



God Calls – *respond ... or die*

CONTENTS

1. GOD SPEAKS TO YOU
2. A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH
3. HEAVEN AND EARTH
4. BE PREPARED

1. GOD SPEAKS TO YOU

It is now about 1900 years since God last spoke through the prophets and apostles. Since then He has been speaking through the events of history, as detail by detail His Word of truth, the Bible, has been fulfilled. Both the divinely inspired message of the Bible and the subsequent happenings, speak with one voice. They are God's call to all thinking men and women to turn to Him and find life, lest they perish forever. More than that, they are God's call to YOU.

God is concerned about individuals. Out of all nations He is calling a people for Himself, to prepare to meet the King. His purpose with the earth involves the return to Jerusalem of the man chosen to rule the world in righteousness. Once God worked through a nation, when the Kingdom of God existed on earth in Israel. But since the last king of Israel was deposed, history has been waiting for the coming of God's appointed king. Soon King Jesus Christ will come.

It will be too late when the king comes, to determine your loyalties. Now is the time to hear God's call and respond. This booklet presents the nature of God's invitation; tells you of His plan and purpose with the earth; explains the response God is seeking, and deals with the consequences of inaction.

The invitation itself is contained in the Bible and there is no substitute for personal reading

and study. Thus as well as individual references, to particular Bible passages quoted, Bible readings are suggested to give you the context, or setting, of the events referred to.

When reading the Bible for yourself, remember this. Despite the huge interval of time which has elapsed since the words were spoken, their message is timeless because they were inspired by God. Through this book God still speaks to you. It is a lifeline, at a moment in history when all else is hopeless. You may not know now how much you need to be rescued, nor how the rescue plan operates. But if you read on, you will.

2. A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

“It could never happen to me,” is what we like to think. There may be many hungry, homeless, fearful, desperately ill, or dying people around but where there is life there is hope. So most people live for today, with no thought for tomorrow.

At critical moments in the lives of His people, God has interrupted their daily routine with an urgent warning. If they had then chosen not to hear they would have perished. Salvation depended upon response.

MAKE YOURSELF AN ARK

One day God spoke to Noah. The earth had become recklessly violent and man thought of nothing but evil continually, until God had had enough and purposed its destruction. He had made a wonderful world in which man could find every opportunity of learning to live with His Creator, but it had all been perverted by wilful human rebellion. Now, as judgement was about to fall, He exercised His constant mercy and warned faithful Noah of the coming end of all things.

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7)

Noah believed God. Even though it had probably never rained before, and despite the inevitable scorn poured on him by people around, he and his family built an ark, a huge vessel; like a floating coffin in shape and a small ocean-going ship in size. What time and effort it required, what patient labour, what confidence in the warning God had given! Nor was this a selfish project, designed to save his family only and make Noah heir supreme of the re-shaped world. Above all, he was a preacher to his contemporaries, an ambassador for God, one through whom the call of God went forth to others (2 Peter 2:5). But they would not hear and only eight persons, all of Noah’s family, survived the flood of destruction. Everyone else perished, drowned by waters they believed would never come. When they realised their need for a lifeboat, God had fast closed the door of the ark, built by His faithful

servant. It was a matter of life or death in which eight found life, through faith in God, and all else perished for ever.

BIBLE READINGS: Genesis 6-8; Hebrews 11; Luke 17:22-27; 1 Peter 3:20-22.

GET OUT OF THIS PLACE

Four hundred years later two angels came to Sodom in the evening seeking Lot, faithful nephew of the patriarch Abraham.

Given the choice of a dwelling place Lot had chosen the fertile Jordan valley, first living near, then in, the town of Sodom. Every day he was greatly vexed by the ungodliness of the inhabitants of this immoral city which he was unable to influence for good, try as he might. For here was the same wickedness that proved fatal in Noah's day, though on a smaller scale, and now God purposed to destroy the Sodomites. Thus the two angels came with a divine escape plan: Lot, his wife and daughters, and all who would hear should flee the city.

So steeped in spiritual darkness was this city that not even Lot's sons-in-law believed the warnings of coming judgement. They stayed to perish with all the unbelievers, and only four people were delivered. Even then, Lot's wife did not heed the angel's warning. She looked back lingeringly, reluctant to believe the message from God, and thus she perished too. Only three survived from the cataclysm that overwhelmed the cities of the plain. Amidst fire and brimstone, probably the result of a God-initiated earthquake or volcanic tremors, both Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown never to be rebuilt. Today they lie submerged beneath the Dead Sea, a fitting end for communities heedless of the laws of God.

BIBLE READINGS: Genesis 19:1-29; Luke 17:28-32.

EAT IT IN HASTE

After spending 40 years in exile Moses returned to Egypt, with the express purpose of delivering captive Israel from the oppressive power of Pharaoh. What was once a place of refuge for a family of 75 had become a concentration camp experience for a nation, several million strong, born in captivity. Now they were the workforce for the ambitious building projects of civilised Egypt. But not for long. God had seen their bondage, heard their cry, and sent them a deliverer and a saviour.

Time and again Moses wielded the power of God, against a monarch unwilling to acknowledge the sovereignty of the God of the Hebrew people, until plague upon plague left Egypt crippled. Frogs, lice, boils, hail and locusts were among the armies responsive to the divine command, yet still the Pharaoh refused to let God's people go. At last a carefully planned ceremony began in each Hebrew household, the first feast of the passover. A lamb,

without blemish, was killed and eaten, its blood daubed upon doorposts and lintel. With clothes on, sandalled, and in haste, ready for an urgent journey, the nation were united in a solemn act of deliverance. And when the angels of death passed over the land of Egypt, the death of a firstborn was the bitter fate of all who had not accepted God's way of escape.

As the shattered Egyptians hurried their unwelcome slaves away to the wilderness, they must have bitterly regretted their earlier unwillingness to listen to God's call. Their failure to respond had led to death. But such is the tragedy of the human outlook upon life that regret swiftly gave way to anger. Thirsting for revenge, the swift armies of Imperial Egypt swept after the fleeing captives. But, once more, the God of the Universe was about to display His power to save His people, and destroy their evil enemies. Trapped between the mountains and the sea, Israel seemed doomed: out of the frying pan into the fire! In reality, no such dilemma existed for those who believed in God's power to save. As Moses raised his rod, at God's command, a path through the sea appeared, a wall of water on either side, and along this way of the Lord the people found deliverance. Neither Pharaoh nor his army need have journeyed along it, to add to the suffering of Egypt. They could have learned at last the supremacy of the God they opposed, and returned home wiser men. But rage drove them forward, between the walls of water, into the sand which halted their chariot forces, and thus when the waters returned they were drowned.

BIBLE READINGS: Exodus 12; Psalm 105; Hebrews 11:23-29; 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.

THESE ARE WARNINGS FOR US

So we could continue with profit, tracing incidents which have been critical for the participants, all matters of life and death, survival or destruction. But one or two questions are worth answering now.

You may have some doubts about the authority of these incidents, as the idea has been widely spread that they are exaggerated folk lore, originating from much smaller episodes in history, for example, a local flood which drowned a few people. The subject has been extensively considered in other Christadelphian publications and, if you wish to pursue it, write to the address at the end of this booklet. Let me make one point however which seems to strike at the heart of the matter.

In sober and restrained language, these incidents were first recorded by writers who sincerely believed them, and throughout the Old and New Testament Scriptures they are accepted as fact. As you will have seen if you have already done the Bible Readings suggested, the first two incidents were accepted as fact by no less a person than the Lord Jesus Christ. He likened the ignorant, violent, immoral societies of Noah and Lot's days to those which he foretold would exist immediately prior to his personal Second Coming to earth, an event now imminent, as our experience testifies. Furthermore he left powerful warnings for us, by

contrasting the inability of past societies to listen to God's call, with our own need to hear and heed. We will only profit from the Lord's counsel, as he intended, if we believe the narrative account of how God has acted in the past, to save His people. If, of course, we prefer to doubt the Lord's understanding of divine history, then that is shaky ground indeed upon which to build (Matthew 7:24-27).

The apostles were quick to follow the lead given by the Lord, searching the Old Testament Scriptures for guidance. Naturally therefore their own comments about these, and other incidents deserve careful thought. So when they stress that the faith of the participants was vital to the success of God's activity, or the urgency with which they acted to demonstrate their priorities, we should be instructed thereby. For those who wrote the Scriptures were inspired by God in their work, and through their words God still speaks to us.

No less a matter of life and death faces us today. Older readers may be fearfully aware of the frailty of human existence, living one day at a time. Others may take a more optimistic, perhaps less realistic, view. But, sooner or later, all must confront the cul-de-sac of death, for all go that way; and today's world presents the greatest challenge man has ever known. Never before has the threat of world annihilation loomed so large. Social disorders, growing needs and tensions, competing ideologies, more and more powerful bombs, combine together to promise a grim and uncertain future. But, as ever, when the problems loom large and there seems no escape, God can show a way through, to a better world.

3. HEAVEN AND EARTH

The other side of the Red Sea was far from paradise for Moses and his fellow pilgrims. Safe from Egyptian danger they certainly were, but ahead lay the barren wastes of Sinai. Understandably, but foolishly, some began at once to betray their disbelief in God's power to save, by grumbling about the pleasant life of Egypt, now lost forever. In retrospect things often seem better than they were; we are easily deceived.

In the wisdom of God the Sinai desert was to prove the ideal training ground for a people with much to learn. At the foot of the mountain range they witnessed the awesome majesty of God as his angels descended to proclaim his law for the nation. Then every day a miraculous food supply kept them sustained, water gushed from rocks when required, sometimes quail flew near in abundance. Time and again God-given circumstances were designed to develop Israel's confidence in the love, goodness and power of God their king. Yet time and again they failed to learn. Unbelief dogged their footsteps. Spies delivered a majority report of odds they could not hope to overcome, in the "promised land" called Canaan. So the whole faithless generation perished in the wilderness, while God waited for their children to mature, both physically and spiritually.

THE PROMISED LAND

At last the nation grew up and, with Joshua as their earthly leader and with the right attitude and response to God, they crossed the River Jordan dry-shod and conquered the land. It took time as God's plan of campaign was to subdue the land little by little, and some 200 years after leaving Egypt the Hebrew people occupied the promised land, having destroyed most of their enemies and established their national identity. First they were governed by judges raised up by God to save them from emerging problems. Eventually the people clamoured for a king, and at that time (about 1000 BC) the Kingdom of Israel was established.

Indeed, in the divine programme it was much more than this. When a God-appointed king sat in Jerusalem to administer the law of God, over a people God had called to be His own, in a land He had given them as an earthly possession, the kingdom of God existed on earth. God was reigning, through His king, over His kingdom—a nation called from the beginning to be His peculiar people, (see, for example, Exodus 19:5-6; 1 Chronicles 28:4-5; 29:10-13; 29:22-25). The passages quoted from the historical record (1 Chronicles) are especially succinct and helpful. They deal with the inauguration of King Solomon, successor to David the shepherd king, and indicate clearly that Solomon succeeded to the throne of the Lord when he began to reign. This was no family dynasty, won by heroism and kept through intrigue. His was a divine appointment and he reigned as God's representative on earth. During Solomon's years the Kingdom of God on earth exercised its most widespread influence. Territorial expansion was coupled with a growth of influence and prestige. In Jerusalem Solomon was privileged to build God a temple, focal point of all Israel's religious longings, and an invitation to others to participate in true worship. Perhaps you remember hearing about the visit of the Queen of Sheba to worship, and doubtless there were others. This blessed period of Israel's history was sadly brief, but despite its brevity significant for all subsequent history. At its zenith this was a portrait of life on earth as God intended, and still intends, it to be lived. Despite the imperfections inherent in human society, here was a glimpse of the better world now soon to come to earth. A divinely appointed king, righteously administering God's law; a people willing and responsive to God's commands, fellowship with God and with one another at the centre of their individual and communal existence. It was something like heaven on earth! (Deuteronomy 11:21).

BIBLE READINGS: 1 Chronicles 29; 1 Kings 10:1-13; Psalms 45; 72.

THE ANOINTED KING

But power corrupts, and Solomon found the temptations of office greater than he could resist. So the kingdom became more materialistic; the king compromised the exclusive calling of Israel by unwise alliances and wives galore, until all was lost. He was succeeded by a foolish son who split the kingdom into two, by reckless decisions, and for 350 years theirs was an unhappy history of civil war, enemy action, spiritual decay and general decline. The glory

was never to be regained and at last the kingdom ceased, but not without hope. With the northern tribes long since exiled in Assyria, and the last king of southern Judah destined for Babylon, the prophet's rebuke held a promise of better days:

“Thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban, and take off the crown; things shall not remain as they are; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high. A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it; there shall not be even a trace of it until he comes whose right it is; and to him I will give it” (Ezekiel 21:26-27).

There would come a time, and there would come a man, appointed by God as the future king over the Kingdom of God on earth. Many are the passages where the prophets still promise this blessing, many the Jews who still seek Messiah (the anointed of God), the man to rule the world from Jerusalem. For coupled with the promise of the coming king is the assurance that the kingdom will be restored in Israel. What God was slowly working out among men, when He gradually shaped His previous kingdom, He will swiftly accomplish when His anointed king returns to take his great power and reign, as promised. Consider the words of another of the prophets concerning the coming king, his origins, and his impending accomplishments:

“I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, ... And many nations shall come and say : ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths.’ for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” (Micah 2:12; 4:2)

When God regathers Israel back to the promised land, He will have begun a work destined to lead the world government from Jerusalem.

“He shall judge between many peoples, ... they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid ...” (Micah 4:3-4)

When King Jesus returns to reign from Jerusalem, his authority will cause the warring nations of our troubled world to cease their conflict and devote their energies to the peaceful and profitable pursuits of agriculture. Thus the earth will again abound in fruitfulness, and peace will grow in place of fear.

“and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and for evermore. And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem ...

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days ... And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And this shall be peace ...” (Micah 4:7-8; 5:2-5.)

It will be the beginnings of paradise restored, when the Kingdom is restored to Jerusalem. Born of a virgin, in Bethlehem, nearly 2000 years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Promised One. In the purpose of God, it was always intended that he should rule on David’s throne and shortly he will return as promised, in the majesty of the Lord his God, with power and great glory.

Under the delusion that the Bible is a book far too complex for the ordinary reader to understand, many people have never bothered to try. Yet see how straightforward it is. These ancient words, referred to in part by advisers in Herod’s palace, who sent the wise men on to Bethlehem, contain a part of God’s divine manifesto for the earth. Here are real promises of a better world soon to come.

BIBLE READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10; 65:17-25; Amos 9:11-15; Acts 1:1-11.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

One further detail is worth noticing from our earlier consideration of Micah’s prophecy. It is prefaced by God’s promise to regather all who are left of Jacob’s flock, and twice the prophet addresses his remarks to the flock of God.

Pastoral imagery has drifted out of wide-spread use in today’s urban world. But sheep and shepherd were very near Israel’s thoughts, as they played a vital part in the economy and life-style of the nation, much as in Australia and New Zealand today. It was the intimate relationship between sheep and shepherd which came to express the care and concern God shows toward His people. Like a shepherd He had guided the nation out of Egypt (Psalm 77:20; 80:1), led them to the green pasture of the fertile land of Israel (Psalm 23), rescued them from their marauding enemies (1 Samuel 17:34-37), and given them a shepherd King David, to tend and feed the nation (Psalm 78:70-72). Subsequent spiritual and political leaders were called to continue this work of shepherding; sadly they became false leaders, out to ravage the flock, and the people were left as sheep without a shepherd (Ezekiel 34:1-6).

This was the situation, and this the imagery of the Old Testament Scriptures, when the Lord Jesus appealed to the nation. He had come to seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As a good shepherd, he was ready to lay down his life for the sheep, for he had

compassion upon them (Matthew 18:12-13; 18:15-24; John 10:11-16). But they would not be gathered into the fold of God; they rejected their appointed King, treated him shamefully and refused to hear his words. Thus they chose the hard way. For generations God has been at work to persuade Israel back from their rebellion against Christ, their shepherd and Messiah.

The Jewish people were scattered throughout the earth and persecuted everywhere, but God has not forsaken them. Always He has been working towards the intended end: the time when a faithful remnant will be found in the promised land, waiting for their anointed king. After generations of suffering, and against seemingly impossible odds, Jews are now back in the land, as a nation, recognised among the nations. Bitter battles have been fought and won, controversy still surrounds their claim to exist, and Arab animosity has never ceased, but Israel survives. Whatever trials lie ahead, God's purpose continues unswerving to bring again a nation who still reject their true Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ—from unbelief to faith.

The regathering of Israel back to the promised land is the one great sign that God's gracious purpose with the earth is in its final phase, immediately prior to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. For he is promised as one who will return to feed a flock in Israel, a people once more to be chosen as God's beloved. But this time that people will not be exclusively Jewish. God's purpose expanded with the ministry of Jesus, for whilst his work was directed towards Israel, almost exclusively, he made it clear that the message he brought was an invitation for all nations. Using the shepherd and sheep language with which we are now familiar, Jesus said expressly to Israel of his role as good shepherd:

“I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.” (John 10:15-16).

His death initiated a new agreement between the Father and His people. Now out of all nations God seeks men and women willing to heed His call and to find salvation. Israel is still a special nation in God's purpose, their existence and experiences being the signpost, among many other signs, that the way ahead is divinely ordained. For it is a way of holiness in which all who care about the future should strive to walk.

BIBLE READINGS: Jeremiah 31:10-14; 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-36; 37:24-28; Revelation 7:9-17.

THY KINGDOM COME

When God's anointed King reigns over His people and the will of God begins to be done on earth, as it is in heaven, the first petition of the Lord's prayer—“thy kingdom come”—will have been answered. So crucial is this event to believers that the Lord gave it priority in his model prayer. Endless repetition without understanding has availed nothing. Now God seeks

people who appreciate what His promises really mean. Be sure to make it your prayer, that God's kingdom should come to earth, and that you will be ready for the king at his coming.

4. BE PREPARED

Warnings are one thing, preparation is quite another. Noah warned the doomed people of his day, as Lot pleaded with the men of Sodom, but few would hear and so they perished in their unbelief. Beware! Jesus said that his coming will bring equally swift destruction to our generation because of the same unbelief. Then, as now, if the opportunity is not taken, the consequences will be fatal.

KING DEATH

With a sudden twist of the well worn imagery of God as shepherd, the Psalmist poses a challenge to all people of the earth to consider the inevitability of death. In a powerful argument he reasons that no-one can buy their way out of the grave, for worldly riches avail nothing to the unconscious, who sleep in the dust. Like beasts, all without understanding are destined to perish, never more to see the light.

“Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol (the grave), Death shall be their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend, and their form shall waste away; Sheol shall be their home.” (Psalm 49:14.)

Following the same theme, centuries later, the apostle Paul traced the source of the power of the grave, the prison which is to keep some captive forever. Starting in Eden, with the first act of human disobedience, he concluded that sin is the reason for death, and that death reigns — like a king over his subjects — because they all sin.

“Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned ... death reigned from Adam ... sin reigned in death” (Romans 5:12-21).

We are born into the dominion of King Death because we both inherit a natural tendency to sin, and choose to exercise it by wilful disobedience. God's judgement on sin has never varied from when first uttered: You sin— You die; and because of what we are and do, we cannot escape that divine sentence without God's help. Every day the inevitability of death is clear to see, for all who look. Every day most people look away, and think thoughts that please them better. But an escape plan only appeals to those who realise they are captives, just as a cure is only accepted by those who know they are sick. And only people with the courage to believe that God can do what man cannot, will dare to face the future with the facts.

BIBLE READINGS: Genesis 3; Psalms 6; 146; John 11:1-44.

KING JESUS

God speaks to you through His inspired message, the Bible, through the events of history, and through the life of His Son, Jesus Christ. Here was life as it had always been meant to be lived. From the moment God intervened to cause His Son to be born of a virgin, Mary, a dramatic rescue attempt had commenced. For here was a child apart; born of God's Holy Spirit power, and endowed with that power without measure while still a young man, he went about making known the will of God and doing good. Sharing our nature, with its trials and temptations, he never once broke the law of God, indeed it was his delight to keep it, to do the will of his Father. He showed himself to be a king by the way he reigned supreme in his own life, subduing all impulses and tendencies to evil. Who else could truly say that he or she had lived a sinless life? No-one, except Jesus.

The life of Jesus speaks still of grace and truth. The reaction of his fellow men shouts of the awful darkness of sin. That such a man should be rejected, hated, whipped and crucified shows sin up for what it is—sinful. And that Jesus should submit to such shame and suffering demonstrates beyond doubt his co-operation in God's far-reaching plan of salvation. No one is too far out of reach for the love of God to stretch to save him.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:16-18).

See how clearly this well known passage spells out the option. Belief or destruction; eternal life or everlasting death; salvation or condemnation. The issues are that clear cut in reality, though human thinking loves to blur the edges and suggest otherwise. But when King Jesus returns, his task will be one of separating along those very lines of demarcation: good from bad, wheat from chaff, blessed from cursed. Notice that it is our belief in Jesus that stands central to the whole issue, believing on the name of the only Son of God. For the name of Jesus Christ embodies the aspects of the work of Jesus considered earlier. Jesus means “God is Saviour” and bespeaks the way of escape through the Son, from sin and death.

Christ (Greek for Messiah) means “Anointed” and sums up the work of Jesus, anointed as king and priest to reign over the Kingdom of God. An understanding of, and belief in, both those aspects is clearly vital for all would-be subjects of the King.

BIBLE READINGS: Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:1-3; 2:14-18; 4:14-16; Acts 8:4-13.

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

Having lived a life of sinless purity, obedient in all things, even death, the Lord had nothing to fear from the future. Though death claimed him for three unconscious days, it was evident, to all who believed in the essential goodness of God, that he must be released from its power; and so he was. The grave could not hold him, and Jesus was bodily raised by God his Father to receive the gift of everlasting life, with a position of honour and glory at His right hand. King Death had been overcome by King Jesus who had thus pioneered an escape route. Henceforth the subjects of the Kingdom of God could be assured of life after death, a personal answer to individual fears. And because the risen Lord received from God all power in heaven and earth, a solution to all world problems is now at hand. With this king ruling, all will be well, as shortly, he will show.

All will be well, for him and for his people. “Call his name Jesus” said the angel to Joseph, “for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Bodily resurrection from the dead, to receive everlasting life and an inheritance in the Kingdom of God on earth has always been the true hope offered in the Bible. Sadly it has been too often obscured by the insistence of many churches that God promised life in heaven to immortal souls, a teaching which comes from Egyptian and Greek mythology and not from the Bible.

But who are his people, and how can they obtain the benefit of something they cannot achieve for themselves? The answer to this is the response God is now seeking from all who hear His call and desire to accept His invitation of life, on His gracious terms.

BIBLE READINGS: Matthew 1:22-42; 1 Corinthians; Acts 2:15; 2:12-28; 2 Thessalonians 1.

THE WAY AHEAD

Listen to God. If you have already developed the habit of turning to the Bible as a book from which to learn the truth about life: good. If not, try it and see. There is no substitute for listening to the words of God at first hand, and daily prayerful Bible reading is the best of all habits. But read to learn, not just to listen to the beauty of the message or take comfort from the poetic language. As I hope we have seen together, God is looking for people who believe that He will do what He promises, and who accept confidently what He asks of them.

Belief, sometimes called faith, is essential for the way ahead. Take God at His Word, He will not disappoint you. Life is for learning to live with Him, and for preparing to live in the Kingdom of God on earth at the return of Jesus. And what we cannot achieve for ourselves, God is prepared to count to our credit. For we will never earn a place in that new society by the quality of our lives. Flesh and blood cannot inherit it; by nature we are destined for death, because of the dominion of sin. But what the Lord Jesus accomplished, through perfect

obedience and by way of the cross and tomb, the Father is prepared to credit to our spiritual account, so to speak. If we accept what the Bible plainly teaches, that we are all condemned, destined for death because of sin, and if we identify ourselves with Jesus, then God will account us to be righteous in His sight. As the Bible expresses it tersely, we can be justified by faith, because of Jesus.

It will take time to understand the implications of God's unique offer and to check out for yourself that these things are truly taught of God. If this is your first contact with Christadelphians you might like to send for some more free literature from the address at the end. Or you might find attending our Bible Talks useful, if we have a meeting near you. But these can only be helps, not substitutes, for what lies ahead. Read the Bible for yourself to see that these things are true.

Then you will understand how God wants you to identify yourself with the experiences of the Lord Jesus. In His wisdom God has ordained that believers should demonstrate their new beginning by baptism in water, an act of immersion likened to the death, burial and resurrection of the Saviour. Thus begins the way ahead to a new life, lived according to the principles of the New Testament, learning to live like Christ. This is the path of discipleship, learning to live together with other believers, coping with new challenges and responsibilities, working at a change of character, finding a new approach to life. It is the only way that leads to eternal life.

BIBLE READINGS: [2 Timothy 3:10-17](#); [John 3:1-21](#); [Romans 5](#); [6](#); [12](#); [1 John 3:1-3](#).

CHOOSE LIFE

When Israel were about to enter the Promised Land after a long wait in the desert, Moses prepared them for their new experience. Painstakingly he reminded them of God's calling, ways and commands. He expressed the issues that lay before them in the future—the same issues that lie before us now. Then he summed up with words that ring through the centuries. They present the divine challenge still, as God speaks to us:

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Tecwyn Morgan

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