

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God

A stylized white outline of an open book with its pages fanning out, positioned to the right of the subtitle.

Featured **Articles**

You and the Infinite God (p. 3)

'The LORD is a Man of War (p. 6)

Witch Doctors and Medicine Men (p. 9)

A monthly magazine written and published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to humankind; to call attention to the divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn people that soon Christ will return to earth as judge and ruler of God's worldwide Kingdom.

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You and the Infinite God

A BEE flew into the room, circled around and tried to exit through a closed window. I opened the window as wide as I could, then sat and watched, wondering at the bee's stupidity as it bashed itself against the closed sash, oblivious of the fact that a few inches away the other sash was wide open.

Bees are not stupid, of course. God has given them the intelligence they need, but this does not extend to knowing about windows.



It occurred to me as I sat there that I was feeling just something of what God feels, as He watches us struggling to get through our lives—frequently taking the wrong direction, wandering around in circles, making mistakes and then making the same mistakes time and again, failing to see both perils and opportunities that confront us.

Admittedly there's much less of a difference between a bee and me, as

there is between us and the Creator of the universe in whose sight all the nations are as a drop in a bucket (Isaiah 40:15).

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8–9).

With this in mind, isn't it incredible that God is interested in us at all? But He is—deeply, passionately interested in you and me, as individuals. Jesus Christ said, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows' (Matthew 10:29–31). Next time you're feeling isolated or unloved, think about that!

God is Love

What is it that makes God interested in us? That's perhaps an unnecessary question: it's simply in God's nature that He cares for His creation. 'God is love' (1 John 4:8). God is interested in everybody, and extends His love freely: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16).

But it is a fact that relatively few people respond to His love (Matthew 22:14). From

beginning to end, the consistent verdict of the Bible on the human race is that there is a minority who respond to Him and a majority who don't. For those who don't, this is the destination: *'Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish'* (Psalm 49:20).

So God is interested in everyone, but He requires a response. The Bible contains many descriptions of this response. Here's one:

The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love (Psalm 147:11).

Consider this statement. You and I, insignificant specks that we are, we are capable of giving pleasure to the Creator of the universe! How? The first step, according to the Psalm, is to fear Him. This is not terror—it's the attitude of respect which is appropriate in our relationship to God: *'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight'* (Proverbs 9:10).

And the second characteristic of those who give God pleasure is that they *'hope in his steadfast love'*. They appreciate the enormity of the love that God showed when He gave His Son Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for our sins—*'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life'* (John 3:16)—and they act upon it by seeking, finding and embracing Jesus Christ as their master and lord (John 13:13). This is what makes their Creator their Father, and brings them into a relationship of love and understanding with Him.

The God of Ages

Typically, bees live for only a few weeks. To us that's an incomprehensibly short lifespan—but it's a matter of perspective. In God's sight, our 70-odd years is similarly brief. In Psalm 90, the writer is musing on the transience of humans versus the eternity of God: *'A thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night'* (v. 4).

We experience life as we live it. The past dims quickly, and the future is unknown. Can you imagine what it is like for God, before Whom all of time is in plain view (Isaiah 46:10)?

And can you imagine what is in store for you and me? God has promised to those who faithfully follow Him that when Christ returns they will be released from their weak, time-bound and sin-prone nature and changed so that they can share in His eternity (1 Corinthians 15:50-56).



I like bees. They're beautiful and fascinating, and they pollinate plants among other things. I'm pleased to report that eventually the bee found its way out to freedom.

God loves us. What intense pleasure it gives Him, when we respond to Him: *'For freedom Christ has set us free'* (Galatians 5:1).

How to Live For Ever

THIS WAS THE TITLE of a book which caught my eye recently in a bookshop. When I opened it, I discovered it was about eating healthily. The title was somewhat inaccurate.

Would we like to live for ever? At first consideration we might think that we would. After all, not many of us would choose to die. Life can be very good as long as we keep our health and have enough food and comfort and have good friends and family around us. But the fact is that as we get older life is not always sweetness and light. Our health can fail, our bodies begin to creak with age, our human relationships disappear or break down for various reasons.

What kind of world would we like to live in? The world we know today is hardly ideal. We don't need to be reminded of the grinding poverty that besets many parts of the world; the worldwide problem of wars, disease and political and financial unrest; and the ever-present global threats of environmental collapse and weapons of mass destruction. Is this the kind of world in which you would like to live for ever?

However the Bible does speak of everlasting life. For example: *'To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life'* (Romans 2:7).

Everlasting life will be given to those who believe in the saving work of the Lord

Jesus, and act on that belief by being baptised and following him faithfully in their lives (Mark 16:16).

And we read in other parts of the Bible that the world in which they will live will also be changed. For example:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

This is just a snapshot of the future God has prepared for those who love Him. It isn't just everlasting life that is promised. It is "eternal life," a life in a perfected state in a perfected world. By reading God's Word, the Bible, we can certainly learn "how to live for ever".

Marion Buckler



'The LORD is a Man of War'

THE CHARACTER OF GOD is described in many ways in the Bible. For example He is acclaimed as '*the God of love and peace*' (2 Corinthians 13:11). These are perhaps the easiest characteristics for us to relate to. However, there are other descriptions of God's character which are less well known, and reveal a side of God which may initially cause confusion or concern. For instance, God is referred to as a 'man of war' on more than one occasion in the Bible!

A significant challenge for all those who wish to know the one true God is to accept what the Bible teaches about Him, and to trust that '*the LORD is righteous in all his ways*' (Psalm 145:17)—not just in the ways we find most comfortable.

God of Peace and War

How can the LORD be a warrior and a God of love and peace at the same time? Surely these two descriptions are mutually exclusive? The answer is that He acts like a warrior towards His enemies, but He is a God of love and peace towards His friends.

When we explore the question we discover that every time God is referred to as a warrior, it is in the context of His dealings with His chosen people, the nation of Israel. It also becomes clear that the act of war was sometimes essential for Israel. When God led them

out of slavery in Egypt (as recounted in the book of Exodus) it was necessary for them to go on the offensive and conquer the peoples who were occupying the 'promised land'; it may surprise us but this was explicitly commanded by God (see Deuteronomy 20:17). Joshua, the commander who led the conquest, reminded them: '*You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you*' (Joshua 23:3).

As well as being essential for offence, the nation of Israel—just like every other nation that has ever existed—needed an army to defend itself from its enemies. God told them that He would fight for them and deliver them from their enemies (see Deuteronomy 20:4).

At the Red Sea

The first time we see God fighting a battle is when Israel had been miraculously delivered from slavery in Egypt. God parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could pass through it and escape the Egyptians who were chasing after them:

And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the

Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained (Exodus 14:24–28).



It's interesting to note that the Egyptian army themselves appreciated that the LORD was fighting for the Israelites. This is also how the LORD's people understood the miraculous deliverance which they had experienced, as they rejoiced in song:

I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble (Exodus 15:1–7).

Is this the behaviour we would expect from a God of love and peace? The fact is, on this particular occasion the Egyptians were God's enemies and He fought against them to save His chosen people. Had He not intervened, the Egyptians would have caught up with the Israelites and slaughtered them (see Exodus 15:9). It may not make comfortable reading, but God had revealed to Moses, in no uncertain terms, the reason for His actions:

I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen (Exodus 14:17–18).

According to the LORD Himself, drowning the Egyptian army in the Red Sea was a source of honour for Him as it was a mighty act of deliverance for His people.

Furthermore, by acting as a warrior against the Egyptians (His enemies), the LORD showed Himself to be a God of love and peace towards the Israelites (His friends).

Who Are God's Enemies?

Other occasions in which the LORD is described as a warrior include Psalm 78:65, Zephaniah 3:17, and Isaiah 42:13: *'The LORD goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.'* These passages demonstrate that the LORD fighting against His enemies is a consistent aspect of His character. Understandably, this conclusion invites questions such as "Does God view me as one of His enemies?" and "Will there ever be peace?"

In the New Testament we are told categorically that we are all, by nature, the enemies of God: *'You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body[a] and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind'* (Ephesians 2:1–3). But there is no need to fear. God does not want it to be like this, and by means of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ we can become children and friends of God:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Romans 5:1, 10).

Peace On Earth

God's ultimate purpose is not to wage perpetual wars against His enemies but to enjoy everlasting peace with His friends. This is to be achieved through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), whose return to the earth will eventually bring about the fulfilment of one of the most inspirational and awe-inspiring prophecies in the Bible:

Out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Isaiah 2:3–4).

The destiny of the world is that there will indeed be peace, but it will not be brought about by our efforts. Rather, world peace will be imposed on the LORD's terms and in the LORD's time. *'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!'* (Revelation 22:20).

Stephen Blake

Witch Doctors and Medicine Men

MANY SOCIETIES have a special local healer. In Africa they tend to be known as the 'medicine man' or the 'witch doctor', in parts of Asia and America as the 'Shaman'. These are people who practise particular arts of healing based upon superstition. We shall show from the Bible that the follower of Christ must avoid these people.

We need to distinguish the 'medicine man' who deals in superstition, from the healer who deals in traditional techniques such as herbalism. The fact that a healer is not a member of the medical orthodoxy does not mean that they are wrong. This article is not concerned with traditional healers, but with those who claim to heal through magic and ritual.



Fake Healers

It is unfair to use the word 'fake' without a proper explanation. Here is one example: in a certain village, anybody bitten by a snake is believed to be doomed without the intervention of a medicine man. Those who survive are those who were bitten by non-

poisonous snakes, or by a poisonous snake which injected little or no venom. These people, who consider themselves 'healed', think the divination and rituals performed by the medicine man have cured them. The unfortunate ones who die are said to be destined to die or to have been attacked by angry spirits.

Another example: using his knowledge of herbs, the medicine man may administer a tree bark (which is medicinal) to a fever patient, but he will lay great emphasis on his alleged communication with the dead or oracles, rituals and charms as vital to the cure—when actually the bark by itself is sufficient.

It is easy for people who live in cultures that do not have medicine men to scoff at those who resort to them—

but they should bear in mind how prevalent superstition is in some parts of the world. There are countries where medicine men are prominent in the media; they are endorsed by qualified medical doctors, and testimonies are provided by people

who sometimes naively believe in them, and sometimes are paid to say so. Witch doctors claim to cure anything, even HIV/AIDS. They may not receive international recognition because of lack of proof of their healing, but they can be very influential within their own society.

Keep Away!

Whereas a sensible person may not think of resorting to a medicine man in normal situations, in times of stress or desperation they may well think: "What do I have to lose by giving it a try?" So let's turn to the Bible. We will see that God forbids the use of superstitious practices, and offers us a better way.

The Bible condemns those who claim to communicate with the dead: for instance '*Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God*' (Leviticus 19:31). Witchcraft (otherwise called 'divination') and the worshiping of idols are grievous sins: '*Rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry*' (1 Samuel 15:23).

The Apostle Paul lists 'idolatry and sorcery' as two of the 'works of the flesh' which can disqualify us from the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:20).

In 1 Samuel 28 is the account of King Saul of Israel, who had previously rid the land of witchcraft in obedience to God's command (v. 8), but in a time of desperation sought one out. He was condemned for it.

It is not and it never has been in the power of medicine men and witch doctors to do miracles. Let not their eccentric appearance and altered voice deceive you. All things come from God: '*The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof*' (Psalm 24:1). Those who claim to work miracles in the name of other gods are like those gods: they have eyes but cannot see, they have ears but cannot hear (Psalm 115:1-8). They have a brain but they cannot discern that the only God, the God of Israel, creates both well-being and calamity (Isaiah 45:7).



Saul and the witch of Endor



not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Peter Ojike

Questions? Comments? We'd love to hear from you!

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A Better Way

'Without faith it is impossible (not hard or difficult but impossible) to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him' (Hebrews 11:6). Faith, like money, has proven itself to be easier to acquire in time of comfort, but hard and very necessary in time of want. If we really think we have faith, then our actions when times are difficult must prove it.

So, if we are ill or in other need, we will seek help but not in a way which God forbids. If we really believe that God's will should be done in our lives, then the urge to visit the medicine man will be as absurd as the urge to steal when in poverty. If we can see these urges as temptations and not a genuine option, then the words of the apostle Paul will be of comfort in the struggle:

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will



g l ea n ing s

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Titus

TITUS WAS A GREEK and, like Timothy, seems to have been a convert of the Apostle Paul. In this letter Titus is addressed as a *'true child in a common faith'* (Titus 1:4; compare 1 Timothy 1:2). The 'common faith' was the true Gospel, preached by the apostles. It is vital that we also hold this, as the letter says.

Paul's first visit to Crete was on his journey to Rome, under arrest, just before the shipwreck (Acts 27:7–8). On being released from prison in Rome he evidently visited Crete with Titus, leaving the younger man there to *'put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you'* (Titus 1:5). There may have been many congregations on the island.



'Insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers' (1:10) who stirred up division (3:10) were threatening to turn the members from the Truth. As in other places, such as Galatia, the followers of Christ were in danger of being misled by *'Jewish myths'* (1:14).

Historically, the Cretans had gained a bad reputation. Even one of their own poets

(Epimenides, 600 BC) had called them 'liars' and 'evil beasts', as Paul reminded Titus (1:12). Believers must be different, and 'overseers' (or elders) in particular should show Godly qualities and be free of the vices of the world—see 1:6–9.

Sound in the Faith

As in the letters to Timothy, Paul stresses the need for *'sound doctrine'* (1:9; 2:1)—that is believing and teaching the right things. Believers must hold fast *'the trustworthy word'* (1:9); they must be *'sound in the faith'* (1:13; 2:2), and set a good example of honesty (3:14). All these words and phrases show how important doctrine is, as a basis for the Christian life.

The letter to Titus exhorts slaves (of which there were many in the First Century churches) *'to be submissive to their own masters'* (2:9); and all believers are *'to be submissive to rulers and authorities'* (3:1).

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Titus 1:2; 2:13; 3:7—see 2 Timothy 1:1; Philippians 3:20; Romans 8:24.
- ◆ Titus 2:14—see Deuteronomy 7:7; 1 Peter 2:9.
- ◆ Titus 3:10—see Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:17.

The Justice of God



LET US BEGIN by thinking about the meaning of the word 'justice'. The dictionary says that justice is 'uprightness, honesty; fairness in dealing with others; the awarding of what is due'.

The meaning of the word in the mind of the general public will of course vary between different ages and different cultures. Some things which seemed years ago to be just, are seen as an outrage today. We no longer send little boys up chimneys to sweep them, and light fires under their feet to encourage them to be quick.

Then we come to the meaning of justice in the Bible. Almost always when the word is used in the Bible it means the adjustment of that which is wrong, and the establishment of that which is right. It means the process by which wrong is corrected and right is upheld. Of course the conception of what is right and wrong is not left to the caprice of human judgement. In the Bible, the measurement of right and wrong is the law of God. People are considered just when they do as God commands, and they are unjust when they disobey.

It seems to me that the justice of God operates on three levels:

1. ***In God's righteousness***—the relationship between God and people
2. ***In civic justice***—the judicial government of a nation (in the Bible case, the nation of Israel)

3. ***In personal justice***—the relationship between people.

It must be recognised that the fundamental and foremost idea in the word 'justice' when it is used about God is of rightness. This is not easy for everybody to accept. For example there are those who say that God was unjust when He punished Adam and Eve for just one slip in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3); when He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness (Genesis 19); when He struck a man dead for touching the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:7), and a man and his wife for telling a lie about their money (Acts 5:1–11).

1. ***God's Righteousness***



As far as I am concerned, I would never say that God is wrong. I may say that in this case or that case I do not understand His justice, but nevertheless I believe that He is right and it is due to my human frailty

that I cannot understand it. Come back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were clearly taught what they could do and what they could not do. They were free to exercise their will without any bias. They were told what the consequences would be if they disobeyed. But they were tempted, they disobeyed and the consequences about which their Creator had warned them came upon them.

What they had done was a sin against God. *'Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin'* (Romans 5:12). Of course in the narrative the awful tragedy is described in a few words—but its seriousness and its sadness we discover in the unfolding story of the human race.

Think of it. Two people endowed with wonderful faculties of the kind that made them the very summit of God's creation. They were placed under a law that was good and holy, just and spiritual, simple and easy to grasp. And they lived in the paradise of Eden, in friendship with God. They ought never to have disobeyed. Their sin was done against the light and the love that had been bestowed on them, in flagrant opposition to their Creator. The enormity of their sin is apparent when we ponder it carefully.

It is not easy for sinners to realise just what sin means to God. God cannot sin. He cannot tolerate sin. It affronts His holiness. Holiness might be defined as 'perfect, right, set apart from anything that is not right'. For God, to accept sin and to say "Well never mind, perhaps it will be better next week" would be to devalue and diminish His holiness.

It is sometimes said that love is God's most important attribute, but I believe that is mistaken. It is indeed a glorious fact that God is love (1 John 4:8), but it is a more glorious fact that God is holy (Leviticus 19:2). We can be sure that God cannot act unjustly or with partiality. Love can be selfish, so it must have standards to determine its quality. Holiness is the measure of God's love. His righteousness is the standard to determine the quality of His love. God's love is a holy love. So if we are open to the truth we ought to see that God's holiness is first—above all things. His righteousness is crucial if we are to trust Him. His justice is paramount.

The trend today in liberal teaching emphasizes God's love but downplays His holiness. Too often this results in a denial of personal guilt for sin.

2. Civic Justice



We see God's justice in public administration in relation to the nation of Israel. In the Law of Moses there is a well known phrase: *'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot'* (Exodus 21:24). Obviously the idea is that the punishment

for the wrongdoer shall be equal to his wrongdoing. There are those who say that this was not punishment, it was vengeance. But let us keep to the facts—it was first of all the imposition of justice. There is about this principle something fundamentally right. If a man is carrying a bomb with the intention to maim and kill innocent people, and it explodes and kills him instead, there is a sense that he received his just reward. This is the principle of exact retribution that is seen in the Law of Moses.

The Law did provide for extenuating circumstances. If there was a factor that made the culprit less culpable, this was reflected in the punishment. For example the penalty for murder was death, but if it was a case of accidental manslaughter the culprit could flee to a safe place (Exodus 21:12–14).

So you see that in the administration of public justice under the Law of Moses there was this convicting sense of rightness. An equality of sentence that was right and seen to be right, taking into account any ameliorating circumstances and ensuring that all parties were satisfied if they were true to God's principles.

Capital punishment was part of God's justice and, if it was properly administered, no innocent person would have been convicted. I must stress that God's civic justice is only seen in the divine administration of His own people, Israel, in the time of the Old Testament.

3. *Personal Justice*

We come now to the justice of God as it is expressed in the personal relationship between people. Consider the response of

the Lord Jesus when he was asked whether we should pay taxes: '*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*' (Matthew 22:21). And later: '*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*' (v. 39). This embodies the prime idea in God's justice—that of doing what is right to the exclusion of what is wrong.



The Apostle Paul reveals that love is an obligation of righteousness: '*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law*' (Romans 13:8). To be unloving, unkind, mean and spiteful is an act of injustice.

The Apostle Peter says '*Honour everyone*' (1 Peter 2:17). That is an act of justice. As is courtesy: '*Have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind*' (3:8).

You may say to yourself, what has this to do with the justice of God? Remember the definition with which we began: 'the adjustment of that which is wrong and the establishment of that which is right'. When people need and deserve kindness, courtesy and pity and instead they get neglect and rudeness, that is unjust. It violates the justice of God.

God's Judgements

Let us turn at last to God's final judgements that are to come on the earth. I mean for example:

When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth (Revelation 11:18).



As we ponder these words we must bear in mind that the Lord God is the righteous governor of the world. The sentences He pronounces, the rewards He bestows, the penalties He inflicts are all righteous. *'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?'* (Genesis 18:25). You can be sure that when God's justice demands the removal of the wicked and the evil, it is because the situation is beyond repair. If people will insist on destroying the earth, which God

created to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18)—then the destroyers will be destroyed.

The Bible says of God, *'Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne'* (Psalm 89:14); *'Just and true are your ways'* (Revelation 15:3); *'His judgements are true and just'* (Revelation 19:2). Either these statements are true or they are false. I believe they are true. The justice of God gives moral stability to life. If it happened that God's judgements were arbitrary and pragmatic, then we could have no confidence in the future. But the justice of God is a complete guarantee that everything is sure to be right and true.

What I mean is this. When the end of this age arrives and God's judgements are unleashed on the world, we can be absolutely confident that everything that happens will be just and right. Some things may be terrible, but that is another matter. God will do what is right.

Justice and Grace

The last thing to ponder is this—the relationship between God's justice and His grace. We must be careful about this. It would be wrong to conclude that when God exercises His grace and mercy, He is saying that His justice was a mistake. I believe that you cannot separate God's justice from His mercy, as though they are divided things, one standing against the other. Let me give you an example of what I mean from one of Paul's letters:

There is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood,

to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:22–26).



Christ's blood was shed in order that we might be redeemed, and two things together follow: that God might be just, and also that He might be the justifier of the one who has faith. We are sinners and under the sentence of death. That is just and right. That is what Paul means by '*showing God's righteousness*'. But if baptised believers are death-stricken for ever, then God's great purpose is spoiled and sin is triumphant. So as well as being just, showing His righteousness, He has revealed a way through His grace by which we can be released from the domination of sin, and made able to live for ever.

This is all part of God's justice and His holiness. He declares that sin is wrong and must be condemned, and He also declares that if sin is defeated then His purpose will stand. He is just—'*the wages of sin is death*' (Romans 6:23)—and also, through

the '*redemption that is in Christ Jesus*' (Romans 3:24) sin is defeated.

Remember what justice is—the adjustment of that which is wrong, and the establishment of that which is right. What Adam did was wrong, and to leave it uncorrected would be to admit the victory of sin. What Jesus did was right—he beat sin in a fair fight, and the issues are adjusted, and righteousness and blessing are established. Hence, the justice of God and His grace combine to uphold His righteousness and to extend His mercy. But please realise that it is only for those who repent, who are baptised and who follow Him (Acts 2:38). For those who do not, the predicament remains and the judgement stands.

'That he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus' (Romans 3:26). What a blessed thing the justice of God really is!

Dennis Gillett

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MS *If Adam and Eve were the first people, and Cain was their son, who was Cain's wife (Genesis 4:17)?*

Ed CAIN WAS Adam and Eve's first child (Genesis 4:1). After him they had numerous sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4). Cain's wife would be a daughter (or other direct descendant) of Adam and Eve, therefore she would be Cain's sister or niece.

It's not good to have children by a close relative. This is because we all have errors in our genes. If you marry someone who is not related to you, you and your spouse are likely to have errors in different genes, so it's unlikely that there will be a problem. But if you marry a close relative, you and your spouse are likely to have errors in the same genes, so there's an increased likelihood that your children will be unhealthy.

These genetic errors have developed over time. Adam and Eve were created 'very good' (Genesis 1:31), they will have had no genetic errors. Their children would only develop a few. So it was safe for Cain to marry his close relative.

Two thousand years after Adam and Eve, Abraham married his half-sister Sarah (Genesis 20:12). Their son Isaac married his cousin's daughter Rebekah (Genesis 25:20). Their son

Jacob married his cousins Rachel and Leah (Genesis 28:1–2). It seems that at this time humans did not have a significant level of genetic errors and it was safe to marry your close relative.

Four hundred years after Abraham, the Law of Moses forbade marrying your close relative (Leviticus chapters 18–22). One reason for this was to avoid the danger of problems, evidently because as time passed humans were developing more errors in their genes. (Interestingly, the Bible reports that initially humans had very long life spans, for example Adam lived 930 years (Genesis 5:5). Life spans steadily decreased over the generations. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all lived well over 100 years, but soon afterwards the typical human life span settled down to its current length. Perhaps this reflects humans' decaying genetic status.)

In summary, today it is hazardous to have children with your close relative and most cultures discourage it, but in the time of Cain it would not have been a problem.

The Justice of God

DEUTERONOMY 10:17–18 describes the justice of God: His kindness and fairness.



Here is the quotation, including ten anagrams. Solve the anagrams and then find the ten words in the wordsearch.

FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD IS GOD OF GODS AND LORD OF LORDS, THE TRGAE, THE YMIHGT, AND THE WOMESAE GOD WHO IS NOT LPRTIAA AND TAKES NO BBREI. HE EXECUTES JUSTICE FOR THE SSLFTHREAE AND THE DWWIO, AND LOVES THE JORNROUES, GIVING HIM DOFO AND GNLCTHOI.

(The quotation is from the ESV: other versions might be slightly different.)

M Z W I D O W A U S
 G I R D U U P W S V
 N J G M O A A E N X
 I T H H R O L S P C
 H C V T T R F O I Q
 T P I P E Y Z M S H
 O A I H A G R E A T
 L E T Q F M D F B N
 C A D G I E B I R B
 F R E N R U O J O S

Anna Hart

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