

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Man of Sorrows (p. 3)

How Medical Science Supports the Bible (p. 8)

Worse Than the Virus (p. 12)

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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Glad Tidings Distributors for orders and payments

United Kingdom
Becky Collard, 7 Lindridge Close,
Redditch, Worcs. B98 0QJ, UK
Tel: +44 (0)7521 079 190 (24 hrs)
orders-uk@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Australia
Ruth Morgan, 51 Jesmond Road,
Croydon, VIC 3136, Australia
gladtidingsaustralia@gmail.com

Canada
Vivian Thorp, 5377 Birdcage Walk,
Burlington, ON L7L 3K5, Canada
vivianthorp@bell.net

New Zealand
Neil Todd, 14 Morpeth Place, Blockhouse
Bay, Auckland 0600, New Zealand
thetodds@xtra.co.nz

U.S.A.
Pat Hemingray, 1244 Pennsylvania
Avenue, Oakmont, PA 15139, USA
orders-usa@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Other Countries
Andrew Johnson, 22 Hazel Drive,
Hollywood, Birmingham B47 5RJ, UK
orders-int@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Editor
Chris Parkin, 7 Thorntree Lane, Newhall,
Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 0LP, UK
editor@gladtidingsmagazine.org

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The Man of Sorrows

THERE ARE JUST TWO occasions in the Gospels on which we're told that Jesus Christ wept.

The first is recorded in John chapter 11. Lazarus, a close friend, had died, and Jesus went to meet his grieving family. He could have gone earlier and healed Lazarus of his disease. But he deliberately waited till Lazarus had died, then went with the purpose of raising him back to life: *'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him'* (John 11:11). In this episode the Lord was teaching profound lessons about his mission to the world: *'I am the resurrection and the life'* (v. 25). He is the Lord of life, and death has no power over those who are his.



As they approached the village of Bethany, Lazarus's two distraught sisters came out to meet them. Jesus and his disciples were escorted to the tomb by the mourners. He knew what he was going to do, he was

about to turn their distress into rejoicing—but when they came to the tomb, *'Jesus wept'* (v. 35). Why did he weep?

The other occasion was a short while later, as he rode into Jerusalem the week before he died. Again he was surrounded by people, but this time was very different: *'As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"'* (Luke 19:37–38).

There is a point on the hilly descent from the Mount of Olives where you suddenly see Jerusalem spread out before you. It would have been a beautiful sight in the afternoon sun, the stone city surmounted by its enormous marble and gold temple glinting like a snow-capped mountain.

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade round you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you" (vs. 41–44).

Surrounded this time by deliriously shouting crowds of adoring pilgrims, he wept again as he saw the future of the city before him: 40 years later it would be besieged and destroyed by the Roman Legions.



Two occasions on which we see Jesus weeping: in Bethany, at the sight of the mourners helpless before the misery of mortality, and on the Jerusalem road at the prospect of the catastrophe of AD70. Jesus Christ was a man who was thoroughly, intimately, passionately involved with the plight of his people.

A Life of Sorrow

The Lord's short life on earth was filled with hardship and pain, and the Gospels record graphically how it ended with the horrific death of crucifixion. Why did he go through it? The prophet Isaiah tells us: *'He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted'* (Isaiah 53:3-4). He lived and died *'to save his people from their sins'* (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus' death and resurrection broke the hold of death on the human race. The Bible tells us that he is now in heaven and will return to establish God's kingdom. At that time the mourning of death will be turned to rejoicing, and Jerusalem will ring again to the triumphant cry: *'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!'*

In the meantime he is the High Priest who brings the prayers of his people to God: *'Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us'* (Romans 8:34). As they wait and prepare for his return, Christ's disciples are assured by his words to his disciples before he left them to go to heaven: *'Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age'* (Matthew 28:20). He is as interested and involved in their lives now as he ever was.

'I am With You'

The Apostle Paul recalled his trial before Caesar: *'At my first defence no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me'* (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

Whether or not he actually saw his Lord standing by him, he knew he was there. Jesus who himself had been deserted by his friends and stood trial alone, was involved with Paul in his ordeal. If you are Christ's disciple, you know that he is passionately interested in you. He gave his life for you. He shares your joys and your sorrows. He is with you *'to the end of the age'*.



The True Vine

The Gospel of John records a number of sayings of Jesus which begin “I am...” In this series we think about some of the profound things he said about himself.

You can catch up with the previous articles at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

I AM THE TRUE VINE, and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned (John 15:1–6).

Jesus is talking about being a part of him, the true vine. As the one true vine he is the source of real truth; all others who make claims to be so are false teachers, false prophets and false Messiahs (see Matthew 24:24); they are not his, and they do not belong to him, and they do not teach what is true.

As the branches depend upon the vine for sustenance and life, anyone who follows Jesus will be dependent upon him for knowledge of the Gospel, and of the coming Kingdom of God.

The Vine Dresser

We note that in this metaphor it is God the Father who is the ‘vine dresser’, and ‘every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away’. The Lord God looks after the vine and removes the branches that do not bear fruit. Jesus’ parable of the tares (Matthew 13:24–30) gives us an insight into how this can happen.

However, for the true believers God treats them differently. They may suffer trials and difficulties in their lives, but if their faith is strong they will persevere—‘every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit’. Bad things can happen in a believer’s life which may be hurtful or worrying at the time. This is God ‘pruning His vine’. But if we remain steadfast, our faith is strengthened and we will bear even more fruit.

What is this fruit? Jesus speaks on many occasions about the necessity of bearing fruit. A good definition of it is given by the Apostle Paul: ‘*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,*

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law' (Galatians 5:22–23).



'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.' To abide in the Lord Jesus means to hear his word (for us today, it means to read the Word of God) and take it into our hearts and minds. And also, as I've already mentioned, it means being part of him. The important thing then, is to obey his commandments: *'Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you'* (John 15:13–14).

For those who abide in Jesus, God's promise holds true: *'He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed'* (Deuteronomy 31:8).

The Fruitless Branches

Jesus ends the parable: *'If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.'* This seems to be extreme language, but the Lord

appears to be referring to the prophet Malachi: *'For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch'* (Malachi 4:1).

The language is extreme but the message is clear. When someone who has been baptised, having confessed their faith in God the Father and the Lord Jesus, decides they no longer want to have anything to do with God and abandons their faith, they will not do this without consequences.

This is how the letter to the Hebrews puts it: *'Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries'* (Hebrews 10:23–27).

These words were initially directed toward Jews who had converted to Christianity but wanted to return to Judaism and to observing the Law of Moses again, but they obviously have a more general application.

What is the fate of these fruitless branches? In other parables Jesus describes this fate as *'outer darkness. In that place there*

will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 8:12), and also 'hell, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched' (Mark 9:47-48). And in Revelation as 'the second death' (Revelation. 2:11). The language is figurative—the Bible does not teach the idea of hell as the place of fiery torment which is believed by some churches—but the seriousness is clear.



The Fruitful Branches

If we believe, repent of our sins and are baptised, we become part of God's family. We become branches of the vine which is the Lord Jesus Christ. Being baptised is not enough, we must then strive to keep his commandments (John 14:15, 23; 15:10). This way we will be able to 'bear much fruit'.

It is a wonderful thing to abide in the Lord Jesus; anyone who does so has the hope of eternal life in the coming Kingdom of God: *'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him'* (John 3:36).

Grahame A Cooper

Other pictures of Christ and his disciples ...

'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.'

(1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

'So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.'

(Ephesians 2:19-22)

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How Medical Science Supports the Bible

IT'S NOT THAT we need to defend the Bible. As the saying goes, there's no need to defend a lion! But in view of the fact that many people these days somehow have the impression that the Bible is an archaic book which has been left behind by science, I think it's worth pointing out a few of the many ways in which the Bible was actually far ahead of its time, and is still entirely up to date.

The first five books of the Bible are generally known as the Books of Moses, because they were written (or compiled) by Moses, around 1500 BC. Moses was brought up as a prince in the highly sophisticated world of Egypt. He *'was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds'* (Acts 7:22). The Books of Moses contain the detailed and elaborate Law which God gave (via Moses) to His people Israel, which would govern every aspect of their lives including health and welfare. It's remarkable that the Law of Moses does not contain a single reference to the medical practices of Egypt, with which Moses would have been familiar—instead it contains rules and principles which must have seemed bizarre to Moses and his people, but (three and a half thousand years later) make absolute sense to us.

Here is a brief summary of ten medical topics on which the Bible is entirely up to date. Some refer to the Law of Moses and some are from elsewhere in the Bible.

1. Human waste disposal



Human waste contains all kinds of toxins, and nowadays we understand the importance of sanitation and sewage treatment. It's surprising to realise that until

relatively recently this was not understood. Until the 19th Century, human waste was dumped out of windows into the streets of London. The River Thames was used as a sewer. Huge numbers of people in similar cities died of cholera and dysentery, but nobody realised why.

If we go further back in time, the Egyptians in Moses' day used animal and human dung as medicine.

The Law of Moses contained a simple rule about personal sanitation—excrement was unclean, and it needed to be kept away from people and buried.

You shall have a place outside the camp, and you shall go out to it. And you shall have a

trowel with your tools, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement. Because the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you (Deuteronomy 23:12–14).

2. Personal cleanliness



In 1840 a Hungarian doctor called Ignaz Semmelweis made a breakthrough in medical practice in Vienna General Hospital where he worked. He told his staff that when they had handled a dead body or a sick patient, they must wash their hands before moving on to another patient.

The disease and death rate in his wards plummeted. It seems obvious to us, but it was not obvious at the time because people simply did not appreciate the value of hygiene. In fact many doctors refused to believe the evidence, and it was not until decades later that Semmelweis's practice of handwashing was generally adopted.

The Law of Moses insisted on washing and cleanliness in the treatment of disease, for example Leviticus 15:13 and Numbers 19:17.

And when the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes. And he shall bathe his body in fresh water and shall be clean (Leviticus 15:13).

3. Isolation and quarantine



Leviticus chapters 13 and 15 contain detailed instructions regarding the treatment of people with bodily issues and skin diseases. Chapter 14 contains instructions regarding rot in the fabric of a building. Central to these instructions is the requirement to discard contaminated items and isolate the affected person (or building). Again, this seems obvious to us but that is only because we have the advantage of hindsight.

In the 14th Century the Black Death was raging in Europe. There was nothing else left to try, so it was decided to adopt the biblical principle of isolating people who were diseased. *'He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp'* (Leviticus 13:46). It's recognised that this measure was largely responsible for ending the Black Death outbreak.

4. Circumcision



Circumcision is the practice of removing the male foreskin. It was commanded by God for His people as a sign of their dedication to Him (Genesis 17:10).

As well as its spiritual significance it also has health benefits—there are lower rates of genital cancer among both men and

women in societies which practise male circumcision.

The Bible's instruction is that circumcision is to be performed when a boy is eight days old (Genesis 17:12). We now know why: a baby can bleed profusely during its second to fifth days of life, but there is a build-up of the clotting factor Vitamin K during the fifth to seventh days. The eighth day is the earliest time when the operation can safely be performed.

5. Hardening of the arteries



Eating too much of the wrong type of fat leads to hardening of the arteries.

This can eventually lead to heart disease, which is one of the leading causes of death in the world.

The Law of Moses warned us about this: *'The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, You shall eat no fat, of ox or sheep or goat. The fat of an animal that dies of itself and the fat of one that is torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but on no account shall you eat it"'* (Leviticus 7:22-24).

6. Alcohol



The abuse of alcohol is one of the world's foremost causes of individual and social problems. Different societies have different

attitudes to it, and its hazards are not always recognised. In the 19th Century alcohol was widely used in western medicine as an anaesthetic.

The Bible recognises the benefit of alcohol: *'wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart'* (Psalm 104:15). But it also warns strenuously against the abuse of alcohol, for example *'Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise'* (Proverbs 20:1). This approach of alcohol in moderation is in line with recognised best practice.

7. Smoking



Not too long ago smoking tobacco was viewed as harmless, and even good for the health. It was thought to protect against 'bad air'. Nowadays medical science recognises that smoking is one of the biggest causes of premature death. Of course, smoking had not been invented when the Bible was written, but the Bible contains a clear and relevant principle. These are the Apostle Paul's instructions to the followers of Christ:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

This principle applies to many other things as well as tobacco—Christians should treat

their bodies with respect and take care what they do with them.

8. Sexually transmitted diseases



The Bible insists that sexual relations must exist only within marriage. For example Hebrews 13:4: *'Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.'* Increasingly this rule is rejected in our modern world. Multiple sexual partners are seen as the norm.

Sexually transmitted diseases are a serious and growing problem, particularly in western nations where 'sexual freedom' is encouraged. They would be unknown in a society which practised the Bible's sexual morality.

9. Psychosomatic disease



It is only recently that medical science has begun to recognise how much influence the mind has over the body. There are a number of physical disorders which are either brought on or made worse by mental stress. This can be worry, jealousy, frustration, self-pity or other negative emotions.

It becomes ever more apparent that the Bible's recipe for peace of mind is also a recipe for good health:

Do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

10. The Sabbath



The Law of Moses required that one day a week was to be a day of rest for people and animals (Exodus 20:8-11), and every seventh year the land was to lie fallow (Leviticus 25:1-7). In our modern world with its demands of business and leisure, every day can be equally stressful; and with fertilisers the land can be kept constantly productive. But it is increasingly being recognised that people and the environment can only take so much pressure.

Looking back from our 21st Century vantage point we can see the wisdom behind the Bible's instructions on the subject of medicine and wellbeing. Moses, and the other great people who received God's words, accepted them even when they may not have understood all the reasons, simply because they were confident that God is right. We can have that same confidence.

Malcolm G Cross



Worse Than the Virus

COVID 19 has been a worldwide tragedy that has changed our lives. Some people are traumatised by it, while others deny its severity or try to ignore it. We can be enormously grateful for those scientists who worked hard to understand the virus and formulate vaccines.

The Problem

Many people don't realise that there is a worldwide problem which affects us all, and is far, far worse than the virus. It is an old-fashioned word, and it is an unpleasant concept. But it features strongly in the Bible. It is 'SIN'.

Like it or not, we all sin. And like it or not, we all die as a result.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). For the wages of sin is death.... (Romans 6:23).

Isolation is a good precaution against contracting the virus, but it cannot shield us from sin, because it comes from within ourselves: 'And [Jesus] said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person"' (Mark 7:20-23).

One in three people with Coronavirus display no symptoms. But none of us are free from the symptoms of sin.

The Remedy

The various Coronavirus vaccines which now exist are the result of magnificent efforts, and have cost incredible amounts of money. But the cost of the remedy for sin was phenomenal. The only man who never sinned died an excruciating death so that our sins can be forgiven, and so that we can be saved from eternal death.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Romans 5:6-10).

We cannot ignore the problem and hope we'll be all right. We need to listen to what God has told us about our predicament, and respond to His offer of salvation.

Anna Hart

Mark

THIS GOSPEL was written by John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. He went with Paul and Barnabas on their preaching mission to Cyprus (Acts 13:4–5). He was well known to Peter who called him his “son” (1 Peter 5:13) and may have been the “young man” referred to in Mark 14:51.

Four Views of Jesus

An interesting connection has been made between the four Gospels and the four faces of the “living creatures”, or cherubim, of Ezekiel’s prophecy (compare Ezekiel 1:10 with 10:14–15). Just as those creatures each had four faces—a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle—so the four Gospels, while offering a full portrait, present characteristically different views of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The lion is a fitting symbol to represent Matthew’s view of the ‘King’.
- The ox corresponds to Mark’s view of the ‘Servant’.
- The human face relates to Luke’s view of Christ the ‘Man’ (often called “Son of Man”).
- The eagle is a fitting image for John’s lofty portrayal of the “Son of God”.

Thus Mark shows Jesus as the one who served. It is noteworthy how many miracles of healing and other acts of service are found in this short book: nearly 20

are recorded in chapters 1–10. It is also significant how Mark emphasises Jesus’ closeness to the people—mingling with them, speaking personally to them, and especially touching those to whom he ministered.



Urgent News

Mark’s 16 chapters are crisp and to the point. The message is simple and urgent. The last chapter gives only a brief account of the resurrection of Jesus—the vital message was to “*go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation*” (16:15).

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Mark 10:45—see Philipians 2:7.
- ◆ Mark 12:29—see Deuteronomy 6:4.
- ◆ Mark 16:16—see 1 Peter 3:21.

Deliverer of His People

Moses was keeping the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro the priest of Midian. He led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, which the Bible calls the mountain of God (Exodus 3:1). *And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed (v. 2).*

At the Burning Bush

Critics of the Bible have tried to explain away the burning bush. There is a type of wilderness thorn whose leaves turn red once a year, and it must have been one of these which caught Moses' eye. The snag with such a suggestion is that it does not fit the context. Moses fled from Egypt when he was 40 years old. He returned to deliver his people at the age of 80. The 40 years in between were spent as a shepherd in the Sinai Peninsula. Moses had led his animals annually round the meagre wilderness pastures until he must have known the area like the back of his hand. He would hardly have been deceived by such a familiar sight as a red-coloured bush. Something dramatic took place on that mountain slope that completely changed his life.

Moses drew near to the flaming shrub, curious. When he was within earshot (and therefore quite close enough to appreciate

that this was no ordinary botanical specimen), he heard the voice of the angel from within the fire. In measured tones he commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh and deliver his people from their slavery.



You might have expected Moses to be thrilled at such a message. In fact, he was extremely reluctant to go. *“But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice”* he protested. *“Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent... please send someone else”* (Exodus 4:1, 10, 13). One excuse after another came into his head as he tried to wriggle out of the job. And each time the angel insisted he would succeed in his task. He made him practise two staggering miracles he could call on to convince doubters. He even agreed to send Aaron his brother to act as his mouthpiece. Eventually Moses gave in and agreed to go.

Why did he make such a fuss? Perhaps as we grow older, we can appreciate his wish to remain in obscurity. As a young man, he had been cruelly rejected by the Israelites when he thought they would welcome him as their saviour. Now, after 40 years, another generation would have come along—why should they treat him any differently? In any case, nearly half a century of solitude and the shepherd life had estranged him from the bright lights and the civilised bustle of Egypt. That amount of time saps the energies, dulls the ideals, and deflates the ambition. Once so keen to go, his faith needed rekindling by the word of the Lord. The fact that he did make his big comeback proves that we are never too old to start work for God. Perhaps Moses needed the sojourn in the wilderness before he was fit to go. Such a period of separation can help someone to see life in perspective. Having to depend daily on God strips you of your self-esteem. Abraham, Joshua, David, Paul the Apostle and other great Bible characters, were all trained by the rigours of the wilderness for their life's work in God's service. So, young person, if your plans do not seem to work out first time, do not despair. Trust in the Lord, and He will direct the circumstances of your life to bring you in His own good time to where He needs you to be.

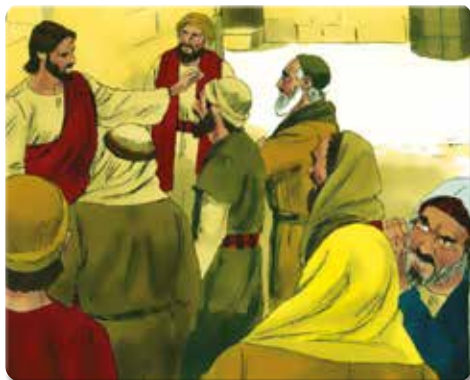
The God of the Living

There is another interesting point in the episode of the burning bush. Moses asked what name he should use when he introduced God to His people in Egypt

(Exodus 3:13). Most of them had stopped worshipping Him long ago. God identified himself: 'God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you' (vs. 14–15).

Jesus refers to this incident (a fact recorded in three of the Gospels, so it must be important). He is showing his questioners that God will raise people from the dead.

This is what he said: 'have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not God of the dead, but of the living' (Mark 12:26–27). You may not immediately see the logic of this answer. Why should the fact that God called Himself the God of Abraham prove that Abraham will rise from the dead?



We need to realise that Jesus was debating with Sadducees. The Sadducees were a

powerful Jewish sect who did not believe in any kind of afterlife. They held that we receive all we deserve in this life, and that is the end of us. So Jesus quoted a passage that said God was still prepared to be known as the God of Abraham, hundreds of years after his death. Abraham was not finished, in the mind of God. He had a reward in store for him, in the day of resurrection. Note that Jesus did not suggest that Abraham was already enjoying his reward. Jesus had no time for the idea of an immortal soul that finds its way to heaven at death. For him the gateway to the afterlife was the resurrection. *'Your brother will rise again'* was the message with which he consoled grief-stricken Martha over the death of her brother (John 11:23). *'Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live'* (v. 25). *'An hour is coming,'* he affirmed in another place, *'when all who are in the tombs will hear [my] voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement'* (John 5:28–29). So great was Abraham's faith, he is promised his part in the resurrection to eternal life. Until then he sleeps quietly in a cave in Hebron, and the phrase 'the God of Abraham' travels round the world, often repeated when sincere people read the Bible.

Returning Home

Moses now said goodbye to the family of Midianites who had taken him in, and returned to Egypt. It was a 250-mile journey, long enough to allow many doubts and fears to gnaw at his heart. However,

he was greatly encouraged when his older brother Aaron came out to meet him. He recounted to Aaron all the words of the Lord (Exodus 4:28). Aaron had lived amongst Israel in Egypt all this time, and was able to arrange a meeting to introduce Moses to the leaders of the 12 tribes.



After hearing what God had told Moses they were sceptical, until he showed them the two miracles God had given him to perform. He turned his shepherd's staff into a writhing snake, and then transformed it back to a rod again. He put his hand inside his coat, pulled it out repulsive with leprosy, then returned it to health. This supernatural power convinced them. The meeting ended with a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving that God was going to do something about their plight (v. 31).

Next day, Moses entered Pharaoh's palace and demanded an audience. We can imagine his feelings as he crossed the threshold of his former home and saw the changes that had taken place since he left. He would remember painfully the circumstances of his leaving Egypt, after

his first unsuccessful attempt to set Israel free. He assumed this time things would be different. With sweet reasonableness, he began by asking permission for Israel to celebrate a three-day religious festival out in the wilderness (Exodus 5:3). It was not much to ask, after their years of hard labour. But Pharaoh was a miser, and the request made him angry. Instead of granting permission, he savagely increased the daily work quota for the Israelite slaves.



Moses heard the groaning of the people as they now struggled to meet impossible targets. They resented his interference, and soon told him so. As he saw his brave adventure crumbling around him, he must have felt that the dreadful fiasco 40 years ago was about to repeat itself. Bitterly, he fell on his knees and spoke to God: *'Why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me?'* he complained (v. 22). He wished he had stayed in the desert. His worst fears were being realised.

Why does God so often make promises, and then leave them apparently unfulfilled?

It is an experience of many, perhaps most of His children. He stretches their faith to the uttermost, to see whether they will still believe when all goes wrong.

His delay can have other reasons, too. It gives space, sometimes, for people to repent. Peter reminds those who are growing impatient waiting for Christ's return: *'The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance'* (2 Peter 3:9). It is this grace that gives us opportunity to repent today. By the same token, the delay confirms in their wickedness those who refuse to repent.

In the case of Moses and Pharaoh, God was allowing Pharaoh to dig in his heels in order to ensure his spectacular and decisive downfall. In the words of the proverb, *'He who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing'* (Proverbs 29:1). Pharaoh was about to be broken.

David M Pearce

Questions? Comments?
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AM

Why is Jesus sometimes referred to as the Son of Man and sometimes as the Son of God?

Ed

HE IS BOTH. His mother was Mary, his father was God. As the angel said to Mary: *'And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High' (Luke 1:31–32).*

The terms 'son of man' and 'son of God' are both used throughout the Bible. 'Son of man' can be a general term for a human, for example *'Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation' (Psalm 146:3)*. 'Son of God' usually refers to Godly people, for example *'all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God' (Romans 8:14)*. But the majority of times each phrase occurs, they are referring to Jesus Christ, and when they're used of him they have a special significance.

'Son of man' is the term Jesus habitually used when he was referring to himself. It emphasises his humanity: he is one of us. The term 'Son of God' tended to be used by other people, when they recognised

who he was. If you have a concordance or searchable Bible app it's interesting to look at the occasions when the term 'Son of God' appears in the four Gospels. This is a key passage:

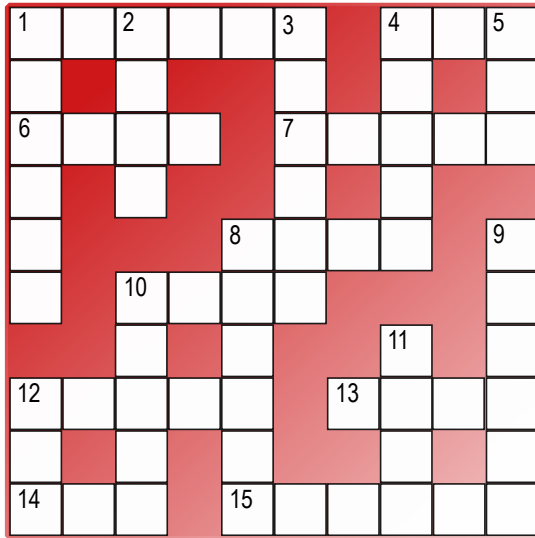
Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! [that is, Simon son of Jonah] For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 16:13–17).

Jesus is the Son of Man. He lived and died, and his life changed the course of history. This is a fact. He also claims to be the Son of God. It's for you to look into this claim, as God has revealed it to you in His Word the Bible, and decide whether or not you believe it—because if you do, it will change the course of your life.



Across

- 1 Wine is this
(Proverbs 20:1)
- 4 Whoever ate
12 down was
to be ___ off
from their
people
(Leviticus 7:25)
- 6 Isaac asked
Esau to hunt
this for him
(Genesis 27:3)
- 7 Anyone with
a discharge
was to
allow this number of days to be
cleansed (Leviticus 15:13)
- 8 The Israelites grumbled to Moses
because they wanted this to eat
(Exodus 16:8)
- 10 Spoke (Leviticus 8:5)
- 12 Anyone who had a discharge was to
bathe his body in this kind of water
(Leviticus 15:13)
- 13 The Israelites were not to do this on
the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3)
- 14 Moses went to this part of Mount
Sinai to receive the commandments
from God (Exodus 19:20)
- 15 We should let our requests be made
known to God by this (Philippians 4:6)



Down

- 1 Moses was this
(Acts 7:22)
- 2 The Israelites
had a place
outside
this for
relieving
themselves
(Deuteronomy
23:12)
- 3 God did this
on the seventh
day
(Exodus 20:11)
- 4 To long to
possess
something which belongs to someone
else (Exodus 20:17)
- 5 The number of commandments
(Exodus 34:28)
- 8 An unfortunate accident
(Psalm 144:14)
- 9 The Sabbath was also to apply to this
person (Leviticus 25:6)
- 10 The Israelites were not to eat 12 down
of this animal (Leviticus 7:23)
- 11 God made the Sabbath day this
(Exodus 20:11)
- 12 This part of an animal was not be
eaten (Leviticus 7:23)

(These clues use the English Standard Version of the Bible.
If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

Colin Jannaway

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cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

Caribbean

CBMC, Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280,
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philsnobelen@shaw.ca

India

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