

Elections

Who deserves your vote?

VOTE



The Christadelphians

“WHO DESERVES YOUR VOTE?”

Election time

“Is your name on the electoral roll? Have you returned your form?” says the envelope from the council. It is election time again. National elections, local elections, elections to replace an MP who has died, even to choose the chief of police for our area – again and again we are asked to choose the candidate we think is best for the job.



People have always looked for great leaders – people that can inspire us, take charge in a crisis, direct their football team to victory, or defeat an invading army. Everyone loves a role model. Hollywood has brought some of history’s great leaders to life. Alexander the Great, Winston Churchill, King George VI, and many others have had the silver screen treatment. But very often they have a fatal flaw, a character weakness like pride, or an obsession with revenge. Sometimes

they cannot deal with power and fame, and fall as fast as they rise.

In a democratic country like the UK, a general election gives everyone the chance to be involved in choosing a leader. This is because each citizen has a vote that they can cast. Not so long ago, only very wealthy people, and then only men, were allowed to vote. In the early twentieth century the Suffragettes campaigned long and hard to win the right for women to vote. Today all those over the age of 18 have this right.

How do we choose a candidate? If someone is popular and looks likely to get things done, they could be the obvious choice. If one of the candidates promises to solve a problem dear to our heart, they could be our favourite. But sometimes choosing who to vote for can be hard. Often there is not much difference between candidates. And anyway, do we vote for the individual, or for the party they represent?

The ideal candidate

Let’s think carefully for a minute. Consider the ideal leader. Which problems would they tackle first? What kind of character would they have to get the job done? Would they be tied to a political party, or

doesn't that matter? Have a go – this is *your* ideal leader, remember!

After a few minutes, you might have a 'to do' list like this:

The ideal leader would:

- Work for world peace
- Ensure there is food for all
- Reduce crime and violence
- Eradicate poverty
- Stop racial tension
- Provide the best education system
- Fight to end disease

What about the character of this ideal leader? You may have thought about:

- trust
- integrity
- dedication
- selflessness
- generosity

Most people would find it hard to disagree with these qualities.

Now the big question, and one to answer honestly: if there was someone like that, who promises to do all these things and who has the perfect character traits, would you vote for them?

How close have we come?

Let's see how near we've been to this ideal in the past:

- Winston Churchill should have been a brilliant Prime Minister, because he

successfully led Britain through the difficult years of the Second World War. Yet in peacetime, he failed to carry the people along with him, and was soon outvoted.

- J F Kennedy in the United States was hailed as the first of a new breed of bright young politicians, popular and good-looking. But subsequent history has shown he had moral failings, and tragically his life was cut short.
- General de Gaulle ran the French state for decades. But his cruelty to the Algerian rebels and his intolerable pride stained his record.

So what's the problem? The problem is that the democratic system involves voting for human beings. Whilst our lists of ideals might be similar, the people we choose to achieve them usually fail to do so. The title of this booklet is very appropriate – who **deserves** your vote? The truth is that there has never yet been a leader who has come close to achieving the ideals listed above. Perhaps you have already decided that no one ever could manage them all. Let's put that thought to one side for the moment.

Democracy and the Bible solution

Voting for a leader is a feature of democracy. An obvious fact might help us see where democracy goes wrong. Democracy is not something created by God. It has its roots in Greek history. It was invented by human beings as a way of sharing responsibility for the future of the state. However, it depends on people, and people usually love power



and money and praise more than what's best for others. Because people have vested interests, they oppose decisions that leave them weaker. It is impossible to reach a majority vote without leaving a minority very unhappy. And the next set of rulers delights to overturn all that their predecessors did.

The alternative to democracy is to accept the authority of one person and leave the decisions to them. But this system of government has never yet produced a great world leader. Every time it has been tried, the leader has turned out to be selfish, cruel, over ambitious or too weak to withstand outside pressure. Think of Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar, or Joseph Stalin.

Thankfully, the Bible tells us that there is one world leader who has not yet started to govern, but who will break this pattern of failure. He is the **Lord Jesus Christ**. Jesus has all the traits of character on our list. He has experienced all the troubles of human life. And he has the power and authority to bring about permanent change.

Most political parties have a manifesto. A manifesto is a list of things they promise to work for if they are elected. Here is Jesus' **manifesto** (the references show the Bible books, chapters and verses).

Jesus will:

- **Rule with justice and fairness**

"But with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked" (see Isaiah 11:4)¹²

- **Help the poor and needy**

"He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in his sight" (Psalm 72:13,14)

- **Bring world peace**

"He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; 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." (Micah 4:3)

- **Remove hunger**

"There will be an abundance of grain in the earth, On the top of the mountains;

1 Please note: 'Isaiah 11:5' means Isaiah chapter 11 verse 5.

2 All Bible quotations are from the ESV (English Standard Version)

its fruit shall wave like Lebanon; and those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.” (Psalm 72:16)

- **Ignore rumours and gossip**

“He shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, nor decide by the hearing of his ears; But with righteousness he shall judge the poor.” (Isaiah 11:3,4)

- **Take away tears, pain, sorrow and ultimately death**

“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.” (Revelation 21:4)

The Bible says Jesus will return to rule the whole world. He will teach people to live by God’s rules. And he will have God’s power to enforce them. Many places in the Bible talk about his reign. Here are some verses from the book of Daniel:

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever ...” (Daniel 2:44)

“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days [God], and they brought him near before him. Then to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples,

nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:14)

Jesus often referred to himself as ‘the son of man’. In this prophecy he is promised an everlasting kingdom over the earth. He comes from heaven, and he is given the right to be the ruler. From these verses it is clear that he will:

- Replace all other forms of government
- Rule for ever (he will be immortal)
- Reign with the authority of the Lord God Himself

First century Christians

First century Christians expected Jesus would return from heaven to bring about this Kingdom of God in their lifetime. It was something they looked forward to.³

In his ‘Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’ the historian Edward Gibbon says:

“It was universally believed that the end of the world, and the kingdom of heaven, were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood in their literal sense the

3 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 9:28; Revelation 22:20

discourses of Christ himself were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished which had beheld his humble condition upon earth ... it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers ..."
(Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chapter 15)

Because the early Christians expected the coming of Christ at any time, they lived as if they were visitors from a far country, pilgrims on a journey, like the people of Israel in the wilderness, led by Moses to the Promised Land. As part of this, they refused to take part in politics. They would not fight in the armies of Rome.

However, as the years passed and Jesus did not come, the doctrine of the Millennium (thousand year reign of Christ) was quietly dropped. By the fourth century the church had entered into partnership

with the very Roman state which Jesus was supposed to destroy at his coming. So, what happened to the Bible's predictions? Did God get it wrong? Or is the delay part of His plan?

Introducing the Christadelphians

There is no doubt God's plan is eventually to fill the world with His glory. Jesus' well-known prayer in Matthew chapter six contains the words, "Your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven". That is not the situation today. It is the will of man, not God, that is done in the world today. But Bible students soon realise that God's plans often take a long time to be fulfilled. The apostle Peter meets the doubters with this important statement:

"... knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

*... But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."
(2 Peter 3:3,4,8,9)*



If Jesus had returned centuries ago, you and I would not have had the opportunity to hear the gospel. In the first century, God had only just begun a great work of preaching the good news of the coming Kingdom to the world. Jesus and the apostles pioneered the work, offering salvation to God's people, the Jews. But this was only the beginning. The apostle Paul took the message to Turkey and Greece. Others spread it outwards into distant lands. Even today, God is still calling on people to repent. Peter was right. The apparent delay in Christ's return is merciful.

But God's patience will not continue forever. As the apostle Paul says:

*"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."
(Acts 17:30,31)*

That day of judgment by Jesus could come at any time, even though the scoffers and humanists, as Peter warned, mock such an idea.

Now, the people who offered you this booklet, the **Christadelphians** (brothers and sisters in Christ), firmly believe that the Kingdom of God is not only coming, but is very near. Like the first century

believers, we consider ourselves to be separate from the politics of the country we happen to live in. Some of us come from the United Kingdom. Others were born in America, or Nigeria, or Australia, or Russia. But our hearts and our hopes for the future are centred on the Kingdom of God. When Jesus comes, he will overthrow the governments of our countries. He will replace them with his own leaders, people chosen by God through the centuries and raised from the dead. For example, Jesus made this promise to the twelve apostles:

*"So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
(Matthew 19:28)*

And in the book of the Revelation, the apostle John sees in vision a multitude of believers raised from the dead to work with their Lord, ruling over the new world of Jesus' kingdom. They sing to Jesus:

*"And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.'"
(Revelation 5:9,10)*

Notice, the administration of the kingdom is drawn from every people and nation, so that Peter was absolutely right when he warned that the work of gospel preaching had only just begun.

In a fascinating parable, Jesus addresses the problem that the people around him wrongly thought the Kingdom was going to appear straight away. This is how Luke reports it:

“Now as they heard these things, he spoke another parable, because he was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore he said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master,

your mina has earned five minas.’ Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’” (Luke 19:11-19)

Transparently, Jesus is the businessman in the story. The far country is heaven. And when he returns, he rewards his faithful followers by making them leaders of his kingdom.

This helps to explain why the Christadelphians, the people who wrote this booklet, **do not vote in elections**. They live as temporary visitors in the lands where they happen to be born, waiting for the Kingdom of God.

In the world but not of the world

This attitude to society, as Gibbon shows, was typical of the first century believers. They were in the world, but they had been called to belong to another kingdom that was not of this world. They were independent. Their loyalty was elsewhere.

You may think it unreasonable to enjoy the facilities provided by the state and



yet not to support it by voting. Well, the Christadelphians, like their first century counterparts, still pay their taxes. They obey the laws of their country. They even pray for their rulers. Here are four important New Testament teachings that Christadelphians follow:

1. *“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all*

authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.”
(Romans 13:1-3)



“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s”

men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.” (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

God is in charge of the world, and we are exhorted to pray that He will allow the government of the country we live in to give us freedom to worship and preach. Of course, there will be times of persecution, too, which will test our faith.

2. *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no*

As ‘strangers’ in society, we need to take care to obey the law, where it does not conflict with God’s commandments. To break the law would bring our community into disrepute.

3. *“For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.”* (Romans 13:6,7)

Jesus made the same point when he was asked whether he agreed with paying tax

to the Roman emperor. Governments need money to provide security, health services and education, even if some of it is spent in areas we might not agree with.

4. *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.”*
(Hebrews 11:13-15)

Although we may own houses and drive cars and go on holidays, in our hearts we have to remain pilgrims, on a journey with Jesus, and ready to leave everything behind the moment he returns.

Jesus, the ideal leader

We come back to our opening question. Elections will take place and leaders will be chosen. They will come and go. But there will be no lasting peace or happiness for the world until the reign of Jesus, the ideal leader, chosen and prepared by God. That day will come. Then it will be true, in the well known words, **“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”** (Revelation 11:15). We hope you will respect our wish to stand aside from the politics of this world. And if you could consider joining us in our patient

waiting for Christ, we would be delighted to help you find confidence in God and hope for the future.

Paul Tovell, with CALS Literature Committee

For further reading see our choice of booklets on the next page.

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