

PSALM 119:79
79 Let those who fear You turn to
me,
Those who know Your
testimonies.
80 Let my heart be blameless
regarding Your statutes,
That I may not be ashamed.

2 KAPIS

81 My soul faints for Your
salvation,
But I hope in Your word,
82 My eyes have been seeking You
ward, - when will You
Saying,
comfort me!
83 For I have become like a
weakness in sinners,
Yet I do not forget Your
statutes,
84 How many are the days of
Your mercy!
85 When will You execute
judgment on those who
persecute me
86 The proud have dug pits for
me,
Which is not according to
law,
87 All Your commandments are
faithful,
They persecute me
wrongfully,
Help me,
88 They almost made an end of
me on earth,
But You did not forsake Your
precepts,
89 Revive me according to Your
lovingkindness,
So that I may keep the
testimony of Your mouth.

— TAMED

— EVER, O LORD,
— IS SETTLED IN

... on th

or by them You have given
 me life.
 I am Yours, save me;
 For I have sought Your
 precepts.
 The wicked wait for me to
 destroy me.
 But I will consider Your
 testimonies.
 I have seen the consummation
 of all perfection.
 Your commandment is
 ever broad.

		flat exceeding
	C MEM	
97		Oh, how I love Your law "It is my meditation all day."
98		You, through Your commandments, my refuge swier than any refuge I have made anywhere For more teachers than all my teachers "For Your testimonies meditation and meditation more than incense."
99		Because I keep Your law, I have retained every evil deed That I may keep Your law, I have not departed from Your judgments.
100		For You save me.
101		My sweetest Savior, Your Tongue through Your Tongue Therefore I
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105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path
106 I have sinned and iniquity
That I won't keep Your
righteous judgments.
afflicted very much
O Lord, acc

the Christ

109 My life is continually in thy
 hand,
 Yet I do not forget, "Thou hast
 110 The wicked for a sacrifice
 for me."
 Yet I have not straggled from
 Your promises.
 111 Your promises I have taken
 as a heritage forever,
 For they are the rejoicing of
 my heart.
 112 I have directed my heart to
 perform Your statutes,
 O Lord, to the very end.

[illegible]

7 AVIN
121 I have done justice and
righteousness.
Do not leave me to my
oppressors.
Praise! for Your

to my path
Keep Your
as judgments
acted very much;
O Lord, according

Christadelph

PSALM 119:140

Give me understanding,
That I may know Your
testimonies.
126 It is time for You to act, O
Lord,
For they have regarded Your
law as told.
127 Therefore I love Your
commandments
More than gold, yes, the
gold.
128 Therefore all Your pre-
cepts concerning all things
I consider to be right.
I have no false law.

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justice and
 me, to my
 or Your servant.
 the proud oppress
 all from seeking
 salvation
 or righteous word.
 in Your servant
 owing to Your mercy,
 each the Your statutes.
 Your servant,

phian

*Published for the
Bexley Christadelphian Ecclesia (Dawn Fellowship)
by*



*Light Bible Publications,
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Bexley, Kent
DA5 1UB, England*

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VOLUME EIGHTEEN NUMBER ONE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2003

A Special Issue of Light on a New World

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Who are the Christadelphians?

TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WORLD is very confusing. On the one hand there are the established churches that can claim many millions of adherents and on the other hand there are a large number of believers who worship separately, whose beliefs differ widely from those of the established churches. In recent years, there have been moves on the part of some church authorities to press for closer ties between the so-called Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church but in general the Christian world is a divided one.

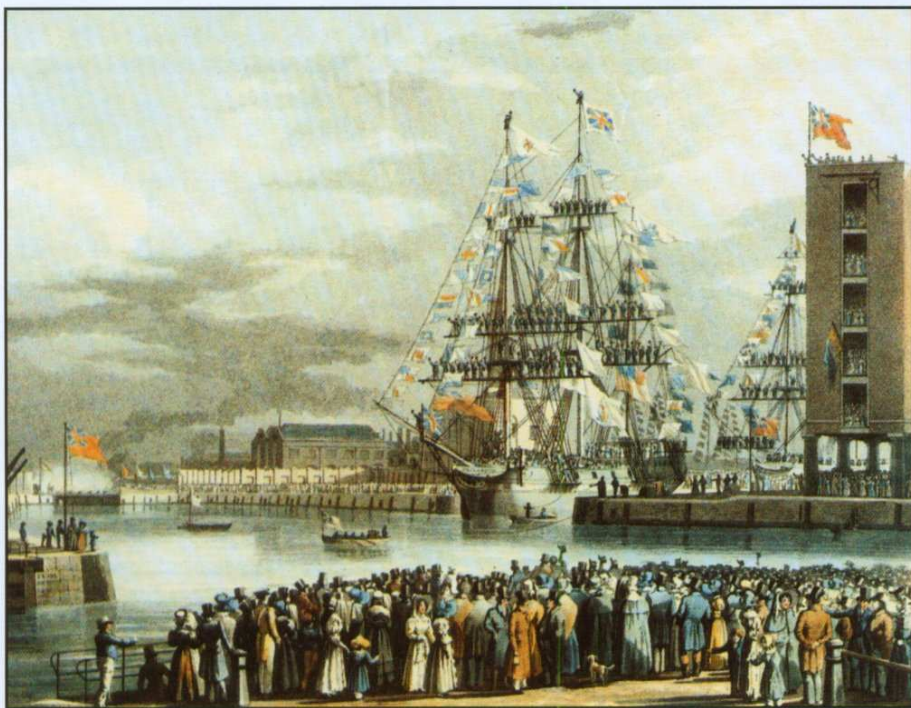
The Christadelphians are certainly **Protestant** in the sense that we have **protested** about errors of belief and practice in the established churches. We only accept the authority of the Bible as the Word of God and our guide for life. As this special issue of *Light on a New World* will demonstrate, our longer history reaches back to the very start of Christianity. Our aim is to show why we are **'protesters'** and why we follow the beliefs and practices of the first century Christians. We will also show why it is that we are at variance with the majority of Christians today and we urge you the reader, to think about the message in this booklet. We ask you to compare your beliefs with the teaching of Christ and his apostles and judge for yourselves.

The publishers of this magazine are often asked questions like the following: *'What does the name Christadelphian mean?'* *'Why are you separated from all other church groups?'* and *'What is so special about your beliefs?'* By reading *Light on the Christadelphians* we are sure you will find the answer to these and other related questions.

During the 19th Century many small religious sects sprang up with new ideas and doctrines. However, this was not the case with the Christadelphians. The name admittedly was new, but their beliefs and doctrines were not. The

Christadelphians were dedicated to a revival of the beliefs and practices of the first century Christians.

The next section explains why the name ‘Christadelphian’ came into use and subsequent sections set out in greater detail our organisation, way of life, beliefs and our hope for the future.



The opening of St Katherine's Docks, London on 25th October 1828

Note about versions

All Bible references in this issue are from the New King James Version unless otherwise stated. Other versions used are the King James or Authorised Version (AV), the New International Version (NIV) and the Revised Standard Version (RSV)

The Name

‘Christadelphians’

‘CHRISTADELPHIANS’ MAY SOUND a rather imposing name but it simply means ‘Brethren in Christ’. John Thomas, an Englishman born in London in 1805, first used the name. He was the son of a clergyman and became a doctor of medicine. In 1832 as a young man, he emigrated to the U.S.A., sailing from St. Katherine’s Docks, London (picture page 2), aboard a ship called *The Marquis of Wellesley*. He helped to pay his passage by working as the ship’s surgeon.

The stormy Atlantic crossing was so bad that the ship lost its mainmast and ran aground. The passengers feared for their lives and at this point Dr Thomas determined that if he ever reached land he would never rest until he found out the truth about life and death. The ship eventually reached port after eight dreadful weeks and disembarked the relieved passengers and crew in New York.

At that time America was full of people with new ideas and a freedom of thought that gave rise to the formation of many different religious communities, unrestricted by any form of state religion. It was in this ‘cauldron’ of religious activity that Dr. Thomas began to implement his resolve to search for the truth about life and death.

With his religious family background he already had a foundation belief in the Bible and it was to the Bible that he looked for answers to his questions. He read the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament Scriptures avidly, learning the original languages and searching out the beliefs of the people of the Bible. He found to his astonishment, that a great deal of what was accepted as established church doctrine was not in the Bible!

In between earning his living in medicine, Dr. Thomas travelled widely in America preaching what he now understood to be the message of the Bible.

He involved himself in debates and addressed many congregations, finding there were others like himself who had searched God's Word for the answer to these vital issues.

Dr Thomas then began to put together his conclusions about the true doctrines found in the Bible. These were published in 1848 in a book entitled 'Elpis Israel'¹ while he was on a visit to England. By this time his preaching efforts had led to a number of people in America and England studying the Scriptures and realising that this man had indeed uncovered original Christianity as taught by Jesus and his apostles. They became associated with Dr. Thomas but they still had no fixed name although they were known in some places as 'Thomasites'. However he resisted this, as he was not a man who sought a following or wanted to have his name associated with a newly formed religious group.

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

It was the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 that made Dr. Thomas choose a name for those who had accepted his understanding of the Bible's teaching. It seems little thought had been given to a name, as it was not considered to be a necessary part of their faith. They followed the teaching of Jesus and like the 1st Century believers, they simply regarded themselves as his brethren and sisters.

The war between the Northern and Southern States of America resulted in believers living in 'opposing camps' and this raised the question as to whether the followers of Jesus should serve in the armed forces. Should they obey the call to take up arms if the Authorities ordered them to do so? After much thought and by searching the Scriptures they came to the conclusion that they had no alternative but to become **conscientious objectors** if they were to follow the commandments of Christ and the apostles [*Matthew 5.43,44; John 18.36*].

Conscription was resorted to by the Authorities in both the Northern and Southern States and the rules for exemption were different on both sides. Negotiations were necessary with the Authorities, who would only consider the cause of **conscientious objectors** who belonged to a recognised religious group. The brethren asked Dr. Thomas for help in adopting a name that would be recognised by the military authorities and so he set his mind to the

task and decided to adopt the name '**Christadelphians**'.

He later wrote, '*I did not know a better denomination that could be given to such a class of believers than 'Brethren in Christ.'* This declares their true status, and as officials prefer words to phrases, the same fact is expressed in another form by the word '**Christadelphians**', or *Christou adelphoi*,'² Christ's brethren.'

With this new name, the **Christadelphians** now had official recognition in America. Dr. Thomas travelled widely, even into battle zones to represent those who were having difficulties with the Authorities, but generally the adoption of the name **Christadelphian** gained the exemption they sought in their desire to uphold the teaching of Christ. The name was also accepted as an established religious denomination in the U.K. from about the same time.

AN APOSTOLIC FELLOWSHIP

For the enquiring reader it is perhaps already noticeable that **the Christadelphians look back to the first century** to the teachings of Christ and his apostles to see what they originally preached and to what we can only describe as **true Christianity**. We would hope that the circumstances that led us to adopt the name 'Christadelphians' do not divert your attention from the fact that the basic beliefs of our community are apostolic. The same fundamental teaching of the first century believers forms the basis of Christadelphian beliefs. The fact that the established churches have strayed from first century Christianity is the reason for our position today.

A BIBLE BASED COMMUNITY

Christadelphian beliefs are based on the Bible's claim that it is the inspired Word of God, a claim that is supported by a substantial weight of external evidence [2 Timothy 3.16; 2 Peter 1.19-21]. When Jesus preached the Gospel, he taught from the Old Testament Scriptures. It was from these ancient Jewish Scriptures that Jesus expounded to the people of his time the 'Gospel' or 'good news' of the coming kingdom of God. It is to these same Scriptures that Christadelphians look for the foundations of true Christianity.



The ecclesia at Disi in Malawi, Central Africa



The breaking of bread meeting – Norwood ecclesia London (see page 10)

The New Testament was not completed until the end of the first century AD, after Jesus had ascended to heaven. However when we study its message we see that it also claims to be inspired by God. The writers of the New Testament did not dismiss the Old Testament Scriptures as irrelevant but rather they expounded the message of those ancient writings. Jesus himself pointed us in the right direction when he said: *'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'* [Luke 16.31]

In this passage the servants of Jesus are clearly directed by him to look at the Old Testament Scriptures - to Genesis and the books that follow - to find the foundation principles of true Christianity. The Apostle Paul who was instrumental in spreading Christianity throughout the Roman world in the 1st Century, confirmed its basis in the Old Testament when he wrote: *'And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the Gospel to Abraham beforehand...'* [Galatians 3.8]

Christadelphians believe that true Christianity can only be found by accepting that the whole Bible is God's Word. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy one of the 1st Century Christians, making this very point: *'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.'* [2 Timothy 3.16,17]

When Paul told the believers at Ephesus *'I have not shunned to declare to you **the whole counsel of God**'* [Acts 20.27] he was reminding them that **all** his beliefs and hopes were based on the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures and in doing this he was following the example of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Footnotes:

¹Elpis Israel, the title of Dr Thomas' first book means 'The Hope of Israel' (Elpis is a Greek word meaning hope).

² *Christou Adelphoi* are Greek words meaning brethren in Christ.

A Selection of Christadelphian Publications/helps to Bible Study

- Thine is the Kingdom
A detailed study of the message of original Christianity.
- A Declaration of the Truth revealed in the Bible
Notes on basic Bible teaching supported by many Bible references.
- Bible Readers companion
Daily Bible reading tables for January to December.
- Statement of Faith
A summary of the fundamental beliefs which form the basis of our fellowship.
- Christendom Astray
The teaching of the Bible contrasted with popular Christian beliefs.
- The Trinity True or False?
A detailed study of the Bible teaching about God and Jesus Christ.
- Bible Correspondence Course
A two part Bible study course
- Special Issues of Light
Special issues on a number of Biblical subjects including Bible prophecy, Creation, Jesus Christ, the Gospel and, Israel.

Available from the Correspondence Secretary (see inside back cover)

The Christadelphian Way of Life

THE CHRISTADELPHIANS MEET in groups called ‘**ecclesias**’, a name taken from the Greek word which is translated ‘**church**’ in the New Testament. The original Greek word is ‘*ekklesis*’, which does not refer to a building but means ‘an invitation to come out’. As with the brethren and sisters of Christ in the 1st Century, to be part of an ‘**ecclesia**’ is to be part of the body of those ‘**called out**’. A study of the New Testament Scriptures will show that the first century ‘**ecclesias**’ were meeting as groups of believers with no emphasis placed on the buildings they worshipped in.

NO INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

The Christadelphians have no connections with any other denomination; neither do we have any involvement in politics. We do not vote in local or national elections. In this respect we follow the advice of the Psalmist: ‘*Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save.*’ [Psalm 146.3 NIV] This does not mean that we have no respect for authority. On the contrary, Christadelphians are law-abiding citizens of the countries they live in. We follow the teaching of Christ, who said in answer to a question: ‘*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.*’ [Matthew 22.21] In other words, we abide by the law of the land, except where it is in conflict with the commandments of Christ (for example conscientious objection to military service).

SERVANTS OF CHRIST

Christadelphians do not have paid ministers, or a central organisation or controlling body. We subscribe to a ‘Statement of Faith’ which sets out our beliefs based entirely on the teaching of the Scriptures. All ecclesias have agreed to uphold this and newly baptised members assent to it. Each ecclesia organises its own affairs, choosing members to perform various duties

according to their individual abilities with the overriding consideration that we are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ [*Colossians 3.23,24*].

MEETINGS

The main focus of our worship is the weekly remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection as symbolised in breaking bread and drinking wine (picture page 6). This is based on the practice of the first century believers as we read for example in the Book of Acts: *'Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread'* [*Acts 20.7*]. In this way we are obeying Christ's command: *'do this in remembrance of me'* [*Luke 22.19*].

Other meetings are held on a regular basis including Bible study classes, public talks and seminars. We also offer Bible correspondence courses for those who cannot attend meetings for Bible study. Sunday schools are held to give children a basic understanding of what is contained in the Scriptures.

PUBLICATIONS

Christadelphians publish a number of books, magazines and leaflets for the purpose of encouraging and assisting individuals to study the Bible. We do not offer this literature for sale, it is freely available to those who wish to read it. Our sole aim is to present the truth contained in the Bible, which we believe has a vital message for the world today. No part of our written material claims to replace the teaching of God's Word.

One useful aid to Bible study is the daily reading tables called the 'Bible Companion'. By following these tables daily it is possible to read the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in the course of a year. (For further information about Christadelphian publications see page 8)

FINANCE

Our activities are financed entirely from within our own community and we do not seek contributions from elsewhere, trusting that the Lord will provide. We have no set rules for giving to the work of our ecclesias and do not practice tithing. As was the custom among the 1st Century believers, each ecclesia has regular collections to help defray its own expenses and provide for those who are in need. Members contribute according to their individual circumstances, following the teaching and example of Jesus and his apostles. [*Luke 6.38; 2 Corinthians 9.7*]

Christadelphian Beliefs

WHEN DR THOMAS began to study the Bible in earnest, he was surprised to find that some established church doctrines were not found in the Bible. Was he right in his conclusions? The following pages set out the main beliefs of the Christadelphians, many of which are opposed to the teaching of the established churches.

THE GODHEAD

Firstly, most churches believe in the doctrine of ‘The Trinity’ which claims that there is one God in Three Persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. These Three Persons are co-equal in every respect. Where did this belief come from? It is not found in the Bible!

The clear teaching of Scripture is set out for us by Moses: ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!’ [Deuteronomy 6.4] and confirmed by Jesus: ‘The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one’ [Mark 12.29]. The Apostle Paul’s teaching was the same: ‘yet for us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things’ [1 Corinthians 8.6]. Christadelphians believe that God is a Unity, that God reigns supreme and that neither Jesus Christ nor the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) are part of the Trinity. We read in Isaiah: ‘For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me’ [Isaiah 46.9].

The question is - where did this idea of the Trinity come from? The Illustrated Bible Dictionary tells us, ‘**The word Trinity is not found in the Bible, and though used by Tertullian** (a 2nd Century AD theologian) **in the last decade of the 2nd century, it did not find a place formally in the theology of the church till the 4th century.**’ [The Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Part 3. Page 1597] In fact the doctrine of the Trinity was only officially adopted in AD 325 at the Church Council held at Nicea in Asia Minor. So we

A SUMMARY OF CHRISTADELPHIAN BELIEFS

- *There is only one God the Creator*
- *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*
- *The Holy Spirit is the power of God*
- *The Bible is the inspired word of God*
- *Man is mortal and dies because of sin*
- *Resurrection is the true hope of believers*
- *Salvation is only possible through Jesus*
- *Belief and baptism are essential for salvation*
- *There is only one Gospel*
- *The Gospel was preached to Abraham*
- *The Jewish people are God's witnesses*
- *The kingdom of Israel was the kingdom of God*
- *Jesus is coming to re-establish the kingdom of God*
- *The kingdom of God will be on earth*
- *Jesus will be king over the kingdom of God*
- *The reward of the righteous is eternal life on earth*

see how soon the leaders of the early church had already departed from the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

JESUS CHRIST – SON OF GOD

The phrase, ‘**God the Son**’ is not found in the Bible. Jesus we are told was, ‘*born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law*’ [Galatians 4.4,5]. The Apostle Paul describes Jesus as ‘*The last Adam*’ [1Corinthians 15.45]. Jesus had to possess human nature to be able to redeem those who are the descendants of Adam. We read in the letter to the Hebrews: ‘*Therefore he (Jesus) had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he may become a merciful and faithful high priest*’ [Hebrews 2.17 RSV].

To make Jesus part of ‘the Trinity’ destroys the meaning of redemption, as we read again in Hebrews: ‘*it was fitting that he ... in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren*’ [Hebrews 2.10,11 RSV].

The clear teaching of the Bible is that Jesus shared our mortal nature: ‘*Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered*’ [Hebrews 5.8 RSV]. Jesus needed salvation as much as we do, for we read that, ‘*In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death*’ [Hebrews 5.7 RSV]. Because of his righteousness he was saved from death and God raised him from the dead. After his resurrection he was, ‘*made perfect*’ and ‘*became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him*’ [Hebrews 5.9 RSV].

THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the older English versions of the Bible we often read the phrase ‘**Holy Ghost**’. This has been classified as the third person of the Trinity. Christadelphians do not accept this teaching. Nearly all modern translations of the Bible render the word ‘**Ghost**’ as ‘**Spirit**’. The clear teaching of Scripture is that the ‘**Holy Spirit**’ is the power of God used for special purposes. For example, when Mary was told by the angel that she would be the mother of Jesus, the words used demonstrate this: ‘*The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of the **Highest** will overshadow you*’ [Luke 1.35]. This same power of God was given to Jesus and the apostles to enable them to perform miracles for the glory of God.

The prophets of the Old Testament were also guided by this power, as Peter wrote: *'For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the **Holy Spirit**'* [2 Peter 1.21]. We read in the book of Acts *'How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the **Holy Spirit** and with power, who went about doing good and healing'* [Acts 10.38]. Jesus received this power of the Holy Spirit at his baptism – it was something given to him by God that he did not possess before his baptism.

The teaching of God's Word is that the Holy Spirit is God's power and there is no mention of the third person of a Trinity. The 1st Century followers of Christ did not believe in the Trinity, neither do Christadelphians today.

IMMORTAL SOULS

Many Christians believe that at death the **soul** leaves the body and goes to **heaven** (a place of reward) or **hell** (a place of punishment). Where have these ideas come from? We do not find the phrase '**immortal soul**' in the Bible! The words of Scripture tell us just the opposite, that all human beings are mortal - that is dying creatures. God said to Adam: *'For dust you are, And to dust you shall return'* [Genesis 3.19].

What happened for example to one of the most illustrious Bible characters, King David? The Apostle Peter wrote: *'let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried ... David did not ascend into the heavens'* [Acts 2.29,34]. David's son, the wise man Solomon wrote: *'All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust'* [Ecclesiastes 3.20] and again: *'for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going'* [Ecclesiastes 9.10].

The word '**soul**' as used in the Bible, is a translation from the original languages (Hebrew - '**nephesh**' and Greek - '**psuche**'). We find these two words are translated in the Scriptures in different ways, such as '**body**', '**breath**', '**person**', '**himself**', '**creature**', '**heart**' and '**mind**'. So all these descriptions refer to the human makeup that is destroyed at death. The Psalmist puts it very bluntly: *'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish'* [Psalm 146.4 AV].

The Bible teaching is quite plain - after death there is nothing! However the idea of immortal souls goes back to the earliest history of mankind. Long before the time of Christ, the Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks and other

ancient civilisations all had these ideas about the afterlife. After the time of Christ many of the believers who had converted from paganism to Christianity, revived these pagan ideas and eventually adopted them as 'Christian' beliefs.

So what was the true hope of the first century Christians?

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN HOPE

We have already stated that Christianity is rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures and we find there that resurrection from the dead was the hope of God's servants in Old Testament times. When Abraham was commanded to offer up Isaac, he was prepared to do so because he *'considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead'* [Hebrews 11.19 RSV].

Job is another faithful man who expressed his hope this way: *'For I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that **in my flesh** I shall see God.'* [Job 19.25,26] Job's belief clearly necessitates a resurrection of his body.

The Apostle Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem that David *'foresaw'* the resurrection of Christ from the grave [Acts 2.25-28]. If you look at the Psalm that Peter referred to, it is obvious that the resurrection was David's hope as well, *'Therefore my heart is glad ... My flesh also will rest in hope'* [Psalm 16.9].

The prophet Daniel expressed the same hope in the resurrection: *'And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt...But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days'* [Daniel 12.2,13].

When Jesus heard that his friend Lazarus was dead he came to Bethany. When he arrived, Martha told Jesus how she had hoped he would have come earlier and healed her brother. Notice here that Jesus didn't comfort her with words about his **'soul'** having gone to **'heaven'**. Instead he said: *"Your brother will rise again."* Martha said to him, *"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day"* [John 11.23,24].

The resurrection was a fundamental part of Jesus' teaching and this is what his immediate followers believed. However by the time the Apostle

Paul was writing his New Testament letters to the 1st Century ecclesias, some were already departing from this fundamental doctrine! Paul challenged the believers at Corinth: *'Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?'* [1 Corinthians 15.12]

If we study this chapter, we find that Paul was not just writing about the resurrection of Jesus for he continues: *'And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished...But now Christ has risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep...But each one in his own order; Christ the first fruits, afterwards those who are Christ's at his coming.'* [1 Corinthians 15.17,18,20,23] Paul is showing here that Christ is the first man to have overcome the power of the grave. He is the **'first'** to have risen and those who believe in him will rise **'afterwards'**, at his coming.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Another fundamental belief of the early Christians, closely linked to the resurrection, was that Jesus would return to the earth. One distinguished church leader has admitted this. He wrote: *'When the expected second coming of Christ did not take place within the lifetime of his earliest disciples the church had to settle down into a routine pattern of life. There were some who resented this: they tried to revive the early spirit; they continued to look for the second coming, usually in the form of the setting up of a visible kingdom of Christ.'* [The Churches Search for Unity: Barry Till: Pelican Books] However this theologian goes on to denounce those who cling to this belief as heretics - but are we to ignore the teaching of the Scriptures on the subject?

After Christ's ascension to heaven from the Mount of Olives an angel told the disciples, *'This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven'* [Acts 1.11]. Was the angel mistaken? No, he was only repeating what Jesus had already told his disciples: *'For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels.'* [Matthew 16.27]

These disciples later preached the same message with great fervour in the temple at Jerusalem: *'And that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since*

the world began [Acts 3.20,21]. We note here that not only did they believe it, but it was also rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures!

The Apostle Paul had been educated in those Scriptures - did he teach anything different? His letters to the early believers set out his convictions very clearly. *'To those who eagerly wait for him he (Jesus) will appear a second time'* [Hebrews 9.28]. In another letter he wrote about *'Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom'* [2 Timothy 4.1]. Again he reminded the early believers at Thessalonica that *'the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first'* [1 Thessalonians 4.16].

Could anything be clearer? The second coming of Christ is the hope of Christadelphians, as it was the hope of the 1st Century believers. This aspect is dealt with more fully in the last section (see page 21).

THE DEVIL, SATAN AND SIN

Many Christians believe that there is a fallen angel called the **'Devil'** or **'Satan'** who is responsible for sin and wrongdoing. On the contrary, the Bible tells us that Jesus destroyed the **'Devil'** when he died. *'...that through (Christ's) death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil'* [Hebrews 2.14].

A study of God's Word shows that the origin of sin came not from some supernatural monster, but from Adam's failure to follow God's command in Eden. We are clearly told by the Apostle Paul that *'...through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned'* [Romans 5.12].

The Apostle James wrote: *'each one is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death'* [James 1.14,15]. So when we are taught in the Bible that by his death, Jesus **destroyed the devil** it means that because he didn't give way to the promptings of his flesh, he overcame the sinful nature he inherited from his mother Mary. Jesus had the same nature as ourselves and he *'was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin'* [Hebrews 4.15]. God raised him from the grave as the Apostle

Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem: *'God raised him from the dead...because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.'* [Acts 2.24 NIV]

When we examine the word **'devil'** in the New Testament we find that it is translated from a Greek word, **'diabolos'**, which means **'slanderer'** or **'false accuser'** and in no way can this be associated with an evil monster called the **'devil'**. The same applies to the word **'satan'**, a Hebrew word which means **'adversary'**. The Apostle Peter was called **'satan'** by Jesus. Did this mean he had turned into a supernatural monster when Jesus said, *'Get behind me, Satan! You are an offence to me?'* [Matthew 16.23] Of course not - it means that Peter at that moment was trying to dissuade Jesus from doing God's will. That made him for a while, a **'satan'** or **'adversary'** who at that time tried to put an obstacle in Jesus' path to detract him from the real purpose of his mission.

The Scriptures teach quite clearly that the words **'devil'** and **'satan'** are used to personify **'sin in the flesh'**, in other words the human nature we all possess. The Apostle Paul described his own nature very clearly to the early believers: *'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells...But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?'* [Romans 7.18-24] Paul's answer to that is, *'I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!'* [Romans 7.25]

HELL, HADES AND GEHENNA

Some churches teach that **'hell'** is a place of punishment for the wicked but again when we study the Bible we find out what is really meant by this word. The word translated **'hell'** in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word **sheol** which means a **'covered place'** and refers to **'the grave'**. In all cases the word should have been translated in the Bible as **'grave'**. So we see that by a mistranslation a false idea has been taught about the destiny of the wicked.

As an example let us consider what happened to Jesus when he died. The Apostle Peter spoke to the Jews in Jerusalem at Pentecost and he referred to a Psalm, the words of David: *'Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.'* [Acts 2.27AV] Peter then explained that David was foretelling the death and resurrection of Jesus, *'He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.'* [Acts 2.31 AV]

Peter was teaching here that all human beings including Jesus, go to the grave at death, but the difference with Jesus was that he didn't stay there! When we look at the New Testament we find there are two Greek words translated 'hell'; these are *hades* and *gehenna*. The word *hades* like the word '*sheol*' is only referring to the 'grave.'

In some New Testament passages the word *gehenna* is translated 'hell.' This is a reference to the rubbish tip that was in the Valley of Hinnom outside the walls of Jerusalem. There the fires were burning continuously and the bodies of criminals were thrown onto it. As a result of bad translation and a mixture of existing superstitions, we have this idea of a terrible place of torment that has terrorised the minds of believers over the ages – a place that never existed at all!

BAPTISM

Another practice of the first century believers was to follow the command of Christ to be baptised. Although some churches practice this, the majority accept '**christening**', a sprinkling of water on a young child, as baptism. The Bible teaches that only adults who have a true understanding and belief should be baptised.

Where baptisms were recorded in Scripture, it was by complete immersion in water. The Greek word used in the Bible is *baptizo*. It means to wash, to completely immerse in a liquid. We read that, '*John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized*' [John 3.23]. This shows clearly that a depth of water was needed for baptism, otherwise John the Baptist could have just carried a goatskin of water around with him and sprinkled a few drops to achieve his purpose!

The book of Acts records a number of baptisms including that of the Ethiopian eunuch who was baptised by Philip. We read that '*he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptised him*' [Acts 8.38]. If a few drops of water are sufficient why didn't Philip just get a drop in his hands or a cup? The actions of these two men indicate that they went down into the water for the complete immersion of the Ethiopian. But what is the purpose of baptism? Why is it necessary at all?

As he preached on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter told his listeners *'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins'* [Acts 2.38].

We find then that the act of baptism is very significant, as the Apostle Paul further explained to the early believers, *'...do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection.'* [Romans 6.3-5]

Baptism is therefore a burial in water and an act of faith that signifies the believer's association with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The following sequence of actions is required of those who desire to be related to Christ through baptism:

- **Knowledge and understanding**
- **Belief**
- **Repentance**
- **Baptism for the remission of past sins**

By being baptised believers then become related to Christ as his brethren and sisters: *'For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus'* [Galatians 3.26-28]. Christadelphians believe, like the first century followers of Christ, that baptism is essential for salvation.

This section only gives an overview of our beliefs where we differ radically from generally accepted Christian beliefs. If you would like more information on Christadelphian beliefs, please refer to the list of publications on page 8 or write to the Correspondence Secretary – address on inside back cover.

The Hope of the Christadelphians

THE GOSPEL

THE HOPE OF Christadelphians is based on the Gospel of salvation as taught in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. If ever there was confusion amongst Christians, it is on this subject of the Gospel! Christadelphians are not surprised by this situation, for we find that in the first century the Apostle Paul was already voicing his concerns to the believers. He wrote to the Galatians: *'I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel... there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ' [Galatians 1.6,7]*. In the very early days of Christianity then, we see some were already following a different gospel and perverting the true Gospel!

Paul told these same believers that the Gospel was understood long ago by the Jewish patriarchs: *'And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed"' [Galatians 3.8]*.

So here we are told clearly that the Gospel is rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures and this is where we believe Christianity has gone astray. Many have dismissed parts of the Old Testament Scriptures as Jewish myth and folklore. However this is an integral part of the Word of God and if it is rejected by Christians, then they cannot understand what the true Gospel is!

THE GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS

The word 'Gospel' means 'good news.' So what was this 'good news' given to Abraham? God said to him: *'I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed' [Genesis 12.2,3]*. Here is the essence of the Gospel message, that from Abraham would come a nation and ultimately a blessing on all nations through his descendants.

If we are to understand the Gospel, we must first read the Old Testament because it is the basis of the teaching and work of Jesus Christ as set out in the New Testament. The 'good news' for Abraham was that he would have a son called Isaac. Isaac's son was Jacob who had his name changed to Israel. He had twelve sons who were the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. The descendants of Jacob were enslaved in Egypt but were eventually led out of captivity by Moses and came to Sinai where they were constituted a nation by God [*Exodus 19.1-6*].

A nation requires a land and Abraham was given this good news concerning the land: *'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates'* [*Genesis 15.18*]. This is the land of Canaan that was eventually settled by the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua. After the death of Joshua, they were ruled by a succession of Judges, the last of whom was Samuel.

THE GOSPEL AND THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

Now it is important to note that at this point in their history the Israelites wanted a king to rule over them and Samuel was not happy about this at all, but God said to him: *'Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them'* [*1 Samuel 8.7*]. We learn from these Scriptures that God had made specific promises about this nation and that He had a purpose with Israel.

When they came out of Egypt, the Israelites were given the Law at Sinai and God made a further promise to them: *'For you are a holy people...the LORD your God has chosen you...for himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth...the LORD loves you...because he would keep the oath which he swore to your fathers'* [*Deuteronomy 7.6,8*].

This 'holy people', this 'special treasure' wanted a king and God said they could have one. But whatever happened to this people there was always a purpose behind it. In order that God would *'keep the oath which he swore to the fathers'*, (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) the king was chosen by God. His name was Saul and he proved a disappointment, but this paved the way for King David who is described in this way by God: *'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will do all my will'* [*Acts 13.22*].

The kingdom of Israel was firmly established during David's reign and reached the zenith of its power during the reign of his son Solomon, who built a magnificent temple for the worship of God in Jerusalem. It is important to

notice however that these kings recognised that their rule was not supreme, they were ruling on behalf of God! David put it this way, *'And of all my sons... he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel'* [1Chronicles 28.5]. We note here that the kingdom of Israel was *'the kingdom of the LORD'* or the *'Kingdom of God.'* This was a part-fulfilment of the promise - the Gospel preached to Abraham!

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Centuries later, when the angel Gabriel came to Mary telling her about the child she would bear, he said, *'Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favour with God...you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end'* [Luke 1.30-33]. Here is a clear link from Abraham's descendants to the nation of Israel, to its king, David and finally to Jesus, who will at some time in the future sit on the throne of David as king over the kingdom of God.

It should come as no surprise then to those who study the Bible, that during his ministry *'Jesus went about all Galilee...preaching the gospel of the kingdom'* [Matthew 4.23]. He stressed the urgency of his mission, saying: *'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent'* [Luke 4.43].

After the death and resurrection of Jesus we learn that the Apostles preached the same Gospel or 'good news' of the coming kingdom of God. We read in the book of Acts *'...when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized'* [Acts 8.12]. Afterwards Paul preached in Ephesus for three months *'reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God'* [Acts 19.8]. Even when Paul was a prisoner in Rome under house arrest, he was *'preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ'* [Acts 28.31].

Many theologians today view the 'Gospel of the kingdom' in a different way to the Bible's clear teaching. Some say the 'Church' is God's kingdom on earth, while others think it is a 'reign of grace' in the hearts of believers. Most churches certainly reject the idea of the Jews being an essential part of the kingdom of God. The Christadelphians believe that is where they have lost sight of the true Gospel message.

THE GOSPEL ROOTED IN THE PROPHETS

Christadelphians take notice of the advice of Jesus and his apostles to study the words of the prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures. Even though the prophets of Israel condemned the descendants of Abraham and foretold judgements on them for their wickedness, we usually find coupled with these words a further prophecy relating to the eventual restoration of the nation!

One example of this is a prophecy by Ezekiel, where God through the prophet told their king that he would bring the Babylonians against Jerusalem and that the last king, Zedekiah would be deposed: *'Now to you...wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, thus says the Lord GOD: "...take off the crown; Nothing shall remain the same...It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him"'* [Ezekiel 21,25-27]. God through the prophet Ezekiel is speaking here about the coming of Jesus and that, *'he whose right it is'*, would come at a future time and inherit the throne of Israel.

Another prophet, Jeremiah, in the same period of Israel's history, was moved to say, *'Behold, the days are coming', says the LORD, 'that I will perform that...which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah...I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth'* [Jeremiah 33:14,15]. It was prophecies like this, that faithful people at the time of Christ's birth were able to recall and remind others that God had not forgotten His promises to Abraham and David.

The Apostle Peter, for example, tells us that David was also one of God's prophets: *'let me speak...of the patriarch David...being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne'* [Acts 2.29,30].

THE GOSPEL AND THE REIGN OF CHRIST

We hope that you can see why Christadelphians are convinced that the Gospel is firmly tied to the nation descended from Abraham – the Jews or in other words the nation of Israel. It is through this nation that God's purpose to bless all nations is being worked out. Jesus the Saviour of mankind came from that nation, as it was prophesied. But for the blessing of all nations to be fulfilled, it requires a revival of the nation of Israel. We have seen this happen in recent history. So what believers are told to look for when they see the Jewish people returning to God's land, is the return of Christ to the earth,

to take the throne of David that is his by right!

Those Old Testament Scriptures pointed out that Christ, God's Anointed, would not only take the throne of Israel but would rule over all the nations. The Psalmist put it this way: *'The kings of the earth set themselves...against the LORD and against his Anointed...the LORD shall hold them in derision. Then he shall speak to them in his wrath... "yet I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion"...The LORD has said to me, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession' [Psalm 2.2-8].*

The blessing of all nations will only come when Jesus returns and re-establishes the throne of David in Jerusalem. We see from this prophecy that God has promised that Jesus will reign over all the nations, not just Israel! The nation of Israel is the nucleus of God's plan for the world. Jesus will not only sit on David's throne in Jerusalem ruling Israel but he will also rule the world.

The prophets of Israel told us all about this: *'Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established...and all nations shall flow to it...he will teach us his ways...For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people' [Isaiah 2.2-4].* These words in Isaiah contain the 'gospel message', the 'good news', promised to 'all nations', that Jesus Christ will rule the world and peace and righteousness will be the order of his reign.

THE GOSPEL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Is it still possible that the Christadelphians are looking at the Bible in the wrong way? Are we deceived? Well what did Jesus tell those Apostles personally? He told them to pray to God like this: *'Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name. **Your kingdom come.** Your will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven' [Matthew 6.9,10].*

So here Jesus taught them to pray earnestly for God's kingdom to be set up, '**on earth**', not somewhere in the heavens, or in their hearts! When Peter said to Jesus, *'we have left all and followed you. Therefore what shall we have?'...Jesus said to them...in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'* [Matthew 19.27,28]

Could this message have been put more clearly by Jesus? The kingdom of Israel will certainly be ‘regenerated’ on earth and those twelve faithful disciples will be co-rulers with Christ! For the avoidance of all doubt, let us look at Peter’s message to the Jews assembled in the temple precincts. We find him rebuking his fellow countrymen for their treatment of Christ, *‘Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance...But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all his prophets, that the Christ would suffer; he has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus Christ...whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began’* [Acts 3.17-21].

Could those Jews mistake Peter’s words? He refers to those ancient Scriptures, right back to Abraham, reminding them that *‘You are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed’* [Acts 3.25].

What did those Apostles, who looked for Jesus to restore the kingdom of Israel, go on to teach? After Jesus left them, did they realise their mistake and admit that the Gospel of the Kingdom had nothing to do with a kingdom on earth? We read that the Apostle Paul went to Athens and preached to the people: *‘Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising him from the dead’* [Acts 17.30,31].

These words of Paul are based on the teaching of the words of the prophets of Israel and echo the same message of Christ ruling the world from Jerusalem!

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

We feel sure that by now you can see why Christadelphians believe that Jesus has to return to the earth. He must come to fulfil these promises contained in God’s Word. However this falling away from the truth of the Gospel message and a general disbelief in Christ’s second coming was foreseen by the Apostle Peter when he said *‘...scoffers will come in **the last days**...saying, “Where is the promise of his coming?”...But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years...The*

THE HOPE OF THE CHRISTADELPHIANS

*Lord is not slack concerning his promise...but is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to **repentance**. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...Therefore...what manner of persons ought you to be?* [2 Peter 3.3-11]. Christadelphians believe we are in '**the last days**', and hope that our preaching may bring more people to '**repentance**' by understanding the true Gospel.

The words of the Apostle Paul to the 1st Century believers bring all these things together – the Old Testament promises and the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament. He wrote:

'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' [Galatians 3.27-29].

A proper understanding of the Gospel, coupled with a firm belief and faith in God's purpose and a recognition of our sinful nature with repentance, followed by baptism into Christ, is the path to becoming '*Abraham's seed*', and heirs to the promises that constitute the Gospel. Christadelphians have no doubts about the ultimate fulfilment of God's promises relating to the future of this earth and all mankind. The Apostle Paul puts it like this:

'But now Christ has risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits 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 first-fruits, afterwards those who are Christ's at his coming. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.' [1 Corinthians 15.20-26]

Here Paul outlines for us the whole plan and purpose of God, or the good news of the Gospel, from beginning to end, which can be summarised in the following statements:

- The fall of man from grace and the curse of death on Adam's race.
- A way of salvation planned through Abraham and his descendants.
- The promise to King David of a son to sit on his throne forever.
- The coming of Jesus - his rejection and sacrifice to cover the sins of mankind.
- The resurrection of Jesus - victory over death by a righteous man of Adam's race.
- Jesus the first man to rise from the dead to everlasting life.
- Jesus the first-fruits of those who will be raised from the dead.
- At Christ's Second Coming, the responsible dead raised followed by the judgment and reward of those who are found worthy.
- The setting up of the kingdom of God on earth.
- Christ enthroned in Jerusalem - the subjection and blessing of all nations.
- The rule of Christ for a thousand years, with a final judgment at the end.
- Death, the great enemy of mankind, is destroyed.

THE GOSPEL FULFILLED

Paul tells us that Jesus *'must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet'* and that *'The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.'* Then he concludes, *'But when he says, "all things are put under him," it is evident that he who put all things under him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to him, then the Son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all'* [1 Corinthians 15.27,28].

Here is the fulfilment of the Gospel message - God's plan of salvation. No more death, no more sorrow, only a beautified earth inhabited by immortal beings at one with God. This is the wonderful hope set out in the Bible. It is the hope of the Christadelphians. To us it is, **'good news'**, indeed.

We urge you to make it your hope as well.

Acknowledgements

Front Cover

Emma Perfitt Graphic Design

Picture Page 2

Bridgeman Art Library

Pictures Page 6

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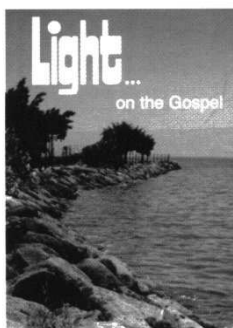
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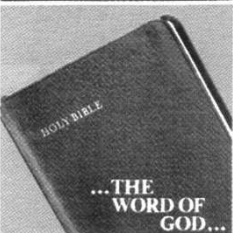
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