

# Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

1570

***The Old and the New – page 3***  
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***Why the Old Testament is Essential – page 14***

# Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

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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 and women; 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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# The Old and the New

Jesus once told a parable about a householder who had a mixture of things he treasured, some of them new and some of them old.

You may be able to identify with that story, for I expect that many of us have things we treasure that we have had for a long time. Perhaps it's a pair of shoes which are so comfortable that we don't want to throw them out, even though they no longer look that good. Or it may be a favourite raincoat that has kept us dry over the years, even if it now looks tired and out of fashion.

But I expect that we also have some things that are comparatively new which we also treasure. If forced to flee, perhaps because our house was about to burn down, we might well grab a selection of old and new items, regarding them all as things we didn't want to lose.

## The Parable

In fact Jesus wasn't talking about things at all, for he often cautioned his disciples about getting too fond of possessions, and he had very few himself. He was talking about our understanding of the purpose of God. Here's the parable:

*Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew 13:51-52).*

The Lord had just taught a large crowd and then his disciples by using word pictures, or parables. It was a deliberate tactic, designed to dampen

down the Messianic expectations that would otherwise have obscured his message. For Jesus had come to preach the gospel, or good news, of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14) and his particular emphasis was about the qualities that are needed if his followers are to enter that kingdom when it is established.

By asking the disciples if they had understood the seven parables that he had taught – two of which he had explained to them – Jesus was seeking to know if they were going to be able to decode his message and understand what was being asked of them, hence this final parable just to them.

## The Scribe

A scribe was someone who spent his life studying and copying the Scriptures, but a scribe who was "*instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven*" would be very special. Jesus was not referring to those Jewish copyists, but to someone who had made a study of the Old Testament scriptures and had come to understand the purpose of God about the coming Kingdom and its God-appointed King – the Lord Jesus himself.

Everything about the teaching of Jesus was new. He declared that he had come to fulfil the law that God had given to Moses. He likened his message to new wine that required new wineskins and the words and works of Jesus are fittingly included in the New Testament, by contrast with the Old.

For there are treasures to be drawn out of both Testaments and, as a later article in this issue explains, you can't



really understand the New Testament unless you first read and understand the one that went before. But how can we be sure that the Bible Jesus read was the same as the Old Testament we now possess? If there was a huge interval between the time of Jesus and the earliest manuscript of the Old Testament scriptures, couldn't errors have crept in that completely distort the message?

## **Dead Sea Scrolls**

In 1947 something happened that later enabled scholars to check that manuscript evidence, to see if significant changes had occurred over the years. A shepherd boy with his flock down near the Dead Sea in southern Israel entered some of the caves shown on this month's front cover and discovered pottery jars which contained ancient scrolls.

It took a while before the significance of his discovery was appreciated but after extensive work finding, buying and piecing together the various scrolls it was announced that numerous Old Testament manuscripts from and before the time of Jesus had been found.

Years of careful scholarship later, the Bible texts were published, covering almost all the Old Testament books. Many were just fragments, but all of Isaiah's prophecy was found and that is now a central feature in the Scroll of the Book at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

So, were there huge differences and had big errors crept in? No. It was found that the transmission of the text over the intervening years had been remarkably accurate, under the hand of God. We now know for certain that we can read the whole Bible assured

of its accuracy. For God, who inspired the writers, has clearly overseen the process of copying and preserving the message, so that we can benefit by reading it. There are treasures from the Old and from the New just waiting for us to find them, read them, understand them and make them the basis of our lives.

## **Dead Sea Scribes**

It seems likely that the Scrolls that have been found, which were preserved for nearly 2000 years, were the Scriptures of a group of isolated worshippers who lived in a settlement at Qumran near the Dead Sea. Some of the community were scribes, copying scripture and writing their own explanatory material; others would have been farmers, builders and potters. But after the capture and destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 the Roman army scoured the countryside to round up any other Jews they could find and it seems they destroyed the settlement.

Seeing what was about to happen the community hid their most treasured possessions – their scriptures – in nearby caves and fled, or were captured, and were never to return to retrieve them. Their loss is our gain; but their treasure should be ours too. There is nothing more valuable than the message of the Bible which tells us how to live to please God. We should hide this message in our hearts and live accordingly, for a wise man once said:

*My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live (Proverbs 7:1–2).*

**Editor**

# Who is Jesus Christ?

## What's in a Name?

The word 'Christ' (which means the same as 'Messiah' in the Old Testament) is more than a name, it is a title which means 'Anointed'. In Old Testament times when a king was crowned a little oil was poured on his head to show that God's blessing was upon him. It was a symbol. The new king became 'the Lord's Anointed'; for instance David thought of King Saul in that way (1 Sam 26:11).

Jesus, however, was 'anointed' not with mere oil but with the Spirit of God. It happened at his baptism.

*When he had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon him (Matthew 3:16).*



## Jesus is The Christ

After Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter said plainly "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

Again, a few days later: "Those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled" (Acts 3:18). And later still: "God

*anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).*

Jesus – God's Christ or 'Anointed One' – is the One through whom God shows Himself to us most perfectly. We remember that in Old Testament times God revealed Himself by means of messages sent to special men and women who were called prophets. Many of these messages were written

down and they are now in our Bibles, thus the Bible is the written record of 'God's Word' (see for instance Isaiah 2:1; Jeremiah 1:4; Ezekiel 6:1 and Hosea 1:1).

As these articles have shown, until Jesus came no-one had succeeded in perfectly obeying this written 'Word of God'. Hebrews 1:1 sums that up –

*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, whom He has appointed heir of all things... (Hebrews 1:1–2).*

The Apostle John describes it in this way:

*"In the beginning was the Word ... 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 1:1,14).*

## **God’s Provision – a Saviour**

The Saviour was provided by God, because we men and women had proved that we would never succeed in serving God perfectly, and would never be able to save ourselves. Human nature, from the first sin onwards, has always been too determined to have its own way. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the Psalmist faced the problem, and declared his faith that God alone would solve it –

*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of their souls is costly ... man, though in honour, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish ... Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them ... But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me (Psalm 49:7–15).*

Many centuries later the Apostle Paul looked back on the life of Jesus, God’s Anointed One, and in Romans 8:3 he wrote this –

*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).*

## **Jesus, the Likeness of God**

No mortal man can see God in person:

*“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).*

God asked Jesus to be a kind of living temple, someone in whom God would

show all His ways to ordinary men and women, and Jesus willingly accepted this challenge. Jesus often stressed that his words were his Father’s words, and his works were his Father’s works. Here are two examples –

*I have not spoken on my own authority; but the Father who sent me gave me a command, what I should say and what I should speak (John 12:49).*

*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 14:10).*

In an earlier article we noticed that Psalm 80:17 foretold two important things about the coming Saviour, hundreds of years before Jesus was born:

- ① He would be “son of man” (“son of Adam” – truly human);
- ② God would make him “strong for Himself”.

The gospels show us how these things came true in Jesus: how all that God has said about His mind and purpose and character is seen perfectly in the life of “*the man, Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5). Truly in him God’s “*Word was made flesh*” (John 1:14); he was the very embodiment of all that God has revealed about Himself and His gracious purpose for mankind.

**John Woodall**

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[www.gladtidingsmagazine.org](http://www.gladtidingsmagazine.org)

# Bible Teaching and Christian Life

*In the first article of this short series **Dennis Gillett** suggested that our behaviour is conditioned by the things we believe and that character is not accidental but is the outcome of principles learned and doctrine assimilated by the mind. Now he begins to apply that suggestion by examining various Bible teachings and investigating whether believing certain things will affect the way we behave and make us different people, with changed characters.*

There were some people living in Corinth in New Testament times who were sceptics. They did not believe in any other world than this world, they saw no evidence for any other life than this life, and out of this belief they formed this proverb:

*“Let us eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.”*

They lived lives which were wholly sensual and transient and that way of life arose directly out of their philosophy.

By contrast, the Bible records the lives of many people who were transformed by the things they came to believe, people like the apostle Paul. He started out as someone who hated the very sound of the name of Jesus of Nazareth and was determined to persecute his followers and have them executed, if need be.

He came to understand differently, however, and became an ardent follower of the Lord Jesus, eventually being executed himself because he would not renounce his beliefs. So what is it about the teachings of the Bible that might change the way we think and thus the way we feel and act? We will look at some of the key teachings of the Bible to test this out.

## The Bible Doctrine of Sin

The Bible says that Sin is lawlessness. It is a clear departing from the will of God. It is coming to the parting of the ways and choosing the way which is wrong. When sin is defined as lawlessness the Bible means that in all this lawful world only one thing is lawless – that is Man. Every other created thing is obedient to the law which has been put upon it by God.

Upon every tulip there is the law of the tulip and when it blossoms forth in all its glory it is obedient to that law, and it does what God intended it to do and therefore gives him glory.



The same is true of every eagle – when it hovers in the sky upon its great wings and hovers over its young, it does that which is true to the law of the eagle and it gives glory to God.

Upon Man there is the law of Manhood, once perfectly revealed by

the Man of Nazareth and now enjoined upon those who are made in God's image. When men turn from that high vision of Manhood and dishonour their nature they do that which is against the law of Manhood – they commit sin and are degraded, for they give God no glory.

## **Sin is Lawlessness**

In all this lawful universe, only man is lawless. This is Sin. It is something with which God cannot compromise. The awful purity of God does not permit Him to regard sin as something which can be forgotten and overlooked. It is an obstinate and painful interloper in the world.

Now suppose a person does not believe or accept the Bible doctrine of Sin. Suppose he or she is ready to accept the popular view – that it is after all merely a maladjustment, a failure of education, a lapse, not an offence against God but in some way almost a blessing in disguise. Surely, a person believing this will have his behaviour affected when he is faced with temptation. Under such circumstances and mastered by such a belief – sin becomes easy.

When someone submits to the Bible doctrine of sin, to that extent he or she is fortified against it. He fears the subtlety of sin and avoids the occasions of temptation. When he is tempted he is held back by a realisation of what sin really means.

## **Case Studies**

### **❖ Joseph**

A good example of this is the case of Joseph being tempted in the house of Potiphar by Potiphar's wife. She tempted him to commit adultery and I want to remind you of Joseph's atti-

tude in the presence of the ruthless temptation of this frustrated woman. He said:

*There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he (Potiphar) kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).*

Joseph knew that not only was it a sin against his master Potiphar but much more it was a grievous sin against his God who had kept and nurtured him all his life. So he fled and got out. It is a splendid example of the right doctrine of sin producing in Joseph the proper and pure life in the face of evil.

### **❖ David**

When King David committed adultery and murder he came to repentance at last by a realisation of what Sin really was, thus he said to his God:

*Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight— that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge (Psalm 51:4).*

The very same principle which fortified Joseph brought David to his knees in contrition. Thus we see the combined effect of Bible teaching and Christian life.





## God's Kingdom

The Bible doctrine of the Kingdom of God means the absolute transcendence of God over all the world: the fact of His government over all things and its eventual establishment on earth in place of the government of men, with Jesus Christ as its undoubted King. This is a vital doctrine for Jesus once said:

*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:33).*

The first step in seeking that kingdom is to submit to its king, believe in its laws, and obey its government – and where these things exist in a person's life, the master principle of the Kingdom of God is established. Now therefore those who believe in the coming Kingdom of God upon the earth, at the second advent of Jesus Christ, constitute a people whose real vocation and real destiny begins in the age to come. Therefore their attitude to the present life will be regulated by that fact.

First of all, they will, or ought to be, people in whom, even now to some extent, the principles of the Kingdom of God are being realised – that is love, joy and peace. Through them the kingdom values are being manifested to those around them and by whom God's literal kingdom and its coming is being preached among men.

They also will be people who know themselves to be pilgrims in this world, passing through it to another and a better society – the world to come on earth. Their master passion, therefore, will not be the acquisition of knowledge, the pursuit of pleasure or the accumulation of wealth. They will be looking through these external things to the spiritual. They will hold with light



hands the things of this world because they are citizens of another. They will be ready to render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, but will be careful to render to God the things which are God's (Mark 12:17).

Their allegiance to earthly governments has to be qualified by the fact that they have sworn allegiance to their King – 'the King of Kings'. But they will be ready always to succour the needs and seek to alleviate the pain of their neighbours, because of the doctrine of gentleness and service which they have received by word and example from their Lord.

Now let me emphasise that this way of life arises distinctly and conspicuously out of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, properly understood. People do not behave in this way without some compelling reason and the reason is that the King has met them and taught them and called them to his Kingdom.

**Dennis Gillett**

*To be concluded*

# The Dangerous Majority

It was a lovely clear, sunny day and Susan was doing a walk which was new to her. She had no map or compass but brief instructions on a sheet of paper. At the top of a high hill she followed the descent of a large group of ramblers, gathering speed because she wanted to get down before it went dark.

After about half an hour she realised to her consternation that she must be going in the wrong direction. The path was getting wider and wider, but according to her instructions it should have been a very narrow path. The ramblers were doing a different walk! Her mistake would have been avoided if, instead of following them, she had used a map and compass. Susan needed to change direction.

## The Majority are often Wrong!

Susan's mistake was easy to make: she had followed the majority. Many people have commented that the majority can be wrong. For example Mark Twain said: "Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect". Scientists and philosophers have voiced similar sentiments.

More importantly, Jesus himself warned that in moral issues following the majority is potentially disastrous. This is because the majority are heading to destruction:

*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. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way*



*which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:13–14).*

Although not all minorities can be right, time after time the majority has been found to be wrong.

### ❖ Noah

In the days of Noah, people were not interested in God and did not believe Noah's preaching, so when the flood came they were not in the ark when: "a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20). Just eight people listened and were saved from utter destruction!

### ❖ Lot

Later, in the time of Abraham, the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God, and only Lot and his daughters were saved. Even Lot's wife did not escape (Genesis chapter 19).

### ❖ Joseph

Two generations later ten of Jacob's sons ganged up on their brother Joseph and sold him into slavery (Genesis 37).

No wonder the Law of Moses specifically warned against the danger of going with a crowd:

*You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice (Exodus 23:2).*

Despite those warnings, for most of the history of the kingdom of Israel the majority were disobedient and refused to believe the prophets sent by God. The ultimate mistake made by a majority was when the Jewish people cried out for the crucifixion of Jesus. The apostle Stephen describes this sad history in a speech just prior to his martyrdom:

*You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers (Acts 7:51–52).*

## **Don't Blindly Follow!**

If we imagine that in the Christian era in which we live things are different, then we are wrong. Near the end of his life the apostle Paul warned Timothy that the Christian church would become corrupted (1 Timothy 1:19). He had already warned about this:

*I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves (Acts 20:29–30).*

This defection was to happen only one generation after the death of Jesus. Given this pathetic record of human rebellion it is inconceivable that nowadays the majority is right in spiritual matters. It follows that we

cannot just go along with the crowd or even believe what religious leaders tell us. Today most of us have access to a Bible and we need to read what God has said, not what people report Him as having said. Following to the letter the instructions in the Bible (like using a map and compass) we cannot go wrong. If we are heading the wrong way we need to repent NOW – change direction and walk in the way of life. That means acting differently from the majority, just as the Bible counsels:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2).*

We must not leave it too late, for Jesus is coming soon to judge the world, for God

*“...has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).*

We need to be found on the right track, walking in the right direction, when that happens.

**Anna Hart**



# More about the Pastoral Letters

The apostle Paul wrote three letters which are described as “pastoral” rather than “doctrinal”. They were written to young men – Timothy and Titus – who had been asked to take charge of new congregations in Ephesus and Crete respectively. Paul’s second letter to Timothy was the last letter we have of his as it was written at a time when he was expecting to be executed by the Romans, because of what he believed. These pastoral letters contain a lot of helpful advice and counsel about how best to arrange collective worship, but they also contain warnings and explanations that are really valuable to us, as **David Pearce** now explains.

## Perilous Times

Paul warns that in “the last days” society would break down, and imposters would appear in the church. This infiltration of wrong ideas began early on, as Paul had earlier warned the Ephesian elders (see Acts 20:29-31). Twenty centuries later we can see the full effects of that process, as Paul explains:

*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:1–7).*

It follows that the moral and social breakdown that has now occurred was clearly predicted. We should not be alarmed at what is now happening in society. It comes as a clear indication that the end of human government and the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth is near.

## What to Do

Paul instructs Timothy, as one of the new generation of leaders, to hold on to what he has been taught, and to take the scriptures as his guide, for he says:

*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 3:16–17).*

In what are the last recorded words of Paul, he again exhorts Timothy to fulfil his role as a leader, preaching and teaching firmly and with patience. The apostle himself was about to bow out and his concluding words bring tears to the eyes –

*I have fought the good fight, I have fin-*





*ished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7–8).*

If only we can speak like that when we come to the end of our days! But time was running out. “*Do your best to come to me soon*”, he urges. Whether Timothy did, we cannot know. Tradition tells that at his second hearing Paul was condemned to die, and on the appointed day led out outside the city boundary to the place of execution. As a Roman citizen he was entitled to a quick and relatively painless death. Now he sleeps in the dust, awaiting “that Day” when he will receive the crown of life from the Master he served so well.

## **Titus**

Like 1 Timothy, the letter to Titus belongs to the period after Paul’s release from prison. He had recently visited the Mediterranean island of Crete with Titus, and left him behind while he went back to the mainland. Paul had not preached in this island during his three missionary journeys, yet he writes here of congregations in every town (see Titus 1:5). Someone had been busy making disciples in the

three decades since the Day of Pentecost. However, it seems Paul was disappointed with the standards observed by these rather isolated Christians, and gave Titus the challenging task of making improvements.

First, he was to choose suitable brothers in each church to act as elders (see chapter 1:5-8). The necessary qualities Paul listed for this role are a repeat of those we met in 1 Timothy. It was all about how they lived. Notice that there were to be a number of elders in each congregation. This was the rule in the First Century church. Leadership was never left in the hands of an individual. One man for one church did not come until long after the time of the apostles, and gradually evolved over the centuries into a full-blown hierarchy (pyramid of control). The simplicity of the New Testament structure, where all were equals, is the ideal we should follow.

These newly appointed elders would be able to teach good doctrine, and rebuke evil men who were pretending to be important and making money from the believers. Old men were to be sober, old women ready to teach the younger ones to be good wives and mothers, and young men to be self-controlled. As Paul’s representative, Titus had the authority to put the churches on a sound footing, but like Timothy, he was himself to set an example.

Paul had a busy schedule, catching up after those years in jail, and he ends by asking Titus to come across to help him in Nicopolis (on the west coast of Greece) as soon as he was relieved by Artemis or Tychicus, who were on their way to Crete (Titus 3:12).

**David M Pearce**

# Why the Old Testament is Essential

When Jesus started his ministry, aged 30, what religious books did he use? One of the first things he said was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). What was the kingdom he was speaking about and how did he know about it?

## Overcoming Temptation

The first indication of which religious books Jesus used is seen during his temptation in the wilderness. Three times he rebutted the temptation saying “It is written” (Matthew 4:4,7,10). On each occasion Jesus was quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures – the Christian Old Testament.

Jesus & the Old Testament	
Matthew 4:4	Deuteronomy 8:3
Matthew 4:7	Deuteronomy 6:16
Matthew 4:10	Deuteronomy 6:13

## Teaching Correct Behaviour

The Old Testament was not just valuable to Jesus to help him to overcome temptation. He saw a correct understanding of the Old Testament as essential. Jesus showed that correct behaviour was a consequence of correct understanding of the Old Testament.

When Jesus called Matthew to be one of his disciples (Matthew 9:9-11), Matthew made a feast to which he invited many, the widespread invitation prompting the Pharisees to question why Jesus ate with “tax collectors and sinners” (9:11). Jesus’ response was that they should go and learn what was

meant by the Old Testament prophet Hosea who said: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6).

On a later occasion (Matthew 12:1-8), Jesus and his disciples were walking through a cornfield on the sabbath. The disciples were plucking and eating the ears of corn. On seeing what the disciples were doing the Pharisees said that they were breaking the Law of Moses which forbade working on the sabbath day (Leviticus 23:3).

Jesus’ response was that the Pharisees’ attitude was a consequence of their lack of understanding of the Old Testament prophet Hosea. Jesus referred again to Hosea 6:6 and said a correct understanding of what the prophet said would have prevented the Pharisees from speaking as they did about the disciples. So Jesus, twice, taught the Pharisees that a correct understanding of part of the Old Testament was important. If their understanding had been correct it would have affected the way they behaved.

## First Century Preaching

### ❖ To Jews

Acts chapter 2 records the first public preaching of Jesus’ apostles after his resurrection. What they said should help us to see what was important to them. They were speaking to Jews and their key message was that God had raised Jesus from the dead because he had not sinned and that he was the One through whom forgiveness of sins was available.

To support their claims they made repeated reference to what the Old Testament said. The point that they were making was that the Old Testament prophesied these things. This table shows the passages from the Old Testament they made reference to.

Acts 2:22-36	Old Testament Ref.
v 25	Psalm 16:8
v 30	Psalm 132:11
v 31	Psalm 16:10
v 33	Psalm 110:1
v 34-35	Psalm 110:1

From this we understand that the death and resurrection of Jesus was planned by God and spoken of beforehand in the Old Testament. Without the Old Testament it would not be possible to understand the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

#### ❖ To Non-Jews

It might be thought that the Old Testament would have been used only when speaking with Jews for, after all, that was their "Bible". However, when speaking to non-Jews the apostles appealed to the Old Testament in exactly the same way.

Acts 17:22-31 records an occasion when Paul was speaking in Athens to people who did not see the Jewish Scriptures as the Word of God, but just as religious literature. However, as can be seen from the next table, Paul made extensive reference to those Jewish Scriptures to preach Jesus.

Paul's audience may or may not have been familiar with the Jewish writings he referred to. That did not matter, for what Paul was saying to them was based on those Jewish writings – our Old Testament.

So, even if many people see no value in the Old Testament we have to

Acts 17:22-31	Old Testament Ref.
v 24	Isaiah 42:5, 66:1
v 25	Isaiah 42:5
v 26	Deuteronomy 32:8
v 27	Deuteronomy 30:11
v 29	Isaiah 40:18-19
v 31	Psalm 9:8

conclude that the Old Testament is essential reading for Christians. The Old Testament teaches us how to resist temptation. It also teaches the Christian gospel about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

## What Was Written

On being asked by a "lawyer" what was necessary to inherit eternal life, Jesus challenged the lawyer with the question "*What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?*" (Luke 10:26). On another occasion Jesus told the religious leaders of his day: "*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me*" (John 5:39). So we see that just reading the Old Testament is not sufficient. We must also understand it.

## Conclusion

The Old Testament can:

- ✓ Help individuals resist temptation
- ✓ Correct wrong teaching
- ✓ Teach the Christian gospel to both Jew and non-Jew

The Old Testament is the source of New Testament teaching. Christianity has its roots in the Old Testament. So without the Old Testament, Christianity is meaningless.

**Peter Forbes**

# Democracy – To End Soon!

Democracy has been defined as government by the people for the people. In practice, of course, it can only work through elected representatives. But it is not considered to be the solution for all nations. Look around the world and you find many democratically elected governments but there are also autocratic monarchies, dictatorships, and a number of other ways of ruling and controlling a nation's affairs. So it is not only democracies that are about to end.

## World Government

All these man-made forms of government are destined to disappear and to be replaced by a better way of ruling the world: a God-given solution to remedy all our problems. The Bible explains why this is destined to happen, how it will be accomplished, and when it is going to take place.

The last book of the Bible is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ", a book of sign and symbol that needs careful consideration. It comprises the last message the risen Lord Jesus Christ conveyed to mankind, from his exalted position at the right hand of God. He reveals how the great purpose of God will come to its grand climax – the establishment of God's kingdom (or rulership) on earth – and just look how it begins!

*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler over*

*the kings of the earth ... Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, even they who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him. Even so, Amen (Revelation 1:4–7).*

## The Second Coming

When the whole world lies in wickedness the final act of the human drama begins. When Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, the disciples were told by angels that Jesus was going to return to earth and the promise could not have been clearer:

*Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).*

Notice, it is the same Jesus who is coming again – the One they saw going into heaven – and he is going to come in the same way they had seen him go. So he will come visibly, powerfully and personally. When Jesus returns it will be a fantastic sight. As the Lord said himself:

*Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:30–31).*



## Rescue Mission

The One who is called the King of Kings is to return to banish greed, oppression, lust and crime and to establish a worldwide state where mankind can live in peaceful contentment. What a task that will be, given all the problems that we now see around the world. Jesus is coming to rescue the world from destruction, as the Book of Revelation explains:

*The seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever!" ... The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:15–18).*

How is that takeover going to be achieved? A worldwide kingdom will be set up supervised by tens of thousands of angels and immortals. All nations will be given the opportunity to accept the rulership of Christ, or be rejected.

### What Sort of Kingdom?

The earth will be transformed and all nations will learn the way of righteousness. People will not be asked what they think, or be asked to vote: the Lord Jesus will reign supreme. The true Christian already has Christ as King, and looks forward to that splendid day when he will rule the world in righteousness, just as the prophets have promised:

*Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with*

*justice...the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever (Isaiah 32:1,17).*

*In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Daniel 2:44).*

But when will this happen and what are the signs we should be looking for? Both the Lord and the prophets tell us that it will be a time when there is terror in so many places around the world, with statesmen not knowing how to bring it all to a quiet end. We are told there will be turmoil in the Middle East, with Israel at the centre of all that trouble:

*There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near (Luke 21:25–28).*

If you can identify with this state of affairs, the way the world is now, then you need to be prepared for the great changes that are about to come when Jesus returns. There is nothing more important and nothing more worthwhile than to accept the Lord Jesus as both your Saviour and your King.

**Ken Clark**

## Living like a King

# King Asa

After King Solomon's death the nation of Israel split in two: ten tribes occupied the north which they still called "Israel" and two tribes formed the southern kingdom named "Judah". Asa was the third king of Judah and followed his father Abijah, whose short reign of only three years was abruptly terminated because of his wickedness. King Asa lived for much longer, dying in the forty-first year of his reign, making him one of the longest serving kings: only Manasseh and Uzziah reigned longer.

## Reign of Two Halves

Asa's reign can be divided into two parts: the first 35 years when he followed the commands of the Lord God and prospered; and the last five years when he seemed to forget that he was a servant of God, and suffered for it. The real problem when reviewing Asa's life is to try and work out why he changed so drastically.

He began really well, removing all the altars to foreign idols from his land, and the Asherim – the wooden poles which stood at Canaanite places of worship. He directed the people of Judah to worship the Lord God. This brief comment says it all: *"the kingdom was quiet under him"* (2 Chronicles 14:5).

This may in part have been due to the strength of his army, which was over half a million men who were evidently well trained and capable. That was clearly demonstrated when a rival king Zerah attacked with an Ethiopian army of about twice the size of Judah's. They were roundly defeated



and the deciding factor was undoubtedly the prayer Asa offered before the battle:

*Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!* (2 Chronicles 14:11).

Asa recognised that in human terms, the odds were stacked against him, but that the Lord God would fight his battles. So Asa had a peaceful first ten years, and after the Ethiopian attack failed the people of Judah became richer through plunder.

## Good Response

As they returned to Jerusalem from the battle, Asa was met by the prophet Azariah, the son of Oded. He had a forthright message for the king. *"Hear*

me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chronicles 15:2). Asa had already found that to be true experimentally; now it was confirmed by the prophet. It is a theme that runs right through the Bible that:

*“You will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29).*

Now the prophet urged:

*“Be strong and do not let your hand be weak, for your work shall be rewarded” (2 Chronicles 15:7).*

Asa responded enthusiastically and removed the “abominable idols” from the land, and restored the altar of the Lord God. They held a great feast and sacrifice for the Lord God in the fifteenth year of Asa, clearly not a Passover celebration, because this was in the third month. He also removed some members of his own family from positions of influence, including Maacah his mother, from being Queen Mother.

There are many indications that the kings of Israel and Judah were greatly influenced by their mothers, often for good. Asa clearly felt his own mother was a bad influence and sought to prevent her doing any further damage. This action was sufficient to ensure another twenty years of peace.

## **The Second Half**

You have to wonder whether all this lulled him into a false sense of security. The twenty years of peace were rudely interrupted when Baasha, king of the northern kingdom of Israel, came against Judah, building the city of Ramah, just north of Jerusalem, in

an attempt to control entry and exit to the nation of Judah. Instead of reacting as he had done when Zerah of Ethiopia invaded, and seeking aid from the Lord God, Asa attempted to make a treaty with Ben-Hadad king of Syria. To a point this strategy was successful for Ben-Hadad’s intervention was enough to stop work on Ramah. But Asa had to pay a large sum in gold and silver to achieve this intervention and another prophet came, this time to rebuke the king for what he had done:

*Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand ... In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars (2 Chronicles 16:7–9).*

It would have been possible for Asa and the people to retrieve the situation, but Asa reacted angrily, putting the prophet Hanani in prison. From this point on things began to go downhill.

In his thirty-ninth year Asa became diseased in his feet, obviously very severely, but even this did not bring him back to God for he thought that his doctors would be able to heal him. They did not, for he died in the forty-first year of his reign, and was buried in an ornately furnished tomb he had himself prepared, in Jerusalem. It was a tragedy.

Asa had started so well, and as long as he demonstrated his faith in the Lord God he had prospered in all he had done. But at the end of his long kingship he forgot all that God had done for him, and suffered along with the whole nation. That’s a life history that is full of lessons for all of us.

**Mark Sheppard**

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