

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1565



Living on the Edge – page 3
What's in a Name – page 10
The Son of God – page 12

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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

130th Year

K14

1565



A monthly magazine 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 men; 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

Bible Talks, Study Classes, Sunday Schools and Youth Clubs are held regularly by Christadelphians worldwide. The address of your nearest group can be obtained either from one of the Glad Tidings Distributors listed above, or from one of the contact addresses listed on the back cover.

Contents

Living on the Edge... ..3

War and Peace.....5

**The Letter to the
Ephesians7**

What's in a Name?10

The Son of God12

Jeroboam II15

"Call His Name Jesus" ...17

**Living in Harmony with
God.....18**

Acknowledgements

Photographs:

Cover: Climbing Mount Etna,
Sicily.

Ken Anderton

Other Illustrations

Pages 3: Ken Anderton;
Wikipedia Commons: 5; istock-
photos: 7,15; Clipart.com
8,10,12,19; Jeff Wilson: 13.

Bible Versions

The version most used in this issue is the New King James Version (NKJV) and other versions are sometimes used.

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Living on the Edge

Mount Etna is one of the main attractions on Sicily's east coast. Etna is the tallest active volcano on the European continent, over 10,000 feet high (3,329 m) and is the highest mountain in Italy, south of the Alps. It's also one of the most active volcanoes in the world, as well as being a World Heritage Site.

So visiting it might not seem such a good idea unless you want an adventure! Thousands of people do visit it, however, and they evidently enjoy climbing up to its rim, covered with black lava sand and rocks that crunch underfoot, usually with a guide to ensure that nothing untoward is likely to happen.

Constant Change

Because eruptions are relatively frequent – the past twelve months have seen several powerful lava fountains, flows and ash emissions – the landscape around Etna never stays quite the same. And if the weather is kind the views from the summit are said to be spectacular, so the climb is judged to be worth the risk. Anyway, many people like living on the edge, and relish a bit of excitement. Nothing stays the same for long and variety is said to be the spice of life.

Our own life experience is rather like that, when you think about it. We all want some variety and a little excitement now and again. But I wonder if we think of ourselves as living on the edge of a volcano. For our society is in danger of erupting and many people now live in constant fear for their lives. In the last few weeks we have learned about a killer virus in Africa which has

taken many lives. War has broken out in the Ukraine, and the allegations made about Russia's covert involvement have resulted in several international conferences and the imposition of sanctions. Meanwhile the civil war in Syria has been overshadowed by the emergence of a fighting force now called the Islamic State, which wants to establish a Muslim nation covering a large part of the Middle East. And Israel has been at war again in Gaza to try and stop rockets being fired into her territory, a conflict which has led to the loss of many lives.

Mountain on Fire

Israel was formed as a nation whilst the people were slaves in Egypt before they were rescued by Moses and led through the Sinai Peninsula. It was at a mountain that God met with His people and commissioned them to be His nation, living according to His law, in His land. And that mountain burned with fire when God manifested His glory on the summit. It must have been like watching a volcano at close quar-



ters and the people were terrified. When 80 year old Moses was called to ascend Mount Sinai he was also frightened, but he went up nevertheless and there received the Ten Commandments and the other laws and statutes which are recorded in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible).

Writing to Jewish Christians, the apostle compares the experience of Old Testament characters with the Christian calling, and says this:

You have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore (Hebrews 12:18–19).

Instead, he says, believers in Christ have come to:

Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect (Hebrews 12:22–23).

If we understand God's intended purpose with Jerusalem – that he intends to place His King there, who will reign over His Kingdom – then we will know that God is now assembling a group of people who will work alongside the Lord Jesus when he returns from heaven, so that the whole world will become beautiful and be filled with righteousness and truth.

Unshakeable

The upset condition of 21st century society is a clear pointer to the nearness of the coming of Jesus and the

establishment of his reign as King. But the writer of Hebrews goes on with his comparison between then and now by saying that God has often overturned human society and its institutions, and that he will do so again:

He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:26–29).

Things that now appear to be stable and secure are not really what they seem. Looking at life with an open Bible in hand, we can see that our war-torn world is extremely fragile. Last week the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, warning of the knock-on effects of the struggle to establish an Islamic State said that the UK faces "a greater and deeper threat to our security than we've seen before."

As world events move ever nearer to the day when God will send the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to earth, we are likely to see that situation get much worse. But remember what the apostle said. The purpose that God has revealed – His plan of salvation – is both unchanging and unchangeable. If we believe what the Bible teaches and if we have been baptized into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ we have nothing to fear and everything to look forward to.

Editor

War and Peace

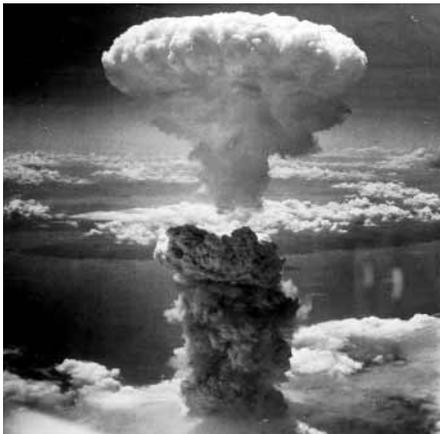
Mankind has had thousands of years to establish peace on the earth, but look at the state of affairs now. In the last one hundred years one hundred million people have died in war.

Frightful weapons have replaced the rifle and shell. Missiles can be fired over vast distances, and with great accuracy. Weaponry exists that can eliminate 250,000 people in a vast fireball in a matter of seconds. We see too the number of wars in Africa, beside the various Arab conflicts in the Middle East, where brother kills brother and millions are homeless. It is frightening.

Blood and Fire

I have just been reading the prophecy of Joel and he has a verse that rivets the attention, for it appears to describe the time just before the establishment of our Lord's kingdom on earth. Here it is:

I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke (Joel 2:30).



Is that a description of modern atomic warfare? Whatever it means the Saviour forecast a time of trouble such as never was, just before he returns. It is not meant to worry us but to prepare us, for when we see certain signs amongst the nations we will know that the Lord is preparing for his return. What a glad day that will be!

Whatever fearful events may take place, the Lord Jesus calls on his followers to stand firm for their faith, and in that grand Sermon on the Mount he said the following:

❖ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

In a world where many think only of themselves he shows that pride is an enemy of Christianity.

❖ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (5:7).

How much real effort is given to the needs of millions in the world who desperately long for food, clothing and shelter? But the Christian does what he or she can, with a real spirit of love.

❖ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (5:9).

Peacemakers are few and far between. Jesus speaks of those who learn to control animal passions, and abhor destruction of any sort.

Peace with God

We have peace with God, so are to be constructive not destructive. Therefore we can understand the words of our Lord, just before he faced the horror of man's cruelty:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

At his return from heaven there will be peace and harmony for those who have loved him. How then could a Christian press a button and wipe out a whole city? Or spray gas over little children?

There is so much confusion among the nations that statesmen do not know which way to turn. The Lord Jesus said that in the time of the end we can expect this:

Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near (Luke 21:26–28).

It is an invigorating call to all who follow the Lord's way.

Prince of Peace

Note what the prophet Isaiah says as he tells us of the coming of the great

Prince of Peace, the Son of God. He is to reign on earth over God's kingdom, but that rule will be unlike all others:

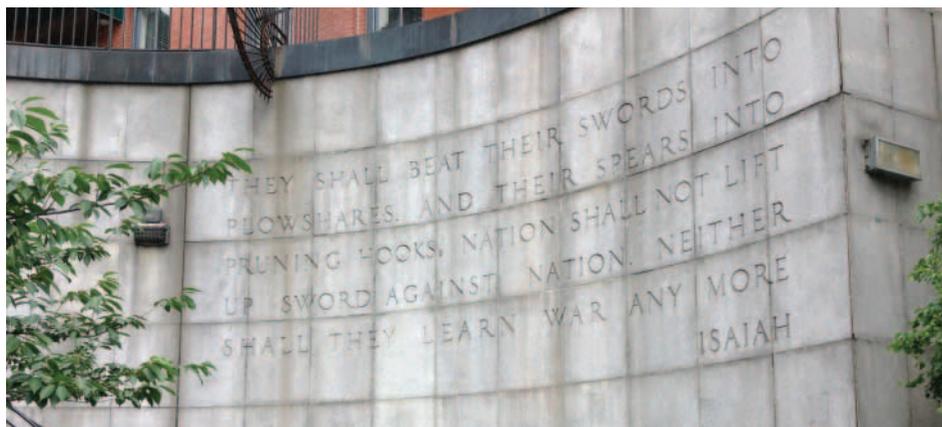
Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:7).

Isn't it exciting to think about what God has prepared for those who love him? There is no hope like it and it is Isaiah who gives us these well-known words:

He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:4).

Those words may adorn the United Nations complex in New York, but it is only God who can deliver the real and lasting peace we all desperately need.

Ken Clark



The Letter to the Ephesians

Paul spent three years in Ephesus during his Third Journey, so he knew the believers there well. They were mainly Gentile Christians. In our Bibles this letter comes just after Paul's letter to the Galatians but, in chronological terms, was written much later than that early letter and even later than his letter to the believers at Rome.

Chapter three of the letter tells us Paul was a prisoner (Ephesians 3 verse 3), and in chapter six he remarks, with a certain irony, that he was an ambassador in chains for the Kingdom of God. Ambassadors normally have immunity from the law of the country! So Paul was writing this letter from prison, during the period covered by the last chapters of the Book of Acts.

Thankful Prisoner

In spite of his miserable circumstances, the aged apostle is full of thankfulness for the goodness God has shown in calling us to know the gospel.



He prays for God to open the eyes of the Ephesians so that they would really appreciate His grace. What God had given them was not for anything they had done, but because of His out-reaching love. Once, as Gentiles, they had been shut out from the promises God had made. Now, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, Gentiles and Jews could share the peace that the gospel brings.

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:11–13).

Paul's statement is still true. Unless we take full advantage of the offer of peace God has made, and join ourselves to the Lord Jesus, we have no hope, and hope is something we desperately need in this dying world.

The Love of Christ

Again, in extravagant language, the great preacher speaks of his privilege in being allowed to spread the good news. He prays that his readers would begin to understand the amazing love of Christ, which extends he says, to four dimensions – breadth, length,

height and depth:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14–19).

Finding Peace

It is only when he reaches the fourth chapter of the letter that the apostle starts to explain the difference all this should make in the way we live. Because God had called us to be at peace with him, we must live at peace with one another. Jews and Gentiles in the congregation must unite together, in spite of their different backgrounds, and show humility and patience towards each other.

The risen Christ had poured out upon them the Holy Spirit gifts (he quotes Psalm 68 to show that this phenomenon had been predicted). These supernatural powers were to help the infant church to grow. It was like a human body, with different limbs and organs, developing from child to adult in the likeness of the Master himself.

All Change!

This idea leads him into a simple but powerful analogy about two coats. Before our baptism into Christ we are all children of Adam, propelled by fleshly desires and evil practices. Now

we must take off the Adam coat, he says, with its bad ways that lead to corruption, and put on the Jesus coat, the one that shapes us into the likeness of God – not in physical form, but in mind and outlook. So:

- ❖ Because God speaks the truth, we must abandon lies.
- ❖ Because God is generous, we must stop stealing from people, and instead give to the needy.
- ❖ Because God’s words bring blessing, we must end hurtful talk, and speak what will build up and encourage others, and
- ❖ Because God forgave our sins, we must forgive each other. Children imitate their parents, he says (we all remember copying Mum or Dad when they started painting or cooking or digging the garden); so, as God’s children, we must imitate him.

Adam’s descendants live in darkness. We are children of the light. Paul quotes what is probably a line from an early Christian hymn about baptism and resurrection:



“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead, and
Christ will give you light”

(Ephesians 5:14).

Emerging from a symbolic watery grave, the newborn Christian, like the blind man who washed in the Pool of Siloam (John chapter 9), emerges to a new world where Christ, the light of the world, gives him joy and direction.

Three Pairs

Paul concludes his theme of unity and consideration for one another by creating three pairs within the congregation.

- ❶ Wife and husband make up the first. They must, he says, submit to each other. The wife should treat her husband as if he were Christ, and the husband should care for his wife with the same love that Jesus showed to his bride, the Church.
- ❷ Child and parent come next. Children should obey their father and mother, just as Jesus obeyed his Father – God promises a blessing for this. At the same time fathers should not be harsh with their youngsters. They should accept it as their duty to bring up their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4 – something to remember in these lawless days).
- ❸ The last pair is slave and master. Slavery was normal in the Roman world, and some slaves found hope and purpose in following Jesus. They must give good service, Paul insists, as if they were serving Jesus himself. Christian masters must remember they are servants of the Lord who shows no respect

of persons. The picture of master and slave side-by-side on the first day of the week, remembering their common Lord in broken bread and wine, is an amazing example of the unity that binds together the followers of Christ.

The Armour of God

The letter concludes with a lesson from the Roman soldier – perhaps one who was guarding the apostle as he wrote. Paul likens the Christian life to a warfare against Sin, in which we need all the armour God provides – helmet, shield, sword and even gospel sandals. Then we need the courage to stand firm when things get tough, and to keep in constant contact with God by prayer.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ... Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints (Ephesians 6:10–18).

David M Pearce

What's in a Name?

Stephen was a precious child. He was named after Dr Stephens who had helped to save his life at birth. Stephen's parents doted on him. "Guess what he said the other day when I dropped something", laughed his father. "He said 'Jesus Christ'. Fancy that, when we are atheists. I wonder where he got that from!"

It has become so common nowadays to use the name of Jesus when emotions are raised (either positive or negative) that people no longer realise that they are doing it. However, it is a very serious matter.

Special Meanings

Many Biblical names have special meanings, just as Stephen was named after a doctor. For example, God changed the name of Abram – meaning 'exalted father' – to Abraham – meaning 'father of a multitude' (Genesis 17:5). He also changed the name of Jacob – meaning 'supplanter' – to Israel – meaning 'prince with God' (Genesis 32:28).

Even more importantly, in the Hebrew Bible, Almighty God is referred to by several different names and they all reflect His character and purpose. An important example is when Moses asked to see God's glory. God said that He would make all His goodness pass before Moses and proclaim the name of the LORD (Yahweh) before him (Exodus 33:18-19). God then passed before Moses and proclaimed:

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity



and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation (Exodus 34:6-7).

God's Special Name

The Jews were commanded to revere the name of God, and the third of the Ten Commandments was:

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

Consequently many of the Psalms talk about the glory of God's name, and of men giving glory to His holy name, for example:

Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (Psalm 29:1-2). See also Psalms 34:3, 111:9 and 148:13.

People call on the name of the Lord (Psalm 99:6), they trust in it (Psalm 9:10), it is associated with forgiveness (Psalm 25:11; 54:1) and God does wonderful things because of His name (Psalm 23:3,31;3,79:9). God sometimes declared that: *“I acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles”* (Ezekiel 20:9). See also Ezekiel 20:14,22,44 and 36:22.

Jesus’ name is very special

Jesus’ name was chosen by God as announced to Mary by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:31;2:21). The name means ‘Saviour’ as explained to his step-father Joseph:

“She [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Just as God’s name was special, so was the name of Jesus. Believing in it allowed, and still allows, human beings to become ‘children of God’ (John 1:12). In fact:

- ❖ We are condemned if we do not believe in his name:

He who believes in him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18).

- ❖ We can have eternal life if we do believe in Jesus’ name:

... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31).

- ❖ People who are converted are described as believing in Jesus’

name (John 2:23) and are baptised into the name of Jesus (Acts 19:5).

This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11–12).

The apostles were able to do miracles using the name of Jesus (Acts 3:16), and asked prayers in his name (John 14:13,14). Preaching the gospel was described as bearing Jesus’ name (Acts 9:15) and Paul suffered for the sake of Jesus’ name (Acts 9:16), while others risked their lives for it (Acts 15:26).

Our Responsibility

Without doubt the names of God and Jesus are holy and most certainly are not to be banded around or used as swear words. The name ‘Jesus’ declares the supreme mercy of God in offering us salvation.

It is despicable that in these days of ‘political correctness’ society is careful in describing disadvantaged people but pays little or no regard to the holy names of God and Jesus. We do well to take heed, because the inspired apostle Paul said this about the Lord Jesus Christ:

God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9–11).

Anna Hart

The Son of God

*In earlier articles **John Carter** explained that God revealed or manifested Himself through angels who spoke for Him and that God wants a family of believers who will be like Him and through whom the world will ultimately be filled with His glory. Now he explains how God made that possible by causing His Son, the Lord Jesus, to be born to the virgin Mary.*

Son of God?

In the promises made to Abraham concerning the land, it was dramatically shown to him that the seed through whom the promise would be fulfilled would be the Son of God.

Isaac was a child of promise. It is foolish for the Jew to scoff at the idea of God having a Son, when the Jewish race owes its existence to the operation of Divine power, apart from which there would have been no Isaac and no Jacob and thus no twelve tribes of Israel.

The dramatic parable was continued when Isaac was offered by Abraham at God's command. His hand was stayed before Isaac was slain; and the Apostle Paul, writing to the Hebrews, says this:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense (Hebrews 11:17-19).

When Isaac asked Abraham where was the lamb for the sacrifice, he said:

"My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8).

When Jesus was announced to Israel, John said,

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Wanted: A King!

When Israel was established as a nation and asked for a king of their own, God further unfolded His purpose. In the covenant of the throne we find the words concerning the seed or offspring of David, who should sit upon David's throne forever. God said of this coming King: *"I will be his Father, and he shall be My son" (2 Samuel 7:14).* Under the guidance of the spirit of God, David says:

The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool." The Lord shall send the rod of your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies! (Psalm 110:1,2).



These words indicate that this descendant of David should for a time be with the Father in heaven, thence to return to earth to rule in the midst of his enemies, and occupy his throne in Zion, where David's throne was established in the past.

Divine Status

The language used by David is very significant – “The Lord said **unto my lord.**” Jesus quotes this in his argument with the Pharisees, when they had been tempting him.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is he?” They said to him, “The Son of David” (Matthew 22:41–42).

They were looking for a merely natural son of David to be his successor as the Messiah of Israel; but Jesus said,

“How then does David in the Spirit call him ‘Lord’? (Matthew 22:43).

Why does David call his descendant “my Lord”? What gave him a higher status than David himself possessed? That terminology was altogether contrary to usual Jewish practice, in which a father had superiority over the son. Jesus used the passage in connection with the subject of the paternity of the Messiah. His opponents were put to silence; they had no answer.

Yet the answer is to be found in the fact that the one who reigns on David's throne, who is David's descendant, would also be the Son of God. Jesus claimed to be that Son and the Pharisees could not evade the force of the argument. But they were not prepared to acknowledge that the Messiah must be the Son of God, and thereby be led

to acknowledge that Jesus was all he claimed to be.

God in a Son

Now let's look at some passages concerning the manifestation of God in a Son, where we find a similar usage of language to that concerning angels, a subject we reviewed in an earlier article. Following up the particular promise connected with David, we read this in Isaiah:

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:1,2).



We can quite understand that this has reference to a descendant of Jesse, David's father and that he would be possessed by the Spirit of God. The prophecy goes on to say:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek him, and his resting place shall be glorious (Isaiah 11:9–10).

The One who is described in the first verse as a Rod, is now described as the Root of Jesse.

How can one be at the same time the branch and the root; the offspring of Jesse and also the source of Jesse? Jesus applies this same language to himself in the Apocalypse when he says:

I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star (Revelation 22:16).

Jesus is a descendant of David; but he is also the Son of God and because of this relationship to God he is the manifestation of the Source of all power, features which belong to God are attributed to him.

A Herald

Isaiah explains that the Coming of the Messiah would be heralded by someone who announced his appearance:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken" (Isaiah 40:3-5).

It was the custom in Eastern lands, before any monarch travelled along a road, for couriers to go in advance calling upon all to make due preparation in the clearing up of the roads. When John the Baptist received messengers from the authorities who asked him who he was and what was his status, he referred to these very words in Isaiah's prophecy saying:

I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord," ' as the prophet Isaiah said (John 1:23).

Preparing the Way

John the Baptist was the courier who went in front announcing the coming of the Lord our God. How are we to understand language like this? Does it mean that the great Uncreate was about to appear in the midst of Israel? Not at all.

But there was going to be a manifestation of God in the midst of Israel such as had never been before. Because Jesus has, by inheritance, "obtained a more excellent name than the angels" (Hebrews 1:4), we should not be surprised if, after the style of description used in connection with angels, he is called "God", hence: "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God," for it was the way of the Lord."

Jesus, who was thus announced by John, is to return to be Israel's Messiah and they will be called upon to "behold your God" (Isaiah 40:9). The cities of Judah shall have a ruler who will be a manifestation of God, for:

Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him (Isaiah 40:10).

When Jesus returns in the power of God, which has been given to him, he will rule for God, will reward his followers, and will undertake the great work of transforming the world to make it a paradise once again.

John Carter

(To be continued)

Jeroboam II

English history is littered with kings who have a number after their name, such as George VI or Henry VIII. Only two seem to have had no numbers after their names, King John and King Stephen, neither of whom were thought to have been good kings.

Perhaps this is why none of their successors took their names. It was very different in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, where there is only one instance of two kings with the same name, Jeroboam I and Jeroboam II, although there are several instances of kings with confusingly similar names.

Who was he?

Jeroboam II was the great-grandson of Jehu, known for his fierce chariot driving. He was given the same name as the first king of Israel, Jeroboam I, who was the son of Nebat. There is a phrase which is repeated again and again through the history of the kings, that Jeroboam I *“made Israel to sin”*.

Presumably when his father Jehoash gave his firstborn son this name he was showing his approval and perhaps

admiration of the man who had set up false worship based around golden calves strategically positioned at Bethel and at Dan.

This strategy had been put in place to prevent the people of the 10 northern tribes going back to Jerusalem to worship, for the city was now part of the kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam also appointed priests who were not from the tribe of Levi. Both idol worship and self-appointed priests were totally contrary to the law which God had given. (See 1 Kings 12: 26-32.)

Good King: Bad King

Jeroboam II came to the throne in 793BC, and had a long reign of 41 years. There is an interesting paradox about Jeroboam’s reign, for although he is described as an evil king (2 Kings 14:24) he was actually very successful, and the kingdom of Israel was very prosperous during his reign. There was an excellent reason for this. The Lord God had made a promise, a final plea to the people of Israel.

The Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence” (2 Kings 13:23)

God had remembered the promises He had made previously. The promises to Abraham went back a long way.

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse



God promised Abraham the earth!

him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3).

Above all else the Lord God was determined to keep his promises. In the days of Jehoash, the father of Jeroboam he sought to remind Israel of all that he had promised.

Just like Jeroboam!

Sadly Jeroboam did not respond as God would have wished. The record tells us that he “did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat” (2 Kings 14:24). Before Jeroboam II became king, Israel had lost a lot of territory in battle, which he was able to recover.

He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher (2 Kings 14:25).

It is interesting to see here the reference to Jonah, the prophet who was told to go to Nineveh and preach against it. Jonah actually went in the opposite direction, the account being recorded in the short book which bears his name. The date when that book was written is not given, but clearly he is the prophet who spoke at the time of Jeroboam II. It must have been on some other occasion that Jonah had prophesied about Jeroboam’s victories.

God’s Help

It appears from the comments which follow this record that Israel at the time was at a very low ebb, and there seemed to be no one to help the stricken nation. At such a time it was important for God’s promises and prin-

ciples to be upheld. On this occasion, and perhaps for the last time, God saved Israel, for we read that:

The Lord did not say that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Joash (Jehoash) (2 Kings 14:27).

Other than this the record has nothing good to say about Jeroboam. In making Israel secure and prosperous once more, Jeroboam was able to secure for both himself and his people a comfortable time. It was not to last. The kingdom of Israel came to an end only 31 years after the death of Jeroboam.

Six different kings followed him, none of whom reigned for very long. Jeroboam restored the nation’s prosperity, but not its righteousness. There are lessons for all rulers of kingdoms, and all subjects too.

Had he set the people on a course of righteousness Jeroboam might have secured a better and a longer future for his people. Sadly, he followed his predecessor Jeroboam I, and did not learn from King David, who showed that “righteousness exalts a nation.”

Mark Sheppard

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“Call His Name Jesus”

Many characters in Scripture have names of deep significance. In the Old Testament, for example, the prophet Nahum’s name means ‘comfort’; Habakkuk stands for ‘embrace’ or ‘one who strongly enfolds’; while Malachi is ‘the messenger of the Lord’.

Name or Title?

It can often happen that a name given to someone can be a one word summary of what he or she has done and of what they are. That name may not have been given at birth, but as a title by virtue of deeds done. Thus Alexander became ‘Alexander the Great’, William was known as ‘The Conqueror’, while King Ethelred is forever known as ‘Ethelred the Unready’, because he was unprepared to resist the Danes when they invaded Britain.

Such titles are given as events unfold; but Almighty God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), so he can name someone beforehand and the name is prophetic of their destiny and future accomplishments. Thus it was that the Lord Jesus was named before he was born. Joseph was told that the young woman – Mary – to whom he was betrothed: *“will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). Notice that Joseph was not told that Jesus ‘might save his people from their sins’, if he was able to fulfil the work that God had asked him to accomplish. God knew beforehand that Jesus would be successful; hence the name the child was given even before his birth.

Free Choice

The children of famous people are often challenged to match what their parents have achieved. Sometimes the name can be an advantage; sometimes a disadvantage. But imagine being given the name of “Saviour” and being told that you were so called by God Himself, who said that you were to save people from their sins. It would be a daunting situation for anyone; yet that was the challenge Jesus faced.

As a young boy he would have been taught in the local synagogue, for village synagogues doubled as schools. And the reading books they used are likely to have been the books of the Bible. Imagine reading your life story in advance and finding out what it was you were meant to do and what would happen to you, for the Old Testament Scriptures are full of prophecies about a coming Messiah who would bring deliverance to God’s people. Nobody could force you to live that way, of course, for everybody has free will, Jesus included. But if the Lord had declined his Father’s call, all of us would be left hopeless and helpless.

Thankfully, Jesus responded to the immense challenge that faced him and chose to obey his Father implicitly. Once, when asked if he wanted something to eat, he replied:

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).

Indeed, he was rightly named “Jesus”.

Timothy James

Living in Harmony with God

From a physical point of view all the creatures that were created by God are equal. The 'breath' or 'spirit' of life is in all of them, mankind included, so that "man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 3:19).

In another way, however, men and women are unique.

God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:27).

The word 'image' describes one thing that is like something else, a resemblance. So God made a being that was more like Himself than the animals are: one that could desire companionship with the Creator.

Friendship with God

Unlike other animals, men and women can think about the reasons for things. We can think about the past and learn lessons from our experiences, and then record them in words and pictures. We can think about the universe and the future and about God Himself. We can consider the effects that our words and actions have on other human beings.

We can examine the evidence that the Bible is right and that it really is God's message to us. Especially, unlike other animals, we can want to be more like our Creator. We have been given consciences to help us to check whether we are doing right or wrong – becoming more like Him or growing away from Him. Our con-

science can only do that if it is trained:

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You (Psalm 119:9–11).

Children of God

God wants us to come to Him as children. This has been true from the beginning when God called Israel His firstborn son (Exodus 4:22). Fathers are expected to give a good example to their sons, and God certainly did that to Israel. He challenged them to be holy (separate from the evil things of the world around them) because, He said, "I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

This was spoken to the nation as a whole, but sadly most of the nation preferred evil to good, and only 40 years later it was said of them:

"They are not His children ... A perverse and crooked generation ... and when the Lord saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters" (Deuteronomy 32:5,19).

Just a Few

The beautiful idea of living in harmony with the Creator appealed to only a few in each generation; but these were the few people for whom God was searching. You can discover how God

appreciated these faithful people and what He has in store for them, by reading Hebrews chapter 11. In this series we have thought about some of the characters mentioned there: Noah, Abraham, David, the prophets and the Old Testament promises that explain what the Gospel really is. You will read of other people too: Abraham's wife Sarah and their family, Moses who led Israel out of Egypt, Rahab a Gentile woman who became an ancestor of Jesus Christ, and many more.

Similarly only a few people accepted the Lord Jesus, but how precious they are to him! The apostle John says of Jesus:

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11–13).

Jesus Opens the Way

Now that Jesus has come, men and women enter God's family by 'receiving' or welcoming Jesus into their lives, by believing him, repenting of their sins, being baptized, and then trying to follow his example. The sacrifice of animals and all the other Old Testament ceremonies taught people important lessons about the worship and service of God; but – very importantly – they did something else too.

The ceremonies were a kind of drama that showed beforehand the work that the 'Messiah' (God's promised priest-king) would do when he came. They were wonderful acted-out prophecies about the ways in which sinners could be reconciled to God.

In other words, the Old Testament



Being in harmony with the natural world is great: living in harmony with God is greater.

ceremonies pointed forward to the work of Jesus. He proved that he is the Messiah by fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies perfectly. We hope to learn more about this later when we think about Jesus' death as the final sacrifice, but at this stage we need to be very clear that the coming of Jesus finished the Old Testament rituals as the way to worship God. They still teach us important lessons, but the true way to God is through Jesus. He said:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

And Peter said about him:

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

No one else can save us from our sins: no one except Jesus Christ.

John Woodall

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