

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Unexplained (p. 3)

The Trinity (p. 6)

Why are Some Christians So Miserable? (p. 11)

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 humankind; to call attention to the divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn people that soon Christ will return to earth as judge and ruler of God's worldwide Kingdom.

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The Unexplained

CROP CIRCLES are one of the more bizarre phenomena of the modern age. They have been reported all over the world, but the majority of them appear during the months of July and August in the county of Wiltshire in the UK. They are huge geometric patterns which appear in standing crops. Some have measured 300 metres across, they appear without warning in the short hours of summer darkness, and they are sometimes breathtakingly beautiful.

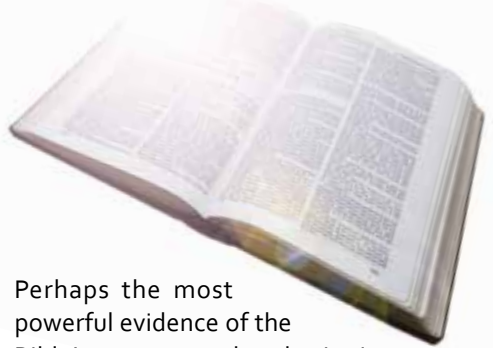
There are many theories about their origin. They are attributed to extraordinary weather phenomena, or anomalies in the earth's magnetic field, or reflections on the ground of the collective unconscious, or aliens. The most likely explanation of course is human pranksters. Over the years various individuals and groups have claimed the credit for them, but it's a fact that the most intricate examples still defy explanation. So for now they remain a mystery.

What is your attitude when you come up against something you can't explain? Some find it unnerving, some will ignore it or try to deny it. But others rise to the challenge and set out to find the answer.

A Supernatural Phenomenon

There is a phenomenon which throughout its existence has baffled and startled those who have come into contact with it. It is the Bible.

There are many features of this unique book which defy natural explanation.



Perhaps the most powerful evidence of the Bible's supernatural authority is the way it predicts the future. Around a quarter of the Bible is concerned with prophecy, much of which has already been fulfilled in remarkable detail. In particular, many prophecies concern the nation of Israel, which God refers to as a witness to His existence:

"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he" (Isaiah 43:10).

There are prophecies about their destruction by the Babylonians which would last precisely 70 years (Jeremiah 25:8–14); their return to their land under Cyrus the Persian (Isaiah 44:28–45:6); the destruction of the nation by the Romans (Luke 21:20–24); and its re-establishment in the 'latter days' (Ezekiel 38:8).

Jesus Christ is at the very centre of the Bible message, and there are at least 200 Old Testament prophecies which concern him. Almost every aspect of his life was predicted beforehand, for example his ancestry (Isaiah 11:1); where he was born (Micah 5:2); the preparatory work of John the Baptist (Malachi 3:1); Jesus' ministry in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1–2); his betrayal by a close friend (Psalm 41:9); his self-sacrifice for the sins of his people (Isaiah 53); the precise manner of his death (Psalm 22); and his resurrection (Psalm 16:10–11).

Another powerful evidence that the Bible is no ordinary book is the information it contains. It does not claim to be a scientific treatise, but there are numerous incidental indications that the Mind behind it possessed a knowledge of the world that was far better than any people at the time it was written. For example it mentions that living things are grouped into distinct species (Genesis 1:11–12, 21–25); that the world is round (Job 26:7), and that rain is always accompanied by an electrical discharge in the cloud (Psalm 135:7).

Then there are the advanced public health measures prescribed in the Law of Moses, such as strict sanitation (Deuteronomy 23:12–14); personal hygiene (Leviticus 15:13); treatment of contaminated objects (Leviticus 11:33), and quarantine (Leviticus 13:46).

What do you think of this? Will you dismiss it? Is it all just coincidence, or a big fabrication? Maybe you think it's pretty interesting, in the same way as you may think crop circles are pretty interesting, but not particularly relevant to your life.

The Word of God

But the fact is, the Bible makes a very bold claim for itself: it claims to be the message of God to the world. *'For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:21).*

Talking to the philosophers of Athens who had called him to their meeting because they liked hearing about new stuff and his message struck them as intriguing, the Apostle Paul was keen to shake them out of their complacency:



The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:30–31).

The Bible is not just an interesting book. It is a personal message to you and me from our Creator. Jesus Christ died for our sins, rose from the dead, and will return to earth as judge. Are you sufficiently interested to look into it?

Colossians

WHEN THE APOSTLE Paul spent three years at Ephesus (Acts 20), the Gospel spread inland to such towns as Laodicea and Colosse (in what is modern Turkey), and congregations of believers were formed.



While Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he learned from Epaphroditus of problems which had arisen among believers at Colosse (Colossians 1:7). So he sent this Letter via Tychicus and Onesimus (4:7–9) to the *'brothers in Christ'* (1:2), encouraging them to *'continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard'* (1:23) and to beware of *'philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition'* (2:8).

The main problems at Colosse arose from Judaisers (Jews who insisted that Christians must follow the Law of Moses) and Gnostics (adherents of a Greek philosophy which valued special knowledge and experience). Paul rebuked those Jews who were still preoccupied with the Law of Moses—with *'questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new*

moon or a Sabbath', which are done away in Christ (2:16–17). He also warned against being caught up in Greek notions of angel worship (2:18). There was a cult of angel worship in Colosse.

The Head of the Body

The letter underlines the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ: there are no other intermediaries between God and humans, such as the Gnostics had invented. God has made His Son the head of all things, the centre of His purpose (1:16). He is the *'head of the body, the church'* and the first of a new creation (1:18). We can only be saved through association with Christ. The process begins with belief and by being *'buried with him in baptism'* (2:12). Baptized believers must continue to follow Christ closely; they must live the new life in Christ (3:1). This will involve *'putting to death'* old ideas and ways, and putting on *'the new self'* (3:8–14). Chapters 3 and 4 contain instructions for living the new life for *'brothers and sisters in Christ'* (which is what the term 'Christadelphian' means).

Norman Owen

By kind permission of 'The Christadelphian'



Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Colossians 1:15—see 2 Corinthians 4:4–6; Hebrews 1:3.
- ◆ Colossians 2:12—see Romans 6:4–6.
- ◆ Colossians 3:4—see 1 John 3:2.

The Trinity

THERE IS A CREED that many churches hold as essential to salvation, and part of it reads:

'We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity; neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one person of the Father, and another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal...

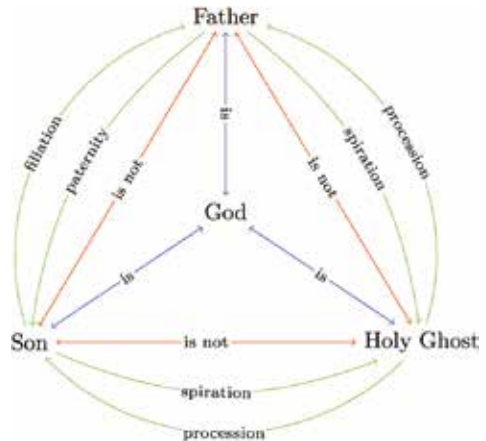
And in this Trinity none is afore, or less than other; But the whole three persons are co-eternal together; and co-equal... He therefore that will be saved, must think thus of the Trinity'

(Athanasian Creed).

I confess that this creed has always baffled me. I know that the doctrine of the Trinity is held very dear by many people, and I am aware that questioning it can cause upset. But we need to test everything by the Bible.

The Bible does contain lofty concepts which require thought to properly understand them, such as 'the atonement' (see the article in Issue 1656)—but these concepts are clear and logical, and it is easy to explain and understand them using Bible vocabulary. The idea of the Trinity is different: it requires mental gymnastics to

understand it, and it can only be properly explained using vocabulary that does not occur in the Bible.



The Bible is the Authority

Hundreds of times the Bible has phrases such as 'Thus says the LORD' (for example Jeremiah 2:2), to emphasise that the book is about God's dealings with humankind. It commences, 'In the beginning God...' (Genesis 1:1). His mightiness is impressed upon us as we think of the glories of His creation: 'O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens' (Psalm 8:1).

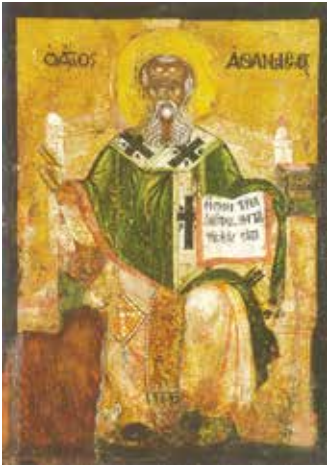
We cannot even begin to understand a Being so ageless, but throughout the Bible the thought is repeated, for example 'who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has

ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen' (1Timothy 6.16).

I have looked in the Bible for the word 'trinity'. I searched thoroughly (it's easy enough to do with a concordance or a Bible app), and the word was nowhere to be found. Wherever did the term come from?

Well one can certainly find the word God, and the words Jesus Christ, and Holy Ghost (most modern translations use the words 'Holy Spirit'). But nowhere do we find that God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are co-equal. So, from where do we get the idea of a Trinity?

Church history shows that it gradually developed, until it was finally defined around 400 years after the time of Christ in a statement called the Athanasian Creed, part of which is quoted above.



Athanasius of Alexandria,
after whom the creed is named

The Father

The prophet Isaiah asks, 'To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?... It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are

like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in (Isaiah 40:18, 22). Words cannot describe the greatness of God: 'I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God' (Isaiah 45:5).

The thought is repeated so often that it is not difficult to understand why the concept of the Trinity is incomprehensible to religious Jews. It is a great stumbling-block to their acceptance of Christianity. Their prophet is emphatic:

For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other" (v. 18).

The Holy Spirit

What is the Holy Spirit? It is the description of God's power, and we read, 'If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust' (Job 34:14–15); Jeremiah adds, 'Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you' (Jeremiah 32:17).

Is the Holy Spirit a person? Let us take an example. You kick a ball. The ball moves by the power behind the kick, but you and your power are one and cannot be separated. Likewise God and His power cannot be separated. The Holy Spirit is the power by which the Almighty formed the universe, made us, demonstrated His glory through angels, and gave His writings to chosen men.

The 18th-Century logician and theologian Isaac Watts wrote, "I can find no verse in the Bible where any word that directly signifies person is attributable to the Holy Spirit... it must be a divine power."

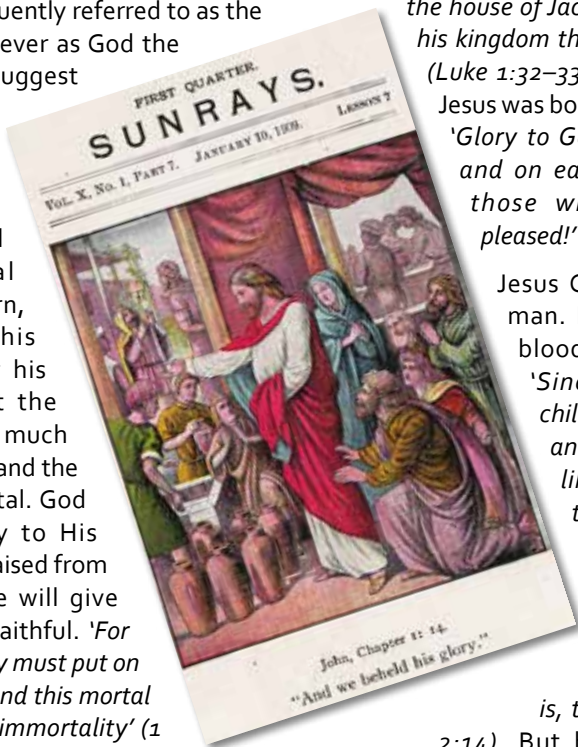
The Son

Jesus Christ is frequently referred to as the Son of God, but never as God the Son. Trinitarians suggest that this was because the Son divested himself of his God status and became mortal when he was born, then resumed his God status after his resurrection. But the Bible sees things much more simply: God and the angels are immortal. God gave immortality to His Son after he was raised from the dead, and He will give it to us if we are faithful. *'For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality'* (1 Corinthians 15:53). The idea of an immortal being becoming mortal is alien to the Bible.

This is how the Bible describes Jesus Christ:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The fact that the one promised was a Son and an heir indicates that he did not exist beforehand. The angel Gabriel declared to Jesus' mother Mary, *'He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end'* (Luke 1:32-33). When the baby Jesus was born the angels sang, *'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'* (Luke 2:14).



Jesus Christ is a unique man. He was flesh and blood, exactly like us: *'Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil'* (Hebrews

2:14). But he was different from us in that God was his father, and because of that he had a strength to resist 'the devil' (his human nature's propensity to sin) which no one else has ever had. He never did sin, and therefore he was able to offer himself as a perfect sacrifice to be our Saviour.

The fact is, he was capable of sin. He could have given in to the devil. But he did not: *'For we do not have a high priest*

who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Hebrews 4:15).

In this he was different from God: 'Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God", for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one' (James 1:13).

So acutely did the Lord Jesus perceive this difference between himself and his Father that he would not even allow people to call him good, and said, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone' (Mark 10:18). He stressed constantly that he was completely dependent upon a God Whom he taught was supreme. He reiterated the Old Testament command, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' (Matthew 22:37). Of his second coming he was clear, 'concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father' (Mark 13:32).

Difficult Passages

John's Gospel contains language and idioms that have led some to assume that it is presenting Jesus Christ as co-equal and co-eternal with God. For example 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30). This does not mean that they are part of the same godhead, it means they are one in

purpose and outlook. As Jesus explains later, he wants all his followers to share this oneness: 'And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one' (John 17:11).

When you read it carefully, you see that John's Gospel is portraying the beautiful relationship between God and His Son. Jesus said, 'My food is to do the will of



him who sent me and to accomplish his work (John 4:34). There are 44 occasions in John's Gospel on which it is emphasized that Christ was 'sent'.

For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel... For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have

life in himself (John 5:20, 26).

There is no sense of equality. God is the fountain of all life, and He gave life to His Son.

In what way was the Lord Jesus sent? Does it mean he came from a previous life? Later John gives the answer as Jesus prays to his Father about his disciples: 'As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world' (John 17:18).

The Sacrifice of Christ

When we come to look on the Lord's agony of mind in Gethsemane, and hear his

heartfelt plea to his Father, we realise that this was a man dreading what the future would bring. What man would not be the same in similar circumstances? We can only look on with reverence as his sweat falls like great drops of blood upon the ground (Luke 22:44). His agony is such that his heart-rending plea is *'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done'* (v. 42).

Two distinct wills are shown to us: the will of God, and the will of the Son appalled at the prospect before him. Yet he ended his life with perfect obedience, that we might have a sinless representative who could open the way to God for us.

Perhaps you have seen the portrayals of Christ on his cross, with gentle eyes gazing calmly heavenwards. It was not like that. It was a fiendish torture that brought his all too brief life on earth to a premature end. Six hours on the cross in searing agony would be enough to make any man blaspheme outrageously, and even the Saviour in the fierceness of his suffering cried, *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* (Matthew 27:46).

Surely, to say that Jesus was God is to render his courage, love, submission and agony meaningless, and to strip his terrible sacrifice of its meaning.

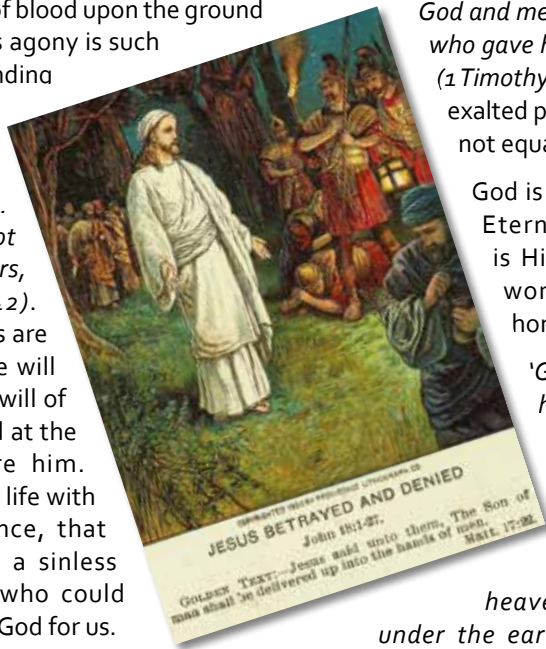
Because of his faultless sacrifice Jesus Christ was raised from the dead (Acts 2:24), and rose to the side of his Father to act as the mediator for his people: *'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all'* (1 Timothy 2:5–6). He is now in an exalted place, but even now he is not equal with his Father.

God is one, the Almighty and Eternal; and Jesus Christ is His beloved Son who is worthy of all praise and honour:

'God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in

heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Philippians 2:9–11).

Ken Clark



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

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or write to the Editor—address inside front cover



Why are Some Christians So Miserable?

"I DON'T THINK MUCH of your church," said Sam. "You all look miserable and the service is boring. Why can't you be like the church near me where everyone is happy?"

It is outrageous if inappropriate attitudes put people off true Christianity. Most certainly it is true that some people do show more emotion than others, and some congregations are very sombre. While some of us are naturally down-beat, it may be the (often un-knowable) reasons for our moods that matter.

Contentment with Circumstances

One reason for being miserable is a general dissatisfaction with our lives, leading to habits of grumbling and complaining. If this is the mind-set of the believer, then they are effectively finding fault with God, Who gives us everything we have. This is a serious matter: the complaints of the Hebrews in the wilderness prevented them from entering the Promised Land (Numbers 14:29). In contrast, the Apostle Paul said that he had learnt to be 'content', despite all his problems—many of which were even a consequence of his faith.

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need (Philippians 4:11–12; see also 1 Timothy 6:6).

In fact, apostles rejoiced that they were worthy to suffer for Jesus (Acts 5:41) and sang hymns in prison (Acts 16:25).

Happiness is Not Enough

However, the fact that we may be enjoying our worship and looking happy does not, in itself, make it pleasing to God, nor does it mean that our faith is biblical. When Moses was away in Mount Sinai the Hebrews in the wilderness made a golden calf and worshipped it. The occasion was extremely enjoyable—the people were making a loud noise and dancing. However, God was displeased with them and about three thousand died as a consequence (Exodus 32).

The Law of Moses instructed the Jews how to worship God, and some of the feasts it

prescribed were intended to be very joyful (for example the Feast of Tabernacles, see Leviticus 23:40). On other occasions (for example on the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16:29–31), the people were commanded to ‘afflict themselves’, with very good reason: they were to be reminded of the seriousness of sin and their need for God’s mercy. Consequently many of the feasts must have evoked mixed feelings. Killing their pet lamb would not be joyful, but the feast of Passover was designed to remind the people of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt and also to point forward to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God whose sacrifice can deliver us from death (Exodus 12:18–27).

A Time for Everything

So the wise man says that there is a time for everything: ‘*a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance*’ (Ecclesiastes 3:4).



But he also comments on mirth:

A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow

is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth (Ecclesiastes 7:1–4).

This is an insightful reflection on human nature: a godly attitude is more likely when we are considering our mortality than when we are ‘without a care in the world’. So being subdued, or even sad, can be spiritually beneficial.

Jesus said, ‘*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*’ (Matthew 5:4).

This needs some thought! The word for ‘mourn’ in the original Greek is a strong one, indicating the sort of grief one has when bereaved of a loved one. So what should the Christian believer mourn? Most certainly they should not indulge in self-pity, as the Christian focus should be God and His kingdom (Matthew 6:33, Colossians 3:2). However, while Jesus is away and sin and its consequences prevail there is much to be sad about.

And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast” (Matthew 9:15).

Jesus said that such mourners would be ‘blessed’, which indicates happiness, and seems inherently contradictory. How can you be truly happy when you are sad? The answer lies in the nature of the happiness: it is a joy which underpins every experience and problem in life—a bedrock that is solid and unmoveable despite all the upheaval and stress going on above it. So the true believer’s faith and utter trust in

God mean that he or she is fundamentally unshakeable, with a composure that is far better than any temporary happiness evoked by pleasures in this life. This is exemplified in the words of the prophet:

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation (Habakkuk 3:17–18).

These are remarkable words because the lack of crops in Israel would have been a punishment for the nation's unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy 28:20–24).

Jesus himself was not always happy. He is described as 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief' (Isaiah 53:3), and he wept over Jerusalem's lack of faith (Luke 19:41–42). The prophets were grieved at the faithlessness of the people (Jeremiah 9:1–3) and we know that wickedness makes God sad (Genesis 6:6).

Christians can be desperately sorry for their continuing sinfulness and total unworthiness before the one righteous God. A number of the Psalms give insights into the intense remorseful feelings of a sinner (especially Psalms 38 and 51), but also the blessings of forgiveness (Psalm 32). Moreover, believers may—like Lot, the godly man living in the wicked city of Sodom—be '*greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked*' (2 Peter 2:7).

But their sorrow should always be 'godly' and hence productive.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death (2 Corinthians 7:10).

The Right Attitude

One of the shortest verses in the Bible is 1 Thessalonians 5:16: '*Rejoice always.*' Indeed the Apostle Paul encourages believers to '*rejoice in our sufferings*', knowing that these can develop virtuous characteristics pleasing to God (Romans 5:3–4). In the preceding verses he talks about '*peace with God*' and rejoicing '*in hope of the glory of God*' (Romans 5:1–2). Later in the chapter he makes it clear that this peace is due to being reconciled to God (Romans 5:10). We will not necessarily have total peace of mind, as we grapple with our human nature about which we can never be complacent (Romans 7:21–25).

So Sam did have a valid point—not every service is a funeral! People who have been

reconciled to God have a responsibility to have a positive attitude, to be thankful and to praise God, even though there cannot be total joy until Jesus returns. If Christ's followers project a miserable image, what does that say about their faith? And their attitude should be motivated by the teaching in the Bible, rather than only by emotional responses.



Anna Hart

Lessons from Eden



GENESIS CHAPTER 3 tells how Adam and Eve brought a curse upon humankind when they ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, after they were lied to by the serpent. This is referred to as a literal occurrence throughout the Bible (for example 1 Timothy 2:13–14, 2 Corinthians 11:3 and Jude 14). As well as being a real event, it also contains great symbolic significance. There are vital lessons here about the process of sin (rebellion against God) which separates us from Him, and the process by which we must be reconciled to Him.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you

*touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman **saw** that the tree was **good** for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she **took** of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:1–6).*

The Process of Sin

I've highlighted three key words which illustrate the process of Eve's sin. These same Hebrew words occur in the same order in each of the following examples of other people succumbing to sin:

*When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God **saw** that the daughters of man were **attractive**. And they **took** as their wives any they chose (Genesis 6:1–2).*

*And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I **saw** among the spoil a **beautiful** cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and **took** them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath" (Joshua 7:20–21).*

*It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he **saw** from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very **beautiful**. And David sent and enquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and **took** her, and she came to him, and he lay with her (2 Samuel 11:2-4).*

Notice the pattern. There is something we know we should not have. We **see** it, it looks **desirable**, and we **take** it. The end result is the same as Eve's—we dishonour our Creator and incur His judgment.



The Process of Reconciliation

Genesis 3 is not all about the principles of temptation, sin and judgement however. It is not just about how we go astray from God. It also gives us the principles of reconciliation—how we can return to God.

Before they sinned Adam and Eve were *'both naked and were not ashamed'* (Genesis 2:25). But after their sin *'the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths'*

(Genesis 3:7). They tried to hide their nakedness by their own ingenuity. It did not work.

It was for God to provide effective clothing for them: *'And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them'* (v. 21). They had sinned, God killed an animal to cover their shame, and in this way He foreshadowed how He would eventually provide the means of bringing people back to Him by the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. These are words of John the Baptist: *'The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"'* (John 1:29).

We are all Eve's children. We all rebel against God, and our sin separates us from Him. But He is merciful and gracious, and He has provided a way for our shame to be done away:

The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels (Revelation 3:5).

Stephen Blake

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Rebellion

ONCE MORE the twelve tribes trekked back into the wilderness, away from the land they had rejected. They were in a mood to complain. Before long a conspiracy developed. The layout of the camp set the tents of the tribe of Reuben near to Levi, for Reuben and Levi were brothers (Genesis 35:23). The ringleader of the mutiny was Korah from the tribe of Levi, a cousin of Moses. With him were Dathan, Abiram and On, three brothers from the nearby tribe of Reuben.

They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (Numbers 16:3).

Korah claimed the right to share the role with Moses and Aaron of leading the people. We see this type of rivalry all the time in the workplace and in politics. Jealousy is a feature of human nature.

Moses' Response

Moses could have called for the mutineers to be executed. Instead, he fell upon his face (v. 4). Probably he was praying. When he stood up, he proposed a straightforward

test to show whom God wanted to lead the people. There were 250 men standing with Korah. Right, said Moses, tomorrow morning let each man bring a censer to the Tabernacle, together with incense. Then God will show who are qualified to be His priests.

Dathan and Abiram were also summoned to Moses' tent, but they refused to attend. *'Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness,' they complained, 'that you must also make yourself a prince over us?' (v. 13).* It was a travesty of the truth. God had described the Promised Land to which He was leading them as *'a land flowing with milk and honey' (Exodus 3:8)*. To claim that the land of their slavery was a land of milk and honey was to mock that promise, and to assert that Moses had taken them away from it so that he could help himself to their goods was pure slander.

All night the congregation were kept awake by the 250 rebels hammering away at their new bronze censers. In the morning they assembled at the entrance door to the Tabernacle. The people stood at a distance to watch. Suddenly the glory of God flared up, and His angel commanded Moses and

Aaron to stand back. They begged him not to punish all the people, only those who led the rebellion. They commanded the people to stand well clear of the tents of the three chief mutineers. On is not mentioned, so he may have had second thoughts and left the rebels.

While they all watched, the earth shook. A huge pit opened up underneath the tents of the three men. In a moment they and their families were swallowed up by the earth, never to be seen again. Next the fire of God fell on the 250 men with their censers. They were burnt to ashes, leaving only Aaron and his censer still standing. It was clear whom God wanted to be His priest.

The Man God Chose

The rebellion was not quite over. Next day the people assembled again outside Moses' tent. 'You have killed the people of the LORD', they cried (Numbers 16:41). They were punished by a sudden plague.

But God instructed Moses to set up a test to show once for all that it was the tribe of Levi He wanted to lead the people. The leader of each of the twelve tribes was told to bring a wooden rod with his name on it to the Tabernacle. Next morning they were brought out, and each took his rod. Eleven rods were unchanged. But the twelfth, with Aaron's name, had grown almond buds,



flowers and nuts. There could be no doubt. There was no possibility of fraud. Levi was God's choice (Numbers 17:8).

To ensure the lesson would not be forgotten, God had the 250 censers of the rebels beaten flat and nailed to the walls of the altar. Afterwards, whenever an Israelite came to offer a sacrifice, he was confronted with a powerful warning about what happens when we challenge God. Aaron's rod was placed inside the ark in the Most Holy Place for a permanent reminder that only one man could act as the intermediary between God and His people.

We know from the New Testament book of Hebrews that Aaron's role was in time replaced by the work of Jesus. 'When

Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come... he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption' (Hebrews 9:11-12).

The almond rod has its own story. It is the first tree to blossom in spring after the dark days of winter. The Jews call it 'the awakening tree'. It is a fitting symbol for the Lord Jesus, the first man to rise from the dead to be given immortality.

David M Pearce

WC *Why was Jesus baptised? If he was without sin, surely he didn't need it?*

Ed WHEN WE'RE BAPTISED, we are dipped under water as a symbol of dying and being raised to life again. We show that we want to put to death our sinful nature, and live a new life. And by doing this we associate ourselves with Christ's death and resurrection.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3–4).

Baptism is the way we identify ourselves with Christ, and so it's the essential start to the Christian life. This is the simple reason why Jesus said at his baptism 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness' (Matthew 3:15). He was setting the example for us to follow.

But there's more to it. Baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Jesus was sinless and did not need remission of sins. However, he was a man, a descendant of Adam, he had a human nature like ours. He was capable of sin. This fact is stressed in the Bible, for example:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our

weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

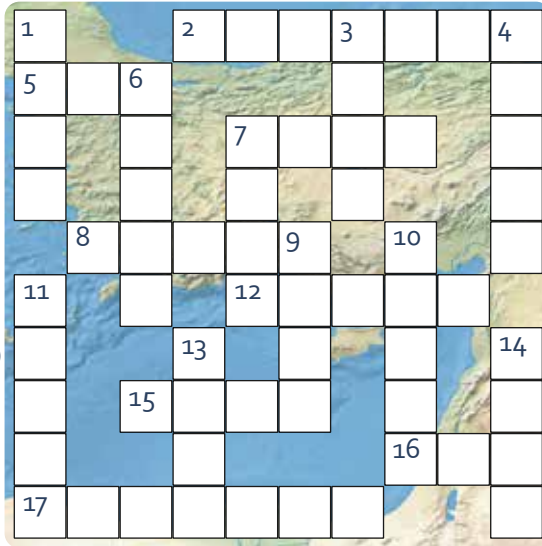
In the Law of Moses the High Priest made sacrifices for the sins of the people and for his own sins. The Letter to the Hebrews shows that Jesus is the new High Priest (Hebrews 4:15), of whom the old priests were just a shadow. Jesus did not offer animal sacrifices, he offered himself as a perfect sacrifice.

When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come... he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11–12).

Jesus needed to be saved, just like you and me, because he shared our sinful nature. He was the High Priest who offered his sacrifice for the people and for himself. When he was baptised he showed that he, like us, needed to put to death his sinful nature—even though he had no sins.

Across

Down



- 2 Paul's description of Epaphras, from whom the Colossians heard the Gospel (Colossians 1:7)
- 5 On being baptised, we put on this self (Colossians 3:10)

- 7 One who was not a slave was this (Colossians 3:11)
- 8 This was shed when Jesus was on the cross (Colossians 1:20)
- 12 Our hope is through that of Christ (Colossians 1:22)
- 15 Paul made known that of God to the Colossians (Colossians 1:25)
- 16 To tell an untruth (Colossians 3:9)
- 17 Obtained knowledge, as did the Colossians from Epaphras (Colossians 1:7)

- 1 To be aware (Colossians 2:1)
- 3 Children should do this to their parents (Colossians 3:20)
- 4 He sent greetings to the Colossians (Colossians 4:14)
- 6 Paul said that the Gospel was bearing fruit in the whole of this (Colossians 1:6)
- 7 No one should pass judgement on another with regard to this (Colossians 2:16)
- 9 God raised Jesus from this (Colossians 2:12)
- 10 Yet (Colossians 2:20)
- 11 Paul wished that the word of Christ should do this in the Colossians (Colossians 3:16)
- 13 Paul wished that God would open this for the Gospel to be preached (Colossians 4:3)
- 14 Our old life has this on being baptised (Colossians 3:3)

(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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