

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

A New Start (p.3)

The Problem With Politicians (p.8)

Baptism and Christening (p.16)

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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A New Start

IT WAS A DAY of disaster and disgrace. It must have seemed as though everything was lost, and life was no longer worth living.

It was around 1100 BC. The Israelites had been struggling for a long time. They were leaderless and surrounded by foes, in particular their arch enemies the Philistines were a continual threat on their western border. Their spiritual life was at a low ebb: the High Priest was a weak old man called Eli who served God in the Tabernacle in Shiloh. He was dominated by his two sons Hophni and Phinehas, who were corrupt and vicious.

Defeat and Catastrophe

One day the army of Israel joined battle with the Philistine army. The account is in the Bible in 1 Samuel 4. Israel were defeated and fled back to their camp, where they had a desperate idea: they would rally themselves for another battle, and this time take the Ark of the Covenant with them.

The Ark was the sacred chest which God had instructed Israel to make. It was the focus of their spiritual life, and it was called the Ark of the Covenant ('covenant' means 'agreement') because it was a symbol of the covenant that they had made with God to be His people. It was kept in the Holiest Place in the Tabernacle and the Israelites

had strict and precise instructions to treat it with the utmost reverence. It was where the presence of God was.



Artist's reconstruction of the Ark of the Covenant

The army came to Shiloh and requisitioned the Ark. We're not told what the reaction of Hophni and Phinehas was to this, but they accompanied it into battle.

As should have been expected, God did not take kindly to His Ark being used as a lucky talisman. The Israelite army was destroyed and the Ark was captured by the Philistines.

Eli was waiting for news at the gate of Shiloh, trembling with worry. The news came that the army had been defeated, his sons were dead and the Ark was captured. At the mention of the Ark he fell backward, broke his neck and died.

Phinehas' wife was heavily pregnant. When she heard the news she went into labour, and died in childbirth. She did not even look at her baby, but with her last breath she named him Ichabod—'There is no glory'.

It was a terrible day for Israel. They had been routed by their enemies, their priest was dead and the Ark of the Covenant had been thrown away. It must have seemed as though everything was lost.

But God, as always, was at work to recover the situation. People can fail, but He will not. At the Tabernacle in Shiloh the young boy Samuel was in training to lead the nation in a spiritual revival; God Himself was going to use direct supernatural means to ensure the return of the Ark; and down south in Bethlehem an obscure family of farmers was going to produce a shepherd boy who would become King David.

Who would have thought on that dreadful day when all hope seemed lost that within 100 years the nation would be basking in the glory of a prosperous kingdom under the wise and godly rulership of its greatest king?

Fear and Doubt

Fast forward a thousand years or so to Jerusalem, around 30 AD. A scared huddle of disciples is gathered in a house behind closed doors for fear that those who arrested and killed their master will return for them.

This time the predicament was not of their making. They had been devoted disciples of Jesus. But the events of the last few days had taken them completely by surprise—a week previously the crowd had been welcoming them into the city like heroes (Matthew 21:1–11), then everything

went wrong and suddenly the crowd was shouting for Jesus' death (Mark 15:11–14). Now he was gone and their world had fallen apart.

Then came breathless rumours that he had been seen alive. And as they sat in doubt, he appeared before them (John 20:19). And at last they understood that this had been no catastrophic accident—they had just become part of the greatest event in the history of the world. The Son of God had sacrificed his life to save his people from their sins, and his Father had raised him to life to lead them to victory over death itself. The dispirited group of disciples was energised to go out and set the world alight preaching the Gospel of God's Kingdom.

A New Start

One of the most encouraging verses in the entire Bible is Romans 8:28:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

What does this mean for you and me? If we love God and become disciples of Jesus Christ, we have the confidence that there is no mess we can ever find ourselves in that is too dark and difficult for God to sort out. The front cover shows life springing back after destruction—God can do this with our lives. More than this, we can look beyond the present with all its problems to the new beginning of eternal, glorious life in His Kingdom. Read on to find out more.

The Kingdom of God



OUR FATHER in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:9–10).

This is the opening of the Lord's Prayer. Every day and in many languages it is repeated. But what do the words "Your kingdom come" really mean?

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Son of God, he added, "*The Lord God will give him the throne of his father [that is his ancestor] David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end*" (Luke 1:32–33).

When the wise men came seeking the baby Jesus they asked "*Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?*" (Matthew 2:2).

When Jesus stood on trial, Pilate the governor asked, "*Are you a king then?*" Jesus

answered, "*You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born...*" (John 18:37).

The 'crime' that Jesus had committed was displayed over his head as he hung dying on the cross: "*JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS*" (John 19:19).

After three days God raised Jesus back to life and the hopes of the disciples revived. They asked him, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1:6). He replied, "*It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority*" (v. 7). He did not deny that the Kingdom of Israel would be restored; but he declined to discuss when.

The Kingdom

Let's return to Gabriel's promise to Mary concerning David's throne. David was a



great king of Israel who lived about 1000 years before the birth of Jesus. Mary was a descendant of David (Luke 3:23, 31). After the death of David the people of Israel repeatedly rebelled against God and ignored His laws. So God gave them into the hands of their enemies, saying to the last king to rule in Jerusalem, “Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel... thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Remove the turban, and take off the crown... Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, **until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him**’” (Ezekiel 21:26–27).

There has never been another Jewish king in Jerusalem from that day to this! But who is ‘he whose right it is’? Of course, it is Jesus himself.

What will the Kingdom of God be like? Let’s listen to God’s prophets:

Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations... They shall beat their swords into plowshares... Nation shall not lift up sword against nation... (Isaiah 2:3–4).

The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding... with righteousness he shall judge the poor... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard

shall lie down with the young goat... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:2–9).

Give the king Your judgments, O God... He will judge Your people with righteousness... In his days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace... He shall have dominion also from sea to sea... His name shall endure forever... All nations shall call him blessed (Psalm 72).

The Kingdom of God, therefore will be a real kingdom on earth. Jesus himself will be the King. Righteous laws will be observed through all the world so that the nations will learn how God wants people to live. They will go to Jerusalem to learn of God’s ways. War, hatred and evil will be eliminated and the whole world will reflect God’s love. The earth will yield food in abundance.

Some people talk about a kingdom beyond the sky but the Bible says nothing about such a kingdom.

*For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it... **Who formed it to be inhabited**... (Isaiah 45:18).*

Many people fear that mankind will destroy the world. No! God created the world and



filled it with life. Ultimately He will fill the world with His Kingdom and Jesus himself will be the king.

The King

What qualities will be essential for a world ruler?

- Absolute authority to insist that his righteous laws be obeyed.
- The will to care for the poor and disadvantaged people with justice.
- Perfect knowledge of people to know all their intentions and the power to solve all problems.
- Immortality so that 'good' may continue for ever.

Only one man has these qualifications. Jesus first of all mastered his own nature and always obeyed God. Always he showed wisdom. Always 'self' was overruled. Always Jesus did as God wished. Jesus alone has the right to be the world ruler with absolute authority.

But when will it happen? When will God send His son to take his throne and establish God's Kingdom? We do not know, and even Jesus himself did not know (Mark

13:32). But there are reasons to believe that that great event is close at hand.

The Citizens

Often Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God as if it was already in existence. Of course Jesus the King lived among people and he showed us how God wants us to live. He has the power to heal those who are ill, to feed those who are hungry. Jesus gave us a 'glimpse' of what the Kingdom of God will be like.

If we want to be citizens in the Kingdom of God we must try to live like citizens of God's Kingdom now. We must be baptised, and busy ourselves doing the Lord's work while we wait patiently for Jesus to come.

David M Budden

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The Problem with Politicians

THIS IS NOT a rant about those who have taken on the responsibility of government. It is a serious analysis of the serious question—why do they so often let us down?

In 1887 the British Lord Acton wrote a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in which he coined a famous phrase: “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.”

You may or may not sympathise with that view. But let’s see what the Bible has to say on the subject.

People Are Unreliable

The first problem which the Bible identifies is that politicians, like all other people, are mortal—they are limited in their ability, and they only last for a short time.

Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish (Psalm 146:3–4).



If we look more broadly at what the Bible teaches us about people in general we learn some disturbing things:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9).

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

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

The Bible does not flatter people by pretending they’re better than they are. It tells us how God sees us. He made us and He knows us.

Why Are We Like This?

So we have to ask, ‘why are we like this if God made us?’ ‘Did God make a mistake?’ These are quite reasonable questions. However the Bible shows us that the fault

does not lie with God. It lies with us and has its origins with the first man, Adam. Adam was made “very good” (Genesis 1:31). However he disobeyed God’s command and ate of the tree that God had told him not to eat.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:6).

Genesis chapter 3 goes on to relate how Adam and Eve’s disobedience brought a curse on them and their descendants. A later comment upon their failure and the consequences that followed is “... *through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned*” (Romans 5:12).

Adam’s descendants became worse and worse, until “*the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Genesis 6:5).

One Good Man

What we have seen so far might lead us to feel that we are in a hopeless situation. However the Bible shows us that, despite our condition, there is hope for us.

We have seen already that the reason why we cannot rely on man is because, as the Psalmist put it, “*his spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish*” (Psalm 146:4). We need to find a man who does not die. That man is the Lord Jesus

Christ, whom God raised from the dead never to die again.

Jesus, whilst being one of Adam’s descendants, “*committed no sin*” (1 Peter 2:22), so “*God raised him from the dead*” (Acts 13:30) to everlasting life.

And “*Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over him*” (Romans 6:9).

The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee that those who faithfully follow him will also rise from the dead to die no more. In 1 Corinthians 15, a chapter which speaks at length about the resurrection of believers, the Apostle Paul says “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive*” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Why We Can Trust Jesus Christ

People enter politics (usually) because they want to make a difference and do good in the world. However, with even the best of intentions they are limited in what they can achieve. They are powerless to address the main problem—which is that we are all by nature sinners, and we are therefore going to die.

Jesus Christ died to save us from our sins. And the Bible contains the promise that when he returns to earth he will form a government which will address all its problems—including the problem of sin and death.

Peter L Forbes

The Bible C

IT'S GOOD to read the Bible in a structured way. Various Bible reading calendars exist which can help you do

this. This one is known as the 'Bible Companion'. It was devised by a 14-year old called Robert Roberts in the 1850s,

JANUARY

1	Gen. 1, 2	Psa. 1, 2	Matt. 1, 2
2	... 3, 4	... 3, 5	... 3, 4
3	... 5, 6	... 6, 8	... 5
4	... 7, 8	... 9, 10	... 6
5	... 9, 10	... 11, 13	... 7
6	... 11, 12	... 14, 16	... 8
7	... 13, 14	... 17	... 9
8	... 15, 16	... 18	... 10
9	... 17, 18	... 19, 21	... 11
10	... 19	... 22	... 12
11	... 20, 21	... 23, 25	... 13
12	... 22, 23	... 26, 28	... 14
13	... 24	... 29, 30	... 15
14	... 25, 26	... 31	... 16
15	... 27	... 32	... 17
16	... 28, 29	... 33	... 18
17	... 30	... 34	... 19
18	... 31	... 35	... 20
19	... 32, 33	... 36	... 21
20	... 34, 35	... 37	... 22
21	... 36	... 38	... 23
22	... 37	... 39, 40	... 24
23	... 38	... 41, 43	... 25
24	... 39, 40	... 44	... 26
25	... 41	... 45	... 27
26	... 42, 43	... 46, 48	... 28
27	... 44, 45	... 49	... 29
28	... 46, 47	... 50	... 30
29	... 48, 50	... 51, 52	... 31
30	Exod. 1, 2	... 53, 55	... 7, 8
31	... 3, 4	... 56, 57	... 9

FEBRUARY

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4	... 10	... 64, 65	... 15, 16
5	... 11, 12	... 66, 67	Mark 1
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8	... 16	... 70, 71	... 4
9	... 17, 18	... 72	... 5
10	... 19, 20	... 73	... 6
11	... 21	... 74	... 7
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13	... 23	... 77	... 9
14	... 24, 25	... 78	... 10
15	... 26	... 79, 80	... 11
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19	... 30	... 87, 88	... 15, 16
20	... 31, 32	... 89	I Cor. 1, 2
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3	... 8	... 107	... 16
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JULY

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28	... 14	... 18	Rom. 1, 2
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10	... 16	... 6	... 2
11	... 17	... 7	... 3
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17	... 24, 25	... 13	... 9
18	I Chron. 1	... 14	... 10
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28	... 11	... 24	... 21
29	... 12	... 25	... 22
30	... 13, 14	... 26	... 23

Companion

and has been in widespread use ever since. There are three portions of the Bible for each day of the year, and it enables the

reader to read the entire Bible through in a year—the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice.

APRIL

1	Num.	15	Prov.	11	Luke	24
2	...	16	...	12	Gal.	1, 2
3	...	17, 18	...	13	...	3, 4
4	...	19	...	14	...	5, 6
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11	...	29, 30	...	21	...	2, 3
12	...	31	...	22	...	4
13	...	32	...	23	...	5
14	...	33	...	24	...	6
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

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JUNE

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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	1
20	Ruth	1, 2	...	44	Jude	1
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	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	Daniel	1	...	19
24	...	20	...	2	...	20, 21
25	...	21, 22	...	3	Acts	1
26	...	23	...	4	...	2
27	...	24	...	5	...	3, 4
28	...	25	...	6	...	5, 6
29	...	26, 27	...	7	...	7
30	...	28	...	8	...	8
31	...	29	...	9	...	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	Neh.	1, 2	...	12	...	3, 4
16	...	3	...	13	1 Thes.	1, 2
17	...	4	...	14	...	3, 4
18	...	5, 6	Joel	1	...	5
19	...	7	...	2	2 Thes.	1, 2
20	...	8	...	3	...	3
21	...	9	Amos.	1	1 Tim.	1, 2, 3
22	...	10	...	2	...	4, 5
23	...	11	...	3	...	6
24	...	12	...	4	2 Tim.	1
25	...	13	...	5	...	2
26	Esther	1	...	6	...	3, 4
27	...	2	...	7	Titus	1, 2, 3
28	...	3, 4	...	8	Philemon	1
29	...	5, 6	...	9	Heb.	1, 2
30	...	7, 8	Obadiah	1	...	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, 5
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	1
20	...	25, 27	...	2, 3	Jude	1
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

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Why You Should Read the Bible

SO YOU BELIEVE in God? Well, I assume you do because you're reading this magazine. So therefore you may also be familiar with the Bible. I'd like to share some reasons why you should read it.

The Bible (also known as 'scripture') is the Word of God, and it is unlike any other book. We are told this by the Apostle Peter:

Knowing this first, that 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).



Jesus Believed the Bible

Our Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament which deals with the history of the world before Jesus Christ, and the New Testament which commences with the birth of Jesus.

The Old Testament was Jesus' Bible. He believed it to be the Word of God. He held it to be the "last word" in authority, and very

often he quoted it and said "it is written..." For instance during his temptations in the wilderness his reply to the tempter was "*It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'*" (Matthew 4:4); and "*It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'*" (verse 7). He also prefaced his answers to questions from the Pharisees with "*Have you not read...*" (Matthew 12:3, 5; 19:4).



After his resurrection from the dead Jesus met two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, and he said "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?*" (Luke 24:25-26).

The Bible Foretells the Future

The Bible claims to tell the future, and its veracity has been proven by many of its prophecies coming to pass. This gives

Bible readers the confidence that those prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled will be, at some time in the future.



Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done...’ (Isaiah 46:9–10).

Moses prophesied the future of the Israelite nation after they had entered the Promised Land—they would be blessed in everything if they loved God and obeyed His commandments, but they would be cursed and cast out of the land and scattered into many nations if they rebelled against Him and worshipped false gods. This is detailed in Deuteronomy chapter 28. The Jews disobeyed God and were cast out of their land on two occasions, the last time being AD70, which the Lord Jesus prophesied in his Olivet prophecy (*Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21*).

It was also prophesied that the Jews would repossess their land—which they did in 1948 when the nation of Israel was re-established.

‘Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says the LORD, ‘nor be dismayed, O Israel; for

behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you (Jeremiah 30:10–11).



The Bible’s Message

The Bible is made up of 66 books: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New. There are three types of book in the Old Testament—history, poetry and prophecy. In the New Testament there are also three types—history, letters and prophecy.

The books were written by many different authors over a long period of time, but because they were written under inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit the message is the same—the Lord God in heaven has a plan and purpose for humankind.

This plan and purpose is centred around the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We find the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the Old Testament in the form of shadows and reflections, and in prophecy; just as he said about himself to the two on the Emmaus road: “O foolish ones, and slow of

heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25–26).



The Bible's Promise

The Bible explains how God set out to save humankind from sin and death. This way of salvation has been brought about by the willing sacrifice of His only begotten Son who died to save us from our sins:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).



Jesus was raised from death and is now in heaven with his Father, where he acts as a priest to bring his people to God. And the Bible promises that he will return to earth to establish his kingdom:

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till his enemies are made his footstool (Hebrews 10:12–13).

In Conclusion

The Bible is the guidebook for life, for all who believe it and seek to learn and understand its message. As the Apostle Paul said:

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).

It promises eternal life to all Jesus' faithful, obedient followers, as he said in his prayer to God before his crucifixion:

Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given him authority over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:1–3).

The Bible is a unique book. It tells the future, it contains the wonderful Gospel of salvation and it tells us what we must do in order to obtain eternal life in the coming Kingdom of God upon earth.

Jesus held it to be wholly God's Word, and it demands that we should too.

Grahame A Cooper

The Psalms

THE PSALMS are songs of praise, prayer and prophecy, written by David, Hezekiah and others.



17th Century painting of King David singing a Psalm while playing the harp

The Psalms and Music

The Psalms were originally sung, and accompanied by musical instruments (a number of Psalms have the names of the



original tunes and other instructions in their ‘titles’). The Psalms were intended

as well as for congregational worship.

Particular Psalms may be prayers or meditations, or both; some recount highlights from the history of Israel or the personal experiences of the Psalmist.

Christ in the Psalms

The work of Jesus Christ was foretold in the Psalms, as it was in all parts of the Old Testament (see Luke 24:44). Jesus knew the Psalms: they provide an insight into his mind and thoughts.

Some Psalms are obviously about him:

- HIS SUFFERINGS—
Psalms 22; 40; 69; 118.
- HIS RESURRECTION—
Psalms 16; 91.
- HIS FUTURE RULE—
Psalms 2; 24; 45; 72; 110; 122.

Personal Treasure

Over the centuries faithful people have derived great personal strength and comfort from the Psalms. There are chapters suited to almost every situation in life—times of sorrow, danger or joy.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Psalm 2:8,9—see Revelation 2:26, 27.
- ◆ Psalm 16:10—see Acts 2:27, 31.
- ◆ Psalm 72:8—see Zechariah 9:10.

Baptism and Christening

In England the number of people claiming to be 'Christian' has dropped dramatically over the past few decades. Consequently, attendance at church services is low. In particular, infant christening is often replaced by secular 'naming ceremonies'. The massive decrease in religious faith is of concern to many people. And what about children who have not been christened: are they in danger?

A Command

The traditional church ritual of sprinkling the forehead of a baby should really be called 'christening' and not 'baptism'. According to the Bible baptism is different: it is undertaken by adults who have expressed a faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as Son of God, and it involves the complete immersion of the person in water.

Baptism was commanded by Jesus (Mark 16:15–16) and also by his followers the apostles (for example Acts 22:16). It was done where there was much water (John 3:23, Acts 8:36–39). Jesus himself insisted that he was baptised to 'fulfil all righteousness' (Matthew 3:13–17). The apostles taught that baptism is the first act of obedience a believer must do, after acknowledging their desperate need to be forgiven and to be saved from eternal death. Their message was: believe, then

repent, then be baptised. They preached this with urgency and zeal (Acts 2:37–39).

Going down into the water is a symbol of being buried with Jesus in death. Emerging out of the water again is a symbol of being raised with Jesus from death to a new life: a life of trying to follow Jesus and a life of hope of sharing eternal life with him (Romans 6:2–5). It is a pledge to follow Jesus.

Baptism 'washes away' all previous sins, so that the believer can have a relationship with God. And it means that from then on all the believer's sins can be forgiven, as long as they remain faithful (1 John 1:9).

Faith, Not Magic

During the first three centuries AD adult baptism was 'the rule'. The established church later introduced child christening. Belief and commitment are obviously impossible for a baby: a baby cannot be aware of sin and death, cannot repent and cannot decide to follow Jesus. So the church reasoned that the child's 'baptism' had to be 'confirmed' later when they had grown up.

Some suggested that christening 'cleansed the nature' of the child, even that it 'exorcised' evil (such as demons). Midwives have been encouraged to christen very ill babies in order to ensure they do not die

in an ‘un-consecrated’ state. Because the act of christening is seen as a ritual that is powerful in itself, the theory arose that it is best performed with ‘holy water’.

But this is all a far cry from Bible practices. According to the Bible, neither the water nor the ceremony itself have any magical qualities. The idea of holy water transforming someone owes more to superstition than Bible teaching.



Bible baptism is an act of faith and obedience, reflecting a person’s desire to enter a relationship with God and their determination to follow Jesus. In itself, dipping in water achieves nothing. That does not mean that baptism is unnecessary, because it is a commandment of God. It is an outward sign that a person wants to be ‘born again’.

Circumcision

Some have compared christening with the Jewish ritual of circumcision, in which a baby boy has his foreskin removed, usually at eight days old. This ritual is as old as the Jewish race, it originates in Genesis 17:10–14 when God told Abraham to be circumcised

along with all his household as a sign of the covenant between them and God.

There were very good health reasons for this practice, and under the Law which God gave to Israel it was commanded for the Jewish nation. But circumcision does not do what baptism does. The Apostle Paul argued vehemently against those in the early church who were teaching that non-Jewish Christians should be circumcised (Galatians 6:12–15). *‘For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation’ (verse 15).*

God’s Commands, Not Ours

Jesus said some very hard words to the Jewish leaders of his day. In their zeal to please God they had invented all sorts of rules and procedures which added to the Law which God had given them. Jesus saw that some of these extra rules actually served to invalidate God’s law (Matthew 15:3–6): *‘You have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition’ (verse 6).*

Replacing baptism with christening is clearly reminiscent of what the Jewish leaders did. No person, government or church ever has a right to change the commandments of God. He is right and we must try to do what He says, not what we think.

So if a baby is not christened it will do no harm. What will do harm is to grow up in ignorance of the Gospel message and the work of the Lord Jesus (John 3:17–18).

Anna Hart

An Evening Under the Stars

We had been warned that today there'd be a long journey. We were to lead a two-day Bible School which would be attended by Christadelphians, and other people from the village and also from further afield.

We set off early in the morning. Three Europeans and three native Africans in a car which was not fit for the roads we were travelling on—they were some of the roughest I have ever experienced. After two hours' travelling the sun was high and burning hot. Sweat dripped from us, our shirts stuck to our backs. Tension was rising, tempers frayed. The day which we had expected to spend talking and helping was slipping away.

At last we had to stop for a break to stretch our legs and enjoy some shade, but we were soon on our way again.



Arrival

After another two and a half hours we finally arrived. What greeted us first was the joyful sound of singing: *"Abwerenso! Abwarensa! Jesu' Abwarensa!"* ("He is

coming! He is coming! Jesus is coming soon!") And what a sight it was! The meeting room had been extended by means of a makeshift structure of tree branches used as posts supporting a thatch of grass, and over a hundred people were sitting on mats or dried mud seats, enjoying the gentle breeze in the shade. Many had already been there for hours, and as we arrived more came pushing in and gathering around the edges of the throng.

The weariness of the journey fell away, and with renewed vigour we set about the day's teaching.

The day passed quickly. Darkness approached and we had to stop, as there was no electric or gas light. And we were exhausted.

Nightfall

A brother walked over: "You want to stay with us tonight?" We readily agreed. We'd be happy to sleep in the car.

"No need, come to my house." He led us on a short, dusty walk to a brick bungalow with a corrugated metal roof—it had not fared well in the previous year's rains, wide cracks ran up the walls where flooding had undermined the foundations, but it was a welcoming home.

We reclined on a couple of wooden benches and were given bottles of cola

(Europeans avoid drinking the local water because their stomachs are too delicate). We enjoyed the cool of the evening, the stillness after the day's business, the smell of the cooking pot over the open fire.

Twilight in Africa does not last long and night fell quickly. The moon rose in breathtaking beauty. At moments like this, well loved Bible passages come to mind:

Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also (Genesis 1:16).

One by one the stars appeared, and soon the Milky Way described a huge speckled band across the dome of heaven, criss-crossed by shooting stars. We sat and gazed in awe. Although it was night it was still so light that we could see the colour of the surrounding foliage.

We thought of the Psalmist gazing in awe into the night sky, and finding his own life put into perspective by the majesty of God's creation:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour. You have made him to have dominion over the

works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:3-6).

Who is the 'son of man'? It's a term that can be applied to the whole human race, but in Hebrews 2:9 we see that primarily it's a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ who is crowned with glory and honour because he gained the victory over sin and death.

This was the night sky Abraham saw, when the God of heaven gave him those magnificent promises which form the basis of the Gospel:

Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:5-6).

Who are Abraham's descendants? Everyone who shares his faith in God (Galatians 3:9). This beautiful spectacle was a picture of us!

As we each laid down our weary heads that night there was no thought about how taxing the day had been. There was only gratitude to our heavenly Father, that we had been privileged to serve Him in some small way. Sweet repose indeed!



David Nightingale

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