, was sometimes undertaken as a thanksgiving for recovery after an illness.

Paul’s continuing Care

Although Paul had left Corinth he had not abandoned the church there but continued to demonstrate his care and concern for disciples living in a city where the environment was not conducive to helping those whose new-found faith was so different from the pagan religions that flourished there. Paul wrote at least four letters to

Corinth although only the second and fourth of these have been preserved in the New Testament, known to us as 1st and 2nd Corinthians. We know of the first and third because of statements in 1 Cor. 5:9 and 2 Cor.7:8.

Paul also arranged for his younger companions, Timothy and Titus, to visit Corinth and he also made a hasty visit. These facts indicate that this young church had many problems, but Paul worked tirelessly to ensure their spiritual development. Here we have an example of the way in which God works, for had there been no problems in Corinth we would not have the legacy of the two splendid Corinthian letters which are such a wonderful source of instruction and encouragement for us. Truly, God has a marvellous way of turning a potential tragedy into a spectacular triumph.

Arrival at Ephesus

Paul followed his normal pattern and went to the synagogue where he reasoned with the Jews. He must have made a good impression for once, for they asked him to devote more time than he really wanted to spend in teaching them. He explained that, although he could not stay any longer, he would return, if it was God’s will.

Paul then sailed eastwards across the Mediterranean to Caesarea. He paid his compliments to the disciples who lived there before travelling to Antioch from where he had set out on his second Missionary Journey about three years earlier.

He had come back home, but with so much happening in Asia Minor and Europe, it was not long before he was off again!

John Hellowell

The Resurrection

The basis of Christianity is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that after giving his life as a sacrifice for sin, he was raised from the dead and went to heaven to be with his Father. If the resurrection did not happen, Christianity is an irrelevant religion.

The people who followed Christianity in the First Century AD recognised this fact and discussed it on a number of occasions (the best account is in 1 Corinthians chapter 15).

The Gospels all record how, three days after his death, his faithful followers went to his grave to find it empty and saw angels there telling them that he was alive.



Many people saw Jesus alive – five hundred at once on one occasion. He appeared to different people on varying occasions and times. He ate meals with them, discussed how the Old Testament showed that, as the Son of God, he had to die for sin and how the disciples were to go out and preach the good news of his resurrection and its implications for people the world

over.

When you think about it, so many people had been involved in the death and burial of Jesus that mistakes about him actually dying were impossible. Romans and soldiers had been present at his death.

Jesus' enemies alleged that the disciples had taken the body (they never suggested that he had not died) and that they had just claimed that he had risen. However, they could not produce his corpse and, in any case, with a detachment of hard-nosed Roman soldiers guarding the cave in which he was buried, how was anyone to remove the huge stone sealing it without being challenged?

The good news is that the Lord Jesus Christ is alive forever, in perfect health and living with his Father in heaven. Why should that be important to you? There are three important reasons.

- 1 Through association with Jesus and his resurrection you can have your sins forgiven and become part of God's family.
- 2 If you have been baptised as a believer and have become a brother or sister in Christ, you can be assured that when you die you will only be dead until the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth.
- 3 Perhaps most importantly, you can be confident that you too can have eternal life when the Lord Jesus returns to earth to set up God's everlasting Kingdom.

Cynthia Miles

The Man Apart



It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that: "... the people were astonished at his teaching for he taught with authority and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7: 28,29) and "the common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37).

Even in his teaching, he was a man apart, but it was not just his message that attracted people. There was something about him: his personality, his character and his life.

The Life of Christ

In the Lord Jesus Christ the people saw someone who said what he meant and meant what he said. They saw truth shining from him without hypocrisy and could accept what he said when he declared:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

No one could make a claim like that unless they had lived in a way which showed it to be true. And Jesus had, for the people who followed him had rich experience of his compassion. They knew that he had genuine concern for them and their needs.

He cured their illnesses and gave them an abiding hope, by giving a clear framework for life now and the promise

of everlasting life in the coming kingdom. Above all else, Jesus made God, his Father, approachable. Through Jesus all can come to Him; nothing need stand in the way.

One of the key themes of John's gospel, from which the above passage is taken, is that people must come to Jesus if they are to find life. That invitation still stands, for Jesus said:

"Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

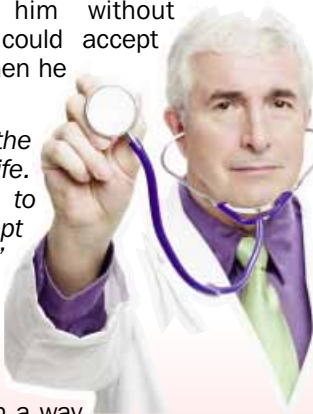
Divine Physician

Jesus' teaching was for ordinary folk like us. It had nothing to offer the ruling classes of his day; for they thought they were all right. Jesus knew that and said:

"Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:31,32).

It's true we do not go to the doctor unless we are ill. The "righteous" to whom Jesus was referring are surely those who believe themselves to be "well", people we might call "the self-righteous". It is only those who see their need, because of sin, who will come to the Father through Jesus. They alone will recognise him as the Way, the Truth and the Life, and will place their confidence in him.

Nothing then should stand in our



way listening to Jesus. Sadly the human race has often erected needless barriers to make things more difficult. We have:

- ❖ invented strange doctrines that no one can really understand;
- ❖ adopted ideas which do not express the truth of what Jesus taught;
- ❖ wanted priests, who dress up in different clothes;
- ❖ created icons and symbols that actually mislead, rather than help, and so on.

"Come to me..."

The clear implication from the gospels is that ordinary people should read the Bible for themselves and then found their beliefs and practices upon what it teaches. And with as much determination as they can muster they should try to live the life of the kingdom of God in their own lives here and now. That way they can begin to prepare for that day when King Jesus will reign from Jerusalem, over all the earth.

The Scriptures are designed to bring us to understand, know, love and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the way to God and all those who come to God through him will be found walking in the way. For it was by that very term that the early believers were known: they were the people of the Way:

"Saul, still breathing threats and

*murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of **the Way**, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem"* (Acts 9:1,2);

*"Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in **the way** of the Lord" (18:24,25);*

*"When some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of **the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples" (19:9);*

*"And about that time there arose a great commotion about **the Way**..." (19:23);*

*"This I confess to you, that according to **the Way** which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets" (24:14).*

There is just the one Way to obtain everlasting life and that is through the man apart – the Lord Jesus Christ. By belief and baptism into his saving name, we can have a true and living hope that will set us apart from all those who have no hope. How important it is for us to hear his voice and come to him.

David Nightingale



There is only one way to make your life right with God – through Jesus Christ

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Michael Ashton

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