

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

Tranquillity (p.3)

Vacuuming the Lawn (p.13)

Israeli–Palestinian Conflict (p.15)

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

Its objectives are—to encourage the study of the Bible as God’s inspired message to mankind; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God’s world-wide Kingdom.

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Tranquillity

WHEN DID YOU last experience tranquillity? Maybe it was a moment of quiet in a garden; or in the embrace of a loved one. Perhaps it was a mood brought on by music, or that flush of wellbeing when pain subsided. It can be a fleeting thing, and it's easily disturbed and lost.

In our modern world, tranquillity is hard to find. Many people live with war, unrest, or poverty which make life a daily struggle. Even for those who are privileged to live in peaceful and prosperous countries, life seems increasingly fast and stressful. And wherever they are in the world, many people live with a nagging fear—fear for their health, for their families, fear of losing their livelihood, of crime; fear of terrorism or environmental catastrophe.

Tranquillity is a thing we crave. In our chaotic world there is no shortage of lifestyle gurus and media channels which offer many different recipes for achieving it, through such routes as self-awareness, meditation, hypnosis and mysticism.

As this is a Bible magazine, we'll consider the Bible's recipe for achieving tranquillity. I believe it is the very best there is.

The Bible's Recipe

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! (Psalm 46:10).

In one respect, the Bible's recipe for peace of mind is similar to the recipe offered by many other religions and philosophies: it's about looking beyond yourself. People who are self-absorbed are usually dissatisfied and unfulfilled; people who think of others are happier, it's a proven fact. Best of all, the Bible says, is to have a relationship with the God of heaven and earth, Who has a purpose with the earth and with you.

When a person is baptised, they join God's family. The Bible says they become sheep in the flock of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. And Jesus had this assurance for his disciples: *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"* (Luke 12:32). What better cause for peace of mind could there possibly be than this!



Be Anxious for Nothing

Perhaps the most succinct instruction on how to achieve tranquillity is in the letter which the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi:



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 4:6–7).

Don't be anxious, Paul says. Yes, things often go wrong in our lives. We have pain and sorrow and frustration, and the Christian is no less prone to these things than anyone else. But Paul says, don't worry about them. How do you achieve that? By taking them to God.

There was a time when the Assyrian army invaded and overran Judah. The account is in 2 Kings 19. The Assyrians laid siege to Jerusalem, and delivered a letter to King Hezekiah urging him to surrender. Hezekiah went into the temple and spread the letter out before God. He prayed and put the situation in God's hands. God took control and destroyed the Assyrian army.

You might think, he was a king, and that was a long time ago in an age of miracles—my life is different. True—but God is still the same. He knows that our lives can be filled with difficulties, and He wants us to put them into His hands. His answer is unlikely to be as swift and spectacular as it was to Hezekiah, but He will answer.

Prayer, Supplication and Thanks

“Be anxious for nothing,” said Paul, *“but in everything by prayer (taking it to God) and supplication (making request about it) with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”* An important aspect of prayer which features time and again in the Bible is thanksgiving.

When you think about it, God has given us so much that it's only natural that thanksgiving should form a big part of our prayers. And perhaps Paul is saying here that when you have something to ask, bear in mind all the blessings you already have and your faith will be strengthened to know that God will give you what you need.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” This is the recipe for true tranquillity—the knowledge that the God of heaven is on your side.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38–39).

The Peace of God

ACROSS the meadow from where I live there is a pool. It is a place of peace. No fish ever breaks the water's surface; no bird ever disturbs the reeds. Across the pool's surface there is a layer of thin green weed. There is peace here—it is the peace of stagnation. It is the peace of death.



Life can be like this. It is possible to be detached from the things which cause stress and strain. To be free from anxiety because you ignore the cares of life. You will never be upset by other people's problems if you are not aware of them. You will not be saddened by the injustices in the world if you are not interested in them. This is a peaceful life—but it is the peace of stagnation.

The peace of God is different. Consider this, from the Apostle Paul's letter to the believers in Colosse:

Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you

were called in one body; and be thankful (Colossians 3:14–15).

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”. It's thought that when he wrote this letter Paul was in prison in Rome, daily and hourly expecting a violent death. This was a time of persecution and difficulty for believers. The letter to the Colossians abounds with earnest pleas, instructions and warnings. This tells us something fundamental about the peace of God: it is unaffected by outside circumstances. You do not have to be leading a quiet life to have it. It is an internal condition, a heart condition.

Peace Through Christ

What is the key to this state of mind? In the first chapter of this letter Paul tells us:

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he has reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (Colossians 1:21–22).

Jesus died to reconcile us to God, to bring us into harmony with Him. If we are baptised and become part of God's family, we are in harmony with God. Is there anything more positive than this? We are at peace with God.

I must tell you that I cannot fathom it. I know about the awful discord in my heart,

and in the world around me. I know I have sinned against God and I am afraid of Him. I know how hopeless I am. Then I consider what Jesus Christ has done for me, and it defies analysis, it transcends explanation. I can only tell you this—I am no longer afraid. My sin has been cancelled.

The Example of Christ

Think for a moment of the Lord Jesus himself, and the peace that was in his heart. Think of him standing trial for his life before the Roman governor Pilate. (You can read the account in John chapter 18 from verse 28.) Of the two men, Pilate and Jesus, who do you think had real peace? Jesus going to his death or Pilate going to his breakfast? Pilate was a man whose mind was in a turmoil and whose conscience was tearing him apart. Jesus is presented before us as serene and composed. There was a “joy that was set before him” (Hebrews 12:2) of which Pilate knew nothing.

Jesus could have evaded his execution, and gained peace for himself. But that would have been the peace of stagnation. Instead he faced life and death with all their reality; he met sin face to face—met and defied and mastered it. And there was peace in his heart.

Jesus once said, “*These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace*” (John 16:33).

There is many a man who would give you a cheque for £10,000 if you could give him peace. But the peace of God is ours if



Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you so

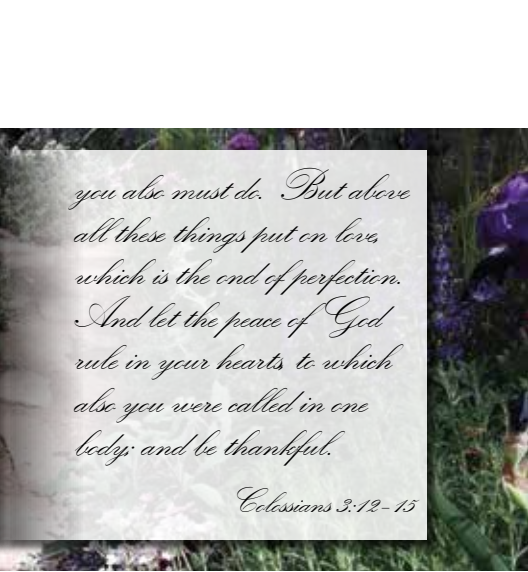
we will accept it. In times of hardship and adversity it calms your spirit. It illuminates every dark cloud; it soothes every bereaved heart. When men's hearts are failing them for fear it will keep you steady.

And it is all true because the Son of God made peace through shedding his blood on the cross.

Put On Love

Let's return to that passage from Paul's letter to the Colossians chapter 3. Look at verse 14: “*But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*” The Greek word which is translated ‘bond’ is used of the ligaments of the body. The ligaments hold the body together and enable it to work properly.

I believe that the proportion in which love is in our hearts, dominating, flourishing, mastering, is the proportion in which we shall have the peace of God. Peace is love's confidence.



*you also must do. But above
all these things put on love,
which is the end of perfection.
And let the peace of God
rule in your hearts, to which
also you were called in one
body; and be thankful.*

Colossians 3:12-15

When love is the sentinel in our heart we shall always be on duty, never say or do anything to hurt our fellow, always forgive what is done to us, never fail in the integrity of our relationships.

Let Peace Rule

Our passage says in verse 15: *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”*

The Greek word translated ‘rule’ here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The best meaning we can give to it is to ‘preside’—like a judge over a court or a chairman at a meeting. A judge or chairman keeps order, and prevents opposing forces causing disorder. They will not allow anyone else to take charge or disrupt the proceedings.

So, says the Apostle, is peace. It will rule in your heart. It will keep all things in their right place. It will ensure that the right priorities are instituted. It will not permit

ungodly things to ascend the throne in your heart.

This does not mean that if we have the peace of God in our heart we will not have any difficulties or be free from anxiety; that we will not be worried or upset or have hard things to do or painful things to endure. We will still be concerned about things, and that is right—to be indifferent when things go wrong would be a sin. But when we have peace in our heart, worry and concern will be in their proper place. Peace will rule.

Peace to Come

One day the Kingdom of God will come. And then the peace of God will roll across the sin-laden, fear-filled, war-weary continents of the world. And the person who has the peace of God in their heart—small atoms though we be, an infinitesimal part of the universe—will be in harmony with that peace, in harmony with the order of a redeemed and peace-mastered world.

In the Kingdom of God peace will be fulfilled. When peace reigns on the earth you will see beauty you have never imagined. We have hardly begun to realise the wonders of this planet.

The Kingdom will be given to those who have sought for it, those who have striven for peace in their lives here and now. And remember that the best and only place to find it is at the cross, where Christ made peace through the shedding of his blood.

Dennis Gillett

Proverbs

THE BOOK of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings, written under the inspiration of God, mainly by King Solomon. They contain sound guidance for life.

Solomon's Request

God appeared to King Solomon and said, *"Ask! What shall I give you?"* Solomon might have desired wealth and power, but he made a surprising request: *"Now give me wisdom and knowledge... for who can judge this great people of Yours?"* (2 Chronicles 1:7–10). God granted his request. *"And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart"* (9:23).



'King Solomon'

The Value of Wisdom

The opening chapters of Proverbs are addressed to 'my son' (chapters 1–9). Sadly, Solomon's son Rehoboam failed to heed the divine instruction. It was God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who recognised the value of his Father's word.

There is nothing in this world which can compare with the *"wisdom that is from above"* (James 3:17), which is to be found in

the Bible—in all its 66 books, including the Book of Proverbs.

Guidance for Daily Life

A large section of Proverbs (chapters 10–24) contains valuable advice for God's children in their day to day experiences. The ruin which comes from laziness and the folly of ignorance are among the warnings given. We are advised on the dangers of riches, on true friendships and loyalty in our relationships.

Chapters 25–29 contain more proverbs of Solomon, copied out by King Hezekiah's men. The writers of Proverbs 30–31 are Agur and Lemuel. They may have been Arabian, descended from Ishmael; or they may be cryptic names for Solomon himself.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Proverbs 3:15; 4:7—see 2 Timothy 3:15.
- ◆ Proverbs 7:19, 20—see Mark 13:34; Luke 12:45.
- ◆ Proverbs 22:20, 21—see Luke 1:3, 4.

Who Wrote Acts and When?

This is the second in a series in which we examine this fascinating Bible book. You can catch up with the first article at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

THE ACTS of the Apostles gives us a picture of the spread of Christianity from the ascension of Jesus to heaven, 40 days after he was raised from the dead, to the preaching activities of the Apostle Paul in Rome some 30 years later.

This was the First Century AD. The Roman Republic had recently become an empire, and it was the dominant power in Europe, North Africa and the Near East. The Roman Empire enabled long distance travel, either along roads kept free from brigands by the power of Rome, or by sea.

Acts in its Context

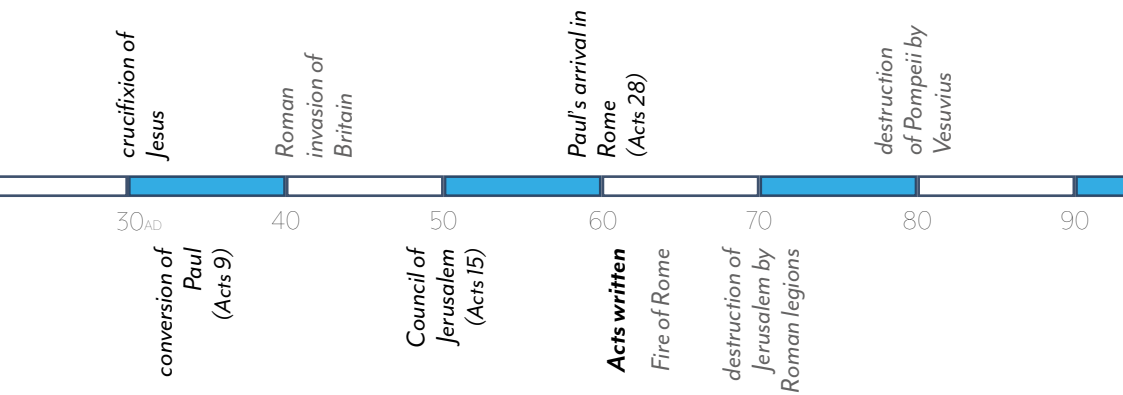
The book of Acts reflects the world of the First Century, before the fire of Rome and before the war between Rome and Jewish insurgents which reached its climax in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.

There are Jewish sympathisers such as Cornelius in the Roman army (Acts 10), and when Paul is accused of teaching an illegal religion (Acts 18:12-13) the governor shows the behaviour of an upper class Roman of the time and refuses to judge the case. Both of these would have been unthinkable after the Fire of Rome, when

Nero declared Christianity to be an illegal religion, or after the start of the Jewish War when Jews became an enemy of Rome and it would have been impossible to find a centurion with Jewish sympathies.



It has been noted that Acts contains a very accurate picture of the Roman world of its time. It refers to more than 50 towns and more than 20 provinces without making any errors. The descriptions of journeys match the geography of the areas travelled, and the timings of sea voyages fit what is known of currents and climatic conditions. Acts fits into the mid First Century in a way that would not be the case at any later time.



When Was Acts Written?

The book of Acts finishes very suddenly in its last chapter. Paul was in prison for two entire years; nothing else is recorded. We are not told whether he was released, or went to trial; we are not told whether he was allowed to go free or whether he was found guilty. A reasonable explanation for this is that the account in Acts ends at the point where the book was published.

This means that Acts was published after Paul had been two years in Rome. We can work out when this happened by a careful analysis of the movements of Paul, comparing this with dates known from archaeology and ancient literature.

Paul arrived in Rome in the early spring of 60AD, so Acts must have been completed in the early spring of 62AD or shortly afterwards.

It seems that after the close of the book of Acts, Paul was released from captivity in Rome and undertook another journey in the Eastern Mediterranean. The letters

to Timothy and Titus indicate that he had undergone experiences in this region which could not have happened during the period covered by Acts. To account for these, Paul must have been released before the start of the summer in 62AD.

This analysis matches what Acts does not include. In the autumn of 62AD, James the brother of Jesus was executed by the authorities in Jerusalem. We would expect a mention of this in Acts; after all, the death of James the brother of John is mentioned in Acts 12:2 and James the brother of Jesus is a much more prominent figure in Acts than the brother of John.

The Writer of Acts

There is ample evidence that the writer of Acts is the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke. The Greek style of Luke is very distinctive and the same style is evident in Acts. The evidence of the first three verses of Acts is also strong:

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

until the day in which he was taken up, after he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom he also presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:1-3).

This tells us that Acts is addressed to someone whom it calls 'Theophilus'—this may be his real name or it may be a nickname. The Gospel of Luke is written to the same person (Luke 1:3).

The passage in Acts describes the Gospel of Luke very well, ending with the ascension of Jesus to heaven, which is also the first event in Acts.

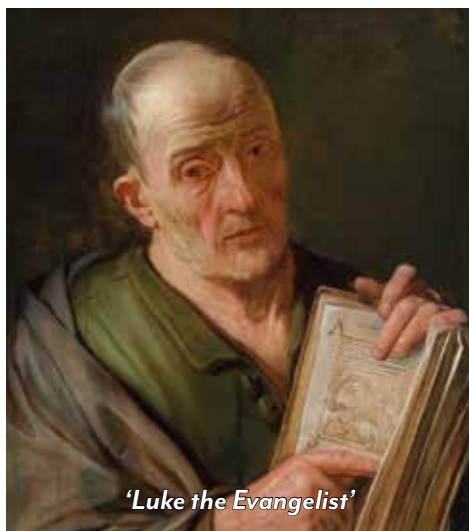
Another line of evidence is the way the writer indicates that he was present on some occasions. When the writer is travelling with Paul he uses the word 'we' to describe what he and Paul did. For example:

Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course... (Acts 16:11).

And when we had come to Jerusalem the brethren received us... (Acts 21:17).

Now when we came to Rome the centurion delivered the prisoners... (Acts 28:16).

These passages tell us that the writer of Acts was with Paul when he arrived in Rome, and it seems that he stayed with him there for some time. We can now turn to Paul's letters and see who was with him there.



Four of Paul's letters were written from Rome. These are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. The ends of these letters contain lists of people who were with Paul in Rome: Colossians chapter 4, for example, lists Aristarchus, Demas, Epaphras, Justus, Luke, Mark, Onesimus and Tychicus (vs. 7-12).

We can therefore put together a picture of who the companions of Paul were in Rome, and by eliminating these one at a time we can see who is left.

And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas (Acts 20:4-5).

Because the writer of Acts mentions himself as being with these people he cannot be one of them. We can therefore eliminate

all the named people in the list as being possible writers of Acts.

By looking at similar passages we can pare down the possible alternatives to Luke and Demas. Demas is a less likely candidate because he abandoned Paul and went back to his ordinary life:

For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica... (2 Timothy 4:10).

This would not necessarily discount Demas from writing Acts, especially as 2 Timothy was written a couple of years after Acts was completed, but it makes Luke the more likely candidate.

Also Luke is the only person identified as the writer of Luke's Gospel or of Acts by writers in the period immediately after the completion of the New Testament.



What We Can Learn from Acts

The Acts of the Apostles is the inspired account of the growth of the early church, and it abounds with invaluable lessons for the beliefs and practices of modern believers.

Besides this, Acts gives the basis of a history of the early Christian community from the resurrection of Jesus to 62AD. By looking at the letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus, the letter to the Hebrews and the letters of Peter, we can extend our understanding to cover the period up to about 65AD.

This is the period in which the apostles were active and in which the New Testament was being written. This means that we have a picture of what was going on in the Christian community at the time that the letters were being written; this helps us to understand those letters.

Not only that, but Acts also gives us the background against which the Gospels were written. When it comes to understanding how and why the Gospels were written, the New Testament letters and the book of Acts give us a context.

When we look at the Old Testament, it is sensible to study the books of the prophets in the context of the history of Israel. The books of Kings and Chronicles give us a context for prophetic books such as Amos and Isaiah. In the New Testament the context is provided by the book of Acts.

John Thorpe

Vacuuming the Lawn



I JUST came in from vacuum cleaning my lawn. Yes, my lawn. I can tell what you're thinking, but let me explain.

The thing is, yesterday we had a builder at the house fitting some timber, and he had to reduce the size of the wood panel, so he used a power planer... out in the garden. So our lawn was covered in woodchip.

Ask yourself, how would you get woodchip off a lawn? I tried everything more sensible, and all the things that would have made me seem like a normal neighbour out in the garden, but in the end the grass felt just like a carpet and so that's how I treated it.

Now what's that got to do with the Bible? The Lord Jesus had something to say about first impressions, and especially about pointing the finger.

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? (Luke 6:41).

Here is someone with roughly the same problem as me—a problem removing

woodchips. Jesus is telling a parable to show that we shouldn't judge other people's motives. Someone may look stupid. They may even appear to have done something with wicked intent. But until we address our own inadequacy (the plank) we're in no position to judge someone else.

Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye (verse 42).

My example was perhaps not as fitting as the one Jesus used. Here Jesus is creating such an obvious story that we can't help but agree with him. We see that we (who do wrong things quite often) would be hypocritical if we turned our nose up at others when they do wrong things.

By increasing the size of the woodchip in our eye to a plank, Jesus drives home the

message: “Your own sin disqualifies you from judging other people!”

With this in mind, we could take a look at my lawn incident again. Can you perhaps think of an occasion when you needed to get something done and had no idea how to go about it? Perhaps you started with all the easy solutions and none of them worked. Then as you got more desperate for a solution you started to do things you wouldn't normally do?

In the Bible we're told about David and the hard time he had getting away from King Saul. Saul totally had it in for David:



Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night (1 Samuel 19:10).

I really hope you have never had anything like this happen to you, but do you think you can imagine what it is like to have the

most powerful man in the land after you? Are there even any neat and effective solutions to that big a problem?

We're told that this continued for a long time, and in the end David buckled under the pressure, and took a most unusual and apparently foolish course of action:

And David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand" (1 Samuel 27:1).

You can see the depths of David's anguish, can't you? Here he really believes there are no more sensible solutions, and only the desperate, foolish solutions are worth trying any more. David heads into enemy territory and...

Guess what? It actually worked! He became the favourite soldier of the King of the Philistines: *"Then Achish answered and said to David, 'I know that you are as good in my sight as an angel of God'..." (1 Samuel 29:9).*

We could look at David and say "What a silly thing to do. I would never have done that." But to do so would be failing to see past the plank in our own eye. God is not like that. He took David's faltering, foolish decision, and made it good. So let's leave the judging to God, and hope He is similarly gracious with us.

Robin de Jongh

Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

The ongoing tension between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbours is seldom out of the news. Often it erupts into outright violence, and there are real concerns that a conflict in the Middle East could turn into a world war.

Who has entitlement to the land that is called Israel, and its capital city Jerusalem? Does it belong to the Jews or to the Arabs? Or, as the peacemakers suggest, should it be divided into two states?

Christadelphians are not involved in politics. This article does not make a political statement—it examines the Bible’s view of the subject.

Abraham

We start in the book of Genesis chapter 12 where we’re introduced to Abraham—a man who is revered by Jews and Arabs because he is the ancestor of them both.

Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your

father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1–3).

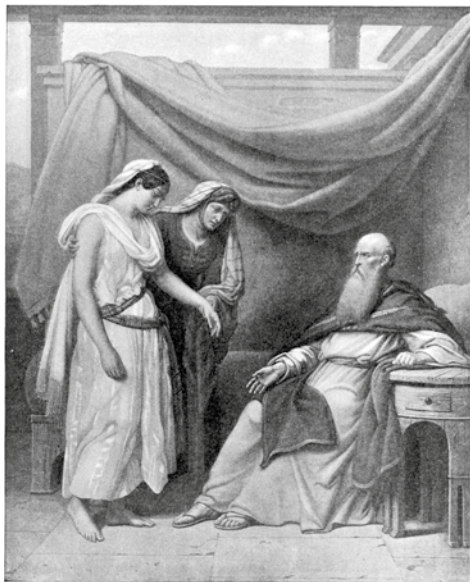
The Jews and the Arabs are descended from Abram (whose name God later changed to Abraham), through different children. They each claim to themselves the blessings which God promised to Abraham, including the right to the land which the Jews call Israel and the Arabs call Palestine.

Most Arabs are descended from Abraham’s eldest son, who was called Ishmael. Jews are descended from his second son, Isaac.

God had made great promises to Abraham, including “*I will make you a great nation*”. So he needed to have children. But both Abraham and his wife Sarai grew old, and they had no child. So their faith



waivered, and they thought God might need assistance: Sarai gave to her husband her servant Hagar to be his concubine, so she could have a child which Sarai could call her own (Genesis 16).



Gently but firmly, God showed Abraham that he should not try to take things into his own hands. The promises would be fulfilled by means of a son who would be born to Sarai:

Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.” Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”

And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year” (Genesis 17:15–21).

Isaac and Jacob

Isaac was born, as God said. And the Bible story focuses on him and his descendants. The Arabs were given a promise and a blessing, because they are Abraham’s children; but it was to be Isaac’s descendants with whom God made His ‘covenant’—that is, the agreement that they would be His special people.

In time Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the elder and he had a blessing of his own, but the covenant promise was given to Jacob. This was because Jacob was a man of faith, whereas Esau was a ‘profane person’ (Hebrews 12:16)—that is, he cared for earthly things rather than spiritual things.

Esau became the ancestor of the Edomites, the Arab peoples who inhabited the region south of the Dead Sea. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel:

Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him.



Petra in Jordan—ancient city of the Edomites

And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.” So He called his name Israel. Also God said to him: “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land” (Genesis 35:9–12).

So the Bible is clear—God’s special promises were to the people of Israel. But this is not the whole story.

The King of Israel

The Bible book of Joshua tells how the people of Israel conquered the land after God saved them from slavery in Egypt. The land at this time was called Canaan, and they conquered it from the Canaanites.

They occupied the land for the next six and a half centuries, during which time they became a kingdom. The kingdom became

so corrupt and godless that God brought the army of Babylon against them to end their occupation. He pronounced His judgement on the last king Zedekiah:

Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, thus says the Lord GOD: “Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him” (Ezekiel 21:25–27).

Since that time there has been no Jewish king over Israel. (King Herod at the time of Jesus was not a Jew.) So who is “he whose right it is”? Who is entitled to take the crown?

The Promised Seed

When God made His promises, He often spoke of a ‘seed’. For example, He once said to Abraham:

Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice (Genesis 22:17–18).

‘Seed’ is a word the Bible often uses for ‘descendants’—but notice that these verses speak of both ‘descendants’ and ‘seed’.

In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul explains:

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 was promised descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven, and he was also promised one special seed. In time this was revealed as Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus was a Jew, a descendant of Jacob, Isaac and Abraham, and he is the focus of all the promises God made to them. This is what the angel Gabriel said to Mary when he told her she was to have a son:

Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:30–33).

The land of Israel, or Palestine, actually belongs neither to the Jews nor to the Arabs, but to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus has not received that kingdom yet—he has still to fulfil the promises to Abraham, and take possession of the Land.

The Kingdom of God

The Bible contains many prophecies of the events surrounding the return of Christ to the earth. For example Ezekiel 38 describes the nation of Israel regathered to their land after a long exile (verse 8—this became possible when the nation of Israel was established in 1948). They are invaded by a confederacy of nations led by a northern power. God Himself intervenes and saves them (verse 18).

And Isaiah 2 looks forward to the Kingdom of God itself, when Jesus Christ is ruling from “the throne of his father David” in Jerusalem:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and 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.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2–3).

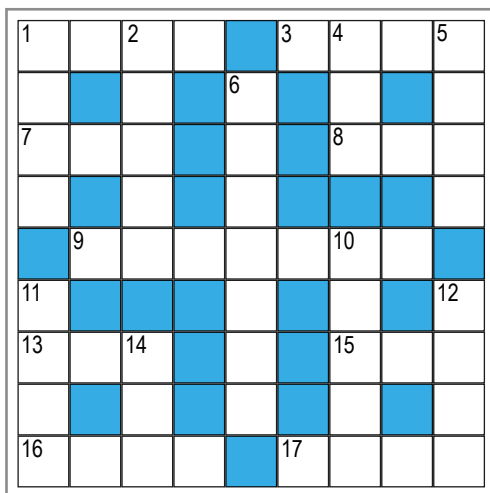
Hamilton Wilson



Bible Reader's Crossword

Across

- 1 One of the 12 disciples of Jesus (*Matthew 10:2*)
- 3 He saw the risen Lord on the road to Damascus (*Acts 9*)
- 7 God made the hearing _____ (*Proverbs 20:12*)
- 8 A king of Hamath in the days of David (*2 Samuel 8*)
- 9 "With the _____ you use, it will be _____d back to you" (*Matthew 7:2*)
- 13 _____ name shall endure for ever (*Psalms 72:17*)
- 15 "He sent out His arrows and scattered the _____" (*Psalms 18:14*)
- 16 A proud Arab nation in Old Testament times (*Isaiah 16:6*)
- 17 Brother of Jacob (*Genesis 25:25*)



Down

- 1 The prophet whose book comes before Amos
- 2 Animal imported from Egypt (*1 Kings 10:29*)
- 4 An example of diligence (*Proverbs 6:6*)
- 5 A faithful grandmother (*2 Timothy 1:5*)
- 6 An ancestor of King David (*Ruth 4:20*)
- 10 His mother was like a mother to Paul (*Romans 16:13*)
- 11 A son of Noah (*Genesis 5:32*)
- 12 A furious driver (*2 Kings 9:20*)
- 14 As the waters cover the _____ (*Isaiah 11:9*)

Norman Owen

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

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