

QUICK QUOTE

"When the time comes to die, make sure that all you have to do is die!"
Jim Elliot

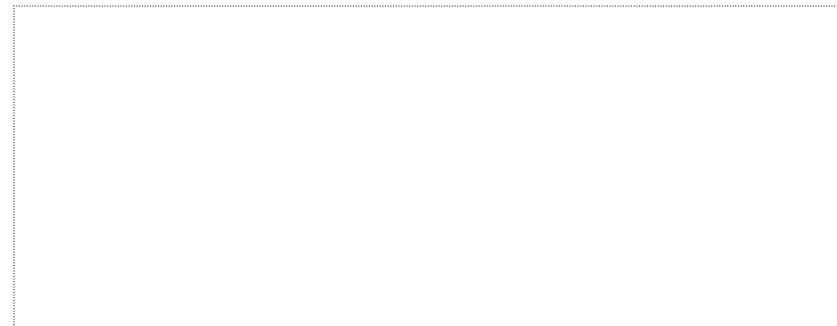
faith matters 7 fm

What think ye of Christ?

important spiritual matters for you

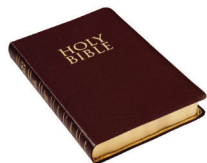
Issue 7

This copy of *faithmatters* comes to you with the compliments of:



We hope you have enjoyed reading this pamphlet and that you will decide to read the Bible for yourself. We are not asking that you join a church, or become 'religious' or turn over a new leaf, but that you find the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Friend. He can forgive your sins and assure you of peace in your life and a place in heaven.

If you do not have a Bible or New Testament of your own then do purchase one. They are available quite cheaply in most bookshops like Waterstones, or W. H. Smith, and in different versions to suit your reading taste.



Contact us through our website www.faithmatters.org.uk where you can access a digital version of this magazine, order a New Testament and other helpful booklets, read the Bible, and of course email us. Distributors can order the next issue there as well.

THE END OF THE LINE

Peter Francis, Wales

In 1935 a 25-year-old Canadian arrived in London to join the BBC as the host of a regular programme showcasing unknown performers. Carol Levis was born in Toronto and brought up in Vancouver.

As 1940 dawned, one of Carol Levis' discoveries was a young Swansea tenor who was a gunner in the Royal Artillery. Promising him a record contract and show business career when the war was over, the soldier entertained his comrades but his life was one that his parents in Swansea would not have approved of.



"What think ye of Christ?"

Look out for the next issue of *faithmatters* in 2017, DV.

1 The end of the line

4 A prisoner's pardon

6 Heart Problems

8 Men as God

10 Procrastination



He had a close encounter with death after falling into the sea, in the black of night, in full kit while patrolling along a pier. Passing fishermen saved him from a watery grave and the incident gave him a wake-up call, but not enough to stop his life from continuing to spiral in a downward direction further away from the God in whom his parents trusted.

When his 21st birthday arrived in 1942 he was granted two days' leave to return home to celebrate his coming of age with his family in Swansea. That Sunday, being his birthday, he acted the part of a dutiful son and attended a service in the local Gospel Hall. The preacher was a Scottish evangelist whose text for that evening was 'What think ye of Christ?', Matt. 22. 42. His powerful preaching moved and convicted the young soldier to the point of conversion, but he resisted and went home to pack for his return to barracks the following day.

After a tearful family farewell he settled into the railway carriage to put the weekend's celebrations and church attendance behind him with a much-awaited cigarette, longing to be back at his barracks for a celebratory pint following a dry time at home. As the train stopped at the next station he looked out, and to his utter amazement the Bible verse that had

troubled him, 'What think ye of Christ?', was staring at him from the station wall. Some would say it was just a coincidence!

The train continued its journey and well into the English countryside it came to a shuddering halt for no apparent reason. Opening the old-fashioned carriage window with its well-worn leather strap to see what was the matter, this young Swansea gunner nearly jumped out of his skin

when there, straight in front of him, at the very spot where his carriage had stopped was that verse again, on a board, in the garden, of the only house visible

for miles. 'What think ye of Christ?', God really was speaking to him!

Finally, the train reached the end of the line and our much-relieved Gunner alighted from his carriage, loaded down not only with his heavy kitbag, but also with the burden of his sinful life in his heart. Turning to make the walk to the end of the platform he saw in bold letters,
WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Without any hesitation he sank to his knees, oblivious of his fellow travellers, he begged God for forgiveness and trusting in Christ to be his Saviour he committed his life into God's hands. Rising from his knees with the great burden of his sin lifted he headed for his barracks with just the kitbag on his back. Carol Levis' loss was the God of eternity's gain and the day after his 21st birthday became the best day of his young life. This story is true, I know because that young gunner was my father.

Is there a Bible verse which has been challenging you recently or over many years? Has the loving God of eternity been speaking to you through His living Word? Have you had a close encounter with death that has been your wake-up call? Do you realise that the Great God of salvation says: 'My Spirit will not always strive with man?', Gen. 6. 3. God encourages us to accept Him at His Word when He says: 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation', 2 Cor. 6. 2. Do what my father did on that railway station platform, at the end of the line, and accept Christ as your Lord and Saviour; it will be the best day of your life!





A PRISONER'S PARDON

David Williamson, Belfast

Some years ago I had a Bible verse printed on the rear window of my car: 'There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all', 1 Tim. 2. 5-6.

One day as I was driving, I looked in the rear-view mirror to see the lights of the car behind me flashing furiously. The driver indicated for me to pull over, and when I did so he told me a story.

He had been in prison for terrorism related offences. One day, as he sat

in his cell, over the loudspeaker system a priest was giving a religious message. At the same time, in a cell near him a prisoner began to shout, 'There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all'. As he listened to his fellow-prisoner repeating this over and over again, he decided he must find out what it meant, and its relevance to him.

After his release from prison he worked as a taxi-driver. Every Friday and Saturday night he would drive to a cricket club near my home, deliver some customers to a dance, and pick them up later. Each time he dropped

off and collected his customers, he saw my car and read the words, 'There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all'.

He began to listen to gospel sermons and soon discovered what the verse meant, and why it was relevant to him. He said, 'It means there is one God against whom I have sinned, and one saviour who died for my sin upon the cross'. 'What's more', he added, 'I trusted Him to save me, and my sins are gone'. I remember well the joy this ex-prisoner had in telling me of his great discovery.

The three most important questions anyone can face in life are answered in that Bible verse:

Is there a God?

'There is one God'. This is a fact, confirmed by an abundance of evidence. God has given physical evidence for His existence, 'For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being

understood by the things that are made', Rom. 1. 20 NKJV. Just as a building is evidence of a builder, so the immense and complex creation is evidence of a creator. God has also given moral evidence for His existence. Every human being is under an obligation not to steal, kill, rape, torture. Where does this come from? It is a moral law, which requires a law-giver! The only one who could place such obligation upon humanity is God Himself, the 'one lawgiver', Jas. 4. 12.

What is God like?

'There is one God'. Some say 'God is not concerned with such petty things as our sins' or, 'My God would never send anyone to hell'. However, these gods are imaginary. There is one God, and He is concerned about our sins - so concerned that without a mediator, we must be banished to hell forever. God is infinitely holy and inflexibly righteous and 'the wrath of God is . . . against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men' (Rom. 1. 18).

However, God is also incomparably loving, and has provided a saviour for us, a 'mediator between God and men'.

Can I know God?

Thankfully, 'There is . . . one mediator between God and men'. A mediator comes between opposing parties to unite them. He satisfies the demands of one party and meets the needs of the other. At the cross, the Lord Jesus 'gave himself a ransom for all'. By His death He satisfied the demands of God's justice against sin. Now, risen from the dead, He lives as the only one who can bring you into a relationship with God.

Church attendance, good works, religion - none of these can bring you to God! How then can you know God? Simply 'through faith which is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 3. 15). Why not trust Him today? You too could say with joy, 'I trusted Him to save me, and my sins are gone'.

Heart problems

Ian Jackson, Eastbourne

A man travelled by train from South Wales to London to attend a meeting of the editorial committee of a communist paper. The meeting having finished he made his way back to London's Paddington Station to return home and was surprised, but not pleased, to see a man standing on the concourse of the station holding a banner containing a message with which he profoundly disagreed.

No doubt the man with the banner was the object of the pity of many and the scorn of some but he stood his ground. His message was unpopular, striking deep and hard against both the opinion that many have of themselves and their world view. The man travelling to Wales immediately and completely disagreed with what the banner said. His view of the world put the blame for the human condition on such things as poverty, difficult upbringing, poor environment and failing education. People would be better if their life chances were improved, he believed. Throw money at the problem. Provide better housing and education. Secure better health care. Give people greater freedom. And then he saw the banner.

'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked', Jer. 17. 9.

This verse from the Bible utterly contradicted what he thought to be true. The cause of the human condition was not external, said the banner, but internal. Improving circumstances would not solve our problems. Someone might have a palatial house but still murder. A man might have made his fortune but blow it all through lust and uncontrolled behaviour. A woman might have everything that her heart could desire but still lie and cheat. In effect the banner said that better housing was not the answer: slum clearance would not solve the problem, for the slum was in the man.

The Lord Jesus Christ said the same kind of thing. He was surrounded by people who concentrated on the external but He told them that they needed to look elsewhere. He said, 'From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man', Mark 7. 21-23.

When he settled himself in the train his mind was far from settled. And as the train went on its way through Reading and Swindon and Bristol the words of the banner would not leave him. The Bible is like this. It is like no other book, living and powerful. Indeed, such was the effect that it had upon him that by the time he had arrived at his

destination he had decided to buy a Bible to see if that is what it really said. It did. And it might have been a long read from the beginning of the Bible to Jeremiah 17. 9 but he persevered, and found it. And having found it, he read on and discovered a wonderful thing.

The answer to the problem of wickedness and sin in the world is found not in man (for that is where the problem lies) but in God. He discovered that God is able to clean up the defiled; to sanctify the unholy; to break the power of sinful things in the life; to renew the mind; to change the life; to bring, at last, to heaven. He found that though he was clearly not worthy of such love God personally loved him and had given His only begotten Son that He might be his Saviour. He learned that Jesus died for him, to pay fully the price of his own personal sins and endure God's punishment against those sins as He bore them in His own body on the cross.

The man became a Christian after this. He repented of His sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Him alone to save him and make him right with God. He came to know the truth of the Bible verse that says, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin'. He was saved. And the evidence was seen in the rest of his transformed life.

'It is no secret what God can do;
What He's done for others,
He'll do for you.'

MEN AS GOD

Stephen Grant, Bridge of Weir

History is replete with men who have strived to be recognized as God. The ultimate power sought by many is to rule over other men and women and be worshipped by them.

Before Jesus had reached His second birthday, He had already become the target of an assassination plot by King Herod, the ruthless and paranoid ruler of Roman-controlled Judea. Joseph and Mary, prompted by a dream from God, took the baby and fled to Egypt.

Egypt's history was one proud and glorious procession of kings spanning thirty dynasties and nearly 3,000 years. Egyptian kings - the pharaohs - were powerful figures and rich beyond imagination. They wielded wealth like a weapon, built sprawling cities and commanded huge armies.

Records indicate Egyptian kings assumed, and were given, supernatural status. The pharaoh was thought to be responsible for bringing the floods that watered Egyptian crops, and so he received credit for providing the nation's food.

He was idolized in statue, citizens bowed to his image, and in the ultimate act of pride every reigning pharaoh claimed to be the manifestation of at least one god.

Whether it's the ancient pharaohs demanding the worship of others, or the millions of modern sceptics who reject God, dethrone Him as Creator, and worship themselves, man's inherent pattern has always been to exalt himself. Rebellion against God can take no higher form than self-love; the person who seeks his own interests at the expense of others and places himself at the centre of the universe.

And while history is crowded with men who would be God, only one God would be man.

Consider for a moment what it meant for the Lord Jesus to come to earth as a man to secure salvation for mankind. He left His throne and took a stable for a nursery. The very Son of God was hunted by a tyrant king and became an infant exile in Egypt.

The source of all wisdom and knowledge was born into poverty and lived without earthly wealth and luxury. Holy and without blemish. The King of creation willingly subjected Himself to all of what it means to be human - pain, hunger, thirst, sorrow, physical exhaustion, the full range of human emotions - yet did so without sinning.

And in an unfathomable act of selfless, sacrificial love, He left heaven's glory to die on our behalf. He offered mercy to a people who deserved only His wrath. He stooped to accomplish that which we not only could not do, but also would not do. In love, the God of the universe stepped from eternity to intervene in human history and save those wholly unable to save themselves.

The Bible speaks of His mission in John's Gospel chapter 3 and verse 16,

'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life'.

Selfish ambition may produce megalomania, which leads to misery, 'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' Rom. 5. 8. Reception of such selfless love through faith in Jesus Christ produces only blessing.

Procrastination

Simon Swan, Northampton

As I sit at my laptop, placed in a comfortable chair, I am very much aware of the fact that by the time you read this article, I will have subjected myself, voluntarily might I add, to something well out of my comfort zone.

Firstly, I hear you ask, what am I doing? In the name of charity, chosen by my employer, a number of colleagues and I are running a six-kilometre 'Iron Run'. It consists of numerous obstacle courses, involving water and mud and is not my idea of a fun Saturday morning!

In order to participate in this gruelling event, preparation is required. I keep putting off the much needed exercise routines in order to 'try' and prepare my body for something it is not accustomed to!

We all have things that we need to prepare for! We are all guilty of putting off various laborious activities! Whether it is that essay that may be due in two

weeks or a simple job around the house that takes longer to get set up for than to actually accomplish!

The Bible provides us with an example of an insect that puts a lot of us to shame with its organization: Proverbs chapter 30 verse 25 says 'The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer'. As we have discussed, it is all too easy to procrastinate. Yet the Bible also tells us in Amos chapter 4 verse 12 that we should prepare to meet God. This statement is pertinent to each of us. The question is why must we be prepared to meet God? Simply because we will meet Him as Judge. This coupled with the fact that we are born guilty of sin makes it imperative that we accept God's offer of salvation.

Are we really guilty of sin? Romans chapter 3 verse 23 says 'for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'.



How did we all get infected? Romans chapter 5 verse 12 says 'as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'. Adam's disobedience to God meant death became inevitable as all of mankind inherited Adam's fallen nature. Mankind is now driven to do what is right in their own eyes and those things which please them. Any thought about God are summarily dismissed as evolutionists proclaim the big bang formed our universe making man accountable to nothing and no one!

God has seen fit to provide mankind with a severe warning with regard to putting off a decision that has eternal consequences. Romans chapter 6 verse 23 says 'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord'. This gift is God's offer of salvation. Jesus bore the punishment for our sins when He was crucified on the cross to make salvation available. Jesus was sinless

and he was guiltless. We are sinful and guilty. Yet God's love for each and every one means that He was willing to allow His Son to bear the punishment that we deserve. The responsibility lies with us as to whether we accept God's offer of salvation and trust Him for salvation, or reject Him.

The consequences of delaying my training may mean I struggle when running the six kilometres. Not getting an essay in on time would undoubtedly mean detention. Neglecting salvation will result in eternal punishment. So many people today choose to 'address' this matter of salvation another time. We do not know what the future holds. Do not delay. Do not put it off to another time. Acts chapter 4 verse 12 says 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.'