

Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God 1574



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What Sir Isaac Newton Believed – page 15

Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

130th Year

G15

1574



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.

Glad Tidings Distributors for orders and payments

United Kingdom – Cilla Palmer, "Highlands",
78 Mildenhall Road, Fordham, Ely, Cambs,
England CB7 5NR
Tel: (01638) 723959 (24 hrs & Fax)
cilla@gladtidings.fsnet.co.uk

Australia – Jon Fry, 19 Macey Street, Croydon South,
Victoria, Australia 3136
gladtidingsaustralia@gmail.com

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

New Zealand – Neil Todd, 14 Morpeth Place, Blockhouse
Bay, Auckland 7, New Zealand
thetodds@xtra.co.nz

South Africa – A. J. Oosthuizen, P.O.Box 50357,
Musgrave Road, Durban 4062, South Africa
antoost@mweb.co.za

U.S.A. – Pat Hemingray, 3079 Kilburn West,
Rochester Hills, USA MI 48306

Other Countries – Andrew Johnson, 22 Hazel Drive,
Hollywood, Birmingham, England B47 5RJ
andrew@gladtidings.me.uk

Editor: Owen Tecwyn Morgan, 26 The Crescent,
Hampton-in-Arden, Solihull, England B92 0BP
glad.tidings@virgin.net

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The Thirst for Knowledge

Thousands of years ago a Hebrew prophet was given a prediction about the way human society would develop, and this has now come true. The prophet was Daniel and he lived at a time when first the Babylonians, and then the Persians, ruled the developed world. This is what he was told:

"...Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4).

We now live in that society, when people travel easily and quickly all over the world and when there seems to be an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. People have always wanted to learn, of course, but knowledge was once limited to scholars and members of the establishment. Common folk were either denied access or lacked the necessary skills. Latin was the language of the educated in England for many centuries and that meant that the 'uneducated' masses couldn't even read Daniel's prophecy, let alone the rest of the Bible.

Breakthrough!

It took a dedicated man – himself a scholar – to make it possible for people to read the Bible in English, and it cost him his life. The man was William Tyndale, and he lived during the reign of Henry VIII, who is best known for his six wives and the dissolution of the monasteries, when he broke away from Roman Catholicism and joined the Protestant Reformation. You might have thought that a king like that would have applauded the work of Tyndale and would have given him

every assistance, but the king did not want people reading the Bible for themselves. They might get wrong ideas and become troublesome! So Tyndale did his translating abroad, in Protestant Europe, and then had his New Testaments smuggled into England. He had begun translating the Old Testament too, when he was tracked down and martyred in Belgium, in 1536.

His murder did not achieve the King's object, however. For Tyndale's work had shown there was a huge thirst for knowledge about God, and people desperately wanted to read the Bible for themselves. So great was that appetite that King Henry, as the newly styled 'Defender of the Faith', had to arrange for an English translation to be made available. The irony is that much of the resultant 'Great Bible' is, in fact, Tyndale's translation, or that of his fellow-workers.

Google It!

If you want to know more about William Tyndale, or the Great Bible, just google it. For such knowledge is now available to anyone who has a computer, or access to one. Or read about these events in any of the many biographies and history books that have been published recently. For *"knowledge has been increased"* just as Daniel foretold and we are the beneficiaries. But there's a curious outcome. People are better informed than ever, but their knowledge of God and of His Word is poorer than ever.

Listen to any quiz programme and find that the participants know a huge amount about history, geography,

sport, popular culture, and suchlike, but they are often unable to answer the simplest question about Bible characters or events.

When the Bible was unavailable, people desperately wanted to read it for themselves, rather than relying upon what others told them about its message. The outcome was much as King Henry VIII had feared. Over time, different religious groups were formed as people came to understand things differently and that process has continued ever since as independently minded men and women have deepened their understanding and made up their own minds about God's message and His offer of salvation. But such Bible-focused people are in a minority the world over, so what went wrong? How was it that secular knowledge became so much more important to people than the knowledge of God?

All Change

The early 18th century saw a radical change in thinking in England during what was known as 'The Age of Enlightenment'. For the first time in England's history citizens had little to fear in making opinions known. The days of being burned at the stake as a heretic were long gone, so debate and criticism became the order of the day. This was especially seen in the way the previously absolute authority of both the traditional church and state leaders was challenged.

People were free to think for themselves and modern society was born. The advances in science and industry heralded a new age of progress for mankind. This new-found freedom saw the rise of learned societies amongst the country's intelligent rich. They tended to meet in coffee houses to discuss and promote appreciation and

study of what would now be termed the Arts, Humanities and Sciences. One such society was the *Spalding Gentlemen's Society*, the Society's Museum in Broad Street being featured on this month's front cover.

The creation of that Society and its wide-ranging membership is indicative of a trend that began in the 18th century and has gathered pace in the 20th and 21st centuries when the increase in worldly wisdom came at the expense of knowing about God and His gracious purpose with mankind.

It is well to remember that it was the quest for the wrong sort of knowledge that got mankind into serious trouble from the very beginning. When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden in Eden, He gave them just one law to keep. They could enjoy everything that God had made except the fruit of one tree, a tree aptly named "*The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*" (Genesis 2:17). But Eve ate of that fruit and this is the reason given:

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 3:6).

She wanted to be wise and her thirst for wisdom resulted in the loss of everything they then enjoyed. The key thing in life is to seek the right sort of wisdom. As the Bible instructs:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding" (Psalm 111:10).

Editor

The Fear of the LORD



All the books in the Bible are important, but each of them has a particular way of conveying a message from God.

- ❖ Some are prophetic in character, detailing events that were or are to come to pass.
- ❖ Some are mainly narrative: telling the story of an individual or the nation of Israel, showing the way in which God communicated to His people along the way.
- ❖ Some are books of poetry, like the Psalms that were the hymn books used by God's people when they were worshipping in the land.
- ❖ Others are books of wisdom and proverbial sayings – like the Book of Proverbs, most of which was written by wise King Solomon.

Add them all together and you have a very diverse library of books from God, suited to all our circumstances and inclinations and designed to get across the essential things we need to know about God's love for each of us and His desire to work with us, as we embark on a spiritual journey through life.

Proverbial Sayings

In March 1933, during the Great Depression, *Franklin D Roosevelt* was inaugurated as the 32nd president of

the United States and in his inauguration address he made the following comment, which has since become famous:

*“First of all, let me assert my firm belief that **the only thing we have to fear is...fear itself** — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and of vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. And I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.”*

His aim was to give the nation new hope and he wanted to encourage people to go forward with a measure of optimism and enthusiasm, despite the grim economic situation. His analysis was shrewd, for he perceived that if people were too afraid to try anything new, nothing would get done.

Of course, people who are absolutely fearless are just as bad. They never assess the risk, but go forward regardless, hoping for the best. That is another way of achieving nothing worthwhile. There has to be a middle



course. A measure of concern and anxiety is no bad thing; too much of it renders a person powerless. And what is true in national politics or in family life is equally true when we think about our spiritual life – how to live with God and to be responsive to His Word. The inspired writer says:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Proverbs 9:10).

What Sort of Fear?

Some words contain a range of possible meanings. Just as “love” can be used as a friendly form of greeting “Hello Love”, or as a way of describing intense and deeply felt emotion, so “fear” can range between respect and terror. What sort of fear is the wise man describing as *“the beginning of wisdom”*? When faced by an issue as serious as this, we have to let the Bible be its own interpreter, and we need to look at how this fear is described in Scripture and at the various examples that are given of people who lived in the fear of the Lord.

When God rescued the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery they were pursued into the Sinai Peninsula by an enraged Pharaoh and his speeding army. They had plenty of reason to be afraid, and so they were (Exodus 14:10), but Moses said:

“Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today” (Exodus 14:13).

They were to have faith in God and to trust in His salvation, and they did for a while, but soon they lost that faith and had to embark on a long journey to the Promised Land.

Israel at Sinai

Moses brought them to Mount Sinai where they made a solemn agreement – or Covenant – with God, but once again they were afraid. For the mountain shook as though there was an earthquake and the top burned like a volcano. Everybody was afraid at first, even Moses, but then he made this enlightening comment:

Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin” (Exodus 20:20).

There are slightly different Hebrew words in the original language of Exodus, but the distinction is not linguistic. What Moses was saying is that God didn’t want to frighten them, for fear itself is debilitating. He wanted to fill them with a sense of awe and reverence, so they would realise the sort of God He is. Elsewhere God is described as *“a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:29), but He is also described as a God of love, mercy and great compassion.

Thus, although Moses was initially overawed at the sight of God’s resplendent glory, he later discovered that God’s glory was expressive of His mercy and grace towards mankind.

The Beginning

It follows that the expression *“the fear of the LORD”* is really a call to approach God with awe and reverence, remembering who God is, so that we can learn from Him and thus develop a relationship with Him, before becoming a member of His family. That is why the inspired writers in Bible books like the Psalms and Proverbs describe this

attitude as the beginning of a relationship based on knowledge and understanding:

- ❖ The **fear of the Lord** is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111:10);
- ❖ The **fear of the Lord** is hatred of evil (Proverbs 8:13);
- ❖ The **fear of the Lord** is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Proverbs 9:10);
- ❖ In the **fear of the Lord** one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge (Proverbs 14:26);
- ❖ The **fear of the Lord** is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death (Proverbs 14:27);
- ❖ The **fear of the Lord** leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm (Proverbs 19:23);
- ❖ Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the **fear of the Lord** all the day (Proverbs 23:17).

The End

Wise King Solomon, who wrote many Proverbs, also wrote a book of the Bible about the real meaning and purpose of life. In Ecclesiastes, he explains that there are various obstacles in life that prevent us getting full satisfaction, and that this is part of God's design, so that we turn to Him for answers. Step by step, he follows a

logical set of arguments until he comes to this final conclusion about the reasons why we are here:

*The end of the matter; all has been heard. **Fear God and keep his commandments**, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).*

The way that Solomon has used this expression throughout the book shows us that when he writes about the fear of God he really means that we are placed on earth so that we can worship God and we should do so mindful of the fact that God will, one day, summon people to His judgement seat. Thus the Psalmist can say:

*I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple **in the fear of you** (Psalm 5:7).*

Summary

- ❖ God wants us to reverence Him and to always be aware of His greatness and goodness.
- ❖ That is how we must start when we seek to find Him.
- ❖ Fearing God in that way is the beginning of wisdom but God wants us to have a relationship with Him.
- ❖ That requires some effort on our part as we must read His Word the Bible and understand how God is working in the world and with us.

We enter into a relationship with God when we are baptized into the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ and begin to worship God in the way that He has shown us in His Word.

Timothy James

Places and People

Sometimes you have only to hear the name of a place to think about a person who is strongly associated with that locality.

- ❖ **Birmingham, Alabama** might make you think of the 1963 march that brought Martin Luther King to prominence.
- ❖ **Memphis, Tennessee** might remind you of his assassination five years later.
- ❖ **Dallas, Texas** might bring to mind the assassination of President J F Kennedy, also in 1963.

But not all places have become memorable because of tragedies. **Hollywood** has become memorable because of its association with the film industry. **Agra** is famous for the Taj Mahal, and towns like to make connections with famous people to give their inhabitants a sense of past happenings. Thus many towns and villages have a sign as you enter them, or sometimes in their centre, which in some way reflects what they are known for. It may be an instantly recognized building – like the Taj Mahal – a famous person who lived there – like William Shakespeare – or something the town is famous for.

Gentlemen's Society

There was once a double-sided sign in Spalding town centre which depicted a prominent local businessman, Maurice Johnson of Ayscoughfee Hall, on one side and three gentlemen in discussion on the reverse. The sign commemorated the *Spalding Gentlemen's Society* which Johnson founded in 1710 to encourage debate and the pursuit of knowledge. Some of those

early discussions centred on the draining of the fens for agricultural use and, when that became a reality, the early 18th century saw a rise in the town's prosperity as the surrounding fenlands were progressively drained and the river improved to develop the town as a port.

Maurice Johnson reflected this period of the town's history and represented the town's new-found growth and wealth, which is why he was remembered. The three gentlemen in discussion served as a reminder of the meetings that took place in the 18th century.

Talking Shop

They didn't just discuss local matters but loved to engage in intellectual pursuits, and the Spalding Society's list of past members reads like a Who's Who of 18th and 19th century intellectuals. Included among them are Sir Isaac Newton and Alfred Lord Tennyson, both of whom were born locally, and



*Maurice Johnson of
Ayscoughfee Hall*

*The Spalding Gentle-
men's Society*

*Pictures courtesy of the Village Sign Society
(www.villagesignsociety.org.uk)*

the poet Alexander Pope. Pope is accredited with the well-known saying “A little learning is a dangerous thing” and that might prove to have been the case with some of this intellectual activity.

It was a period of optimism when the excellence of the human mind was advanced, but was also a time when Christian beliefs were needlessly attacked. In such discussions, God was often rejected and the miracles recorded in the Bible were denied. It’s an irony that as knowledge grew and men believed they were more enlightened than ever, they chose to declare that nature was revelation enough, and that they had no need of God.

Finding a Balance

The Bible says that God has revealed Himself in the world that He has created, in just the way that someone who creates a poem, a symphony or a piece of art shows something of themselves in the work they have fashioned. Thus a beautiful world is an expression of a beautiful Creator and a well-designed universe reveals the skill and understanding of the Designer. As the apostle Paul expresses this:

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they



became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened... (Romans 1:18–21).

Paul is explaining that the glory of God is clearly revealed through nature, the works of His hands, and it is God Who is the source and giver of wisdom and knowledge. Yet, in his ‘enlightened’ state, mankind has moved away from God’s Word and formulated theories that seek to explain this world by leaving God out of account. But God has not only created the world to show something of His character and purpose, He has also revealed Himself in His Word, the Bible.

Two Revelations

Long before the apostle Paul made his declaration on the proper way to view nature, the Psalmist had penned this two-fold statement about the things we should observe and the best things to discuss, whether in formal societies or in informal groups. Psalm 19 begins by marvelling at the wonderful world that God has created:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all

the earth, and their words to the end of the world... (Psalm 19:1–4).

According to the inspired Psalmist, the created world clearly demonstrates what God is like. Observe the world during the daytime and marvel at the beauty all around. Look up at the starry sky at night, to see something of the wonders of the universe, and you will have even more cause for wonderment. And this declaration of God's awesome majesty is apparent wherever you happen to be in the world: it is designed to speak to everyone about God's goodness and His greatness.

Then the Psalmist looks elsewhere to find out more about God: he directs his attention to the Word of God – the Bible – and he gives this assessment of God's revealed Word:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward (Psalm 19:7–11).

Capability

Notice that the Psalmist says two quite distinct things about God's revealed Word. First, he details its quality – it is perfect, sure, capable of reviving a person's life, able to make us wise, a source of joy; it is pure, enlightening, clean and enduring, true and righteous altogether. Then he adds an important qualification. God's Word can do all

these things, but it needs a response from us. It has to be desired and tasted if it is to accomplish its intended purpose. The reader must approach it as a servant, not as a master, and must be willing to do what is asked of him or her, with the promise that if God's commandments are kept a great reward will follow.

What that reward is can be discovered from some words that were written over a thousand years later, by the apostle Paul to Timothy:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:14–17).

Again, we are given a catalogue of the things that God's Word can do for us: it can make us wise for salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. That is its intended purpose, for if we read what God has revealed and make that the centre of our lives, by believing it and obeying God's commands, it is able to change our lives, and to lead us to eternal life. But we have to be willing to persist in wanting to know about God, and we have to believe. It's a big challenge, a gracious invitation on the part of the Creator of the universe, and an opportunity none of us should want to miss.

Ron Walding

The Bread of Life



If you pick up your bread in a supermarket it's easy to think the loaves just appear, without much effort on anybody's part. Buy a loaf from a baker, where you can smell the baking, and you realize that somebody has been at work to provide your daily bread. Bake the bread yourself and you begin to appreciate the skill involved, but even then you are a long way from understanding all that has been going on to make this possible.

Long Process

Your bread begins when the farmer prepares the ground to sow wheat in the field, and tends and cares for it whilst it grows and ripens. Weeks later he harvests the grain and sells it. In earlier times he might have sold it to a miller who would have ground it, using a millstone which was wind or water driven.

Fortunately some of these mills still exist where you can watch the process and buy flour that has been milled under stone. The tallest windmill in Britain, one of the tallest in the world, is in the village of Moulton in Lincolnshire. It stands 24 metres high and contains nine internal floors. Built in 1822, it originally had four sails which were damaged in harsh gales and were removed in 1894. Following

much fund raising by local residents, the sails have now been reinstated and the milling plant, which was driven by an oil engine for a while, can now be turned by wind once again.

Going back in time, which a visit to Moulton Mill helps to facilitate, we get to appreciate just how much work is still required to provide our food. The farmer, the miller, the baker and the shopkeeper all have to do their work well, so that we can eat. How easy it is to take things for granted when we only see the end product, and forget what's involved. And what is true about an everyday product is also true about what God provides. For unless He provides the right weather conditions to allow the grain to grow, the wind to turn the sails and gives the miller and the baker the energy to grind and bake, we would have no bread.



Moulton Mill, Lincolnshire. Picture by Winyard Engineering Ltd., www.winyardengineering.com

Earlier Times

In Bible times there were no windmills and the flour had to be ground manually. The staple food was bread, and it was such a vital part of each meal that the Hebrew word for bread, *lehem*, also referred to food in general. And people who wanted to eat knew that they had to work in the fields to make that possible, for Israel was primarily an agricultural society. Here's one proverbial saying:

Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty (Proverbs 28:19).

Bread was eaten at just about every meal, and it is estimated to have provided from 50 to 70 percent of an ordinary person's daily calories. The bread eaten was mainly made from barley flour, the grain being ground between two mill stones. The flour was not only used for making bread but also was used in offerings as part of Israel's worship:

When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it (Leviticus 2:1).

Grain and flour were also used in buying and selling. On one occasion the end of a famine resulted in a rush to buy:

The people went out and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord (2 Kings 7:16).

On another occasion, when the prophet Hosea was buying back his

wife and hadn't enough ready money, he paid part in cash and part in grain:

So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley (Hosea 3:2).

Daily Bread

In New Testament times bread was still baked and used as a daily provision. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, the words "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11) remind us that God gives us everything we need every day: "life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:25).

People needed to eat bread to live, like the boy who was carrying five loaves and two fishes, which Jesus miraculously multiplied to feed 5000. But the following day, at the synagogue in Capernaum, he made it clear that we need something more if we are to live forever. This is part of what he said:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:32-35).

If we want to live day-by-day we need food to sustain us. But if we want to live forever, which is what God is offering, we need to be followers of the Lord Jesus, to take note of his example and then begin to prepare ourselves for the great things that are about to happen when he returns.

Isaac Holmes

Finding Hidden Treasure

Parents often give their children advice which is completely ignored on the basis that “They don’t understand me” or “They haven’t experienced this themselves”.

Whilst we are inclined to think this is a new phenomenon, the probability is that this mismatch between age and youth has always existed, at least to some extent. For example, King Solomon had just one son, so far as we know, the one who would succeed him in due course and become King Rehoboam.

Understandably, Solomon took pains to make sure that his God-given wisdom was passed to his son but, as it turned out, Rehoboam was as foolish as Solomon was wise. During his reign Solomon’s vast kingdom was divided and all that was left to King David’s descendants was the small territory comprising Judah and Benjamin. It seems that Rehoboam was unable or unwilling to take Solomon’s advice and that he listened instead to people who told him what he wanted to hear.

Search It Out

What Solomon said wasn’t just good advice for his son; it is good wise advice for all of us. And this is what he said about finding wisdom by which to live:

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures,

then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:1–6).

Notice that this quest for the precious things of life – and eternal life at that – requires some effort. Just look at the verbs: *being attentive; inclining the heart; calling for insight; seeking it like silver; searching for it as for hidden treasure.* And just in case we think that he was talking about worldly wisdom, Solomon explains that our search must centre on those words which have come out of the mouth of God. These are God’s inspired (or breathed-out) utterances which now comprise the Bible, and this is indeed a compilation of books which require a bit of effort and application, if we are to understand them.

Hidden Treasure

For many people it’s a great joy to go out in all weathers, wrapped up in numerous layers, with flask, shovel and metal detector to look for hidden treasure. For the keen treasure hunter the excitement and anticipation of possibly finding gold, silver coins or rare objects of unimaginable wealth is hard to beat, even though the chances of doing so are slim. There are many accounts of lost treasures just waiting to be found but in reality they are either myths or their whereabouts are unknown.

One such lost treasure is that of King John of England. The legend is that he lost the crown jewels and the Royal Treasury in the Lincolnshire mudflats

somewhere in the area known as The Wash between the river Nene at Sutton Bridge and the river Welland at Fosdyke in eastern England. This area was aptly named 'The Wash' because in King John's days it was a huge expanse of marshes, dangerous mud flats and deeper channels that quickly filled with the incoming tide. It was only passable at low tide and would swiftly catch out the stranger or the unwary traveller.

King John was travelling from King's Lynn to Newark in October 1216 and to avoid the treacherous marshes he took the longer but safer inland route. The wagons containing all his treasure took the short cut across The Wash and it is thought that the slow moving horse-drawn wagons became bogged down in the mud and quicksands before the tidal waters came in drowning all concerned. Neither man, horse or treasure was ever seen again!

New Testament Treasure

Jesus himself spoke of treasure hidden in a field:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (Matthew 13:44).

This man's joy was like that of the man with his detector who discovers that pot of gold in the ground. He didn't appear to be looking for the treasure, but stumbled across it, yet having found it and recognising it for what it was, he was prepared to sell all he had to buy that field. Such was his desire for the sort of life-changing effect it would have.

Jesus gives this example, not to emphasize the man's joy at discovering riches that would set him up in

luxury for the rest of his life, but to show what it should mean to discover the good news about the Kingdom of God. The glad tidings of the gospel is God's promise of eternal life in His Kingdom at Christ's return and this is the great treasure that Jesus was speaking of. When we come to understand God's promises and the hope He has given us for the future, through His Son, it should make us so joyful that we too will be prepared to give up everything else, to secure our place in God's kingdom.

Looking in the Right Place

This treasure is not to be found with a metal detector out in a farmer's field but by searching God's Word. When its message is understood, when all the uncertainty and doubt gives way to a firm belief in the Almighty and His purpose, then we can know the joy of the treasure hunter when he discovers that pot of gold.

This treasure is not buried under ten metres of silt in an unknown location. It's in plain sight and readily accessible to all who are prepared to open the Word of God. Unlike the man in the parable we don't have to sell everything we have to procure the treasure: it's freely available. For God, through the gift of His Son, has made it possible for us to become part of His wonderful plan. As Jesus said:

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

if we really want to be part of God's great and gracious purpose, the good news is that He wants that too.

Ron Walding

What Sir Isaac Newton Believed

Sir Isaac Newton is frequently mentioned as one of the leading lights in the 18th century as his scientific discoveries strengthened the prevailing attitude of enlightenment without the need for God. Yet Isaac Newton firmly believed in God as the Creator who set in motion the laws of the universe. A quotation from him sums up his attitude towards God:

“He who thinks half-heartedly will not believe in God; but he who really thinks has to believe in God.”

That statement was not just a challenge to his own generation: it stands as a challenge to all generations – to think deeply about God. He created man with the ability to think, to search out things and to reason; but all searching must begin with God.

Little Known Fact

Sir Isaac Newton has been called ‘the greatest scientific genius the world has known’ and this may be so; but not many people know that he had another love – the Bible. He was a friend of Maurice Johnson, who founded Spalding’s Gentlemen’s Society, and was himself an honorary member. It may have been somewhat difficult for Isaac to adhere to the rules of the Gentlemen’s Society of not talking about religion! For religion was his passion.

It is said that he spent less time on science than on theology. Best known for his scientific achievements, it is a little known fact that he wrote 1.3 million words on biblical subjects!



He was born in the manor house at Woolsthorpe near Grantham in Lincolnshire, now owned by the National Trust. Isaac’s father died before he was born and his mother, Hannah Ayscough, then remarried when he was three years old. He spent a lot of his childhood with his grandmother and went to the grammar school in Grantham. As an adult he studied in Cambridge, but his love of the Bible was largely evident only when an auction of his non-scientific writings was held in 1936.

Newton seldom made public pronouncements regarding his theology, yet he was an avid Bible student and once wrote:

But search the scriptures thyself and that by frequent reading and constant meditation upon what thou readest, and earnest prayer to God to enlighten thine understanding if thou desirest to find the truth.

Bible Prophecy

Newton was a believer in the Second Coming of Christ and readily discussed what the Bible had to say concerning the prophecies in Daniel and the Book of Revelation. He also held the belief in the unity of God and carried out a great deal of research on the nature of Christ's relationship to his Father. He did considerable work on biblical numerology and was very fond of Bible study.

Newton loved Bible prophecy so much that he would debate with other like-minded people about the date of the end of the world. In a 1704 manuscript he describes his attempts to extract scientific information from the Bible:

"This I mention not to assert when the time of the end shall be, but to put a stop to the rash conjectures of fanciful men who are frequently predicting the time of the end, and by doing so bring the sacred prophesies into discredit as often as their predictions fail. Christ comes as a thief in the night, and it is not for us to know the times and seasons which God hath put into his own breast."

Newton was referring to the return of Christ to the earth and stated that this would only happen when Israel was restored as a nation in their own land, according to his Bible studies.

Israel Restored

Isaac Newton died in 1727 and, at that time, there was no nation of Israel as the Jews had been deported from their ancient homeland and had been scattered throughout the world. But, perceptive as ever, Newton worked out that prophecies like these had to be fulfilled, and that the Jews were destined to return to their own land, as the

purpose of God came into its final phase:

Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock' (Jeremiah 31:10);

Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of Me in their hearts, that they may not turn from Me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all My heart and all my soul. For thus says the Lord: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them (Jeremiah 32:37–42);

Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel' (Ezekiel 11:17).

People sometimes say that Bible readers make the prophecies fit events that have already happened, but Sir Isaac Newton was clear that an important event was awaited, and that it was going to happen when the time was right. In fact, the nation of Israel was not established again, as a nation among the nations of the world, until



David Ben Gurion reading Israel's Declaration of Independence in Tel Aviv in 1948.

the 14th May 1948 – 221 years after his death. He was that far ahead of his time!

God's Created World

It has been said that the Bible doctrine of Creation was the underpinning of Newton's science. He certainly believed in the Creator who set in motion the laws of the universe and this is what he said:

"This most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being ... This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as lord over all; and on account of His dominion He is wont to be called Lord God."

"One can never unlock the secrets of the universe until they come to realise that there was a designer of that expanse."

His scientific achievements are still spoken of today. When Apollo 8 was

returning from the moon to the earth, NASA asked which one of the astronauts was guiding the capsule. The reply was "Sir Isaac Newton". For the laws discovered by Newton nearly three hundred years ago made space flights possible; but the real credit must go to the Lord God who put the laws there in the first place. As Newton once wrote: "Gravity explains the motions of planets, but it cannot explain who set the planets in motion".

It is the Lord God who put the laws in place for sustaining life itself, as the Bible explains, and there are plenty of reasons why we should align ourselves with people like Sir Isaac Newton and believe in the Creator. We have to exercise our minds and develop our understanding and, as a consequence, we too can come to this conclusion, expressed by the apostle:

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible (Hebrews 11:3).

Believing in God the Creator is a good start. Believing in His Word and understanding His purpose is the next great step. Then we must prepare our lives for the great changes that lie ahead for the earth and for the new society to be established when Jesus returns. It is this promise given by the angels to the apostles, as they saw their Master ascending to heaven, that is soon to be fulfilled as God's plan of salvation moves forward:

Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

Sue Walding

A Pearl of Great Price

When a change of approach proved necessary, Jesus began to teach using parables. His message about a coming kingdom on earth was encouraging some Jewish nationalists to imagine that he was about to head a revolutionary movement which would sweep away the occupying Roman force and establish a Jewish State again. They wanted Jesus to be their king, but he had been given a very different job specification by his Father.

Coming Kingdom

Jesus will come as a king and will rule over God's Kingdom on earth, as the Scriptures clearly promise:

Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice. Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land (Isaiah 32:1-2).

To ensure there would be people in that Kingdom with him, Jesus came as a Saviour and his remit was to give his life as a sacrifice for sin, which would be effective for saving "his people" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus did not want that message to be lost amidst nationalistic fervour, so he taught by parables to make people think about what they really wanted and needed. Many parables were about the Kingdom of God: on one day alone he used eight different parables to describe aspects of the Kingdom,

focusing upon the attitude of mind and heart that is necessary for people to gain access.

Seeking and Finding

Among the eight parables Jesus taught were two about seeking and finding. Before his change to teaching in parables, Jesus had taught that his followers should:

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:33).

Now he illustrated what that meant in practice by one parable in which someone stumbles across hidden treasure, referred to in a previous article in this issue, and one in which a pearl trader sets out deliberately to find the finest pearl that can be bought:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matthew 13:45-46).

Imagine his excitement when this trader finally found the thing he had been looking for all through his business life. No doubt he had found many lesser pearls but they had not satisfied him; they failed to come up to his expectations. So he made a determined effort to find that one fine pearl and once he had found it he was prepared to sell all he had to buy just that one pearl.



Of course, Jesus wasn't a pearl trader himself, nor was he speaking to pearl traders. He was using this as an example of someone searching for what he considered to be the most valuable thing in life. And because Jesus likened this quest to "*the kingdom of heaven*", elsewhere termed *the kingdom of God*, the pearl of great value is the gospel hope of eternal life in the Kingdom which is to be established when Christ returns. The merchant is representative of someone who is seeking for truth, who studies many philosophies and theories in vain without ever satisfying his or her desire.

Price Paid

Jesus himself was like the pearl trader in that he spent his entire life seeking to do the will of God, his Father, and was never satisfied with anything less than his total obedience. He once said: "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work*" (John 4:34).

And the Lord Jesus gave everything he possessed to make that search successful, for he had few possessions, no home, no wife, no safety and security, and he laid down his life for us – spending all that he had to secure the prize of everlasting life with his Father

The apostle Paul put it like this:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In laying down his life for his friends, Jesus paid the price of our redemption and has made it possible for us to share his victory. If we choose to seek the truth from God's Word and come to

an understanding of the gospel hope, we can find both satisfaction and contentment, for we then get to see where our life is heading and to what end. We can rest contented, sure in the knowledge that the price has been paid and that God's kingdom will indeed come, just as God has promised. For the followers of Jesus are those who have been redeemed and purchased for God Himself: "*for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body*" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Modern Parable

This month's front cover photograph features the museum of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, reputed to be the second oldest in the UK after Oxford's Ashmolean Museum. The deceptively small frontage of the present building in Broad Street conceals a unique Aladdin's cave of rare books, pottery and coins dating back to the Romans, as well as artwork and artefacts – including a royal medieval charter sealed by King Henry IV granting the right to cut down trees! This fine collection has been built up over many years and is well worth a visit, but there is something else that a seeker after truth might prefer.

The building shares an exclusive secure passageway with the Christadelphian Hall in Spalding. By contrast with the museum, this building has nothing of any value to speak of from a human point of view. Yet, in reality, it contains the most precious treasure that can ever be found – the Bible, the Word of God, which is the greatest treasure anyone could want. It contains the offer of everlasting life in a perfect world. That's priceless.

Lydia Balls

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Africa & Europe

Christadelphian Bible Mission,
404 Shaftmoor Lane, Birmingham,
England B28 8SZ

requests@cbm.org.uk

The Americas

CBMA, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi
Valley, CA 93065, USA

cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

Caribbean

CBMC, Box 55541, Unit 119,
15280, 101 Avenue, Surrey, BC,
Canada V3R 0J7

philsnobelen@shaw.ca

India

T Galbraith, GPO Box 159,
Hyderabad, 500001, India

tim@galbraithmail.com

South and East Asia

ACBM, PO Box 42, Wallacia, NSW,
Australia 2745

coelmada@ozemail.com.au

Local Information