

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

Made in God's Image (p. 3)

Peter's Progress (p. 9)

A New Heaven and a New Earth (p. 15)

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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Made in God's Image

ANIMALS are amazing. An eagle's eyesight is so sharp that it can spot a rabbit two miles away



– and it can keep the rabbit in focus as it dives out of the sky at 200 miles per hour. A sniffer dog has been known to detect a packet of drugs sealed inside a bottle submerged in a can of kerosene. Migrating birds can travel from one side of the world to the other with incredible accuracy, using a variety of navigational aids including the sun, the stars and the earth's magnetic field.

But you and I are more amazing than any other animal—because unlike all other animals, we're made in the image of God.

In the Beginning

Right at the beginning of the Bible, Genesis chapters 1 and 2 describe the creation of the world and everything in it. Humans were the last to be created—the culmination of God's great work.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. And

God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:24–27).

What does it mean, "Let us make man in our image"? The Bible tells us that at the creation of the world "the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7)—it seems the angels were involved in the creation, carrying out God's work, and humans are made in the image of angels. We look like angels—in the past angels have been mistaken for ordinary people (Hebrews 13:2), and no doubt they still are.

But there's more to it than that. We are able to think like the angels—like God Himself. Unlike other animals, we can appreciate God, we can have faith and we can choose to obey Him. And so as the Bible book of Ecclesiastes says: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Giving Glory to God

When a fish swims in the sea or a bird flies in the air, in a way they give glory to God who designed them. But when you or I choose to love and obey God, we give Him something which animals cannot give:

Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth (Psalm 96:8–9).

We can make the choice to give glory to God by responding to Him, returning His love, obeying Him and bringing our offerings of thanksgiving. That's what He wants us to do. *"The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy" (Psalm 147:11).*

Consider that—you and I, feeble mortal specks, can give pleasure to the God of heaven!

The Breath of Life

In many ways animals are very much like us. For example, anyone who is acquainted with dogs will know how complex are their social behaviours. There are ants that cultivate crops, and ants that tend and milk herds of aphids just like human farmers tend and milk cows. Chimpanzees have outperformed humans in number memory tests.

And the book of Ecclesiastes shows us another way in which we're similar: *"For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies,*

so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust" (Ecclesiastes 3:19–20).



Carpenter ant tending aphids

All animals live because of the breath God gives them. This is how Genesis describes the creation of life: *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).* That word 'being' is translated 'soul' in some older versions of the Bible. That's what a soul is—it's simply a living being. People and animals have souls while they live, and cease to have souls when they die (Ezekiel 18:4).

All animals live and then die, that's the way it is. And many people believe that we are no different. In a way they're right: *"A man who is in honour, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:20).* But it does not have to be so. We are made in the image of God. God lives for ever, and He wants us to live for ever with Him. As Jesus once said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).*

“I Am the Resurrection and the Life”

The Gospel of John records a number of sayings of Jesus which begin “I am ...” In this series we think about some of the profound things he said about himself.

JESUS had some close friends—Lazarus, and his sisters Martha and Mary. They lived in the village of Bethany outside Jerusalem, and Jesus and his disciples would often stay at their home.

John chapter 11 tells of the time when Lazarus fell ill and died, and Jesus raised him back to life. He ‘resurrected’ him—the word ‘resurrection’ means to bring back to life.



Jesus and his disciples arrived at the house to find Martha grieving for her dead brother.

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world” (John 11:25–27).

Martha was familiar with Jesus’ teaching, and she believed in him. She could have echoed the words of Peter: “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68).

Steps to Eternal Life

Eternal life will not be given to everyone, there are conditions:

You must hear the word—that is, the Gospel message—and respond positively to what you hear. In other words you must believe it. Jesus once said: “*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). Belief, when your heart is first opened to the truth of the Gospel, is the first step on your journey to the Kingdom of God.

And be baptised. This is a public demonstration of your faith. As Jesus told his disciples, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:15–16).

Then live a life of obedience to Jesus’ commandments: *“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love”* (John 15:10).

This new life is not just about obeying commandments, it’s about coming to know Jesus and growing to be like him. As he said: *“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent”* (John 17:3).

He Who Believes Will Never Die

One of the pictures which Jesus used to describe himself and his followers was the picture of a shepherd and his sheep. *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish...”* (John 10:27–28).

Jesus was effectively saying that anyone who believes in him will never die.

But everybody dies, so what did he mean? For the majority of people, when they die they perish, that’s the end. But for those who have been faithful disciples of Jesus, death is not the end. It is described as ‘sleep’. Jesus said of Lazarus, *“Our friend*

Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.” Then his disciples said, *“Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.”* However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that he was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, *“Lazarus is dead”* (John 11:11–14).

The Bible describes death as ‘sleep’, because it is not final—you go to sleep, and you wake up.

When Jesus returns to the earth there will be a ‘resurrection’ and also a judgement. People will be raised from the dead: *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”* (John 5:28–29). At that time those who have followed him faithfully will be given eternal life. As far as God is concerned, disciples who have died are just asleep.

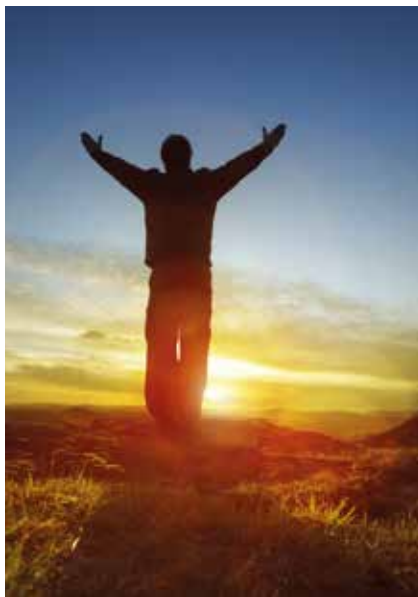
There was a group of people called Sadducees, who didn’t believe in the



resurrection of the dead and they thought they had a good argument to prove their point. They came to Jesus with a hypothetical story about a woman whose husband died. She married his brother, but he died, so she married another brother, and so on until eventually she had married all seven brothers. “Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her” (Matthew 22:23–28).

They were clever, but wrong. Jesus answered: “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (v.29–32).

Jesus was quite clear: God would not associate His name with dead people—He deals with the living. Although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, great men of Jewish history, are dead, God sees them as alive because they will be resurrected and be part of His kingdom.



The Day of Christ’s Return

Paul said in his first letter to the Thessalonians, concerning the day when Christ returns: “I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–14).

Lazarus had been dead and in his tomb for four days—long enough for his body to start to decay (John 11:39). But as far as Jesus was concerned he was just asleep, and he woke him up. When he returns he will do the same to all his friends.

The Resurrection and the Life

To the joy of his family and friends, Lazarus was literally given a new lease of life. But in time he died again. The Gospels contain accounts of other people whom Jesus raised from the dead—Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:54) and the widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:14). They both died again.

Jesus told Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). He showed that he was ‘the resurrection’ when he brought her brother back to life. He has yet to

demonstrate that he is ‘the life’ in its fullest sense, but one day he will do so. Remember his words: *“The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”* (John 5:28–29).


After he himself had been raised from death Jesus said to his disciples, *“All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth”* (Matthew 28:18). When he returns he will not simply give people life as we know it now—it will be perfect, eternal life, free from pain and sorrow and sin. It will be a completely different life from the life we know now.

Eternal Life Can Be Yours

We have seen evidence of Jesus’ declaration in the gospels that he is ‘the resurrection and the life’. He is, as he promised, going to return and he will bring judgement with him. At that time he will give eternal life to all the truly faithful—his ‘sheep’—those who love him and are waiting for his return. As the Apostle Paul said at the end of his life: *“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 4:8).

What about you? Eternal life can be yours if you believe in the Lord Jesus, are baptized and keep his commandments.

Grahame A Cooper



“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man

came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at his coming.”
(1 Corinthians 15:20–23)

Questions? Comments?
We’d love to hear from you!

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Peter's Progress

This is the fourth in a series in which we examine this fascinating Bible book. You can catch up with the previous articles at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

IN THE FIRST part of Acts the narrative tends to follow the actions of the Apostle Peter. Peter had been one of the main disciples of Jesus, alongside James and John. After Jesus' resurrection Peter was among the first to meet him alive, and he became an important figure in the early community of believers.

The Acts of Peter

In Acts chapter 2 Peter addressed a crowd in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: the first recorded public presentation of the Gospel after Jesus' resurrection was spoken by Peter. Peter continued to be active in preaching. Had anyone wished to find Peter in Jerusalem at this time the best strategy would have been to find the largest crowd in the city; Peter would have been at the front of it, proclaiming the Gospel!

Peter's activities soon made it difficult for him to remain in Jerusalem and he visited various other places to preach.

In Acts chapter 8 he visited Samaria. Philip had already preached there, but John and Peter went there to strengthen the new congregation of believers.

In Acts 9 Peter travelled around the coastal plain of Judea, where he performed miracles at Lydda and Joppa. In Lydda he healed Aeneas, who was bed-ridden with paralysis; Aeneas was now able to walk and to earn his living. In Joppa the miracle was even more astonishing: a woman named Tabitha had died, and Peter raised her from the dead. This caused a stir throughout the region and the church in Joppa grew. Peter stayed on in Joppa.



"Tabitha, arise!"

In Acts 10 we have one of the turning points of the book. Peter proclaimed the Gospel to, and then baptised, the Roman centurion Cornelius and his companions. These were the first Gentiles to receive the Gospel.

Peter then returned to Jerusalem to explain his mission, and the baptism of Gentiles, to the other apostles.

In Acts 11 Peter was arrested by Herod the King (who ruled Judea from 41 to 44AD). He escaped with the assistance of an angel, but then left Jerusalem.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians chapter 2:11 we learn that Peter came to Antioch on the Orontes River (which was then in Syria but is now in Turkey).

The Gospel to the Gentiles

In Acts 15 Peter was present at the Council of Apostles in Jerusalem, at which the Apostles decided how to deal with the large number of Gentiles who formed the new congregations founded by Paul, and how to manage their relations with Christians from a Jewish background.



Modern Jaffa (Joppa of the Bible)

One of the main issues in Acts is the relationship of the new Christian community to the Jewish community of the time. As a result of Peter's teaching, Gentiles were baptised for the first time. From this point onwards the Christian community contained both Jews and Gentiles. It was then necessary to decide what the requirements would be for the

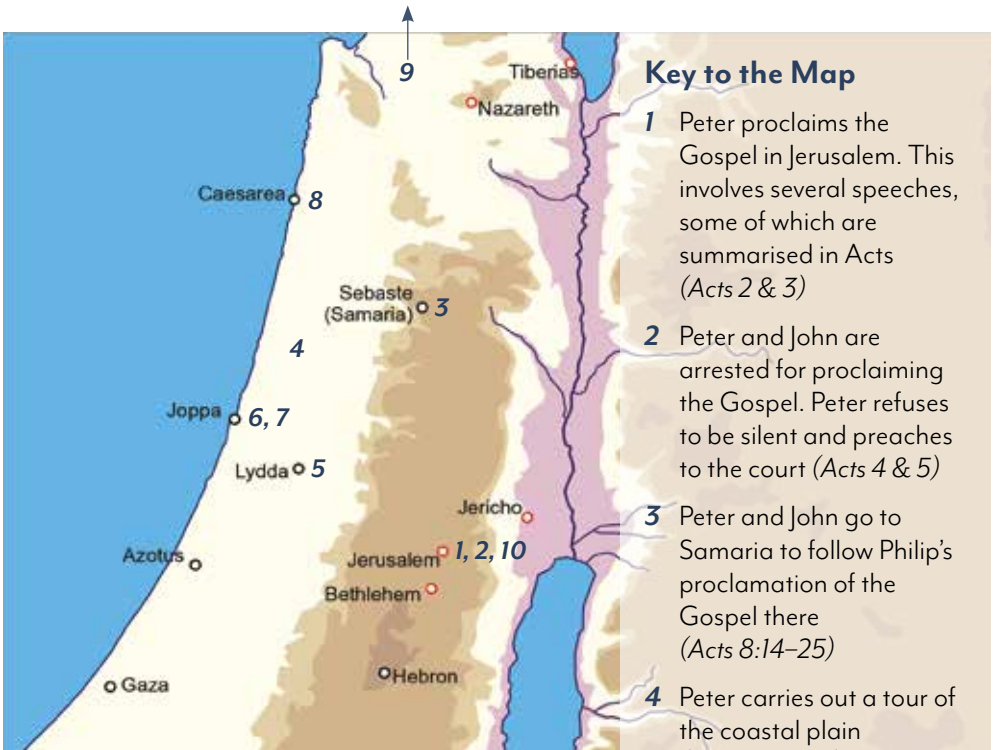
behaviour of the Gentile members. Should they keep the whole of the Jewish Law? Should they eat a Jewish Kosher diet?

Acts contains accounts of two councils held in Jerusalem to discuss the way that the new Gentile congregations should fit into the community of believers. The first one (Acts 11:1–18) decided that Gentiles could be members of the Christian community and the second one (Acts 15) decided that Gentile believers did not need to obey the Jewish Law of Moses.

The theme of the relationship between believers from a Jewish background and those from a Gentile background recurs over and over again in the New Testament as groups of Jewish believers attempted to overturn the divinely inspired decision of the Apostles and make the Gentile converts follow the Jewish Law. This is only a minor theme in the letters, but its presence is further evidence that the letters were written during the same period and share the same background as Acts.

The Conversion of Cornelius

The background to the conversion of Cornelius (in Acts chapter 10) is significant. Peter may have been a major figure in the congregation in Joppa, but he didn't use this for his own profit. While he was living in Joppa he was in the house of Simon the tanner. At the time tanning was a filthy trade, which prepared the skins of dead animals using a variety of animal products to process them. The smell alone would be overpowering and disgusting.



Key to the Map

- 1** Peter proclaims the Gospel in Jerusalem. This involves several speeches, some of which are summarised in Acts (Acts 2 & 3)
- 2** Peter and John are arrested for proclaiming the Gospel. Peter refuses to be silent and preaches to the court (Acts 4 & 5)
- 3** Peter and John go to Samaria to follow Philip's proclamation of the Gospel there (Acts 8:14–25)
- 4** Peter carries out a tour of the coastal plain (Acts 9:32–43)
- 5** Peter heals Aneas in Lydda (Acts 9:32–35)
- 6** Peter raises Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36–42)
- 7** Peter is fetched to Caesarea from Joppa (Acts 10:1–24)
- 8** Peter proclaims the Gospel to Cornelius and his companions in Caesarea (Acts 10)
- 9** Peter visits Antioch (Galatians 2:11)
- 10** Peter comes to Jerusalem for a council (Acts 15:7)

It was while Peter was there that he received messengers from Cornelius in Caesarea. He was to go to Caesarea to explain the Gospel to him. Peter was in a quandary. He had been brought up to think of Gentiles as inferior, people with whom he should have as few dealings as possible. But before the messengers arrived he had a dream from God. The message of this was that God had declared Gentiles to be acceptable; Peter should not argue with this.

Cornelius was a senior Roman military officer. He had no doubt had reports from Judea (the Roman part of the area—Galilee was outside the empire at the time) about Jesus. Now an angel had told him to send

for Peter and listen to what he said. So Peter told him the truth, the way that Jesus taught and healed, the fact that he was raised from the dead. Cornelius and his companions were baptised; Gentiles had joined the Christian community.

Peter's work took him to Antioch, where he was temporarily diverted from the Gospel by Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who brought a fake message which appeared to come from the other apostles (Galatians 2:11–13). After this there was another council in Jerusalem where the reality of the matter was decided. This council is recorded in Acts 15.

Then we lose sight of Peter for some time. There is some evidence from outside the Bible that he visited Rome with Mark, and that shortly after this Mark wrote his Gospel, which mostly appears to contain information given to him by Peter. There is certainly good evidence that the Gospel of Mark is associated with Peter and it does contain some Latin words which suggests that it may have been written after Mark had visited Italy.

Bishop of Rome?

Peter may have visited Rome, but we know there was at least one congregation of Christians in Rome before he arrived. When Peter gave his speech on the day of Pentecost there were Romans in the audience (Acts 2:10). Some of these may have been baptised and might have returned to Rome to establish a congregation there. By the time that Paul

wrote his Letter to the Romans there were several congregations there; Paul seems to refer to at least four of these in his letter.

The career of Peter is clearly described until after the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15; he is unlikely to have visited Rome before this time. After this Mark went to Cyprus. If this took a year, he would have been available to go to Rome only after 50AD. By this time there would have been a considerable community of believers in Rome.

So it seems certain that Peter was not the first 'bishop of Rome', as is sometimes claimed. He may have been there, but it was to visit congregations of Christians that already existed.

Peter's Letters

At the end of the New Testament period Peter wrote his two letters to the Christians in Asia Minor. These were written around 64AD, much later than the last of Peter's appearances in the Acts of the Apostles. His letters are full of references to the coming persecution of Nero. It is likely that they were written from Rome, which is identified as "Babylon" (1 Peter 5:13). If this is correct, Peter probably died in the persecution that followed only a few months after his second letter was written. He had faithfully proclaimed the same Gospel, from the death of his Lord until his own death.

John Thorpe

No Hero

THE BIBLE contains inspiring accounts of men and women of faith who achieved great things in their service to God. John Mark was not one of them—in the great drama that unfolds in the Bible’s pages, he plays a bit-part, and he was no hero. But as is usually the case, we can learn a lot from the little we’re told about him.



Mark was the writer of the Gospel of Mark. It’s likely that his information came first-hand from Peter (under the inspiration of God).

In the Acts

The first time he’s mentioned by name is in the book of Acts. Peter had been freed from prison by an angel, and “*he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying*” (Acts 12:12). This was in Jerusalem and it’s thought that this was the house where Jesus and his disciples shared the Last Supper before he was killed, and it had become the headquarters of the apostles in the time since.

There’s a detail in the Gospel of Mark about the evening of the Last Supper (Mark 14:13–16). Jesus’ enemies were waiting to pounce on him, but he was keen to share this last meal with his disciples undisturbed, so it seems he’d made a secret arrangement with a friendly householder. He sent two of his disciples into the city with instructions to look out for a man carrying a pitcher of water. This man would be easy to spot—in those days only women did that job. They were to follow him and he’d lead them to the safe house. If this was Mark’s mother’s house, then the man was probably Mark himself.

It’s one thing to do heroic things in the service of a cause you believe in, things you can be proud of and things people will celebrate. Mark was prepared to humble himself in the service of Jesus, to do a job that would no doubt get him laughed at by his friends and neighbours. In this way he showed himself a true follower of the man who said, “*Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*” (Mark 8:34).

Jesus shared his Last Supper with his disciples, then they went out into the night, to the Garden of Gethsemane where he was in the habit of praying, and where he knew that night his enemies would come and arrest him.

Mark's Gospel contains a peculiar little detail here. Receiving a tip-off about their location, a band of soldiers came to the garden to seize Jesus. His disciples abandoned him and fled. Mark records, *"Now a certain young man followed him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked"* (Mark 14:51–52). The obvious explanation is that this was Mark himself. What was he doing there? Perhaps he'd heard that trouble was coming and he'd hurried out to warn them? But he failed to be a hero, instead he slunk home in shame.

Back to Acts chapter 12. Shortly after Peter was freed from prison by the angel, two other prominent disciples, Paul and Barnabas, left Jerusalem and embarked on a preaching journey (verse 25). Mark went with them, apparently as their assistant. The record focuses on Paul and Barnabas. Mark was someone who was willing to give all he could in the service of the Gospel, but he was happy to be in the background. As the Psalmist says, *"I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness"* (Psalm 84:10).

It was a long and taxing journey, it must have been exciting but also fraught with hardship and danger. We're given no details, but in the next chapter (verse 13) Mark left them. He let them down.

In chapter 15 we see Paul and Barnabas planning another journey. Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them. *"But Paul insisted that they should not take with them*

the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work" (Acts 15:38). Paul and Barnabas disagreed so sharply that they went their separate ways—Barnabas took Mark, and Paul took another young disciple.

After Acts

That's the last we see of Mark in Acts. The last time he appears in the Bible is many years later, in the second letter Paul wrote to his friend Timothy while Paul was in prison in Rome awaiting execution.

Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry (2 Timothy 4:9–11).

This must be one of the loveliest little tributes of friendship that's ever been written. What kind of things must have happened in the intervening years, since Acts 15 when Paul refused to have Mark with him because he'd proved himself unreliable?

Mark was no hero. But he was devoted and faithful, he was willing to humble himself in the service of his Lord, and when he failed he got back up and kept going. He shows us what it is to follow Jesus Christ: *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45).

Katie Cabeira

A New Heaven and a New Earth

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared

as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle 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. 4 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 21:1-4

GOD'S CREATION is incredible. Whether it be gazing in awe at the sheer scale and intricacy of outer space or smiling in admiration at the diversity and complexity of the creatures which inhabit our planet, we cannot help but be impressed by the Creator's handiwork. But although our world has so many virtues, it is impossible to ignore the fact that it is also filled with numerous evils, such as pain, suffering and death. Thankfully, the world is not to continue in its current form indefinitely. This is a key element of the Gospel, namely that the world is going to be transformed into a paradise which God's children will inhabit for ever. This is the glorious age which is

described in the verses above, from the last book of the Bible.

Echoes of Genesis

The coming age is called 'a new heaven and a new earth'. And its description is surrounded by many details which direct our attention back to the creation of 'the first heaven and the first earth' as described in the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis.

The Bible opens with the words "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (*Genesis 1:1*). The chapter goes on to describe the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them. The

waters were called ‘seas’ on the third day of the creation week (Genesis 1:9–10). What possible reason could there be for the peculiar prophecy in Revelation 21:1 that there will no longer be any sea?



The reference to there being no more sea emphasises to us that this ‘new heaven and earth’ will be different from the ‘first heaven and earth’. But why is it specifically mentioned that there will be no more sea as opposed to no more sea creatures or no more fish etc.? Naturally speaking, the sea is essential to all life on earth, it is beautiful to look at and the gentle sound of waves lapping up on to the shore can be very therapeutic. It may surprise us that, symbolically speaking, the sea can have altogether different connotations. For example, *“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt”* (Isaiah 57:20). Verses such as this may help to explain why in the vision of the Kingdom in Revelation there is no longer any sea—perhaps it is best understood symbolically as the complete absence of the wicked and their practices.

The allusions in Revelation 21 to the early chapters of Genesis continue with the wonderfully comforting words, *“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” (verse 4). The current heaven and earth are filled



with these four evils. ‘Pain’ and ‘death’ in particular were the punishments placed on Eve and Adam when they ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:17–19). We all experience these punishments too and deservedly so, as we all follow Adam and Eve’s pattern of disobedience to God’s commandments.

However, when God creates the new heaven and earth these afflictions will be done away with; as a loving and caring Father, God will wipe away the tears from the eyes of His children. This is an intensely emotive metaphor which perfectly depicts the relationship the Father has with all those who love Him.

Revelation 21 goes on to describe the holy city, new Jerusalem—a symbolic way of describing God’s people finally united together.

The holy city will not need the sun or the moon to provide light for it (verse 23). The sun and moon were made on the

fourth day of the creation week (Genesis 1:14–19) and are thus part of the first heaven and earth. The new Jerusalem is described as not needing the sun or moon, and in it there will be no such thing as ‘night’.



Revelation 21:19–20 describe how the foundations of New Jerusalem are made of precious stones and the street is pure gold. By now it shouldn’t surprise us that these are first mentioned in the early chapters of Genesis (2:10–12).

In the next chapter, the final chapter of Revelation, we read of “*the river of the water of life*” (Revelation 22:1). This invites comparison with the “*river which flowed out of Eden to water the garden*”(Genesis 2:10).

Revelation 22 goes on to describe the Tree of Life which provides fruit for the healing of the world’s nations (verses 2, 14 & 19), and directs our attention to Genesis 2 (verse 9) and Genesis 3 (verses 22 & 24) which describe the Tree of Life which God planted in the Garden and which Adam and Eve were withheld from after they sinned.

Then we read the wonderful words “*And there shall be no more curse*”(Revelation 22:3). The world was cursed as a punishment for Adam and Eve’s sin (Genesis 3:17) but in

glorious contrast there will be a time when there shall be no more curse on the earth or its inhabitants: God’s children will serve Him free from toil, as Adam did before he sinned (Genesis 2:15).



“*Even So, Come!*”

The first heaven and the first earth have many virtues for us to enjoy over the course of our brief lives, but they pale in comparison with the eternal virtues to be enjoyed in the new heaven and the new earth that God will create for those who love Him. To quote from the last verses of the Bible: “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” (Revelation 22:20).

Stephen Blake

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Song of Solomon

THE THEME of the book is the quality of Divine love. It is illustrated in God's love for His people Israel, whom He describes elsewhere as His 'bride' (see for example Isaiah 54:5–6). And it looks ahead to the love of Christ for his bride—the community of believers—which is to be fully realised when he returns to earth.



Christ's Love for His Bride

The book is in the form of speeches by various characters: a woman who is called the Shulamite, a shepherd and a king. It also involves groups of women, watchmen and other characters. Some editions of the Bible insert before each section the name of the speaker, although it's not always possible to be certain who is speaking.

The love of the bridegroom for his bride, and her response, is beautifully portrayed in this tender allegory, pointing forward to the love of Christ for his true followers and their devotion to him. The intimate relationship which will exist between them is likened in the Song to that between

the dove and its mate, which is a lifelong partnership (2:14).

The Marriage Feast

The return of the Bridegroom (i.e. the return of Christ) will be followed by the perfecting of the Bride, when faithful followers of Christ will be made both sinless and immortal. Thus the words of 4:7 will be made true: *"You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you."* The 'marriage of the Lamb' to his Bride can take place, as foretold in Revelation 19:6–8. This means they will be united, both in immortality and in outlook, with Christ and also with God Himself (see John 17:21).

The Inheritance

Together, the Bridegroom and the Bride will inherit the Promised Land: this will extend to the whole earth. Paradise will be restored and all creation will rejoice.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Song 1:3, 12—see John 12:3.
- ◆ Song 4:7—see Ephesians 5:25–27.
- ◆ Song 5:16—see Psalm 45:11; Isaiah 33:17; John 1:14.

Across

- 1 Peter healed a lame man who was lying here (4) *(Acts 3:2)*
- 2 A form of transport used by Paul (4) *(Acts 20:13)*
- 5 To carry out (2) *(Acts 4:16)*
- 6 Peter healed a man who lived here (5) *(Acts 9:32)*
- 8 To go in (5) *(Acts 14:22)*
- 10 Simon the tanner lived by it (3) *(Acts 10:32)*
- 12 After the lame man was healed people tried to do this to Peter and John (3) *(Acts 3:11)*
- 13 Peter saw this in a vision (5) *(Acts 10:11)*
- 16 Peter met her at Mary's house (5) *(Acts 12:13)*
- 17 Abraham came from here (2) *(Genesis 11:31)*
- 18 Peter told the lame man to do this (4) *(Acts 3:6)*
- 19 God raised Jesus from the ____ (4) *(Acts 4:10)*

1						2	3		4
				5					
6			7						
			8			9			
	10								
11						12			
		13			14				15
					16				
				17					
18						19			

Down

- 1 Peter did not have this for the lame man (4) *(Acts 3:6)*
- 3 Peter went to the temple at the ninth one (4) *(Acts 3:1)*
- 4 After healing the lame man Peter and John were in this, called Solomon's (5) *(Acts 3:1)*
- 5 One of the sons of Jacob (3) *(Genesis 30:6)*
- 7 The punishment for the guards after Peter's release from prison (5) *(Acts 12:19)*
- 9 In Peter's vision, 13 across was let down to this (5) *(Acts 10:11)*
- 11 People are baptised in this (5) *(Acts 10:47)*
- 13 Repent so that these will be blotted out (4) *(Acts 3:19)*
- 14 To do wrong (3) *(Jeremiah 23:13)*
- 15 Ananias kept back part of the price of this (4) *(Acts 5:3)*

Colin Jannaway

(These clues use the New King James version of the Bible. If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

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