

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

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The Glories of the Age to Come (p. 5)

Getting to Know the Devil (p. 14)

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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Meditate On These Things

ON MY WAY to work I pass a pub called the Waterloo, and every day I have to look away in case I start humming the Eurovision song.

When I get to work there's a security pad on the door, and it happens that as you punch in the code the beeps play the first five notes of an oratorio of Handel's Messiah. If I'm not careful I start whistling the tune, to the annoyance of myself and everyone else.

Sometimes tunes get stuck in your head. They're called 'ear worms'.

Experience shows that the best way to avoid succumbing to an ear worm, or to get rid of it once you've got one, is to get something else into your head instead. And here's the spiritual principle. Jesus told a parable:

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first (Luke 11:24–26).

As usual with the Lord's parables, this simple story has multiple layers. It can be seen as a commentary on the nation of Israel at that time—the preaching of John

the Baptist had brought about a national reformation, preparing the people for the arrival of the Messiah, but when Jesus Christ came they failed to embrace him as their saviour and ultimately sank to new depths of wickedness when they crucified him.

But the parable also has a more personal application. You manage to get rid of some unhealthy influence in your life, maybe a bad habit, but you don't fill its place with anything. They say 'nature abhors a vacuum'—if you leave an empty space something will fill it, and in this case the unhealthy influence returns.

This principle applies to all kinds of human endeavours, from giving up smoking to submitting our lives to the Gospel. In order to succeed, we need to replace what's bad with what's good.



Fill Your Mind

The Apostle Paul wrote: *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever*

things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). He could have said avoid things that are ignoble and unjust and impure, and that would have been fair advice. But he went further: he said find things that are noble, just, pure and lovely, things that are positive and upbuilding and wholesome—and think on them.

This of course is where the Bible comes in—the Word of God, the source of all that is godly. *“I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word” (Psalm 119:14–16).*

That Greek word which Paul used in his letter to the Philippians, which is translated into English as ‘meditate’, literally means ‘take a reckoning’. A Bible dictionary defines it as “Make them the subject of your thoughtful consideration”. Think around them, ask questions, prayerfully—understand them, make them a part of you; return to them in the light of different experiences and new insights from the Bible, deepen your understanding. Not only will the old unhealthy patterns of thinking get shut out, but gradually your mind will be transformed (2 Corinthians 3:17–18).

Benefits of Meditation

In the world there are various definitions of ‘meditation’, and various methods. Generally it’s seen as a way to achieve

mindfulness, focus, calmness and clarity of mind. It certainly can be a powerful tool in the quest for mental and physical well-being.



The Bible does not prescribe techniques for the achievement of mindfulness and calmness. The purpose of meditation according to the Bible is nothing less than to attune your mind to the mind of God. It’s about learning who He is, what He is like, the things He has done and will do, which all focus on His over-arching love for His creation which He has shown in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ; appreciating that this life is actually a preparation for eternal life in His Kingdom; coming to love and trust Him, and finding your own outlook gradually transformed by doing so. Mindfulness and calmness are by-products which will accompany this process:

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:5–7).



The Glories of the Age to Come

ONE GOVERNMENT throughout the world, ruling solely by the law of God: its fruits, peace and fulness of life for humankind from pole to pole.

That seems the most futile of utopian dreams in a world of international conflict: yet it is as sure as the unceasing roll of the heavenly bodies, for “*the mouth of the LORD*” by Whom they were made “*has spoken*” (*Isaiah 40:5*).

Many Bible prophets speak of the splendid Temple to be reared in Jerusalem (for example Ezekiel 40–48). And the prophecies of Isaiah 2:1–4 and Micah 4:1–4 draw a picture of the new world order of which it will be the centre. With Christ’s return to the earth, the throne of King David will be restored as the seat of his rule (Luke 1:32); and people from far countries, sickened by slaughter and the ruin which humanity’s evil has brought, will turn to it as to light. They will say “*Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach*

us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths” (*Isaiah 2:3*).

Not only by the sheer power of moral beauty will the new rule draw people into its sway. History, especially recent history, has proved too well that there is a core of wickedness in human nature which loves the dark rather than light (John 3:19).

The King in Jerusalem will rule with a rod of iron and dash to pieces like pottery those who oppose him (Psalm 2:9). With the sanction of absolute right, he will also have a power against which raging nations will fling themselves in vain. He will “*rebuke strong nations afar off*”, and on his orders they will “*beat their swords into ploughshares*” (*Micah 4:3*).

People require two things of an organised society: that it should give them security and sufficiency. They want to live safe and ordered lives, with a fair chance of obtaining suitable food, clothing and housing for themselves and their families.

Human governments in general cannot guarantee these two elementary needs. Divine government will meet those needs with all the resources of the earth turned to the pursuits of peace: “everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid” (Micah 4:4).

With freedom from fear there will be a freedom also from hunger. Guided by the light of God from the centre of His government in Zion, men and women will no longer be warped and poisoned by their environment: they will be free to grow to that full mental and spiritual stature for which they were made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26).

Most of the world lives now in fear and uncertainty. The spiritual feast and the enlightenment of that day, described in the poetic language of the

prophet, are beautiful as daybreak by contrast to this gloom:


And in this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations (Isaiah 25:6–7).

No mere change of social system could give the benefits which will come from that age. Neither king nor demagogue has ever had power to raise the dead: none but Jesus of Nazareth, whose kingdom, once established, will have no end. Under his rule life will come with a new wealth and healing, for it is written:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert (Isaiah 35:5–6).

Harmony with God will make life richer physically as well as mentally: its span will be lengthened, so that people will no longer lose their powers before they are fully attained and pass into a premature grave:

I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who



has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. 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 (Isaiah 65:19–23).

Though these words are written especially of the people of Israel, who will be restored to their land as the central domain of this world empire, all families of the earth will be blessed through this blessing which will come on Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 12:3).

“Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice” (Isaiah 32:1) hints at the ordered administration of this great realm. Those “princes” will be those whom Daniel was told would wake from sleep in the dust to receive everlasting life (Daniel 12:2), who in the book of Revelation are shown acclaiming the “Lamb of God” who has washed them in his own blood, and made them kings and priests to his God (Revelation 1:5–6, 5:9–10). They rule over the mortal population during the

thousand years (Revelation 20:2–7) which is the last stage in God’s work of redeeming the world; then death will be abolished, and the world will enter the glory of that final state in which God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

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Zechariah

AFTER THE RETURN of some of the Jews from exile in Babylon around 520 BC, in the reign of Darius I of Persia, Zechariah received prophecies from God about the future of Jerusalem and of God's people.

First prophecy (1:1–6) This is a call to God's people to return to Him and to the words of His former prophets. Then He will bless them.

Second prophecy (1:7–6:15) This consists of eight visions which look ahead to God's dealings with Israel, and encompass the cutting off of oppressing nations, the restoration of Jerusalem, the rise and fall of false worship, and the judgement of the nations when the Messiah comes.

Third prophecy (chapters 7–14) This fills out the message from “the LORD of hosts”, whose armies fight for Israel.

Chapter 7: God appeals to His people to hear Him.

Chapter 8: He promises a future restoration.

Chapter 9: the Greek invasions of Israel and the ultimate coming of Zion's King.

Chapter 10: a second exodus of the



Jews from Gentile lands is foretold.

Chapter 11: the Roman invasion of Israel and the cutting off of God's “shepherd” (Jesus). The rise of false religions.

Chapter 12: the ultimate rescue of ‘troublesome’ Israel from the nations.

Chapter 13: the repentance of one third of Israel when they see Christ. Their ultimate salvation.

Chapter 14: the return of Christ to the Mount of Olives when all nations are gathered against Jerusalem to battle. He will rule the world. All nations will come year by year to Jerusalem to worship the LORD of hosts.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Zechariah 1:3–4—see Jeremiah 25:4–5; Malachi 3:7; Luke 15:20–21.
- ◆ Zechariah 3:8—see Isaiah 4:2; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15.
- ◆ Zechariah 14:4—see Ezekiel 11:23; Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:11–12.

The Suffering Servant

ISAIAH CHAPTER 53 contains a remarkable prophecy, which is sometimes known as the ‘suffering servant’ prophecy. It was probably written at the time of the illness of the Jewish King Hezekiah which is described in Isaiah 38, and it seems that some of the prophecy’s details were fulfilled by Hezekiah. But the New Testament writers quote from and allude to this prophecy on a number of occasions and apply it to Jesus Christ (for example Matthew 8:17, Acts 8:30-35 and 1 Peter 2:22).

I’m going to suggest that Hezekiah’s illness, his miraculous recovery and the gracious extension of his life comprise a partial fulfilment of the suffering servant prophecy. This period of the king’s life was a parable about the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the prophecy was completely fulfilled.

The Exalted Servant

The prophecy begins in chapter 52: *“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high”* (v. 13). This is really important for us

Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Just as many were astonished at you, so his visage was marred more

than any man, and his form more than the sons of men... Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he shall grow up before

Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised

to bear in mind—the ‘suffering servant’ prophecy actually starts with a prophecy about the servant being exalted! The complete fulfilment of this is found in the exaltation of Jesus, for example *“Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:9–11). However, is there a partial fulfilment in the life of King Hezekiah?

During the reign of King Hezekiah the army of Assyria invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem.



Assyrian relief engraving showing the invasion of Judah in the time of Hezekiah

The army was miraculously destroyed by God (Isaiah 37:36). The fame of this spread far and wide, “and many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter” (2 Chronicles 32:23). Hezekiah was exalted (a different Hebrew word from Isaiah 52:13 but the same idea nonetheless), but obviously not to the extent that Jesus Christ has been exalted—Hezekiah experienced a partial fulfilment of the prophecy.

Put To Grief

After the prophesied exaltation of the servant, we read in Isaiah 53 about the suffering which he was to endure: “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; He has put him to grief” (v. 10).

The Hebrew phrase which is translated “put him to grief” is literally ‘made him sick’. When we read the passage in this way, an application to Hezekiah seems very reasonable: “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death” (2 Chronicles 32:24).



and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we did not esteem him. Surely

he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was

bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to

Interestingly, Hezekiah’s suffering appears in the record immediately after we read of his exaltation.

A literal application to Hezekiah fits very well but the prophesied suffering could refer to Jesus in a more metaphorical way (he wasn’t literally crushed by the LORD and likewise he was not literally made sick). Hezekiah’s suffering was a ‘foreshadowing’ of the suffering that the Messiah was to go through, and the fact that he was “sick and near death” could well be indicative of the literal death that the Messiah would experience many years later.

There are other occasions in the Bible on which someone had an experience which foreshadowed the death and resurrection of Christ. For example in Genesis 22 Abraham showed his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. He was not required to go through with it, but the account strikingly foreshadowed the sacrifice which God made of His own beloved son. Reflecting on Abraham’s faith in Hebrews 11:17–19 we’re told that Isaac was figuratively raised from the dead.

He Shall Prolong His Days

Where the ‘suffering servant’ section of Isaiah resonates most strongly with Hezekiah is found in the prophetic

declaration, “he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days” (Isaiah 53:10). At the time of Hezekiah’s illness he had no children; this would have been of great concern for the king, as he would not have had a son to take the throne after he died. A prophecy that he would “see his seed” (that means ‘offspring’) would therefore have been hugely comforting to him. If he was to have children, the sickness could not be fatal. However, Isaiah the prophet had informed him in no uncertain terms: “Thus says the LORD: ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live’” (2 Kings 20:1). How was the situation to change from one of despair to one of salvation and joy?

King Hezekiah prayed to the LORD and wept; the LORD heard Hezekiah’s words and saw his tears (a foreshadowing of what we read in Hebrews 5:7). What was the outcome? “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years” (Isaiah 38:5). The prophecy ‘I will prolong his days’ was graciously fulfilled by God. Hezekiah’s days being prolonged was a foreshadowing of God prolonging the days of His Son, not for 15 years but for all eternity!

Within three years of Hezekiah’s life being extended, a son was born to him. We know this because his son, Manasseh, was 12

years old when he became king (2 Kings 21:1). A son being born to him after his life was extended was symbolic of the offspring that the Messiah would have after he had been given eternal life: “Here am I and the children whom God has given me” (Hebrews 2:13). You and I, if we come to Jesus and are baptised and become his disciples, are in a way his children.

It is clear that there are significant parts of the ‘suffering servant’ prophecy which cannot relate to King Hezekiah. This prophecy must have been bewildering for its readers in Isaiah’s time, and to this day it is an enigma to those who fail to see its application to Jesus Christ. But when we identify aspects of the prophecy which had a partial fulfilment in the experience of Hezekiah, we can perhaps gain a richer appreciation of the marvel of the life, death and glorious resurrection of the Son of God, who fulfilled the prophecy in every detail.

Stephen Blake



his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth...Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; He has put him to grief. When You make his soul an

offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the labour of his soul, and be satisfied.

Isaiah 52:13–53:11

Does It Matter Who Governs?

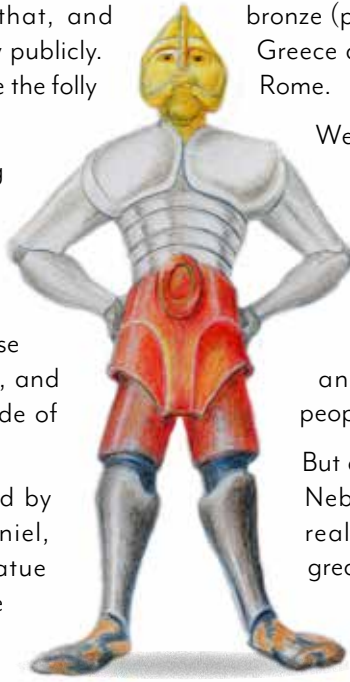
MANY YEARS AGO there was a king who was told that his dynasty would be replaced by an inferior one. He was not prepared to accept that, and expressed his defiance very publicly. He was later made to realise the folly of his attitude.

Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon at the height of its power in the 6th Century BC. Daniel chapter 2 describes a dream he had, of an immense statue with a golden head, and other parts of its body made of different metals.

The dream was interpreted by the Hebrew prophet Daniel, who revealed that the statue represented four successive empires. *“You are this head of gold,”* Daniel explained (v. 38). That sounded promising. But Daniel continued: *“But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth”* (v. 39).

The four empires having dominion over Israel were represented by four metals in the image: the golden head represented Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian empire,

the silver breast and arms represented the Medo-Persian empire which was to succeed him, the belly and thighs of bronze (probably copper) represented Greece and the iron legs represented Rome.



We read Nebuchadnezzar’s response in chapter 3. He made a huge statue, about 27 metres (90 feet) high, entirely of gold, as though to challenge the prophecy and make his own prediction, and he commanded all the people in his empire to worship it.

But as the book of Daniel unfolds Nebuchadnezzar was made to realise that there was a force greater than himself at work in the empires of the world.

In chapter 4 he had another dream, which was again interpreted by Daniel, and foretold in symbol a period of mental illness which would temporarily deprive him of rulership, but from which he would recover. The purpose of this illness would be *“in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men”* (v. 17). The dream came to pass. In a moment of pride Nebuchadnezzar

declared “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?” (v. 30), and immediately he was struck by his illness, he lost his mind and became like a beast.



At the end of it his attitude was changed:

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honoured Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?” (vs. 34–35).

In the New Testament the apostle Paul puts the situation very concisely. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Romans 13:1).

God has a purpose with this earth, to fill it with His glory when His will is done on

earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). Those who have served God faithfully will be part of the new government, serving with the Lord Jesus Christ at his return. In vision the apostle John was shown these people addressing the Saviour:

And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; 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).

For disciples of Christ the politics of the world are irrelevant, except insofar as they can observe the unfolding of Bible prophecies in world events. All is under God’s control, moving towards the fulfilment of His purpose—when those disciples themselves, along with Jesus Christ their King, will become the new world government.

Peter Banyard

Questions? Comments?

We’d love to hear from you!

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Getting to Know the Devil

THE DEVIL is something that many people fear, believing it to be a powerful evil being or force, the enemy of God who incites us to do bad things (or sin). Mythology, art and horror fiction have added to the idea; it is also convenient to have something to blame for our own misdeeds!



Let's look for the truth about this subject. The Bible is the Word of God, and so is the only authority we can turn to. The fact is that the devil is less frightening but more personal than we might think. Let's start with the good news. Whatever we will discover about the devil, whatever it is, it has no power to harm us. The Bible explains that Jesus destroyed the devil, through his own death as a perfect sacrifice:

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of

death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14--15).

Put another way...

...now, once at the end of the ages, he [Jesus] has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26).

The Source of Power

The devil is typically portrayed as an evil power which opposes God. There are several problems with this point of view, but the main one is that all power comes from God.

I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me... That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD do all these things (Isaiah 45:5-7).

There is no power beyond God, He created the universe and everything in it and continues to sustain life. He blesses when He chooses to; He also causes calamity or disaster when it is necessary. The Bible tells of no opposing force or alternative source of power.

The Source of Sin

The devil is also credited or blamed with making people sin or disobey God. The

idea is of a person or influence which incites us to do the wrong thing, when we would otherwise do the right thing. However, the Bible makes it clear that when we do the wrong things it is our own fault, it is part of our human nature.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (James 1:13–15).

Jesus put it like this:

There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man (Mark 7:15).

He explained to his disciples about the many things men and women do wrong, and concluded: *"all these evil things come from within and defile a man"* (v. 23).

The tendency to sin comes from human nature, and we counter it by trying to be more like Jesus Christ. Paul wrote at length about this inner battle and summarised it like this: *"So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin"* (Romans 7:25). (It's worth reading the whole of Romans 7 to get to grips with this principle.)

The Devil in the Bible

Throughout the Bible we read of 'devils' or 'demons', and these are references

to idol worship and superstition. The singular word 'devil' only occurs in the New Testament. When we see the English word 'devil' it is usually a translation of the Greek word 'diabolos' (from which we get the word 'diabolical'). It comes from the word 'to accuse' and means a 'false accuser' or 'slanderer', which is how it is sometimes translated into English. It never means a malignant force or supernatural person, but is applied to normal people who were acting in this way.

Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray him, being one of the twelve (John 6:70–71).



We find the following two translations close together, speaking about the characters of those who should lead in the church:

*Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of **the devil** (1 Timothy 3:6–7).*

*Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not **slanderers**, temperate, faithful in all things (1 Timothy 3:11).*

‘Slanderer’ is the Greek word ‘diabolos’. Of course, the writer would not describe these wives as devils, but it is the same word as we find in the earlier verses. ‘Slanderer’ or ‘false accuser’ fits better in all the cases—there is no supernatural devil.

The same word appears in 2 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 2:3, also translated as ‘slanderer’. In fact, you should read ‘slanderer’ or ‘false accuser’ wherever you see the word ‘devil’.

What About Satan?

Satan also appears in the Bible, and some think it is another name for the devil. However, just as with the devil, *satan* is not a name or a person, but a description. It appears 63 times in both Old and New Testaments and means an ‘opponent’ or ‘adversary’.

In fact, it is often translated as an adversary or ‘to withstand’. Here’s a useful example, where we have two parallel records:

Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1).

Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against

them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah” (2 Samuel 24:1).

So in this case, God was *satan*! Clearly, He was acting as an adversary to David. Check the chapters for yourself.

Balaam was a greedy man who was summoned to curse Israel but was prevented by God from doing so. God sent His angel to intercept him on his journey. It’s a good story—read Numbers 22—but look how the angel describes his actions:

The Angel of the Lord said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me (Numbers 22:32).

In the original Hebrew, ‘to stand against’ is ‘*satan*’—the angel was acting as an opponent to Balaam.



When Peter opposed Jesus, trying to prevent him from going to his death, then Jesus answered:

Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men (Matthew 16:23).

Don't be fooled by the capital letters (which didn't appear in the original Hebrew or Greek), neither 'satan' nor 'the devil' is a name of a supernatural person. Both refer to characteristics of human beings and, as in the cases we have shown, occasionally of God or His messengers.

Lastly—Lucifer

Another feature of popular culture is 'Lucifer', supposedly a fallen angel who entices people to sin. His name means 'light bringer' and he is a Bible character, who appears just once:



How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! (Isaiah 14:12).

The clue is actually in this verse, and his identity becomes very clear if you read the chapter from the beginning. In verse 4, we are told that the prophet is talking about the Assyrian king of Babylon, describing God's judgements on him.

Good News—And a Warning!

So, there is wonderful news. We do not need to fear some supernatural being or fallen angel whose intention is to harm people or make us disobey God. There is no supernatural evil force which opposes God and all that is good. All power and authority come from God and Him alone.

However, this also means that we are responsible for our own actions. If we sin and disobey God, that is our fault and we are responsible. We can't blame anyone else. But this warning also comes with good news, as we read at the start of this article. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, God is willing to forgive our sins and forget them, if we are sorry and ask Him for that forgiveness. We need to be baptised to enter a special relationship with God, to make this possible.

Let's continue to read our Bible, understand what it really says about good and evil, God's plan and the future. And let's act, to make that future our own.

Andrew Hale

LP

In his prayer at the Last Supper Jesus said “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:4-5). This sounds very much as though Jesus is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

Ed

THIS IS ONE of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible. It’s a prayer of the Son to his Father that the love and unity which they have between them may be shared with his disciples. When you read the chapter through, it’s clear that Jesus was sent by his Father, was given his work by his Father, he’s glorified his Father; his Father gave him his disciples... so the first question is, does this really sound like the prayer of one who is co-equal with his Father?

So what about verse 5? *“And now, O Father, glorify me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”*

When the Lord says *“with you”* the Greek word *“with”* can mean ‘with’ or ‘from’, it’s the same word that’s used in Acts 9:14 when Saul had authority ‘from’ the chief priests. It does not mean that Jesus’ glory was inherent in himself, or equal to his

Father’s glory. (It’s clear from v. 22 that it was the glory which God gave him.) But how did Jesus have glory before the world was?

The key is the principle that God is outside time—He knows the end from the beginning. *“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, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:9–10).* Jesus is the focus of God’s purpose with the world, God knew and loved him before the world was.

God also knew and loved His other children before the world was: *“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4, see also Matthew 25:34).*

Back to John 17: Jesus is one with his Father, and he wants his disciples to share in that unity (vs. 11 & 21). This is not about a Trinity, it’s about a Multiplicity! When you read it this way the chapter is immensely more powerful and profound, not to mention more logical, than when you read it with the assumption that Jesus is the second person of the Trinity.

Do you have a comment or question? Please e-mail or write to the editor, details on the inside front cover.



The Suffering Servant

ISAIAH 53 is a prophecy about the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

On the right are 12 short quotations from the chapter. Select the correct word for each quotation, and then find it in the wordsearch.

W D N K L Y D T X C
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 N B B C P G Y V M U
 D M I M I I E D R Y
 E W V R L I S X K H
 D F S A L C L E U U
 V T N E L I S O D K
 D T B M O U T H R M
 G N O L O R P B Y D



(This wordsearch uses the New King James version of the Bible. If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

- Who has **believed/read** our report?
- To whom has the **power/arm** of the LORD been revealed?
- As a root out of **dry/stony** ground
- He is **betrayed/despised** by men
- He was **wounded/beaten** for our transgressions
- Led as a **calf/lamb** to the slaughter
- As a sheep before its shearers is **afraid/silent**
- They made his grave with the **prophets/wicked**
- Nor was any deceit in his **mouth/mind**
- It pleased the **LORD/Jews** to bruise him
- He shall **shorten/prolong** his days
- He bore the sin of **many/criminals**

Anna Hart

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