



# THE **Plain Truth** ASIA

PP 12578/4/2006

A Magazine Of Christian Understanding

Sept–Nov 2005

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unknown God**  
p.8

**Hard to forgive**  
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# Humanity versus terrorism

The madness has occurred yet again. Scores of innocent people were killed by bombs triggered by suicide bombers in London's underground rail transit system during peak hours. Those killed and injured would never have expected such a thing to happen there. London having taken on the role of promoting multiculturalism in its society now faces the situation of how the essence of multiculturalism can be maintained under the strain of such a violent act. Outrage has been rightly expressed at those responsible for the terrible violence but could a backlash, either verbally or physically against their particular community be justified? It's a difficult situation to assess. People of all faiths have shown their utter disgust at the sheer brutality against innocent people. However, the perpetrators and the organisations and individuals who promote and glorify such acts of terrorism cite political and religious reasons to justify their actions. They even attribute a symbolic significance to their actions, proposing it as the only means to fight against evil as they perceive it. Thus, terrorism becomes a premeditated, planned, deliberate act of violence upon people to promote an ideology, either political or religious, with the purpose to instill paralysing fear that would force people to accept their desired change. Sadly, this kind of action causes a human propensity to develop intense hatred towards all members of a particular community or group of people for the actions of a few misguided individuals. Our values and our very humanity are now tested through our reactions towards others in the aftermath of such violent incidents. Righteous indignation or anger towards such acts of violence is needed but to wish for violent retribution towards a whole peoples or community is in itself also equally abhorrent and equals terrorism. We must remember God's assessment of us all as "there is no one who

is righteous, not even one."<sup>1</sup> In the eyes of God all humanity has sinned and needs the saving grace of Christ. We being sinful cannot pass judgment on other peoples especially if they do not share our religious beliefs or ideologies. In Malaysia, multiculturalism is part and parcel of our daily life. The government and people of this country take great steps and effort to promote better understanding, tolerance and peace among people of different cultures and religious



beliefs. The rule followed here is the same as advised in the Bible that is, "as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men."<sup>2</sup> There is no room for extremists or terrorists here. The condition for being Malaysian is that the core values such as obedience to the laws of the country and respect for the cultures and religious beliefs of others must be accepted. It is the Malaysian mindset. How then should we proceed or react in these dangerous times? We need to resist the fear that terrorism causes. Our focus should turn to God and God alone. He is the only refuge and strength that we can have against the evil of terrorism.<sup>3</sup> In God alone would

fear dissipate. Peace of mind and the strength to carry on come from Him. Some would criticise or ridicule this notion. A whole torrent of statements and insults would follow especially the oft used phrase "what was God doing when innocent people were being killed?" "Why didn't He do something to stop this if He really exists?" Answering these questions will not convince the hate filled mind. Rather an outflow of true humanity needs to be shown to the world. We need to show a tolerant and loving attitude towards others especially if they are different from us. We need to sympathize and empathize with the sufferings of others so that people with a terrorist mindset would not be able to take advantage of situations. In short, we need to care. Terrorism is not the answer to any problem. Another way has to surface to counter terrorism. Its source is the sound instruction of Christ to love our neighbour as ourselves.<sup>4</sup> Acts of sincere kindness and goodness towards others irrespective of their race, religion or culture is the most effective weapon against the proponents of terrorism. We cannot allow ourselves to fall into the trap of hate mongering. By doing so we would only fuel the flames of hate and destruction. The solution to the problems of humanity was brought to the world almost two thousand years ago. We know it as the gospel of Jesus Christ. The way to peace and coexistence comes through the Kingdom of God as Christ preached. Humans have gone for so long on the path of violence such as war, that a way of peace such as the gospel seems strange and far fetched. But in reality there is no better way. The way of killing cannot bring peace or joy. But the gospel of Jesus Christ promises a total end to the sufferings of humanity. Would you take a little time to read it from the Bible? You can be assured that it will be time well spent. □

<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:9

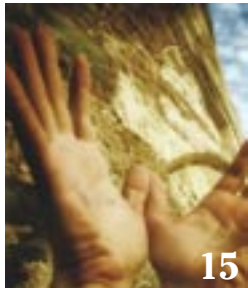
<sup>2</sup> Romans 12:18

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 46:1–3

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 22:39

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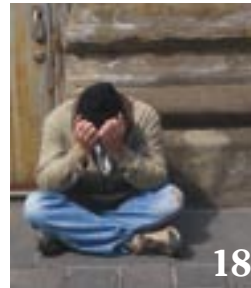
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Issue No. 3

September—November 2005

Volume No. 4

PP 12578/4/2006

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The Plain Truth Asia is published five times a year as funds allow, and is sponsored by the Worldwide Church of God Malaysia, which is a member of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia. It follows a non-denominational editorial policy and provides a message of practical help, hope and encouragement from a Christian perspective.

- For Non-Muslims Only -

DONATIONS: Although we do not put any subscription price for the Plain Truth Asia, we gratefully welcome donations from readers who support our desire to bring spiritual knowledge and understanding to our increasingly secular society.

Cheques should be made payable to 'Worldwide Church of God' and sent to the addresses listed above.

Designed and prepared by the British and Malaysian PT offices.  
Printed in Malaysia by

DI Print Solutions Sdn Bhd/Imagescan Creative Sdn Bhd.

ISSN 1675-3100. Copyright Worldwide Church of God, 2005.

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# Astrophysics a

David Wilkinson is one of a rare breed—an ordained minister and an astrophysicist. He is chaplain at Liverpool University, but has accepted the appointment of Fellow of Christian Apologetics at St John's College, Durham. We talked with Dr. Wilkinson about the challenge of reconciling science and faith.

*PT:* What are “apologetics”? What is it that you do?

*DW:* Don't confuse apologetics with apologies. It means explaining and defending the Christian position by logical argument. I think apologetics today is twofold: one is a traditional understanding of apologetics, which is answering questions like “Why is there suffering in the world if there's a good God?” or “How can we reconcile science with Christianity?” But I think apologetics is far more than that. Apologetics is making the truth of the Christian faith relevant to the concerns and interests of people today.

*PT:* The Bible tells us “the heavens declare God's glory.” That was written 3,000 years ago. Today we know so much more, and we should have a much greater appreciation of the greatness and majesty of God. Yet so much of science seems to be against the concept of Creation and a Creator.

*DW:* Many people have this image of science being against the concept of Creation, but I don't think that's valid. One of the fascinating things over the last 20 to 30 years is that scientists have become more and more interested in questions about God. Maybe not questions about the Christian faith, but they are interested in the big questions. For instance, in my field of astrophysics, many of my colleagues would be fascinated by questions of

## THE BRITISH PLAIN TRUTH interview with

David  
Wilkinson

purpose and why are we here? Science itself doesn't give answers to that. What science does show us are things like the extravagance of God.

*PT:* What do you mean by that?

*DW:* Well, we know that our sun is one star in a galaxy of a hundred billion stars, and our galaxy is one of a hundred billion galaxies in the universe. Then when you read in the first chapter of Genesis, almost by the way of a side comment, “He made the stars also,” you begin to see something of the greatness of God.

I think science has helped my faith, because it has given me an appreciation for things like the importance of evidence within the Christian faith. But my faith has also helped my science. Albert Einstein said that “science is thinking God's thoughts after him.” Science has expanded my vision at just how good and elegant and beautiful and majestic the creation is.

*PT:* Why is it then that some scientists tend to regard questions of faith and revelation as irrelevant?

*DW:* I think a lot of that comes from what we might call the conflict hypothesis. That is that science and faith are somehow opposed and mutually exclusive. You can trace that back historically to the turn of the last century where people like G.H. Huxley tried to free science from the control of the church. Up to that point the great scientists were Christian believers. But I think the reality now is that most professional scientists would be far more open to religious questions than perhaps they would 30 to 40 years ago.

There is a genuineness of interest and searching for spiritual answers as well as scientific ones.

*PT:* Do you mean there is a level of curiosity or even an acceptance that goes beyond agnosticism?

*DW:* Yes, I think that's right. For instance if you look at the work of someone like Paul Davies, an eminent cosmologist and populariser of science, you see someone who is not afraid to explore questions that go beyond science. Questions about the purpose of the universe, questions about why the universe seems so finely balanced to make possible life. Questions about the intelligibility of the universe. Why is it that scientists can even do science?

*PT:* Isn't there a danger, though, of laymen reading too much into this, and say, “Look-you see-they admit God exists”?

*DW:* I think you've got to be careful. The media particularly will hype up any discovery, and scientists today will even hype up discoveries in order to get funding. We need to be cautious about some of the claims that are made. These new discoveries in cosmology shouldn't worry us. They are exciting. We begin to see certain things that resonate with the Christian faith.

*PT:* Like what?

*DW:* One of the things of interest at the moment in cosmology is not the beginning of the universe but the end. Is the universe going to expand forever or will it reach a point when it reaches its limit and collapses? There are competing claims about this at the moment. But one of



# and apologetics

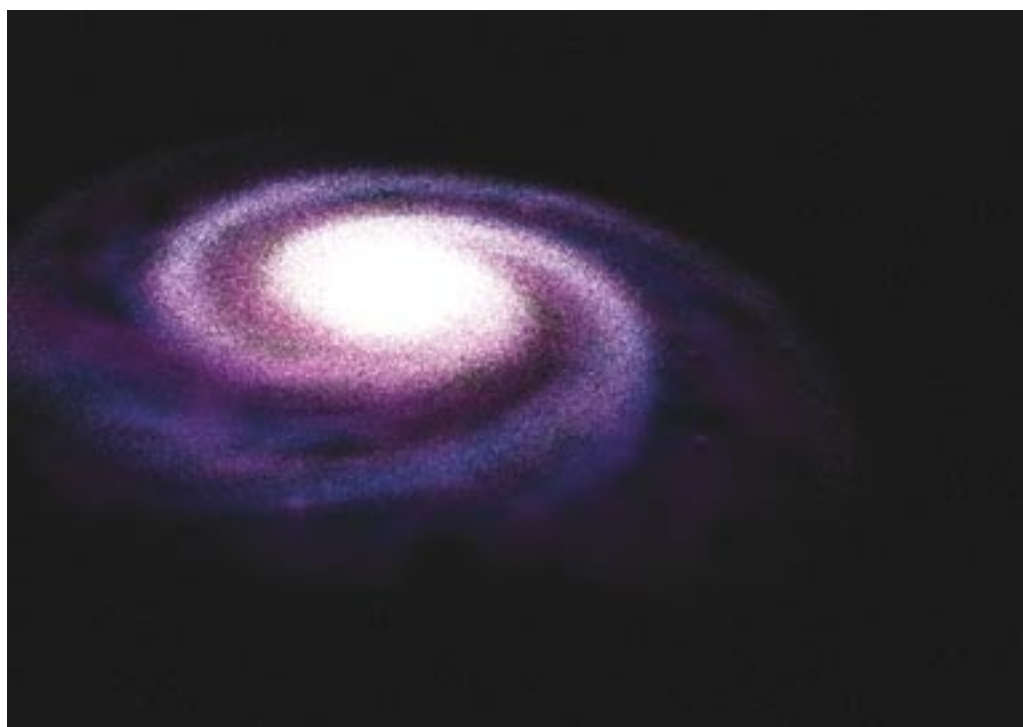
the interesting things for me as a Christian is what does that say about creation? If the universe expands forever it dies what is called heat death. Everything cools down. If the universe starts to collapse after expanding, everything is destroyed in a big crunch. Now at that point what I find interesting is that the Bible talks not just about the continuation of this earth, it talks about a new heaven and a new earth, because God's purposes are beyond this present universe. Then there is what we've discovered about the fine balance within the universe that makes life possible. It's called the anthropic balance. In order to make structure possible within the universe the gravitational force that pulls everything together, and the expansion force of the big bang, which causes the universe to expand, needed to have been balanced at a certain point in the universe's history. Very finely balanced too, with a precision of  $10^{60}$ —that's 10 followed by 59 zeros. We really can't cope with numbers like that, but it's as if you're blindfolded and must hit a target one centimeter square on the other side of the universe. Now, discoveries like this are not proofs for God, but they raise questions that the Christian faith has natural answers to.

*PT:* The idea that you can prove God by design is flawed though, isn't it?

*DW:* There's a whole number of problems with trying to prove God through design. In terms of modern science you cannot prove God either through the argument of design, because there are always alternative theories.

For example, let's go back to anthropic balances. The Christian may look at the way the universe is so finely tuned and say, "That proves there is a God." An atheist can quite validly come along, "Perhaps there's an infinite number of universes, all with different conditions in them and ours just happens to be balanced and we're here because of that. In fact there are billions and billions of

But the Christian can say, "My metaphysical explanation in terms of God actually does have some basis because of the Christian claim that God has come into our universe in the person of Jesus." So there is the possibility of knowing what's beyond this physical universe. That's not the classic argument from design. It recognises that the insights into design and balances need to be put beside the Christian claim that God



other universes that don't have life. Therefore it is just chance." Well, scientifically you can say that, but you've got to be careful. When we introduce the phrase "in other universes," we go beyond science. That's actually a metaphysical explanation, even a theological explanation. The person who believes in many, many universes can't prove that they exist because there's no information that's passed between these various universes.

can only be known because He reveals Himself in a way that we can understand. The Creation can help us to understand His nature, but it doesn't give the complete picture. Take for example the question—and it is a valid one—is God a loving God? For every beautiful sunset I could show you a child dying of leukemia. The question then is how do you establish whether God is loving or not. For me it's simply that I see revealed in the man Jesus Christ, the God of compassion, the God of mercy, the God of justice. Within that



framework I can then look at the universe and look at the beautiful sunset to see that this God's love and compassion is expressed within artistic beauty, creativity. And at the same time I can see a God who cares for the child suffering with leukemia. For every 'good' bit of the universe there's also a 'bad' bit. Creation confronts us with the problem of suffering, and few Christians would be arrogant enough to say that they had a full answer to that.

*PT:* It could be argued that a loving God wouldn't have created the possibility of leukemia in the first place.

*DW:* I think then that we're evaluating God and we're also probably straying into areas where the personal and the theological stand in tension. You and I could have an interesting intellectual discussion about a child dying of leukemia. But you do not go to the bedside of a child and have an intellectual discussion with the parents. What you hope to do is to bring the love of God into that situation through the giving of support and the concern.

*PT:* If you say that the only way we can really know God is through

Jesus Christ, a scientist could say, "Well how do I research Jesus Christ?"

*DW:* Very important. I remember a conversation I had at a breakfast table with a student who'd just arrived at the university where I was a post-graduate. He was a first year physicist, and he sat down and said, "I gather you're a Christian?" I said, "Yes, I am." He asked, "How can you be a scientist and a Christian?" It was early in the morning and I was a little brusque with him and said, "Tell me, have you ever looked at the evidence for the historicity of Jesus?" To which he said, "No, but I saw a program on Channel 4 that said He didn't exist." I said, "Have you ever looked at the evidence of His teaching or His death on the cross?" He said, "Well we did all of that a long time ago and I don't really remember it." I said, "Have you ever looked seriously at the historical evidence of the resurrection of Jesus and the appearance to the disciples of the empty tomb that grew up with the Christian church?" He said, "No, but even if I did, it wouldn't change my mind because I know dead people can't rise." At which

point I wanted to say to him, "You're going to have to learn a lot before you become a scientist, because to a scientist, evidence is key." As a scientist, I approach the man Jesus Christ, not with any *a priori* belief that the Bible is infallible or that this man is exactly what He says He is. I come as someone first and foremost who wants to assess the evidence. I look at the evidence of the history within the New Testament. I look at the evidence contained within the growth of the Christian church. I look at the evidence of men and women, boys and girls, who claim to experience Jesus Christ and see if this evidence stands up. Now that's a very scientific way of doing it. Now of course I need at the same time to say, although that evidence is there, there is a point that then goes beyond science. Because the Christian claim is that Jesus Christ is personal, and when we come to persons rather than scientific theories, we're on different ground. As a scientist, you might ask me, "How do I know that my wife loves me?" Well, I've got scientific evidence for that: does she buy me a Valentine's

card? Does she scream and run out of the room every time I walk in? That would tell me something, but ultimately I only know her love for me if I am prepared to commit myself into a relationship. That's the only way that I know it for sure. And the Christian faith is somewhat like that.

*PT:* You're saying that science is not the only measure of reality.

*DW:* Absolutely, and again that's the fallacy of the argument of saying, "Once I've got a scientific description of something, that's all I need." That is plainly not the case. If we ask the question, why is the kettle boiling? Well, you might say because the heat energy is being transferred to the water molecules, which are increasing in their velocity, eventually bubbles are formed and that's why the kettle is boiling. At the same time there is an answer that goes, because you and I want a cup of tea together. One's about the science, one's about the purpose. If I'm going to understand why that kettle's boiling, I need to know both. Those who follow the conflict hypothesis are only giving one aspect to what is a multi-faceted reality.

*PT:* Let's go back to the cosmology. As an astrophysicist, what big questions that remain fascinate you most?

*DW:* There are a number. I've talked about the end of the universe, and that's linked to the so-called dark matter question. Stars and planets are only a small percentage, maybe not more than 10 per cent of the mass of the total universe. There's a lot of mass in the universe that we know is there because we can see its effect on the gravity. But we don't know what it's made of. That's a reminder about just how little we know, but it's also one of those great fascinating questions of science. There are many

speculations. Some say we have just got our mass wrong. But the main candidates are either what we might call brown dwarfs, which are effectively large planets that never made it to become stars. Like Jupiter. Jupiter is a large planet that never became a star. But I think it's unlikely myself. I think the best candidate is some form of exotic particle that as yet we've not discovered. There are searches at the moment for such particles. Theoretically we can say they exist, but we need to find one. That is difficult because although they exert mass on a large scale, it seems that they don't interact through electrical charge or some other way that we can measure. Another question that intrigues me is the question of extra-terrestrial intelligence.

*PT:* Is that a genuinely scientific pursuit?

*DW:* Yes it is. The search for extra-terrestrial intelligence has been an honest scientific pursuit for many years now. Unfortunately, it has got a bad name because of some enthusiastic but totally unscientific claims. All we can say for certain at the moment is that the only intelligent life in the galaxy is us. We can't go beyond that until we have had some kind of contact.

*PT:* What would it do to your faith if you were a part of a team that did discover little green men living on one of the moons of Jupiter?

*DW:* It wouldn't be catastrophic to my faith. It would be yet more demonstration of the extravagance and greatness of God. I would welcome it. That wouldn't mean there wouldn't be difficult questions to work out. I come back to one of my comments that there's an extravagance to what God does. Why so many stars? Why so many galaxies? Surely if God was just interested in us, one star, one planet, would be enough? But the billions of

stars are a reflection of the nature of God. And the more we discover that which can be seen, everything seems to be useful. Everything has a place.

*PT:* So you have no conflict in your roles of a Christian minister and a theoretical scientist?

*DW:* No, there's no conflict. That's not to say there aren't unanswered questions. But in the end someone said to me very early when I became a Christian, if you proclaim Jesus as Lord, then He's got to be Lord of your mind as well as Lord of your heart. You cannot live some kind of Jekyll and Hyde existence between church on Sunday and the real world during work. The same Jesus who's Lord of the worship is also Lord of the workplace. Part of my attempt at Christian discipleship has been to show integrity. I don't think churches are good at helping scientists. Often the language, the illustrations and the concepts we use in worship are more based in the arts world. Scientists often find themselves quite alienated by the church. I've been fortunate to be a part of churches where science has been valued. It was always made clear to me that to be a scientist was as much of a Christian calling as it was to be a full-time worker for the church, and I try and encourage students to see science as a calling. God has created a universe where science is possible. Jesus is the One that, as Paul said in Colossians, holds the whole universe together. We're only able to do science because of Jesus, and it should be for His glory. ■

*Dr David Wilkinson is an ordained minister. He holds the position of Wesley Research Lecturer in Theology and Science in the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Durham. He has a PhD in theoretical astrophysics for his work on galaxy evolution and cosmology. Dr Wilkinson was recently awarded a second PhD in systematic theology for his work on what the Christian faith says about the end of the Universe.*

# Knowing the u

To entertain delegates, the organisers of a recently held computer conference threw in a dinner cum comedy show. One of the items was a junior salesman exercising his wits so as to sell his products to a senior salesman. He explained how buying his products (shampoo, perfume, good luck charm) could help enhance his life. He even offered discounts and installment payments. All these didn't work. Finally, he asked the elder salesman, "Do you need God?" The elder salesman thought for a minute and reluctantly said, "Yes, I think so". The young salesman quickly pulled out several religious icons from his briefcase and exclaimed, "You get the best deal; you can have all these gods at half price. Surely, you don't want to miss this fantastic offer!" The audience broke into laughter.

Buying and selling gods at half-price? It may be okay at a comedy show. Unfortunately many today unwittingly do this with the real God. They have no idea who this real God is and so they 'buy' and 'sell' Him at an incredibly low price—far below His true worth. Many of us are guilty of doing this. We don't see God as He really is or understand what He is really worth.

Let's look into the Bible to learn more about this God. I hope that this article will help you to know Him as never before and encourage you to worship Him with deep



by  
**Dr. P.  
Sellappan**

reverence, respect, adoration and thanksgiving. This could transform your life forever.

## Many gods

About 1,900 years ago, a group of people gathered at Athens, the capital of Greece, a city known for culture, arts and intellectual discourse. They had a view of God which is not very different from ours. They had erected numerous gods—one for protection, another for education, another for wealth, etc. They had gods for almost

better or the more powerful. Their lives were empty. Although they had a form of godliness, their gods didn't have any power to change their lives.

Many peoples' religious experience today is quite similar to those Athenians. They don't believe that one God is powerful enough to change their lives and make them happy. So they make many gods (as though God can be made by human hands or machines!) and worship them, often running from one place of worship to another.



everything they could think of. Just in case they missed out any gods, they had also erected a 'catch all' god and called it the 'Unknown God'.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Athenians had many gods, they didn't take these gods very seriously to the point of committing their lives to them. They spent their time arguing and debating as to which god was the

Yet they still end up feeling miserable and unhappy.

## Two opposing religious views

The Athenians were divided into two religious camps: Epicureans and Stoics. The Epicureans were atheists and they held the view that people should do whatever is pleasurable to the senses. Their motto was "live it up—eat, drink



# Unknown God

and be merry". They cautioned, however, that any form of extreme behaviour would cause pain and therefore should be avoided. As atheists, they held the view that people should not fear gods or fear death.

The Stoics on the other hand were pantheists; people who believe that God and the universe are the same. They held the view that everything is God and God is everything. They believed in fatalism—a philosophical doctrine holding that all events are predetermined in advance for all time, and that human beings are powerless to change them, and so they should accept whatever befalls them without complaining. They are to control their desires and emotions and live their lives rationally. Nothing should upset them since God is all and all is God.

The Epicureans based their philosophy on the 'here and now' because they believed that people are merely random occurrences, while the Stoics believed in a rationally evolving universe. The Epicureans believed in no God, whereas the Stoics believed everything is God. Neither group believed in a personal God or resurrection.

## Religious implications

These beliefs have serious religious implications. Many gods imply that no one god is sufficient or powerful enough to help people in their lives. They limit and reduce God to mere helpless objects or creatures. They buy and sell God at half-price—far less than He is worth. They don't know which god to turn to if they have a family, health or job problem. They are not sure whether all these gods will work in concert to help them or get jealous or angry with each another. There's a hit-and-miss kind of belief system.

The Athenians made their gods according to their own ideas or imaginations. Do we mortals have

power to create the immortal God? God through the apostle Paul tells us that it is He who created the heavens and the earth and all living creatures. It is He who sets in motion the law of gravity, binds atoms and molecules, and causes heavenly bodies to follow their appointed courses.<sup>2</sup>

If we follow the Epicurean belief system which says there is no God and that one should just live it up, then there is no accountability whatsoever. We can do whatever is pleasurable to our senses and there is no such thing as sin or immoral behaviour. That means that attitudes like greed, adultery, lying and terrorism are all permissible!

Whereas if we follow the Stoics belief system which tells us that all things are of God and whatever happens is destined (a fatalistic view on life), we deny all cause-and-effect relationships. That implies there is no accountability for our actions. That means that careless driving is okay and car accidents are just fated. We can't do anything and we just call it an act of God!

The Athenians didn't have any concrete belief system. Either they believed in nothing or they believed in everything. They could slant their life this way or that way whichever way was convenient or suited them best. There was no commitment, accountability or responsibility. It is an 'anything goes' religion. Many today also hold this view. They are constrained only by the civil laws!

## Ignorance is not bliss

As long as God is unknown, we all can spend our time doing our own thing as did the Athenians. But if God is known, then we had better make up our minds to trust and obey Him.

God has revealed Himself to us in so many ways that we really have no excuse to remain ignorant. He calls us to seek Him so that we might enjoy His rich and abundant blessings and live with Him forever.

## God's Attributes

### God is Eternal

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen"  
(1 Timothy 1:17).

### God is Almighty

"This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD Almighty is his name" (Jeremiah 31:35). "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."  
(Revelation 1:8).

### God is Sovereign

Everything is under His rule and control, and nothing happens in the Universe without His knowledge or permission. God's purpose is all-inclusive and is never thwarted (Ephesians 1:11; Isaiah 46:11).

### God is Creator

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth"  
(Isaiah 40:28).

### God is All-Wise

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise." (Revelation 5:12) "The only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen"  
(Romans 16:27).

### God is Love

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins"  
(1 John 4:8–10).

### God is Holy

"Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy" (Revelation 15:4).

### God is Good

"Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good"  
(1 Peter 2:3).

### God is Gracious

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding" (Ephesians 1:7).

### God is Merciful

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4). "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy"  
(Titus 3:5).

### God's Attributes

#### God is Faithful

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

#### God is Saviour

"I the LORD, am your Saviour, your Redeemer" (Isaiah 60:16). "That we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:10). "While we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

#### God is Patient

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

#### God is our Friend

"Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:13–15).

#### God is our Father

"One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Ephesians 4:6). "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17). "Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear" (1 Peter 1:17).

#### God is our Refuge

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

#### God is Judge

"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

should be proof enough for anyone who wants to know God.

The apostle Paul introduced this Unknown God to the Athenians thus: "It is plain to see that you Athenians take your religion seriously. When I arrived here the other day, I was fascinated with all the shrines I came across. And then I found one inscribed, to the god nobody knows. I'm here to introduce you to this God so you can worship intelligently, know who you're dealing with. The God who made the world and everything in it, this Master of sky and land, doesn't live in custom-made shrines or need the human race to run errands for Him, as if He couldn't take care of Himself. He makes the creatures; the creatures don't make Him. Starting from scratch, He made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find Him. He doesn't play hide-and-seek with us. He's not remote; He's near. We live and move in Him, can't get away from Him! One of your poets said it well: 'We're the God-created.' Well, if we are the God-created, it doesn't make a lot of sense to think we could hire a sculptor to chisel a god out of stone for us, does it? God overlooks it as long as you don't know any better—but that time is past. The unknown is now known, and He's calling for a radical life-change. He has set a day when the entire human race will be judged and everything set right. And he has already appointed the judge, confirming him before everyone by raising Him from the dead." When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. A few men became followers of Paul and believed.<sup>3</sup>

Paul assured the Athenians that God had overlooked their past ignorance but urged them to seek after Him. He got different responses. Some sneered, some wanted to know more about it later, but a few accepted the message and invited God into their lives.

### God's attributes

Although the Bible doesn't tell us everything about God, it tells all that we need to know to help us build an intimate relationship with Him. To help you get started, we have listed several of His attributes along with some scripture references in the inset/box below. The list is by no means exhaustive. There is a lot more to know about this awesome God. You need to read the Bible to get to know and experience Him.

### Go for the full price of God

Once you know the true God, you will never want to buy or sell Him at half price. If, on the other hand, you reduce God's worth in your life, this will only limit His blessings to you. You can only continue to live the same old humdrum life as now, a life without any hope of the bright future, the eternal life, God plans for you. You will be disappointed in life too, because you won't experience the transforming power of God in your life.

So let's give God His full worth—the full price! Let's ascribe to Him the glory, power, holiness, goodness, kindness, mercy and faithfulness that He deserves. Let's exalt His name and worship Him with deep reverence, respect, adoration and thanksgiving. Let's submit to Him and let Him rule over our lives. He really cares for us. He is inviting us to become His children and enjoy His richest blessings beyond all that our eyes can see, our ears can hear, our hearts can fathom.<sup>4</sup>

The apostle Paul told the Athenians not to remain ignorant of the identity of this Unknown God. The same message applies to us today. We don't have to buy or sell God at half-price as the two salesmen at that recent comedy show. The hand-made gods of the Athenians and the good luck charms and religious icons at the comedy show cannot transform our lives one bit. Get real! Seek the true God and experience His transforming power. You can know Him because God, through Jesus Christ, has already revealed Himself to us. He has shown us who He is and what He is worth. So let's go for the full price of God! □

### Know the 'Unknown God'

There is no need to play the guessing game anymore. God has revealed Himself to us in at least three ways.

- (1) The creation itself declares that there is a Creator who created all things big and small (e.g., planets and stars, atoms and molecules), visible and invisible (e.g., flora and fauna and human beings, laws of gravity and angels).
- (2) The Bible positively identifies who is this Unknown God. It declares that the God of the Bible is the Creator, Sustainer and Life Giver.
- (3) To clear the mystery once for all, He sent his Son Jesus Christ to reveal Himself to us. That

<sup>1</sup> Acts 17:22–23

<sup>2</sup> Acts 17:24–25

<sup>3</sup> Acts 17:22–34  
(Message Bible)

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 3:  
17–20

# Skin deep

The following is a story related by a person called Kim Aaron, a story that shows how parents can deeply influence their children and prevent them from becoming prejudiced.

"One afternoon, my son came home from school with a puzzled look on his face. After asking him what was on his mind he said, 'Are all people the same even if their skin color is different?'"

I thought for a moment, then I said, 'I'll explain, if you can just wait until we make a quick stop at the grocery store. I have something interesting to show you.'

At the grocery store, I told him that we needed to buy apples. We went to the produce section where we bought some red apples, green apples and yellow apples.

At home, while we were putting all the groceries away, I told Adam, that it was time to answer his question. I put one of each type of apple on the countertop: first a red apple followed by a green apple and then a yellow apple. Then I looked at Adam, who was sitting on the other side of the counter.

'Adam, people are just like apples. They come in all different colors, shapes and sizes. See, some of the apples have been bumped around and are bruised. On the outside, they may not even look as delicious as the others.' As I was talking, Adam was examining each one carefully.

Then, I took each of the apples and peeled them, placing them back on the countertop, but in a different place.

'Okay, Adam, tell me which one is the red apple, the green apple and the yellow apple.'

He said, 'I can't tell. They all look the same now.'

'Take a bite of each one. See if that helps you figure out which one

is which.'

He took big bites, and then a huge smile came across his face. 'People are just like apples! They are all different, but once you take off the outside, they're pretty much the same on the inside.'

'Right,' I agreed. 'Just like how everyone has their own personality but are still basically the same.'

He totally got it. I didn't need to say or do anything else.

Now, when I bite into an apple, it tastes a little sweeter than before. What perfect food for thought."



By  
**Joe D'Costa**



All humans are alike. They have two hands, two legs, two eyes, and an intelligent brain in their heads. We all have the capacity to love, hate, be kind and generous or obnoxious and stingy. Yet we as humans tend to focus on the differences as if the differences are bad. Colour, accent, languages, religions, caste, all seem to be sticking points and opportunities to develop animosity, hatred and mistrust. These differences also make us feel superior, or in some instances inferior to others depending on where we feel we stand in the pecking order. All these feelings lend a significant hand in our relationship with others causing difficulties we would never otherwise encounter.

In India alone there are,

according to one statistic, at least one caste related violence perpetrated every day. The Times of India dated November 5, 2001 gives a report of 50,000 Dalit (low caste) Hindus embracing Buddhism while shouting slogans against the upper caste hegemony of Hinduism, polity and society. B.R. Ambedkar carried out a similar exercise in 1956 when half a million Dalits embraced Buddhism in Nagpur.

Let us get to know others better especially the ones that we initially do not take to kindly. You may be

surprised at the change in attitude they will have towards us and us them.

All of us are precious to God who created us. Therefore we need to learn to love one another. Let us not look at the outward appearances—the colour of the skin, language, accent, food habits, dress, education or the amount of money we have in our pockets. Let us look deep within the person realising that the same spirit dwells in all of us. The Bible gives us many guidelines about how we should treat our fellowman. One of the

greatest commandments given to us by Jesus Christ was to love each other as ourselves. How can we discriminate against others if that kind of attitude is in us?

All religions believe that God's spirit dwells in humans. Let us respect that Spirit of God in us and also respect the fact that God loved us all and considers us reflections of His image. Let us study that reflection because that reflection will teach us more about God and His personality. In studying others' personalities as reflections of God's personality, let us learn to consider others not as inferior to ourselves but better than ourselves. In so doing, we will grow to be wiser and mature humans that God will be proud to call His sons and daughters. ■



# Finding hope

Life on earth has its beginning and end. All earthly creatures die, and human beings are no exception. It is said that the only certainty in life is death. It is a stark reality, inevitable, and none can escape from it. Death is unavoidable and an undeniable fact of life.

As the wise author of the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes says: "There is a time to be born and a time to die. Man's fate is like that of the animals, the same fate awaits them both: as one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return."<sup>1</sup>

Truly death is a "grim reaper," a respecter of no person, brutally impartial. Not only the wise, foolish, rich and poor are equal in death, and so are people and animals. The wise, the foolish, rich and poor, all die in exactly the same way animals die.

From the moment of birth, death stalks our lives, and begins its countdown numbering our days. None of us wishes to die young nor in our prime of life. On the contrary, most of us desire longevity. Nobody, however, can be certain when our life is going to end. The Bible describes the nature of human life is like a wisp of vapour, a puff of smoke, or a mist that is visible for a little while and then disappears!<sup>2</sup>

## The fear of death

When we think of death, what thoughts and feelings come into our minds? Most of us have images of death which are negative and disturbing, including feelings of fear. This is natural, of course.

Many people, however, fear dying more than death itself. Some fear dying a violent death while others fear suffering a slow painful death. It is said that death has a thousand faces but dying has a million ways! How we wish we can die in sleep, without any suffering.

We suffer emotional shock when our close friends, relatives and other loved ones die. Death is terrifying



by  
**Yong  
Chin Gee**

because it exerts its monstrous, invisible, brutal power to take away all that we possess and what we have worked for in life. It totally destroys anything we hold dear to!

We know we are going to die some day, somehow, somewhere, but we do not really care to think about it, do we? Being so preoccupied with daily work and absorbed in the business of living, somehow we are generally oblivious to the fear of death in our conscious lives. If this fear of death were a constant reality in life, we should not be able to function normally. It seems a paradox that the innate fear of death is a biological necessity of self-preservation, yet we must control this fear if we are to live with any degree of comfort, peace and joy of life.

## The search for immortality

The search for immortality is as old as man. All world religions have their teachings on the afterlife. Alchemists racked their brains seeking the elixir of life. Contemporary scientists feverishly work on the mystery of life and death and the similar quest for longevity and immortality.

Why should human beings be so curious in the quest for immortality? King Solomon was inspired to state the truth that "God has set eternity in the hearts of Men."<sup>3</sup> It is natural for people to have the subconscious wish of living forever. The notion and vision of immortal life pervades all cultures. Many primitive societies and cultures believed that life and death could be controlled and manipulated by magic, witchcraft, charms and spells and other superstitious beliefs and practices.

The quest for longevity and even immortality was a major motif in ancient Taoist culture and belief. According to the teachings of

philosophical Taoism, immortals were beings who lived the ideal Taoist life in remote mountains. The aspiring immortals would typically search for herbs, fruits, plants or other substances with magical qualities that could confer longevity and even immortality. The "eight immortals" are famous legendary figures in the literature, folklore and visual arts of China.

Many Chinese emperors and rulers down through history had great interest in the search for elixir



of life and immortality. According to legend, Emperor Qin Shi Huang dispatched two to three thousand young men and women on an expedition to the Isles of the Blest in the Eastern Sea in search of the herb, plant or tree of longevity and immortal life. They never found it, and neither did they return to China. A popular story claims that they finally settled down in the isles of Japan!

On the other hand, the ardent search for immortality also led to the practice of alchemy



# beyond death

which involved all sorts of experimentation, hoping to produce concoctions that could prolong life. The Emperor Qin Shi Huang liked to experiment with immortality potions. It is believed that one of these potions containing mercury and arsenic caused his death in 210 B.C.

Today scientists have not given up the dream of "Elixir Vitae" either. Some think that their project, the scientific conquest of death is feasible. Right now

not only conquering death, but also expanding in consciousness!

Some scientists today are bent on waging a war against aging and even death; because death is seen as evil and an enemy to life that should ultimately be defeated and destroyed. Will bio-technology and other scientific research ultimately triumph over death? Time only can tell whether a scientific way of eliminating death becomes a reality.

## Importance of resurrection

According to the thinking of Plato and other Greek philosophers, human soul or spirit is immortal, imprisoned in the physical body. At death, the immortal soul is released to freedom, unrestricted by bodily weaknesses or limitations. The ancient Greeks believed in no immortality of the body, but immortality only of the soul or human spirit.

Owing to this Greek influence, some first-century Christians doubted the truth of resurrection. The Apostle Paul, however, refuted their erroneous belief. He ascertained the fact that Jesus presented Himself alive to him, other apostles, and more than five hundred of followers most of whom were still around.<sup>4</sup>

There is no greater evidence for Jesus' existence

after death than the many eye witnesses who testified to the historical reality of Christ's resurrection. Christianity, in contrast with Greek philosophy, actually teaches us that the departed human spirit will be reunited with the body at resurrection. Believers of God, Christians, will receive from God a new spiritual, immortal body at Christ's second coming. Resurrection is the prime focus and cornerstone of the Christian gospel of salvation.

## Victory over sin and death

The origin of death started with the first human beings. God created Adam and Eve with the possibility of death if they sinned against Him, and the opportunity for eternal life if they maintained a loving relationship with Him. Tempted by Satan, they chose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit of the "Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil." Consequently, God pronounced a death sentence on them. Obviously Adam and Eve had no inherent immortal life otherwise death would have been an impossibility. On the other hand, God would have offered them the gift of eternal life, access to the "Tree of Life," had they been obedient and faithful to His commands.

The Bible states that just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ by dying on the cross destroyed death through His resurrection and brought immortality to light.<sup>5</sup>

The book of Hebrews says, "Since the children have flesh and blood, He (Jesus Christ) too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death".

The fear of death has subjected and enslaved humanity throughout the ages to all sorts of superstitious beliefs and false religious practices such as charms, magic, spells, witchcrafts, mythology, voodoo, sorcery, human sacrifices and many other forms of demonic worship. Christ came to reveal that He is the Saviour of all humankind. He has power and authority over Satan and his demons, and can set human beings free from sin, the fear of death by bestowing the gift of immortality and eternal life through resurrection.

The Apostle Paul states: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep (in death), but we will all be



scientific research into life-extension is going on around the world. This includes genetic engineering, DNA analysis, stem-cell technology, therapeutic cloning, nanotechnology, biomedicine, nanomedicine, etc. Scientists talk about "Cyber immortality," which is copying our "selves"; i.e. our nature, personality, thoughts, memories, feelings, likes and dislikes and other unique traits on to a computer. In that way, humankind can leave behind the constraints of biological mortality,



changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound (at the time of second Christ's coming), the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death, O death, where is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup>

#### **Our destiny or our future**

God has put eternity in our hearts and mind for a meaningful, noble purpose. We are not born to die but to live eternally with God. Despite man knowing what he is appointed to do, God has put the concept of our survival beyond death, in one form or another, in the hearts of men. And He put it there for a meaningful and noble purpose.

After resurrection, we will have a wonderful spiritual body like Christ's, not limited by time and

space or laws of nature. We will not exist as ghosts, phantoms or disembodied souls or spirits. Our human spirit will be reunited with our new human body which will be spiritual in nature, free from sin, glorified, powerful, immortal, imperishable and incorruptible. Our bodies may be different in some ways, but not all, from our earthly bodies. We will continue to have our own personalities and unique individualities and talents. Our resurrected bodies will be free from all bodily defects, weaknesses and imperfections because God tells us that diseases, sickness, pains, sufferings, tears and sorrows, and being blind, deaf and dumb will be things of the past.<sup>7</sup>

Our spiritual bodies will be perfectly suited to live in the spiritual realm with our creator God and Christ in the new heavens and new earth. In resurrection, we neither marry nor be given in marriage. We will live in a new dimension of life, enjoying spiritual creative works which God has planned for us in His kingdom. Being children of God we will have a higher status than the angelic beings. Living with God

means happiness and pleasure forever more. Scriptures reveal that our future destiny far surpasses anything we can dream of.<sup>8</sup>

The Bible declares all human beings who have ever lived will be resurrected to God's judgment. The unbelievers, unrepentant sinners and the incorrigible wicked will suffer the punishment of second death which is eternal separation and destruction in the Lake of Fire. Those who believe Christ and love God, however, will live in glory forever, shining like stars in heaven. God does not want any to perish and would have everyone to be saved.<sup>9</sup>

God has promised that everyone will be resurrected from death. Through God's mercy and grace He has offered everyone who believes in Him and Christ the amazing, wonderful the gift of immortality and eternal life beyond death in His soon coming Kingdom. The question is, will you accept His gracious invitation to live with Him forever in His soon-coming glorious Kingdom? ☐

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:2, 19–20

<sup>2</sup> James 4:14 (AV)

<sup>3</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:11

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:4–8

<sup>5</sup> Romans 5:12; 6:23;

2 Timothy 1:10

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51–56

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 3:2; Luke 24:39; Revelation 21:3–4; 1 Corinthians 2:7–10

<sup>8</sup> Luke 20:34–36; 1 Corinthians 6:3;

Hebrews 1:

4–5; 2:6–8;

Psalms 16:11;

Romans 8:

8–22

<sup>9</sup> Revelation 20:11–14;

Daniel 12: 2–3

# It's hard to forgive

Jesus often said that God is merciful. But He also said, in a statement that can send chills up the spine, 'If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses'.<sup>1</sup> Do we have to forgive everyone? Apparently so yet no one does it perfectly. We don't do anything perfectly. So how can we ever hope for the Father to forgive us?

## Examples

After a brief romance, George and Judy married. After an equally brief marriage, Judy walked out on him, crushing his ego like an eggshell

**By  
Joseph Tkach**

gambling. He's broke now, and the older siblings have to take care of the elderly parents. How can they forgive Bob, when they are still suffering from what he did?

Or perhaps you know someone like Susan, Chris or Karl. Susan was abused by her stepfather, and 30 years later she still struggles with a distorted self-image. Chris was paralyzed in an accident caused by a drunk driver. Karl was left an orphan when his father committed suicide. The sinners are dead, and can't repent or apologise. Can these victims forgive the people who caused them such pain, or

and hurts our heart. For our own health, we need to forgive but it's hard to forgive.

## Forgiving another believer

Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'.<sup>2</sup>

Imagine that someone in the church has hurt your feelings, and the person says 'sorry'. And he or she does it again, and says 'sorry'. And it happens again, and again you hear 'sorry'. And again, and again, and



on a railroad track. Even ten years later, George has deep scars from his wound. Is Judy's 'sorry', but I want to move on' an apology? Is there ever an acceptable apology for that sort of betrayal?

Bob was the youngest child in a family of seven. He borrowed all of his parents' money and lost it in

would that trivialise the sin?

What other choice do we have, though? If we hang on to anger, it will eventually eat us from the inside out, like acid in an iron pot. We will become bitter, ulcerated, depressed and unpleasant we add to our own damage and pain. Anger raises our blood pressure

again. At what point are you going to say, 'I don't think you're really sorry?' Maybe the person isn't sorry, but Jesus says to forgive them anyway, even 77 times. Try saying 'I forgive you' that many times! It might be good therapy.

Jesus said 'forgive, not forget, and there is an important difference.





Jesus has not forgotten who betrayed Him, or deserted Him, or ordered His execution, but Jesus does not harbor grudges about it. He wants those people to accept the forgiveness that He offers. He died for them as well as for everyone else. (When the Bible says that God does not remember our sins any more, it is not talking about forgetfulness; it is using the word remember in the sense of taking action on something. Exodus 2:24 is an example of this meaning of remember.)

Jesus then told a parable that explains why we should forgive: Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents (an enormous amount) was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.<sup>3</sup> The king represents God, of course, and the debt corresponds to our sins. We are totally unable to pay for our sins. Even selling ourselves into slavery would pay only a small fraction of the debt. We can't work our way out of this one. The servant fell on his

knees before him. Be patient with me, he begged, and I will pay back everything. The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.<sup>4</sup>

We can't pay our debt, but if we ask for mercy, God will give us more than we ask. That's what the kingdom of God is like. (As an aside here, we can see that the servant didn't have a totally accurate understanding of God's grace. He asked for mercy, but still thought he could do something to repay his debt. That's like a lot of Christians today, who don't really believe they are forgiven unless they have done some kind of penance. Yet God forgives them anyway, even if they don't understand how sweeping His forgiveness really is.) So far, so good. It would be a great parable if Jesus just stopped right here. But Jesus did not stop here, and the second part of the parable makes me squirm a little. But I have to remember that Peter's question is not whether he is forgiven, but whether he has to forgive others and this is the task that we frequently face.

### **The unmerciful servant**

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. Pay back what you owe me! he demanded.<sup>5</sup> The first servant was determined to pay off his own debt by collecting every cent he could. A hundred denarii was a significant amount, but it was only a tiny fraction of the 10,000 talents. But every penny counts, the servant must have thought, and he even used a little violence to underscore his determination to collect.

Christians today do this as well. When they think they have to earn God's respect through obedience and good works, they look down on people who aren't trying as hard as they are.

His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, Be patient with me, and I will pay you back (which is what the first servant had said to his master). But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.<sup>6</sup> He wanted the man's relatives to cough up the money to get the guy out of jail. He



was playing hardball in a desperate attempt to gather enough cash to impress the king with his sincerity. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. You wicked servant, he said, I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?<sup>7</sup> This chapter is about life in a community, not just between one person and God. This is a small reminder in this parable that our actions affect other people, and that we should encourage one another to give mercy, just as we have been given mercy.

Now here is where the parable turns into a warning: In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.<sup>8</sup> Shocking! Jesus represents God as taking away the forgiveness He once gave, and inflicting punishment, knowing quite well that the man will never be able to pay back all he owed. But Jesus is not attempting to tell us about the nature of eternal punishment. He is simply presenting this as a warning, with terms appropriate to the parable, that we must forgive others not grudgingly, but from the heart.

### Faulty forgiveness

But is Jesus laying on us an impossible burden? It is easy to say you are forgiven, but it is difficult to mean it in our heart. Aren't we still angry at the injustice that was done to us? Don't we still hurt when we think about it? Don't we still want the person to be punished for what was done? What are we to do with the vial of bitterness we have accumulated in our thoughts?

If this parable had been longer, maybe it would have gone something like this:

And the wicked servant said, O my king, you are right. You have been patient with me; I should be just as patient with my fellow servants. Please do not throw me in jail. Have mercy on me again. I will forgive the people

who ask me for mercy. And the king said, You are forgiven. The wicked servant then went out and found a woman who owed him 50 denarii, and he demanded to be repaid within a week. The woman was exceedingly sorrowful, and sold herself into slavery to pay the debt. And since she did not ask for mercy, none was given. The other servants found out about this and reported it to the king, and the king was angry and called the wicked servant in again, saying: You wicked servant! I forgave your huge debt because you asked me to. Can you not see that the poor woman wanted mercy even though she was afraid to ask? Therefore I will throw you into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The wicked servant then said: O my king, you are right again. If you forgive me this time, I will sell some of my possessions to redeem the woman from slavery. Well done, said the king, you may go. And the wicked servant went out and straightway forgot what he had promised. And he was reported to the king again; was threatened with punishment again, asked for mercy again, and was forgiven again. And I ask you, how many times will the king forgive seven times? Nay, he will do it seventy-seven times. That is what the kingdom of heaven is like. God is even more merciful than what He tells us to be.

In other words, God even forgives our imperfect attempts at forgiveness, as long as we look to Him for mercy.

### The key to forgiving

The better we understand that we are forgiven, the better we can forgive others. That does not mean thinking (as the wicked servant did), Thanks for your patience; I will still try to repay all that I owe. If we have that attitude, then we still overestimate our abilities, and we will still expect people to pay all that they owe us groveling for everything they've done to us.

But the truth (which the wicked servant could have known, if he had listened carefully) is that when God forgives us, we are forgiven. There is no debt to repay. There's nothing to work off, no penance to perform, no need to prove how sincere we were this time. It's forgiven it's gone.

Another point from the parable

that will help us forgive others: we have been forgiven an enormous debt; the sins that people commit against us are much smaller. Even if someone beats you to a bloody mess and nails you to die on a cross, God has forgiven you more than that. Perhaps you find that hard to believe, as I do, but this is the point of what Jesus is saying, and He has earned the right to say it.

Forgiveness does not mean that we pretend like nothing ever happened. It does not mean trusting a swindler with money, trusting a wife-beater to not get abusive again, or appointing a child-molester to be a youth pastor.

Forgiving does mean that we do not harbor grudges, we do not seek vengeance. It means letting go of our need to get even. It means praying for our enemies. It means seeing ourselves in their shoes, knowing that God has, for the sake of Christ, forgiven us all our sins too. No groveling required. God does not want us to sin again, but His mercy lasts forever.

God wants us to forgive, and He knows that it's hard. He wants us to obey Him in everything, and He knows that we don't. That's why our salvation does not depend on our performance, but on the righteousness of Christ. Our salvation does not depend on our performance in keeping the law, or in having enough faith, or in forgiving as well as we ought. In all these areas, we are sinners who fall short of the glory of God.

Our salvation depends not on us, but on Christ, and on our connection to Him. He is the one who forgives with the sincerity and frequency that is required, and when our lives are hidden in Christ,<sup>9</sup> God attributes Christ's perfect obedience, including His perfect forgiveness, to us.

God wants us to forgive others because He forgives us. He forgives us far more generously than 77 times. The point is that we are to realise our need for mercy, look to Him for mercy, depend on His mercy, and instead of harboring our hurts and nursing our grievances, we need to ask Him to help us begin to forgive.

In this world of sin and ignorance, offenses are inevitable. We've all been hurt. What's the worst thing that has happened to you? What resentment do you carry? For our own good, we need to let our resentments go. Jesus will help us that's something worth praying about. ☐

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 6:15

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 18: 21–22

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 18: 23–25

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 18: 26–27

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 18:28

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 18: 29–30

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 18: 31–33

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 18: 34–35

<sup>9</sup> Colossians 3:3

# When trouble comes

“Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” These are words from a very special hymn, “What A Friend We Have in Jesus”. True enough, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did not promise us a care-free life. In fact, He promised some difficulties—enough to push us out of our self-sufficiency. But He also offered to ease our burdens as we walk with Him. “Come unto me, all of you who are weary and overburdened, and I will give you rest!”<sup>1</sup> It is easy for us in our fast and troubled world to become weary, worried, and worn out. But when we feel down we often neglect prayer, and our cares and burdens become even heavier. We tend to think we should come before God in prayer only when we are in a good attitude. But scripture tells us we can, and should pray even if our state of mind is not perfect.

## Consider the Psalms

I used to puzzle over the Psalms. They seemed so disorganised, a confusing mixture of extreme emotions, some good, some bad, and some just plain ugly. King David wrote many of the Psalms, and God called David “a man after God’s own heart”<sup>2</sup>. True enough, he wrote many Psalms praising God for His majesty. But he also wrote some Psalms that express loneliness, anger, fear, and at times he asked God to destroy his enemies. He even expressed impatience with God. How could these be the words of someone who was close to God? The explanation is simply that David was not always close to God. He was human, just like us, and at times felt downright frustrated and ticked off. The Psalms are a magnificent expression of our sometimes chaotic human experience—our conflicting moods, struggles, pains, and frustrations. In putting these prayers into scripture, God shows that He understands us, and that it is OK to talk to Him about whatever is on our minds. God knows what is inside of us anyway:

might as well talk to Him about it.

## David was open before God

David prayed when he was glad, sad, bad, or mad. He held nothing back from God, but simply poured it all out in prayer. Notice some of his prayers. When he was outraged at the evil around him, he pleaded, “Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end...”<sup>3</sup> Feeling abandoned and forsaken he cried out, “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?”<sup>4</sup> In better times he joyfully praised God for His salvation. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”<sup>5</sup> When seeking God’s will he asked for divine guidance. “Show me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths.”<sup>6</sup> After seeing the seriousness of his sins he sought forgiveness.

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.”<sup>7</sup> He expressed pain over a friend’s betrayal. “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me: then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance.”<sup>8</sup> When he was running and hiding from his enemies he appealed to God. “Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those who rise up against me.”<sup>9</sup> David was a man of prayer, hiding nothing, but expressing all his feelings to God. God may not have

By  
Paul Hailey



answered all of David’s requests the way David wished, but He did listen and respond in unseen ways. As David said, “...you Lord, have helped me, and comforted me.”<sup>10</sup>

## Take your cares to Him

What about you? Are you burdened with troubles? Perplexed over overwhelming problems? Feeling guilty? Hurt because of a broken relationship or some other heart-rending situation? Whatever you may be feeling, soaring joy or agonising pain, or something in between, you can talk to Him about it. You can pour it all out. Jesus beckons you and me, “Come unto me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest”. He invites us to cast our cares upon Him. Bring all your hurts and cares to Him and ask Him to deal with them. Bad feelings have a way of growing. Don’t let them grow. Take them to God. Tell Him about your, grudges, gripes, fears, frustrations, hopes, worries. To you, Jesus says, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and overburdened and I will give you rest!”

## But, remember this

Jesus told His disciples, “In the world you shall have tribulation; in me you might have peace.” Yes, we will continue to have troubles. But we can be sure He is always with us and He will share in bearing our burdens, and give us inward peace of mind. And even more meaningful, the time is coming when He will remove all of our burdens forever. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”<sup>11</sup> Until that wonderful time, let’s remember to talk to our Lord. It is indeed a great privilege. Let the words of that old hymn remind us, “What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!” □

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 11:28

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 13:14

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 7:9

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 13:1

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 23:6

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 25:4

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 51:1

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 55:12

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 59:1

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 86:17

<sup>11</sup> Revelation 21:4

### The Paradox Of Our Age

We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers.  
 Wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints.  
 We spend more, but have less.  
 We buy more, but enjoy less.  
 We have bigger houses and smaller families.  
 More conveniences, but less time.  
 We have more degrees, but less sense.  
 More knowledge, but less judgment.  
 More experts, but more problems.  
 More medicine, but less wellness.  
 We drink too much, smoke too much,  
 spend too recklessly, laugh too little,  
 drive too fast, get too angry too quickly,  
 stay up too late, get up too tired,  
 pray too seldom, and watch too much TV.  
 We have multiplied our possessions,  
 but reduced our values.  
 We talk too much, love too seldom and lie too often.  
 We've learned how to make a living, but not a life;  
 we've added years to life, not life to years.  
 We've been to the moon and back, but have trouble  
 crossing the street to meet a new neighbor.  
 We've conquered outer space, but not inner space;  
 we've done larger things, but not better things;  
 we've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul.  
 We've split the atom, but not our prejudice;  
 We write more, but learn less;  
 plan more, but accomplish less.  
 We've learned to rush, but not wait;  
 we have higher incomes, but lower morals;  
 more food, but less appeasement;  
 more acquaintances, but fewer friends;  
 more effort, but less success.  
 These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion;  
 tall men, and short character;  
 steep profits, and shallow relationships.  
 These are the times of world peace, but domestic  
 warfare; more leisure and less fun;  
 more kinds of food, but less nutrition.  
 These are the days of two incomes, but more divorce;  
 of fancier houses, but broken homes.  
 These are the days of quick trips,  
 disposable diapers, throwaway morality,  
 one night stands, overweight bodies,  
 and pills that do everything from cheer,  
 to quiet, to kill.  
 It is a time when there is much in the show window,  
 and nothing in the stockroom.  
 Today, many want to gain the world  
 at the "mere" expense of their souls.  
 Evil is contemplated and performed with both hands,  
 yet we cannot lift a finger for our fellow man.  
 May God have mercy on our souls.  
 Pray without ceasing.  
 Let each of us examine our own ways.

Author Unknown

*Perhaps the most tragic cases of Christian persecution are when Christians persecute their fellow believers, as has been happening in Georgia where some Orthodox Christians have been causing great difficulties for non-Orthodox, especially Baptists. This has included burning Bibles and Christian books, beating church leaders and destroying church buildings. But reconciliation started last year when a Baptist leader had to testify in court against nine Orthodox Christians who were being tried for what they had done to him. He asked the judge to release them. The court could not believe it, but eventually accepted the decision, to great rejoicing from all in court. Pray that those who call themselves Christians will live in peace together, however great their differences may be.*

*Berita N'ECF March-April 2005*

None of us is as smart  
as all of us.

**Cuccaro**

Teachers live forever in  
their students.

**Dr. Timothy Hawkes**

The heart of education is  
the education of the heart

**Moey Yoke Lai**

The weak can  
never forgive.

Forgiveness is the  
attribute of the strong

**Mahatma Gandhi**

When you blame others,  
you give up your power  
to change

**Douglas Noel Adams**

*When we are reading, we often find something that attracts our interest. It's not earth-shattering, or life-changing. But it's worth cutting out and keeping, or sticking on the refrigerator door; or maybe sending to us for this page!*

*We invite all our readers to contribute news items, quotes, or poems, that make you say 'Hmm'. It could be in today's paper, or in a book hundreds of years old. Try to send the original clipping, or a copy of the page to:*

*Hmm... The Plain Truth, Locked Bag 2002, 41990 Klang, Selangor, Malaysia.*

# The salt

In Matthew 5:13 Jesus says to the disciples: “You are the salt of the earth...” I have often been intrigued by this verse in the Bible. Why salt? Why not sand, stone, silver, gold or even diamond? There must be a reason.

When God created the heaven and the earth, He provided us with plenty of salt on this earth. Historically some even called salt the fifth element because we are as dependent on it as on air, earth, water and fire. Homer called salt “divine” and Plato terms it a “substance dear to the gods”. Salt is found abundantly on the surface of the earth as well as deep within it.

One of the ways of extracting salt is by using the sun. Sea water is collected in salt pits dug into the sand. The sun will then evaporate the water leaving the salt behind. Nowadays, in some parts of the world, salt water is still pumped into ponds for a similar process to take place. In Asia’s oldest salt mine at Pakistan’s craggy Salt Range, labourers use hand drills and gunpowder to blast away the pink and orange-coloured crystals to excavate the salt.

A primary source of salt is found in the Dead Sea in the Middle East. The concentration of salt in the Dead Sea is nine times saltier than the oceans. It is easier to stay afloat in the Dead Sea than in the ocean because of its high density of salt. Friends and I found this to be true when we made a side trip to the Dead Sea and swam in it while attending a Christian convention in Jordan some years ago.

The ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah may have been situated near the south end of the Dead Sea. It was here that Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt.<sup>1</sup> During the time of the patriarch Abraham in the Old Testament era, Lot, nephew of Abraham, lived with his wife and two daughters in Sodom. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah, another city nearby, sinned exceedingly before God. As a result, God decided to destroy the two cities. Just before, God sent two angels to Lot and told

him and his family to escape. They were cautioned not to look back once they departed. Lot’s wife, however, disregarded the command and looked back. The result, as the story goes was that she was turned into a pillar of salt.

When I was in secondary school, my science teacher used to tell me that salt is formed through the reaction of a base and an acid. When sodium, an unstable metal, reacts with chlorine gas (a poisonous gas), it becomes a white crystalline substance called sodium chloride.

Amazing, isn’t it? That God could create harmless salt from chlorine gas which is poisonous by itself. Chloride is essential for digestion and in respiration. Without sodium, which the body cannot manufacture, the body would be unable to transport nutrients or oxygen, transmit nerve impulses, or move muscles. Blood, tears, sweat and many parts of the human body contain salt, a necessary component in the proper functioning of cells. Without both water and salt, cells are unable to get nourishment and die of dehydration. I think you begin to realise how indispensable is salt in our lives.

## Salt has many uses

It is an appetising seasoning of food to man. Food without salt is tasteless, unsavoury and unpalatable. In the 1920s, the Diamond Crystal Salt Company of St. Clair, Michigan, in a booklet entitled One Hundred and One Uses for Diamond Crystal Salt listed some of the uses of salt: keeping colours bright in boiled vegetables, getting additional heat out of boiled water, removing dust, cleaning bamboo furniture, removing spots on clothes, sealing cracks and keeping cut flowers fresh. Today there are more than 101 uses of salt. The figure actually cited by modern salt industry is 14,000 uses, including the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals,



by  
**Tan Ten Lee**

the melting of ice from winter roads, fertilising agricultural fields, making soap, softening water and dyeing textiles. Advances in engineering, geology and chemical knowledge enable us to utilise this resource to its fullest advantage. Wow! I didn’t realise salt was so useful!

## Salt preserves

Egyptians used salt in the process of mummification in an attempt to preserve the bodies and to protect them against decay. In the early middle ages, farmers in northern Europe learned to save their grain harvest from ergot, a devastating fungal infection, poisonous alike to human beings and livestock, by soaking the grain in salty brine. In Malaysia, one often comes across salted eggs, salted fish and salted vegetables. Eggs, fish and vegetables are preserved by salt so that they can be eaten later.

Throughout the ages, there was a belief among some people in the sacred properties of salt. In Scotland salt was held in high repute as a charm. It was the first item to be moved into a new building. As the poet Robert Burns was about to occupy a new house in 1789, he was escorted along the bank of the river by a procession of relatives carrying a bowl of salt resting on the family Bible. In Japan it was believed that evil spirits detest salt. In traditional Japanese theatre, salt is sprinkled on the stage before each performance to protect the actors from the evil spirits.

Salt played a significant role in Hebrew worship in the Old Testament dispensation. The Israelites were required to season all their grain offerings with salt.<sup>2</sup> The priests were to sprinkle salt on the burnt offerings.<sup>3</sup> Even the fragrant blend of incense made from various spices had to be salted.<sup>4</sup> To ratify covenants, salt was also used.<sup>5</sup> When babies were born they were rubbed with salt.<sup>6</sup> The Israelites believed that rubbing



# of life

infants with salt made the skin dense and firm.

Salt signifies the imperishableness of God's love for His people, just as an antiseptic salt would imply durability, fidelity and purity. To eat the salt of the king was to owe him the utmost

outward sign used by Elisha in healing the waters.

There is a French folktale which relates the story of a princess who declares to her father, "I love you like salt". Her father is angered by what he thinks is a slight, and he banishes her from the kingdom.

road via Solaria from Rosettia to Rome in an attempt to fight off hostile enemies seeking salt.

The Germans waged war over saline streams, while many of the Indian wars were fought over salt licks or salt springs. During times of war, the lands of enemies were sown with salt to make them barren.<sup>8</sup> In Roman times, salt was an important item of trade and it was even used for money. Roman soldiers received part of their salary (a word which itself means salt) in salt.

Jesus advised His disciples to "have salt in yourselves and be at peace with each other". Just as no sacrifice to God or food to man was acceptable without salt, so a disciple's actions without 'peace' of heart toward men were savourless. This was a warning to the disciples who had just been disputing with one another about who would be greatest in the kingdom and judging others who used Jesus' name to cast out demons.<sup>9</sup> They were called on by Jesus to have a loving, imperishable savour toward one another and toward all men. In another instance, Jesus described His disciples as the salt of the earth.<sup>10</sup> He was exhorting them to imitate the usefulness of salt. Paul urged Christians to "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt."<sup>11</sup> He did not want unwholesome talk or corrupt communications that were tasteless or unprofitable; he wanted words of spiritual wisdom to help build up others according to their needs.<sup>12</sup>

In Mark 9:49, it is mentioned that "everyone shall be salted with fire". The work of everyone shall be tried with fire. The fire purifies the people of God so that they can be found to be without dross in the eyes of God.

Salt, like Christianity, is no good unless it is used. Christianity, like salt, preserves what is good and prevents its decay. No wonder God describes Christians as the salt of the earth. □



fidelity, while to eat bread and salt together was to make friendship unbreakable and lasting. Loyalty and friendship are sealed with salt because its essence does not change. When Leonardo da Vinci portrayed an overturned saltcellar before Judas in his famous painting 'The Last Supper', he might well have been thinking of the covenant of love and friendship which Judah had just broken.

When Elisha made the waters of Jericho wholesome again, he cast salt into them to illustrate its purifying power.<sup>7</sup> Salt as an expression of purity was the

Only later when he is denied salt does he realise the value of salt and therefore the depths of his daughter's love.

Salt today is so common, so easy to obtain, and so inexpensive that we have forgotten that from the beginning of civilisation until about 100 years ago, salt was one of the most sought-after commodities in human history. The possession of such a precious commodity has historically been the cause of war. Historians tell us that more wars have been fought over salt than over gold. Roman soldiers constantly guarded the early salt

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 19:26

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 2:13

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 43:24

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 30:

34–35

<sup>5</sup> Numbers 18:19;

2 Chronicles

13:5

<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel 16:4

<sup>7</sup> 2 Kings 2:19–22

<sup>8</sup> Judges 9:45

<sup>9</sup> Mark 9:33–50

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 5:13

<sup>11</sup> Colossians 4:6

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 4:29

# The God of this world

Satan can deceive and control the unwary but Satan's influence in this world is not limited to confusing only those who seek trendy enlightenment or satisfy their lusts in perverted or gruesome practices. The subjects we have discussed in this article are only a few of the more visible tips of the iceberg.

Satan's influence is far more pervasive. He can affect the unwary and strong as well as the weak and insecure. He would like to so thoroughly confuse and deceive the entire human race that we will never understand the truth.

The Bible calls Satan the "god of this world",<sup>1</sup> and in this age we can never be completely free of his influence. It contaminates all aspects of life today—politics, music, entertainment, education and even religion. The apostle Paul described Satan as the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience".<sup>2</sup>

Satan can prey upon attitudes, moods and feelings. He is especially tuned to those negative emotions like vanity, pride, hurt feelings, revenge and lust. He is ready to fan the embers of discontentment into flames of hatred, and is always eager to coax the first stirring of temptation into the reality of sin. (Temptation, when resisted, is not sin. Even Jesus was tempted by Satan, but he did not sin.) Wherever human beings are, he is there also, waiting for those moments when a man, woman or even a nation can be tempted, deceived and started out on the road to ruin. Satan's rule as "god of this world" will be over when he is removed and replaced by Jesus Christ at His return. But until that happens we must be aware of him. Aware, but not afraid. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,"

advised James.<sup>3</sup>

To resist spiritual influence, you need spiritual power. Human beings were created in the image of God, but with a physical frame. How then do we get the spiritual power to resist Satan and to worship God in "spirit and in truth"?

The answer to this question will also show the safe and legitimate way by which you can contact the spirit world. First, remember the potential of the human race. Human beings were made mortal and physical, but with the

## Extract from *Is There A Spirit World?*



capacity to become spiritual and immortal. It is God's intention that mankind, made in the image of God, become even more like God. But not until mankind has been made ready. But before we are ready to put on our full potential we must overcome.

Overcome what? Human nature, with its pride, vanity, selfishness, competition, greed and hatefulness. Those are the attitudes and emotions that so often make life on earth miserable now. Eternal life must not be an

extension of such misery.

Before human beings can inherit eternal life, they must develop the nature of God. They must learn to live as God does, which means they must learn to think and act as God does. For this to happen, there must be a partnership between them and God. Jesus Christ became the vital link in that partnership. He, an immortal, eternal being, the Son of God, divested Himself of eternal life and was born on earth as a human being. Jesus lived His life without sin. Then He allowed Himself to be

put to death, an innocent sacrifice for the sins of others. For three days and three nights He lay dead in a tomb, until the Father resurrected Him. Jesus was restored to eternal life and returned to the spirit world.

When He returned to heaven, He left behind a little band of people, who had believed in Him and had tried to follow His example. He had been their constant companion for 3 ½ years, leading, helping, teaching, encouraging, correcting and comforting them. Now He was leaving. What would become of them?

Jesus knew that without Him there to set an example, they would certainly fail. They needed to be able to draw on the

strength and power of God, as He had. So He promised to send them, and all who followed them, spiritual help. "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you," He reminded them at the Last Supper. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you".<sup>4</sup>

He gave them access to the power of the Holy Spirit. He opened up a direct line, so to

speak, to the throne of God, through which human beings can receive the same power that Jesus Christ had access to while He was on earth. Jesus Christ is in Heaven today, at the right hand of the Father. God understands human frailty. He is compassionate and merciful, and He knows what we need. His spirit guides us, leads us, encourages us. It does not force us to do what is right. It does not manifest itself in wild and uncontrollable outbursts of ecstasy. It is the safe, legitimate contact with the spirit world.

Through His spirit, God can give a human being the power to subdue the passions of human nature and to overcome. And such gifts are always under the control of the individual. Unlike a hostile

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:2

<sup>3</sup> James 4:7

<sup>4</sup> John 14:25–26

<sup>5</sup> Galatians 5:22

<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 1:7

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9–10

<sup>8</sup> John 15:8

demonic spirit, God's Holy Spirit does not take us over or possess us. God gives His Spirit only to those who obey Him and who will use it to overcome their own weakness and live a life of service to others. We can seek it in sincere, heartfelt prayer, usually in a private place.

With its help, our lives will begin to show the fruit of the Spirit, which the Bible tells us are "love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, (and) faithfulness".<sup>5</sup> The Holy Spirit is the safe, legitimate means by which human beings can make contact with what lies beyond our natural world. It is safe because "God had not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind".<sup>6</sup>

Through the Holy Spirit, God

gives us spiritual insight and leads us towards eternal life in a safe, controlled and disciplined manner. Eternal life in the spirit realm with all its power and splendour is waiting for us. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit" wrote the apostle Paul.<sup>7</sup>

With the help of God, we can prepare for eternal life and show in our lives now the fruits of the Holy Spirit. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples".<sup>8</sup> May God help you to trust him and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. □

## What our readers say:

My two cents worth: THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA Magazine is a simple piece of literature that costs so little but is worth so much. It is not just value for money but also value for life.

Alaric  
Australia

Thank you for another great issue (Feb-Mar 2005). All the articles are well written and very edifying. The cover design on tsunami issue is great as are all the photographs inside. I especially enjoyed Mr. John Halford's article. It is brilliantly written. It tells why God created us so vulnerable and what it takes for us to transition to the glorious life that God has purposed for us. May God help us develop the godly character so we will be in his kingdom.

Keep up the good work and may God bless you all abundantly.

Reader  
Petaling Jaya

I just wondering you have a Chinese edition of THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA. Your magazine is very good and I know that many Chinese speaking people will benefit from your magazine. I find the articles very good and helpful.

Anonymous



I used to be on the mailing list of your magazine many years ago until it was discontinued for some reason. Recently, I came across a copy of your December-January 2004 issue and enjoyed reading the well-written articles. Please put me on your mailing list once again as I still find your magazine to be thought provoking and well-researched as it has been in the past. Looking forward to a positive response.

David  
Kangsar

I wish to be a subscriber to the said magazine which I understand can enhance my knowledge and provide me with practical down to earth biblical solution to the complex question in today's fast paced society.

Alfred

Thank you for sending me the April-June 2005 issue. I thank the writers for all their effort and for selecting useful topics. The articles "Can you hear the Holy Spirit?" and "Faith in the face of the unexpected" have helped me to understand how the Holy Spirit works in a new way. The article "Living on death row" is also very moving and sobering. It also makes me realise that all of us

are on a spiritual death row unless God intervenes and saves us! Please continue to do the good work!

Paul  
Petaling Jaya

THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA has so many words of advice and truth about Jesus Christ. It helps us to know and understand about Christ.

Clara Siew  
Kuala Lumpur

I was a long time PLAIN TRUTH reader since 1980. This magazine changed my life and the lives of my family members to the extent that I am an old time member of the Worldwide Church of God. We greatly missed this magazine which gave us new life but a few months ago I received a copy of THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA from a friend and hence I heartily request you to send me this great magazine.

Om Parkash Kadyan  
India

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