

Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

1573



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‘My Servant Job’ – page 12
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130th Year

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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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Bible Versions

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Man is Mortal

One of the first Christadelphian Meeting Rooms I ever visited had a notice board outside which included a simple statement of beliefs and included among them were the words “*Man is Mortal*”.

I thought it unusual because it seemed so obvious. ‘Mortal’ means ‘liable to die’ and it is clear that we are all in that unhappy state. Even crossing the road can be fatal if you don’t look where you are going. The opposite is immortal – that is, incapable of dying. I’ve never met anyone in that happy condition and I doubt that you have either.

Not so Simple

After a bit of thought I realised the point that was being made on the notice board. You have only to take a stroll through a graveyard to realise that there are many different ideas about death. And if you extend your consideration to think about other religions the scope widens immensely.

It becomes evident that lots of people believe, and even more people hope, that after death life continues in some other form. I was once at the funeral of a keen cricketer who had no religious beliefs whatsoever, but that didn’t stop a friend of his expressing the belief that the deceased was now playing cricket again, this time with a much better team than his earthly colleagues ever achieved.

Those are nice thoughts to express, but are they just make believe? And how can we know what really happens without dying ourselves to find out? We need God’s help and His guidance to be sure about the best way of living

and the likely end result and month by month in “Glad Tidings” we look at straightforward Bible teaching about all sorts of subjects and we aren’t afraid to face up to hard questions like: “What happens to me when I die?”

Mortal or Immortal?

It really is very easy to find out about our true nature. Just searching in a Bible Concordance for the words “mortal” and “immortal” will produce the following:

*‘Can a **mortal** be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?’ (Job 4:17);*

*I will make a **mortal** more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir (Isaiah 13:12);*

*Therefore do not let sin reign in your **mortal** body, that you should obey it in its lusts (Romans 6:12);*

*Now to the King eternal, **immortal**, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen (1 Timothy 1:17).*

Extend your search a little and you will find some clear warnings that human existence can simply cease or perish:

*Nevertheless man, though in honour, does not remain; **he is like the beasts that perish**. This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve their sayings (Psalm 49:12–13);*

To give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those

who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power (2 Thessalonians 1:7–9).

Not so Bad

If all the Bible said was that we have no hope of continuing to exist after death, we would need to rename this magazine “*Bad Tidings*”, but it doesn’t have to be like that at all. Walking through a graveyard recently (and I don’t make a habit of it!) I encountered this headstone with just two dates: the date the person was born and the date of his or her death. There was nothing more.

It may be that all other details had been lost, or that the person concerned wanted to be buried anonymously – in which case why have a headstone at all? But it stands there as a solemn warning that there may be no more to our existence than the time we are born and the time we die. It was Job, the Old Testament character who suffered greatly, who summed up mere existence like this:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

What improves the situation immensely is that whilst the Bible tells us repeatedly that we are going to die, and that death could be the end of our existence, it contains an offer from

Almighty God which enables us to escape the long term consequences of death by being given the gift of immortality. But there is nothing automatic about it and that gift will only be given when the Lord Jesus returns from heaven to establish God’s Kingdom on earth. God alone has inherent immortality (1 Timothy 6:16), but He can make others immortal, if He so chooses. In that way Jesus was raised from the dead – for he died being mortal – and was gifted with immortality by God.

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it (Acts 2:23–24);

I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death (Revelation 1:18).

Jesus is a trailblazer. He was the first to rise from the dead to be given eternal life, but he is to be the first of many, by the grace of God. Here is the scriptural assurance of what is to happen when the time is right:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at his coming (1 Corinthians 15:20–23).



The Wisdom of This World

“We must welcome diversity”, urged the tutor running the training course. “Some people are black and some are white; some people are allergic to nuts while others love them; some people like cheese and others don’t; some people prefer one style of life and others another. Each is equally valid. Just because someone is different from you doesn’t make them better or worse.”

Limited Diversity

Nowadays messages like this are common. While the argument is appealing, that does not make it correct. Independent of any Biblical evidence, the argument of the trainer has limitations. I might thoroughly enjoy beating up old ladies, but most people would argue that I do not have a right to do this just because it gives me pleasure.

So how do we decide where to draw the line? For example, is it sufficient to say (as some do) that an action is acceptable as long as it doesn’t harm another person, or if it does more good than harm?

If we tried to answer such questions by thought and philosophy then we could, and probably would, all come to different conclusions. Society changes its position: activities deemed illegal a few decades ago are positively encouraged nowadays. So how do we really know right from wrong?

Bible Teaching

The Bible has the answer. God made us differently, whether that’s the colour



of our skin or our different allergies. Yet none of that matters in relation to our salvation; as the apostle Paul explained. With God:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

However, the Bible teaches very clearly that in matters of behaviour we are responsible for our choices and that some choices are simply wrong because they are against what God asks of us.

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish

ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21).

We are also told that we are very limited in terms of the knowledge we can deduce for ourselves. This does not mean medical knowledge or advances in technology, but morality. We cannot even learn this from experience, because God asks us to do what pleases Him, not what pleases us.

“He who trusts in his own heart is a fool...” (Proverbs 28:26).

“...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14-15).

The Bible says that God’s moral standards are alien to us:

‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’ (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Because this is so we need things to be revealed by God, not deduced by us. The wisdom of this world is *“foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19)*. After all, human reasoning perpetrated the worst crime in history – the murder of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today’s World

The God of the Bible defines right and wrong. Tragically, nowadays these Biblical standards have become repulsive to some people. Some people even

argue, quite falsely, that the love of God is unconditional and so, irrespective of how people live, God will be pleased with them. Others claim that encouraging certain behaviours is showing the love of Jesus to the people who practise them.

If the Bible is right, as we believe, then the world is in a very serious state. In the days of Noah morals had lapsed so that:

“the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).

The consequence was that *“the flood came and took them all away” (Matthew 24:39)*. Jesus says that at the time of his return to earth it will be like the days of Noah (Matthew 24:37). Once it is established, the kingdom of God on earth will be a wonderful place, but not everyone will be there to experience it. The judgements of God are yet again to be poured out on the world:

“...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

If we choose to ignore the Bible we are effectively saying that we know more than the God who is revealed in its pages. If we claim to believe the Bible then it is a matter of life and death to study it and to try to obey it, even when this goes against the wisdom of today.

Anna Hart

More about the Letter to the Hebrews

*This New Testament letter was written to Jewish Christians to explain they no longer needed to keep the Old Testament law that God had given to Moses. That required keeping the Sabbath, observing feast days, offering sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem, and suchlike. As the writer explains, all of those arrangements have been replaced now that the Lord Jesus Christ has offered himself as a sacrifice for sins. Unlike an earthly priest, he now ministers in heaven, because – as Son of God – he is superior to all others. To make this explanation convincing to Jewish readers, the apostle shows how the Old Testament had foreseen a time when the Law given to Moses would be replaced, as **David Pearce** now explains.*

Melchizedek

On the theme of Jesus as priest, we are told that he did not inherit the office of priesthood from his forefathers, like the priests under the Law of Moses. He was sworn into office by God Himself, as we read in Psalm 110:

The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool ... The Lord has sworn and will not relent, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:1,4).

Melchizedek was a priest who lived in the time of Abraham. He was both a king and a priest, and Abraham offered tithes to him. Therefore, reasons the apostle, Melchizedek was superior to Aaron, head of the Levites, who was Abraham’s descendant, and in the Psalm, the Lord Jesus is made a king priest ‘forever’. This sets him above the Levites, who only ministered for a human lifetime. Finally, if God appointed Jesus as High Priest centuries after the giving of the Law, this means the priests of the Law of Moses were inevitably destined to give place to a better system of reconciliation to God, through a priest who lives for ever.



Better Covenant

We can go further, he continues. Not only the priesthood, but the covenant on which the inheritance of the Promised Land was based is also due for renewal. The writer quotes from Jeremiah chapter 31, which begins with the restoration of God’s people from their dispersion. The Old Covenant made at Sinai was in tatters, because God’s people failed to keep their promise to obey the Lord’s commands. But God, being merciful, promised a new and better covenant. This one would not just spotlight sins, but take them away:

Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is **the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days**, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Hebrews 8:8–10).

So, reasons the writer, if God has spoken of a New Covenant, clearly He intends to replace the Old Covenant and that time has now come. Israel has been inducted into the New Covenant, based not on animal blood, but on the sacrifice of Jesus himself. Therefore it was high time to abandon the Law, which has become obsolete.

New Way to God

The ninth chapter of Hebrews follows up this train of thought. The beautiful Tabernacle with its two compartments and its lampstand, bread, and golden ark was designed as a visual aid.



- ❖ The outer section represents our mortal pilgrimage, enlightened by God’s Word and fed by the bread God provides each day.

- ❖ The inner room is the Kingdom to which believers are travelling.

The High Priest was allowed into this room only on one day a year, on the Day of Atonement, when he took in the blood of a goat for the sins of the people. He then came out to bless the worshippers. So Jesus has gone to heaven, but will return to bring eternal life to those who are waiting for him.

Drawing the threads of the argument together, the apostle explains that as God has replaced the Law of Moses with a new and better way, based on the sacrifice of Jesus, the Jewish Christians must now leave Jerusalem and abandon the Temple services. There was coming a time of trouble (foretold by Jesus) when Jerusalem would be destroyed and the Temple burned with fire. They must separate themselves, or they would be caught up in that dreadful overthrow. It would take faith to turn their backs on their fellow countrymen and leave.

Living by Faith

Faith is what we need, if we are to please God. In the magnificent eleventh chapter, the apostle picks key features from the lives of many great characters from the Old Testament who did just this.

- ❖ **Noah** built an ark because he believed that God meant what He said when He warned him of a coming judgement – the Flood.

- ❖ **Abraham** ‘went out’ from the apparent security of Ur of the Chaldees, and spent the rest of his

days in a tent, waiting for God to give him the land He had promised.

- ❖ **Moses**, stepson of Pharaoh's daughter, turned his back on the attractions of Egypt, because he saw a better future in the rewards God offers.
- ❖ **Jesus**, too, endured the agony of the cross because he was able to look ahead to the joy of the Kingdom.

So, Paul exhorts, the Jewish Christians were going to have to make a clean break. God was about to shake the heavens and the earth of the Jewish state, as Haggai the prophet foretold (Haggai 2:6-7). We must go out, believing God will take care of us. Jesus himself suffered outside the city walls.

Therefore let us go forth to him, outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come (Hebrews 13:13-14).

Although these exhortations had a poignant message for First Century believers, we can take them to heart, too. God has warned that a similar Day of Judgement is to fall on our dissolute world. We too must be ready to go out to meet the Master, who will return from the right hand of God, as Psalm 110 promises:

The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool" (Psalm 110:1).

David M Pearce

Christ in Psalm 110

The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool" (Psalm 110:1).

These words speak of the ascension and exaltation of the Lord Jesus to be with the Father. To sit at the Father's right hand was to be given authority over the earth, inheriting the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world, but still having to wait for the time to come when his enemies would be made his footstool. When David wrote these words he was showing that he understood that his greater son would be his Lord and only subject to God his Father.

Jesus would be to God as Joseph was at the right hand of Pharaoh and as Daniel would be to Nebuchadnezzar. The psalm speaks of the time to come when God will give to him the throne of his father David to reign over the household of Jacob for ever and of his kingdom there will be no end. It will be the time of resurrection and judgment when his people will offer themselves willingly in service to bring about the kingdom.

John Boulton

Jesus is the Only Priest We Need

The evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead is very strong. His followers had not believed that he would die, and when he did they were in complete despair. Yet, within a few weeks they were shouting the message all around Jerusalem that Jesus was alive again.

- ❖ What had given them such conviction and certainty, and
- ❖ Who had told them what to do?

It was the risen Lord who convinced them he was alive and this is what he asked them to do:

Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

What a remarkable statement that was, and is! Jesus has all authority in both heaven and earth. Even the angels are subject to him (see Hebrews 1:6). This gives Jesus the power to guide our lives towards God, if we truly give ourselves to him.

Good News for All

The resurrection of Jesus wasn't just good for the disciples; it is good news for all of us, if we believe what Jesus said. During the forty days when he

instructed his disciples, before he ascended to heaven, Jesus said this:

"All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me ... It was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" ... Now it came to pass, while he blessed them, that he was parted from them and carried up into heaven (Luke 24:44-53).

The apostles did as Jesus instructed them. They told everyone that Jesus had won the battle over sin and over death and that their Lord was now alive forever. He, and only he, could make it possible for others to live forever like him, and he would do this for them when he returned. To prove it, Jesus gave the power of the Holy Spirit to his apostles so that they could heal people miraculously, as Jesus had done. Thus Peter and John healed a man who had never been able to walk, and then said:

"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man stands here before you whole ... 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 4:10-12).

Only True Priest

Just think about that – there is only one person who can save us, because only one person has ever lived in complete obedience to God. Then this perfect man gave his life as a sacrifice, to save us from sin. Because of this, Jesus now is God's High Priest – the one and only priest for His people; the only one who can bring us to God. The New Testament says this of him:

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5);

For this reason he is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15);

It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34).

A Better Sacrifice

Earlier in this series we looked at animal sacrifices under the Law of Moses. They could only put the sinner right with God if he confessed that as a sinner he deserved to die too. If he did not repent of his sins, the sacrifice did nothing for him at all. It is the same with the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus died to save sinners but we must recognize that we are sinners in need of salvation and that God alone can make us right with Him, by our acceptance of His offer, on His terms.

Now that Jesus has done his work, the arrangements of the Old Testament – Sabbaths, feasts, sacrifices, priests and the Temple – are finished.

They were only a foretaste of what Jesus would do in reality. Not even the apostles of Jesus claimed to be priests in that way!

So what about the 'priests' and ceremonies of the various religions today? Unlike the Law of Moses they have been invented by men. They mislead people into thinking that their rituals can bring people to God; but it is only Jesus who can do that. They delude people into thinking that their sins have been forgiven through these ceremonies, but it is not true. Ceremonies and offerings cannot bring forgiveness of sins.

God's Way

The lives and minds of many people were changed when they learned about Jesus' life and sacrifice, and the way they could be forgiven. It is the same with us. God asks us to believe what He has said and to repent of our sins. Then, to associate ourselves with the saving work of Jesus, we need to be baptized, by full immersion, and should share bread and wine regularly with other believers to remind us what Jesus has done for us. For this is what Scripture says:

There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21);

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup (1 Corinthians 11:28).

John Woodall

'My Servant Job'

The book of Job is deemed to be one of the oldest documents in existence and Job himself may have been contemporary with Abraham. Though Job was undoubtedly a real, historical figure, the writer presents a major episode in his life in the form of a play.

Two Challenges

❶ **At that time it was assumed that good citizens are blessed by God with excellent health, high esteem and wealth. The book of Job challenges that assumption.**

The same wrong assumption can be found in the New Testament. When confronted with a man who was born blind the disciples of Jesus had a problem:

"Rabbi," they asked Jesus, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2).

They assumed that it must be somebody's fault! Even today the same views are lurking around. "I don't know what I've done to deserve this!" can be the reaction to adverse circumstances.

❷ **The book of Job also examines the question of forgiveness in a way which anticipates the teaching of Jesus.**

Three supposed friends of Job appear on the scene. In spite of all the cruel words they heaped onto the head of Job, he was able to find it in his heart to show a forgiving spirit. Job remembered his friends in his prayers to God. In this way his prayers became medicine for his own soul; bitterness, anger and revenge were excluded by the greater power of forgiveness.



William Blakes painting of Job, his wife and the three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar.

The Drama Unfolds

Act 1: (Job chapter 1 and 2:1-10)

We are introduced to Job as a "blameless and upright" man. He was extremely wealthy and had brought up his children to be God-fearing citizens; he enjoyed great status in his community.

On one occasion, Job was holding a religious gathering but a character named 'Satan' also attended. (The writer introduces this character to give voice to the unspoken words of some of Job's friends who were jealous of him and were thinking that if God had blessed them with great wealth, they could afford to be God-fearing people too.) The Almighty was also present at the gathering.

God gave 'Satan' the power to severely test Job and so a series of disasters befell him destroying much of his wealth and leaving him in a pitiful state due to painful sores which caused relentless itching. Would he still be "godly and upright"? Even his wife appeared to turn against him,

“Curse God and die” was her advice. But Job’s trust in God was unshakable – although even he was totally bewildered. “Why, why, why is God dealing with me like this?” he asked, and he had no answer so he wished that he could die.

Act 2: (Job 2:11–32:1)

Three friends arrive to express their sympathy with Job but it soon becomes clear that privately they derive some satisfaction from the downfall of this great man. To them the explanation is clear – in spite of all appearances to the contrary, Job must have been a wicked man because everyone knows that God brings misfortunes on the wicked. In a long series of speeches they mercilessly rub their increasingly cruel words into Job, thus exacerbating his anguish. These are some of the things they say:

“Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same” (Job 4:8);

“How long will you speak these things, and the words of your mouth be like a strong wind?” (Job 8:2);

“Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves” (Job 11:6).

Job resolutely denies that his life has been tainted with wrong-doing in any way and the only explanation he can think of is that God has somehow got His facts wrong and that the whole thing is the result of a most unfortunate misunderstanding. If only Job could have the opportunity to present his case to God then this misunderstanding would soon be cleared up. We note that Job is thinking of God very much in human terms. Eventually the three friends give up, concluding

that Job’s self-righteousness cannot be shaken (Job 27:6 and 32:1).

Act 3: (Job 32:2–37:24)

At this point a young man called Elihu comes forward and he is very angry: angry with Job because he deems himself to be more righteous even than the Almighty, but also angry with the three friends because their thinly veiled gloating over Job’s misfortunes is so offensive. Furthermore he holds that their conclusions are wrong and their condemnation of Job totally unjustified.

Elihu then turns to Job and rebukes him for having criticised the Almighty.

“Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, for God is greater than man” (Job 33:12).

That really is the final answer – that neither Job nor we ourselves, can be greater than God and nor do we have the right to demand an explanation from God concerning His actions. Elihu goes on to draw Job’s attention to the greatness of God:

“Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; nor can the number of His years be discovered” (Job 36:26).

Elihu’s final words to Job are these:

“As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, in judgment and abundant justice; He does not oppress. Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart” (Job 37:23–24).

A great whirlwind is approaching. Perhaps this represents the turmoil in Job’s mind as he tries to come to terms with the fact that his presuppositions have been totally wrong and that he must acknowledge his own human littleness in the presence of his Maker.

Act 4: (Job 38:1–41:34)

The voice of the Almighty Himself now arises out of the whirlwind, as He asks: “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? (Job 38:2). He then draws Job’s attention to a catalogue of marvels in creation which surround us all but which, like Job, we tend to ignore:

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4)

“Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion?” (38:31)

“Who provides food for the raven, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?” (38:41)

“Do you know the time when the wild mountain goats bear young? Or can you mark when the deer gives birth?” (39:1–2)

“Does the eagle mount up at your command, and make its nest on high?” (Job 39:27)

Such examples of Divine creation are drawn to Job’s attention – and they could be multiplied many times over. Where were we when God created the spiders with their miraculous webs; when God created tiny birds with the ability to navigate over thousands of miles; when God created ants with their highly organised communities...?

Do we marvel at these everyday things, giving glory to the Creator, or do we mutter ‘evolution’, thus ignoring the evidence of the Creator’s handiwork?

Job is now humble enough to acknowledge his own arrogance:

“I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be

withheld from You. You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know ... Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:2–3,6).

Act 5: Job 42:7–17

The three friends now return to the centre of the stage feeling very contrite for the cruel and grossly unfair words which they have aimed at Job. They are rebuked by the Almighty and they are given a piece of information:

“My servant Job shall pray for you”.

Job does indeed pray for his friends. Remembering his own need for forgiveness he finds it possible to forgive the friends for all the cruel things they have said.

And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).

Thus the book of Job, written so early in Bible history, anticipated the teaching of Jesus, who said:

“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

Job did that brilliantly and so should we if we want to be part of God’s new world when Job and other faithful believers will be raised from the dead to start life anew.

David Budden

The Blessing of Rain

People who live in lands which enjoy plentiful rain can be guilty of viewing rain in a wholly negative way, especially as such people often love talking about the weather. When it's raining they might say: "Miserable day isn't it?" or "What terrible weather we're having", and so on. But Scripture presents the blessing of rain in a very positive way.

God is Good

At Lystra, in Asia Minor – now part of Turkey – the apostles Paul and Barnabas encountered a lame man, who was healed by the apostle Paul, using the Holy Spirit power that God had given him (Acts 14:8–10). There were crowds of people who witnessed it and who acclaimed the apostles saying: *"The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"* (verse 11). This gave Paul and Barnabas a great opening to preach the Gospel, and they took the opportunity to talk about the weather!

*"We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, **gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness**"* (Acts 14:15–17).

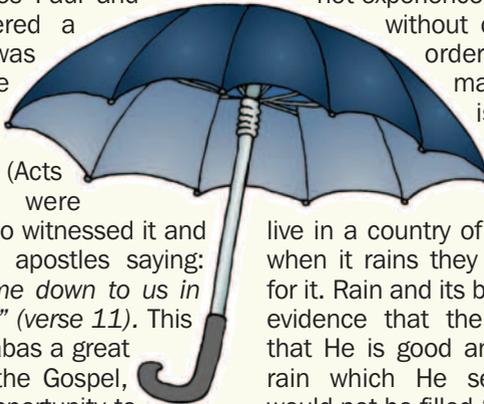
Looking to find common ground, the apostles combined the teaching of the Old Testament (see Psalm 146:6) with something that everybody knows about – rain. God is good, they explained, because He gives us rain from heaven to ensure fruitful seasons. Rain and its effects are therefore evidence, they argued, both that God exists and that He is good.

Rain on Dry Ground

People who live in countries which do not experience rain very often pray without ceasing for rain, in order that their crops may grow. That growth is necessary for their very survival, and that should remind those who live in a country of abundant rain that when it rains they should be thankful for it. Rain and its beneficial effects are evidence that the living God exists, that He is good and that without the rain which He sends, their hearts would not be filled *'with food and gladness'*, as they so often are.

Jesus also spoke about rain when teaching his disciples about the perfect character of God. Asking us to love even our enemies, he explained how God bestows His favours:

*"I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, **and sends rain on the just and on the unjust**"* (Matthew 5:44–45).



Such is the character of God that He allows the benefits of the sun and the rain to reach both the just (those who love God) and the unjust (those who do not love God). This example, Jesus explained, demonstrates how the followers of Christ should act towards those who do not love them. Loving our enemies is one way in which we can imitate the Father's perfect character. When it rains, we can therefore remind ourselves:

- ❶ Of the perfect character of God, and
- ❷ That we should treat our enemies in this life in the way which God treats them – with love and kindness.

Rain, rain, rain!

So when next it rains remember that rainfall is designed to remind us of the goodness of God the Creator who seeks to fill *“our hearts with food and gladness”* and of the generosity of God who shares all these blessings with the deserving and the undeserving alike. If we want to be like God we too should love – both those who love us and those who do not, in just the same way. It's a demanding thought but, as



Jesus said, if we can do that:

“You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Stephen Blake

God's Abiding Care

When life takes quite an unexpected turn
And the path leads to a valley of despair
Where sun no longer shines, and in its place
We see the dark clouds gathering everywhere.
We must remember that this time will pass
And through our tears, we have to understand
We're in God's care no matter what befalls —
In fact, we're in the hollow of His hand.

Colleen Simon

'Blessed is the man...'

The first psalm is the perfect introduction to the Book of Psalms. It sets before us two ways of thinking, two ways of living: two mindsets, as we say these days.

The Blessed

One kind of person is blessed by God; but his or her mindset is first described in a negative kind of way. There are things he doesn't do:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful... (Psalm 1:1)

- ❖ He doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly. There are people who go out of their way to do evil things, to be successful in a worldly sense, to be powerful or wealthy and pleasure-seeking without regard to how God would have them live.
- ❖ Nor does he stand in the way of sinners – people who sin deliberately or are easy-going in their living, not caring about God's way.
- ❖ Nor does he join in the scoffing and scorn of those who treat God's Word with contempt and are happy to ignore it, an all too common attitude nowadays.

So what is he like, this man who is blessed by God, and how does he think?



His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper (Psalm 1:2–3).

'His delight is in the law of the Lord'. We would think of this today as the whole teaching of God and of the Lord Jesus. How often we read this word 'delight' in the Psalms! David, who wrote many of the psalms, delighted in the Word of God and treasured it. We are told to take delight in the LORD and he will give us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4). In another psalm we read of one who was to come who would 'delight to do your will, O my God,' words that are prophetic of Jesus (Psalm 40:8).

Do we delight in God's Word? The one who is blessed meditates day and night on the Word of God – well, you might say, we cannot do that all the time, can we? But what the psalmist means surely is that in all our life and actions we are thinking what God would want us to do, how He would have us live.

Are we guided in our lives by God's Word? Sometimes we may ask ourselves "What would the Lord Jesus do given our circumstances?" Answering that question will help us know what we should do.

Such a man, the psalm tells us, is like a tree planted beside the water: it flourishes and brings forth fruit. Such a person is nourished by the Word of God, drinks of the water of life, and the fruit of the spirit is produced in his life day by day. In all his life he prospers – and that doesn't necessarily mean he will be well-off in the financial sense; but he will be satisfied, happy and contented to know that God blesses him.

The Ungodly

Then the psalmist compares the destinies of the two people he has described.

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous (Psalm 1:4-5).

The lives of the wicked will be transient, not forever. They will be like the chaff the wind blows away in the winnowing process. In the judgment, such a man will not have a leg to stand on.

Nor will sinners – the unrepentant – find companionship with the righteous. We notice that those blessed by God are now called the righteous – not that they are without sin, but they have recognized their naturally sinful state, confessed it and have sought the forgiveness of God. Daily they now ask for strength to live a new life. And the Lord God knows the human frame, our weaknesses, and is ready to forgive us our sins if we acknowledge them and are repentant (Psalm 103:13-18).

The Righteous

As a consequence of their belief, commitment and trust in Him, He is willing to call them 'righteous'. What a blessed state indeed.

*For the Lord knows **the way of the righteous**, but the way of the ungodly shall perish (Psalm 1:6).*

When we read this lovely psalm, we have to ask ourselves a question. Am I on the Lord's side? Surely we would like to think we are on His side and have His blessing.

What an encouragement it is that He knows our ways and will help us in the course of our lives and bring us to the end He has in mind for those who seek Him. The "way of the righteous" leads to immortality and to sharing His nature. Thus the psalm puts before us the biggest of all choices: do we want to live forever, or are we content to live for a while and then to perish? Surely not!

John Boulton

Healthy Living

We are always being told how we should live if we want to be healthy. Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables every day, give up smoking, drink less alcohol, take more exercise. We must all be familiar with such good advice but how much we pay attention to it is up to us! There is no doubt that a sensible, balanced life-style guards against many illnesses and malfunctions of the body.

Live Longer?

With the advantages of a good diet and access to modern medicines we humans, especially in the West, are living longer – often well beyond the allotted ‘three score years and ten’. But the crux of the matter is that our bodies are not designed to live for ever – not in our present state anyway. Whether we live more or less than 70 years, we will all die one day. The Bible explains this in the clearest possible terms:

“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19);

For all our days have passed away in your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away (Psalm 90:9–10);

For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten (Ecclesiastes 9:5).



Live For Ever?

That is why looking after our bodies is not enough. We must feed our minds too. Of course this is no new idea; it was foreseen by God from the beginning. The Israelites were told through Moses:

He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3).

That profound truth was clearly understood by Jesus when he resisted the temptation in the wilderness to turn stones into bread on the basis that: *“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4).*

If our minds are fed by spiritual food – God’s Word – it can lead to a more meaningful life now and eternal life in a perfected world when Jesus returns. That’s what I call ‘Healthy Living’!

Marion Buckler

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