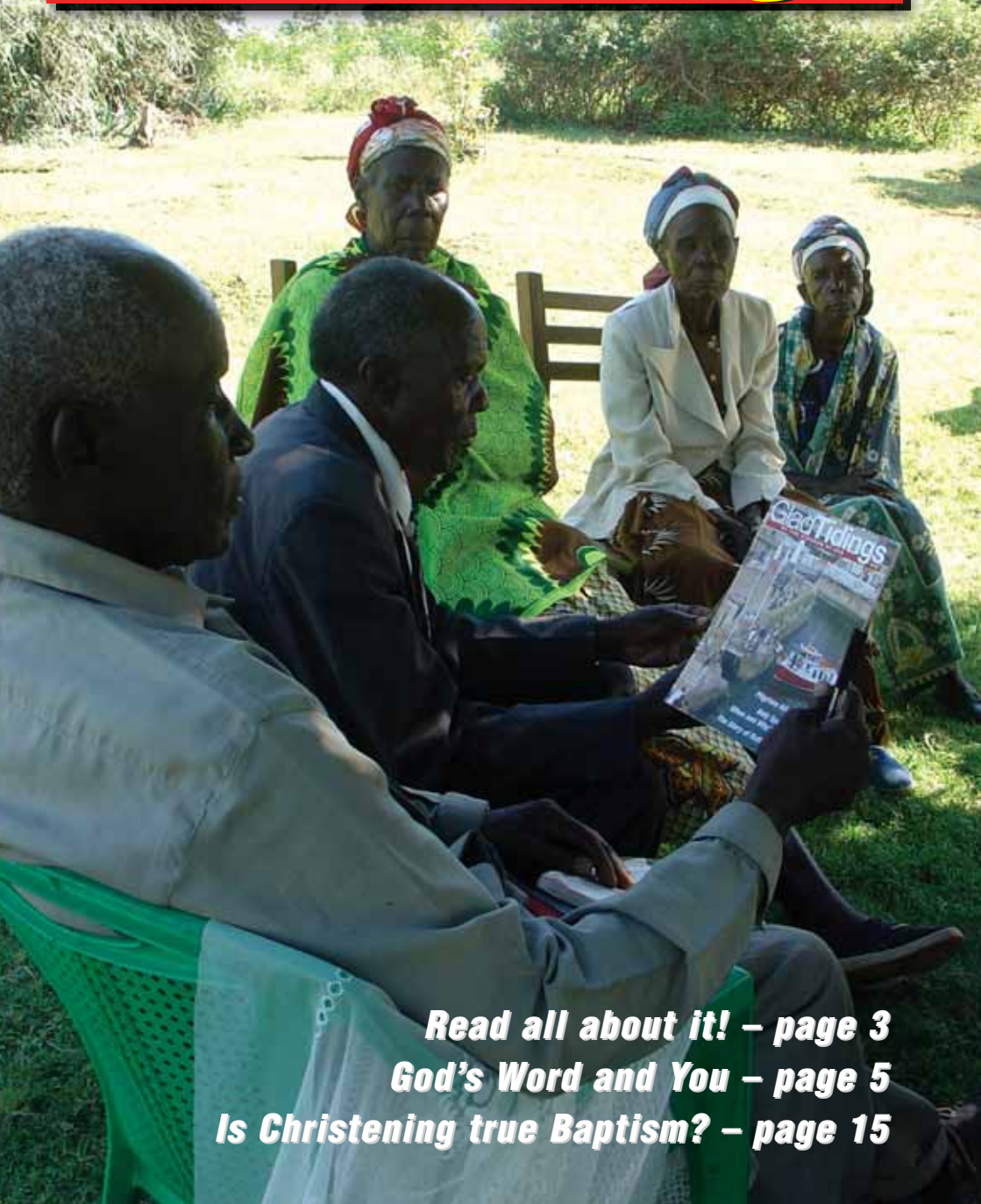


Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1532



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God's Word and You – page 5
Is Christening true Baptism? – page 15

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

127th Year

A12

1532



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

Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; 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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Bible Versions

The version most used in this issue is the New King James Version (NKJV) and other versions are sometimes used.

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Read all about it!

The last twelve issues of this magazine have featured the way in which the printed English Bible became available to a public who, at the time, were desperate to find out for themselves just what the Bible taught.

500 years ago a religious monopoly existed and ordinary people had to believe what they were told by the clergy. They had no way of knowing whether those things were right or wrong. Religious books were usually in Latin – the language of educated people – and they were very expensive, because they had to be copied by hand.

Breakthrough!

All that changed when brave people risked their lives to make an English translation of the Bible and when the invention of printing made the copies more affordable. These changes built up a huge public demand. People demanded to be allowed access to God's Word for themselves and their insistence changed the attitude of the King and his Parliament.

First, the Great Bible appeared in every church in England: it had to be chained to the lectern to ensure that nobody took it home. Then King James allowed an English translation to be made which was published with royal approval in 1611 – just 401 years ago. Those happenings were part of a process known as the Reformation, because long-established attitudes and restrictions were being reformed, to be replaced by a much more free society, at least in some respects.

As people started to read their own Bibles and tried to understand what

God was saying directly to them, all sorts of different religious opinions emerged. Now there are said to be some 38,000 different Christian denominations, which would make it bewildering if you decided to investigate all of them! Fortunately you don't have to, for the easy option is to read the Bible for yourself and thus understand God's gracious purpose.

For the Bible is a book that God has designed to be read and you don't need a theological degree or years of training to understand it. You just need the right attitude of mind and heart. Long ago God sent this message through the prophet Isaiah:

On this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word (Isaiah 66:2).

Paradox

Here's a curious thing. Now that people have easy access to God's Word and there is no fear of being imprisoned for possessing, reading or expounding the Bible, many people have no interest at all in what it teaches.

Perhaps it is because there is so much else to do today. Maybe they think religion is just for the afterlife and are so busy living for the present that they never think seriously about the future and just hope that it will take care of itself. It is no coincidence that a loss of interest in Bible teaching has coincided with the breakdown of society in so many areas of human activity. That comes as no surprise to Bible readers, for nearly 2000 years ago the apostle Paul predicted that

this would happen:

In the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ... men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all (2 Timothy 3:1–9).

Glad Tidings

As people get more successful and self-reliant their interest in God and His Son diminishes. People like that must look at the world situation – the dire financial position of the world economy; the instability of nations, especially in the Middle East; the breakdown of the family unit in much of the developed world; the hopelessness that many people feel – and just shrug it off. Perhaps they just hope that “things will sort themselves out”. Or perhaps they dare not think about what might happen, for the future is just too scary and nothing meaningful can be done to put things right.

Regular readers of this magazine will know that there is a better way of coping with the present and preparing for the future. The centre pages of this issue contain a set of Bible reading tables which can help you read through the whole Bible in a year: the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice, for good measure. Bible reading following that plan will only take a few minutes every day and will

be extremely worthwhile. Choose any version you like and just let God’s message instruct you.

“Glad Tidings” can guide you to some extent. We have articles about different books of the Bible, about different Bible teachings, and about the appropriate lifestyle for someone who wants to turn their life around, to follow the Lord Jesus. But Christadelphians have always insisted that the most important thing anyone can do if they want to find out God’s truth is to read the Bible for themselves. It’s not what people tell you that’s of primary importance, although you can get a lot of help along the way. It’s what you find out for yourself that really makes a difference to the way you understand, believe and behave.

Key Idea

God has a purpose with the earth He created, centred in the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. Jesus died to save mankind from sin, which will otherwise destroy us, and by our belief in him and by baptism into his saving name, we can become members of God’s family. Jesus will soon return as King, to rule the world from Jerusalem. He will then put everything right and will work with all those people who have found the time to prepare for the great work that awaits them.

If we learn to live with Jesus now we will find a way of coping with all the difficulties of life. And in the life to come – when Jesus returns to earth – he will invite us to live with him forever. That’s one of the key themes of the Bible. Read it every day and find out just what you can do to get ready for the coming transformation.

Editor

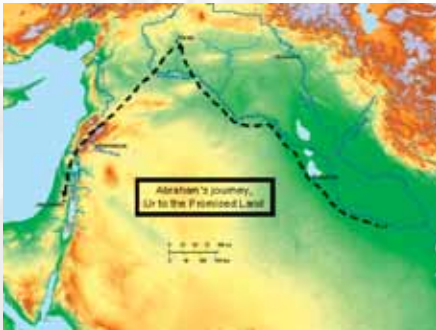
God's Word and You

In the last article, Peter Moore took Abraham as an example to show the importance of Bible study. God asked him to leave Ur and to go on a journey of discovery. In this article, Peter explains what it was that Abraham discovered, because of his willingness to believe God.

Name Change

Because of the many promises that God made to this faithful man, He changed Abram's name to "Abraham", meaning "father of many nations". Abraham was one of three children who were sons of Terah. He lived in Ur of the Chaldees and was called by God to leave everything behind and take his household on a journey to a land that God would give him. The journey was to take him over 1,000 miles from Ur, near the Persian Gulf, to the Promised Land.

He probably travelled along the



banks of the River Euphrates and then went north to Haran where he stayed until his father Terah died. When he set off, he did not know the destination, but he believed that God would care for him and keep him safe.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he

was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise (Hebrews 11:8-9).

Man of Faith

God's promise to Abraham of a land in which he and his descendants would live was made at a time when he had no children (read Acts 7:5). Because of his willingness to believe, even against the odds humanly-speaking, Abraham is frequently mentioned in the Bible as a man of faith. Using a Bible Concordance we can discover that references to Abraham occur 175 times in the Old Testament and 75 times in the New Testament.

He is mentioned more times in the New Testament than any other Old Testament character. After Abraham, the most frequently named Old Testament characters are King David (59 times), Jacob (27 times) and Isaac (20 times). Why does Abraham feature so frequently in the New Testament record? Galatians chapter 3 provides the answer to our question, and is well worth reading if you're not familiar with it.

Abraham's faith was demonstrated by his life of obedience to God's commands. Only through faith, obedience and baptism can we inherit the same promises that God made to Abraham over 3,500 years ago. This is a key passage:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29).

Special Descendant

↘ **The first two verses of the New Testament tell us that Jesus is related to both Abraham and King David:**

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of

Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers... (Matthew 1:1-2).

The promises that God made to Abraham are very important elements in the unfolding purpose of God. They concern the blessings that would come, the land he would one day possess, the descendants he would have, and the special descendant who would take control of all his enemies,

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed' (Galatians 3:8).

New Testament record of God in the life of Abraham

Bible chapter references	No.	Other Bible connections
Matthew 1, 3, 8, 22	7	2 Sam.7:12-13; 2 Chron.30:6-7
Mark 12	1	Exodus 3:15
Luke 1, 3, 13, 16, 19, 20	15	Gen. 17:19; 2 Chron.36:14-16
John 8	11	Ezek.33:24-26; Gen.22:4,13
Acts 3, 7 ,13	8	Acts 3:25-26; Acts 7:2-8
Romans 4, 9, 11	9	Gen.15:5-6; Gen.17:15-19; Gen.21:5-7; Psa.94:14; Jer.30:10-11
2 Corinthians 11	1	Acts 9:16
Galatians 3	8	Gen.12:4; 13:15; 18:18; 22:17-18
Galatians 4	1	Gen.21:1-21
Hebrews 2, 6, 7, 11	11	Gen 14:13-24; 22:1-19; 25:7-10
James 2	2	Gen 15:5-6
1 Peter 3	1	Gen 18:19

➤ **God promised that a descendant of Abraham will be the Saviour of mankind. We know from Bible teaching that the Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

➤ **Abraham's great faith is an example which we are encouraged to follow. If we trust God then we can be blessed with Abraham.**

... just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness'. Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham." (Galatians 3:6,7)

➤ **Abraham looked forward to the coming of Jesus.**

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" (John 8:56-57).

➤ **God tested Abraham's faith but did not allow him to slay his son Isaac.**

Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided" (Genesis 22:13-14).

God's Word and Us

God has provided Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. We have not been called, like Abram, to pack our bags and leave our homes. However, God is calling us to forsake the attractions and the desire for the possessions of this world and follow him in the way we lead our daily lives. This requires faith on our part.

Like Abraham, we must trust God and believe that what He has promised, He will do. The promises to Abraham have been extended to all who understand God's purpose with the earth. The New Testament record gives us more information about what we must do to be saved. If we are faithful, God has promised us a place in His Kingdom on earth. Abraham demonstrated his faith by his actions, we must do the same.

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? (James 2:21-22)

The impact of the King James Bible

The value of the Bible has been recognised by many people in past generations as a guide for life. The publisher's preface to editions of the King James Bible makes this point.

Many of the 19th Century King James Family Bibles contained these words in the Preface;

...The Word of God is within reach of every one, and neither the reading nor circulation of it is by authority proscribed. This sacred privilege, won for us by the toil and blood of our fathers is the prime element of our national



The King James Family Bible of 1858 Bible

greatness... Our Scriptures are the legacy of the Reformation ... in consequence of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and enterprise, the sun never sets on the English Bible."

During the Second World War, the King wrote this Preface to the King James text and authorised printing half a million copies for distribution to those on active service in the armed forces of Great Britain. This was the Royal message from King George VI.



New Testament with the Psalms 1943 King George VI

To all serving in my armed forces by sea, or land, or air, and indeed, to all my people engaged in the defence of the Realm, I commend the reading of this book. For centuries the Bible has been a wholesome and strengthening influence in our national life, and it behoves us in these momentous days to turn with renewed faith to this Divine source of comfort and inspiration.

Hope for the Future

We are living in days of unprecedented political and economic troubles. Do we recognise the value of the free access we have to the Bible? It is within reach of every one of us. It is only through this Divine source of God's Word that we can find comfort and hope for the future.

Through the labours of the translators many people throughout the world continue to be able to read God's Word in their own language. What impact does the Bible have in our lives? For Abraham and the men and women of faith listed in Hebrews chapter 11, God's promises meant more than anything this life can offer.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:8-10).

Peter Moore

Next month: Revisions and Printing of the King James Bible

The Diving Bell

The diving bell is so called because, as you can see, it is a bell-shaped device open at the bottom, which is used by people who need to work for long periods under water.

The earliest ones had no tubed air supply from above: the diver used it as an air reservoir, until the air required replenishing. It meant that he had to return repeatedly to the bell to breathe fresh air as he conducted his undersea operations. The most common use at the time was salvage work on sunken ships. It was actually Edmond Halley – of Halley’s Comet fame – who first introduced a tubed air supply to the diving bell in 1717. However, like many of man’s clever achievements, nature got there long before he did.

Diving-Bell Spider

The diving-bell spider – its technical name being *Argyroneta aquatica* – is found in Northern and Central Europe. It is the only spider that spends its whole life under water. How does it achieve this? The answer is, it traps air in a bubble held by hairs on its abdomen and legs, and swims down with it to replenish the spent air within

the bell. The female constructs the underwater diving bell from her spun silken threads, well-anchored to stems or twigs. This is then filled with air, brought in a bubble, and is used as a safe den for digesting prey and for mating and raising their offspring.

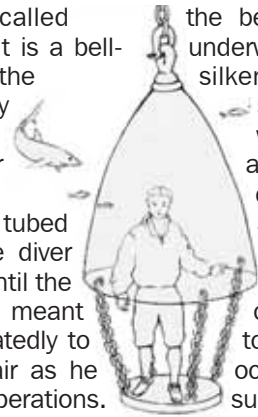
The spiders live almost entirely inside the bells, darting out to catch any underwater prey that touches it. The spiders surface occasionally to renew their own air supply, and also the air within their webs. The males usually build smaller diving-bells and replenish their air supply less often. Being the better swimmers, they do most of the hunting.

Intelligent Design

This is another amazing example of intelligent design. That the diving-bell spider evolved from a normal species to an underwater type by a very slow process of evolution, is surely ludicrous. Why in the first place would it seek prey underwater when there is always an over-abundance of insects above? How long would it take for the female spiders to adapt their silk to produce a safe airtight underwater home? How was the timing of such an unusual adaptation achieved?

The more one delves into the intricacies of insect life, the less likely are the possibilities that such wonders could be produced by random mutations over long periods of time. Such creatures as the water spider join the long list of nature’s miracles that demand an intelligent Creator.

Malcolm Edwards



Courtesy of Wikipedia

Bible Reading

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20	...	37	...	30	...	15, 16
21	...	38	...	31	...	17, 18
22	...	39	...	1	...	19
23	...	40	...	2	...	20, 21
24	...	41	...	3	Acts	2
25	...	42	...	4	...	3, 4
26	...	43	...	5	...	5
27	...	44	...	6	...	7
28	...	45	...	7	...	8
29	...	46	...	8	...	9
30	...	47	...	9	...	10

MAY

1	Deut.	18	Ecccl.	10	Acts	9
2	...	19	...	11	...	10
3	...	20	...	12	11, 12	11, 12
4	...	21	Song	1	...	13
5	...	22	...	2	14, 15	14, 15
6	...	23	...	3	16, 17	16, 17
7	...	24	...	4	18, 19	18, 19
8	...	25	...	5	20	20
9	...	26	...	6	21, 22	21, 22
10	...	27	...	7	23, 24	23, 24
11	...	28	...	8	25, 26	25, 26
12	...	29	Isaiah	1	...	27
13	...	30	...	2	...	28
14	...	31	...	3, 4	Col.	1
15	...	32	...	5	...	2
16	...	33, 34	...	6	...	3, 4
17	...	35	...	7	1 Thes. 1, 2	1
18	...	36	...	8	...	3, 4
19	...	37	...	9	...	5
20	...	38	...	10	2 Thes. 1, 2	1
21	...	39	...	11	...	3
22	...	40	...	12	1 Tim. 1, 2, 3	1
23	...	41	...	13	...	4, 5
24	...	42	...	14	...	6
25	...	43	...	15	2 Tim.	1
26	...	44	...	16	...	2
27	...	45	...	17, 18	...	3, 4
28	...	46	...	19	Titus 1, 2, 3	1
29	...	47	...	20, 21	Philemon	1
30	...	48	...	22	...	2
31	...	49	...	23	...	3, 4, 5

JUNE

1	Joshua	18	Isaiah	24	Heb.	6, 7
2	...	19	...	25	...	8, 9
3	...	20, 21	...	26, 27	...	10
4	...	22	...	28	...	11
5	...	23, 24	...	29	...	12
6	Judges	1	...	30	...	13
7	...	2, 3	...	31	James	1
8	...	4, 5	...	32	...	2
9	...	6	...	33	...	3, 4
10	...	7, 8	...	34	...	5
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	1
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
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	...	37	...	5	...	21, 22
9	...	38	...	6	...	23, 24
10	...	39	...	7	...	25, 26
11	...	40	...	8	...	27
12	...	41	...	9	...	28
13	...	42	...	10	Colos.	1
14	...	43	...	11	...	2
15	...	44	...	12	...	3, 4
16	...	45	...	13	1 Thes. 1, 2	1
17	...	46	...	14	...	3, 4
18	...	47	...	15	...	5
19	...	48	...	16	...	6
20	...	49	...	17	...	7
21	...	50	...	18	...	8
22	...	51	...	19	...	9
23	...	52	...	20	...	10
24	...	53	...	21	...	11
25	...	54	...	22	...	12
26	...	55	...	23	...	13
27	...	56	...	24	...	14
28	...	57	...	25	...	15
29	...	58	...	26	...	16
30	...	59	...	27	...	17
31	...	60	...	28	...	18

DECEMBER

1	Esth.	9, 10	Janah	1	Heb.	6, 7
2	...	11	...	2, 3	...	8, 9
3	...	12	...	3, 4	...	10
4	...	13	Micah	1	...	11
5	...	14	...	2	...	12
6	...	15	...	3, 4	...	13
7	...	16	...	5	James	1
8	...	17	...	6	...	2
9	...	18	...	7	...	3, 4
10	...	19	Nahum	1, 2	...	5
11	...	20	...	3	1 Peter	1
12	...	21	...	4	...	2
13	...	22	Hab.	1	...	3, 4, 5
14	...	23	...	2	2 Pet.	1, 2
15	...	24	...	3	...	3
16	...	25	...	4	...	4
17	...	26	...	5	1 John 1, 2	1
18	...	27	...	6	...	3, 4
19	...	28	...	7	...	5
20	...	29	...	8	...	6
21	...	30	...	9	...	7, 8, 9
22	...	31	...	10	...	10, 11
23	...	32	...	11	...	12, 13
24	...	33	...	12	...	14
25	...	34	...	13	...	15
26	...	35	...	14	...	16
27	...	36	...	15	...	17, 18
28	...	37	...	16	...	19, 20
29	...	38	...	17	...	21, 22
30	...	39	...	18	...	23
31	...	40	...	19	...	24

By courtesy of The Christadelphian

Job and the Psalms

*In the first 10 articles of this series **David Pearce** has reviewed the teaching of the historical books of the Old Testament, which also comprises books of poetry and prophecy. The poetic books – known as the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament – begin with the Book of Job, then continue with the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.*

The Patience of Job

The book of Job is the first of the so-called Wisdom Books of the Old Testament and it is probably the oldest, for the Hebrew language of Job is archaic and difficult to translate. There are clues that Job lived before the Exodus – his advanced age at death, the way his wealth is measured in livestock, and the place names like Uz and Teman, which provide links with Genesis.

The story of Job is set out in the form of a play, with a prologue, an epilogue, and three rounds of speeches by the four main characters. In other words, there was a real historical character named Job, but the book is presented as a drama written later, portraying his great trial by suffering (just as Shakespeare wrote a play about the death of Julius Caesar).

❖ The Plot

Job was a believer in God, like Abraham. He offered sacrifices, and he and his friends came together to worship. They called themselves “sons of God” (Job 1:6), and came “to present themselves before the Lord”. These statements link back with those people before the Flood who “called upon God’s name” (see Genesis 4:26 and 6:2), and the references to worship in “the presence of the Lord” in Genesis 3:8 and 4:16. Job had seven children and a fortune in cattle

and sheep, and was an important elder or judge in his community.

Typical of human nature, there was one among the group who envied Job’s prosperity. The Bible calls him a “satan”, a Hebrew word that means “adversary”. He complained to the angel of the Lord that “Job only serves you for what he gets out of you!” To prove him wrong, but at the same time to test Job’s faith, the Lord gave him the power to afflict Job with a series of calamities that brought him close to death. Job accepted these troubles as coming from God (see 2:10), and would have persevered in his trust in the Lord had not his three friends arrived on the scene.

❖ The Dialogue

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar – Job’s three friends – intended to comfort Job in his sufferings. However, their conclusion – that his problems were the direct result of some heinous sin he had committed – grated on his ears. “You have only to repent”, they bleated, “then God will forgive you and your prosperity will return”.

But Job knew that he had done nothing seriously evil. Their link between sin and punishment was too facile. Though all human suffering is the consequence of Adam’s sin in the beginning, our particular sorrows are not necessarily the outcome of a bad life. It is often the case, as Job remind-

ed them, that wicked people are rich, and live long and comfortable lives.

Job writhed under their false accusations, and complained bitterly that he had no opportunity to justify himself before God, who seemed blind to his tears. At the end of the book, God spoke. He did not provide a reason why Job had been made to suffer. He simply pointed out that He operates on a scale and at a level high above our comprehension.

We must simply trust Him, believing He knows what is best for us, and wait until the reasons for His actions become clear. The fact is, that God often allows us to suffer, as He did Job, to stretch our faith. Jesus himself experienced false accusations, but quietly accepted his trials as part of God's plan, without complaint. God's Son, says the New Testament writer to the Hebrews:

... learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

❖ **The Conclusion**

In the last few chapters, Job acknowledges that he has no human rights in the presence of God and confesses that he cannot understand God's way with mankind. God forgives him and accepts him once more as His friend, whereupon Job graciously forgives his narrow-minded friends. He recovers from his illness, and the sun shines in his life once more.

Hebrew Poetry – The Book of Psalms

The Psalms give us an insight into Hebrew poetry. In spite of the difficulties of translating poems into another language (getting the rhythms and 'music' of the words to flow) we do not

need to be experts to appreciate the beauty of these ancient writings. In the Hebrew Bible the Book of Psalms is divided into five parts. Each is an anthology of works by different authors. As a whole they represent the hymn book of the Temple, as is clear from the musical directions printed with them, and the references to directors of the Temple worship such as the sons of Korah and Asaph.

Approximately half of the psalms have headings indicating they were written by King David, who had great musical talent (see 1 Samuel 16:16 and Amos 6:5). One is attributed to Moses (Psalm 90), while others are anonymous. Many of them have been set to music for English congregations.

Parallel Couplets

It helps our appreciation of the psalms to realise that traditional Hebrew and English poetry operate upon different rules. Both genres have a regular metre or pattern of beats per line. And both rejoice in elaborate similes or metaphors to link the emotions of the writer with the experiences of the reader. But whereas our senses delight in the endings of the lines having the same sound (rhyming), the Israelites enjoyed a mathematical structure.

Succeeding lines may begin with consecutive letters of the alphabet (acrostics), or two contrasting statements may be set out in the form A B, B A. A prominent feature of Hebrew poems is parallelism, whereby one line makes a statement, and the next says the same thing again in a different way, perhaps with stronger emphasis.

Psalms of David

It is not possible here to cover the huge range of psalms. But it is worth spending a few minutes with the

psalms of David. David had many frightening experiences, as we have seen, where his life hung by a thread. He also made a mess of his life as a result of his affair with Bathsheba. His fears, his thankfulness when God rescued him, his remorse after his sin, and his confidence in the mercy of his Lord, all come out in the poems he composed. Interestingly, many of his psalms have a note indicating the circumstances under which he wrote, for example Psalms 34, 51 and 57.

Psalm 23 – the Song of the Shepherd – has brought comfort to millions. With powerful imagery David imagines himself as the lamb, and God as his shepherd, leading him through life with all its dangers, and being with him through the valley of the shadow of death. Psalm 119 is also a brilliant example of the acrostic form, with each stanza of eight verses having the same Hebrew letter at the start of each line, and moving on through the whole alphabet. At the same time, the theme rotates through eight synonyms for God’s Word.

Prophetic

David was not just a poet; he was also a prophet. The Spirit of God inspired him, so that when he wrote from his own experiences, he was also predicting the work of Jesus. To demonstrate this point, we have these words of the Apostle Peter in the New Testament about Psalm 16:8-11:

Him (Jesus), being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning

Him: ‘I foresaw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’ ... Being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he (David), foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that his soul was not left in Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption (Acts 2:23–31).

There are some truly amazing prophecies about Jesus in what are known as the ‘Messianic’ psalms (‘Messiah’ is a title in the prophets for the king promised to Israel). We can find:

- ✓ the circumstances of his birth (Psalm 116:16),
- ✓ his rejection by his own family (69:8),
- ✓ his betrayal (41:9),
- ✓ the false witnesses at his trial (35:11),
- ✓ his crucifixion (22:16-18),
- ✓ his resurrection (16:10), and
- ✓ his ascension to heaven (110:1).

These words, written 1000 years before Jesus was born, show that the Bible is truly the work of God.

David M Pearce

Is Christening true Baptism?

The christening of a child is a happy event. Members of the family gather together around the font in church and witness the child receive a few drops of water on the head. The vicar might trace the shape of a cross on the infant's forehead, and some suitable words are said. Then everyone goes away in high spirits. But a question which is seldom asked at the time has to be asked. Is this action Scriptural?

Gift of Love

Some of the loveliest words in the whole Bible are found in John's account of the gospel and here are some of them:

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).

This is an explanation of God's extensive and expansive love. His is the finest love possible. He gave mankind the gift of His Son, and the Lord Jesus gave his life in complete obedience to his Father, so that people like us can be saved from sin and are given, in the Bible, a glorious vision of the future. It is available to all who want it, but we have to be associated with the saving work of Jesus if we are to be saved. Without that association we will perish.

True Baptism

The New Testament says a lot about the need for baptism and there is a good reason why that should be. Baptism is the means that God has

appointed whereby men and women can be identified with the saving work of Jesus. It is likened to a death and a resurrection so that we, like Jesus, can put to death our old life and rise to a newness of life. But exactly what does that mean and how is it to be acted upon?

Bible baptism requires immersion in water. Indeed that is what the word baptism actually means. Derived from the Greek word *baptizo* it means to be immersed or buried in water.

In the N. T. it is used particularly of the rite of sacred ablution, first instituted by John the Baptist, afterwards by Christ's command received by Christians and adjusted to the contents and nature of their religion, viz. an immersion in water, performed as a sign of the removal of sin, and administered to those who, impelled by a desire for salvation, sought admission to the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom

(Thayer, J. H. (1889) A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

Someone who understands and believes the gospel will therefore gladly accept this way of salvation and be completely covered or immersed in water after a public confession of faith. To do this is a tremendous privilege given by the Father. The only way to be born again is through the waters of baptism, to a new life dedicated to God and His Son. When Peter reminded his brethren of the way of belief and repentance, his rousing call was, "Be

saved". The result was a mighty beginning of a Christian crusade as 3000 were baptised (Acts 2:40-42).

"Be Born Again"

In order to be a Christian, as defined in the Bible, we must obey the commandments of Jesus Christ. Once, to a Jewish leader named Nicodemus, Jesus said: "*You MUST be born again*" (John 3:7). When he asked for clarification, Jesus gave this explanation:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

There must be a rebirth in water – by being immersed – but there must also be a spiritual awakening, in which a person acquires a new understanding of God's purpose and His gracious invitation to live a new life in Christ. Many people, in Bible times and later, have accepted this gracious offer of salvation and have turned their lives around. Think of the great apostle Paul.

An Imperative

Journeying to Damascus, intent upon persecuting Christians, he was given a splendid vision of his Lord which brought him to his knees. He was told:

*"Arise and go into the city, and you will be told **what you must do**" (Acts 9:6).*

Notice that this was an imperative. Baptism was something that he MUST do. There was no alternative. "So he arose and was baptized" (Acts 9:18) and that was the beginning of a new

life for the man who became an ardent follower of the Lord, whose followers he had first persecuted.

The very next chapter in the Book of Acts introduces us to a Roman centurion named Cornelius who was a great philanthropist and devout before God. He was a good man who feared God. We are told that he was someone who:

...feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"... (Acts 10:1-3).

The angel told him that his prayers had been heard in heaven and that there was something he must do. He was to send for the apostle Peter who would tell him something important. Notice how important it was:

*"He will tell you **what you must do**" (Acts 10:6).*

Again it is an imperative. Peter would tell Cornelius and his household what they MUST do and when Peter came and explained about the purpose of God, centred in the Lord Jesus Christ, they were all baptized. They had an experience just like the apostles had in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit descended upon them, and they began to speak in tongues:

*Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And **he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord** (Acts 10:46-48).*

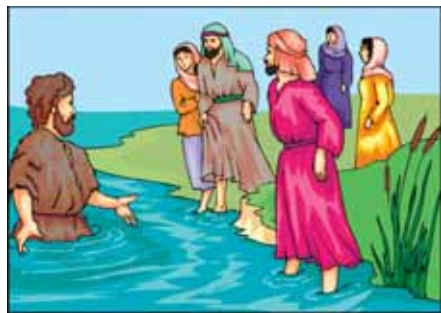


Notice that the apostle **COMMAND-ED** them to be baptised. It was not an option, but a requirement if they were to become true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all of these people were adults, for they first heard the gospel, believed it, and were then baptised.

Much Water

Time and again the nature of Christian baptism is emphasized. In the very same chapter of John's gospel where we read of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, we are told:

After these things Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea, and there he remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized (John 3:22–23).



The River Jordan was an obvious choice. There was ample water for applicants to be immersed. If only a few drops were needed there were many water bottles that would have sufficed to meet the need. And the people who came were adults not infants, people who could reason things out, and see that one had to repent, believe and then be baptised. No baby can comply with those conditions, for no child can understand the great need for baptism. What baby can

appreciate the great love of God in making this way of salvation available?

Belief and Baptism

Belief and action go together, and an infant is not of sufficient age to appreciate the words of the Master,

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

Wherever we look in the Bible at the lives of those saved, after their Lord's resurrection, they saw their desperate need of salvation, and offered their lives in service, with gratitude and joy.

In the stirring fifth and sixth chapters of the letter to the Romans all the wonder of salvation is explained. We are reminded that we all are sinners in need of redemption. Christ died that we might live. Baptism is a figure of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In baptism our sins are blotted out, and we arise from the cleansing waters to newness of life, that by God's grace lead us to eternity. The apostle ends his thoughts in that chapter with these well-known words:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

When next we are blessed with a new life in the family, there is an option to having the infant christened. Thank God for the blessing of a new life and nurture the child, bringing the boy or girl up with an awareness of God's love and of His gracious purpose so that, at a later date, he or she may hear the call, *“Arise and be baptised,”* and respond with joy. At that moment the angels will rejoice as well.

Ken Clark

“Lord, teach us to pray”

Luke tells us that the Lord Jesus was praying when his disciples came and asked him to teach them to pray. They added that John the Baptist had taught his disciples and they might have known that because two of Jesus' disciples had been disciples of John before they started to follow Jesus. Jesus gave them a two-fold answer: First, a model prayer which is now known as the Lord's Prayer, and then a parable, known as “The Friend at Midnight”, which we shall consider in a later article, God willing.

The Model Prayer

The prayer the Lord taught his disciples is concise, but contains a lot of detail. It begins by honouring the Lord God. *“Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your Name” (Luke 11:2)*. Before all else in prayer we should recognise the One to whom we are praying. It is the Lord God in Heaven and we need to come reverently to Him.

The wise man who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes said: *“God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:2)*. The Lord Jesus echoes those words, and in so doing suggests that we need to be as ready to listen to God speaking to us as we are to pour out our needs.

The First Request

The substance of the first request should make us stop and pause for a while. We all have plenty of things we would like, if not for ourselves then for other people. But what Jesus put first and foremost was not the sort of thing for which most people feel the need,

on a day-to-day basis. Jesus said the first thing we should want is for God's rulership and His dominion to be established on the earth.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (11:2).

We really need a change of world government, given the huge problems the earth now faces and the evident failure of human government to create the sort of society that all right-thinking people desire. That is what God wants to happen too. He intends the world to be a fit place in which His people can live and the Bible is full of promises about the time when Jesus will reign as God's appointed King. Then:

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

If we are to be acceptable to God when Jesus returns as King, it has to be our heartfelt desire that God's Kingdom might be established on earth. And if we really think like that, we need to express that desire before we think of anything else to ask for.

Daily Needs

Only when we have honoured God and shown that we want His Kingdom to come above all else, do we proceed to other requests. Again the petitions Jesus outlined are not what we might expect. The first is: *“Give us day by day our daily bread” (Luke 11:3)*. In many countries the availability of supermarkets means that people have larders and freezers full of food. Some people would be able to keep feeding themselves and their families for days, even

if all the shops closed down. For such freezer-dependent people this simple request could lose its impact. But other parts of the earth are not so well blessed and “Where will the next meal come from?” is a very real question.

When God’s people Israel were in the wilderness, He fed them with Manna. They had to go out each morning, six days a week, and collect what they needed. They knew all about being dependent on God for their daily bread. It is this attitude of mind which Jesus is asking us to develop. In our prayers we should recognise that our food, and everything else that we have, comes from his Father, the Lord God.

Forgiveness

The prayer continues with these words:

And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Luke 11:4).

If we are to pray acceptably to God we need to recognise that we are

sinners, and ask for His forgiveness. We can show our understanding of this when we need to deal with those who may have wronged us. If God is to forgive us, we must also forgive those who may have caused us harm. Jesus taught a parable about this, known as the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (see Matthew chapter 18, verses 21-35). Here Jesus teaches that God has forgiven each of us an enormous debt, if He has forgiven our sins, and we must recognise that wonderful act of forgiveness by forgiving the comparatively trivial debts which come from others.

Lastly, we are to ask God not to lead us into temptation. So often this prayer is repeated, and then broken as we actively look to do things we know God will not find pleasing. If we really are to pray the prayer in the way Jesus taught his disciples we need to pray, and then try and put it into practice for ourselves.

Mark Sheppard

Help with the Daily Readings

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