

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Power of Water (p.3)

Christians and their Allegiance (p.5)

Miracles in a Time of Famine (p.10)

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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The Power of Water

IT WAS hot. The sea glittered as though it were raining quicksilver. The waves rolled invitingly to the beach. My younger son and I decided to brave the cold water (this was Britain!) and take a cooling dip.

After the initial shock, the water was wonderful, and we played in the waves for a long while. Fun became exhilaration as the rollers grew around us, picking us up like flotsam or crashing over us. We were reminded of the power of the waves as we left the water. One would carry us towards the shore whilst the next would flatten us! We made the shore perfectly safely and were elated for the rest of the day.

The scientific numbers make impressive reading. A cubic metre of water weighs 1000kg, or a metric tonne. Physicists have calculated that a breaking wave will exert peressure of up to 30,000 kg per square metre. Thankfully our beach waves were relatively small, but that still means around 500kg impacting on our bodies – no wonder we couldn't resist their power!

This also explains the fearsome force of storms at sea, to destroy boats and coastal defences and make us stand in awe at the power of nature.

Water – the ONLY Way to God

The Bible teaches us about the power of water in a different, more important way.



Jesus made it very clear that, if we want to be part of God's family and hope to be in His future Kingdom, we have to be baptised:

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

If we are not baptised, then we cannot participate – it is that simple. The process starts with belief in God and in His purpose, which is laid out for us in the Bible. Having understood what God wants from us, if we choose to believe Him and trust Him, we show this through being baptised.

It is like a spiritual washing, showing that we want to be connected to God through Jesus. The Apostle Peter put it like this:

Baptism [is] not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21).

Another apostle, Paul, explained that baptism is like putting on new clothes, identifying ourselves with Jesus and so becoming God's people.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27).

New Life

Baptism is a relatively simple thing to do. It means to go down into water, be covered by the water, then come back out. You can see an example in Acts 8:35–39.

That process is a powerful symbol of dying and rising again. If we stayed under the water, of course we would drown. So that 'burial' is a fitting image of death. Yet we come up out of the water again, and so we live – a picture of coming back to life, or resurrection. Jesus literally died and then rose from the dead, and baptism connects us very directly with his work:

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6:3–5).

The writer (Paul again) shows how baptism identifies us with Jesus' experience, firstly with his death. Jesus died as a sacrifice to bring people to God, so we need to be associated with his death.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he was made immortal. You can read in the final chapter of each gospel to learn how he was changed, no longer subject to the limits of human weakness. We want to be like him, when he returns to set up God's Kingdom.

Paul actually continues in this chapter to explain that, after we have been baptised, we start a new life *now*. It is a life in which we try to please God, while we look forward to Jesus coming back. It is a new life of hope and purpose *today*.

The Power of God

Such is the power of water – the power of baptism. In being baptised we commit our life to God and to His Son: both our way of life, as we saw above, and our actual existence.

Once we are baptised, we effectively ask God to keep our life safe, so that even if we die, He will bring us back to life. There is no safer place to put our lives than in the hands of God Who created life and can recreate it in His Kingdom.

[You were] buried with him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead... If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Colossians 2:12, 3:1–4).

Christians and their Allegiance

BEING a conscientious objector is always a serious decision and often an unpopular one.

Since the eighteenth century, conscientious objectors have often been unfairly accused of cowardice, and given white feathers as symbols of this.

We examine reasons why some Christians are conscientious objectors, and what the Bible teaches about this difficult subject.

Not Pacifists

Followers of Christ cannot be pacifists if by that word we mean that the use of force is wrong under all circumstances and at all times. Nor can we be pacifists if by that word we mean that by refusing to participate in war we shall eventually bring about world peace. Neither of these things is consistent with Bible teaching.

Force is right if and when God commands it; He has commanded it for His people in the past and He might command it in the future. Also, pacifism will not bring world peace. Indeed, the prophet Zechariah says that there will be fighting at the time when Jesus returns (Zechariah 14: 1–4).

Nor can we argue that we are conscientious objectors because one of the great Ten Commandments says, 'You shall not murder'. The people to whom that command was given frequently went



to war by God's instruction (for example, Deuteronomy 7:1–2, 16). SO, the command is not an absolute ban on taking up arms.

King Jesus

The real reason for conscientious objection is positive and comes from the very heart of the Gospel. The great central feature of the Gospel is the Kingdom of God on earth and the great central event which will bring that to pass is the second coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Jesus taught his disciples: *Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).*

It was a call to recognise his kingship and his government, so that in prospect they became citizens of his kingdom. The first step in seeking that kingdom is to submit to the king, believe in his laws, make a commitment to his government and give *unqualified allegiance* to his service.

This produces a group of people whose real destiny and whose real vocation is not any longer in this age and in this society. Their real destiny begins in the age to come but they are already governed by the principles of the Kingdom of God and even now to some extent the values of that kingdom are realised: love, joy and peace.

Of course, they are required by God to respect those in authority over them and to obey the laws of their country of residence (Romans 13:7, Titus 3:1). The only exception is when this would contravene God's laws (Matthew 22:17–21). So the only government to which these believers can give *unqualified allegiance* is the government of God – now and in the age to come.

They, therefore, would count it wrong to participate in the wars of nations, since their Lord and King has forbidden this. If there is one saying of the king which sums it up precisely it is the words of Jesus to Pilate:

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered (John 18:36).

There could never have been a nobler cause for fighting than the deliverance of God's Son. But even this was forbidden. When Peter tried it by attacking the servant of the high priest, he was rebuked by Jesus and the injury he had inflicted was repaired by the very one whom he had tried to defend. His intent was good, but it was more important to follow God's will. This is an important principle.

The key issue is therefore allegiance to a kingdom. To paraphrase Jesus' words: "If my disciples based their lives on the principles of human government and human wisdom then indeed, they would fight – but they are different."

Jesus spoke similar words to the apostle John:

He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints (Revelation 13:10).

This is how believers in Jesus must behave and it calls for faith and patience – that is, endurance. Experience has proved that to be true. Refusing to kill does call for faith, endurance and holding fast to the principle.

Commandments for Christians

This principle is embodied in some very clear commandments from Jesus and his apostles.

Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for

those who spitefully use you and persecute you (Matthew 5:44).

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds (2 Corinthians 10: 3–4).

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient (2 Timothy 2: 24).

If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink (Romans 12: 20).

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3: 8–9).

All these passages call for gentleness, peace and compassion – and insist on peace and goodness, even towards those who are regarded as enemies.

Disciples have to ask themselves, how could they be obedient to those commandments and at the same time go to war to fight

and destroy with weapons of indescribable horror? Disciples of Christ are detached from the wars of nations, otherwise they would have to kill at the command of human governments – even slaying their own fellow-believers as would have been the case in, for example, World War 2.

Tragically, war is an inescapable part of the world dominated by sin. It is as much part of our present society as is pain to a diseased body. But war will be abolished finally by the rule of Christ (Isaiah 2:1–4).

A Brave Choice for God

Disciples' refusal to participate in war is because they regard themselves as citizens of another kingdom, the kingdom of God. They have given allegiance to another king – Jesus Christ. For the time being they are forbidden to fight in the wars of nations. They see themselves as only pilgrims in this world – passing through it to another kingdom (Hebrews 11:13–16).

Like all decisions about Christian behaviour this requires serious thought and correct understanding of Bible teaching.

Dennis Gillett



Hezekiah's Seals

ARCHAEOLOGISTS study history by looking at ancient sites and artefacts.

In this series we look at some fascinating archaeological finds. They cast light on the world and events that we read about in the Bible, and they provide evidence that the Bible record is true.

Hezekiah the King

Hezekiah was one of the greatest Jewish kings. He reigned in Jerusalem around 715 to 686 BC.

He is introduced like this:

He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done (2 Kings 18:2-3).

He was a sincere worshipper of God, unlike his father, Ahaz, who worshipped the idols from neighbouring nations.

The consequence of this is described like this:

The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went (v7).

You can read his full story in 2 Kings chapters 18–20, 2 Chronicles 29–32 and Isaiah 36–39.

A Figure of History

Archaeological digs around the Temple Mount in Jerusalem have unearthed a fascinating insight into Hezekiah's life, in the form of little clay disks called 'bullae'.

In the ancient Near East official letters were written on scrolls which were rolled up and tied with string, which was then fixed with a lump of wet clay. A pattern was impressed into the clay, usually with a signet ring, then it was left to dry. The letter could not be opened without the clay 'bulla' being removed. So when you received a scroll with its bulla intact you could be sure that it had not been tampered with, and the impression on the bulla would tell you who it was from.

A number of the bullae that have been found are of particular interest because they bear the inscription in ancient Hebrew: 'Belonging to Hezekiah son of Ahaz, king of Judah'.

Think of that – two and a half thousand years ago these little disks were stamped, probably with the ring on the finger of king Hezekiah himself!

Discovery of these bullae provides confirmation that Hezekiah was who the Bible says he was, and also further evidence that Jerusalem in the time of the kings was indeed the sophisticated administrative

Bulla featuring a dung beetle, probably from early in Hezekiah's reign



Bulla featuring a winged sun, probably from later in Hezekiah's reign



capital the Bible describes, and not just a primitive hill fort as was previously suggested by sceptical historians.

Historical Complexities

Interestingly there are two designs of Hezekiah's seal: one shows a winged dung beetle and the other shows a winged sun. Both motifs were common in royal seals at the time.

The dung beetle often occurs in Egyptian religious imagery – it represents Ra the sun god. Scholars are not sure why this heathen design appears on the seal of Hezekiah who was an ardent worshipper of the God of Israel.

The suggestion is that this design dates from early in Hezekiah's reign, when he had inherited the administration from his idol-worshipping father Ahaz; then later on he replaced the beetle with the sun motif. What better emblem for a man of God like Hezekiah?

For the LORD God is a sun and shield;

The LORD will give grace and glory;

No good thing will He withhold

From those who walk uprightly.

O LORD of hosts,

Blessed is the man who trusts in You!

(Psalm 84:11–12).

Chris Parkin

Miracles in a Time of Famine

FAMINE was a regular problem in Israel at the time of Elijah and Elisha. We have already looked at the famine in the time of Elijah and Ahab which lasted for three and a half years. There was another famine in the time of Elisha, which seems to have been desperately severe. This was not however because of a direct act of God, but because Ben-Hadad king of Syria had besieged the city of Samaria.

The famine in the city was so severe that small amounts of food were selling for amazing prices. One example was the head of a donkey for 80 shekels, perhaps about £4000 at today's prices. There was even worse, women were eating their own children, they were so desperately hungry.

What happened in Samaria was to be an awful warning of what would happen later in Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah used this picture to foretell the horrors that would be experienced in Jerusalem when the city was besieged by the Babylonians.

See, O LORD, and consider! To whom have You done this? Should the women eat their offspring, the children they have cuddled?... The hands of the compassionate women have cooked their own children; they became food for them in the destruction of the daughter of my people (Lamentations 2:20, 4:10).

It was also a fulfilment of the warnings which Moses made just as the people were



about to enter the promised land, if they were not faithful to God.

You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you (Deuteronomy 28:53).

Danger for Elisha

The king of Israel seemed to think Elisha was to blame for all of this, and sent a man to try and take Elisha, perhaps to kill him, as if that would solve the problem. The murderous messenger arrived at Elisha's house, bent on removing the prophet of God.

However, Elisha had good news for him:

Hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the LORD: Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine

flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria (2 Kings 7:1).

The appalling siege was about to end. The Lord God was about to intervene and bring relief to the inhabitants of Samaria. The prices which are mentioned were far below what had been charged, back down to normal prices.

The king's right-hand man, described as a captain, was sceptical: *Look, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, could this thing be? (v2).*

Elisha warned him, "*you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it*" (v2).

God Saves His People

The way that God saved Israel is most touching. The story concerns four lepers, excluded from the city because of their dreadful disease, yet like the rest of the population starving to death. They decided that if they stayed where they were, they would starve. If they entered the Syrian camp, they might be fed, or they might be killed, either of which was preferable to a slow, lingering death.

At first light they entered the Syrian camp, to find it strangely empty. They could not understand it. Where were all the soldiers? What could have happened?

The answer was simple. The Lord God had intervened in a dramatic way.

The LORD had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of

horses—the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!" Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact—their tents, their horses, and their donkeys—and they fled for their lives (2 Kings 7:6–7).

The noise, and the noise only, had been sufficient to scare hardened Syrian soldiers, and they had fled for their lives. The camp was abandoned. The four lepers wandered into the first tent they came to, ate and drank what was left, and helped themselves to silver, gold, and clothing, before hiding them and visiting the next tent. They did not need to eat, but again helped themselves to what was left, before they suddenly realised the wider implications of what they were doing. They said:

We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household (v9).

They now headed into the city of Samaria with the amazing news that the siege was over, the Syrians had fled, and there was an abundance of food available.

The king, summoned from his bed in the middle of the night, was sceptical, suspecting a Syrian plot. He guessed that once the Israelite army entered the camp, they would be ambushed.

Fortunately, wiser advice prevailed, and a small party was sent out to go as far as the

river Jordan to see if the report of the lepers was true.

They found everything abandoned, and the path littered with clothing and equipment which had been dropped by fleeing soldiers. The news spread like wildfire, the people rushed down to the Syrian camp, plundering it for all of the food and valuables. It happened as prophesied; a seah of flour, just over seven litres, was on sale for a shekel; two seahs of barley for the same amount.

Saving Individuals Too

There was a sequel to this incident. The Shunammite woman, whose son Elisha had restored to life by the power of God, was warned to flee from the famine which was to follow the siege of Samaria. Elisha warned her that it would last for seven years. Such a famine would be devastating in its effects.

The woman did as Elisha suggested, and moved into Philistia for seven years. When she returned it was to find that she needed to appeal to the king for her land and house to be returned to her. Presumably someone had thought she did not intend to return and had decided to occupy it.

When the woman arrived at the king's palace, she found that Gehazi, Elisha's servant was there, talking with the king about all the great things this man of God had done. Gehazi had just reached the point in his account when Elisha had restored the Shunammite's son to life:



My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life (2 Kings 8:5).

The king appointed one of his court officials to restore the estate of the woman, not only the property, but also the results of the harvest since she had moved to Philistia.

This may appear an inconspicuous and unimportant detail, but it demonstrates the care which the Lord God has for those who are His faithful servants. It is a detail which could be repeated many times from scripture.

It also reminds us that apparent coincidences are often deliberate acts by the Lord God. He was at work in the life of the woman of Shunem, on more than one occasion.

Mark Sheppard

Nehemiah

NEHEMIAH was a Jewish exile who served as a cup-bearer to the Persian monarch, Artaxerxes, in about 446 BC. Following the decree of Cyrus in 536 BC, some of the Jews had returned to the land of Israel. However, adversaries had succeeded in slowing down the work of restoration. Now, some 90 years later, the walls of Jerusalem were still in a state of disrepair. Nehemiah prayed to God about it (1:4–11).

Nehemiah's sorrow for the state of Jerusalem showed in his face. Artaxerxes demanded to know the reason for his fallen countenance. A quick prayer to God by Nehemiah (2:4) was immediately answered.

Building Work

Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah authority to go to Jerusalem and personally take charge of the rebuilding work. The first thing Nehemiah did was to undertake a night-time survey to assess the state of the walls (2:12–15). Then he mobilised the people to repair sections of wall (3:1–32).

Despite further opposition from local tribes, the wall was completed in a mere 52 days (6:15).

Worship of God

Ezra the scribe had returned to Jerusalem some eleven years earlier (Ezra 7) and

for a while had been able to instruct and encourage the Jews in the ways of God. Now, with Nehemiah as Governor of the land, opposition was kept at bay, though the Jews themselves needed further reform.

Ezra and his assistant priests read daily to them from God's word, when they assembled with their families in the streets of Jerusalem. They all saw the need to change their ways, including some religious leaders – who were among the worst offenders (13:29).

Norman Owen

By kind permission of 'The Christadelphian'

Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Nehemiah 1:5; 9:32 – see Exodus 20:6; Daniel 9:4.
- ◆ Nehemiah 1:4; 2:4 – see Daniel 9:3–23; Psalm 34:15.
- ◆ Nehemiah 13:29 – see Malachi 2:4, 7, 11; 1 Peter 2:5.



The First Christians – Rejoicing in Suffering

THE FIRST Christians experienced extraordinary persecution from both the Jews and the Roman authorities. This came in the form of hatred, being made outcasts from the synagogues, trials, imprisonments and executions. Their example of endurance is truly inspirational and the fact that they could rejoice in such suffering is almost beyond belief.

Fascinatingly, Jesus had foretold the suffering that his disciples would go through. By comparing passages in Luke and Acts we can see how the prophecies of Jesus unfolded in the lives of the first Christians.

In Luke 21 we have the record of Jesus foretelling the destruction of the Temple. This led his disciples to ask when this was to happen and what the sign would be that it was about to take place. Jesus provided the signs that would occur before the destruction of the Temple and informed them that:

Before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom

which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist (Luke 21:12–15).

Jesus prophesied that his disciples would undergo severe trials. The prophecies were fulfilled in remarkable detail.

Seized

Firstly, 'they shall lay their hands on you'. The fulfilment of this is recorded for us in Acts.

They laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day (Acts 4:3).

...and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison (5:18).

Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church (12:1).

Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him [Paul] in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him (21:27).

Persecuted

Jesus also said they would 'persecute you'. Saul (called Paul after his conversion) engaged in this before his conversion. The word translated as 'persecuted' in Luke 21 is used nine times in Acts and every time it refers to the persecution by Saul of the first Christians.

The disciples were to be ‘*delivered up to the synagogues and into prisons*’. Defending himself to various authority figures, Paul said that he:

Punished them often in every synagogue... and persecuted them even to foreign cities (26:11).

Persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women (22:4).

As well as being the cause of the sufferings Jesus prophesied about, Paul would also suffer following his conversion.

Disciples were to be ‘*brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake*’. Paul’s final defence at his trial, before being sent to Rome, was before the governor (Festus) and the king (Agrippa):

When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them (Acts 26:30).

Helped to Speak Out

The prophecies of sufferings came true for the first Christians in such agonising ways. They were not to face the sufferings alone, however. Jesus declared that he would give them a ‘*mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to contradict nor resist*.’ As we read in Luke 21, they would not even have to premeditate what to say – it would be wholly the work of Christ.

This aspect of the prophecy had particular application to the witness of Stephen. In his disputes it is recorded that his opponents ‘*were not able to resist the wisdom and the*

Spirit by which he spoke’ (Acts 6:10). The Lord Jesus was faithful and provided his disciples with the words to counter the adversaries they were to face.

It is clear that Jesus foretold the sufferings of his disciples. It is also clear that everything which was prophesied did occur. The disciples had a choice of how to respond to all of this. Could they apply their master’s teaching and actually rejoice in their suffering?

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:10–12).

The first Christians provide an amazing example as they did apply this extraordinarily difficult teaching in their lives:

They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts 5:41).

These men and women suffered extraordinary persecution, even torture and death, yet they met it with hope in Jesus and the coming Kingdom of God. This shows the power of the Word of God, and of association with Jesus, to change lives: both then and now!

Stephen Blake

The Kingdom of God

THE HOPE of the Gospel is a wonderful one – to live for ever in the Kingdom of God. This promise is real and physical and is described in the Bible. God’s purpose is clear, *“All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD”* (Numbers 14:21).

This is not a ‘spiritual experience’ or ‘rapture’ which only a few people will experience. The kingdom will be worldwide, and will be experienced by everyone, whether immortal or mortal (we will look at the difference).

This article looks at what the Bible teaches about the kingdom; its conditions, the people in it, what will be happening, and how it will end. To make it easier to follow, we have included references at the end of each paragraph rather than within the text. This means that you can check the details for yourself, and get a fuller view of what the Bible says.

The Start of the Kingdom

When Jesus returns, he will judge those people, alive and dead, who have heard the Gospel, and so have had an opportunity to respond to it and be baptised. If we have heard the Gospel and made a choice either to accept or reject it, then we will be judged. If not, then we will simply cease to exist when we die.

Jesus will give eternal life to those who are accepted, and these immortal people will

share his kingdom, and have specific jobs to do. We know from Ezekiel and Zechariah that Jesus will return at a time of great trouble and war in the world: so at the start of his kingdom, much work will be needed to restore peace and prosperity to Israel and the rest of the world.

Ezekiel 38–39; Zechariah 12–14; Matthew 25:31–46; John 5:25–29; Romans 2:12.

Good Government

Jesus will be the king of the whole earth, reigning from Jerusalem, and all people will eventually accept his authority. No resistance to his rule will be allowed, he will rule righteously on God’s behalf, and the people of the world will come to Jerusalem to learn the laws of God.

This righteous king will govern the world with real justice for everyone, protecting the poor and needy and not allowing anyone to oppress their fellow men and women. The result will be a world where there is no violence or crime, where people live in peace together, and boys and girls can play safely in the streets. Those who build houses will be able to live in them peacefully, and those who plant crops will enjoy their fruits.

Having one righteous king over the world, there will be real peace – nations will no longer go to war, and will no longer learn about warfare or build weapons. Jesus will

be the one king, and he will judge between nations where necessary.

Psalm 72, 46:9; Isaiah 2:1–5, 11:1–5, 16:, 26:9–10, 60:18, 66:14–16; Jeremiah 3:17; Micah 4; Zechariah 8:5, 14:9–18; 2 Thessalonians 1:6–8.

The Physical World

The earth in the kingdom of God will be a wonderful place, where the curses put on it when Adam and Eve sinned will be removed. At the time of Jesus' return there will be great earthquakes, changing the landscape of the Middle East in particular, and raising Jerusalem up above the surrounding area. Then we are told that fresh, 'living' water will flow from Jerusalem, and even the Dead Sea, will again have living creatures and plants in and around it.

The dry and desert places will be watered so that the whole earth will be very fruitful, producing food and removing hunger. There will be corn even on the tops of mountains. There will be such plenty the ploughman will overtake the reaper. Even the nature of animals will be changed, so that creatures which normally would kill each other for food (such as the lion and ox) will live peacefully together, and meat-eaters will become vegetarian. Animals that once would harm humans, such as

snakes, will no longer do so, such that little children can even play with them.

Psalm 72; Isaiah 11:6–8, 35, 41:17–20, 43:19, 55, 60:19; Ezekiel 47:6–10; Amos 9:13–14.

The People in the Kingdom

There will be three sorts of people in the kingdom, each with a specific status and with certain responsibilities. These are the immortal 'saints', mortal Israel and mortal Gentiles.

The Saints

Those who in this life have faith in God, are baptised and try to please Him, will be rewarded with eternal life in the kingdom. If we try to glorify God in our lives now, we have the opportunity to glorify Him for ever.

'Saints' is a name used of believers in the New Testament, and simply means 'set apart' or 'holy', so we also use it of believers who in the kingdom will be immortal. These immortal saints will most importantly worship and praise God – a more perfect demonstration of what they did in their mortal lives.

The saints will also have jobs of rulership and priesthood to do; they are called to be kings and priests to God. Jesus promised that his saints would rule with him, that this



was an inheritance he would be pleased to share with them. He also said that this requires preparation, and it may lead to suffering in this life. The saints' role will include judging and ruling the mortal population, and fighting with Christ to destroy the wicked.

We are told that a temple will be built in Jerusalem under Christ's direction. This will be the centre for worship.

As part of this, the saints will be responsible for teaching the mortal population how to live by the laws of God. Teaching and preaching the Gospel was a job of the priests in the Old Testament too.

Psalms 2:7-9, 47:2-4; Isaiah 2:3; Jeremiah 3:15; Ezekiel 44:15-24; Daniel 7:22 & 27; Malachi 2:7; Luke 19:12-17; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26-27, 5:10, 14:6 & 12, 20:4-6.

The Mortal Population

Those people who survive the fighting and upheavals at the return of Jesus and who are privileged to live in the kingdom as mortals, will see God's purpose and promises fulfilled.

As we have seen, the world they live in will be ideal. They will live for very long periods, hundreds of years, and there will be no infant mortality. Someone who dies at a hundred years old will be called a 'child'. There will be no disabilities or disease – the blind, dumb, lame and sick will be healed.

All people everywhere will praise God. The mortal population will come to Jerusalem to worship God and pray, celebrating God's

salvation. They will serve Jesus and bring gifts to him. They will bring sacrifices to the Temple (to be offered by the priestly saints) and will learn God's truth, putting right any wrong beliefs they might have had. This will be done in a spirit of love, as they see the righteous and good rule of Jesus.

Psalms 2, 68:29, 72; Isaiah 2:2-4, 19:21-25, 29:18-24, 56:6-8, 60:6-12, 61:4-5; Micah 4:3-5; Zechariah 6:12-15, 8:20-22, 14:16-19; Malachi 1:11.

Mortal Israel

Whilst mortal Israel will have the same general conditions as the other mortals, they do occupy a special place in God's plan, and in the kingdom to come. The regathering of Jews from all over the world to Israel has already begun, and will be completed in the kingdom, fulfilling another of God's promises.

They will realise their great error in rejecting Jesus, will mourn and repent, and God will forgive and accept them. He will make a new covenant with them for ever, putting His laws into their hearts. Israel will be recognised throughout the world as God's special people, the nation of salvation.

God will give them the land of Israel as their inheritance and they will be united, living together in peace and holiness. They will rebuild, replant and restore the land to its true beauty and prosperity, and will enjoy the fruits of their labours.

Israel will also worship at Jerusalem. The priestly tribe of the Levites will be purified

and their role re-established, helping in priestly duties in the Temple.

The Jews will be respected by all nations, enjoying God's special favour.

Deuteronomy 28:12-13; Isaiah 27:12-13, 59:20-21, 65:21-23; Jeremiah 3:17-19; Ezekiel 37:23-28, 39:25-29, 44:9-14, 45:21-23, 48:29-35; Amos 9:14-15; Zechariah 8:23, 12:10-14; Malachi 3:1-4.

Beyond This Time

The conditions of the kingdom will be wonderful. They would be perfect, except for the mortal population who still sin and die. For this reason, when Christ has ruled for 1000 years, this kingdom age will be changed for something even greater.

At this point, there will be a second resurrection and judgement – this time for those mortals who have lived and died in the kingdom age. Those accepted will be made immortal (and join the saints), but those rejected will die for ever.

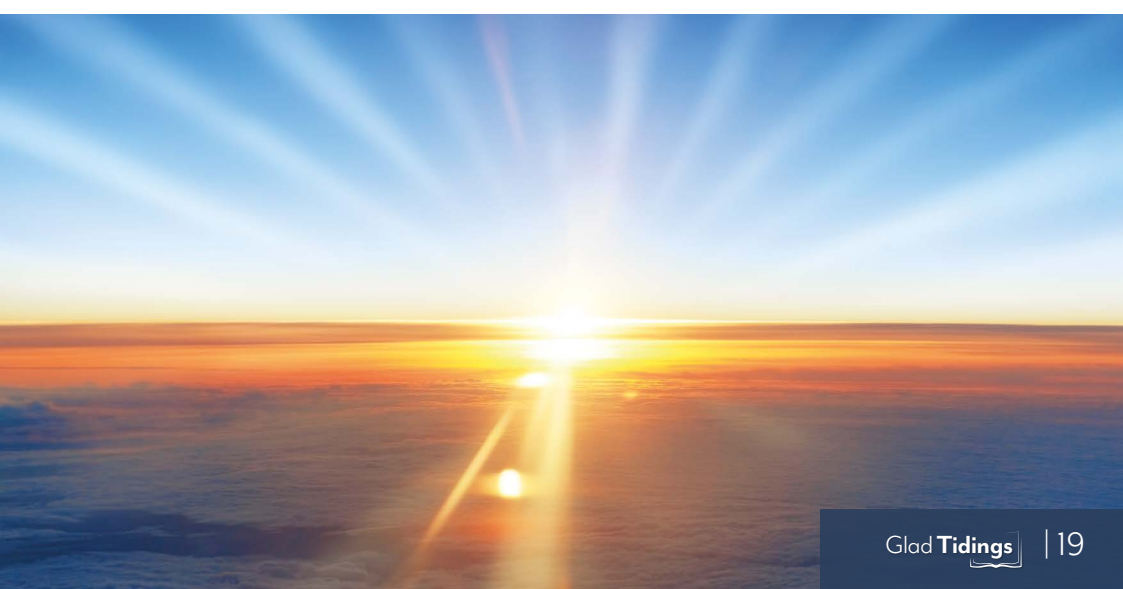
When there is no more sin, there is no more death, and the world will be populated by sinless immortal saints. At this point God will finally live with humankind, and the saints will see Him face to face.

God will remove all pain, suffering and even death, and will wipe away all tears from the eyes of His people. Jesus will hand power to God directly. There is no more need of a temple, as God is there with the saints. Nothing and no one impure will ever enter it. This is the final completion of God's purpose, and it will last for ever.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 20:11-22:5.

The hope of the Gospel is truly breathtaking: God offers every one of us the opportunity to live in His kingdom, simply by belief and baptism. It is proof of God's love to us, that He gave Jesus as a sacrifice to make this possible.

Andrew Hale



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