

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

When You Know the Reason It Makes Sense (p. 3)

The Wisdom of God (p. 5)

Demons In The Bible (p. 13)

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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When You Know the Reason It Makes Sense

IF YOU HAD VISITED the English town of Beverley in the 1960s, you may well have travelled on a bus like the one on the front cover. Why the peculiar shaped roof? Was it an attempt at streamlining—or did they think that was stylish in the '60s? If so, it didn't catch on!

Actually it was a perfectly sensible design—it was to enable the bus to fit through Beverley's medieval gateway, the North Bar. When you know the reason, it makes sense.



The North Bar

Many things in life are like that. And it's a good principle to bear in mind when you read the Bible. The Bible is a wonderful book, when you read it you realise it's like no other book that was ever written—which isn't surprising because it's God's book. But it does say things which initially seem odd. So we need to take the trouble to

understand the reasons behind the things it says. When we do that, we begin to appreciate the divine wisdom it contains.

Being Born Again

It's clear from the Gospels that when people came to Jesus Christ and wanted to follow him, they were baptised (for example John 3:22–24). And after he went to heaven, this is how people joined the early church (for example Acts 2:37–39). Our word 'baptism' comes from the Greek word 'baptizo' which means 'to plunge' or 'to sink'. According to the Bible, when people are baptised they are completely immersed in water.

The practice of baptism is not popular in our day and age. Some see it as primitive and undignified, and therefore they regard it as optional. Do you really need to undergo this demeaning ritual in order to become a Christian?

But when you read the Apostle Paul's explanation of its meaning in Romans chapter 6, you realise what baptism means:

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 (Romans 6:3–4).

Baptism is laden with significance. It's a symbolic death and rebirth. When you're baptised, you show that you want to put to death your old life, and start a new life with a new master. You're associating yourself with Jesus Christ who died to save us from our sins, and was raised to life and glory, never to die again. When you know the reason, it makes sense.



Men And Women

The Bible is clear that men should lead the life and worship of the church (for example 1 Timothy 2:8–15). This is how it was in the First Century. Some see this as unfair—aren't women just as capable as men? The answer of course is, yes. The Bible's instructions have nothing to do with intelligence or capability. Nor is it the case that men are more important than women. As the Apostle Paul stresses, we're all of equal value in God's eyes: *"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"* (Galatians 3:28).

But the Bible prescribes different rôles for men and women, and it goes back to the beginning, to our first ancestors Adam and Eve: *"I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression"* (1 Timothy 2:12–14). If you read Genesis chapter 3 you see how the catastrophe of sin and death came into the world. Adam was meant to guide his wife to obey God. She was deceived and disobeyed, and he stood by and let it happen—they both failed. So now, when the men take the lead in the church and the women step back, it shows that they have learnt the lesson of Eden and they're going to obey God's will. When you know the reason, it makes sense.

The Cross of Christ

There's one thing about Christianity that some people have always found difficult to accept. It was a problem which the Apostle Paul addressed in his letter to the church in Corinth:

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The problem is this: what kind of religion centres on the barbaric execution of its saviour? The answer becomes ever clearer and more brilliant as you come to appreciate the love of God, Who gave His Son to die for our sins, and the love of Jesus Christ who willingly obeyed.

The Wisdom of God

“WHY? WHY? WHY?” “Because I say so!”

How many times have we heard exasperated parents exclaim this to a protesting child? To the child it might seem an unreasonable response: it’s no explanation at all. But for a parent who has finally lost the will to explain, it can be their last resort.



Questioning can be genuine—the child may be really trying to understand, but unable to grasp their parent’s explanation. Or it may be challenging and defiant. As children grow older, their parents’ reasoning becomes more intelligible; but the tendency to be defiant does not necessarily decrease. And on occasions parents are actually wrong.

We are all like the inquisitive child. We like to think that we know the answers, or at least that we are entitled to know them. We also seek reasons. And in this quest we can challenge authority, even when we are

incapable of understanding a technical or complex issue. We see this in families, at work, in healthcare and in society at large.

God is like the longsuffering parent. He sets standards. Unlike our human parents, He is never wrong (Titus 1:2). But in comparison to His supreme knowledge and wisdom we are naïve children (1 Corinthians 3:1–2). He asks us to do some things and not to do others. Jesus asked his followers to embrace his standards and principles, many of which we would not have ever thought of ourselves, for example loving our enemies (Matthew 5:44). And sometimes we struggle to understand ‘why’.

Laws Ahead of Their Time

This has always been the case. Thousands of years ago Moses, instructed by God Himself, drew up a code of behaviour for the Jewish people. It was a Law which was way, way ahead of its time in terms of public health. As such, it was consistent with modern principles, but at variance with the customs of the day, even in ‘advanced’ civilizations such as Egypt.

Here are some examples:

Quarantine (*Leviticus chapters 13 & 14*).

The word ‘quarantine’ originated in the 14th Century in Italy, but the practice is in the Law of Moses. Leprosy was a deadly

and contagious disease. A leper had to keep away from people permanently and cover his or her upper lip, rather like the modern face mask (Leviticus 13:45–46). Someone with suspected but not confirmed leprosy had to isolate for seven days, then be re-checked and if appropriate isolate for a further seven days.

But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate the one who has the sore seven days. And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day; and indeed if the sore appears to be as it was, and the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him another seven days. Then the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day... (Leviticus 13:4–6).



Priest examining for leprosy

Moreover, infected clothing had to be washed or burnt, depending on the severity of the infection (Leviticus 13:47–59).

Quarantine was also required after touching a human corpse, or even going into a tent where someone had died. And open pots in such a tent were to be cleansed (Numbers 19:13–16).

Unsafe meat

There are lists of ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ food (Leviticus 11:3–23).

The ‘unclean’ ones (most famously pigs) are now well-known to carry health risks, especially



Rock hyrax—
an unclean animal

in hot climates like the Middle East. Even touching unclean animals came with warnings about possible infection (Leviticus 11:24–28). Moreover, the Law warns about the dangers of eating meat from animals that have died naturally:

And every person who eats what died naturally or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean (Leviticus 17:15).

These dangers are still not fully recognised in parts of the world today.

Washing in clean water

The importance of washing in clean water was only recognised in the western world about 120 years ago. But throughout the Law there are instructions for washing: after touching the carcass of an ‘unclean’ animal (Leviticus 11:24–25); after touching a dead person (Numbers 19:11–12); after eating meat from a ‘clean’ animal that has died naturally (Leviticus 11:39–40);

when cured of leprosy or other diseases (Leviticus 14:8, 15:13–14); after emission of bodily fluids/ discharge (Leviticus 15:3–12, Deuteronomy 23:10–11).



Flowing water

Ancient civilizations were advanced in many subjects. The amazing thing about these examples from the Law of Moses is that they relate to invisible things like germs, bacteria and viruses. It is therefore extremely unlikely that Moses and the Jews understood the reasons for all of these laws. But it is most certainly true that they were healthier for obeying them. And 3,000 years later, with our enhanced knowledge, we can understand the reasons.

God Knows

In a completely different context, the book of Job tells of a man struck by horrendous disasters who struggles to understand why. Three friends try to comfort him and suggest that God has allowed these things to happen to him because of something he has done. But they are wrong: they have misunderstood and so misrepresent God (Job 42:7). Then finally in chapters 38 and 39 God Himself speaks to Job: *Where were you when I created the world? Do you know how nature works? Do you understand why animals behave the way they do? No, Job; but I do!* God understands His creation and also understands why things happen. We do

not always know, and cannot always know. What matters is to have the right attitude to God.

There is nothing wrong in asking ‘why’ in a sincere quest to find out. There is much wrong in asking ‘why’ to challenge the Almighty. The simple fact is that our Creator, who sustains all life, knows far more than we can ever know (Romans 11:33–36).

Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite (Psalm 147:5).

And God alone is in control of our destiny. There are many, many things that He has explained to us in the Bible. He gave us reasons for much of what He asks. He has no need to justify Himself. We are in no position to argue with Him. He asks us to believe Him.

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

So whether or not God has given us a reason, and whether or not we fully understand such a reason, it surely makes sense to try to do what He says. Obedience to God’s laws brought great health benefits to the Jewish nation. Reading God’s Word, the Bible, and trying to please Him brings supreme spiritual benefits to us, both in this life and for ever. It makes sense to take notice of Him.

Anna Hart

Pictures of Baptism

IF YOU WANT TO belong to God, you need to be baptized. Jesus Christ said so:

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

One of the brilliant things about the Bible is that it doesn't just tell you things—it shows you pictures as well! We're going to look at three pictures that illustrate what baptism means.

The Flood

Right back near the beginning, the world's population had grown so wicked that God determined to destroy them all. The account is in Genesis chapter 6. Only Noah and his family were faithful to God. God told Noah to build a massive boat, to save his family and a stock of animals that would repopulate the earth. Then God sent a cataclysmic flood which washed away everybody and everything else.

Jesus Christ and his disciples used the story of Noah and the Flood to teach several things. This is from a letter of the Apostle Peter:

... Once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (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 3:20–21).

Baptism is an 'antitype' of the Flood. That's an odd word, what does it mean? It means that the Flood was a picture of baptism. Just as the Flood washed away the earth's wickedness and prepared it for a new start, so baptism shows that we want to turn our back on our old life, and start afresh.

The Red Sea

The next book in the Bible is Exodus, and it tells how God saved the young nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. He brought them all out in a single night, leading them by a cloud of fire. The account is in chapter



Israel crossing the Red Sea

14. The Egyptian army chased after them and cornered them on the shore of the Red Sea. God told Israel's leader Moses to raise his staff over the sea, and miraculously the sea parted. The Israelites passed through

the sea on dry ground, but when the Egyptians tried to follow the sea flooded back and swept them away.

Recalling the episode the Apostle Paul writes:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea... (1 Corinthians 10:1–2).

Paul goes on to point out that the experience of the nation of Israel was a picture of the experience of every person who chooses to follow Christ: God brings them out of their life of slavery to sin and sets them free, and they then journey through life towards the Promised Land. Israel journeyed to Canaan, the Christian journeys to the Kingdom of God. The journey starts with baptism, where the old slave-master is washed away and God becomes our master.

Naaman

2 Kings 5 tells the story of Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, who had leprosy—a horrible disease for which there was no cure and which would eventually kill him. But he heard that the God of Israel could cure him. So he came to Israel to the prophet Elisha. Elisha told him to go and dip himself in the River Jordan seven times. Naaman was furious—he was a proud man, he wasn't prepared to do something so demeaning. But then he came to his senses. He swallowed his pride and obeyed, and he was cured.



The healing of Naaman

The Bible does not point it out, but it's obvious—this was a picture of baptism!

So we've seen three pictures the Bible paints of baptism: it's washing away godlessness from our life and starting afresh; it's the start of our journey towards the Kingdom; it requires humility and obedience.

And did you notice that the three pictures we've looked at all come from the Old Testament? That's the first part of the Bible which was written before the time of Jesus. Baptism is a New Testament thing: in Old Testament times you didn't need to be baptized in order to belong to God. But we've seen how God put these pictures in the history of the Old Testament, in order to show you and me what He wants us to do. Isn't God amazing!

Emmanuel Chipaka

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

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or connect with us via our web site
gladtidingsmagazine.org

Ruth

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give lists of the ancestors of Jesus Christ. Only five women are mentioned. These were all very special individuals. In this series we're looking at them in turn—this month we consider Ruth.

LIKE RAHAB before her, Ruth was not a Jewess. She comes into the Bible story when she married into a Jewish family who had left their Promised Land.

Elimelech and his family lived in Bethlehem. When a famine struck the land of Israel, it seems Elimelech didn't trust God to preserve them in their Promised Land, and so he took Naomi his wife and his two sons to the land of Moab.

He died in Moab. His two sons married local girls, and then sadly the two young men also died, leaving Orpah and Ruth, and their mother-in-law Naomi. When news arrived from Israel that God had ended the famine Naomi decided to return home, and initially her two daughters-in-law started the journey with her. Orpah turned back but Ruth very firmly showed that she had adopted Israel's God, and no longer felt herself to be an outsider: *"Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God"* (Ruth 1:16).

Some Bible readers have found a difficulty in the fact that in Deuteronomy 23:3 God

prohibited a Moabite from joining the nation of Israel for up to ten generations—but there's no problem here, as Ruth clearly signalled her total faith in Israel's God, and that she was no longer a Moabitess, but now an Israelite at heart.

Back To Bethlehem

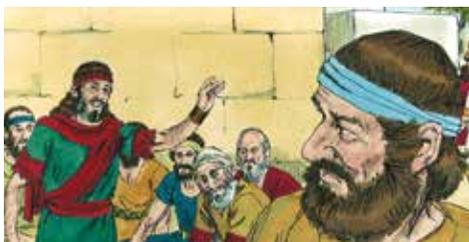
So Naomi and Ruth walked the long road back to Bethlehem, and arrived just when the barley harvest was starting. Ruth offered to go and glean grain in the harvest fields, and by a divine 'coincidence' found the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi. He welcomed the foreign girl, and told her to stay with his servants until the end of harvest.



The harvest continued for about seven weeks (in the Jewish calendar 50 days from the Feast of Firstfruits until Pentecost). And that was when Naomi unveiled her plan. She told Ruth that as a very close relative Boaz could redeem the property that had belonged to Elimelech. Her plan was that Ruth should go to the threshing floor where

Boaz would sleep that night, and ask for his protection and help. Ruth did just as Naomi had said, and Boaz straight away offered to do as she asked.

There was a man who was an even closer relative than Boaz. Next morning Boaz found him, and explained that he could redeem Naomi's field. If he did this he would also have to marry Ruth (this procedure was laid down in the Law of Moses in Deuteronomy 25:5).



To Marry Ruth

The close relative was willing to redeem the land, but not to marry Ruth, and so he left the way open for Boaz. What a most wonderful demonstration of the hand of God at work!

Elimelech didn't trust God and left the Promised Land, but Boaz his kinsman did trust God. He was a very successful farmer despite the famine. In the inspired record in Ruth 4 the close relative is not named, although his excuse was "*I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance*" (Ruth 4:6). There's a lesson for us here. One man was totally wrapped up with preserving his name and possessions—but the Bible does not name him! Boaz, on the other hand,

who was willing to raise a family with Ruth in Elimelech's name, finds himself as the named next of kin: Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David (Ruth 4:21–22).

What a great blessing Ruth received: she had the offer of marriage from the rich farmer, and became an ancestor of King David and Jesus himself. What a complete change of life!

Bethlehem

Naomi lived in Bethlehem before she emigrated to Moab. The name Bethlehem means 'House of bread', so in a way we could say that when the famine started there was no bread in the house of bread. Then, after quite a long while Naomi returned to Bethlehem with Ruth her daughter in law. Now there was a good harvest, so once again there was bread in Bethlehem, and Boaz the farmer provided that grain for producing the bread.

Over a thousand years later Jesus Christ was born in that same town, and he actually gave us that wonderful verse "*I am the bread of life*" (John 6:35). Baptised followers of Jesus eat the bread and drink the wine which are symbols of his death (Luke 22:19–20). He is their bread of life.

There is another lovely picture here: Boaz represents Jesus, born in Bethlehem. Ruth represents you and me, if we leave our old way of life and come to him. He is the bridegroom, and we are the bride.

David Simpson

Micah

THE PROPHET Micah lived at the time when God's kingdom was divided into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Micah prophesied to the Southern Kingdom during the reigns of its kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Micah 1:1). He spoke out against idolatry, cruelty and oppression in both Judah and Israel, and warned of God's coming judgements.

Yet, through him, God also foretold the recovery of a remnant of the people (2:12; 5:7–8), the coming of the King (the 'Messiah') (5:2) and the ultimate restoration of the Kingdom of God (4:1–4).



Summary of the Prophecy

- **Chapters 1–3:** Judgements on Judah and Israel.
- **Chapters 4–5:** Ultimate restoration of the kingdom under God's coming King.
- **Chapters 6–7:** God's desire for justice, kindness and humility (6:8). He will fulfil His promises to the Jews' ancestors, Abraham and Jacob (7:20).

The Kingdom Restored

The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, the town of the great King David (5:2). He will be King, not only of Judah, but of

the united kingdom of Israel. His capital will be Jerusalem and his dominion will be worldwide. There is a wonderful description of tomorrow's world in 4:1–4 (which also appears in chapter 2 of the prophecy of Micah's contemporary Isaiah):

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 peoples shall flow to it. Many nations 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 the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Micah 4:1–2).

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Micah 4:2, 8—see Obadiah 17; Isaiah 65:17–25.
- ◆ Micah 5:2—see Matthew 2:1–6; Luke 1:32, 33.
- ◆ Micah 7:20—see Genesis 13:14–16; 28:13; 35:12.



Demons In The Bible



THE IDEA OF demons is an interesting one. The word appears over 50 times in the New King James Version of the Bible (which is the version we generally use in *Glad Tidings*). In the older King James Version, demons are typically called ‘devils’. We’re going to consider what the Bible says about them and how we should understand this concept.

Put simply: demons refer to one of two things:

- Idols worshipped instead of the true God, or
- Mental illness healed by Jesus and his disciples.

There is good news here. Demons are not something to fear, supernatural beings sent to hurt us. Rather, they are a warning to worship God properly, and evidence of His power, as exercised through Jesus Christ. Let’s put aside any preconceptions we may have and read what the Bible actually has to say when it speaks about demons.

Old Testament Idol Worship

The Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament which deals with events before Jesus Christ, and the New Testament which starts with his birth. Demons appear four times in the Old Testament, and these are all to do with idol worship. Leviticus

17 teaches Israel about proper worship and sacrifices to God. These offerings were to be made in particular ways, by the designated priests, at the tabernacle—the place God chose for them to worship Him. As emphasis, the people were reminded:

They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations (Leviticus 17:7).

Israel were to turn away from the idols they had worshipped when they failed in their relationship with God. They were to remain faithful to Him. In fact, the word translated ‘demon’ here refers to an animal, a goat or kid, typical images in the local pagan worship.

In 2 Chronicles 11:15 we find the same word used, again referring to idols. Bad king Jeroboam had imposed idol worship, doing exactly the opposite of what God had commanded. These demons were idols.

The other two occurrences of demons in the Old Testament are Deuteronomy 32:17



and Psalm 106:37. In both cases, the writer is speaking about Israel's worship of false gods. If you read the surrounding verses, you will see that they are about 'foreign gods' and 'abominations', 'new gods' and idols. Demons are idols.

New Testament Idol References

Outside of the Gospels, demons appear in six New Testament references. In each case, the writer is explaining how true worship of the true God is different from praying to idols.



In 1 Corinthians 10:19–21, the Apostle Paul talks about the pagan worship of meaningless idols, also called 'demons'. His message is that Christian believers should have nothing to do with such

worthless practices. He uses the same language in 1 Timothy 4:1 to warn against people teaching things which are untrue. James (2:19) uses a similar idea to show that even idol worshippers could claim to believe in one God, but that "...faith without works is dead" (v. 20).

In the book of Revelation, demons appear three times. The first shows that the meaning is the same as what we have seen already:

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk (Revelation 9:20).

Demons have no power; they are just the worthless focus of worship which ignores the true God. The danger they pose is as a distraction from worshipping the God who created heaven and earth. There are many godless ideas and superstitions, as well as our own selfish desires, which we can allow to get in the way of our relationship with God. This is how demons are spoken of in Revelation 16:14 and 18:2—ideas opposed to true worship.

Mental Illness in The Gospels

Sadly, the nation of Israel often went away from God, and they were punished for it. Interestingly, one of the punishments was this: "*The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart*" (Deuteronomy 28:28).

The connection between false worship and mental illness may help explain how demons were understood in First Century Israel. Visible illnesses, such as being blind, lame or a leper, were easy to see and understand. Any illness which was not visible, such as epilepsy or personality disorders like schizophrenia, was blamed on invisible 'demons', often thought to be caused by godlessness. This sort of view was very common until modern medicine and psychology was able to understand





these afflictions for what they are—illnesses like any other.

Demons appear over 40 times in the Gospels (some are parallel accounts of the same event), and every time the context is the same:

- People who are ‘possessed’ by demons show symptoms of mental illnesses.
- Jesus or his disciples have the power to ‘cast out’ the demons, healing the person concerned and putting them ‘in their right mind’.
- The event happens in the region of Galilee or further north in Israel, never in Jerusalem or Judea. Among Jews, belief in demon possession seems to have been relatively localized.

Let’s look at a couple of examples. When Jesus began his work of teaching and healing, we read:

Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them (Matthew 4:23–24).

We see that Jesus was in Galilee and northern Israel, and that he was healing

people of all kinds of illness. Among them were ‘demon-possessed’ people, but we see them as listed among the other sick who needed his healing power. Just a few chapters later, we again find Jesus healing the sick and demon-possessed, simply the expression of different kinds of illnesses:

When evening had come, they brought to him many who were demon-possessed. And he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:16–17).

Unusual Examples

When we understand that ‘demons’ in the Gospels means mental illness, then the few more unusual descriptions make more sense. In Luke 8:26–39, Jesus heals a man terribly afflicted by some personality disorder. It is described as demon possession, but as we are now familiar with the term we can see it just means mental illness. The episode is described very graphically, with Jesus speaking to the man’s delusions and a herd of pigs running down a cliff into the lake. We do not know why the Bible describes it like this—perhaps it was for the benefit of the man himself or the onlookers as a visible demonstration that the man was healed. In any case, the man who was healed is later described as “clothed and in his right mind... he who



had been demon-possessed was healed (vs. 35–36). This was another sick man healed. You can read the same language used in the parallel account in Mark 5.



Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' closest followers and would be the first he met after his resurrection. Their connection began when Jesus healed her. She is described as "Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons" (Luke 8:2). Why is she described like this? Maybe she was particularly ill: the number seven in the Bible is often associated with completeness, such as seven days in a week. Maybe it was how she was known locally. In any case, Jesus healed her.

The Good News

We do not know why the Bible doesn't try to correct the understanding about mental illness. Clearly it was a local superstition; maybe it would just be too hard for people to grasp back then; perhaps it just wasn't important, compared to the message Jesus was preaching about the Kingdom of God.

Certain things are clear and important. Firstly, there is and are no supernatural

beings causing disaster and illness—people get ill and suffer because of the imperfections in today's world. Secondly, God and Jesus have power over all of nature, so Jesus was able to heal people of whatever illness they happened to have, visible or not. We do not need to worry about demons, but we do need to worship God properly, to make sure we understand His truth and obey Him.

If we do, we can look forward in hope to God's Kingdom on Earth, ruled by Jesus Christ, when all illnesses will be healed.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear!" Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing (Isaiah 35:3–6).

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

Andrew Hale

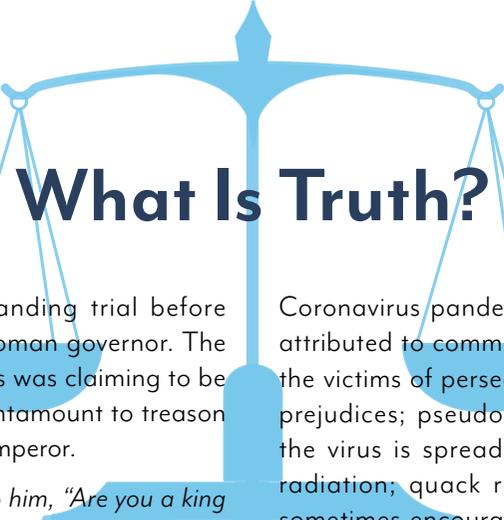
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What Is Truth?

Jesus Christ was standing trial before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. The charge was that Jesus was claiming to be a king, which was tantamount to treason against the Roman Emperor.

Pilate therefore said to him, "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in him at all" (John 18:37–38).

Was Pilate really interested in the answer to his question? Did he care about the truth? Not enough to let it stop him handing over for execution a man whom he knew was innocent.

The Bible book of Daniel contains a prophecy of the 'time of the end', which it describes as a time when *"many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase"* (Daniel 12:4)—a perfect description of our day!

But a feature of our age is that, at the same time as knowledge increases, so does the spread of misinformation: 'fake news' and 'alternative facts'.

While social media can be used profitably, they can also be misused. Blame for the

Coronavirus pandemic has been falsely attributed to communities who are often the victims of persecution, fuelling racial prejudices; pseudo-science claims that the virus is spread by electromagnetic radiation; quack remedies proliferate, sometimes encouraged by those in high office. The spread of disturbing material has been comparable with the spread of the virus itself.

In this world where untruths and half-truths are all too common there is always one place we can turn to: God's Word, the Bible. It confidently proclaims the end to all the world's crises—plagues, pollution and conflict—in the Kingdom which God has promised to establish on the earth. And it has shown itself to be true.

Jesus prayed to God for his disciples shortly before his arrest: *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth"* (John 17:17). The Bible is the definitive source of truth.

But there's more to the answer. This is how John's Gospel introduces Jesus: *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14). The ultimate truth is the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the embodiment of God's Word and purpose.

Peter Banyard

TH

On page 6 of issue 1630, the writer claims that baptism is necessary for eternal life, and to support this he quotes Mark 16:15–16: *“And [Jesus] said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’”*

1. The earliest manuscripts do not include the verses in Mark 16:9–20. Therefore, should these verses be used to support an argument?
 2. If you’re going to use verses 15–16, you should also consider the rest of what Jesus said: *“And these signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover”* (vs. 17–18). I assume that Christadelphians do not believe in speaking in tongues or drinking poison?
 3. There are many verses that discuss salvation (for example John 3:16) that do not include baptism as a requirement.
1. Over 99% of Greek Bible manuscripts include the verses in question. Also, early Christian writers referred to and quoted these verses. Most scholars agree that the verses belong in Mark’s Gospel.
 2. Mark 16:16 is often used as a go-to verse to show the necessity of baptism, because it is a simple forceful statement. It’s true that it is part of a specific commandment to the apostles themselves, so if this was the only verse which gave commandment on the subject we may be wrong to use it. However, when you take it in the context of the rest of the Bible’s teaching—the practice of Christ in the Gospels and the early church in Acts, the reasoning in the apostles’ letters, and the Old Testament parables (see page 8 of this issue)—it becomes clear that baptism is a necessary part of the believer’s life.
 3. If you drive a car on a public road you need to obey the law. You also need a licence. If I were to say that you need to obey the law but did not mention the licence, I wouldn’t be implying that you don’t need a licence—holding a licence is part of obeying the law. Similarly, when the Bible says *“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), it’s not implying that you don’t need to be baptised—baptism is what you do when you believe.

Do you have a comment or question? E-mail editor@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Ed

Across

- 1 Ruth came from here (4) (*Ruth 1:4*)
- 3 Boaz did this by the gate (3) (*Ruth 4:1*)
- 5 Ruth and Naomi returned to Bethlehem at this time (7) (*Ruth 1:22*)
- 7 "The LORD do ___ to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me" (2) (*Ruth 1:17*)
- 8 Boaz told Ruth to look at the field where the women did this (4) (*Ruth 2:9*)
- 10 The name of Boaz and Ruth's son (4) (*Ruth 4:21*)
- 11 The capital of Moab (2) (*Isaiah 15:1*)
- 12 Ruth gleaned in the field after these (7) (*Ruth 2:3*)
- 13 Boaz asked this number of men to be witnesses (3) (*Ruth 4:2*)
- 14 Boaz commended Ruth for leaving that of her birth (4) (*Ruth 2:11*)



Down

- 1 The name of Ruth's first husband (6) (*Ruth 4:10*)
- 2 Orpah did this to Naomi before leaving (6) (*Ruth 1:14*)
- 4 In addition (4) (*Ruth 1:5*)
- 6 God said that this should not come upon Samson's head (5) (*Judges 13:5*)
- 7 To refrain from destroying (5) (*Genesis 18:24*)
- 8 Boaz asked his relative if he would do this to the land that Naomi sold (6) (*Ruth 4:4*)
- 9 Boaz ___ parched grain to Ruth (6) (*Ruth 2:14*)
- 11 To have the power (4) (*Exodus 18:18*)

Colin Jannaway

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

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