

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

Racing Towards the Future (p. 3)

The Race For Your Life (p. 5)


Rules and Resilience (p. 11)

A monthly magazine written and published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God’s inspired message to mankind; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God’s world-wide Kingdom.

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Racing Towards the Future

I recently met an old friend I had not seen for a long time. We talked about the many things that had happened since we last met, how tall our children had grown, and how much had changed among our friends. She remarked, “The future is coming at us faster every year, or we are running more quickly towards it.” Whilst we know this is not literally true, we can understand, and perhaps relate to what she meant.

A Changing World

At the same time, the whole world is changing more quickly than ever before. Technology, global communications and easy travel mean that business, government and social structures are developing more and more rapidly. Some of this is positive, such as the eradication of certain diseases. Some is less so, such as environmental damage and the proliferation of dangerous weapons.



We may have heard people ask what the world is coming to; there is certainly worry about the future and where humankind is headed.

There is good news here. Jesus predicted that there would be a time of uncertainty and concern, just like this, when men and women do not know which way to turn.

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 (Luke 21:25–26).

He continued to explain that this was a sign that he would soon return to set up the Kingdom of God:

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... So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near (v27–28, 31).

The future for the earth is not uncertain, God has told us all about it, in His word, the Bible. He created the universe, and He created the earth for people to live on. It will not be destroyed. He wants men and women to be saved, to live with Him in the kingdom to come.

For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it

in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: "I am the LORD, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek Me in vain'; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right" (Isaiah 45:18–19).

Our Future

This leaves the question of our personal future, and in which direction we are heading. Do we have a clear vision of where we want to go, what we want to be?

One such hope might be to be somewhere beautiful, like on our front cover, perhaps driving on an open road with nothing ahead but rolling hills and dramatic skies. Maybe it is to be surrounded by loving friends and family, a place where we feel content.



The Bible, however, gives us an even greater vision, one of life after death, living in God's Kingdom. This is God's plan for the world, and He invites each of us to have a part in it. This edition of *Glad Tidings* focuses on this hope for the future, and the way to get there. It is described in the Bible as a race, and we are using this as our theme.

The writer to the Hebrews encouraged Christians in this race, to make the effort and to do so with endurance:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1).

The Apostle Paul also used this picture, describing his own efforts to please God:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:24–27).

The race has a course – the passage of our lives. It has a prize – eternal life in God's Kingdom. And it has fellow runners, but they run together, not against each other, as everyone can win this prize. Like any other race, the race of life requires preparation, training and commitment. We need to develop our resilience and resistance to setbacks. We have to understand and value the prize, and keep our eyes on the goal. This is to be welcomed by Jesus to a place in God's Kingdom.

Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matthew 25:34).

The Race for Your Life

THE BIBLE uses many pictures to explain God's message. One striking image is that of an athlete running a race, which is used to describe a Christian trying to follow Jesus, and to please God.

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Running a race for your life sounds overwhelming – does your life really depend on how well you run? The race we are talking about has a reward worth much more than a gold medal, and it will benefit you more than any physical activity. It is a race for everlasting life.

I have finished 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 (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Beginning Training

So, how do you get ready? First, just like any sporting event, you start by training. We can't follow God and live a life pleasing to Him without making this sort of commitment. We have to stop living a life of apathy and make a conscious choice to make Him part of our lives. Jesus said this to some 'lukewarm' believers:

I know your works, that you are neither hot nor cold. I could wish that you were hot or cold (Revelation 3:15).

In preparing for an event, an athlete will start regular training. They will re-evaluate their diet



and their social life will change as the training becomes more demanding or more frequent. The event becomes their absolute focus. Every decision they make will be reached knowing that they have training to complete or food preparation to get done.

We need to be equally focused on godly things. Jesus spoke regularly about having a close relationship with God. This means that we should think of God first when we have something to worry about, something that is upsetting us, or something to celebrate. Simply offering a prayer every time we experience one of these emotions will help bring our focus back to God.

We need to be close to God daily in preparation for the 'big event'. Just as an athlete will build up their training regime, so we need to prepare for the big challenges in our life with Christ.

By spending time daily with God’s word, the Bible, we ensure a mindset fixed on Christ. Athletes running a long distance have water stations throughout the race – they are there to refresh them and keep them going. Daily Bible reading does this for those who are following Christ. It sustains us, giving peace of mind and reminding us that we are not alone in this life.

Athletes have to show incredible control – they do not overindulge or allow themselves to act on impulses which might otherwise break someone not so focused. Their determination is aimed at getting them to their goal. The Christian likewise needs to develop control and the right personal attributes.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control (Galatians 5:22–23).

Teamwork

“Teamwork makes the dream work” is the favourite quote of many employers. The thing is, it is true!

Any task that needs to be done is made easier with a companion or even a group of people



working together. We can look after each other and encourage one another when our individual focus falters. We can rely on each other to keep our training fresh. When we have a common goal, we meet all types of people. This brings new ideas, it brings a fresh approach that can breathe life into tired lungs and legs. In terms of our race for life, people who share the same faith can help each other in the same way.

When joining this race, we are reassured that we can find likeminded people to help, a group of people who have the same goals to meet and the same challenges to face. Christ knew this formula worked when he sent his disciples out in pairs to spread his message. He hadn’t been doing his work alone and he didn’t expect them to have to do it alone either.

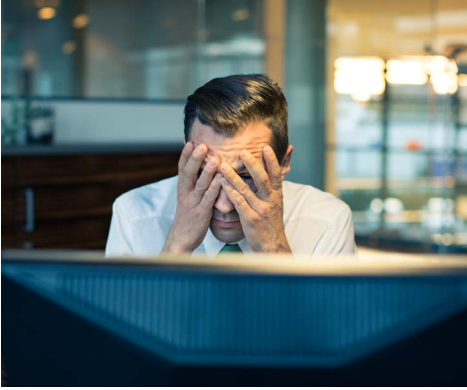
Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together... encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:24–25).

‘Hitting the Wall’

At times during this race, we will be challenged, and the prize may seem unattainable. Have you ever heard of an athlete ‘hitting the wall’? It is when they physically and mentally cannot comprehend the reason for what they are doing. Scientifically, the body has run out of its most ready source of energy and this causes the brain to shut down, giving only negative thoughts. The best way to cope is to immerse ourselves in our goal and to focus on the support being offered.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all (Psalm 34:19).

We have examples in the Bible of how those who loved God kept their focus. King David is



babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:1-2).

If you've ever watched a new-born child cry for food, the desire is very clear! There's a desperation to be filled and satisfied; to the child's instincts, it is a matter of life and death. The Bible is just as important to the Christian. It is where we turn for guidance and help. Reading the Bible every day is a very good habit to develop.

Athletes in training put up with many setbacks, such as injury and illness. Someone who is focused on their goal, and who has put in all the work, will not allow these setbacks to end their race. They understand that it is part of the journey, part of the work needed to get themselves ready to endure the race.

We cannot expect that just because we are following God, life will be 'plain sailing'. Life is full of ups and downs, good days and bad days. Being a follower of Christ is not a guarantee that we will never worry again or never feel pain. However, it is an understanding that we won't be alone; the Lord Jesus promised to be with us every step of the way – he is our pacesetter. What's more, we can have fellow 'runners' to help us, to coach us, and to remind us why we joined the race in the first place. It's an understanding that there is more to this life and that the prize is eternal life – worth more than any medal.

described as a 'man after God's own heart' (1 Samuel 13:14) and his life was full of decisions which put God at the centre of his race. He made mistakes – after all he was only human – but he is held in high regard by God and mentioned again in the New Testament. It is widely thought that David wrote the majority of the book of Psalms, a book which many people turn to for comfort in times of distress. This book tells us about making God our focus:

Those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing... who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it (Psalm 34:10-14).

Fuel and Focus

David did this because he realized that God's prize is worth aiming for. We will examine the prize itself in a further article. It takes a desire to want to better oneself and a belief that it is possible. This is possible with the help of God's word, the Bible. Reading the Bible should be as regular as eating is to us.

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking, as newborn



The Prize of Eternal Life

PROFESSIONAL athletes train and compete with one clear goal in mind – to achieve first place. Just as Olympians compete for the prize of a gold medal, so too followers of Christ are striving for a reward. This is not made of physical materials such as gold, silver or bronze, which have no enduring value. God's prize is eternal and incorruptible: everlasting life in God's Kingdom on earth.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown (1 Corinthians 9:24–25).

The Bible makes it clear that those who have been obedient to God and His Son and have run the race will be granted eternal life:

This is the promise that He [God] has promised us – eternal life (1 John 2:25).

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

God's Kingdom on Earth

Where will recipients of eternal life spend their days? The Bible makes it clear that they will live on the earth in God's Kingdom. Here is an example of an Old Testament prophecy, a passage speaking of the future establishment of God's Kingdom and its expansion to fill the whole earth:

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

The Book of Revelation is a New Testament prophecy. Depicting the people in God's Kingdom speaking about Jesus, it says:

For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and



people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9–10).

Daniel, writer of one of the books of the Bible, speaks of the kingdoms of mankind making way for the Kingdom of God:

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).

The present world order will be swept aside to make way for God's righteous Kingdom.

What Will It Be Like?

The world as we currently know it is plagued with problems such as wars, famines, natural disasters and disease. As such it is perhaps not the most appealing place to spend eternity. The Bible gives a picture of a world free from these problems in God's Kingdom.

We read of a world without war, where people no longer have weapons or learn to fight:

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:4).

The prophet Isaiah has much to say about the Kingdom of God. It will be ruled by Jesus, and will be a place of justice and fairness for all:

His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and he shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, nor decide by the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked (Isaiah 11:3–4).

Later in his prophecy, Isaiah talks about conditions of security, safety and prosperity:

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain (Isaiah 65:21–23, 25).

We read too of God having a direct relationship with His people, and the marvellous effect this will have:

Behold, the tabernacle [dwelling place] of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:3–4).

Eternal life spent with God, and His Son, on a perfect earth free from its current problems, as described in these Bible passages, is surely a prospect not to be missed!

The Return of Jesus

The world to come is very different from what we see today. How and when will it be changed? The Bible tells us that Jesus will return from heaven to set up God's Kingdom, beginning in Jerusalem. Jesus himself said:

The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds



However, that does not mean that God and His Son do not require anything from us. Jesus told his disciples:

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

Immediately from this verse we have two simple requirements. The

of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).

When Jesus ascended to heaven, two angels made the same declaration:

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).

While we know from Bible prophecy that God's Kingdom will be established at the return of Jesus to the earth – and that time appears to be near – no one knows exactly when it will be. Even Jesus did not know:

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mark 13:32).

How Can We Obtain the Prize?

Thus, the idea of eternal life and a place in this Kingdom being a prize is not a perfect analogy. It is ultimately something given by God, because of His love and the work of Jesus. Romans 6:23 tells us that it is a “gift of God”.

man or woman who wishes to be saved and receive eternal life firstly must believe in God and Jesus. Then they must be baptised to demonstrate that belief, and to figuratively wash away their sins.

Having obeyed these commands, the followers of Christ must put their belief into action in the way they live, putting behind them their old life away from God.

Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

Only by doing these things can followers of Christ hope to receive the ultimate prize.



Rules and Resilience

A large part of an athlete's groundwork will focus on learning and studying the rules and guidelines of their sport so that they can compete fairly. They will also build resilience, so that they can deal with setbacks and difficulties.

Why We Need Rules

We know that every sport has its rules, and each athlete is bound to compete according to them. These exist to make sure that everyone is aware of what is expected of them and so that all can compete fairly, having the same opportunity to win the prize. The phrase a "level playing field" might come to mind. This provides a good summary of what regulations are intended to do. It would be unfair, for instance, if a single rower was placed in competition against a team of two; or asked to row a greater distance than their competitor.

Therefore we have guidelines to dictate not only the number of people allowed to compete in each event, or how far they must row, but also the competitor's age, nationality and even weight. Every aspect of the sport is covered.

There are penalties given for breaking the rules. These can vary in severity, depending on how bad the 'crime' is seen to be. Ultimately a competitor

risks being disqualified from the competition, with their hard work and training wasted as they are no longer able to compete for the prize.

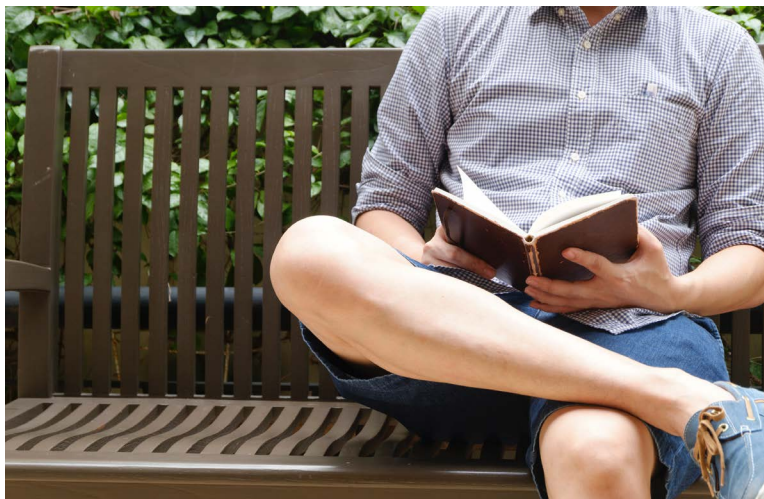
Guidance from God

The idea of setting out a series of guidelines, however, is not only man-made. In fact, we find it in God's teachings in the Bible:

If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules (2 Timothy 2:5).

The Bible uses the picture of an athlete competing according to the rules. All that we need to know is provided in God's Word – the Bible.

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).

God details His commandments to the people of Israel in the Old Testament, and Jesus builds on them in the New Testament, identifying the most important commandments as:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37-40).

All of the commandments of God can be fulfilled through living by the principles which Jesus sets out. In this 'race', many winners can be crowned; our job is to love our neighbour and support each other to the finish line.

Dealing with Setbacks

At some point during their career, all athletes will face setbacks – whether physical injury, psychological stress or external criticism. The most successful athletes are those who are able to push through these trials to continue towards their goal.

What kind of setbacks might we experience in the 'Race for Our Life'? We might lose sight of our goal; become distracted by our busy life; become discouraged by our struggle with sin or even begin to doubt our faith. How we choose to deal with our setbacks will determine how we fare in our race.

Endurance

Just like a long-distance runner, perseverance and endurance are important skills to develop. Jesus told a parable about a sower who scattered seed over different types of ground.

Crops sprang up on a patch of rocky ground but quickly withered. Jesus said these are like:

Those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away (Luke 8:13).

Some seed was scattered on thorny ground, and Jesus said that these:

Are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity (v14).

If we enter the race without the necessary commitment, we will find ourselves pulling out of it when challenged, unable to endure. So, how can we ensure that we endure when 'the going gets tough'?

Having trained to a peak level of fitness, athletes work hard to maintain this throughout their career. To maintain our own spiritual fitness, it is vital that we read God's word and put it into practice.

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience [endurance] and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Romans 15:4).

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise (Hebrews 10:36).

Weightlifting

Our toughest setback might be the challenge of putting our sins behind us. We may feel that we are just not good enough, and this can feel like a heavy burden – like a heavy weight on the shoulders of an athlete.

For my iniquities [sins] have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me (Psalm 38:4).



However, we have been offered the incredible opportunity to allow Jesus to take on our burdens if we make the commitment to follow his example:

Who himself (Jesus) bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you are healed (1 Peter 2:24).

So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many (Hebrews 9:28).

Jesus, who lived a sinless life, didn't deserve to die – yet he was willing to sacrifice his life that we might have our sins forgiven. What a truly selfless act! Because of this we are invited to take off the weight that holds us back and set it aside.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us (Hebrews 12 v1).

Unburdened, we are now free to expend our full energy in concentrating on the race before us, without distraction or looking back.

Peter

The Bible recounts many examples of godly people overcoming the setback of sin. Peter,

a disciple of Jesus, is often remembered for his biggest failure, at the time of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. Before Jesus was arrested, Peter had declared:

Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you! (Matthew 26:35).

When Jesus was taken away, Peter followed closely behind. When challenged by those around, however, Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus. We can imagine that this failure on Peter's part would have had a huge impact on his faith. We read that when he realised the error of his ways, he "went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75).

However, after his resurrection, Jesus met Peter and showed that he was forgiven, rebuilding his faith and putting the incident behind him. In fact, Peter would later be a main preacher of the good news about Jesus, and would lead many to join him in the 'race'.

Peter's example should encourage us to just keep going:

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast [perseveres, endures] under trial; for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12).

We should also remember that this is not a challenge that we face alone:

For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you' (Isaiah 41:13).



How to Enter the Race

IF AN ATHLETE wishes to participate in a competition, he or she cannot simply turn up at the stadium and expect to be admitted to the starting line. For most, some specific standard needs to be reached or they must win a number of preliminary heats in order to qualify. In a similar way, those who wish to take part in the race for eternal life, and to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, must do the same.



The Bible makes it very clear that in order to enter the race for eternal life, first a person must believe the gospel message and have faith in God.

Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

This faith means believing that God exists, and that He will fulfil the promises that He has made. The next step is to repent of old sins, in

other words, be sorry for disobedience to God in the past, and commit to taking one's life in a new direction. This is demonstrated in the next step, which is being baptised.

Shortly after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, crowds of people were gathered listening to the Apostle Peter as he preached the good news about Jesus. They acknowledged the error of their former ways and asked him:

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:37-38).

In other words, for a person to have their sins forgiven and the hope of eternal life, baptism is a necessity.

What is Baptism?

The Bible makes it clear that baptism is the full immersion of an adult in water. For example, when John the Baptist carried out baptisms in Israel, he did so in the river Jordan:

Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins (Matthew 3:5-6).

If baptism for the forgiveness of sins needed just a sprinkling of water on the head, there would have been no need for a deep river. Jesus was also clearly in the water of the Jordan river when he was baptised:



When he had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water (Matthew 3:16).

In order to come up from the water he must have been down in the water beforehand. The book of Acts describes the baptism of a man from Ethiopia in a similar way:

Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"... So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:36–39).

These verses show that biblical baptism is complete immersion in water rather than just a few drops on the head. As we saw earlier, belief

and repentance must come before baptism. Another example is in the words of Jesus:

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

If a person needs to believe in God and His Son, and repent from his or her previous behaviour, then baptism is only for adults. Interestingly, Jesus himself was baptised at the age of thirty, and not as a child.

What Does Baptism Symbolise?

Why does the Lord Jesus require this from those who wish to have their sins forgiven and to have the hope of eternal life? After all, immersing oneself in water is something people do every day, perhaps in the bathtub or at the swimming pool. Why is baptism any different?

The Bible establishes that baptism is not simply the washing of the body:

...which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) (1 Peter 3:21).

The act of baptism is thus not for cleansing the body, but the demonstration of a good conscience, of this commitment to a new life obeying God. It is also meant to associate oneself with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, as the Apostle Paul explains:

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3–4).

By being baptised we are, in symbol, participating in the death of the Lord Jesus as we go down under the water; in fact, if we stayed under the water we would actually die! But in this way we can have our sins forgiven, and we rise out of the water in a picture of Jesus' resurrection, with the hope of everlasting life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin (v5–6).

After Baptism, What Next?

Baptism is just to get us started on the race for life. The Bible explains that after being baptised and committing

their life to the Lord Jesus, a man or woman must live as closely as possible to his example. The picture is one of being 'dead' to our old lives of disobedience to God.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord (v11).

The Apostle Paul also wrote the Letter to the Colossians, where he used a different picture, one of focusing our minds and effort on Godly, heavenly things:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:1–4).

Baptism is the qualifying process, joining this race for the prize of everlasting life.

The job of the Christian then, is to dedicate their lives to remaining on track, waiting for Jesus to return and to bring the reward:

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (v4).

Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every one according to his work (Revelation 22:12).



Exodus

THE BOOK of Exodus records how the Israelites were saved out of Egypt, led through the Sinai desert for forty years and brought to the borders of Canaan.

A Way Out

The word ‘exodus’ means ‘a going out’. The first part of the book contains the record of how God made a way out for His people Israel. He chose Moses to be their leader.

Then, after ten mighty plagues against Egypt and its gods, and other miracles such as the drying up of the Red Sea to let them cross, He took them out of the slavery of Egypt, to go to the Promised Land. The rest of the book of Exodus records their journeyings in the Sinai desert.



Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

Exodus 19:6 – see 1 Peter 2:9

Exodus 28:29 – see Hebrews 2:17

Exodus 34:33–35 – see 2 Corinthians 3:7–14



The Ten Plagues

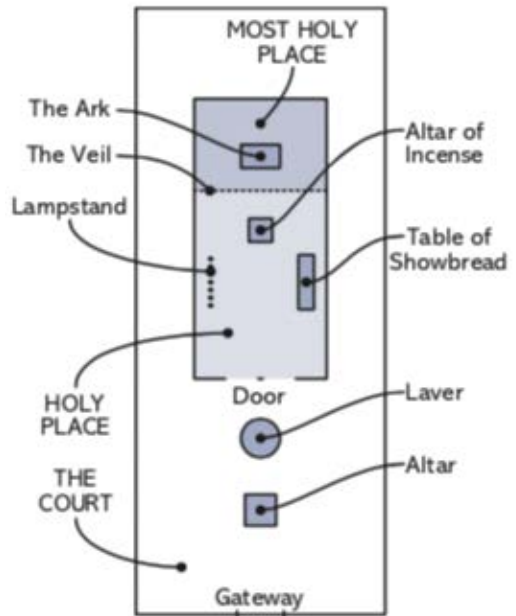
God sent the ten plagues on Egypt to make Pharaoh let the Israelites go. He was also showing that He is God, and the Egyptian gods were just powerless superstitions. We can see some examples where the plagues were directed against specific Egyptian gods:

- ◆ Nile turned to blood: Hapi, Khnum, Osiris (gods of the Nile)
- ◆ Plague on cattle: Hathor (cow goddess), Mnevis and Apis (sacred bulls)
- ◆ Darkness: Ra, Aten, Atmu (sun gods).

Great Events

Among the great miraculous events recorded in Exodus are:

- ◆ God reveals His divine Name, 'Yahweh', at the burning bush – chapter 3.
- ◆ The ten plagues – chapters 7–12.
- ◆ The Passover – chapters 12, 13.
- ◆ Crossing the Red Sea – chapters 13–15.
- ◆ Bread from heaven – chapter 16.
- ◆ Water from the rock – chapter 17.
- ◆ God affirms His special relationship with Israel at Mount Sinai – chapter 19.
- ◆ The giving of the Law (including the Ten Commandments) – chapters 20–31.
- ◆ Incident of the Golden Calf – chapter 32.
- ◆ Making and erecting the Tabernacle, where God's glory came to dwell (see plan opposite) – chapters 25–40.



The Tabernacle (Exodus 32-40)

Norman Owen

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Footprints

ANN was walking in the mountains during winter with hazardous snow and ice. She had studied the route, and carried her map and compass. Nonetheless she was relieved to see footprints along the way, helping her to stick to the path but also to avoid dangerous sheets of ice. Snow clouds were gathering, so she was keen to get down safely. She was scared of slipping so her stride was less than that of some of the people who had gone before.

As she stared ahead carefully finding and following more footprints it occurred to her that this was only a safe plan if the previous walkers had known what they were doing. In her training the advice had always been to keep referring to map and compass.

What to Follow?

In life, our map and compass are the Bible – God’s guidebook. Our path is not always clear and can be difficult. In fact, problems are a necessary part of the Christian’s life (see Romans 5:3). The Bible is full of accounts of how people have lived their lives, sometimes obedient to God, but more often not.

For example, Paul quotes the negative experiences of the Hebrews in the wilderness:



Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted... Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11).

In contrast, Abraham was a supreme example of faith, and we are encouraged to ‘walk in his steps’ (Romans 4:12). Hebrews 11 lists Abraham and other people as ‘faithful’. However, just like us, even they wandered from the true path by sinning:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

There is only one person who has never sinned and who always did exactly what God wanted. That is Jesus (1 Peter 2:22). So we are asked to follow his steps – or footprints (v21). While we are not asked to go through all that Jesus endured, he asks us to follow his example, trying to behave as he would, to the best of our limited ability (see Matthew 16:24–26).

Like Ann we should study the guidebook (the Bible) to make decisions in life. In applying godly principles we should learn from biblical examples, especially the Lord Jesus. For it is only through Jesus that we can ever reach the end of the path – the Kingdom of God.

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