

PreciousSeed

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'And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord', Gen. 21. 33.



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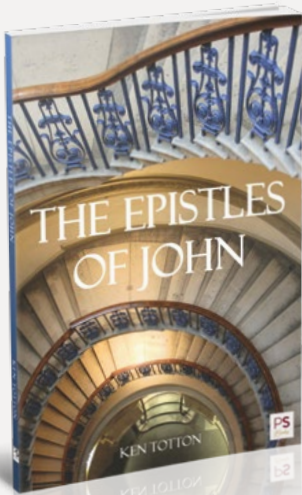
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with Jonathan Black

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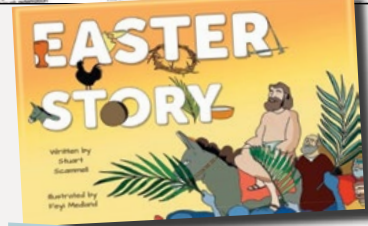


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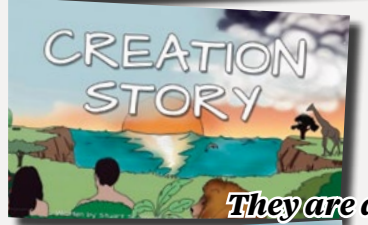
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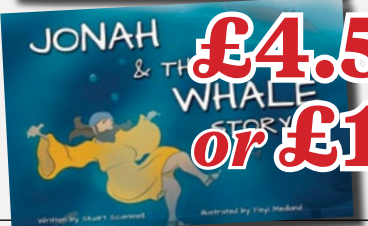


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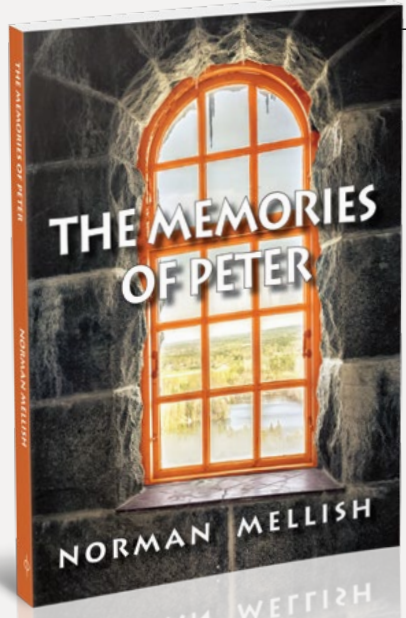


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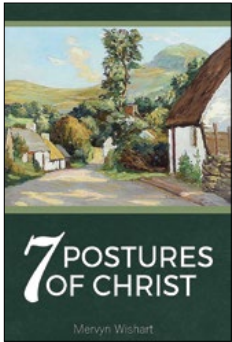
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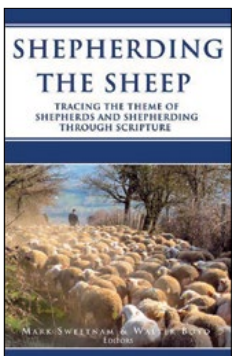
Seven Postures of Christ Mervyn Wishart

128 pages, Paperback. Published by John Ritchie Publishing, 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland. ISBN-13: 978-1-912522-62-0.

Benefits arising from the pandemic lockdown of 2020/21 are not easy to quantify. But one area in which significant expansion has been noted is in the sale of books online. W. H. Smith, the stationers, reported a 400% increase in mid-2020 and no doubt other outlets noted a similar trend. I mention this simply as an encouragement, to me at least, that more people are taking time to read books. Ritual clicking on screens rather than turning pages has become the habit of many, including believers, whose bookshelves, full of excellent and profitable written teaching, simply collect dust!

Stepping down off my soapbox, I am pleased to commend this book by MERVYN WISHART as being a worthy addition to any library. I think of my books as a reference library, not necessarily a reading library; this book is, however, one for reading. It presents to us delightful pictures of the Saviour as we follow Him through the Gospel records. Mervyn takes note of the occasions when the Lord Jesus is seen standing, sitting, walking and lying down, among other postures. He makes copious use of scripture to draw out the lessons, both devotional and, on occasion, practical, which serve to enhance our

appreciation of the Saviour. The narrative draws the reader along, and the book can be read quite easily in an afternoon. However, there are truths here which deserve development and further meditation. It would serve well as a book to dip into in preparation for the remembrance on a Lord's Day morning, or to keep by the bedside to clear the mind of the day's events and fill it with Christ, before turning out the light.



Shepherding the Sheep Mark Sweetnam and Walter Boyd (eds.)

248 pages. Paperback. Published by Scripture Teaching Library, Northern Ireland. Available from Ards Evangelical Bookshop, Newtownards. ISBN 978-1-909789-54-8.

The sub-title of this book from STL is 'Tracing the theme of shepherds and shepherding through scripture', and it does exactly what it says on the cover. The writers will be well known to many throughout the UK and some much further afield, where they have served on the mission field for a good number of years.

We have often heard it said in conferences, that the great need among the Lord's people is for those with a shepherd heart. This book addresses that need in a substantial way by following the analogy of sheep and shepherds right through the scriptures. Lessons are drawn in relation to the nation of Israel, the church and local assembly witness, as well as practical matters pertaining to individuals.

The nature and character of sheep can be seen as a rich source of instruction for the people of God, bringing out the best, and, on occasion, the worst in those who undertake the work of shepherds.

Old Testament shepherds such as Abraham, Jacob, Moses and David, together with others, are touched upon, perhaps a little too briefly, while more time is given to the subject as developed in the Psalms and in the major prophetic chapter, Ezekiel 34. The Lord Jesus is clearly seen as the pattern Shepherd in the writings of Isaiah, Micah and Zechariah.

Moving into the New Testament, the Shepherd to the nation of Israel is revealed in Matthew's Gospel, while the heart of the Shepherd is in evidence in Mark and Luke.

The Apostle John's portrayal of the Good Shepherd in chapter 10, is dealt with in some detail, together with the Lord's conversation with Peter in chapter 21.

The practical ministry of shepherd care illustrated in the Acts and the Epistles, particularly in relation to the responsibilities of overseers, is clearly explained. The book then closes with a comprehensive exposition of the subject in the book of Revelation, with emphasis on chapter 7.

The themes throughout of leading, feeding, watching, tending and keeping are repeated in their varying contexts. But repetition enhances and underlines the importance of these subjects in our present day.

‘A servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’, Jas. 1. 1.

‘A servant of God’ – nothing more, nothing less! How do we see ourselves? James, who is widely recognized to be the half-brother of the Lord Jesus, could have claimed that human link to establish and build his importance; but not so. He seeks no profile other than that of a ‘bondslave’ – one who has surrendered his rights entirely in the service of another. How is it with us? Is the sole objective of our life to devotedly serve our Master? As we search the scriptures to learn what being a servant means, we can draw lessons from a plethora of examples.

From Jeremiah, we can learn about the preparation of the servant, Jer. 1. 4-10. We note simply that God’s servants are God’s sovereign choice; the servant neither chooses his sphere of service nor undertakes that service in his own strength. The same is true today. Nor, it should be noted, does a local church choose the sphere of service of a servant. The distribution of, and power

to use, gift is the domain of the Godhead alone. We should carefully remember that there is no room for depending on fleshly talent in His work, 2 Cor. 4. 7! My responsibility is not to express or develop my fleshly talents, but to make myself available for the service my Master has graciously set out for me.

From the servant with a pierced ear, we can learn about the proving of the servant, Exod. 21. That ‘bored’ ear demonstrated he loved his master. Has our Master’s unmerited, loving provision for us so impacted us that we are happy to bear the mark of being devoted for life to His service?

But, back to James. In a world that is obsessed with ‘profiles’, can we learn again the profile of the servant? Surely, the true ‘servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’ will ensure that his Master is what is seen and his Master’s voice is what is heard. He will be self-effacing, humble of mind, fervent in His work, meek and

faithful. He will act as one with no rights, with unswerving dedication, and take every conceivable precaution to ensure he has no ‘profile’.

We pray that as this issue of the magazine finds its way into your hands, the content, as contributed by a few of His servants, will be a timely message from our Master, and He will be honoured and given the glory.

BRIAN CLATWORTHY

Ministry Articles Editor

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YPS

Suffer the little children – the challenges of Parenthood

The responsibility of raising a family for the Lord is, perhaps, one of the most challenging tasks which any believing couple can undertake. It is a task which demands total commitment coupled with prayer, love, devotion, patience, compassion, understanding and wisdom, all day, every day. Some tasks are less straightforward than others and there are often sacrifices to be made regarding time, money, and other legitimate commitments.

One essential matter that calls for particular attention is the spiritual welfare of the children. The constant prayer of parents and others is for the children to be saved early in life and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, 2 Pet. 3. 18. In addition, there is the spiritual input at home, coupled with attendance at Sunday school, Bible class, or children's meetings where they are available, or maybe Postal Bible School lessons where they are not.

All such actions are applauded by fellow believers who fully support such activities, but there is one matter which can prove to be difficult. This is the subject of taking children to meetings where all the assembly is gathered and, in considering this, we need to look at the practical implications. With some assemblies now small in numbers and only one or two families with young children, the situation can be more prominent.

Picture a family in assembly fellowship with two small children. On Lord's Day morning the mother is busy. With her husband, she has prepared and served breakfast and the children are ready. She has shepherded them into their coats, and they have set off for the meeting. Despite parental efforts at home, and quite early into the meeting, one, or both, of the children need to visit the toilet. In taking the child out a chair is knocked over and items fall to the floor with a clatter. Heads turn, grim faces look

on disapprovingly. Whilst things settle a little upon their return, it does not seem long before there is a noisy protest from the other child. Heads turn again and grim faces look on even more disapprovingly.

As the meeting continues, maintaining the quiet patience of the children becomes harder. Ultimately, it seems that one of the parents has to take a child out of the meeting. Invariably, they do not go quietly. The once disapproving faces now turn to scowls. At the end of the meeting, it is clear from facial expressions as well as terse comments that many in the fellowship were 'not impressed' and that some 'did not enjoy the meeting because they found it difficult to concentrate'. Considering the effort that both father and mother have put in to get their children to the meeting, they feel upset, almost guilty for taking their children, none more so than the mother who has tried to look after the children to enable her husband to contribute to the gathering and, consequently, has struggled with her own inaudible involvement in the meeting.

Although we might be accused of focusing upon the negative reactions and feedback, this illustration will be sadly familiar to some, and for a young mother to go home after the Lord's Supper upset and unhappy is wrong. As believers, do we show Christ-like grace and understanding in situations that do not go well? Are we careful not

to praise some and, by implication, criticise others? Are we sensitive to the stress levels of parents after a trying experience with their children? How do we approach the matter of an unsettled child? Do we express our impatience in observing parents trying to calm a child? In seeing a child taken out of the meeting, do we see it as a punishment?

family unit with a measure of spiritual maturity where partners have worked in harmony. For various reasons, some companies may have single parents, perhaps not long saved, those who were never given a good example from their own parents in how to nurture a child. Can they be expected to have everything perfectly in order? They will need love and support and we might mention the value of a sister who will take a child on their lap for a few minutes to allow a worn-out mother to benefit from a few precious moments in the Lord's presence. What practical arrangements can be put in place to make it easier for parents to withdraw and calm children or feed a baby for a few moments when necessary?

These are important issues. Whilst believers should be sympathetic and patient, sadly there are those who are critical and who give the impression to stressed parents that they are an authority on dealing with such problems. Children are different in temperament. They are human beings and not robots and react differently to events. They also vary in how well they can sit and keep quiet. By prayer, positive effort, and the support of the saints, all should endeavour to take their children to meetings.

We have all been children and the Lord Himself was once a child. What is His view of children and the challenge of raising them? We have only to turn to the account of children being brought to the Lord to observe that three out of the four Gospels record this occasion.¹

Matthew's account tells us that they were 'little children', so that their parents brought them. He adds that they wanted Him to put His hands on them. Was this that He might bless them or were they sick? In all three accounts, the disciples try to send them away, for which the Lord rebukes

them. He had time for the children, and they were not held at arm's length. He took them up in His arms and blessed them individually. It did not matter what they looked like, what homes they came from, or any of their faults. He displayed a compassion so graciously to those whom the disciples saw as of little value.

In Mark chapter 10, the reaction of the Lord to the disciples who had rebuked the parents who brought the children is particularly heart searching, for we read that, 'he was much displeased', v. 14. It is evident that the negative, ungracious conduct of the disciples distressed Him. Thus, He presents an invitation to all children and emphasizes His love for them. It is to be noted that on His way to Calvary to be the supreme sacrifice for the sin of mankind, the Lord takes up children in His arms and blesses them. What a precious scene!

The greatest lover of children is Christ and the word 'whosoever' applies equally to them as any adult. In Mark chapter 10 verse 15, the Lord says, 'Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein'. The Lord used a child to illustrate the simplicity of faith, a subject we often visit in the gospel. If the Lord attaches such importance to both the spiritual

and physical welfare of children, why does the subject receive so little attention by us?

Turning to the Old Testament, we will also see that it has much to say about children. We are told that 'children are an heritage of the Lord', Ps. 127. 3. Jacob acknowledged to Esau that those with him were 'the children which God hath graciously given thy servant', Gen. 33. 5. There is also the beautiful example of a spiritually devoted Hannah in 1 Samuel. Here is one who prayed for a son that he might be a man for God in Israel, 1. 10, 11. When she had given birth, she weaned him and brought him to the house of God, willingly giving him to the Lord for the rest of his life. She had a rich appreciation of what a child can be for God.

In the light of Old and New Testament teaching about the value of children to God, we should nurture the practice of taking children to meetings. The spiritual welfare of children is so vital. Many of them will be growing up through an education system and in a world marked by bullying, both physical and verbal, violence, drugs, sexual misconduct, materialism, paganism, and media-driven ungodliness. They will mix with children who have suffered abuse both mentally and physically. They will be taught evolution theory as fact

in an environment where the basic truths of scripture are unwelcome and regularly subject to challenge. The world is racing onwards to judgement and our children need a God-given haven, a place focused upon spiritual realities. The local assembly is that place and our children should feel wanted, loved, and welcomed there. May we never hinder the spiritual welfare of believers' children by a cold and critical manner, even because of any difficulties experienced by taking children to meetings. There is a need for every believer to be at the throne of grace daily concerning the children of believers, as well as children in general. May we be encouraged to seek their eternal good.

We hope that these little ones, raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, will take their place in the not-so-distant future of assembly testimony, so these are important matters and the next generation may be at stake. It would be incredibly sad if coming to the assembly gatherings became a burden, rather than a joy and source of encouragement, as parents try to press on through the challenges of another busy week. This article asks for compassion for the children's sake.

Endnote

- 1 Matt. 19. 13-15; Mark 10. 13-16; Luke 18. 15-17.



Old Testament women who appear in the New Testament

RAHAB

By **MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE** Grantham, England

The Bible does not gloss over the faults of those of whom it speaks. Two out of the three times Rahab is mentioned in the New Testament, it is with the addition of 'harlot', Heb. 11. 31; Jas. 2. 25. This follows the pattern of the Old Testament, Josh. 2. 1; 6. 17, 25, and sets the dark background upon which the jewels of God's grace and her faith stand out all the more brightly.

God's response to Rahab's faith – 'By faith the harlot Rahab perished not', Heb. 11. 31

When, in every other example of the faithful, it is the triumph of their faith that is highlighted, and all other failings are passed over, it seems harsh that for Rahab the manner of her previous life is mentioned. But does this not contribute to the force of the argument? In a wicked city, here was a sinful woman, and yet God's grace was such that, in response to her faith, she 'perished not'. Like Paul, Rahab stands out as a beacon to God's longsuffering, 'for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting', 1 Tim. 1. 16.

Faith is therefore defined as the key point of distinction between those who perish and those who do not. The action of receiving 'the spies with peace' stemmed from a faith that is shown in her remarkable verbal testimony in Joshua chapter 2 verses 9 to 13. It was a faith that:

- 1 Had come by hearing, v. 10; cp. Rom. 10. 17.
- 2 Was rooted in the evidence of history, v. 10; cp. 1 Cor. 15. 1-11.
- 3 Had an appreciation of the person, power and purpose of God, vv. 9, 11; cp. 1 Cor. 2. 1-5.
- 4 Laid hold on things not yet seen, v. 10a; cp. Heb. 11. 1.
- 5 Was prepared to ask big things, vv. 12, 13; cp. Eph. 3. 20.

Hebrews chapter 11 verse 30 reminds

us of the destruction of the walls of Jericho, and Joshua chapter 6 verse 21 tells us that the people were also 'utterly destroyed'. The scriptures make it clear that Rahab not perishing 'with them that believed not' was no accident. Her complete security, even before the battle, is seen in Joshua's account. In his speech to the people at the start of the day of victory, he says, 'only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house', 6. 17. Responding to the promise of God through the spies, she binds the cord in the window. God's promises, received by faith, are utterly secure, Rom. 4. 16, and despite her house being in the very wall that was destroyed, Rahab, her family, and all that she had, were saved, Josh. 6. 25.

Rahab's response to God, 'Rahab the harlot justified by works', Jas. 2. 25

Faith that results in justification will prove itself by works. Therefore, we have the twin truths of Romans, which speaks of faith as the means of **receiving** justification, e.g., 4. 2-5, and James, who writes of the importance of demonstrating the **reality** of that faith by our works, e.g., 2. 21-24. This is the distinction between mere profession, Jas. 2. 14, 'though a man **say** he hath faith', and the practise of it, vv. 15-17.

James was writing 'to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad', 1. 1. His readers would therefore have been happy with the illustration from the

life of Abraham, 2. 21-24, but it would have been a jolt to have seen the argument continue with, 'Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works', v. 25. Was James following the example of his Lord in stirring up the Jews by highlighting that they did not have exclusive rights to God's blessing, Luke 4. 25-27? Here, he brings her as a second witness to this important truth 'that faith without works is dead', v. 20.

Rahab and the inhabitants of Jericho illustrate the distinction that is made in verse 19. It was undeniable that there had been some higher power at work to enable the Israelites to win such victories as they had won. As in the case of the demons in James chapter 2 verse 19, however, it had only caused 'terror', Josh. 2. 9: resulting in, 'the inhabitants of the land [to] faint', v. 9 and, their hearts to 'melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man', v. 11. There was no desire to come to trust in such a God and thus there were no works fitting to those that had faith.

What a contrast with faith-filled Rahab. She 'received the messengers', Jas. 2. 25. This was not just doing them no harm, but an active hospitality was shown to them. She 'lodged' them, Josh. 2. 1; 'hid them', vv. 4, 6; protected them by leading the investigating soldiers the wrong way, vv. 4-7; helped them to escape the city, v. 15, and gave advice as to how best to escape detection on the way back to camp, v. 16. Faith in God will change our natural allegiances and, for her, this was now with the God of Israel, evidenced by the care she had for His people and her willingness to risk the wrath of the king of Jericho. James reminds us that 'friendship of the world is enmity with God', 4. 4; John says that 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him', 1 John 2. 15, and Paul teaches that we should, 'come out from among them, and be ye separate', 2 Cor. 6. 17. If our lives were examined, where would our allegiance be found? What would this tell us, and others, about the reality of our faith?

This change of allegiance was not just demonstrated in her willingness

to help the spies. To an extent, this could have been done privately, but then the challenge came as to whether she was willing to publicly declare where her faith was and whose side she was on. 'Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee', Josh. 2. 18. She was not left any choice of keeping her faith private. If she wanted to be saved, it would have to be declared in the cord, and if she wanted her family rescued she would have to talk to them sufficiently to persuade them to come and stay at her house. Both tests were passed with flying colours as immediately 'she bound the

scarlet line in the window', v. 21, and by the time the city was defeated, she was not only saved but, 'her father's household, and all that she had', 6. 25. That our faith will be declared publicly is expected, e.g., 'with the mouth confession is made unto salvation', Rom. 10. 10; 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them', Matt. 28. 19; 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together', Heb. 10. 25. Would our faith be known by our works?

The grace of God, 'Rahab', Matt. 1. 5 NKJV

The last we read of Rahab in the Old Testament is that she 'dwelleth in Israel even unto this day', Josh. 6. 25. God's grace had done much, but it was going to do so much more, including marriage into the nation

and ultimately becoming part of the lineage of the Lord. What a reminder of God's heart towards us, for He did not simply bring us to where we 'perished not with them that believed not', but to 'have everlasting life', John 3. 16. More than that, He, 'gave . . . power to become the sons [children] of God', John 1. 12, and 'the adoption of sons', Gal. 4. 5. Such is the grace of God in our lives that we are so linked with the family of Christ, that He is 'not ashamed to call [us] brethren', Heb. 2. 11.

How beautiful that, in this family tree, the fact of her past life is no longer mentioned; she is simply 'Rahab'. To be linked with Christ in His family, is to bring about such a change that Paul could say to the Corinthians, 'And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God', 1 Cor. 6. 11, and then in his second Epistle, 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new', 5. 17. What a joy to know that none can bring anything, 'to the charge of God's elect', Rom. 8. 33.

We have no direct record of the kind of woman Rahab became, but it is interesting that throughout the history of Israel, mothers were often mentioned along with God's declaration of the spiritual condition of kings.¹ As we are told the name of her son in this genealogy, Boaz, would it be wrong to attribute something of his godliness to the influence of his mother and thereby understand something of the change that occurred in her character?

In contrast to her people, Rahab was willing in simple faith to, 'humble [herself] . . . under the mighty hand of God', 1 Pet. 5. 6. God has truly exalted her to be an example of God's grace, and one who proved her faith by her actions. May she be an example we are stirred up to follow.



Endnote

- 1 E.g., 1 Kgs. 15. 2, 3; 2 Kgs. 14. 2, 3; 15. 2, 3.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

By **JOHN BENNETT** Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

15

Having crossed the storm-tossed lake at the end of the previous chapter, this one records the Lord's dealings with three individuals – the Gadarene demoniac, the woman with the issue of blood and Jairus' daughter. In chapter 5, we also have the sixth seaside scene recorded by Mark.

We might divide the chapter into three main sections:

- The demon possessed, vv. 1-20.
- The daughter of Jairus, vv. 21-24, 35-43.
- The deliverance of the woman, vv. 25-34.

The chapter opens with that simple statement, 'And they came over unto the other side of the sea', v. 1. How simple an end to such a traumatic journey! Yet that is what the Lord had said they would do – get to the other side.

The demon possessed, vv. 1-20

With such a simple opening it must be remembered that the background to this recorded event is the storm upon the Sea of Galilee. This man, possessed of Legion, is placed into that context. It tells us of the remarkable compassion of the Saviour. He took that journey and experienced the storm in order that He might meet this man and bring release and peace into his tormented life.

The condition of the man, vv. 1-5

Whilst Matthew tells us of two demoniacs, Mark concentrates his narrative upon the one we can only assume to be the most prominent. The starkness of the situation is clear from Mark's description:

- His home, 'who had his dwelling

among the tombs', v. 3. As he was possessed of an unclean spirit, so his dwelling was in a place associated with ceremonial uncleanness for the Jew.

- His hopelessness, 'no man could bind him, no, not with chains', v. 3. Numerous efforts had been made to restrain the man and to bring him under control, but all had failed. They had tried fetters upon his feet and chains upon his arms and body, but nothing had worked. The superhuman strength of the demons had rendered such attempts futile.
- His helplessness, 'neither could any man tame him', v. 4. Mark conveys the thought that this man's behaviour placed him alongside the animals, those who needed to be tamed or brought under the control of man. All human efforts to subdue this man had failed.
- His heartache, 'And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying', v. 5. This is a graphic picture of this man's misery. His grief was constant, for it was 'always'. His unearthly and restless scream disturbed the people day and night.
- His harm, 'cutting himself with stones', v. 5. His body would bear the scars of his repeated attempts at serious self-harm. These were no surface marks but deep gashes in his body.

His plight was awful. He had lost everything – home, fellowship, self-control, peace, and purpose for

living. How remarkable that such a person should be of interest to anyone!

The conversation and cure, vv. 6-14

It is difficult to imagine the sight of this man rushing headlong to meet the Saviour. The people of the district would have fled in terror at such a sight, knowing what they had witnessed in respect to this man's actions in the past. We might note:

● **The power, 'he ran and worshipped him', v. 6**

We have seen the power of the Saviour when He stilled the storm upon the lake. Here, without a word, this demon-possessed man is found under the control of the Saviour. Others had tried, but all had failed. Here, however, there is an immediate recognition of the lordship of Christ and that due homage should be paid to Him at whose feet this man prostrates himself. It may not have been willing worship, but it was a demonstration of demonic impotence before the power of the Saviour.

● **The pleas, 'torment me not', v. 7, and 'he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country', v. 10**

The demoniac commences the conversation between himself and the Lord. Again, one demon would seem to speak on behalf of them all. In the conversation there is recognition of who the Lord is, 'Jesus, thou Son of the most high God', v. 7, and the power that He had – to send them to final judgement, to the abyss. There is also recognition of the fact that these demons cannot resist His power or fail to comply with His command. It would appear that this area, around Decapolis, was, for them, fruitful ground and one in which they wanted to stay, v. 10.

● **The plight, 'My name is Legion: for we are many', v. 9**

It is only here, in Mark and in Luke's Gospel, that we appreciate the awful plight of the man. He was not possessed of one, or even seven demons, but a legion. An

estimate of the extent of this possession is a figure of over 6,000 demons. It is a picture not just of vast numbers but also, through their conversation with the Lord, of complex organization. Apart from that invincible strength and relentless oppression that we have seen in earlier verses, all of this adds to the hopelessness of this man's situation.

- **The pigs, 'a great herd of swine feeding', v. 11, 'Send us into the swine', v. 12**

We might have seen something of the plight of the man, but there is also a picture of the sinfulness of the people around Decapolis. Although there were more Gentiles in that area, yet this brought with it the presence of, and the trade in pigs, an animal that every Jew should have regarded as ceremonially unclean. Here, financial gain seems to have outweighed the claims of the law. It is these pigs that provide the legion of demons with an opportunity – to release the man, as the Lord had commanded, but not to be consigned to the abyss.

- **The precipice, 'the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea', v. 13**

There is, in this event, a graphic picture of the deliverance that the Saviour had wrought. No real picture of the extent of this man's possession could have been gained without the question the Lord asked in verse 9, and the death of 2,000 pigs in verse 13. Every spectator would be left in no doubt as to the power of God at work in their midst. There was also a testimony to the man that his deliverance was complete – as the swine had perished, so he was free! Finally, to every Jew there was a reminder that unclean business should not be permitted or supported. As WIERSBE puts it, "To Satan, a pig is as good as a man! In fact, Satan will make a man into a pig".¹

As a consequence of all that has happened, the men who kept the pigs flee into the city carrying their story

with them. They would be quick to seek to absolve themselves from all blame in respect to the fate of the pigs.

The contrast and the consternation, vv. 15-17

There could be no greater contrast than between the man's former condition and that in which he was now found:²

- 'sitting', v. 15. Once, he was cutting himself night and day, v. 5, in restless activity, now he was sitting. Once, he was a roving, raving maniac, but now he is at rest.
- 'clothed', v. 15. Luke tells us that, for a long time, he had worn no clothes. His shame is now replaced with sobriety.
- 'in his right mind', v. 15. Once possessed with legion and out of control, he is now subdued, rational, and committed to the service of Christ.

In the light of such a miraculous transformation evident before the enquiring crowd it would have seemed likely that there would have been interest in finding out more about the Lord and His power to deliver. Yet the centre of discussion was the account of the keepers of the swine. They were at pains to explain how their charges, the swine, had been destroyed in the act of bringing deliverance to the demoniac, v. 16. The focus was economic and not spiritual.

From that report of the keepers of the swine, 'they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts', v. 17. Luke tells us that this was the unanimous verdict of the people. They did not seem to want their settled manner of life disturbed by the Lord and His power to deliver and heal. It is remarkable that such a manifestation of divine power should leave them unmoved. They saw the act but did not wish to see the wonder of the person who could perform it.

Is it not deeply sad to note that the scriptures have no record that the Lord ever visited this part of the country again? Their opportunity was lost!

The command, vv. 18-20

Blessed by his remarkable deliverance, the demoniac seeks the

company of the Saviour. He 'prayed him that he might be with him', v. 18. What a contrast! The common people did not want the presence or power of the Saviour in their part of the country. They would rather remain in darkness and sin. This man sought the fellowship of the Lord and His people.

However, the Lord saw what the man did not specifically see, and that was the opportunity for evangelization. This is equally remarkable. Humanly speaking, we would have thought this area of the country a fruitless ground for testimony and witness. They had asked the Saviour to leave. They had, effectively, rejected the greatest evidence of His ability to save that they could ever have had. Nevertheless, the Lord said to the man, 'Go home . . . and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee', v. 19.

It is worth noting where a young convert's efforts should be directed. The Lord indicates to this man, 'Return to thine own house', Luke 8. 39. This should be the starting point to bear testimony. Those closest to us should be able to see a change and, from that, understand the basis of that change and who has wrought it. From that point this man 'began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him', v. 20. The message radiated out to the ten cities of the area.

There is, in Luke's account, a testimony to the deity of Christ. The Lord's command to this delivered demoniac was 'shew how great things **God** hath done unto thee', Luke 8. 39. The man is true to the Lord's command, but Luke gives the detail as, 'he went his way, and published . . . how great things **Jesus** had done unto him!'

Endnotes

- 1 W. W. WIERSBE, *op. cit.*
- 2 HIEBERT comments upon the present participle of the verbs 'sitting' and 'clothed'.

THE SEIGE OF SAMARIA

2 Kgs. 7 • Part 2

By **ANDREW BENNETT** Sound, Shetland

The uninhabited camp of the Syrians, vv. 3-16

In the opening verses, the message has been delivered and rejected through unbelief.

The scene changes to four leprous men outside the gate. It is interesting to notice that it was to these men that provision was first made. You would have thought that it might have been the prophet first and then the elders to whom the message would come, but, no, it was to these men.

Once again, we can see the sovereignty of God brought before us. He employs whom He pleases! Consider the personal state of these four men at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. Death surrounded them. 'If we say, "Let us enter into the city," the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives, we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die', v. 4 ESV. If they could have entered into the city, they would have found famine and death. To stay where they were was, without contradiction, death. To go to the enemy, representative of the judgement of God and wielding His sword, would this not still be death? But, on that side, at least, there was a glimmer of hope, 'if they save us alive, we shall live'. Their lives were dependent on the goodwill of their enemies. They might not pronounce the death sentence!

They rose and went into the camp. I'm sure that heading there they did so with fear and yet they found the camp empty. What had happened, no one in the city knew about. God had wrought a miracle and they were not aware.

A great noise had been heard and the Syrians had fled, fearing that

a greater army had been hired to come and beat them. Remarkably, the victory had been won in the darkness of night. What can we learn from this? When we think of these lepers and the situation that they found themselves in, living apart from the people with no access into the presence of God, their relief came from an unexpected source. They found provision; they found that the Lord had won a great victory. Does this remind us of the greatest victory that has ever been won, by the Saviour on the cross? He entered into the darkness alone. At highest cost, He purchased our redemption and, as a result of that, as we say in preaching the gospel, the blessings of heaven are open to those who trust Christ.

These lepers found that everything had been left behind. To find that the enemies had packed up camp and gone would have been amazing. To find that there were a few rations left as they went in haste would also have been amazing. What they found was above all that they could imagine, 'And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it', 2 Kgs. 7. 8. We should mark the phrase 'even the camp as it was', v. 7; everything left behind.

How true it is that 'the wicked flee when no man pursueth', Prov. 28. 1. Supposing that a more formidable force had come to the relief of the besieged Samaritans, the Syrians were filled with consternation and abandoned their well-provisioned camp. So thoroughly panic-stricken were they that they left their horses which would have helped their

flight. How easily can the Lord make the heart of the stoutest quake, and how vain and mad a thing it is for anyone to defy Him!

There was a realization, as the lepers went about, that they should really be sharing this news and not keeping it to themselves. Sadly, when we read a little more, there was no recognition of the divine hand in this. There was no bowing and no appreciation of the miracle that had been wrought to preserve the people, no realization of their deep sense of need before God.

Perhaps there is a challenge here for some of us. Many of us do not have to worry where the next meal will come from. There is a welfare state and provision available. Sadly, there is no giving of thanks for what we have.

This nation, Israel, that had known God lead them out of the land of Egypt and lead them through the wilderness into the Promised Land, had forgotten His mighty works and paid no attention to the prophet. They were quick to blame God and the prophet of God for what had come to pass. Why is this? As Solomon reminds us, 'there is no new thing under the sun', Eccles. 1. 9; the heart of man does not change.

At this point, the lepers took the message to the city. They came and told the porter of the city. They told the message clearly as to what they had witnessed and left it with them to decide what they wanted to do with the message. It is interesting to note that the message was not seen with the sceptic's eye, noted in the opening verses. The message was digested, discussed and then disseminated.

When the message reached the king, he was less than impressed. He thought that it was a trap. He did not suspect the gracious hand of God was at work. Some might say he acted perfectly naturally, as a king should. The news was too good to be true, so therefore it must be a lie. Consistent with what we have discovered of this unbelieving king in this and the previous chapter, he

did not recognize the voice of the Lord and therefore he rejected the message.

The men went out to see if the message was true. The message was to 'go and see'. They went out and returned with the good news. They had witnessed the goodness the lepers had seen and so came and told the city and the king. What was the result? The word of the Lord came to pass as spoken by the prophet and the people spoiled the tents and had provision, and the cost of food was as Elisha had said.

The word of the Lord will surely come to pass! This is true of every word. Paul wrote to Titus, 'Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began', Titus 1. 1, 2. Men may scoff at it; kings may not believe it, even when its definite fulfilment is declared to them, but that does not affect its truth. Solomon said, 'Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his

people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant', 1 Kgs. 8. 56.

The unguarded gate, vv. 17-20

The lord was given charge of the gate, but the message of Elisha solemnly came to pass. He was told that he would see and not taste, and so it was; he was trodden underfoot as the people came out of the city.

How sad to think of this man! He heard the words of the prophet and rejected them. Then he saw them come to pass but was not able to partake thereof and died.

So ends the chapter of God graciously providing for His people. It started with sadness and unbelief. It ends too with sadness and, indeed, a warning.

In like manner, God will yet answer the scepticism and blasphemous scoffing of this degenerate age. The great of this world may laugh at the Lord's servants now, but, in eternity, they will gnash their teeth in anguish. This sequel completes the symbolic picture, showing as it does the doom of the reprobate. The gospel is a 'savour of death unto death', as well as 'of life unto life', 2 Cor. 2. 16. Unbelievers will 'see' the elect feasting with Christ, as the rich man saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, but they shall not partake thereof.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the faith of the prophet as he speaks the word to the people, even in the difficult circumstances that were about him. We have seen the provision that God made for the people despite the unbelief of their leaders. We noted too, at the end, the awful and solemn words that came to pass, in that the man saw, and died. So, too, we see the awful judgement that will come to pass in this world for those who do not believe. Should this not spur us all on to preach the gospel and encourage people to 'flee from the wrath to come', Matt. 3. 7?



THINGS THAT CONCERN US

PHILIPPIANS

By **FRED WHITELOCK** Warrington, England

4

Your faith, 2. 17

The apostle is here referring to the effective outcome of their salvation, their faith having been worked out in them by giving evidence of it in their lives. Because of this, he would count it a joy to be a sacrifice, as one who is poured out as a drink offering, on account of his sufferings experienced because of them. The Philippians were the offerers, their faith in action displaying the sacrifice; the apostle was the drink offering. In this aspect, he is speaking of his approaching death as a martyr, 2 Tim. 4. 6.

In David's day, men broke through the Philistine ranks to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem and, because they had virtually sacrificed their lives as a demonstration of their allegiance to him, he poured out the water onto the ground as a sacrifice unto the Lord, 2 Sam. 23. 15, 16.

It is this which the apostle has in mind as he speaks to the saints at Rome, particularly as he reflects upon his service to the Lord, 'That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost', Rom. 15. 16.

The example of those who so willingly and sacrificially give of themselves to the Lord in service and faithfulness provokes the question as to our behaviour. A beautiful commendation that puts us all to shame, is that which Paul gives concerning a couple, Aquila and Priscilla, of whom he says, have 'for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles', Rom. 16. 3, 4. This truly was love for the Lord and for His people. May we feel our exercise and, in true love for the Lord, give ourselves wholeheartedly to Him.

Your state, 2. 19, 20

The idea here is the welfare of the saints in Philippi. It is their spiritual welfare that is of paramount importance to the apostle as he writes to them. He wants to know what spiritual progress they have made since he last wrote to them, further proof of his endeavour for the saints in their furtherance in spiritual things. Additionally, there is expressed the confidence that the apostle has in Timothy, his son in the faith, in that he too had a deep interest in the saints there in Philippi.

This is why the chapter is so full of the examples presented before them of the Lord, Paul himself, Timothy and Epaphroditus. He is underlining the following aspects of character:

- **Loving, v. 2** – the same kind of love that the Lord showed to each of us in willingly going to the cross that we might be saved.
- **Not proud, v. 3** – Where would we be if it were not for the grace of God in saving us? We should remember the words of the wise man who said, 'Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall', Prov. 16. 18.
- **Humble, v. 3** – Our blessed Lord, 'Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God', v. 6. But note the next verse, 'But made himself of no reputation'; that, with all the verses that follow, is true humility.
- **Unselfish, v. 4** – the very One to whom are all things, and by whom all things subsist, is the One who gave His all for you and me. Why are we so selfish towards one another?
- **Committed, v. 8** – Let us not forget either, that our blessed

Lord, with all the horrors of Calvary, committed Himself completely to bring about our salvation.

Drawing from these examples, the apostle was looking to the saints to confirm their calling and election. This is the very same outcome that Peter in his Epistle was seeking, 2 Pet. 1. 3-8.

What progress have I made? What progress have you made? These words are a challenge to us. May we apply ourselves to these aspects of development and growth. Do we show any real care for our fellow brethren and sisters in the assembly where we are? How different things might be if the virtues underlined by these examples were expressed by us!

Your messenger, 2. 25, 26

Epaphroditus:

1. 'my brother' – family of God.
2. 'companion in labour' – fellow worker.
3. 'fellow soldier' – fighting the same battle.
4. 'your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants' – fellow servant.
5. 'he longed after you all' – fervent in his love.
6. Faithful steward; he fulfilled his commission – he delivered the things they had sent to Paul, 4. 18.

In other words, he enjoyed working **with** others.

Note further that we can see he was working **for the good of others**:

- a) His selflessness – he thought of Paul, not himself.
- b) His sacrifice – he exhausted himself on behalf of others.
- c) His service – he ministered to Paul and on behalf of the assembly.

What a commendation! How lovely each assembly would be if all the saints strove to be like Epaphroditus: worshipping, walking and working together in absolute harmony with each other. This involves being unselfish, having no self-important pride or selfish ambition to look good in the eyes of men. Would it not be the greatest commendation to hear

the Lord say in that coming day when we stand before the Judgement Seat, 'Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord', Matt. 25. 23?

Your lack of service, v. 30

The apostle was not castigating the saints in this case for any lack of effort on their behalf. Far from it! He was always grateful for the ways in which this assembly had endeavoured to help him. They had known of the apostle's situation and had, as an assembly, purposed that one of their own should travel to Rome with their gift to encourage and help the servant in prison.

Epaphroditus did, as their representative, what they were unable to do because of their distance from Rome, 4. 18. This is the same idea as in the case of Stephanas and

Fortunatus in 1 Corinthians chapter 16 verse 17, and with Onesimus in Philemon verse 13.

It is understandable when we do not have the means or opportunity to minister to the needs of others at times. However, it is extremely sad when we know that there is a desperate and urgent need to help a brother or sister, and we do nothing, which is tantamount to refusing to help. The big question which John underlines in this respect is very searching, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him', 1 John 3. 17-19.

Also, in ministering to other saints, even though they may be physically unreachable, we should prayerfully consider the difficulties encountered by others who endeavour, and are entrusted, to bring our gift to them. Such sacrifices, whether it be in transmitting our gift, or in travelling rough and dangerous terrain to encourage and help these dear servants of God, should always be appreciated, and these believers borne up in prayer. 'For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister', Heb. 6. 10.

The appreciation of this aspect is further clarified in chapter 4 verse 17 as that which is to their reward at the Judgement Seat of Christ.



Consummate Comforters

By **DAVID BRAUCH** Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, USA

On Sunday evening, the 5th of April 2020, Queen Elizabeth II delivered a message of solidarity and hope to the people of the United Kingdom. This was despite the fact that the United Kingdom was struggling to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and Prime Minister Boris Johnson had contracted the virus. 'Today we are tackling this disease, and I want to reassure you that if we remain united and resolute, then we will overcome it'. These are some of the words she used in her brief address. Her demeanour and speech manifested modest dignity and insight resulting from a life dedicated to the nation's highest ideals in good times and bad. According to the press, her address served to comfort many in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. This was the fourth time that the queen had spoken to the nation in a time of turmoil or sorrow.

Since the beginning of time the Godhead has also manifested much concern for the comfort of people, especially the godly. Down through the centuries, this ministry was accomplished either directly by the Godhead or using surrogates, for example, prophets. This contrasts with the efforts of some humans. Take, for example, Job's three friends who came together to provide this ministry to him after his life was turned upside down. After some of their attempts to 'console' him, Job responded, 'Miserable comforters are ye all', Job 16. 2!

Sprinkled throughout the Old Testament are verses that have brought consolation, not only to saints then, but to those down through the centuries. One that has particularly uplifted me, and others too, is Isaiah chapter 41 verse 10, which states, 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness'. Incidentally, 'Fear not!' is the most repeated command in the Bible. Theologian OGILVIE, author of *Facing the Future without Fear*, even claimed that there are 366 'fear nots' in the Bible, one for every

day of the year, including Leap Year! God doesn't want us to go a single day without hearing His word of comfort: 'Fear not!'

Soon after beginning His earthly ministry, and in declaring the so-called beatitudes to His followers, the Lord Jesus promised, 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted', Matt. 5. 4. BARNES writes that 'this [statement] is capable of two meanings: either, those are blessed who are afflicted with the loss of friends [I would add 'relatives'] or possessions, or they that mourn over sin'.² Many today are mourning the loss of their job and/or savings. Still others are mourning wasted years of living for self or for committing particular sins repeatedly.

During His three-year ministry, our Lord demonstrated, on a number of occasions, that He could deliver this important commodity of comfort to those who were filled with fear – a few examples are:

- Two scary situations where the twelve are in a boat that is ready to sink on the Sea of Galilee;
- The possibility of being stoned by the Jewish religious leaders,

as was the case with the woman caught in adultery;

- The loss of a loved one, as in the cases of the widow of Nain and Lazarus of Bethany.

When our Lord's earthly ministry was nearing its end, He assured His disciples that there would be a continuity of divine help and comfort for them, in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Lord stated, 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you', John 14. 16, 17. The word 'Comforter' [*Parakletos*] means one who comes along one's side, as Philip the evangelist did to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Sometime later, the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, assuring the believers of still another divine comforter, 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble [tribulation], by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God', 2 Cor. 1. 3, 4.

VINCENT in his *Word Studies in the New Testament* wrote, 'All is better rendered every: the God of every (every type of) consolation'.³ GUZIK in his *Enduring Word Bible Commentary* wrote that 'the words all comfort in this passage come from the ancient Greek word *paraklesis*. The idea behind this word for comfort in the New Testament is always more than soothing sympathy. It has the idea of strengthening, of helping, of making strong'.⁴

However, we should note that we believers are not only to pray that the members of the Godhead will minister to the sick and sorrowing. We are to be willing to engage in comforting them ourselves, using the same means that brought us comfort.

How sad it is that our Lord who

delivered this precious commodity of comfort to His own was deprived of it on the cross. Sadly, our Lord went through a time when He received no comfort during the most excruciating experience ever – the worst of them all. Psalm 69 is a Messianic psalm containing portions that do not apply to the author King David but rather his namesake, the Son of David.

Verse 21 is an example of this, ‘They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink’. This was literally fulfilled on the cross, see Matthew chapter 27 verse 34. I believe that verse 20 also speaks about our Lord during His crucifixion, it reads, ‘Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and

for comforters, but I found none’. He was utterly bereft of comfort. Why? ‘His disciples forsook Him and fled; the priests, scribes, and common people, that attended Him at the cross, mocking Him; the thieves that were crucified with Him reviled Him; and God hid His face from Him; only a few women stood afar off and lamented’.⁵

All but one of His eleven disciples at that time had disappeared, seeking their own safety. Matthew chapter 27 verses 55 and 56 read, ‘And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children’. No

doubt from that distance any words of comfort from them couldn’t be heard. However, there was a time when His mother, Mary Magdalene and Mary the wife of Cleopas, along with John, the son of Zebedee, were standing by the cross, John 19. 25-27. Perhaps they had tried to console Him but, probably, anything they said was being drowned out by the blaspheming, mocking, and reviling by not only the crowd but by the two thieves that were crucified with Him. Nor were any angelic beings ‘there’ for Him as comforters at that juncture of time. Why? It was because our Lord was paying the penalty for our sin. Note that, in spite of the dearth of comforters during the six hours on the cross, He provided comfort to the repentant thief, assuring him that he would be with Himself in paradise [heaven] that very day.

Do you recall what were the first recorded words spoken on the resurrection morning? The angel at the opened and empty tomb said to the women who came to anoint Christ’s dead body with spices, ‘Fear not ye [be comforted]: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay’, Matt. 28. 5, 6.

Let me conclude with a most encouraging verse from the Epistles, highlighting the Godhead’s past and present comforting ministry in our lives, respectively. ‘Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish [strengthen] you in every good word and work’, 2 Thess. 2. 16, 17.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.soulshpherd.org/fear-not-365-days-a-year/>.
- 2 ALBERT BARNES, *Notes on the Whole Bible*, found here: <https://e-sword.net>.
- 3 MARVIN VINCENT, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, found here: <https://e-sword.net>.
- 4 DAVID GUZIK, *Enduring Word Bible Commentary*, found here: <https://e-sword.net>.
- 5 JOHN GILL, *Exposition of the Bible*, found here: <https://e-sword.net>.



JESUS THE SON OF ABRAHAM

By **REX TROGDON** Pineville, USA

The children's chorus goes, 'Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had Father Abraham'. And it is true. After all, the first two letters of his name, 'Ab', join to provide the first word in STRONG's *Hebrew Concordance*. It means, '**father**'. Expanding 'Ab' into 'Abram' also expands the meaning to, '**exalted father**'. When God changed his name to Abraham, the added syllable increased its meaning to, '**father of a multitude**'. But if we were to count all the sons born to Abraham, the most we come up with is only eight. These are Ishmael by Hagar, Isaac by Sarah, and six sons born to him by Keturah. However, for our theme, we are interested in the One who bears the title, 'the son of Abraham', Matt. 1. 1.

'The son of Abraham' is unique in that it appears in the first verse of the New Testament, in the genealogy recorded in Matthew's Gospel. It is used about the Lord Jesus Christ, only one other time in the Bible, in the genealogy recorded by Luke.

How is it that Abraham's claim to fame as the **father of a multitude**, culminates in the One who is called 'the son of Abraham'? It all started when the God of glory appeared to him in Mesopotamia. He brought him into Canaan and there made a promise that He would make of Abraham 'a great nation', and that through him 'all families of the earth' would be blessed, Gen. 12. 1-3. We can follow the record through the birth of Isaac, Jacob, the twelve patriarchs, the family of seventy who went down into Egypt for four hundred years, and the great nation that emerged out of bondage. God's promise to Abraham was partially fulfilled.

The fullness of the promise would be realized centuries later. Although Abraham was well advanced in years, God reassured His servant that He would make his descendants like 'the dust of the earth', like 'the stars

of heaven', and like the sand on the seashore, Gen 13. 16; 22. 17. These poetic expressions must have amazed him, causing him to ponder the greatness of God's plan, but there came a point at which God tested Abraham and took him past the dust, and stars, and sand, and brought before him his son, Isaac, Gen. 22.

And God said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you', 22. 2 NKJV. The Mount Moriah experience was the test that proved Abraham's faith, and gave a preview of what God would do to fulfil His promise.

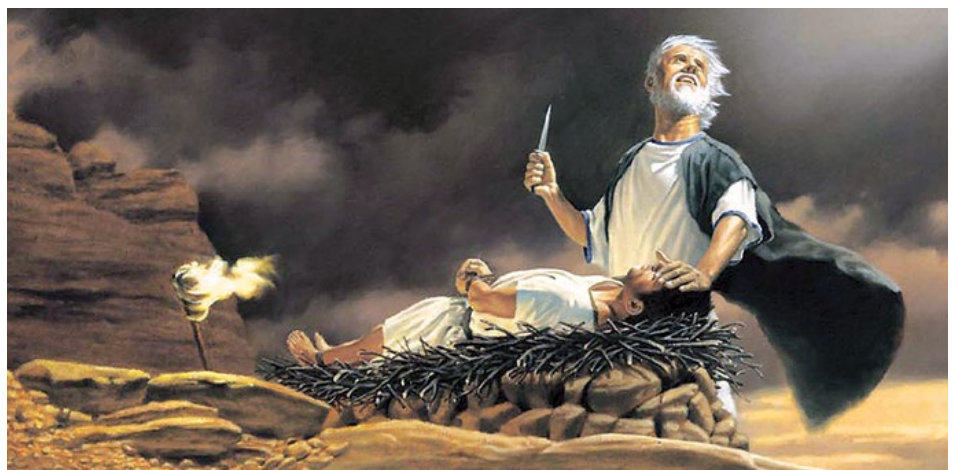
Isaac prefigured the Lord Jesus carrying the cross, as he carried the wood for the sacrifice and submitted himself unto death. 'He said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together', vv. 7, 8. When Abraham lifted his knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, 'Abraham, Abraham . . . Do not lay your hand on the lad', vv. 11, 12 NKJV. And we read that Abraham called the name of that place, 'Jehovah-jireh' meaning, 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen', v. 14.

What was seen in the mount of the Lord? In John chapter 8 verse 56, the Lord Jesus explained, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad'. Of course, the Jews were perplexed at this statement, and tried to reason out how He could have seen Abraham and was not yet fifty years old. They could not understand how the Son of Abraham could be older than father Abraham. The answer was simple, yet profound. Jesus said, 'Before Abraham was, I am', v. 58.

Going back to that scene on Mount Moriah, God swore an oath by Himself to Abraham saying, 'in blessing I will bless thee, and . . . in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed', Gen. 22. 17, 18. This was the final promise God made to Abraham, and Abraham was fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform, Rom. 4. 21.

How is it that Abraham could become the father of many nations? Galatians chapter 3 verse 16 explains that the key is **the Seed**, the Son. It states, 'Now to Abraham and **his seed** were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, **And to thy seed**, which is Christ'.

It is through this One, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Abraham, that those who believe become part of the **many nations** who through Abraham-like faith, receive the promise. Romans chapter 4 verse 16 says it best, 'it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed'. From one Seed, Christ, to all the seed, all those who believe, this promise is given and is still being fulfilled to this day.



Song of Solomon

By **WARREN HENDERSON** Chippewa Falls, USA

Introduction

Originally, this song derived its Hebrew title from verse 1, 'The song of songs', but later it became identified with its author, the 'Song of Solomon'. The repetition of 'song' in the first verse indicates that Solomon considered this book his most important literary work. What is the topic of the greatest song that Solomon penned? The security and exhilaration of marital love!

At this present time, the divine institution of marriage is under immense attack. Not only are some in our postmodern culture trying to redefine what marriage is, many have concluded that it is an archaic tradition which is no longer relevant. Consequently, a smaller percentage of people are entering into that sacred covenant and, of those who do, fewer are staying married.

God's original design for marriage was affirmed by the Lord Jesus: one man and one woman committed to each other until death separates them, Matt. 19. 3-8. Unfortunately, Old Testament history shows that divorce had become commonplace among God's covenant people long before Christ's earthly sojourn, Mal. 2. 14-16. As evidenced in Solomon's own life, another departure from God's marital order was polygamy. In ancient Jewish culture, it was not uncommon for a man to take a second wife, especially if his first wife could not bear him children, 1 Sam. 1. Reigning kings usually took several wives to ensure a lasting posterity and, hopefully, a long dynasty.

In this song, Solomon is not only acknowledging the importance of the marital commitment, but also the intimate lifetime companionship that God desires a married couple to share. These vibrant realities needed to be rediscovered in Solomon's day, and we need them reaffirmed today also.

Purpose

While the main theme of this book centres on the love shared between

'the beloved' and the Shulamite maiden, the specific purpose of the book depends on what perspective it is being evaluated from. From a literary standpoint, the entire poem extols marital love. If we analyse it from a dispensational standpoint, the special union between Jehovah and His covenant people, the nation of Israel, is paramount. If interpreted by the fuller work of redemption, as revealed in the New Testament, then we can see the marvellous union between Christ and the church. Lastly, if reading the book from a spiritual standpoint, we understand that communion between the redeemed and the blessed Saviour is to be maintained in purity and faithfulness.

Divisions/Outline

Throughout the song, the 'beloved' would either be Solomon or, perhaps, the shepherd-lover, while the Shulamite maiden is his 'love'. Regardless of which dramatic interpretation one accepts as correct, the following generic outline by HAMILTON SMITH seems to accommodate the various views of this book:

The Assurance of Love, 1. 2 – 2. 7.
The Awakening of Love, 2. 8 – 3. 5.
The Communion of Love, 3. 6 – 5. 1.
The Restoration of Love, 5. 2 – 6. 12.
The Witness of Love, 6. 13 – 8. 4.
The Triumph of Love, 8. 5-14.¹

If Solomon is the Shulamite's 'beloved', then the progression in the relationship would be: a courtship, 1. 2 – 3. 5; followed by a wedding, 3. 6 – 5. 1; and the maturing of the marital relationship, 5. 2 – 8. 4. If the shepherd-lover is the 'beloved', then the Shulamite reminisces, expresses her desire to be with him, tells others about him, or secretly communicates with him, while in Solomon's court, 1. 2-8; 2. 8 – 3. 5; 4. 7 – 6. 3; during this time Solomon's attempts to woo her to himself fail, 1. 9 – 2. 6; 3. 6 – 4. 6; 6. 4 – 7. 10; and, finally, she is reunited and married to her shepherd-lover, 7. 11 – 8. 14.

Authorship

The book's title and the first verse confirm that King Solomon was the author of this splendid book. His name is also mentioned throughout the song.² The writer is also referred to as a 'king'.³

Given Solomon's marital extravagance, 1 Kgs. 11. 3, we may question why he composed this poem, especially after repeatedly warning his own son not to be overcome with sensual lusting in Proverbs. Clearly, Solomon did not exercise wisdom in this aspect of his life; he plainly ignored Moses' warning against a king marrying many women, Deut. 17. 17. In the Song of Songs, Solomon apparently wants to set the matter straight; God's design for marriage is one man and one woman bound by a covenant for life.

Date and historical setting

Since Solomon reigned as Israel's king from 971 to 932 BC, his literary works would have been composed during that timeframe. Given that the Shulamite is a young maiden, it is suggested that Solomon wrote the Song of Solomon in his early adult years. Proverbs was likely written in his middle years and Ecclesiastes near the end of his life as he reflected on all his experiences.

Analysis of the book

Speaking about the book's divine inspiration, H. A. IRONSIDE highlights how the Song of Solomon affirms what God's design for marriage was to be for the nation of Israel:

'Many of the Jewish teachers thought of it simply as designed of God to give a right apprehension of conjugal love. They thought of it as the glorification of the bliss of wedded life, and if we conceived of it from no higher standpoint than this, it would mean that it had a right to a place in the canon. Wedded life in Israel represented the very highest and fullest and deepest affection at a time when, in the nations surrounding Israel, woman was looked upon as a mere chattel, as a slave, or as the object of man's pleasure to be discarded when and as he pleased. But it was

His banner over
me was love

The glories of the bridegroom

The chiefest among ten thousand
'A greater than Solomon is here', Matt. 12. 42.

'My beloved is white and ruddy.'
'Brightness of his glory', Heb. 1. 3.
the beauty of his humanity
1 Sam 16. 12.

'His head is as the most fine gold.'
'The head of all principality
and power', Col. 2. 10.

'His locks are bushy, and black.'
'Thou art the same, and thy
years shall not fail', Heb 1. 12.

'His eyes are as the eyes of doves.'
'He beheld the city,
and wept over it', Luke 19. 41.

'His lips like lilies.'
'Never man spake like this man',
John. 7. 46.

'His hands are as gold rings.'
'Neither shall any man pluck
them out of my hand',
John 10. 28.

'His belly is as bright ivory.'
'A body hast thou
prepared me', Heb. 10. 5.

*'His legs are as pillars of marble
set in sockets of fine gold.'*
'Be strong in the Lord, and in
the power of his might'.
Eph. 6. 10.

'His countenance is as Lebanon.'
'in all things he might have
the preeminence', Col. 1. 18.

'His mouth is most sweet.'
'O taste and see that the
Lord is good', Ps. 34. 8.

'And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five', 1 Kgs. 4. 32

'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No'

My well beloved Their courts

Ch 1. Love for her beloved, 'Tell me, O thou

Ch 2. Led by her beloved, 'He brought me

Ch 3. Longing for her beloved, 'I will see

Ch 4. Linked with her beloved in marriage

Ch 5. Listening for her beloved, 'The ch

Ch 6. Locating her beloved in the garden

Ch 7. Lodging with her beloved in the f

Ch 8. Looking for her beloved to come

Her beloved is seen as

The chief shepherd, 1. 7 - drawn to where

The shepherd king, 1. 12 - where he sits.

A superior son, 2. 3 - how he compares.

A faithful friend, 5. 16 - enjoying his com

A young deer, 8. 14 - looking for his quick

'Love is

'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle

'Give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself read

ship Ch 1-3 / Their wedding Ch 3-4 / Their eternal relationship Ch 5-8

thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest'.

me to the banqueting house'.

ack him whom my soul loveth'.

ge, 'Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse'.

ieifest among ten thousand'.

n, 'Whither is thy beloved gone?'

ield, 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field'.

quickly, 'Make haste, my beloved'.

Oh I am my Beloved's
And my Beloved's mine!
He brings a poor, vile sinner
Into His 'house of wine';
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

*'All thy
garments
smell of
myrror,
and aloes,
and cassia,
out of the
ivory
palaces,
whereby
they have
made
thee glad'.*

Ps 45:8

Solomon
(peace)

Shulamite
(the peaceful)
Shulamite is
the feminine
form of Solomon.

The brides of scripture

he feeds.

Eve The first bride

Rebekah The fetched bride

Rachel The favoured bride

Asenath The fruitful bride

Ruth The foreign bride

Shulamite The fragrant bride

The Church The future bride

pany.

x return.

The bride eyes not her garments,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory
But on my King of grace;
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.

[ANNE R. COUSIN, 1824-1906]

'strong as death', 8.6

height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord', Rom 8:35-39

for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
e, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish', Eph. 5. 25-27.
y. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white', Rev. 19. 7, 8.

otherwise in Israel. The Jewish home was a place where love and tenderness reigned, and no doubt this little book had a great deal to do with lifting it to that glorious height'.⁴

The Song of Solomon has always been a part of the Hebrew Bible, though a tradition developed among orthodox Jews did not permit a man under thirty years of age to read it because of its descriptive sensual content, e.g., 1. 12-16. Regardless of its interpretation, this entire poem is a song of enduring devotion and expressed passion between a man and a woman who are unconditionally committed to each other – this upholds God's original design for marriage, Gen. 2. 24, 25.

Dramatic observations

Some merely see the Song of Solomon as a collection of detached romantic poetry, which lacks a central storyline. So, while portions of the book might be fitting for a wedding ceremony, there is no literal meaning or application to be derived from the composition. The fact that the same characters, figures of speech, and expressions are present throughout the entire book defies this conclusion. On the contrary, conservative scholars observe a central narrative involving two or possibly three main participants depending on how it is understood.

There are two main dramatic understandings. First, Solomon, likely disguised as a lowly shepherd, interacts with a young, beautiful Shulamite maiden, and develops a relationship with her. He later reveals his identity in a surprise visit and whisks her away to the palace to be his bride, thus fulfilling his promise to her. Second, the Shulamite maiden has already committed herself to a shepherd-lover, but Solomon sequesters her in his palace against her will. Solomon's repeated attempts to woo her fail, and she is eventually reunited with her beloved, whom she then marries. In this view, the Shulamite bride is the heroine of the poem, and Solomon, the author, is the villain. This author prefers the former and less awkward viewpoint.

Whether the Shulamite's beloved is actually Solomon, or a shepherd-

lover cannot be proven. The latter interpretation suggests that Solomon was a kidnapper; such a perspective taints the marital theme of the book. Furthermore, all the Shulamite's romantic expectations seem fulfilled by Solomon's surprise appearance at her home and then their departure in the royal chariot to his Jerusalem palace, 3. 1-10; 6. 12. Why would Solomon say to her, 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away', if they did not share a mutual affection, 2. 13 NKJV? With that opinion stated, the author readily agrees with JACK DEERE's assessment, 'Probably no other book of the Bible has such a variegated tapestry of interpretation'.⁵ It is doubtful that Bible students will agree on the interpretation of the Song of Solomon on this side of heaven, but what is asserted is that marriage, as God designed it, is a lifetime covenant of companionship which is characterized by intimacy and unwavering commitment.

Thematic interpretation

There are three main thematic interpretations of the Song of Solomon: allegorical, literal, and prophetic. Because of the vivid sensual language, many ancient scholars viewed the entire book as an allegory, tracing the history of the Jewish nation from its conception to the coming of the Messiah, their Beloved. This type of allegorical meaning is represented in other portions of scripture, such as Ezekiel chapter 16.

As already discussed, the literal interpretation suggests that the book is an actual love story, which confirms God's design for marriage. Commentator ROY ZUCK holds this position:

'Some Bible teachers view the Song of Songs as an extended allegory to depict God's relationship to Israel, or Christ's relationship to the church. However, since there is no indication in the book that this is the case, it is preferable to view the book as extolling human love and marriage'.⁶

Yet, nearly all of the prophetic books in the Old Testament foretell of a future day when the Messiah will come and restore the nation of Israel

to Himself. From this prophetic viewpoint, Jehovah is the faithful husband waiting for the restoration of His unfaithful wife, Israel, Jer. 3. 8; Hos. 3. But beyond this fact, there also seems to be a prophetic application for the church, which Paul states was a mysterious truth not clearly revealed in Solomon's day, Eph. 3. 1-11. From this vantage point, the 'daughters of Jerusalem' in the song represent the Jewish nation, which is presently spiritually estranged from Jehovah, while the church is the spotless bride patiently waiting to be united with her Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 1. 6. Like the Shulamite, the church is also waiting for a surprise visit of her Bridegroom to snatch her away to His superb palace! This interpretation would agree with the teachings of the Lord Jesus concerning future events involving the church, the bride returning to the earth with Christ at the end of the tribulation period, Rev. 19, and the refined Jewish nation who receive the Holy Spirit, the virgins with oil, who are patiently waiting to receive Him also, Matt. 25. 1-13. The marriage feast is then enjoyed by all believers.

The Song of Solomon is a marital expression of the devotion and commitment between a husband and his Shulamite bride. As already mentioned, several interpretations of the main characters and thematic viewpoint are possible. However, it seems most fitting to assume a literal explanation of King Solomon and a young Shulamite woman being mutually consenting lovers who maintained moral purity in their relationship before and after they were married.

Endnotes

- 1 HAMILTON SMITH, *The Song of Songs*, STEM Publishing: <http://stempublishing.com/authors/smith/canticles.html>.
- 2 Ch. 1. 5; 3. 7, 9, 11; 8. 11.
- 3 Ch. 1. 4, 12; 3. 9, 11; 7. 5.
- 4 H. A. IRONSIDE, *Addresses on the Song of Solomon*, Loizeaux Brothers, 1950, ch. 1.
- 5 JACK DEERE, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and Roy Zuck, Victor Books, 1986, pg. 1009.
- 6 ROY B. ZUCK, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, Cook Communications, 1991.

BALAAM

Numbers 23. 13-26 (continued)

5

By **RICHARD CATCHPOLE** South Norwood, London, England

But still there is more:

c. The divine power, v. 22

‘God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn’. In Numbers chapter 22 verse 5, Balak described them as a people ‘come out from Egypt’; here Balaam says who it was that brought them out, ‘God [Heb. *El* – God singular – the mighty God] brought them out’. While initially looking back to their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and what God had done for them in the past, the sense of the Hebrew text actually goes beyond that. Their deliverance from Egypt was but the first step; the process was ongoing, and they moved forward with the strength of a unicorn.¹ DARBY in his *New Translation* says, ‘buffalo’ while others translate as ‘auroch’ or ‘wild ox’. In Job chapter 39 verses 9 to 11, the Lord says to Job, ‘Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? Or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?’ The Lord contrasts the ‘unicorn’ with the ‘domesticated oxen’ with which the farmer ploughed his land and threshed his grain and the question the Lord addressed to Job raised the impossibility of men harnessing the strength of the unicorn to employ it in some useful purpose.² Thus, the unicorn is figurative of invincible, irresistible strength. We remember Balak wanted to curse the people so they would be weakened and he could then defeat them in battle, but the very man he employed to curse them proclaims their invincible might. In a future day, the remnant of Israel, empowered by their Messiah, will ‘tread down the wicked’ who will be as ‘ashes’ (the result of the fire of God’s judgement) under the soles of their feet, Mal. 4. 3. It was a sad day when, having arrived at the borders of the promised land, they fearfully spoke of

their enemies as giants and themselves as grasshoppers, saying ‘we be not able to go up against the people for they are stronger than we’, Num. 13. 31. They didn’t lack the power. What they lacked was faith in the One who brought them out of Egypt. Writing to Timothy in his last recorded letter, Paul says, ‘God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God’, 2 Tim. 1. 7, 8. Do we lack power or is it a lack of faith?

d. The divine protection vv. 23, 24

Balaam confesses, ‘Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel’. The heathen nations resorted to spells, incantations, enchantments, divination, and various magical arts in seeking supremacy over their enemies. Here, Balaam asserts that all are totally impotent against the people of God, adding, ‘according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!’ The Septuagint (LXX) translates the phrase ‘in season it shall be told to Jacob and Israel what God shall perform’. Understood thus the statement embraces great things that God was yet do for His people, things to be revealed in their divinely appointed time and that would be manifest in His acts, counsel and word. But, accepting the reading of the King James Version, the statement looks on to future events that will be recounted to subsequent generations of the nation who, as they hear, will exclaim, ‘What hath God wrought!’ Writing of those days, the prophet Isaiah says, ‘in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee’, Isa. 12. 4-6. Balaam continued, ‘Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain’. Again, looking on to future days, Micah chapter 5 verse 8 RV says, ‘the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and there is none to deliver’.

What a day it will be when they celebrate all that God has done for them and the fulfilment of His promise to bless them, their sins no longer remembered, their enemies defeated, the Lord dwelling in their midst, and their adoring exclamation, ‘What hath God wrought!’ But, in this present day of grace, as believers in Christ, ‘Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ’, surely we must say, ‘What hath God wrought?’



Endnotes

- 1 Some feel the pronoun ‘he’ refers to God, and that the power that was displayed in bringing the people out from Egypt in the past was with them still to bring them into the land and to crush their enemies. However, it seems that the pronoun is more likely a reference to the people themselves ‘brought out from Egypt’ and empowered by God.
- 2 D. J. NEWELL, *What the Bible teaches*, Job, John Ritchie, pg. 570.

CYRUS INGERSON SCOFIELD 1843-1921

By **BERT CARGILL** St. Monans, Scotland

The name C. I. Scofield will be recognized by many Christians as that of the man who gave us *The Scofield Reference Bible*. Of American origin, in some ways it is akin to, but quite different from, *The Englishman's Bible* which Thomas Newberry had produced several years earlier. Scofield's is a monumental work with accurate and helpful references and footnotes which distinguish and clarify some of the main themes in the Bible. The references are coherent and follow topics rather than words, traced from the first mention to the last to show the progressive unfolding of truth. Summaries and suggested subdivisions of individual books of the Bible are given throughout and these are helpful aids to personal study. It was first published in 1909 by Oxford University Press, then with a major revision in 1917 and another in 1967 when some archaic words in the King James Version were replaced by more current ones without altering the sense.

The paragraphs that follow describe something of Cyrus Scofield himself, now quite a controversial figure, as internet searches show. Some present-day assessments of the man are very negative, verging on defamation of character, raking up matters from his pre-conversion days. These almost all come from individuals and groups who disagree strongly with the dispensational teaching embedded in his work, and clearly set out in his earlier publication, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. It appears that their opposition to this teaching has given a distinctly negative bias to their opinion of this servant of the Lord, whose work has helped believers of all age groups for over 100 years. In 2009, marking the centenary of the first Scofield Bible, Todd Mangum and Mark Sweetnam published a well-researched book which contains a thorough and fair account of the man.¹

A turbulent early life

Cyrus Scofield was born on 19 August 1843 in Clinton Township, Michigan, USA, the seventh and last child of Elias and Abigail Scofield who were of English Puritan descent, and nominally Episcopalian in belief. His mother died three months after he

was born, but his father remarried and gave him a God-fearing upbringing and a good education. By 1861 he had gone to live with relatives in Lebanon, Tennessee. When the American Civil War broke out, he enlisted in the 7th Tennessee Infantry in the Confederate Army, and fought in several major battles. After a year, however, he deserted and escaped behind Union lines in Kentucky and, eventually, was able to settle in St. Louis, Missouri.

There, in 1866, he met and married eighteen-year-old Leontine Cerrè from a wealthy French Catholic family and they had two daughters and a son who died as a child. He was given work in the legal office of his brother-in-law, and began to study law. From there he moved to the St. Louis assessor's office before moving further away to Atchison, Kansas in late 1869. In 1871 he was elected to the Kansas House of Representatives, and, eventually, became District Attorney for Kansas at the age of 29, the youngest in the country. However, during these years his personal habits deteriorated into heavy drinking, and his professional life became scandalous due to dishonest financial transactions including forgery, so that he had to resign and was jailed.

By this time, he had also abandoned his wife and two daughters, and, in 1877, she obtained a legal separation. In 1883, she divorced him on grounds of desertion. He later married Hettie Hall von Wartz, with whom he had a son, Noel Paul in 1888. She became a faithful and helpful assistant in his future life's work.

A definite conversion

Before that, in 1879, a huge change occurred, when Scofield was saved by grace at the age of thirty-six. HENRY PICKERING records the details of his conversion.² One day a Christian colleague named Tom McPheeters was about to leave Scofield's office after transacting some business, when he stopped and said, 'I want to ask you why you are not a Christian?' After a pause, Scofield replied, 'Does not the Bible say something about drunkards having no place in Heaven? And I am a hard drinker . . . I do not recall ever having been shown just how to be a Christian'. Later Scofield described what happened as the two men went down on their knees in that office: 'Mine was a Bible conversion. From a well-worn Testament, McPheeters read to me the great Gospel passages (John 3:16; 6:47; 10:28; Acts 13:38, 39), and I received Jesus Christ as *my* Saviour, and the passion for drink was taken away'.

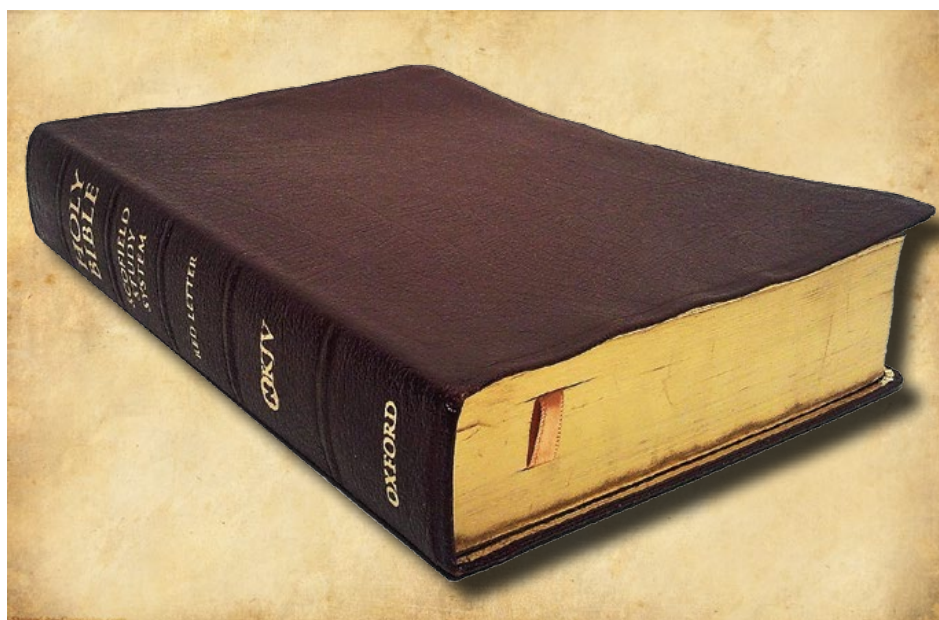
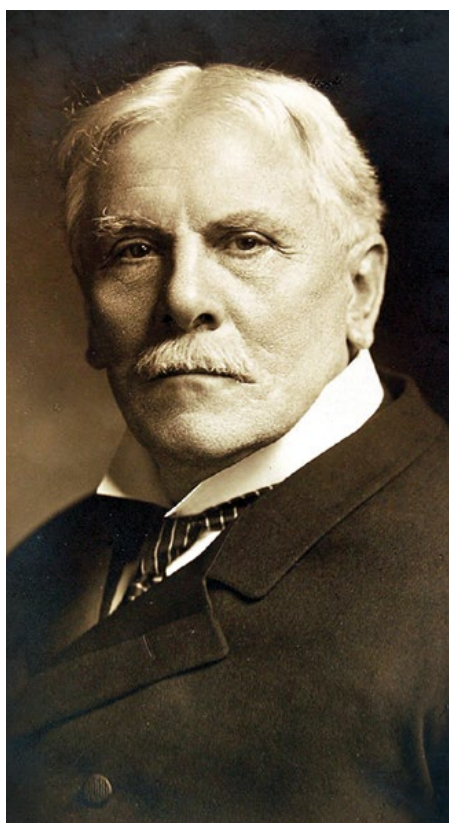
Soon after this, D. L. Moody had one of his gospel campaigns in St. Louis and Scofield assisted in organizing it. He also became secretary of the St. Louis YMCA. At this time, he was helped to maturity and was being taught by James Brookes, pastor of Walnut Street Presbyterian Church in St. Louis. Doubtless he was influenced by Brookes who held firmly to the dispensational teaching of J. N. Darby who had visited the United States several times between 1870 and 1877. Scofield joined the Pilgrim Congregational Church in St. Louis and became pastor of a new congregation at the Hyde Park Congregational Church there. In 1882, he moved to Dallas in Texas to take charge of a new mission church which grew from an attendance of fourteen to over 500, before he resigned in 1895.³ In 1888, he set out with remarkable clarity his own dispensational beliefs in *Rightly*

Dividing the Word of Truth, which closely follow those promoted by Darby.

A varied ministry

While at Dallas he had begun to develop a regular preaching ministry at Bible conferences. He also introduced a Bible correspondence course for willing students, which laid the foundation for the *Scofield Reference Bible* to come. At the Niagara Bible Conference in 1890 he met Hudson Taylor, and that pioneer's vision of missions led to Scofield founding the Central American Mission and the American Mission Society of Texas and Louisiana. He also directed the Southwestern School of the Bible in Dallas (now Dallas Theological Seminary, founded by Lewis Chafer) and helped to found Lake Charles College in Louisiana.

In 1895, Scofield left Dallas to re-join Moody, now in Massachusetts. He presided over the Northfield Bible Training School which Moody had founded, and it was here that Scofield decided to embark on his large literary project. He returned to Dallas in 1903, but most of his time was now given over to the work which this project entailed. It included trips to England and also Switzerland between 1904 and 1906 for study and research.



However, he developed chronic ill health which began to affect the progress of the work. Back in USA he moved between New York and Michigan with boxes of manuscripts to work on, now assisted by others. His wife Hettie cut and pasted the pages of the whole Bible into loose-leaf notebooks for notes to be added, and Ella Pohle collated and organized the paperwork. At one point a fire destroyed nearby premises, but the manuscripts stored in a tent were preserved intact. Before the work was finished, he had eight consulting editors, among whom were Arno Gaebelein and Arthur Pierson.⁴

At an earlier conference at Northfield, Scofield had met Robert Scott from the English publishers, Marshall, Morgan and Scott. Scott had contacts with McHenry Frowde, head of the Oxford Bible Publishing House, and the American branch of Oxford University Press became involved. The outcome was that this prestigious publisher has produced all the editions of the *Scofield Bible*, from the initial contract which was signed on 5 June 1907. So it was that after seven years' work, the first edition was published in 1909, with a revision following in 1917. It quickly became popular and influential doctrinally. Scofield's popularity as a conference speaker increased, but his health was already deteriorating quite seriously and his movements were restricted.

Substantial royalties from the work were used to purchase property, and Scofield, with his family, moved to

the New York City area. There he set up and supervised the New York Night School of the Bible where correspondence courses were used to help others, and, in 1914, he founded the Philadelphia School of the Bible (now Cairn University). Additional later achievements included the establishment of the New York School of the Bible and the Douglaston Community Church. At this time, he again changed affiliation, leaving the Congregational Church to join the Southern Presbyterians at Douglaston.

He attended his last service there on 22 May, 1921. One month before his seventy-eighth birthday, after a time of intense pain and during a spell of fierce summer heat, he passed away at 11am on Sunday, 24 July at his home in Douglastown, Long Island. The cause of death was given as cardiovascular renal disease. His funeral was held three days later at the First Baptist Church in nearby Flushing and he was buried in Flushing Cemetery. His wife Hettie was buried beside him two years later.

Endnotes

- 1 TODD MANGUM and MARK SWEETNAM, *The Scofield Bible, its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church*, Paternoster, 2009.
- 2 H. PICKERING. *Twice-Born Men: True Conversion Records of 100 Well-Known Men in All Ranks of Life*, Pickering & Inglis.
- 3 That First Congregational Church of Dallas is now called Scofield Memorial Church.
- 4 Full list given in the 1907 Edition of the Scofield Bible, and an updated list in the 1967 Edition.

The preservation of the Messianic line

Part 1

By **MERVYN WISHART** Newcastle, Northern Ireland

The first prophecy concerning the Messiah

‘And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel’, Gen. 3. 15.

- He will be the seed of the woman: He will be born of a virgin.¹
- He will be a man, ‘he shall crush thy head, and thou shalt crush his heel’, Gen. 3. 15 JND.
- He will be a descendant of Seth; Eve said, ‘God . . . hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew’, 4. 25.
- He will be of the seed of Abraham, ‘in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed’, 12. 3. ‘Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ’, Gal. 3. 16.
- He will be of the seed of Isaac, ‘in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed’, Gen. 26. 4.
- He will be of the seed of Jacob, ‘in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed’, 28. 14.
- He will be of the tribe of Judah, ‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be’, 49. 10.
- He will be the son of David, ‘Howbeit the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever’, 2 Chr. 21. 7. ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham’, Matt. 1. 1.

The attack of the serpent on the royal seed

By murder

‘Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him’, Gen. 4. 8. It is a sad mark against the human family that, of the first two brothers born, one became a murderer. It is important to note that it was not merely the result of a quarrel or disagreement between them. Cain was angry with God and jealous of his brother Abel, whose offering had been accepted.

The New Testament states clearly that Cain was under Satanic influence, ‘[He] was of that wicked one’, 1 John 3. 12. This was the first visible manifestation of the enmity that would rage for many generations between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. When Cain was born, Eve thought he would be the fulfilment of Genesis chapter 3 verse 15. She said, ‘I have gotten a man from the Lord’, Gen. 4. 1. When her third son was born, ‘[she] called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew’, v. 25. In spite of the murderous plot contrived by Satan against Abel, the seed of the promised Messiah was intact.

By attempted murder

David was anointed king by Samuel, 1 Sam. 16. 13. Immediately he became a prime target for the enemy. Goliath would have killed him, but the Lord gave him victory. The Lord preserved David from Saul’s javelin twice, 1 Sam. 18. 11, and a third time, 19. 10. When Saul sent messengers to his house to kill him, David made his escape through a window, vv. 11, 12.

There were those who would have killed the Lord Jesus before the arrival of God’s appointed time. In the precincts of the temple, ‘Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him’, John 10. 31. Following His public reading of the scriptures in Nazareth and His teaching that followed, the people ‘were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill . . . that they might cast him down headlong’, Luke 4. 28, 29.

By mixture

The godly line of Seth intermarried with the descendants of Cain, Gen. 6. 1-7; a tactic the devil would use again in succeeding generations.

When the children of Israel left Egypt, ‘a mixed multitude’ went with them, Exod. 12. 38.

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem from Babylon, the princes of Israel brought a report to him, ‘The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands . . . For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that **the holy seed** have mingled themselves with the people of those lands’, Ezra 9. 1, 2.

In spite of the devil’s plan, on each occasion God protected the line through which the Messiah would come.

In Nehemiah there was a recovery of the truth of separation, ‘And **the seed of Israel** separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins’, Neh. 9. 2. The genealogies recorded in Luke chapter 3 verses 23 to 38 and Matthew chapter 1 verses 1 to 16 were not altered from God’s original plan.

By massacre

There were at least three massacres of children recorded in scripture, each a direct attempt to halt the messianic line, and one that was planned but prevented in the days of Esther.

Pharaoh gave orders to the midwives, who cared for the Hebrew women in Egypt, to kill every male child born, Exod. 1. 15, 16. ‘But the

midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them', v. 17. Pharaoh then widened the scope of the edict, 'And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive', v. 22.

Speaking of these events, Stephen said, 'The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live', Acts 7. 19.

Ahaziah reigned as king of Judah for just one year. When he was killed, his mother, the wicked Athaliah, in order to prevent royal succession, killed the seed royal and assumed the position of queen herself. She reigned for six years in Judah. Unknown to her, when she killed the royal children, there was one who escaped. 'But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram . . . took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain. And he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years', 2 Kgs. 11. 2, 3. At the end of that time, when Joash was seven

years old, he was anointed king, and Jehoiada the priest and his sons announced his coronation, shouting, 'God save the king', v. 12. The line of the Messiah was reduced at one point to a single individual, a child of one year.

The onslaught of Satan against the seed of the woman increased in ferocity. The Lord Jesus was already born in Bethlehem, and the wise men from the east came searching for Him. They asked Herod for directions, and he told them when they found Him to bring him word. 'And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way', Matt. 2. 12.

The result was that Herod's fury was unleashed against the child population in the Bethlehem area. 'Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under', v. 16. An angel had appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him to take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, 'for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him', v. 13. Once again,

in frustrating the plan of Satan, the word of God in prophecy was fulfilled, 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt', Hos. 11. 1.

In the book of Esther, Haman was promoted by King Ahasuerus to be second in command in the land. He used his newly acquired power to plot the destruction of the Jews. A decree was published to all of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. 'And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day', Esther 3. 13.

The plan of the wicked Haman was thwarted by the intervention of Esther, who, at great risk to herself, interceded with King Ahasuerus. Haman was hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai the Jew. A new proclamation was sent to all the provinces, granting protection for the Jews and their families. The letter was sealed by the king's ring and sent out in his name, 8. 10.

Endnote

1 Gen. 3. 15; Isa. 7. 14; Luke 1. 31-34.



Priests and Levites

By **JOHN BENNETT** Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

It has always been God's desire to dwell amongst His people, to enjoy their fellowship and to receive their worship. This commenced in Eden and was demonstrated again in the tabernacle and then the temple, before being currently realized in the Church. However, in that desire God outlined every detail about the place where He would meet with His people. Neither Moses nor Solomon contributed anything to the design of either the tabernacle or the temple.

By exploring the subject of the priests and Levites, we will see that God dictates:

1. Where He meets with His people – tabernacle, temple, church;
2. When He meets with them – the set feasts of the Lord, church gatherings;
3. How He meets with them – on the basis of cleansing and sanctification;
4. Whom He allows to approach Him – every Jew, mediated by the priests and High Priest in particular; in a New Testament context, all believers (audibly represented by the men in collective gatherings).

As we consider something of the work of the priests and Levites, it is important to appreciate God's plan. We read in Exodus chapter 19 that God desired the whole nation to operate in a priestly capacity. In the plagues upon Egypt, Moses said to Pharaoh, 'We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters . . . for we must hold a feast unto the Lord', Exod. 10. 9. Yet, Israel soon corrupted God's design for them. While Moses was on Mount Sinai, receiving the Law, which clearly said, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image', 20. 3, 4, the people committed idolatry, pressing Aaron by saying, 'Up, make us gods, which shall go before us', 32. 1.

When Moses descended the mount and stood in the gate of the camp, crying, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' 32. 26, it was the tribe of Levi that

responded. While the history of this tribe, particularly their involvement in the slaughter of the Shechemites,¹ might have barred them from priestly activity, their valiant response to the call of God at the foot of Mount Sinai highlighted their faithfulness, and God in His sovereignty chose them for priestly service.²

From the choice of the Levites, the different families were also each given a designated task:

- The Merarites took responsibility for the outer shell of the tabernacle – the construction of the court as well as the shell of the inner tabernacle.
- The Gershonites took responsibility for the vessels associated with the service of the tabernacle.
- The Kohathites took responsibility for the vessels/furniture of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies. However, only the family of Aaron could handle the most holy elements, which were only given to the Kohathites once they were covered.

As we look at the New Testament pattern, we see God's purpose remains. All Christians are designated priests, although New Testament priests do not operate in a tabernacle or temple. Their worship is not associated with a physical building but with a spiritual house – the people that gather in that building. It is not made up of dead stones – bricks and mortar – but living stones, manifesting spiritual life through faith in Christ.³

A God of order

One of the other lessons we learn is that God is a God of order. He desired things to be done orderly in relation to the tabernacle and temple and that godly order extended into the detail. Those whom God had chosen had to operate in the designated way. The Merarites and Gershonites were given carts and oxen in which to transport their materials, but the Kohathites were specifically told that they must carry their materials by hand.⁴ This was crucial when David sought to bring the ark of the Lord back to Jerusalem. Using an ox cart, when God had specified that the Kohathites were to carry it, led to Uzzah reaching out his hand to steady the ark and being struck down for his actions.⁵

God has not changed and in the New Testament He still requires things to be done according to His pattern and in order. He is 'not the author of confusion'⁶ and this order reflects something of His character and person. Equally, as the Levites did not all do the same things, so, in the Church, God has given gifts for the accomplishment of His work. These gifts vary and we should all seek to determine what our gift is and then exercise it, doing what God wants of us. We have the complete canon of scripture in our hands and it is essential that we immerse ourselves in that word of God to move in accordance with His will.

A cleansed and sanctified people

We also need to emphasize godly order in relation to the sanctification of those who serve. God requires those who function in His service to be separated unto Himself, sanctified for His service. We cannot be 'split personalities', living as the world lives and then attending meetings on a Sunday. Whilst we are 'in the world', we are not 'of the world' – we live in it but should not be characterized and moulded by it.⁷

Priestly work

Having looked at who would serve and how they would serve, we come to why they served. The High Priest's focus was to minister to God – to bring the worship of the people of

God and offer it in the divinely appointed way. Thus, the offerings arising from the hearts of the people were channelled through the priest at the door of the tabernacle.⁸

The second object of the priesthood was to maintain the position of the people based on their redemption before God. To enable worship to ascend from the altar of the tabernacle, it needed a people who lived in the good of the redemption they had experienced at the time of Passover in Egypt.⁹

As we look at the New Testament pattern, we see similar truths. As believer priests, we are to offer up 'spiritual sacrifices', and such sacrifices are 'to God by Jesus Christ'. Whilst we have a meeting set aside for worship according to the scriptural pattern, we should all be in a constant state of worship, showing 'forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness', 1 Pet. 2. 9.

It is important to appreciate what worship really means. It should be 'acceptable to God'. For some the focus is upon the quality of the music, the professionalism of the band, the entertainment value of the presentation, and, sometimes, the quality of the lyrics. All of this has significant appeal to the human senses and emotions, and this can affect our judgement. We emphasize that the sole criterion which we must



use to decide is this: is it 'acceptable to God'? That can only be determined by a knowledge of the word of God.

Then, there is the matter of keeping ourselves in the good of the position into which we have been brought. As Ephesians puts it, we have been 'quickened . . . together with Christ . . . raised . . . up together, and made . . . [to] sit together in heavenly places in Christ', 2. 5, 6. But does our present state match that blessed position? As long as we live in this body, it is so easy to fall into sin and fail. This should not be the practice of our lives. Equally, once sin has crept into our lives, we should have a conscience about it and a genuine desire to resolve the matter quickly. The writer to the Hebrews states, 'let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water', Heb. 10. 22. And again, in chapter 13, 'let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name', v. 15.

The High Priest

As Aaron donned his high priestly garments, he was reminded of the character of the God in whose presence he served – a holy God.¹⁰ The place where Aaron served was a holy place, befitting the presence of God. The vessels that he handled were holy vessels. Indeed, the whole of the tabernacle spoke of the presence of God. Equally, as Aaron came out before the people, the glory and the beauty of his garments represented the glory and honour that God had bestowed upon him as the high priest. The glory belonged not to Aaron or to his sons that succeeded him but to God who had bestowed the responsibility. On the forehead of Aaron was a plate of pure gold upon which was inscribed 'Holiness to the Lord'.¹¹ Whilst this indicates the extent of divine requirements – holy in thought and deed – it was also a reminder, to his fellow priests and to the people, of the character of the God they worshipped.

A part of those garments was the breastplate and on the breastplate

were twelve stones – each in their order and bearing a name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. That the stones were upon the heart of the priest indicated the place of affection the nation held in the heart of God. There were also two stones, one upon each shoulder of the high priest's garments. On each of these stones were engraved six names, depicting in total the tribes of Israel. It was a reminder that as God was bearing the nation through the wilderness, sustaining them along the way, so God bears the burdens of His people.

In the Old Testament, the people looked to Aaron and his sons to offer sacrifices and to give judgement. In the New Testament pattern, we look to the Lord as our High Priest. His true humanity means He understands our frame. As Hebrews chapter 4 puts it, 'we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities', v. 15.

The purpose of this short study is to appreciate the pictures that parts of Exodus and Leviticus offer us – glimpses of what God would reveal in a fuller measure in New Testament times. However, what we see is that God's thoughts and plans remain the same for Christians:

- To function as priests;
- To manifest godly order and exercise of the gifts He has given us;
- To be sanctified – living in close communion with Him;
- To live in communion with the Lord, that we offer up spiritual sacrifices;
- To appreciate and avail ourselves of the work of our Great High Priest in glory.

Endnotes

- 1 See Genesis 34.
- 2 See, for example, Num. 3. 12.
- 3 1 Pet. 2. 5.
- 4 See Num. 4. 15, 24-26, 29, 31, 32.
- 5 2 Sam. 6. 1-7.
- 6 1 Cor. 14. 33.
- 7 Rom. 12. 2.
- 8 These are specifically the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering.
- 9 This takes in the sin offering and the trespass offering.
- 10 See Exod. 28.
- 11 Exod. 28. 36.

Introduction to Paul's First Missionary Journey

By **MALCOLM DAVIS** Leeds, England

The risen Lord's great commission

Soon after the Lord Jesus rose from among the dead, triumphant over all His foes, He told His disciples to go to a mountain in Galilee where He would meet them again. There He came and spoke these words to them, 'All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world [the consummation of the age]', Matt. 28. 18-20.

This is His great commission for world evangelism today, until He comes again for us. However, note what it involves for all Christians to obey. First, we should make disciples of all nations. This means that we should preach the gospel of God's grace to everyone we meet, with the objective of encouraging them not only to trust Christ sincerely for salvation, but also to make a wholehearted commitment to follow Him wherever He may lead them. Second, we should baptize all such genuine converts by immersion in water in the name of the triune Godhead. This is their public confession that they have trusted the Saviour and accepted His lordship over their lives. Third, we should then go on to teach them to observe and obey all Christ's commandments as found in scripture. Conversion and baptism are only the beginning of their Christian commitment, not the ultimate goal, which is complete surrender to the will of God and full conformity to Christ's character. Finally, the Lord Jesus assures us that He in all His triumphant authority over all His foes is with us as we preach. He will empower and

validate the message we bear to the nations. This commission has never been rescinded nor altered in any way since then, so that this task still lies before all true Christians today. Are we obeying it fully?

The widening sphere of witness

On the Mount of Olives, just before He ascended back to heaven, the Lord Jesus indicated to His apostles their future task, and the power that they would be given to carry it out, in the following words, 'But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth', Acts 1. 8. The promised gift of the Holy Spirit to empower them would be the means by which they carried out this awesome task, and He is still the power for witness today. Acts records the progress of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, the centre of civilization in the first century AD. The New Testament church, formed into one body by the indwelling Spirit at Pentecost, expanded rapidly from small beginnings in an upper room in Jerusalem, where about 120 people gathered to pray, to more than 3,000 after the Day of Pentecost, to whom were added many others daily, including 5,000 men at one time, and many of the Jewish priests. After the martyrdom of Stephen, fierce persecution against the Jerusalem church caused the majority of the Christians there to scatter throughout Judaea and Samaria, but wherever they went they preached the gospel. Philip the evangelist went to Samaria and saw many saved there; then the Lord called him to speak to an Ethiopian eunuch in the desert on his way home. The eunuch was saved and took the gospel back to his native country in Africa. The Lord was blessing His word greatly.

The unlikely apostle to the Gentiles

Acts chapter 9 records the remarkable conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who was soon to spearhead the decisive expansion of the gospel into the Roman Empire. A more unlikely person to receive this task we could hardly imagine, because at the time of his conversion on the Damascus Road he was 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord', having previously been consenting to Stephen's execution. However, our God is the God of the impossible, and fully able to stop an ardent persecutor in his tracks and reveal Himself to him in a way that he could never forget. The Lord told Ananias, who baptized Saul, that the new convert was, 'a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel', adding, 'for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake', Acts 9. 15, 16. Saul had been highly educated in the Jewish religion, and was a fervent Pharisee, opposed to all Gentile influences on his life; but now he began to preach Jesus Christ as the Son of God in the synagogues of Damascus. The transformation in his life had been immediate and total, truly a miracle of grace that only God can perform.

Galatians chapters 1 and 2 record the future-Apostle Paul's own testimony concerning the gospel that he was to preach henceforth. Soon after his conversion, he went for about three years into the desert of Arabia for a time of mental and spiritual readjustment in his life, during which time he probably received further revelations from the Lord concerning the mystery of the church and associated truths which had not been revealed before the Day of Pentecost. Afterwards, he was ready to return to Damascus, and then to Jerusalem to consult with the other apostles concerning the gospel that they should all preach. They found that they were in full agreement. God's apostle to the Gentiles was now ready to be called to his life's main work.

Antioch becomes the centre of evangelism

After the conversion of Paul, the

record in Acts gradually changes its main focus of evangelism from Jewish Jerusalem to the largely Gentile city of Antioch in Syria. In chapter 10, the Lord calls the Apostle Peter to preach in Caesarea to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household; Gentiles are converted, and receive the Holy Spirit, just as Jews and Samaritans had done earlier. Chapter 11 sees Peter defending his mission to the Gentiles as a genuine work of God and being accepted by the majority of the Jewish believers at Jerusalem. At the end of the chapter, Barnabas seeks Paul's help in the growing work in Antioch and they both become members of that assembly, teaching them for a whole year. It was here that the disciples were first called 'Christians'. After further persecution by Herod, ending in the latter's sudden death, 'the word of God grew and multiplied', Acts 12. 24, so that the early church was now ready for significant expansion. Who would do this?

How the Lord called Paul and Barnabas to missionary work

The Lord Jesus alone as 'the Lord of the harvest' has the prerogative to initiate such a call to missionary work. He usually waits until conditions for expansion are right in the home assembly before doing so. In the opening verses of Acts chapter 13, we do find that the local assembly at Antioch in Syria was in such a favourable condition. All

the ministering brethren were fully engaged in exercising their gifts to the Lord and their fellow-saints and waiting upon the Lord with fasting to ascertain His will for them. God rarely calls men who are failing in their local responsibilities into His work elsewhere; normally, He chooses those who seem to be indispensable locally, brethren who are already fully engaged in His service there and in the district around them.

Then, as they were serving and praying together with due self-discipline, the call of the Holy Spirit came to them all, not just to those specially chosen. In Acts chapter 13, the call may have come through the prophets and teachers directly. Today, the call usually comes both to the person concerned and to exercised responsible brethren around them in the form of a clear conviction that the Lord desires that they send the missionary candidate to another area of the world to evangelize and establish local assemblies there. Without this clear call it is unwise for any Christian to attempt to act independently in gospel witness and travel elsewhere without commendation.

The Roman world during the so-called 'Roman peace' [Pax Romana] of the first century AD was ready for such missionary endeavours. There were now many good roads connecting centres of population, and there were a few common languages used

throughout the Mediterranean world: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Paul was a Roman citizen from Tarsus in Asia Minor, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, highly educated, and able to converse and write in Greek also, ideally qualified to spearhead the evangelistic enterprise before them. Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus, who had sacrificed much to join the newly formed Church at Jerusalem and had proceeded to help with the expanding work in Gentile Antioch. It was, therefore, no great surprise that the Holy Spirit said to the gathered company in the local assembly there, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them'. The assembly proceeded to fast and pray, gave the two brethren their warmest commendation and expressions of fellowship, and sent them on their journey together. Farewell meetings are a great encouragement to the commending assembly as their sphere of outreach is expanded to other areas.

However, the commending assembly did not dictate to them exactly where they should go. Paul and Barnabas were free under the Holy Spirit's guidance to go wherever they felt that He was leading them. They were not answerable to any missionary board, but simply reported back to the Antioch assembly after their first journey what the Lord had done with them during their service. They did not receive any stated remuneration from Antioch either, but lived 'of the gospel', depending on the Lord in faith that He would lead other Christians to support them in their work. Paul used his technical skills in tent-making to support his fellow-workers when he felt that this was necessary, or advisable due to local conditions, although he said in his letters to some of the assemblies planted that he actually had the right to expect material support from them in return for the spiritual help given to them. Finally, we should note that the Lord often used two or more brethren in His work overseas, not just one, so that they could support one another in a united witness to Christ.

Thus, the great task of world evangelism was begun, the initiative of the Lord Himself.



What does the Bible tell us about the future?

The final rebellion

By **MALCOLM DAVIS** Leeds, England

Part 11

What will happen?

The prediction of the final tragic rebellion of Satan and mankind against God is recorded in Revelation chapter 20 verses 7 to 10. Immediately after the completion of Christ's thousand-year reign over the earth, Satan will be released from his confinement in the bottomless pit, and will, at once, come out to deceive the nations who are living in the four corners of the earth; he will be no different after his imprisonment there, full of hatred against God and all God's people. His followers are here called Gog and Magog, as were the armies who gathered against Israel during the previous tribulation, see Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. Probably they are so called because they share the hatred that the former enemies displayed then, but not because they are exactly the same peoples, since the former Gog and Magog came only from the far north, probably Russia and her Islamic allies of that day, whereas this Gog and Magog include peoples from every point of the compass on earth, a universal revolt.

John in his vision then saw that this vast horde of enemies, who were as numerous as the sand on the seashore, came up on the breadth, or 'broad plain', Rev. 20. 9 NASB, of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and 'the beloved city', Jerusalem, Christ's world capital, intending to wage war against them. Jerusalem will be elevated then far above its present altitude, and the topography of the millennial earth may be different from its present condition after the earth movements at the end of the tribulation. The threatening armies will present a frightening sight.

However, God will not be moved at all by this attack and will, at once, send fire down out of heaven to destroy the vast host supernaturally, for He is always far greater than Satan. Satan himself will be immediately thrown into the Lake of Fire to join the Beast and the False Prophet, who were sent

there at the end of the tribulation at Christ's second coming to reign. There they will all experience conscious and eternal torment, an awful fate! This will finally end Satan's influence on God's creation. God will be victorious. Praise His name!

How can this happen?

All who enter Christ's millennial kingdom will be saved persons, Rom. 11. 26; Matt. 25. 31-46. However, many generations of men and women will be born to believers during this thousand-year kingdom age who will not all respond positively to the gospel of God's grace but will remain unregenerate. Godliness cannot be inherited but is the result of the new birth and the work of the Holy Spirit within. Some will be judged summarily for serious sins, Isa. 65. 20, while others will remain quietly, but stubbornly, opposed to God and His Christ, despite the obvious blessings bestowed on earth's inhabitants during that kingdom and the fact that 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea', Hab. 2. 14. At best, they will only 'yield feigned obedience' to God; see the Revised Version marginal translation of the word 'submit' KJV, Ps. 18. 44; 81. 15. Thus, Satan will find an immediate response to his evil intentions and deception from a large section of the world's population at the conclusion of Christ's reign, despite its righteous, peaceful, and holy character. The latter end of the millennial kingdom on earth may not be as happy as its beginning, for sin will still be latent in it and growing throughout it.

Why will God allow this to happen?

Here it is essential to understand God's dispensational purposes as outlined throughout scripture; the final rebellion cannot rightly be accounted for otherwise. Just as every previous dispensation in the world's history has contained first a test of mankind's obedience to God, then man's failure

to comply with it, followed by His summary judgement on that failure, and the introduction of a new age of opportunity, so will the ideal conditions of the millennial kingdom of Christ be a test of man's obedience to God. Mankind will have been tested under law and grace and have failed. Then it will fail the test of perfectly righteous government and ideal conditions of peace and holiness by rebelling at the first opportunity to do so. Thus, God will prove conclusively that mankind is by nature incorrigibly sinful and must be judged finally. That is why the final judgements immediately follow the last rebellion, and lead God to destroy the present heavens and earth, then to create new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness does not simply reign, but dwells.

Only true believers of every age of human history will survive the old creation, because they have been born again and have God's new nature within them; even now they form part of the new creation that will follow the end of the old with all its unhappy judgements and sorrows. Christians of the age of grace today are destined to become part of this much happier future world. Hallelujah for His wonderful grace!



THE SEALING OF THE FATHER

By **DAVID E. WEST** Leicester, England

There are a few New Testament scriptures which refer to a 'seal of God' or to an object or a person sealed by God. Thus, for example, Paul makes mention of the seal of God in the context of foundational truth. He tells Timothy that false doctrines are being propagated and some men are seeking to 'overthrow the faith' of believers. However, Paul is able to offer encouragement, 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this **seal**, The Lord knoweth them that are his', 2 Tim. 2. 19. A further example takes our thoughts on to the future when there is reference to a group of people, the 144,000 from Israel, who have the seal of God in their foreheads and thus His protection, during the great tribulation. As part of the fifth trumpet judgement, demonic locusts from the bottomless pit attack the people of the earth with 'power, as the scorpions of the earth', Rev. 9. 3, but 'only those men which have not the **seal** of God in their foreheads', v. 4; there is a divine limit placed upon these locusts.

However, there is only one reference to the sealing of the **Father**, 'Labour . . . for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father **sealed**', John 6. 27.

In John chapter 6, we read first of the miracle [sign] of the feeding of 'about five thousand' men, v. 10; this is followed by the confession of these men, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world', v. 14. However, the Lord Jesus, perceiving 'that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king . . . departed . . . into a mountain', v. 15. Meanwhile His disciples 'entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum', v. 17. When 'it was now dark', v. 17, 'they see Jesus walking on the sea', v. 19, the second sign of the chapter. 'Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went', v. 21. Was this the third miracle of the chapter?

'The day following', v. 22, 'the people . . . came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus', v. 24. 'And when they had found him . . . they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?' v. 25.

The Lord Jesus did not answer their question, but rather He gave a word of rebuke, 'Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled', v. 26. These details give the background and the introduction to the key verse we are considering.

If, in verse 26, the Lord Jesus gives a rebuke, in verse 27 He gives an



exhortation. 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth'; perhaps 'work not' is a better rendering, for it clearly shows the verbal connection with the verses that follow, 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?' v. 28; 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent', v. 29; 'what dost thou work?' v. 30.

Man consists not only of body, but of spirit and soul as well. There are two kinds of food: food for the body, necessary, but not the more important; food for the inner man, the spirit, which is essential. Satisfying one's physical appetite is not the most important thing in life.

Our verse continues, 'but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life'. The expression used here by Christ is a relative and comparative one. His meaning is 'Labour for the latter rather than for the former'. The Lord is presenting a proper balance in motivation; men should be in real earnest over spiritual things, they should spare no pains to obtain that which supports, nourishes and strengthens the soul. The qualifying clause is 'which the Son of man shall give unto you'. The Lord Jesus was not preaching salvation by works; such 'food' is obtained only from the Son of man. What the people needed was not material food, but life, and life is a gift. Food only sustains physical life, but the Lord Jesus gives eternal life.

Then we have the reason, 'for him hath God the Father sealed'. The sealing here signifies the authentication, the commissioning with authority, of the Son of man, by God the Father, as the sole giver of eternal life. It is as 'Son of man' that He is said here to have been sealed, that is, as the Son of God incarnate. The Father has made Him known and approved Him on the occasion of His baptism, by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him and by the voice from the opened heaven, declaring Him to be His beloved Son, Matt. 3. 16, 17, and has confirmed Him to be the promised Messiah by the miraculous works He gave Him to perform.

How secure then is this gift of eternal life to those seeking and receiving this unperishable food!

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

By **SAM TAUFEEK** Toronto, Ontario, Canada

In 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 4, and in Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we are in a spiritual warfare which will continue until we meet the Lord in the clouds or in glory. In 1799, WASHINGTON wrote, 'make them believe that offensive operation, often times, is the surest, if not the only (in some cases) means of defence'.¹ In the spiritual warfare against Satan and his principalities, there are also defensive and offensive operations. Let us examine some biblical references of such operations.

'Be ready', 1 Pet. 3. 15

This verse is usually used by those who are defending biblical truth by giving biblical answers to the questions of those who are attacking the faith. Perhaps we might categorize this operation as, mainly, a defensive operation. We should never underestimate such an approach but rather encourage it to be used by all as we are thus commanded in this verse.

'Resist', 1 Pet. 5. 9; Jas. 4. 7; 'stand', Eph. 6. 13

The whole armour of God in Ephesians chapter 6 includes many defensive items, namely:

- 'Loins girt about with **truth**', v. 14;
- 'Breastplate of **righteousness**', v. 14;
- 'Shield of **faith**', v. 16;
- 'Helmet of **salvation**', v. 17;
- **Prayer**, 'in the Spirit . . . watching', v. 18.

In all spiritual defensive operations, we are instructed to keep our heart 'with all diligence', Prov. 4. 23; keep ourselves 'in the love of God', Jude 21; keep 'his commandments', 1 John 2. 3; keep ourselves 'unspotted from the world', Jas. 1. 27; keep ourselves pure, 1 Tim. 5. 22; 'keep the ordinances' that were delivered to us, 1 Cor. 11. 2; keep our minds, Phil. 4. 7; keep 'the unity of the Spirit', Eph. 4. 3; and, finally, keep 'the testimony of Jesus Christ', Rev. 12. 17.

'Make known', Eph. 6. 19

In World War I, the campaign on the

Western Front, located in France, was fought using trench warfare. Many trenches were dug by the soldiers but neither side made much ground for nearly three years. Defence alone cannot win a war! This is why the whole armour of God in Ephesians chapter 6 also includes weapons of offence:

- Shoes for our feet, 'shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace', v. 15;
- The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God', v. 17;
- Prayer 'always', which is also defensive, v. 18;
- Opening the mouth boldly 'to make known the mystery of the gospel', v. 19.

How strong are these offensive weapons? We find the answer in 2 Corinthians, '(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ', 10. 4, 5.

In Deuteronomy, God commanded His people, 'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount . . . go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers', Deut. 1. 6-8. For, said God, 'Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours', 11. 24. The people needed to learn not to trust their own power but the

power of the Lord of hosts, Zech. 4. 6. We need to remember that God has provided us with what it takes to attack and conquer the spiritual kingdom of Satan, and to win souls to Christ, 'pulling them out of the fire', Jude 23. Let us also remember what Hezekiah told the people when Sennacherib of Assyria came and entered into Judah, 'With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles', 2 Chr. 32. 8. Before the Lord Jesus sent the disciples to undertake the humanly impossible mission of going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature, He equipped them with the power of:

- His continuous presence, Matt. 28. 20;
- The Holy Spirit to strengthen the believers, Acts 1. 8;
- The Holy Spirit to convict sinners, John 16. 8;
- The message of the gospel, Rom. 1. 16.

It is not our own power, 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us', 2 Cor. 4. 7.

It is interesting that shortly into the disciples' mission, we hear the enemy confirming that the disciples have 'turned the world upside down', Acts 17. 6. The power of His presence and the power of the Holy Spirit have never changed, but to apply the power of the message we need to open our mouths, trusting that the Lord is going to give the message.

The First Epistle to the Corinthians sheds some light on divisions that existed among the saints in that city. Maybe their eyes had shifted from seeing the power of the message to comparing the 'power' of the messengers, 1 Cor. 1. 12, or maybe they cared more about the wisdom of the preachers than the 'foolishness of preaching', v. 21. The Apostle Paul had to explain to them that the wisdom of words, regardless of the speaker, could make the cross of Christ of no effect. Paul challenged the Corinthians to 'suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ', 9. 12.

Today, the gospel remains the power of God unto salvation, and the armour of God is still capable of pulling

down strongholds. Preaching Christ crucified may still be foolishness to many and a stumbling block to others, but it is simply the good news declared by God and received by the believers. The Holy Spirit wants us to pass on the same news, without any modifications, in its entirety. I believe that Satan will resist a simple brother who is preaching the truth of the gospel at a street corner more than an eloquent preacher who is speaking in front of thousands without a mention of the gospel or Christ. The faithful preaching of the gospel should include the punishment of God on 'them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ', 2 Thess. 1. 7-9.

To be able to answer those who ask us questions we need to study and be prepared, and we are commanded to do that and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In apologetics, obviously some are more equipped and more qualified than others, but this does not necessarily apply when it comes to spreading the gospel. Whilst 'evangelists', Eph. 4. 11, need to receive a special call from the Holy Spirit for this ministry, sharing the good news with others, such as friends, neighbours, and work colleagues does not always require a particular depth of knowledge. Indeed, our own wisdom and personal power might be a hindrance rather than help. Remember, too, that what people regarded as foolishness in the days of Paul they will regard as foolishness till the end of time.



Many people around us are honestly seeking answers for their legitimate questions, and our responsibility is to present the truth to them. However, be aware of the many people described by the Holy Spirit in 2 Timothy chapter 3. Such people still have 'a form of godliness' and they have their own false answers and arguments, denying the power of the gospel.

'In weakness', 1 Cor. 2. 3

The Apostle Paul needed almost two full chapters to explain to the Corinthians that he could not take any credit for preaching the gospel. He describes to them his personal state of mind when he came to them, 'And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling', 1 Cor. 2. 3. He understood what the gospel of the Son of God means to God Himself, the value of the blood of His Son, the cross, and the glorious, finished work. The thought that God is proclaiming all this through a human channel made him tremble. Thankfully, the weakness of man gives way to the power of God. No special gift is needed to spread the gospel; just pass on what you received and what you believe in boldness. Every moment when the Lord puts us in touch with people around us is an opportunity to put the power of God into action, and to engage the armour of God in the warfare. Every spot is 'a preaching platform'. Let us always remember what Paul wrote of his experience, 'for when I am weak, then am I strong', 2 Cor. 12. 10.

Preaching, hearing, the Spirit convicting, repenting and believing

are the steps that are pleasing to God for salvation that all might be for the glory of the Son of God. Results are guaranteed when God is pleased! There is a general agreement that what sparked all revivals in modern history is the Holy Spirit through preaching the gospel. It is clear that God had also used local and world events to soften the hearts. Let us not discount the sovereign dealings of God from such events. Yes, knowledge increased through the years and minds became more sophisticated and critical, but God will always honour the glorious gospel of His Son.

King Saul could not even imagine some inexperienced young man like David standing against Goliath in the battle. Later on, the best he could suggest was to equip David with Saul's own fighting gear. David knew that such protection, though it might be one of the best in the earthly kingdom, would hinder him rather than help. David trusted that the Lord would deliver him. He went out in the name of the Lord of hosts. Yes, David needed a sword to end this battle, but that sword was none other than Goliath's own sword. In 1 Samuel chapter 21, that same sword became the property of David, but as he went out to the battle he did not trust in the weapons of the world. Neither should we!

In 1787, BENJAMIN BEDDOME wrote:

'God in the gospel of His son
Makes His eternal counsel known.
Where love in all its glory shines
And truth is drawn in fairest lines,
The pris'ner here may break his
chains,
The weary rest from all his pains,
The captive feel his bondage cease;
The mourner find the way of peace'.

'And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen', Rom. 16. 20.

Endnote

- 1 <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-04-02-0120>.

WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

Καίπερ (*kaipep*) Although

Καιρός (*kairos*) Time, season

Καῖσαρ (*kaisar*) Caesar

Time plays a very important part in the cycle of human life, and the first question that most of us probably ask in the morning is ‘what is the time?’ The rest of the day is similarly punctuated by the same or similar questions, and this reflects the way in which our lives are regulated and constrained by time. The writer of Ecclesiastes in chapter 3 verses 1 to 15 refers to the oppressiveness of times and seasons as if the whole of humanity is trapped in an endless round of cause and effect without any escape. As one commentator puts it, ‘Most direct biblical references to time are neutral in association, denoting simply when something happens. Contrary to a common misconception that the Bible does not deal with cyclic time, many of these references imply an awareness of human life lived in terms of its seasons or cyclic repetitions. We might profitably think of such time as natural time, rooted in the natural creation’.¹ Yet, because God has placed eternity within our being, Eccles. 3. 11, we have the capacity to think beyond the fleeting things of time and sense, and embrace, through the grace of God in Christ, eternal realities, 2 Cor. 4. 18. We now understand that time is simply one measure of the present limitations of faith that will one day give place to sight, 1 Cor. 13. 12.

The Greek noun *kairos* occurs frequently in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint [LXX], as well as in Jewish apocryphal texts. It occurs as early as Genesis chapter 1 verse 14 of the set times, or the passage of days and years that are regulated by the luminaries in the sky. These celestial light carriers also provide illumination for the earth. Later, at the beginning of the first of four divine discourses relating to the Flood, the word is translated as ‘resolution’ in the sense that the

earth has come into the purpose or time of God’s judgement, Gen. 6. 13 (14 LXX). It is also recorded in Exodus chapter 8 verse 28 that even after God had removed the swarms of flies from Egypt, Pharaoh took the occasion to become even more stubborn. When Jonathan sought to intercede for David with Saul, the word is used in the sense that he would seek an opportune moment or occasion to sound out his father on David’s behalf, 1 Sam. 20. 12. In Proverbs chapter 15 verse 23, it refers to the merits of a word that is rightly timed or meets the need of a particular situation. We might compare this to Paul’s injunction in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 2, where the teacher should always be ready to proclaim a timely word, that is, a word appropriate for the occasion. There are many other references to the word *kairos* in the Septuagint [LXX], and even from the limited survey above, it is clear that the word has a multiplicity of meanings. This semantical range, i.e., its subtle shades of meaning, indicates the need to look at the context in which the word is found and not simply translate the word as ‘time’, because what is apparent is that the word *kairos* refers to a fixed and definite period, e.g., the time of the year when kings go out to battle, as in 2 Samuel chapter 11 verse 1, rather than time in the sense of duration, e.g., lifespan as in Job chapter 10 verse 20, where the synonymous Greek noun *chronos* is used.

This is an important distinction and can either be thought of in terms of the ‘chronological’ and the ‘realistic’ as argued by MARSH,² or as BARR put the difference as, ‘between time as chronological and time as opportunity’.³ ROBINSON states the difference with even more clarity, ‘*Καιρός* is time considered in relation to personal action, in reference to ends to be achieved in it. *χρόνος* is time abstracted from such a relation, time, as it were, that ticks on objectively and impersonally, whether anything is happening or not; it is time

measured by the chronometer, not by purpose, momentary rather than momentous’.⁴ Whilst BARR did not ultimately accept this distinction, the use of these synonyms in the Old and the New Testaments does show that the words for ‘time’ exhibit both ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ aspects to their meanings. The ‘quantitative’ aspect is mainly, but not exclusively translated by the noun *chronos*, and the ‘qualitative’ aspect is mainly, but again not exclusively translated by the noun *kairos*.⁵ This distinction in part can be seen where both words appear in the same text. For example, in Acts chapter 1 verse 7, we read our Lord’s words to His disciples during the forty days prior to His ascension, ‘And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times [*chronos*] or the seasons [*kairos*], which the Father hath put in his own power’ [my inserts]. Similarly, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 1, both words appear in the same order. BRUCE writes in respect of Acts chapter 1 verse 7 that ‘*χρόνους* refers to the time that must elapse before the final establishment of the Kingdom; *καιρός* to the critical events accompanying its establishment’.⁶

While the distinction is fairly consistent throughout the Bible, the synonyms are often interchanged where we least expect them. A number of New Testament texts demonstrate this, where we would expect to find one noun, but the writer uses the other:

Acts 7. 17

In Stephen’s apology before the Jewish authorities, he refers to the ‘time of the promise [drawing] nigh’ in respect of Israel. Here we would expect the writer, Luke, to have used the noun *kairos* because he is referring to the fulfilment of prophecy. In other words, using BRUCE’s earlier definition, the critical events will have taken place for Israel’s deliverance. Instead, however, he uses the noun *chronos*.

Galatians 4. 4

Again, this text, ‘when the fulness of the time was come’ refers to the fulfilment of prophecy, namely the incarnation of Christ, yet Paul uses *chronos* not *kairos* to interpret this event. EADIE states that ‘it is the time

regarded as having filled up the allotted space, or itself filled up with the inflow of all the periods contained in the *plērōma* [“appointed time”, v.2 – (my insert)] of the father.’⁷ Contrast this, however, with Ephesians chapter 1 verse 10, where Paul uses a similar expression ‘the fulness of times’ but uses *kairos* not *chronos*.

In terms then, the noun *kairos* suggests more than simply a measurement of time, but of a specific age or epoch prescribed by God for the outworking of His sovereign purposes, especially relating to the redemptive work of Christ. In respect of divine judgment, *kairos* is used almost by way of shorthand as it refers to ‘the time’, Mark 13. 33, or ‘the time is come’, 1 Pet. 4. 17, or ‘the time is at hand’, Rev. 22. 10. As RENN concludes in his study on the word ‘time’, ‘God created the world in space and time. His own intimate personal involvement with the world culminated in the coming of Christ

the Messiah at exactly the right time. God’s own son has identified with his fellow human beings in his unique way, thereby gaining salvation for his people that will ultimately transcend space and time in the new heaven and the new earth’.⁸

When our Lord began His Galilean ministry after John the Baptist was imprisoned, the theme of His preaching was, ‘The time [*kairos*] is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand’, Mark 1. 15. Some 2,000 years have elapsed since that declaration, so the actual realization of the kingdom is now much nearer. If, therefore, ‘time’ is short, may we redeem it, because the days in which we live are evil, Eph. 5. 16.

Further reading/study

Introductory

Time in LELAND RYKEN, JAMES C. WILHOIT, and TREMPER LONGMAN III (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP, 1998, pp. 870-872.

Advanced

JAMES BARR, *Biblical Words for Time*, SCM, 2012.

Endnotes

- 1 LELAND RYKEN, JAMES C. WILHOIT, and TREMPER LONGMAN III (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP, 1998, pg. 870.
- 2 JOHN MARSH, *The Fulness of Time*, Nisbet, 1952, pg. 19f.
- 3 JAMES BARR, *Biblical Words for Time*, SCM, 2012, pg. 20.
- 4 JOHN A. T. ROBINSON, *In the End . . . God: A Study of Last Things*, Fontana, 1968, pg. 45f.
- 5 VINE takes a slightly modified view in that whilst he accepts this distinction between the two words, he also recognizes that the distinction is not sharply defined as, e.g., in 2 Tim. 4. 6 (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* – Season A2 – ‘Chronos’, pg. 333).
- 6 F. F. BRUCE, *The Acts of the Apostles – The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale, 1970, pg. 20.
- 7 JOHN EADIE, *Galatians, Greek Text Commentaries*, Baker Books, 1979, pg. 296.
- 8 STEPHEN D. RENN, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, Hendrickson, 2005, pg. 976.



HIS FACE

By **JOHN TINKLER** Red Row, Northumberland, England

Over the years many people have tried to portray features of our Lord Jesus Christ, whether that be in books, films, pictures, or paintings, but we can search in vain in the Gospels for any description of His physical features. In this meditation, I would like to consider the mention of His face to draw us to His blessed person.

In the narrative of Luke chapter 9 verses 51 to 53 and chapter 10 verse 1, the Lord is sending messengers before 'to make ready for him', v. 52. Sadly, the Samaritans did not receive Him because **His face** was steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem. Despite the rejection of men, the Lord's resolve was to go to Jerusalem, 'knowing all things that should come upon him', John 18. 4. Even at the age of twelve, He said to Mary and Joseph, 'wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business', Luke 2. 49. Later, He said, 'not my will, but thine, be done', Luke 22. 42. Our Lord came to do the Father's will and that meant His journey from the cradle to the cross. The goal of His life was to give His life. He had a fixed purpose and a fixed pathway.

When Peter, James and John were present on the mount [a high mountain and, perhaps, a night scene] where He was transfigured,¹ all three Gospel writers make mention of His raiment being white, but Matthew records, '**his face** did shine as the sun', 17. 2. What a sight for these three disciples, to behold the Saviour, to see His glory and a preview of His future glory. He was the central figure. In that scene, we might meditate upon:

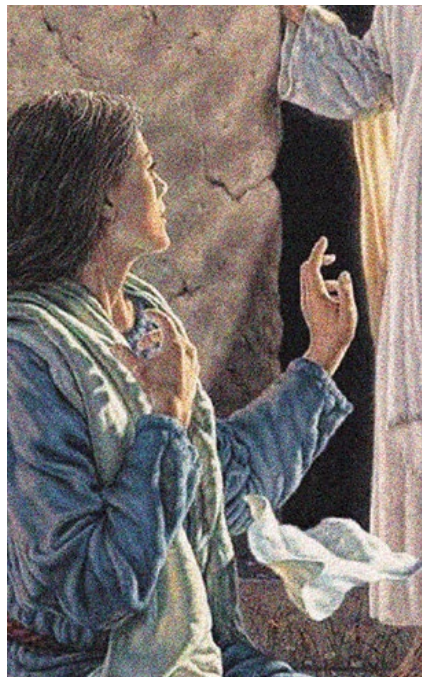
- The disciples' elevation – 'an high mountain', v. 1.
- The disciples' separation – 'apart', v. 1.
- The Lord's transfiguration – 'transfigured' meaning 'to be changed into another form', v. 2.
- The Lord's association – 'Moses and Elias', v. 3.
- Their conversation – '[they] spake of his decease', Luke 9. 31.
- The heavenly declaration – 'This

is my beloved Son', Matt. 17. 5.

- The disciples' prostration – 'they fell on their face', v. 6.
- Our Lord's glorification – 'my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased', v. 5.
- Our Lord's manifestation – 'his glory', Luke 9. 32.
- Peter's impression – 'eyewitnesses of his majesty', 2 Pet. 1. 16. He never forgot that incident.
- The Lord's isolation – 'they saw no man, save Jesus only', Matt. 17. 8.

What a contrast between the two scenes in Matthew chapter 17. The first, on the mountain, 'This is my beloved Son', v. 5; the second, down from the mountain, 'Lord have mercy on my son', v. 15.

As we move nearer to Calvary, we come to the scene in Gethsemane's garden and, leaving the other



disciples, Peter, James and John were taken further into the garden. Then, the Lord 'went a little further, and fell on **his face**', Matt. 26. 39. In supplication, as He contemplated the events closing in on Him, He said, 'not what I will, but what thou wilt', Mark 14. 36. As believers, we are so thankful that the Lord went 'a little further' to deal with the matter of our sins.

As Matthew's account proceeds, he records, 'they spit in **his face**', 26. 67, and again, in chapter 27 verse 30, 'they spit upon him'. It was Isaiah who prophesied of these insults, 'I hid not my face from shame and spitting', 50. 6. Let us just pause and consider that down the blessed face of our Saviour there was the foul spittle of men, yet the Lord had told His disciples that this is what people would do to Him, Luke 18. 32. What a sign of man's utter contempt for the Saviour.

The Gospels also record that our Lord's face was buffeted and smitten.² They struck him on **His face**. The men of the day did their worst to Him. The people averted their gaze from Him, Isa. 53. 3. He was totally rejected and despised.

As we close this meditation, let us think of a different scene. As John closes his book, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, he tells us, 'they shall see **his face**', Rev. 22. 4. Our faces will gaze upon His, the Lord's, for all eternity. In the first chapter of the book, John says something of that face, in His vision of the glorified Christ, 'his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength', 1. 16. John 'fell at His feet as dead', v. 17. It is nearly 2,000 years since the Lord was seen on this earth, but He is coming, and we shall see Him.

'By and by when I look on His face,
Beautiful face, thorn shadowed
face,

By and by when I look on His face,
I'll wish I had given Him more'.

[GRACE REESE ADKINS]

Endnotes

- 1 Matt. 17. 1-8; Mark 9. 1-10; Luke 9. 28-36.
- 2 Mark 14. 65; Luke 22. 64.

QuestionTime

Conducted by
Frank A. Proudlock

QUESTION

How can I believe God is in control of my life when I am experiencing such pain?

ANSWER

The preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that it is common to the human condition that we go through times in our life when we experience sorrow as well as joy. There is 'a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance', Eccles. 3. 4. Certain believers, however, pass through extraordinary times of adversity. They can experience pain, pressure, or loss, often lasting years, and, like the Apostle Paul, seem to be 'appointed' to suffer, Acts 9. 16. Sometimes events during these dark periods in our life make no sense at all to us and we call into question whether God is really in control of our circumstances. Such doubts can make genuine believers feel even worse about themselves and can lead them into depression and bitterness.

If these words resonate with you then let me assure you that you are in distinguished company. Other notable individuals expressing similar doubts include Elijah, 1 Kgs. 19. 4; Asaph, Ps. 73. 13-17; David, Ps. 142. 1-4; the disciples, Mark 4. 38; and Martha and Mary, John 11. 21, 32, to name a few. The problem of human suffering is one of the most profound questions of all. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Bible dedicates a whole book to this subject, the book of Job, perhaps the oldest book in the canon of scripture. Let us draw a few helpful lessons from this book.

The first lesson from Job is the danger of rationalizing the situation. When Job's three friends saw the tragedies he had experienced, 'they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great', Job 2. 13. Remaining quiet and sitting with their friend Job was possibly the best course of action they could have taken. From that point onwards when they, along with Job, tried to make sense and vocalize what had happened, all they managed to do was darken 'counsel by words without knowledge', Job 38. 2. In times of adversity, we should rest rather than rationalize, being confident in the knowledge that God knows best.

A second lesson highlighted by this book is the problem of having a limited and localized view of events. When Job and his friends had said all they had wanted to say, God

finally spoke in chapters 38 to 41, bringing their human wisdom to nothing. In these ancient days, before the revelation of the scriptures had been formally provided to humanity, God reminds Job and his friends of the immense global scale of events He deals with in creation. God assures Job of His immense power and intricate knowledge through the way in which He has designed and brought into existence the created world and in His day-to-day administration of the vast complex and interconnected universe in which we live. We need to remember God sees the bigger picture. He has eternity in view as well as time.

Another lesson from the book of Job, and one that is easy to miss, is the importance of not comparing ourselves with others. God uses the example of the animals. By God's design each one is different. Also, by God's sovereignty, each is allocated to live in its own particular habitat. Certain animals are appointed by God to survive in the harshest of environments. The wild goat survives on rock ledges, facing danger every day, Job 39. 1-4. The wild ass (or onager) roams the desert with frugal resources to survive on, vv. 5-8. Yet God not only appoints but keeps and preserves these animals in the cruellest of conditions. God had done the same for Job. He was surviving by 'the skin of my teeth', 19. 20. Yet his faith had come through and was proved to be vital and real. 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him', Job says in chapter 13 verse 15. Like these animals, God can preserve and keep us in the challenging circumstances we face. He uses trials to prove that our faith is real, 1 Pet. 1. 6, 7, as we draw more on the infinite resource of His strength, 'which is made perfect in weakness', 2 Cor. 12. 9.

Let us conclude by reminding ourselves that suffering is not something God is isolated from or immune to. Personal suffering is something that is central to the story of redemption as we contemplate the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. It is also a reason why the Lord Jesus is so effective in helping us through our trials on an emotional level. He has been here before and suffered many of the things we experience – 'For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour [help or aid] them that are tempted', Heb. 2. 18.

Chairman and General Editor:

JOHN BENNETT

19 Alfreton Road, Pinxton,
Nottingham NG16 6JZ

Treasurer:

MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE

PO Box 10544, Grantham NG31 0HW

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*All committee members can be contacted at
secretary@preciousseed.org
or via **0044(0)1142 511700***

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'And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord', Gen. 21: 33.



'And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord', Gen. 21: 33.

Beersheba is one of the largest cities in Israel outside of the metropolitan areas of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa, and is known for the manufacture of chemicals, porcelain, tile products, and textiles. It is described as the administrative, cultural, and industrial centre of the Negev and is the site of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

However, the history of the area known as Beersheba can be traced back to Abraham. Its name can mean either 'the seven wells', or 'well of the oath'. We first read of the place in scripture as an area of wilderness in which Hagar and Ishmael, cast out by Abraham, are dying of thirst, Gen. 21: 14-16, until God intervenes and directs Hagar to the well.

In that same chapter, Abraham and Abimelech swear an oath of agreement, and Abraham establishes a foothold in what was later to become the land of Israel. Indeed, Beersheba was to become synonymous with the boundary of the nation in later times, Judg. 20: 1; 2 Sam. 17: 11; 1 Chr. 21: 2; 2 Chr. 30: 5, associated with the tribes of Judah and Simeon.

Apart from being a place of wells, for Isaac's servants dug one there later, Gen. 26: 25, it was also a place of covenants. Whilst Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech in Beersheba, his son Isaac re-established it later. More importantly, it was there that Abraham and Isaac 'called ... on the name of the Lord', and Isaac built an altar, 21: 33; 26: 25. This spiritual significance is cemented by God appearing there to Isaac, 26: 24, Jacob, 46: 1, 2, and, later, Elijah, 1 Kgs. 19: 3-8.

Perhaps the contrast between the modern and the historic could not be greater, between what Beersheba was and what it is now. What criteria do we use to establish significance and value? Is it economic, educational, social or spiritual?

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