

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1567



The Great Adventure – page 3
How to Start Reading the Bible – page 5
Bible Reading Tables – pages 10,11

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

130th Year

M14

1567



A monthly magazine 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 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 either from one of the Glad Tidings Distributors listed above, or from one of the contact addresses listed on the back cover.

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Acknowledgements

Photographs:

Cover and pages 10-11:

Climbing in the European Alps
istockphotos

Other Illustrations:

Clipart.com

Bible Versions

The version most used in this issue is the New King James Version (NKJV) and other versions are sometimes used.

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The Great Adventure

It's an adventure when someone sets out to achieve something, not knowing for sure whether the aim can be accomplished, but where everyone is determined to make the best effort possible.

The climbers on this month's front cover look intent upon reaching the mountain top, but there are significant obstacles on the way. They may or may not make it, but they are clearly intent upon doing their best. And if they are successful, what a marvellous view they are likely to have from the top of the mountains!

Living Dangerously

George Mallory was a mountaineer who led several expeditions to try and climb Mount Everest in the 1920s. Asked by a *New York Times* reporter why he wanted to climb Everest he famously replied "Because it's there", a comment which sums up the attitude of many people who like to live dangerously, if they can. But life itself can be dangerous, which is why every sensible parent tries to urge their children to take care and to watch out for unforeseen happenings.

Because God is a Father, He too warns those who want to be His children to take care how they live and what they make of life. But He also wants them to make the most of the opportunities life offers and not to misuse the precious gift of existence. God's advice comes in many forms, including laws, precepts, wise sayings, narratives and the life experiences of many godly (and ungodly) people which are recorded in the Bible.

Inspiration

The Bible is a communication from God given when He inspired people to deliver His message. It is not, as some people wrongly suggest, a record of people trying to find out about God. It is not their musings and searches for divine reality. The Bible is God's message for mankind, as the apostles explain:

❖ Paul

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15–17).

❖ Peter

No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20–21).

It follows that when we read the Bible we are reading God's message to mankind and we should consider it to be the most important thing we will ever read. In the Bible we can find out about the Creator of the universe and His great plan of salvation. For the One who gave us life wants to give us everlasting life in a perfect world.

Divine Guidance

When starting off for a mountain adventure it is as well to have a guide,

a good map, or a companion who has made the climb before. The Bible is just that and as you read it you find out about the journey through life that many others have made, albeit in different times and facing quite different issues from those that face us today. Not all of the people who started well finished the course; many fell by the wayside, or were distracted by other opportunities or attractions that led them away from the way that God wanted them to walk. But here is a key piece of advice for us, given by King Solomon in his early days, before his many wives stole his heart away from God:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths (Proverbs 3:5–6).

Sometimes the smallest words carry the strongest message: here it is the twice-repeated word “all”. God asks for total commitment if we want to be part of His purpose and members of His family. He asks us to give His message priority and to think about Him in everything we do – in work, in our relationships, in family life, in the way we spend our leisure time and in our worship. If we put God first in all these things and always keep Him and His Word uppermost in our minds, He will be with us to help and bless all that we do.

Living by Faith

The Lord Jesus is the perfect example of how to live with God in mind. Whilst still a young boy, he was found by his mother and his stepfather in the Temple at Jerusalem, listening and learning. When they remonstrated, he quietly answered:

Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house? (Luke 2:49).

That was his priority – to do his Father’s will – and it was a guiding principle all his life long:

I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me (John 5:30).

Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done (Luke 22:42).

Jesus was the Son of God and was given the freedom to choose whether he would obey God’s will or not. There was nothing automatic about what happened, for Jesus was his own man, not a robot or a puppet. As he said himself:

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father (John 10:17–18).

Fortunately for us, Jesus gave his life in perfect obedience and died to make it possible for us to share his victory over sin and death. He undertook a great adventure and now sits in glory at his Father’s right hand in heaven. But when he returns to earth, in his Father’s glory and that of the holy angels, another adventure will begin, as he establishes God’s kingdom and transforms the world. The wonderful thing is that we can be part of that transformation if we put God first in all that we do and learn to live by faith.

Editor

How to Start Reading the Bible

There is something to be realised right at the beginning. You cannot read the Bible in the way you might read some other books. The Bible is unique and it is good to recognise it right at the start. There is nothing like it or equal to it anywhere else in the world, and therefore the way you read it is important.

You must read it carefully, because every word is important. With other books, individual words may not in themselves have particular significance – but with the Bible it is different, because of what the Bible is.

The Mind of God

Remember the Bible is the documentation of the mind of God. It is the thought of God, expressed in the syllables of human speech. It is the purpose of the Eternal made articulate and imprinted upon the parchment of a book. If so great a concept is confined within the limitations of human language, how important must the words be themselves. Many a man has misunderstood the Bible because he was not willing to take care to read it properly and reverently. It is far more than printers' ink and paper.



It deserves respect and esteem. Some books can be read cursorily, lightly skipping from one chapter to another – but not the Bible.

What time of day you read it and how much you read may have to be regulated by the facts and forces of your particular way of life. But if you really mean business about this enterprise, then the nature of your reading must be careful and reverent. Christadelphians have always been Bible readers. This is not said boastfully, but only to justify offering a word of advice about the method of reading.

We have found from our experience that it is a good and profitable thing to read the Bible every day and we have a system of reading which, if followed, enables us to read the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in the course of 12 months.

This is done by following a table of readings. Using these reading tables gives the added benefit that all of us are reading the same portions of Scripture each day all over the world. So the fellowship of faith is sustained and strengthened by the same thoughts and ideas being pondered upon and weighed from the Word of God. (That set of Bible Readings is included in this issue of *Glad Tidings* at pages 10 and 11.)

How to Read

If you are going to read a portion of the Bible every day there is one piece of advice I would offer and it is this. Take care that the exercise does not

become a performance – a ritual – so that we do it as a matter of course, like cleaning our teeth or taking the dog for a walk. If that was to happen, before long we should be saying: “Let’s get the readings out of the way and then we can...” That is not the way to start reading the Bible. Quite obviously the objective is to read with a view to understanding.

I met a man the other day who had been reading the Bible every day for 27 years – that meant he had read the prophecy of Habakkuk 27 times but he confessed that he had never understood it. Imagine reading something every year for 27 years and never understanding what had been read. His reading was a performance – a habit – superficial and without feeling. Read every day by all means but try to read penetratingly. Speaking for myself, I find that where a passage of Scripture is not immediately and clearly self-evident as to its meaning, then it is a good thing to read it several times slowly and to meditate upon and ponder the actual words used, remembering that every word is important.

An Open Mind

Now we must get down to the nitty-gritty about Bible reading. If you are reading for the purpose of discovering the truth about God and His purpose, it is essential to come with a genuine desire for truth, and be ready to face the consequences of such a discovery. What I mean is this. Some people come to the Bible not to discover truth but to find support for ideas they have already formulated in their own mind.

People are often inclined to invent a God which suits their own idea of what He ought to be like. Their own thoughts and ideas become their God – so they come to the Bible seeking to

justify the God they have invented. Sometimes by a capricious selection of certain passages of Scripture and a wilful rejection of others, they can satisfy themselves that their God is the God of the Bible. This is not the way to discover the truth that is revealed in God’s Word.

Problem Areas

If possible, it is best to read the Bible without any preconceived notions at all. That, of course, is asking a lot, but the truth is that the person most likely to be filled is the person who is most empty. The difficulty is that there are certain preconceived ideas which, because of their very nature, are likely to hinder and harm the cause of truth. Usually those ideas are pagan and consequently out of harmony with the divine purpose revealed in the Bible.

Just as an example of what I mean – there is the Greek and therefore pagan doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The idea is that man by his very nature is immortal and indestructible. This is a pernicious doctrine and has the effect of blinding people to so much of the truth revealed in the Bible.

- ✓ *It robs death of its real meaning;*
- ✓ *it diminishes the awful power of sin;*
- ✓ *it confuses the meaning of redemption;*
- ✓ *it clouds a true insight into God’s real purpose with the world;*
- ✓ *it dislocates a proper understanding of God’s kingdom; and*
- ✓ *it contradicts the Bible’s clear teaching about the meaning and need of resurrection as a means of survival.*

This is but one illustration of how much we need to come to the Bible

with a mind which is open and a heart desiring the truth.

Read it All

The next condition I draw attention to is the need to read the whole Bible. The Bible had many writers – but one author. It is a transcript of that one author’s purpose and will and it is one complete organic whole. The moment we open the Bible, God is coming close to us.

It is not our business to pronounce judgment upon the value or truth of this part or that. Men did not originate the words, they are only the custodians – they are not the source. If we begin to select this and reject that, we are at once undermining the possibility of gaining a balanced view of God’s Truth. But people do this.

They treat the Word of God as though it is a large department store. You can wander through such a store saying ‘Yes I like that, that suits me well’, or ‘Oh dear no – I dislike that, that is not for me’. That’s perfectly alright in a department store, but it’s a tragic mistake when it comes to the Bible. But it happens. They read these words:

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).

They say ‘That is good and I like it’. But then later on they read:

Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33), or

Unless you repent you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:3).

They say ‘I do not like that, it does not suit my ideas and therefore I cannot receive it’

Old and New

Then there are those who think that the only important part of the Bible is the New Testament and that everything in the Old Testament is old fashioned and out-of-date. Anybody who believes this has erected a barrier to a proper understanding of the Bible, right at the start. The relationship between the two Testaments is an essential relationship and one of perfect harmony.

The Old completes the New as much as the New completes the Old. Neither is sufficient without the other. The Old prepares for the New. The New authenticates the Old. The New Testament does not make the Old void, it makes it valid. The New Testament does not weaken the moral law of the Old Testament – instead it develops it and moves from the letter deep into the spiritual part of human life. There is Grace in the Old Testament and there is Law in the New Testament and there is fulfilment in both.

Dennis Gillett

To be concluded

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www.gladtidingsmagazine.org



Which Way?

Two men sat behind me, talking loudly. One said: "I'm not looking forward to driving on the Continent, as they drive on the wrong side of the road. Why can't everyone go on the same side?"

His words set me thinking. Many Bible passages show us the right way to go in life. The Lord Jesus was emphatic:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it (Matthew 7:13).

Could words be clearer? How are we to join such a favoured company? There is only ONE way to choose, and at times it can be difficult to walk it, but the majority of people don't want to go that way. "Why?" The Lord continued with these strong words:



Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:14).

Which choice should we make? The majority choose the wrong way – the broad way – which gives no hope. It is pointed out that the narrow way is the ONE way to glory. It may not be easy at times, but the prospect is superb. It is the way to life!

Taking Direction

After the resurrection of the Saviour, 3000 people gladly accepted that way (Acts 2:41). It was no easy decision but the happiness of those who accepted this change in their way of life was so infectious that soon there were 5000 believers (Acts 4:4).

The decision to become a follower of Jesus was a hard choice because much persecution followed, at first from the Jewish authorities and then from many unbelievers. Over the next few years hundreds of Christians went to their deaths confidently believing that their Saviour would call them forth from death to a life that no ordinary man could offer.

What had they done to become a follower of the Lord Jesus? They had obeyed the commandment he gave, for they wanted what he was offering. Here is the commandment and the offer:

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).

It is a stark choice. Believe in God and do all that He asks us to do and then be baptised. What is baptism? It

is a complete immersion in water, with the belief that at that moment the baptised person has all his or her sins forgiven and begins a new life of Christian service, a life of humility and obedience, which puts a believer on the way that leads to God's kingdom. For when Jesus returns he is to establish God's kingdom on earth, centred in Jerusalem, and that will begin the transformation of the earth and the creation of a new society.

Which Way?

Throughout the whole of the Bible we are encouraged to choose the right way in life: the way that leads to God and towards His kingdom:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:1-2).

Only one man in the history of the world was able always to stay on the right path: the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is the way to go: by delighting in God's law and by reading the Bible and meditating upon it. The alternative is eternal destruction:

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish (Psalm 1:6).

The question we need to address is this: When our Lord returns will we be walking the right way? We must be positive in our answer, but it is a free choice for each of us. The Old Testament gives details of a man who was nearing death who said this:

Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not

one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed (Joshua 23:14).

Joshua had incredible drive and courage and what a conclusion to his life, as well as a testimony to all who follow the right way. We should heed the Psalmist's words and try to direct our lives in the same way that these righteous men have walked:

Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path ... I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord! (Psalm 27:11-14).

Journey's End

If we can do that, we puny creatures can ask the mighty Creator to help, just as King David did when he said:

Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day (Psalm 25:4-5).

God will lead us in the right direction if we pray for help and if we pray through Jesus he can bring us near to the One who alone makes it possible for sinners like us to be given everlasting life in God's coming Kingdom. Jesus once summed up all our needs in these words:

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

Ken Clark

Bible Reading

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15	...	34	...	25	...	7
16	...	35	...	26	...	8
17	...	36	...	27	...	9, 10
18	Deut.	1	...	28	...	11
19	...	2	...	29	...	12
20	...	3	...	30	...	13, 14
21	...	4	...	31	...	15, 16
22	...	5	Eccl.	1	...	17, 18
23	...	6, 7	...	2	...	19
24	...	8, 9	...	3	...	20, 21
25	...	10, 11	...	4	Acts	1
26	...	12	...	5	...	2
27	...	13, 14	...	6	...	3, 4
28	...	15	...	7	...	5, 6
29	...	16	...	8	...	7
30	...	17	...	9	...	8

MAY

1	Deut.	18	Eccl.	10	Acts	10
2	...	19	...	11	...	9
3	...	20	...	12	...	11, 12
4	...	21	Song	1	...	13
5	...	22	...	2	...	14, 15
6	...	23	...	3	...	16, 17
7	...	24	...	4	...	18, 19
8	...	25	...	5	...	20
9	...	26	...	6	...	21, 22
10	...	27	...	7	...	23, 24
11	...	28	...	8	...	25, 26
12	...	29	Isaiah	1	...	27
13	...	30	...	2	...	28
14	...	31	...	3, 4	Col.	1
15	...	32	...	5	...	2
16	...	33, 34	...	6	...	3, 4
17	Joshua	1	...	7	1 Thes.	1, 2
18	...	2	...	8	...	3, 4
19	...	3, 4	...	9	...	5
20	...	5, 6	...	10	2 Thes.	1, 2
21	...	7	...	11	...	3
22	...	8	...	12	1 Tim.	1, 2, 3
23	...	9	...	13	...	4
24	...	10	...	14	...	5, 6
25	...	11	...	15	2 Tim.	1
26	...	12	...	16	...	2
27	...	13	...	17, 18	...	3, 4
28	...	14	...	19	Titus	1, 2, 3
29	...	15	...	20, 21	Philemon	...
30	...	16	...	22	Heb.	1, 2
31	...	17	...	23	...	3, 4, 5

JUNE

1	Joshua	18	Isaiah	24	Heb.	6, 7
2	...	19	...	25	...	8, 9
3	...	20, 21	...	26, 27	...	10
4	...	22	...	28	...	11
5	...	23, 24	...	29	...	12
6	Judges	1	...	30	...	13
7	...	2, 3	...	31	James	1
8	...	4, 5	...	32	...	2
9	...	6, 7	...	33	...	3, 4
10	...	7, 8	...	34	...	5
11	...	9	...	35	1 Peter	1
12	...	10, 11	...	36	...	2
13	...	12, 13	...	37	...	3, 4, 5
14	...	14, 15	...	38	2 Pet.	1, 2
15	...	16	...	39	...	3
16	...	17, 18	...	40	1 John	1, 2
17	...	19	...	41	...	3, 4
18	...	20	...	42	...	5
19	...	21	...	43	2 & 3 John	...
20	Ruth	1, 2	...	44	Jude	...
21	...	3, 4	...	45	Rev.	1, 2
22	1 Sam.	1	...	46, 47	...	3, 4
23	...	2	...	48	...	5, 6
24	...	3	...	49	...	7, 8, 9
25	...	4	...	50	...	10, 11
26	...	5, 6	...	51	...	12, 13
27	...	7, 8	...	52	...	14
28	...	9	...	53	...	15, 16
29	...	10	...	54	...	17, 18
30	...	11, 12	...	55	...	19, 20

OCTOBER

1	Chron.	15	Ezek.	27	Luke	24
2	...	16	...	28	Gal.	1, 2
3	...	17	...	29	...	3, 4
4	...	18, 19	...	30	...	5, 6
5	...	20, 21	...	31	Eph.	1, 2
6	...	22	...	32	...	3, 4
7	...	23	...	33	...	5, 6
8	...	24, 25	...	34	Phil.	1, 2
9	...	26	...	35	...	3, 4
10	...	27	...	36	John	1
11	...	28	...	37	...	2, 3
12	...	29	...	38	...	4
13	2 Chron.	1, 2	...	39	...	5
14	...	3, 4	...	40	...	6
15	...	5, 6	...	41	...	7
16	...	7	...	42	...	8
17	...	8	...	43	...	9, 10
18	...	9	...	44	...	11
19	...	10, 11	...	45	...	12
20	...	12, 13	...	46	...	13, 14
21	...	14, 15	...	47	...	15, 16
22	...	16, 17	...	48	...	17, 18
23	...	18, 19	...	49	...	19
24	...	20	...	50	...	20, 21
25	...	21, 22	...	2	Acts	1
26	...	23	...	3	...	2
27	...	24	...	4	...	3, 4
28	...	25	...	5	...	5, 6
29	...	26, 27	...	6	...	7
30	...	28	...	7	...	8
31	...	29	...	8	...	9

NOVEMBER

1	2 Chron.	30	Dan.	10	Acts	10
2	...	31	...	11	...	11, 12
3	...	32	...	12	...	13
4	...	33	Hosea	1	...	14, 15
5	...	34	...	2	...	16, 17
6	...	35	...	3	...	18, 19
7	...	36	...	4	...	20
8	Ezra	1, 2	...	5	...	21, 22
9	...	3, 4	...	6	...	23, 24
10	...	5, 6	...	7	...	25, 26
11	...	7	...	8	...	27
12	...	8	...	9	...	28
13	...	9	...	10	Colos.	1
14	...	10	...	11	...	2
15	...	11	...	12	...	3, 4
16	Neh.	1, 2	...	13	1 Thes.	1, 2
17	...	3	...	14	...	3, 4
18	...	4	Joel	1	...	5
19	...	5, 6	...	2	2 Thes.	1, 2
20	...	7	...	3	...	3
21	...	8	Amos.	1	...	4, 5
22	...	9	...	2	1 Tim.	1, 2, 3
23	...	10	...	3	...	4
24	...	11	...	4	...	5
25	...	12	...	5	2 Tim.	1
26	...	13	...	6	...	2
27	Esther	1	...	7	...	3, 4
28	...	2	...	8	Titus	1, 2, 3
29	...	3, 4	...	9	Philemon	...
30	...	5, 6	Obadiah	...	Heb.	1, 2
31	...	7, 8	3, 4, 5

DECEMBER

1	Esth.	9, 10	Jonah	1	Heb.	6, 7
2	Job	1, 2	...	2, 3	...	8, 9
3	...	3, 4	...	4	...	10
4	...	5	Micah	1	...	11
5	...	6, 7	...	2	...	12
6	...	8	...	3, 4	...	13
7	...	9	...	5	James	1
8	...	10	...	6	...	2
9	...	11	...	7	...	3, 4
10	...	12	Nahum	1, 2	...	5
11	...	13	...	3	1 Peter	1
12	...	14	Hab.	1	...	2
13	...	15	...	2	...	3, 4
14	...	16, 17	...	3	2 Pet.	1, 2
15	...	18, 19	Zeph.	1	...	3
16	...	20	...	2	1 John	1, 2
17	...	21	...	3	...	3, 4
18	...	22	Hag.	1, 2	...	5
19	...	23, 24	Zech.	1	2 & 3 John	...
20	...	25, 27	...	2, 3	Jude	...
21	...	28	...	4, 5	Rev.	1, 2
22	...	29, 30	...	6, 7	...	3, 4
23	...	31, 32	...	8	...	5, 6
24	...	33	...	9	...	7, 8, 9
25	...	34	...	10	...	10, 11
26	...	35, 36	...	11	...	12, 13
27	...	37	...	12	...	14
28	...	38	...	13, 14	...	15, 16
29	...	39	Malachi	1	...	17, 18
30	...	40	...	2	...	19, 20
31	...	41, 42	...	3, 4	...	21, 22

By courtesy of The Christadelphian

The Thessalonian Letters

Just to show how ‘mixed up’ is the order of letters in the New Testament, we now return to one of the first letters Paul ever wrote. He came to Thessalonica in the north of Greece on the Second Journey, and left the town in a hurry when his Jewish enemies stirred up the people against him.

The apostle was worried about his new converts, and sent Timothy to them. When Timothy and Silas came back with good news, Paul at once wrote the First Letter to the Thessalonians to encourage them to stand fast.

1 Thessalonians

Paul commends the brethren because they had not kept their new faith to themselves, but had sounded it out to the whole surrounding area. They had suffered persecution from the Jews as a result. He wished he could come himself to support them, but Satan (literally ‘the adversary’, i.e. the Jewish opposition), had kept him away:

Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

Now he was relieved to hear from Timothy that their faith was strong, and they remembered him with affection.

He reminds them of the instructions he gave them – how they were to steer clear of sexual immorality, love one another, and work for their living. Then in the fourth chapter he slips in an important summary of the Christian hope of life after death. It reads as though some of their members had died, and they had been mourning for

them. Death is not the end for the believer, Paul says. When Jesus returns at the Second Coming, the very first thing he will do is to raise his dead friends, even before he greets the living believers. It will be like Mount Sinai, when God descended with a trumpet blast to call Moses and the elders of Israel up into the clouds on the mountain. So Jesus will gather to him the faithful, including those who are asleep in the grave.

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

Every chapter of this short letter has mention of the return of the Lord. Paul ends with a reminder that when Jesus does come, it will be like a burglar in the middle of the night. He warns them to keep awake and watch – words that still apply today.

2 Thessalonians

The second letter sends greetings from Paul, Silas and Timothy – the same trio found in the first epistle. It seems that this letter followed swiftly on the heels of the first. The apostle is impressed by the steadfastness of the Thessalonians under persecution, which was still ongoing, and he tells them God will reward them. When Jesus returns, he will bring a fiery judgment on all who have refused to hear the gospel, and rest to those who have suffered for its sake.

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. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, 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 (2 Thessalonians 1:6–10).

However, Paul continues, they should not expect the Return immediately. There must first be the development of an apostasy (a falling away from the faith), in which a leader would set himself up as if he were God on earth, enthroned in God's temple, the church (2 Thessalonians 2:3,4). This development would be encouraged by false signs and miracles which would deceive people. (Jesus had warned the apostles about the coming Anti-Christ in the same terms.) This system of false religion would then be swept away by Jesus at his coming.

The third chapter emphasizes again that believers are expected to earn their living by working, and not to sponge on others (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). Paul had set them an example while he was with them, making tents to earn money, and preaching only in his spare time. He signs off the letter himself (it had probably been dictated) so that they would know it was genuine, and prays the grace of Jesus will be with them.

David M Pearce

The Second Coming in 1 Thessalonians

You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10).

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? (2:19).

... that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints (3:13).

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (4:16).

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (5:23).

The Word Made Flesh

The Bible is the Word of God, which is why we should read it carefully and prayerfully. But reading it is not an end in itself for it is a revelation from God to bring us to Him.

Jesus once rebuked his listeners by saying that they had searched the Scriptures, but their reading had not brought them to him, although those Scriptures are all about him (John 5:39). He was the Word or revelation of God made flesh, as John Carter now explains.

The Word of God

The prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of the Messiah with these words:

*Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God ... The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; **for the mouth of the Lord has spoken** (Isaiah 40:3,5).*

The gospel-writer John picks up those words in the opening words of his account of the life of Jesus when he says:

*In the beginning was **the Word** (John 1:1).*

He is not here referring to the written Word of God – the Bible – nor to the Lord Jesus Christ as though he had existed from the beginning of time. The Greek word “logos” from which we get the word “logic” has to do with reason or thought, for any written or spoken word is the expression of the thought or reason that preceded the utterance. But once uttered that word has power, especially if the speaker is Almighty God Himself. Thus, at the beginning of

time, God spoke “and it was done” (Psalm 33:9). God said “Let there be light” and light appeared; for every word spoken by God is effective to the accomplishment of His purpose.

Personification

So, when the apostle John said: “In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word (logos) was with God, and the Word (logos) was God” (John 1:1), he did not mean that “the Word” was a separate personality. He meant that God had a reason for Creation, and a purpose which had been with Him from the very start of everything. John, in his first Epistle, uses language very similar to the opening of his gospel when he says:

The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us (1 John 1:2).

Here he is explaining that they have seen the risen Christ who has been given eternal life, after his resurrection, and that this life (which has now been revealed in the risen Christ) was always part of God’s gracious purpose from the very beginning. Must we give “life” a separate existence and make it a person? No! This is personification in operation, and it helps us to understand the prologue to the gospel. For when John says that “the Word” (the logos) and “the life” were with God, it means that these attributes – logic, reason, thought, and intention of giving people eternal life – were part of God’s plan from the very start.

“The Word was God”

So what does it mean that “the Word (*logos*) was God”? We should express that in modern English by using an adjective for, although the Greek word is a noun, it has an adjectival value. What John is saying is that the Word was divine. The purpose that God conceived in the beginning was a divine purpose. It was a divine thought which was then expressed in words when God revealed His gracious purpose.

The whole of the scheme He had in mind partook of the character and of the attributes of God. Just as our thinking and planning is human through-and-through, so what God purposes to accomplish is divine through-and-through.

It cannot be otherwise. But since man has sinned and transgressed, how and in what way is this purpose to be realized? Now here comes the breakthrough. We are told in the 14th verse that something extraordinary has occurred:

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).

God’s plan and purpose which had previously been expressed in the words that He had communicated to the patriarchs and through prophets, had now been embodied in human form. God had begotten a Son, who partook of our human nature, so that we could see what Almighty God is like by having His Son live alongside us. As a later writer would express the same thought, in different words:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these

last days spoken to us by His Son (Hebrews 1:1–2).

The Word made Flesh

John now tells us more about what it was like to have God’s “only begotten Son” (1:18) dwelling among mankind, and he uses some language which looks back to the time of Moses:

The Word became flesh and dwelt (or tabernacled) 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 word “tabernacled” used by John is a derived from the word used to describe the display of God’s glory in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. Just as God had dwelt in the midst of His people in the Tabernacle, and the Temple, so God was now tabernacling in a man, in flesh, in Jesus Christ, through his Holy Spirit.¹

John says, “*We beheld his glory.*” What is the glory that was seen in Jesus? He perfectly displayed the moral attributes of the Eternal. Once, long before, Moses had asked God to show him His glory and God said that He would make all His goodness pass before him and would proclaim the name of the Lord (Exodus 33:18,19).

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth” ... (Exodus 34:6).

These were the characteristics of God, and the expressions of His Name, as He revealed His character to Moses. Now, in Jesus, we have the manifestation of the Father and His glory revealed in a Son, who was “full of grace and truth”, full of all the qualities and attributes of God.

God Revealed

At the end of the Lord's ministry, one of his disciples said: "Show us the Father" (John 14:8). Notice what Jesus said in reply:

Jesus said to him, "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?'" (14:9).

To have lived with Jesus, to hear him speak and see him act was to see just what God is like Himself. We may have heard about the royal family, for example, but if one of the family came and lived with us we would get a very good idea of what royalty is really like. Because he was God's Son, Jesus had his roots in the Eternal. He was in a unique position to show mankind what God is really like because he was his Father's Son:

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared Him (John 1:18).

Previously the Word of God had come through intermediaries – people who had been inspired to reveal God's purpose, or who had been used to convey God's law to His people. John notes the difference between a prophet and a Son when he says:

For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

God was gracious in giving Israel the Law: but they had a higher and fuller grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the change in the verbs "given" and "came". The law was given by or through Moses: he was the channel of something "given". But it was

embodied in Jesus. Grace and truth "came" and were established as facts in him. And all this was done for man's salvation, in order that the fulness and grace of God might be extended to all who will come into a relationship with Him. God is bringing many sons to glory through this One who is the only begotten of the Father. This is the Father's method, and the way He has brought about human salvation. Can we wonder that the names of God are given to the Son in the prophecies, and that those who at last attain to the Divine nature are themselves described as manifestations of the Name of God?

The Divine Name

Even now we may be brought into relationship with His Name. Jesus said:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

The Divine Name is expressive of God's purpose. That name required that God should be manifested in a Son through the Holy Spirit, which is His power. That was the means whereby Jesus was brought into being (Luke 1:35); and it was then operative in raising him from the dead and endowing him with the power of an endless life. The same spirit will be operative in changing those who are born of the spirit to likeness of nature to Jesus Christ, making them all equal to the angels. There will thus be manifest at the return of the Lord Christ, a new order of immortal beings, taken out of the human race, with Jesus the Son of God as their Head.

John Carter

(Concluded)

Jesus – Born of the Virgin Mary

*In the last article in this series **John Woodall** explained that after thousands of years of sin and failure, just one man got everything right and that man was the Lord Jesus. Now he explains how Jesus was able to overcome, where all others have failed, because whilst Mary was his mother, God was his Father. For Jesus was virgin born.*

Unique

Although he was the Son of God, the Jewish leaders hated him and throughout his short life they tried to find fault with what he said and the way he lived. They wanted to discredit him, destroy his influence with the people, and finally they determined to have him killed. There was something about the way that Jesus spoke that really annoyed them. Frequently, people who heard him were amazed at his teaching. It was plain and direct, very different from the complicated opinions they were used to:

So it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes (Matthew 7:28–29).

When the Pharisees and Sadducees asked him trick questions, the result was the same:

When the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at his teaching (Matthew 22:33).

Promised: A Unique Birth

The Old Testament had pointed out very plainly – and it still does – that human nature is so weak that we men

and women cannot save ourselves. God allowed thousands of years of failure to pass so we have had plenty of time to realise this. The psalmist put this feeling of need into a prayer:

Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself. Then we will not turn back from You; revive us, and we will call upon Your name (Psalm 80:17–18).

The prophet Isaiah likewise commented:

So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own



arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him (Isaiah 59:15–16).

God was saying that He would do what mankind had failed to do: He would provide someone who would obey His law and serve him perfectly. Earlier, to King David, God had promised a descendant who would also be the Son of God (2 Samuel 7:12–16). Isaiah, 300 years after David, revealed that the manner of his birth would be miraculous for he was to be virgin-born:

The Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

The Promised Birth

700 years later, Isaiah's words were quoted by an angel who came to a Galilean carpenter to tell him that his fiancée would have a baby whose Father would be God Himself. The young woman was named Mary. She was a Jewish girl, very godly, but with ordinary human nature, like all of us. The Isaiah passage was referred to:

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call his name "Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called his name Jesus (Matthew 1:23–25).

Some churches treat Mary like a goddess, and even pray to her, although this is totally against Bible teaching. In time Mary died just like everyone else, although she will be

raised to life again when her Son returns as God's appointed King. Mary was, of course, very privileged to be the mother of God's Son.

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus ... "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:26–35).

Son of God

If we were to ask, 'whose son is Jesus?', the Apostle John has the answer:

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love (2 John 3).

The Bible is so clear: Jesus is God's Son. Many Christians spoil the truth about this by believing that there are three persons within one Godhead and that Jesus is the second person of a trinity. The Bible teaches differently: Jesus is the Son of God, not God Himself.

John Woodall

What is God Like?

When we meet someone new it is often important to discover what makes up the character and personality of that person.

Our assessment of whether they are kind, generous and gentle or whatever characteristics appeal to us may determine the development of a relationship and how close we choose to become with that person. Our conclusions come from what we learn from words and actions and also from body language.

Communicating with our bodies can sometimes be more important than speech or deeds. Body language communicates the unspoken, unconscious attitudes that we all have and tells others a good deal about our thoughts and feelings. Only when we have assessed all our information do we decide whether we want to get to know someone and develop a friendship or relationship with them. Failure to make a sound judgement may lead to difficulties, even disastrous consequences for both parties.

Building a relationship with God is, in many ways, no different from building a relationship with a human being. We need to start by getting to know Him. Finding this out is even more important than finding out about other people, for the result may have very long-term consequences.

Problems

There are two problems with analysing God. One is that the information about Him is contained in only one book, the Bible. There is no other comparative or supporting information from additional sources.



The second problem is that we cannot see Him so we can only judge Him from His words in that book and our assessment of His actions in that book. We have no opportunity to read His body language.

So let's get to know God in His own words from His own book and by examining the actions He has engaged. Leave body language for reading human beings. What we shall find is that God is someone with whom we want to share our lives and our futures.

The Bible says that "*no one has seen God at any time*" but it then explains that we can get to know about God by learning about His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for "*he has declared Him (John 1:18)*."

Cynthia Miles

Free Offer

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