

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Joy of Books (p. 3)

Words Matter (p. 6)

The Bible Companion (p. 10)

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

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

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Publisher

The Glad Tidings Publishing Association
A registered charity—Number 248352

The Joy of Books

HAS IT EVER struck you as odd? God has an urgent message for us, and He has infinite power at His disposal. He could have taken over the world's TV channels, or written in the sky, or sent out angels with loudhailers. But instead He chooses to communicate by means of an old book.

The cynic might turn the question round, and suggest that if God really did want to communicate with us He would use some other means. But this would be to miss the point of what the Bible is. It is not just an old book.

What God wants from us is faith. *'Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him'* (Hebrews 11:6). History shows that overt displays of God's power do not produce faith.

For Example ...

The book of Exodus narrates the journey of the people of Israel through the wilderness towards the Promised Land. They had experienced God's spectacular deliverance from their slavery in Egypt, and they were experiencing every day His guidance and care in the supernatural pillar of cloud which stood over the camp and the manna with which they were fed. And yet they regularly murmured, complained and

rebelled, and almost all of them perished on the journey. This is the Bible's summary of their failing:

For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest" (Psalm 95:10–11).



The four Gospel records present detailed accounts of Jesus Christ's ministry. The people were astonished at the miracles he performed, and on at least one occasion they were all for making him king (John 6:15). The Gospels describe how disillusionment developed into hostility, and three years after his ministry began his enemies were able to turn the people against him and secure his execution.

No amount of dramatic displays of God's power would produce a world full of faithful people. So what is the way to cultivate faith? *'Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ'* (Romans 10:17). The Bible is designed to ignite and cultivate faith in its readers.

Faith in God is not simply an acknowledgement of His existence. The Bible does provide plenty of evidence that it is the work of God Himself—for example in its own miraculous internal consistency, the witness of archaeology and science, and the evidence of fulfilled prophecy, especially in relation to Israel (which are regularly presented in this magazine). But much more than that, the Bible is a book with a purpose which is to change lives.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

God's purpose never was to convert everyone. It is to call out from the nations 'a people for his name' (Acts 15:14), to cultivate people who will turn to Him, put their faith in Him, obey Him and set their hearts on becoming like Him in the way they think and the things that matter in their lives. The Bible has a supreme ability to do this, and it has been doing it generation after generation down through the centuries.

A Good Read

It is a book that grows on you. As the Psalmist said: 'Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me' (Psalm 119:97–98). It contains sublime wisdom, which is unlike any other book in the world. What is not often recognised is that it is also great to read!

Within the Bible's 66 books there are examples of pretty well every genre of literature. For example Genesis contains the epic of creation and the beginnings of God's dealings with humankind; the books of Samuel contain the heroic life-story of David the shepherd king; the following books of Kings contain the historical saga of the prosperity and decline of a kingdom, and Lamentations is a song of grief for a fallen city. The book of Psalms contains songs which span the full breadth of human emotion; Proverbs contains pithy nuggets of wisdom, and Ecclesiastes is a philosophical treatise on the meaning of life. In the New Testament, the Gospels present four complementary biographies of the Lord Jesus Christ. The letters (or 'epistles') provide intimate insight into Christian life in the First Century in a wide variety of styles, from the meticulously reasoned argument of Hebrews to the warm practical guidance of James.

And these books are not just ancient and beautiful literature—they have the potency of the true words of God, bound together into one consistent revelation, with its central theme of a call to accept the free gift of eternal life. Why would you not want to read it?



John

THE WRITER of this fourth Gospel was John, brother of James and son of Zebedee, a Galilean fisherman. Jesus called him to be one of his closest followers. He is described in this book as *‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’*, showing how much John appreciated what Jesus stood for (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

John focuses on certain miracles of Jesus and calls them “signs”. They underline the authority Jesus had as the Son of God. They also serve as reminders of our need for healing from spiritual sickness and blindness (for example John 5:1–9; 9:1–12).

The Exalted View

God used John to reveal lofty truths about Jesus. *‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth’* (John 1:14). More than any of the other Gospel writers, John recorded the Lord’s wonderful discourses on deep spiritual themes with his ‘inner’ group of disciples—lessons, for example, on “the bread of life”, “the living water”, “the good shepherd”, “the true vine” (chapters 6, 7, 10 and 15).

Most of John’s record is concerned with events in Judea in the vicinity of Jerusalem, rather than Galilee in the north. He focuses on certain short time periods: chapters 7–21

are all concerned with the last few weeks, and chapters 12–21 with the last week of Christ’s ministry.

Norman Owen

By kind permission of ‘The Christadelphian’

John’s Eight Signs

- 1 Water made into wine (2:1–11)
- 2 Healing the nobleman’s son (4:46–54)
- 3 Healing the paralysed man (5:1–15)
- 4 Feeding the 5,000 (6:1–14)
- 5 Walking on the sea (6:15–21)
- 6 Healing the blind man (9:1–12)
- 7 Lazarus raised from the dead (11:1–44)
- 8 Miraculous catch of fish (21:1–14)



Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ John 1:14—see Isaiah 40:5; 2 Peter 1:17.
- ◆ John 3:14, 15—see Numbers 21:9.
- ◆ John 17:3—see 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5.

Words Matter

IN JANUARY 2021 American news hit world headlines: a violent crowd of rioters stormed the Capitol building in Washington. The President was subsequently impeached for allegedly inciting a riot. The Senate chaplain had said that “Words matter” and that “the power of life and death is in the tongue”.



The Power of the Tongue

Words do indeed matter! With words we can humiliate, insult, embarrass, malign, discourage; or we can uplift, encourage and build up. The wise man said that there is ‘a time to keep silence, and a time to speak’ (Ecclesiastes 3:7).

Keeping silent is not always the wisest approach, as silence is not neutral and can be misinterpreted, as either approval or disapproval. So there is a ‘time to speak’. But the speech itself needs to be wholesome. The Apostle James warned:

No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so (James 3:8–10).

Worse still, it is not uncommon these days for people to speak disrespectfully about God Himself. The follower of Christ should never do this. But the Bible warns us that it is quite possible to speak disrespectfully about God without meaning to.

Unsafe Assumptions

The book of Job tells of a series of catastrophes happening to this godly man. His wife urges him to ‘curse God and die’ (Job 2:9), which is clearly wrong. But then three friends come to ‘comfort’ him and to give him the benefit of their advice. In slightly different ways they all accuse him of having done something to incur the anger of God, while he repeatedly (and correctly) insists that his behaviour before God has been right and consistent. They become judgemental and he becomes defensive.

While the book is about Job’s endurance in the face of disaster (James 5:11), it is also about the attitude of the three friends. God says of them that they have not spoken of Him what is ‘right’ (Job 42:7).

In fact the friends did say some things about God that were correct: principles that are repeated elsewhere in the Bible. Examples are:

- *Eliphaz* (Job 5:11 compare with Psalm 113:7; and Job 15:14 compare with Proverbs 20:9)
- *Bildad* (Job 18:5 compare with Proverbs 13:9, 20:20)
- *Zophar* (Job 20:5 compare with Psalm 37:35–6; and Job 20:8 compare with Psalm 73:20).



It is a fundamental Bible message that ultimately the righteous are blessed and the wicked punished. But in the short-term, in this life, it is not like that. Bad people can prosper, and bad things happen to good people. The supreme example of this is the Lord Jesus Christ who never did anything wrong and yet suffered more than any other human being. And in Psalm 73 the writer realises that bad people may prosper in the short-term, but not eternally. Similarly, the claim that God chastens people (Job 5:17) is perfectly correct (Hebrews 12:5), but that is not the only reason why people suffer.

The massive error made by the friends was to judge the actual case before them. They

presumed to tell Job (and therefore God Himself) why God had allowed these things to happen to Job. The fact that God can and does sometimes react in a particular way does not entitle us to presume that we know His reasons in any specific situation. The details in the book of Job show us that, when assessing Job's plight, the friends made unsafe assumptions and spoke out of turn, and consequently they told untruths about God. This was so serious that God told Job to pray for them (Job 42:8) so that they could be forgiven.

We Must Beware

We cannot deduce truths about God from our observation and experience of life. The Bible is the only authority and tells us much about God's character and plans. This is a great honour for us. But we must be very careful to quote correctly, in context, neither adding to nor taking away from God's own revealed words and ideas. Otherwise we may make the same mistake that Job's three friends made. Are we ever tempted to say things such as "Oh, it was meant to be", "It will all work out", "God helped them to get better because they are so faithful", "It's judgement on them"?

The words we speak reflect the beliefs in our inner selves (Luke 6:45). Let us read the Bible carefully, trying to ensure that all our communication is consistent with it. Then our thoughts and ideas can be godly and we can avoid misrepresenting Almighty God. Our words really do matter.

Anna Hart

Cain and Abel

THE ACCOUNTS of the first act of worship in human history and the first murder are recorded in Genesis chapter 4. They follow the account in chapter 3 of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden and the entrance of sin into the world.

Cain and Abel were the sons of Adam and Eve. They each brought an offering to God (Genesis 4:3). Some wonder how Cain and Abel were to know what to sacrifice. The answer is that their parents must have instructed them concerning the details of acceptable worship. Adam and Eve had tried to hide their shame by sewing fig leaves together (Genesis 3:7), then they had watched as God killed an animal to clothe them with its skin (v. 21), and so they had learnt the principle that is explained much later in the Letter to the Hebrews: 'Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins' (Hebrews 9:22).

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard (Genesis 4:3-5).

Later, in the Law of Moses, God confirmed what Cain and Abel probably already knew: the firstborn and its fat belong to Him (Leviticus 3:16). There was provision in the Law for grain offerings

(Leviticus 2), but this was not what God required of the brothers. Abel had obeyed God's command that blood must be shed in order to receive forgiveness of sins. Cain had not.



Worship With the Heart

The attitude with which an offering is made is crucial. There was something in Abel's and Cain's motivation which made one offering acceptable and the other unacceptable to God. The Bible is clear that God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7) and without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). When Cain and Abel approached God in worship they needed to acknowledge that they were sinners in need of the covering God could provide, and to 'worship God in spirit and truth' (John 4:24). Abel offered in faith, and his faith was acceptable in God's sight:

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks (Hebrews 11:4).

It is a fundamental principle that we must approach God in faith. Abel did not value his flock more than God, but gave to God the best he had. *'Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him'* (v. 6).

Hatred and Murder

Cain was angry and envious of Abel. Instead of repenting and seeking forgiveness from God he slew his brother in the field, and then lied to God: *'Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"'* (Genesis 4:9). God knew what Cain had done, but because of His lovingkindness He took pity on him and put a mark on him so that no one would take revenge on him (v. 15). Cain still did not repent. He went out from God's presence and dwelt in the land of Nod (v. 16).



The Apostle John gives us further insight into Cain's heart. *'We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous'* (1 John 3:12). Those who belong to 'the evil one'—those who follow their own sinful desires—will do evil, and those who do evil will naturally loathe those who do what is right.

When God confronted Cain with his brother's murder He said *'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground'* (Genesis 4:10). But the Letter to the Hebrews contrasts this with the blood of Jesus Christ: *'To Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel'* (Hebrews 12:24). Abel's blood cried out Cain's guilt; Christ's blood cries out for our forgiveness.

Like Abel, Jesus Christ offered a sacrifice which was pleasing to God and was slain by wicked hands. The offering Jesus made was his own life, which he laid down as a sacrifice for our sins. If we worship God in the way He requires—rather than doing what we think is right—then in Christ *'we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace'* (Ephesians 1:7), and there is a wonderful and glorious hope awaiting us in the age to come.

Bahar Raesi

The Bible C

These tables contain three portions of the Bible for each day of the year. They will enable

1 CHRONICLES

2 KINGS

1 KINGS

2 SAMUEL

PROVERBS

PSALMS

NUMBERS

LEVITICUS

EXODUS

GENESIS

| January | February | March |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 Genesis 1, 2 | 1 Exodus 5, 6 | 1 Leviticus 5, 6 |
| 2 ... 3, 4 | 2 ... 7, 8 | 2 ... 7, 8 |
| 3 ... 5, 6 | 3 ... 9 | 3 ... 8 |
| 4 ... 7, 8 | 4 ... 10 | 4 ... 9, 10 |
| 5 ... 9, 10 | 5 ... 11, 12 | 5 ... 10, 11 |
| 6 ... 11, 12 | 6 ... 13, 14 | 6 ... 12, 13 |
| 7 ... 13, 14 | 7 ... 15 | 7 ... 14 |
| 8 ... 15, 16 | 8 ... 16 | 8 ... 15 |
| 9 ... 17, 18 | 9 ... 17, 18 | 9 ... 16 |
| 10 ... 19 | 10 ... 19, 20 | 10 ... 17, 18 |
| 11 ... 20, 21 | 11 ... 21 | 11 ... 19 |
| 12 ... 22, 23 | 12 ... 22 | 12 ... 20 |
| 13 ... 24 | 13 ... 23 | 13 ... 21 |
| 14 ... 25, 26 | 14 ... 24, 25 | 14 ... 22 |
| 15 ... 27 | 15 ... 26 | 15 ... 23 |
| 16 ... 28, 29 | 16 ... 27 | 16 ... 24 |
| 17 ... 30 | 17 ... 28 | 17 ... 25 |
| 18 ... 31 | 18 ... 29 | 18 ... 26 |
| 19 ... 32, 33 | 19 ... 30 | 19 ... 27 |
| 20 ... 34, 35 | 20 ... 31, 32 | 20 ... Numbers 1 |
| 21 ... 36 | 21 ... 33, 34 | 21 ... 2 |
| 22 ... 37 | 22 ... 35 | 22 ... 3 |
| 23 ... 38 | 23 ... 36 | 23 ... 4 |
| 24 ... 39, 40 | 24 ... 37 | 24 ... 5 |
| 25 ... 41 | 25 ... 38 | 25 ... 6 |
| 26 ... 42, 43 | 26 ... 39, 40 | 26 ... 7 |
| 27 ... 44, 45 | 27 ... 41, 42 | 27 ... 8, 9 |
| 28 ... 46, 47 | 28 ... 43, 44 | 28 ... 10 |
| 29 ... 48-50 | 29 ... 45 | 29 ... 11 |
| 30 Exodus 1, 2 | 30 ... 46 | 30 ... 12, 13 |
| 31 ... 3, 4 | 31 ... 47 | 31 ... 14 |

| July | August | September |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1 1 Samuel 13 | 1 2 Samuel 18 | 1 2 Kings 6 |
| 2 ... 14 | 2 ... 19 | 2 ... 7 |
| 3 ... 15 | 3 ... 20, 21 | 3 ... 8 |
| 4 ... 16 | 4 ... 22 | 4 ... 9 |
| 5 ... 17 | 5 ... 23 | 5 ... 10 |
| 6 ... 18 | 6 ... 24 | 6 ... 11, 12 |
| 7 ... 19 | 7 1 Kings 1 | 7 ... 13 |
| 8 ... 20 | 8 ... 2 | 8 ... 14 |
| 9 ... 21, 22 | 9 ... 3 | 9 ... 15 |
| 10 ... 23 | 10 ... 4, 5 | 10 ... 16 |
| 11 ... 24 | 11 ... 6 | 11 ... 17 |
| 12 ... 25 | 12 ... 7 | 12 ... 18 |
| 13 ... 26, 27 | 13 ... 8 | 13 ... 19 |
| 14 ... 28 | 14 ... 9 | 14 ... 20 |
| 15 ... 29, 30 | 15 ... 10 | 15 ... 21 |
| 16 ... 31 | 16 ... 11 | 16 ... 22, 23 |
| 17 2 Samuel 1 | 17 ... 12 | 17 ... 24, 25 |
| 18 ... 2 | 18 ... 13 | 18 ... 1 Chronicles 1 |
| 19 ... 3 | 19 ... 14 | 19 ... 2 |
| 20 ... 4, 5 | 20 ... 15 | 20 ... 3 |
| 21 ... 6 | 21 ... 16 | 21 ... 4 |
| 22 ... 7 | 22 ... 17 | 22 ... 5 |
| 23 ... 8, 9 | 23 ... 18 | 23 ... 6 |
| 24 ... 10 | 24 ... 19 | 24 ... 7 |
| 25 ... 11 | 25 ... 20 | 25 ... 8 |
| 26 ... 12 | 26 ... 21 | 26 ... 9 |
| 27 ... 13 | 27 ... 22 | 27 ... 10 |
| 28 ... 14 | 28 2 Kings 1, 2 | 28 ... 11 |
| 29 ... 15 | 29 ... 3 | 29 ... 12 |
| 30 ... 16 | 30 ... 4 | 30 ... 13, 14 |
| 31 ... 17 | 31 ... 5 | |

| January | February | March |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1 Psalms 1, 2 | 1 Psalms 58, 59 | 1 Psalms 105 |
| 2 ... 3-5 | 2 ... 60, 61 | 2 ... 106 |
| 3 ... 6-8 | 3 ... 62, 63 | 3 ... 107 |
| 4 ... 9, 10 | 4 ... 64, 65 | 4 ... 108, 109 |
| 5 ... 11-13 | 5 ... 66, 67 | 5 ... 110-113 |
| 6 ... 14-16 | 6 ... 68 | 6 ... 113, 114 |
| 7 ... 17 | 7 ... 69 | 7 ... 115, 116 |
| 8 ... 18 | 8 ... 70, 71 | 8 ... 117, 118 |
| 9 ... 19-21 | 9 ... 72 | 9 ... 119 v.1-40 |
| 10 ... 22 | 10 ... 73 | 10 ... v.41-80 |
| 11 ... 23-25 | 11 ... 74 | 11 ... v.81-128 |
| 12 ... 26-28 | 12 ... 75, 76 | 12 ... v.129-134 |
| 13 ... 29, 30 | 13 ... 77 | 13 ... 135-136 |
| 14 ... 31 | 14 ... 78 | 14 ... 137-139 |
| 15 ... 32 | 15 ... 79, 80 | 15 ... 140-142 |
| 16 ... 33 | 16 ... 81, 82 | 16 ... 143, 144 |
| 17 ... 34 | 17 ... 83, 84 | 17 ... 145-147 |
| 18 ... 35 | 18 ... 85, 86 | 18 ... 148-150 |
| 19 ... 36 | 19 ... 87, 88 | 19 ... Proverbs 1 |
| 20 ... 37 | 20 ... 89 | 20 ... 2 |
| 21 ... 38 | 21 ... 90, 91 | 21 ... 3 |
| 22 ... 39, 40 | 22 ... 92, 93 | 22 ... 4 |
| 23 ... 41-43 | 23 ... 94, 95 | 23 ... 5 |
| 24 ... 44 | 24 ... 96-99 | 24 ... 6 |
| 25 ... 45 | 25 ... 100, 101 | 25 ... 7 |
| 26 ... 46-48 | 26 ... 102 | 26 ... 8 |
| 27 ... 49 | 27 ... 103 | 27 ... 9 |
| 28 ... 50 | 28 ... 104 | 28 ... 10 |
| 29 ... 51, 52 | 29 ... 105 | |
| 30 ... 53-55 | 30 ... 106 | |
| 31 ... 56, 57 | 31 ... 107 | |

1 SAMUEL

JUDGES

JOSHUA

DEUTERONOMY

| April | May | June |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 Numbers 15 | 1 Deut. 18 | 1 Joshua 18 |
| 2 ... 17, 18 | 2 ... 19 | 2 ... 19 |
| 3 ... 19 | 3 ... 20 | 3 ... 20, 21 |
| 4 ... 20, 21 | 4 ... 21 | 4 ... 21 |
| 5 ... 22, 23 | 5 ... 22 | 5 ... 22, 24 |
| 6 ... 24, 25 | 6 ... 23 | 6 Judges 1 |
| 7 ... 26 | 7 ... 24 | 7 ... 2, 3 |
| 8 ... 27 | 8 ... 25 | 8 ... 4, 5 |
| 9 ... 28 | 9 ... 26 | 9 ... 6 |
| 10 ... 29 | 10 ... 27 | 10 ... 7, 8 |
| 11 ... 30 | 11 ... 28 | 11 ... 9 |
| 12 ... 31 | 12 ... 29 | 12 ... 10, 11 |
| 13 ... 32 | 13 ... 30 | 13 ... 12, 13 |
| 14 ... 33 | 14 ... 31 | 14 ... 14, 15 |
| 15 ... 34 | 15 ... 32 | 15 ... 16 |
| 16 ... 35 | 16 ... 33, 34 | 16 ... 17, 18 |
| 17 Deut. 1 | 17 ... 35 | 17 ... 19 |
| 18 ... 2 | 18 ... 36 | 18 ... 20 |
| 19 ... 3 | 19 ... 37 | 19 ... 21 |
| 20 ... 4 | 20 ... 38 | 20 ... 22 |
| 21 ... 5 | 21 ... 39 | 21 ... 23 |
| 22 ... 6 | 22 ... 40 | 22 ... 24 |
| 23 ... 7 | 23 ... 41 | 23 ... 25 |
| 24 ... 8 | 24 ... 42 | 24 ... 26 |
| 25 ... 9 | 25 ... 43 | 25 ... 27 |
| 26 ... 10 | 26 ... 44 | 26 ... 28 |
| 27 ... 11 | 27 ... 45 | 27 ... 29 |
| 28 ... 12 | 28 ... 46 | 28 ... 30 |
| 29 ... 13 | 29 ... 47 | 29 ... 31 |
| 30 ... 14 | 30 ... 48 | |
| 31 ... 15 | 31 ... 49 | |

JOB

NEHEMIAH

EZRA

2 CHRONICLES

| October | November | December |
|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 1 Chron. 15 | 1 2 Chron. 30 | 1 Esther 9, 10 |
| 2 ... 16 | 2 ... 31 | 2 Job 1, 2 |
| 3 ... 17 | 3 ... 32 | 3 ... 3, 4 |
| 4 ... 18, 19 | 4 ... 33 | 4 ... 5 |
| 5 ... 20, 21 | 5 ... 34 | 5 ... 6, 7 |
| 6 ... 22 | 6 ... 35 | 6 ... 8 |
| 7 ... 23 | 7 ... 36 | 7 ... 9 |
| 8 ... 24, 25 | 8 Ezra 1, 2 | 8 ... 10 |
| 9 ... 26 | 9 ... 3 | 9 ... 11 |
| 10 ... 27 | 10 ... 4 | 10 ... 12 |
| 11 ... 28 | 11 ... 5 | 11 ... 13 |
| 12 ... 29 | 12 ... 6 | 12 ... 14 |
| 13 2 Chron. 1, 2 | 13 ... 7 | 13 ... 15 |
| 14 ... 3 | 14 ... 8 | 14 ... 16, 17 |
| 15 ... 4, 5 | 15 Nehemiah 1, 2 | 15 ... 18, 19 |
| 16 ... 6 | 16 ... 3 | 16 ... 20 |
| 17 ... 7 | 17 ... 4 | 17 ... 21 |
| 18 ... 8 | 18 ... 5 | 18 ... 22 |
| 19 ... 9 | 19 ... 6 | 19 ... 23, 24 |
| 20 ... 10, 11 | 20 ... 7 | 20 ... 25-27 |
| 21 ... 12, 13 | 21 ... 8 | 21 ... 28 |
| 22 ... 14 | 22 ... 9 | 22 ... 29 |
| 23 ... 15 | 23 ... 10 | 23 ... 30 |
| 24 ... 16 | 24 ... 11 | 24 ... 31 |
| 25 ... 17 | 25 ... 12 | |
| 26 ... 18, 19 | 26 ... 13 | |
| 27 ... 20 | 27 ... 14 | |
| 28 ... 21 | 28 ... 15 | |
| 29 ... 22 | 29 ... 16 | |
| 30 ... 23 | 30 ... 17 | |
| 31 ... 24 | 31 ... 18 | |

ISAIAH

ECCLESIASTES

| April | May | June |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 Proverbs 11 | 1 Ecclesiastes 10 | 1 Isaiah 24 |
| 2 ... 12 | 2 ... 11 | 2 ... 25 |
| 3 ... 13 | 3 ... 12 | 3 ... 26, 27 |
| 4 ... 14 | 4 Song of Sol. 1 | 4 ... 28 |
| 5 ... 15 | 5 ... 2 | 5 ... 29 |
| 6 ... 16 | 6 ... 3 | 6 ... 30 |
| 7 ... 17 | 7 ... 4 | 7 ... 31 |
| 8 ... 18 | 8 ... 5 | 8 ... 32 |
| 9 ... 19 | 9 ... 6 | 9 ... 33 |
| 10 ... 20 | 10 ... 7 | 10 ... 34 |
| 11 ... 21 | 11 ... 8 | 11 ... 35 |
| 12 ... 22 | 12 Isaiah 1 | 12 ... 36 |
| 13 ... 23 | 13 ... 2 | 13 ... 37 |
| 14 ... 24 | 14 ... 3 | 14 ... 38 |
| 15 ... 25 | 15 ... 4 | 15 ... 39 |
| 16 ... 26 | 16 ... 5 | 16 ... 40 |
| 17 ... 27 | 17 ... 6 | 17 ... 41 |
| 18 ... 28 | 18 ... 7 | 18 ... 42 |
| 19 ... 29 | 19 ... 8 | 19 ... 43 |
| 20 ... 30 | 20 ... 9 | 20 ... 44 |
| 21 ... 31 | 21 ... 10 | 21 ... 45 |
| 22 Ecclesiastes 1 | 22 ... 11 | 22 ... 46, 47 |
| 23 ... 2 | 23 ... 12 | 23 ... 48 |
| 24 ... 3 | 24 ... 13 | 24 ... 49 |
| 25 ... 4 | 25 ... 14 | 25 ... 50 |
| 26 ... 5 | 26 ... 15 | 26 ... 51 |
| 27 ... 6 | 27 ... 16 | 27 ... 52 |
| 28 ... 7 | 28 ... 17, 18 | 28 ... 53 |
| 29 ... 8 | 29 ... 19 | 29 ... 54 |
| 30 ... 9 | 30 ... 20 | 30 ... 55 |
| 31 ... 10 | 31 ... 21 | |

First portion

Second

Companion

enables you to read the Old Testament through once in a year, and the New Testament twice.



| July | August | September |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1 Isaiah 56, 57 | 1 Jeremiah 22 | 1 Lament. 2 |
| 2 ... 58 | 2 ... 23 | 2 ... 3 |
| 3 ... 59 | 3 ... 24 | 3 ... 4 |
| 4 ... 60 | 4 ... 25 | 4 ... 5 |
| 5 ... 61 | 5 ... 26 | 5 ... 6 |
| 6 ... 62 | 6 ... 27 | 6 ... 7 |
| 7 ... 63 | 7 ... 28 | 7 ... 8 |
| 8 ... 64 | 8 ... 29 | 8 ... 9 |
| 9 ... 65 | 9 ... 30 | 9 ... 10 |
| 10 ... 66 | 10 ... 31 | 10 ... 11 |
| 11 Jeremiah 1 | 11 ... 32 | 11 ... 12 |
| 12 ... 2 | 12 ... 33 | 12 ... 13 |
| 13 ... 3 | 13 ... 34 | 13 ... 14 |
| 14 ... 4 | 14 ... 35 | 14 ... 15 |
| 15 ... 5 | 15 ... 36 | 15 ... 16 |
| 16 ... 6 | 16 ... 37 | 16 ... 17 |
| 17 ... 7 | 17 ... 38 | 17 ... 18 |
| 18 ... 8 | 18 ... 39 | 18 ... 19 |
| 19 ... 9 | 19 ... 40 | 19 ... 20 |
| 20 ... 10 | 20 ... 41 | 20 ... 21 |
| 21 ... 11 | 21 ... 42 | 21 ... 22 |
| 22 ... 12 | 22 ... 43 | 22 ... 23 |
| 23 ... 13 | 23 ... 44 | 23 ... 24 |
| 24 ... 14 | 24 ... 45 | 24 ... 25 |
| 25 ... 15 | 25 ... 46 | 25 ... 26 |
| 26 ... 16 | 26 ... 47 | 26 ... 27 |
| 27 ... 17 | 27 ... 48 | 27 ... 28 |
| 28 ... 18 | 28 ... 49 | 28 ... 29 |
| 29 ... 19 | 29 ... 50 | 29 ... 30 |
| 30 ... 20 | 30 ... 51 | 30 ... 31 |
| 31 ... 21 | 31 Lament. 1 | |

| January | February | March |
|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Matthew 1, 2 | 1 Romans 10, 11 | 1 1 Corinthians 14 |
| 2 ... 3, 4 | 2 ... 12 | 2 ... 15 |
| 3 ... 5 | 3 ... 13, 14 | 3 ... 16 |
| 4 ... 6 | 4 ... 15, 16 | 4 2 Corinthians 1, 2 |
| 5 ... 7 | 5 ... Mark 2 | 5 ... 3, 4 |
| 6 ... 8 | 6 ... 8 | 6 ... 5-7 |
| 7 ... 9 | 7 ... 9 | 7 ... 8, 9 |
| 8 ... 10 | 8 ... 10 | 8 ... 10, 11 |
| 9 ... 11 | 9 ... 11 | 9 ... 12, 13 |
| 10 ... 12 | 10 ... 12 | 10 Luke 6 |
| 11 ... 13 | 11 ... 13 | 11 ... 7 |
| 12 ... 14 | 12 ... 14 | 12 ... 8 |
| 13 ... 15 | 13 ... 15 | 13 ... 9 |
| 14 ... 16 | 14 ... 16 | 14 ... 10 |
| 15 ... 17 | 15 ... 17 | 15 ... 11 |
| 16 ... 18 | 16 ... 18 | 16 ... 12 |
| 17 ... 19 | 17 ... 19 | 17 ... 13 |
| 18 ... 20 | 18 ... 20 | 18 ... 14 |
| 19 ... 21 | 19 ... 21 | 19 ... 15 |
| 20 ... 22 | 20 1 Corinthians 1, 2 | 20 ... 16 |
| 21 ... 23 | 21 ... 3 | 21 ... 17 |
| 22 ... 24 | 22 ... 4, 5 | 22 ... 18 |
| 23 ... 25 | 23 ... 6 | 23 ... 19 |
| 24 ... 26 | 24 ... 7 | 24 ... 20 |
| 25 ... 27 | 25 ... 8, 9 | 25 ... 21 |
| 26 ... 28 | 26 ... 10 | 26 ... 22 |
| 27 Romans 1, 2 | 27 ... 11 | 27 ... 23 |
| 28 ... 3, 4 | 28 ... 12, 13 | 28 ... 24 |
| 29 ... 5, 6 | 29 ... 14 | 29 ... 25 |
| 30 ... 7, 8 | 30 ... 15 | 30 ... 26 |
| 31 ... 9 | 31 ... 16 | 31 ... 27 |

| July | August | September |
|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Rev. 21, 22 | 1 Romans 9 | 1 1 Corinthians 15 |
| 2 Matthew 1, 2 | 2 ... 10, 11 | 2 ... 2 |
| 3 ... 3, 4 | 3 ... 12 | 3 2 Corinthians 1, 2 |
| 4 ... 5 | 4 ... 13, 14 | 4 ... 3, 4 |
| 5 ... 6 | 5 ... 15, 16 | 5 ... 5, 7 |
| 6 ... 7 | 6 Mark 1 | 6 ... 8, 9 |
| 7 ... 8 | 7 ... 2 | 7 ... 10, 11 |
| 8 ... 9 | 8 ... 3 | 8 ... 12, 13 |
| 9 ... 10 | 9 ... 4 | 9 ... 14 |
| 10 ... 11 | 10 ... 5 | 10 ... 15 |
| 11 ... 12 | 11 ... 6 | 11 ... 16 |
| 12 ... 13 | 12 ... 7 | 12 ... 17 |
| 13 ... 14 | 13 ... 8 | 13 ... 18 |
| 14 ... 15 | 14 ... 9 | 14 ... 19 |
| 15 ... 16 | 15 ... 10 | 15 ... 20 |
| 16 ... 17 | 16 ... 11 | 16 ... 21 |
| 17 ... 18 | 17 ... 12 | 17 ... 22 |
| 18 ... 19 | 18 ... 13 | 18 ... 23 |
| 19 ... 20 | 19 ... 14 | 19 ... 24 |
| 20 ... 21 | 20 ... 15 | 20 ... 25 |
| 21 ... 22 | 21 ... 16 | 21 ... 26 |
| 22 ... 23 | 22 1 Corinthians 1, 2 | 22 ... 27 |
| 23 ... 24 | 23 ... 17 | 23 ... 28 |
| 24 ... 25 | 24 ... 18 | 24 ... 29 |
| 25 ... 26 | 25 ... 19 | 25 ... 30 |
| 26 ... 27 | 26 ... 20 | 26 ... 31 |
| 27 Romans 1, 2 | 27 ... 21 | |
| 28 ... 3, 4 | 28 ... 22 | |
| 29 ... 5, 6 | 29 ... 23 | |
| 30 ... 7, 8 | 30 ... 24 | |
| 31 ... 9 | 31 ... 25 | |



| October | November | December |
|--------------|----------------|------------|
| 1 Ezekiel 27 | 1 Daniel 10 | 1 Jonah 1 |
| 2 ... 28 | 2 ... 11 | 2 ... 2, 3 |
| 3 ... 29 | 3 ... 12 | 3 ... 4 |
| 4 ... 30 | 4 Hosea 1 | 4 Micah 1 |
| 5 ... 31 | 5 ... 2 | 5 ... 2 |
| 6 ... 32 | 6 ... 3 | 6 ... 3, 4 |
| 7 ... 33 | 7 ... 4 | 7 ... 5 |
| 8 ... 34 | 8 ... 5 | 8 ... 6 |
| 9 ... 35 | 9 ... 6 | 9 ... 7 |
| 10 ... 36 | 10 Nahum 1, 2 | 10 ... 8 |
| 11 ... 37 | 11 ... 3 | 11 ... 9 |
| 12 ... 38 | 12 Habakkuk 1 | 12 ... 10 |
| 13 ... 39 | 13 ... 2 | 13 ... 11 |
| 14 ... 40 | 14 ... 3 | 14 ... 12 |
| 15 ... 41 | 15 Zephaniah 1 | 15 ... 13 |
| 16 ... 42 | 16 ... 2 | 16 ... 14 |
| 17 ... 43 | 17 ... 3 | 17 ... 15 |
| 18 ... 44 | 18 Joel 1 | 18 ... 16 |
| 19 ... 45 | 19 Zechariah 1 | 19 ... 17 |
| 20 ... 46 | 20 ... 2 | 20 ... 18 |
| 21 ... 47 | 21 Amos 1 | 21 ... 19 |
| 22 ... 48 | 22 ... 2 | 22 ... 20 |
| 23 Daniel 1 | 23 ... 3 | 23 ... 21 |
| 24 ... 2 | 24 ... 4 | 24 ... 22 |
| 25 ... 3 | 25 ... 5 | 25 ... 23 |
| 26 ... 4 | 26 ... 6 | 26 ... 24 |
| 27 ... 5 | 27 ... 7 | 27 ... 25 |
| 28 ... 6 | 28 ... 8 | 28 ... 26 |
| 29 ... 7 | 29 Malachi 1 | 29 ... 27 |
| 30 ... 8 | 30 ... 2 | 30 ... 28 |
| 31 ... 9 | 31 ... 3, 4 | 31 ... 29 |



| April | May | June |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Luke 24 | 1 Acts 9 | 1 Hebrews 6, 7 |
| 2 Galatians 1, 2 | 2 ... 10 | 2 ... 8, 9 |
| 3 ... 3, 4 | 3 ... 11, 12 | 3 ... 10 |
| 4 ... 5, 6 | 4 ... 13 | 4 ... 11 |
| 5 Ephesians 1, 2 | 5 ... 14, 15 | 5 ... 12 |
| 6 ... 3, 4 | 6 ... 16, 17 | 6 ... 13 |
| 7 ... 5, 6 | 7 ... 18, 19 | 7 James 1 |
| 8 Philippians 1, 2 | 8 ... 20 | 8 ... 2 |
| 9 ... 3, 4 | 9 ... 21, 22 | 9 ... 3, 4 |
| 10 John 1 | 10 ... 23, 24 | 10 ... 5 |
| 11 ... 2, 3 | 11 ... 25, 26 | 11 1 Peter 1 |
| 12 ... 4 | 12 ... 27 | 12 ... 2 |
| 13 ... 5 | 13 Colossians 2 | 13 ... 3, 5 |
| 14 ... 6 | 14 Colossians 1 | 14 2 Peter 1, 2 |
| 15 ... 7 | 15 ... 2 | 15 ... 3 |
| 16 ... 8 | 16 ... 3, 4 | 16 1 John 1, 2 |
| 17 ... 9, 10 | 17 1 Thess. 1, 2 | 17 ... 3, 4 |
| 18 ... 11 | 18 ... 3, 4 | 18 ... 5 |
| 19 ... 12 | 19 ... 5 | 19 2 & 3 John 1 |
| 20 ... 13, 14 | 20 2 Thess. 1, 2 | 20 Jude 1 |
| 21 ... 15, 16 | 21 ... 3 | 21 Revelation 1, 2 |
| 22 ... 17, 18 | 22 1 Timothy 1, 3 | 22 ... 3, 4 |
| 23 ... 19 | 23 ... 4, 5 | 23 ... 5, 6 |
| 24 ... 20, 21 | 24 ... 6 | 24 ... 7, 9 |
| 25 Acts 1 | 25 2 Timothy 1 | 25 ... 10, 11 |
| 26 ... 2 | 26 ... 2 | 26 ... 12, 13 |
| 27 ... 3 | 27 ... 3, 4 | 27 ... 14 |
| 28 ... 5, 6 | 28 Titus 1, 2 | 28 ... 15, 16 |
| 29 ... 7 | 29 Philemon 1 | 29 ... 17, 18 |
| 30 ... 8 | 30 Hebrews 1, 2 | 30 ... 19, 20 |
| 31 ... 3, 5 | 31 ... 3-5 | 31 ... 21, 22 |

| October | November | December |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Luke 24 | 1 Acts 11, 12 | 1 Hebrews 6, 7 |
| 2 Galatians 1, 2 | 2 ... 13 | 2 ... 8, 9 |
| 3 ... 3, 4 | 3 ... 14, 15 | 3 ... 10 |
| 4 Ephesians 1, 2 | 4 ... 16, 17 | 4 ... 11 |
| 5 ... 3, 4 | 5 ... 18, 19 | 5 ... 12 |
| 6 ... 5 | 6 ... 20 | 6 James 1 |
| 7 Philippians 1, 2 | 7 ... 21, 22 | 7 ... 2 |
| 8 ... 3, 4 | 8 ... 23, 24 | 8 ... 3, 4 |
| 9 John 1 | 9 ... 25, 26 | 9 ... 5 |
| 10 ... 2, 3 | 10 ... 27 | 10 1 Peter 1 |
| 11 ... 4 | 11 ... 28 | 11 ... 2 |
| 12 ... 5 | 12 Colossians 1 | 12 ... 3, 5 |
| 13 ... 6 | 13 Colossians 2 | 13 2 Peter 1, 2 |
| 14 ... 7 | 14 ... 3, 4 | 14 ... 3 |
| 15 ... 8 | 15 1 Thess. 1, 2 | 15 1 John 1, 2 |
| 16 ... 9, 10 | 16 ... 3, 4 | 16 ... 3, 4 |
| 17 ... 11 | 17 ... 5 | 17 ... 5 |
| 18 ... 12 | 18 2 Thess. 1, 2 | 18 2 & 3 John 1 |
| 19 ... 13, 14 | 19 ... 3 | 19 Jude 1 |
| 20 ... 15, 16 | 20 1 Timothy 1, 3 | 20 Revelation 1, 2 |
| 21 ... 17, 18 | 21 ... 4, 5 | 21 ... 3, 4 |
| 22 ... 19 | 22 ... 6 | 22 ... 5, 6 |
| 23 ... 20, 21 | 23 2 Timothy 1 | 23 ... 7, 9 |
| 24 ... 22 | 24 ... 2 | 24 ... 10, 11 |
| 25 ... 23 | 25 ... 3, 4 | 25 ... 12, 13 |
| 26 ... 24 | 26 Titus 1, 2 | 26 ... 14 |
| 27 ... 25 | 27 Philemon 1 | 27 ... 15, 16 |
| 28 ... 26 | 28 Hebrews 1, 2 | 28 ... 17, 18 |
| 29 ... 27 | 29 ... 3-5 | 29 ... 19, 20 |
| 30 ... 28 | 30 ... 3-5 | 30 ... 21, 22 |
| 31 ... 29 | 31 ... 3-5 | 31 ... 23 |

portion

Third portion

The Passover



ON MARCH 30th 1956, the peninsula of Kamchatka in the far east of Russia was rocked by a tremendous explosion. With an energy equivalent to 40 billion electric fire bars, the great volcano Bezimianny literally blew its top. Within seconds millions of tons of rocks, reduced to fine powder, shot into the stratosphere at twice the speed of sound. Later that afternoon a strange thing happened. As the dust began to drift back out of the sky, the daylight faded. Soon a darkness fell over the surrounding cities, so impenetrable that you could not see your own hand, not even holding it close to your face. People returning from work groped about in the streets, searching for their homes. They were disorientated and terrified.

To the Egyptians in the time of Moses, the ninth plague that God brought upon the land must have been a similar experience. We are not told how it was caused, but when Moses stretched out his hand, a thick darkness enveloped the country. The Bible describes it as ‘*a darkness to be felt*’ (Exodus 10:21). For three days, the sun, the very emblem of the life of Egypt, failed to rise. Cowering in their homes, the Egyptians were dismayed by this omen of doom and conceded that the God their Hebrew slaves worshipped had finally beaten all the gods of the land. Moses was able to warn his people the end was very near.

The Tenth Plague

The tenth plague was the strangest and most calamitous of all. Moses carefully prepared the Israelites for it. As the 14th night of the first month drew on, each Israelite household was to roast and eat a lamb. They must hurry. The accompanying bread must be baked and eaten unleavened, because there was no time to wait for the yeast to make it rise. They were to put on their coats and shoes, and be ready to leave at a moment’s notice.

The oddest command he gave concerned the blood of the lamb. Usually when an animal was slaughtered for food, the blood was poured out on the ground and covered

with dust. This time, the blood of the lamb was to be caught in a bowl and spattered over the posts and lintel of the front door. The significance of this ritual soon became apparent.

Towards midnight on the fateful night, the Israelites were waiting expectantly in their homes. Suddenly a ghastly cry floated across on the night air from the Egyptian settlements, to be joined by another, and another. It was a sound that generations of Israelites would never forget. In every Egyptian household the eldest male lay dead. As each family discovered the glazing eyes and stiffening corpse of its firstborn, the combined wailing of thousands of despairing throats ascended to the stars in indescribable anguish.

The Israelites paled with fear. But in every house where the head of the family had obeyed Moses' instructions, the blood on the door posts had done its job. The firstborn continued to live and breathe.

After that, things began to happen quickly. Messengers ran swiftly round the camp, ordering the twelve tribes to assemble in orderly companies at their rendezvous. Pharaoh hastily signed the warrant releasing the Israelites from their bondage.

So keen were the Egyptians to see the backs of their slaves that they thrust them out in the middle of the night, heaping upon them gold, jewellery, and whatever they asked. By morning light, over half a million men with their families had left the country.

The climactic event that broke the will of Pharaoh was supernatural. Yet, as we noted previously, its authenticity is beyond doubt. To this day, Jews all over the world celebrate the Passover every year on the 14th day of the month Abib, eating again the unleavened bread and reciting the story of their deliverance. It is a challenge to the sceptic, and a reassurance to the slow of faith.



Hidden Messages

But what are we to make of the Passover Lamb, the unleavened bread and the sprinkled blood? What hidden messages were they intended to convey? Why did a lamb have to die, to deliver them from death?

Fortunately, the specification gives us a clue. The lamb had to be a male. It had also to be without blemish (Exodus 12:5). Not a bone of it was to be broken (verse 46). The blood was to be sprinkled

with a twig of hyssop (verse 22). And once the door of the house was closed, nobody was to leave, on pain of death. *'For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you'*, said Moses (verse 23).

Lambs had been used for sacrifice from Eden onwards. Each untimely death of an animal pointed forward to the coming of Jesus the Redeemer, who would give himself to be sacrificed on the cross for sinners such as us. The momentous night of deliverance from Egypt was being made into an object lesson Israel would never forget. Their years of helpless bondage in Egypt were a graphic symbol of sin. Sin holds us all in its grip, like an iron taskmaster. No matter how we try, we cannot escape. We follow our own desires, as slaves obey their master, and wear ourselves out in an empty striving for an elusive satisfaction that ends in death. *'For when you were slaves of sin,'* wrote the Apostle Paul, *'... what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death'* (Romans 6:20–21).

The darkness that fell upon Egypt in the days preceding the Passover also had a place in the symbolism. Darkness, sin and death are linked together throughout the Bible. *'This is the judgement'*, Jesus declared: *'the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light'* (John 3:19–20).

Darkness conceals murder, theft and immorality. Light throws into relief the ruin and barrenness of sin. The return of light, just before the deliverance from Egypt, meant Israel had gone back to work for one last day to savour to the full the bitterness of the old life they were about to leave. The deliverance from that bondage depended now upon their accurately fulfilling the conditions laid down by Moses, the messenger of God.

The Passover Lamb

The lamb they slew, male and free from blemish, stood clearly for the sinless Christ who was to come far in the future to redeem his people from their sins.





celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

It all fits. The symbol is complete. We can set out clean, free and full of hope, on our individual journey to the Promised Land. And not a penny have we paid for this precious gift of God. *'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God', we read, 'and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (Romans 3:23-24).*

When Jesus was crucified, the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves hanging with him, but left Jesus' bones unbroken. This makes a striking connection with the Passover lamb, because its bones were never to be broken (John 19:32-36). Even the hyssop used to sprinkle the blood of the lamb is to be found at the crucifixion. It was used to give the dying Jesus a drink (John 19:29).

David M Pearce

What is the equivalent of the door posts of the house? When we declare our belief in the work of Christ, and are baptised under water into his name, we do not literally sprinkle Jesus' blood anywhere. Yet the act of baptism, a loving response to the command of the apostles, is in effect the sprinkling of Christ's blood on our heart. Peter writes *'you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot' (1 Peter 1:18-19).*

'Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed,' Paul writes. 'Let us therefore

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Plague, Pestilence, Pandemic

PLAGUES FEATURE WIDELY in the Bible: some are caused by God to further His purpose, for example the plagues on Egypt in the book of Exodus.

Infectious diseases are a fact of life, they have been suffered by humankind throughout our history. Recently we have learnt how to effectively control their spread by more advanced medicine, antiseptics and vaccinations. So the Covid 19 pandemic came as a huge shock to most of us. We did not realise that we were so vulnerable in our modern world. Many people will ask, “Why does God allow such suffering to happen?”

Our world is not a perfect one but its imperfection is the result of our



disobedience in the first place. God gave Adam and Eve the choice to obey or disobey Him. They chose disobedience, and its consequence was mortality. God said to Adam:

Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it’, cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return (Genesis 3:17–19).

This curse passed to all their descendants—to you and me. This is why we live in a world of suffering.

The Healer

When God made His covenant with Israel to be their God, He described Himself as their “healer”: *‘If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to*

his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer' (Exodus 15:26).

Part of this special care for His people was shown in the Law which He gave to govern their lives. This Law included lists of animals that were not to be eaten (Leviticus 11). Today, although the Christian is not obliged to keep the Law of Moses, we can appreciate the science behind these lists. For example, pork and shellfish can be very dangerous if they are not cooked properly.

God never said that if we follow Him we will be free from trouble, but His people have the assurance that He looks after them, whether they fall sick or whatever else happens: *'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28).*

Signs of the End

In his prophecy on the Mount of Olives, Jesus Christ told us that plagues (or 'pestilences') would be a signal of the nearness of his second coming: *'Nation will rise against*

nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven' (Luke 21:10-11).

The Bible abounds with descriptions of the Kingdom of God which will be established when Christ returns. At that time all the disasters with which we are all too familiar today will be a thing of the past, and he will make this world into the place that God intended:

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

This really is the promise of the Bible so let's find out more now!

Marion Buckler





SD

I'm concerned about having the Covid vaccine. What does the Bible say?

Ed

THE BIBLE DOESN'T of course give direct instructions about vaccinations, so we need to look at the principles which will guide the decision we make.

One principle is that your body is a gift from God and the Christian must take care of it (1 Corinthians 6:19). So the first question is, are the vaccines beneficial? There are suggestions that they have not been properly tested. There are also conspiracy theories which allege that they are harmful, and even that they are part of some sinister plot against the population. Before we take these theories seriously we should look into their sources and weigh them against the evidence. The consensus is that Covid is a real and devastating disease, and the vaccines offer protection against it. They do have known side effects, as do all vaccines, but the risks from these side effects are far outweighed by the benefit of the protection which they provide.

Another important principle of Christian life is that the disciple must always consider the effect of their actions on others (Matthew 7:12). There is strong evidence that you are less likely to pass on Covid to others if you have been vaccinated.

A further principle is that the disciple should obey the will of the authorities—unless of course their will conflicts with the

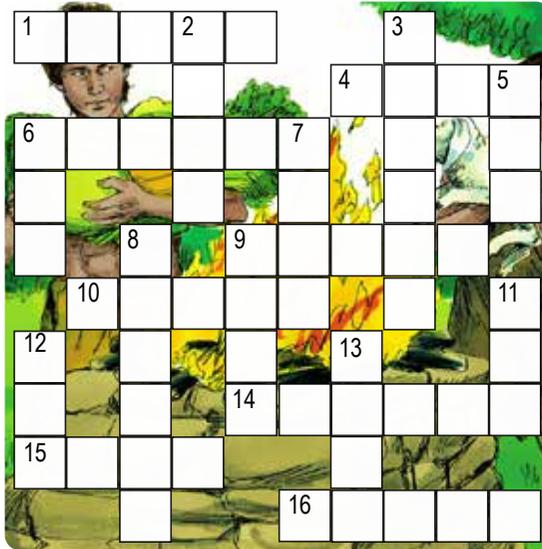
will of God (1 Peter 2:13–14). Medical and civil authorities the world over are urging us to 'have the jab'. Although it is generally not compulsory, we should only refuse if we have a good reason.

There is an argument that vaccination against Covid or any other disease shows a lack of faith in God, Who oversees our lives. The thinking is that if we catch Covid it must be God's will, and we should not resist it. However, if we carried this argument to its logical extreme we would not wash our hands to protect against germs, or lock our doors to protect against burglars—we'd leave it to God to look after us. The Bible does tell us to trust in God, and it also tells us to look after ourselves. For example '*The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it*' (Proverbs 22:3). I don't believe that being vaccinated shows a lack of faith in God.

Whether or not to have the vaccine is a matter of individual conscience. The Apostle Paul's instructions about conscience are very useful: '*One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgement on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him*' (Romans 14:2–3). In matters such as this, we should make our decision based on our conscience and respect other people's decisions, whether or not they are the same as ours.

Across

- 1 Abel offered the firstborn of this (Genesis 4:4)
- 4 Cain was very angry and this fell (Genesis 4:5)
- 6 God told Cain that the voice of his brother's blood was doing this (Genesis 4:10)
- 9 God said that the ground had opened this to receive his brother's blood (Genesis 4:11)
- 10 God told Adam that he would eat this by the sweat of his face (Genesis 3:19)
- 14 Cain asked whether he was that of his brother (Genesis 4:9)
- 15 'And the LORD said, "What have you ___?"' (Genesis 4:10)
- 16 'Then the LORD said to Cain, "___ is Abel your brother?"' (Genesis 4:9)



Down

- 2 He offered the fruit of the ground (Genesis 4:3)
- 3 Security (Genesis 43:9)
- 5 The mother of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1)
- 6 "My punishment is greater than I ___ bear" (Genesis 4:13)
- 7 At the conclusion of His creation, God said that all He had made was this (Genesis 1:31)
- 8 Cain's occupation was a worker of this (Genesis 4:2)
- 9 God put this on Cain (Genesis 4:15)
- 11 "And the LORD had regard ___ Abel and his offering" (Genesis 4:4)
- 12 Cain settled in this land (Genesis 4:16)
- 13 Eve's third son, who replaced Abel (Genesis 4:25)

(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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