

# PRECIOUS SEED

INTERNATIONAL



a magazine to encourage the study of the scriptures, the practice of New Testament church principles and interest in gospel work



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Psalm 133. 3.

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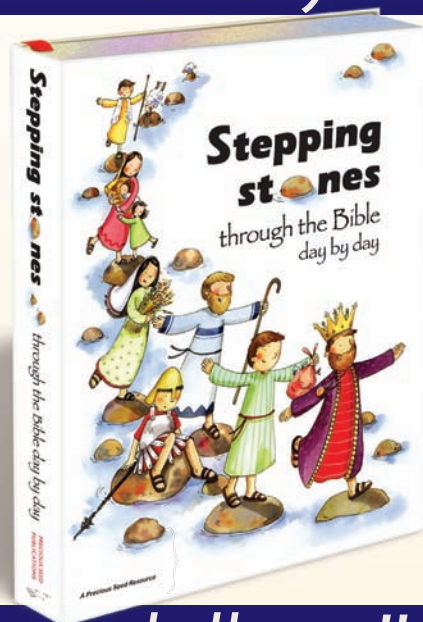
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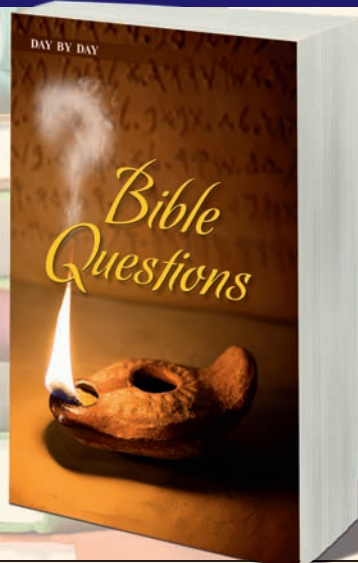
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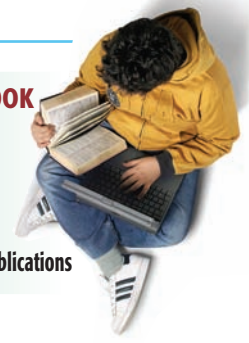
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# Book Reviews

By JOHN BENNETT and JOHN SCARBROOK

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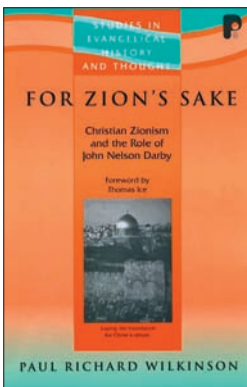
## The divorce dilemma John MacArthur

Paperback, 104pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ. Price £5.00. ISBN 978-1-846251-07-8.

In a world that has come to regard divorce as the norm and marriage for life the exception, a book that offers guidance on this most difficult of subjects should be welcome. Similarly, in a book authored by a renowned Bible teacher such as JOHN MACARTHUR it was hoped that there might be a level of spiritual wisdom and insight of help to leaders amongst the people of God. However, much of this book is a disappointment.

MACARTHUR indicates the line that he intends to take early in his book. From page 7, he commences his long treatment of the so-called exception clause of Matthew chapters 5 and 19. It is sad that it is only when he gets to chapter 5 of the book that he mentions the parallel passage in Mark chapter 10, but then he does not explain why that exception clause should be absent from this passage. Equally, the author's treatment of such a fundamental passage as Romans chapter 7 is superficial and wholly unsatisfactory, reading into the passage what is not present rather than explaining how his view can be reconciled with this portion of scripture. In chapter 3 he makes the statement that 'the Greek word "separate" (*chorizo*) always carries the meaning of divorce, not a mere separation', and he cites 1 Corinthians chapter 7 in this context. An expansion of this assertion could have enabled a more thorough treatment of that Bible passage.

Although this is not a book that this reviewer could recommend, there are sections that would be useful in other contexts. In chapter 5, MACARTHUR tackles the question, 'Is singleness the best option?' In chapter 6, he looks at 'Marriage in a troubled society', and, in chapter 7, he considers 'Divine guidelines for singleness and marriage'. It is a great pity that the author's treatment of the subject of divorce was not set against the background of these chapters as it might have helped us to take his ideas a little more seriously.



## For Zion's Sake Paul Richard Wilkinson.

Paperback 308 pp. Published by Paternoster, 9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK1 1QR, UK. Available from the author, Paul Wilkinson, Hazel Grove Full Gospel Church, 68 London Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 4AF, UK. Price £10.00 + postage. ISBN 978-1-84227-569.

What should be the attitude of the Bible-believing Christian towards Israel today? PAUL WILKINSON recognizes that, in much of Christendom, Christian Palestinianism is the prevailing view. This has resulted in some elements of the church attacking Christian Zionism as 'a powerful force which fuels the Arab-Israeli conflict' as 'a totally unbiblical menace', and as 'the road-map to Armageddon'.

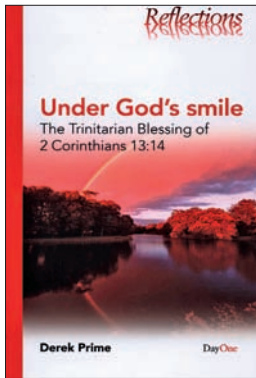
The author tackles such criticism head-on. He cuts through the confusion and misinformation which surrounds such views, and takes his readers beyond politics and back to the Bible's own teaching concerning Israel. He is unashamedly pre-millennial, and sees J. N. DARBY's eschatology as providing a consistent and accurate understanding of God's purposes for Israel. In answering those Christian scholars who have attacked DARBY, he has restored DARBY's reputation, and has recognized his vital contribution to Christian Zionism, noting that the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His church is at the heart of DARBY's eschatology.

Recognizing that Christian Palestinianism is a coalition of 'strange bedfellows', he challenges those who have fallen for the propaganda which, sometimes in strident tones, promotes the cause of Christian Palestinianism. He is forthright in identifying the well-spring of this coalition, 'Christian Palestinianism is theologically rooted in Reformed, covenant theology which has re-defined Israel. Consequently, the church is said to be the real Israel, the Israel of God'.

In taking his readers through this complex and emotive subject, the author gives ample evidence of painstaking research (the bibliography runs to thirty-seven pages), and mastery of his subject. His style is sometimes trenchant. In countering the charge that Christian Zionism has subordinated Christ and the church and elevated Israel, he replies, 'On the contrary, its focus on Israel is thoroughly Christ-centred, interpreting Israel's restoration in the light of Christ's return . . . it has uncovered the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, reclaimed Israel from the theological dustbin of Reformed theology, and unveiled the "blessed hope" or rapture of the church'. Furthermore, he has exposed the well-organized Palestinian propaganda machine, Sabeel, the Palestinian Ecumenical Theology Centre, which, he claims, has established itself within mainstream Christianity.

The reader of this invaluable volume must be prepared to master a few technical terms. The effort will be well rewarded. Although this review has concentrated on the first four chapters, chapters five to eight are no less stimulating, particularly when the author notes the promise of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the subsequent betrayal of the Jewish people during the period of the British Mandate, and then ponders the collapse of the British Empire and the sorry state of the UK today. A stimulating and courageous book, long overdue, ably vindicating J.N. DARBY's eschatology and articulating the Bible's teaching about Israel and its place in the divine plan.

[Our thanks to Ed Hotchin, Hucknall, Nottingham, England, for this review]



### **Under God's smile** Derek Prime

Paperback, 122pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ. Price £5.00. ISBN 978-1-84625-059-0.

This book is subtitled *The Trinitarian Blessing of 2 Corinthians 13.14* and is an up-dated version of an earlier book published in 1994 and entitled *Let's say the grace together*. Though the verse, 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen', is frequently quoted in prayer the author asks if the words are really understood and if we appreciate what we are actually praying for? These questions are addressed in this book.

There are three main sections to the book, corresponding to the three parts of the benediction. As an example of the writer's approach, the first section focuses on 'The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' and under that general heading contains five separate chapters on such themes as the grace of His forgiveness, His presence and His strength. The chapters are short and easily read and each concludes with a series of

'Points to reflect on'. The writer frequently draws upon other passages of scripture to illustrate his teaching and it is good to see how those passages are considered contextually. All scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version.

While this is a book to uplift, encourage and comfort, nevertheless readers should be aware that it seems the author believes in 'covenant theology' and although that does not impinge greatly upon the content of the book, mention is made on pages 87-88 of 'the covenant of redemption' a covenant that it is asserted was made between the Father and the Son.

[Our thanks to Richard Catchpole, South Norwood, England for this review]



### **Opening up Proverbs** Jim Newheiser

Paperback, 186pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ. Price £8.00. ISBN 978-1-84625-110-8.

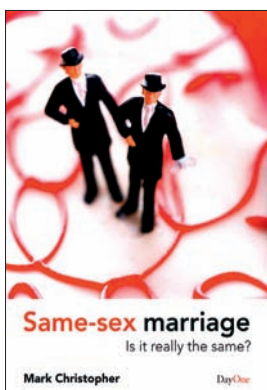
All Bible students recognize that Proverbs has a special place in the canon of scripture and the author of this introduction to the book writes as one who believes that to study the Proverbs and to live by them is the key to 'success in every aspect of . . . life'.

The first nine chapters of Proverbs as well as the concluding one are dealt with in an expositional manner, the writer giving a general overview of their contents and teaching. The intervening chapters are dealt with topically rather than in an expository fashion, the writer focusing upon such themes as 'The theology of Proverbs'; 'Wisdom at work'; 'Financial wisdom'; 'Wise words'; 'Wise child training' and, 'Wisdom for leaders'.

Like Proverbs itself, this commentary is both practical and challenging. The writer exposes many of the ills of modern society and the sound counsel that Proverbs gives in addressing the very same issues. For

maximum benefit this book needs to be read alongside an 'open Bible' to facilitate easy reference to the many scripture passages the reader is referred to. All quotations are from the New American Standard Bible. As the title indicates, this book is intended to be only an introduction to Proverbs, something that the author has effectively and most helpfully provided.

[Our thanks to Richard Catchpole, South Norwood, England, for this review]



### **Same-sex Marriage. Is it really the same?** Mark Christopher

Paperback, 125pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ. Price £6.00. ISBN 978-1-84625-163-4.

It might seem strange to many that a book with such a title should be reviewed within the pages of this magazine. However, this quote from MARK CHRISTOPHER's introduction puts the issue into perspective, 'The concerted onslaught of the mainstream media, hedonistic Hollywood, liberal scholars, radical activists . . . and pragmatic politicians have all blitzkrieged our senses to make the unthinkable thinkable'. Against that background the writer presents a cogent and well-researched argument against the tide of moral and social drift.

His four 'non-negotiables' are: that the argument is not about hate but debate; in the Bible, homosexuality isn't necessarily worse than other sexual sins; his authority is the Bible, the word of God; and who the biblical God is. From these axioms, CHRISTOPHER covers such subjects as, 'What is the

divine purpose for marriage?; what presuppositions motivate the same-sex marriage lobby?; the cultural creeds that led us to our current situation; and, is change really possible?'

Perhaps the most valuable chapter in this incisive exposé of current trends is entitled, 'How should the church respond to SSM? A scriptural strategy for the church'. In it the writer makes a number of very telling points. He argues that 'shepherds must begin feeding their flocks on all the vital issues and true doctrines concerning marriage and family'; 'shepherds must take sexual sin of any nature seriously'; 'shepherds must take divorce and remarriage more seriously'; 'shepherds must teach what the Bible says about gender distinctions and gender roles'; and 'shepherds must equip their people adequately to prepare their children for the sexually saturated world'. Just under half of the book is taken up with three appendices. The most valuable of these is entitled Questions and Answers, and covers some searching but pertinent issues with thoughtful and biblical responses.

This book is not comfortable reading, neither is it as thorough a book as it might have been. However, MARK CHRISTOPHER has done a considerable service in providing a powerful rebuttal of the arguments for same-sex marriage. While these dangerous trends indicate the imminent return of the Lord, it is important that elders are ready to fulfil their responsibilities in preserving the flock of God.



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'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him', Ps. 126. 6.

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## EDITORIAL

**'The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore', Ezra 2. 64.**

In reading through such chapters as this it is striking to notice God's attention to detail. In a company of such magnitude would we be interested in one or two? We would be happy with a round figure approximation to work with, but not God. Every family is listed. The number in each family is counted and recorded. When we think of the God who created and who sustains the universe in all its vastness, it is amazing that He should be interested in the individual and even the minutiae of our lives. How awesome is our God!

As many assemblies decline numerically and as, in many cases, their age profile increases, let us be encouraged to know that we serve a God who is interested in numbers, however small. As we read through Ezra chapter 2 we can see the families counted in their thousands and their hundreds. Nevertheless, those families that numbered only forty-two or fifty-two are not forgotten. If we are committed to a small work and feel the fewness of numbers, let us take courage that our God knows and records what is done by His people for Him.

Equally, if any remembered a once mighty nation reduced to the few that were prepared to return to the land from exile, it would have been a most discouraging spectacle. So many preferred to remain in Babylon rather than return to the land of Israel. The seeming spiritual apathy of some should always bring us to our knees in prayer but it should not deflect us from what He still has for us to do, however difficult it may be to do it.

Yet, even with such a relatively small congregation and with some families so poorly represented, there was also the situation of some who could not trace their genealogy and were put from the priesthood. We might have been tempted to ask whether, in the light of the smallness of the company, these things were really important. However, the God of numerical detail is also the God of spiritual detail. To Him these things are vital! But how important is the lesson that those who were put from the priesthood accepted their plight and left the matter with God to resolve. In a society that is so quick to defend the rights of the individual, we can often forget that it is God's 'rights' that need to be defended.

I wonder what this company must have felt like as they entered the city of Jerusalem upon their return. As they surveyed the plight of the city and the temple, what must they have thought? Where do we begin? The answer was remarkably simple, 'They gave after their ability', v. 69. God requires no more and no less than what we are able to give. What should distinguish our contribution to the work of the Lord is that we are both willing and cheerful givers because we give 'unto the Lord'.

As I come to the last of the four issues that have formed my first year as ministry articles editor, I want to thank all who continue to support this work both prayerfully as well as practically. To those who give of their limited time to write, we owe a considerable debt. Without such willing writers, the work of this magazine would not be possible. This issue sees the continuation of our two new series and material which will inform and challenge us all. May the Lord be pleased to bless this issue to the encouragement of His people!



# DANIEL'S SEVENTH

By **JIM ALLEN**  
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Most serious students of scripture agree that these four verses are the key to the understanding of scriptural prophecy. SIR EDWARD DENNY, a respected expositor of the last century, called them, 'The Backbone of Prophecy'. Their vital importance stems from a number of considerations: (a) this is the only prophecy that dates the arrival of the Messiah (Christ); (b) this date is linked with a verifiable date in secular history; (c) the exact literal fulfilment of the first part of the prophecy, vv. 25-26, given 570 years before the event, is an assurance that the second part, v. 27, will be fulfilled just as literally; (d) other prophecies link with the divine time-line given here and in doing so they complete the prophetic picture.

It would be perfectly natural to assume that the promises God had given to Abraham of a great people, Gen. 12. 2, and a national home in Canaan, Gen. 15. 18, and to David of a throne to his house for ever, 2 Sam. 7. 16, could never be realized. However, Daniel knew that in the ministry of Jeremiah God had set a divine limit upon the captivity and shown, even before the first invasion,<sup>1</sup> that, 'He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem', Dan. 9. 2; Jer. 25. 11-14. Daniel has spent sixty-eight years in Babylon and, realizing that the period is almost over, is burdened as to what lies ahead for his people. Is it any wonder that Daniel is praying?

In his prayer there is: (a) a confession of sin as he identifies with his people, 9. 3-16. Notice, 'we have sinned' repeated in verses 5, 8, and 15; (b) a claim that 'thy great mercies' in the character of God, v. 16, demand that He 'hear' and 'forgive', vv. 17-19. In response to the godly exercise of Daniel, addressed as 'greatly beloved', God gives him a vision that would not only implicitly unfold the immediate future of Daniel's people, Israel, and Daniel's city, Jerusalem, but explicitly unfold the distant future when that nation would become a blessing to mankind under the sovereignty of One identified as 'the son of David, the son of Abraham', Matt. 1. 1; Gal. 3. 16.

## THE PRAYER OF DANIEL (Dan. 9. 1-23)

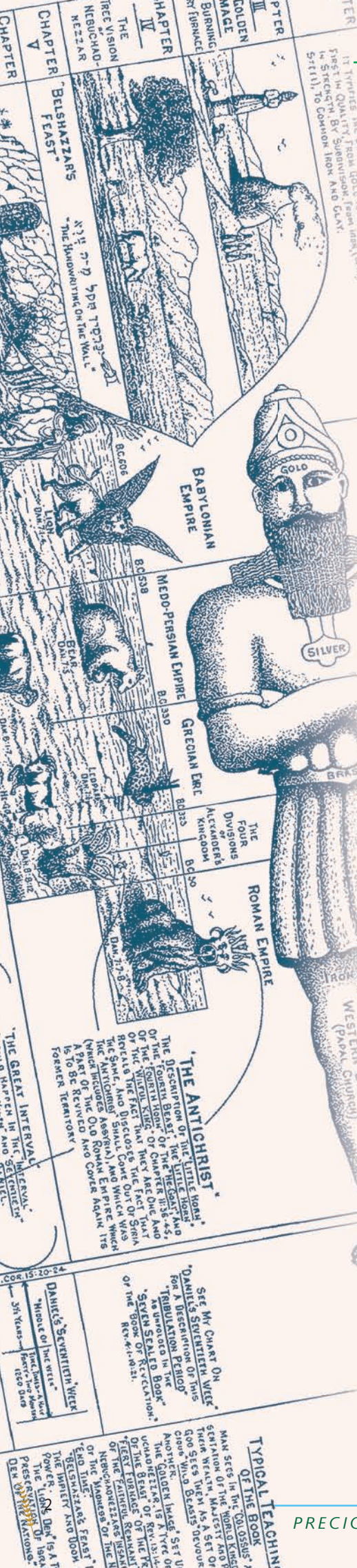
In the city of Babylon, Daniel, an old man of 85 years, is on his knees in the presence of his God. Dramatic events have taken place on the world stage. Just months before, mighty Babylon, capital of the great Babylonian Empire, had fallen to the Medo-Persian armies (13th October 539 BC) as recorded in Daniel chapter 5. The date of Daniel's prayer is given as, 'the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes', 9. 1. Using our chronology, this is the year 538 BC. Daniel is deeply burdened about the future of his people – the nation of Israel.

## THE PROPHECY GIVEN TO DANIEL (Dan. 9. 24-27)

In answer to Daniel's exercise, Gabriel is commissioned to show to Daniel, 9. 23, that within a specified period of years, seventy sevens, or 490 years, God will literally fulfil all the promises to Abraham and to David. When the promises are fulfilled the people of Israel, 'thy people', v. 24, will dwell in peace in the land of Canaan under the king of David's line, ruling in Jerusalem, 'thy holy city', v. 24, with consequent blessing to mankind.

### The Period Determined, v. 24

Hebrew scholars agree that the word 'weeks' is a generic term meaning 'sevens' without specifying 'days',





# TY WEEKS

## DANIEL 9. 24-27

'weeks', 'months' or 'years'. Perhaps the best translation would be *heptad*, meaning something composed of seven parts. Since Daniel had in his thoughts the seventy years of captivity, v. 2, now coming to an end, and he receives an answer in terms of 'seventy sevens' it is a logical inference that the subject is still years and the period becomes seventy sevens of years – thus 490 years. It is to be noted that Israel, and Babylon, used the lunar-based year of 360 days. Thus, the period of 490 years of 360 days totalling 173,880 days 'are determined' – the Hebrew root of the verb means 'to cut' suggesting this period is 'cut out' of history for a specific purpose. Within this specified period the purpose of God is to be accomplished.

### The Purpose Defined

The objective to be achieved in this specified period is clearly defined in six statements. The first three deal with the national problem that had brought Israel to their present state. The issue of sin must be dealt with before blessing can be enjoyed. Daniel is not told how this is to be done but Isaiah's ministry in setting forth the Servant of Jehovah, Christ, will fully explain. It is to be noticed how the words 'sin', 'iniquity' and 'transgression' run through Isaiah chapter 53. Here, the results of the great work of the Servant are made good to the nation. Three expressions are used: (a) 'to finish transgression' – the noun 'transgression' comes from a verb that means 'to rebel'. Thus, the rebellion endemic in Israel is to be 'finished'; the picture in the verb is that of a '**beast – shut up**'. Transgression has been so dealt with there can be no subsequent breaking out of the rebel nature seen in the past; (b) 'to make an end of sins' – the verb means to 'seal up' and the picture is of a '**book – sealed up**'. Sin has been so dealt with that the record is righteously cleared and there can be no additions; (c) 'to make reconciliation for iniquity' – the basis of the verb is 'to make atonement'. In New Testament terms, propitiation has taken place, satisfaction has been given to God. The picture is of a '**bill – settled up**'. Sin fully dealt with, the nation can now enjoy the blessing

intended by God.

The blessing is centred in the acceptance of a person – indeed, a sovereign. Three terms are used: (a) 'to bring in everlasting righteousness', Isa. 32. 1 – a new rule in the land under a new ruler; (b) 'to seal up the vision and prophecy' – a revelation that makes interim measures unnecessary; (c) 'to anoint the most holy' – a recognition of a divine person for whom the holiest is anointed as He takes up permanent residence in Jerusalem. The sovereign has arrived – the promises to Abraham and David are fully realized in a person who takes the place of prophet, priest and king. He will be identified in the next verse as Messiah.

### The Prince Designate, v. 25

This verse deals specifically with the commencement of the period that will culminate in the arrival on the scene of 'Messiah the Prince' – 'the Anointed' – 'the Christ'. The date that allows the clock to start ticking is given as 'from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem'.

There are three edicts in scripture regarding the building of the temple<sup>2</sup> but there is only one with regard to the city and we are not surprised to find it carefully dated. This is the decree given by King Artaxerxes Longimanus to Nehemiah, Neh. 2. 1-8. It is dated in his twentieth year in the month Nisan.<sup>3</sup> Since it was standard practice in Babylon and in Medo-Persia to date edicts from the first of the month in which they were issued, the starting date for this decree becomes, in our chronology, **1st Nisan 445 BC**. Implicit in this verse is the return of a remnant of the nation of Israel to Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> So Daniel's immediate concern about his people is answered. This return took place between 536 BC and 445 BC when the temple was built. The key dates for the temple may be noted: founded under Zerubbabel 536 BC; finished under the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah 516 BC; furnished under Ezra 458 BC. It is thus ninety years from the first return under Zerubbabel in 536 BC through the exercise of Nehemiah that attention was focussed on the city and the decree issued in 445 BC. Daniel had been dead many

years when this key date starts the prophetic clock.

From the commencing date to Messiah the Prince would be measured as 'seven weeks' and 'three score and two weeks' – thus a total of sixty-nine weeks of years that covers 483 years. The reason for the break after the seven weeks, forty-nine years, is clearly to point to the completion of the city. The 'street' or 'open place' is used of the public area where civic gatherings took place and 'wall' is not the usual word for wall but is best translated as 'the scarp rampart', F. A. TATFORD, denoting the completion of the defences of the city. 'Even in troublous times' points to Nehemiah's time and the following years until the prophetic voice fell silent in Malachi, 396 BC, forty-nine years from 445 BC.

The 'threescore and two weeks' period brings us to 'Messiah the Prince' or, as the Revised Version reads, 'Unto the Anointed One the Prince'.<sup>5</sup> So, from the 1st Nisan 445 BC to the expected Christ would be 483 years of 360 days or a total of 173,880 days.

In his book *The Coming Prince* (page 127), SIR ROBERT ANDERSON has shown that exact calculation of the days brings us to the date **10th Nisan 32 AD**. The expression 'Messiah the Prince' implies a public presentation of Christ and thus rules out any reference to His birth or to His baptism. However, there is one very public event recorded in all the Gospels and dated in the Gospel of John. This is the arrival of Christ in Jerusalem riding on the colt. The Jewish Passover was, of course, on the 14th Nisan. For His last Passover, Christ went up to Jerusalem six days before the Passover, John 11. 51, which would be the 8th Nisan 32 AD. In this year the 8th fell on a Friday. Christ would rest on the Sabbath, 9th Nisan, and then attend the supper after sunset in the house of Simon the leper, Matt. 26. 6; John 12. 1-9. On the next day, John 12. 12, the first day of the week, **the 10th Nisan**, Christ presented Himself officially to His nation as 'Messiah the Prince'. Zechariah was given a prophetic view of that moment when the nation was challenged, 'Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion; Shout O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, Thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation: Lowly, and riding upon an





ass, And upon a colt the foal of an ass', Zech. 9. 9. Messiah the prince had arrived, exactly on schedule!

### The Programme Deferred, v. 26

'After the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off'. In sober prophetic statement the most dramatic moment in earth's history is stated. Instead of a crown the nation of Israel gave Christ a cross!

Four days after the closing of the 69th week, on the **14th Nisan 32 AD**, Christ died on the cross of Calvary. 'The Lamb of God', John 1. 29, having been 'kept' the four literal days, dies on the Passover day in keeping with scripture. 'Cut off' is a word used in scripture to describe deliberate judicial action, Isa. 53. 8 – the nation refusing His claim took action to put Him to death. The KJV reading, 'but not for himself' may be replaced by the more exact reading of the RV, 'and shall have nothing'. No crown, only a cross for the 'Messiah' the 'Anointed'! The consequence is that the clock of prophecy stopped. The purpose of God for this nation was not cancelled but temporarily suspended. Before the Sovereign could reign, Israel would have to face her sin.

That there is a gap between the 69th and 70th week of the prophecy is obvious. Two events are noted as taking place after the 69th week has closed with the arrival of Christ and before the 70th week opens in the next verse. The first event is the cross, Messiah cut off, four days after his presentation to the nation. The second event is the destruction of the city, Jerusalem, and the sanctuary, the temple, just 38 years later. In 70 AD in the process of subduing the rebellious province of Judaea, a Roman army under Titus destroyed both the city and the sanctuary. The agent of this destruction is very carefully identified as, 'the people of the prince that shall come'. The participle that describes the prince as 'coming' makes it clear that the people would come before this particular prince would appear on the historical scene. In other words, while the people are certainly the Roman army, the prince cannot be Titus. The prophecy looks beyond Titus to show that a far greater than Titus would emerge from the West. From the people who arrive with Titus – a western people – the one identified as the 'Coming Prince' would arise. In

retrospect, the gap between people and prince lengthens to centuries. In this statement is foreshadowed the coming upon the world stage of a mighty leader from an imperial Western power, inheritor of all the might of Rome. As the next verse will show, he is an end-time figure who has not yet appeared. The action of the next verse may well mark his political debut as a peacemaker.

The ferocity of the Jewish defence of Jerusalem incited the Roman soldiers to unparalleled brutality. Crosses around the city were in such numbers that it was said that not a tree was left in Judaea. Titus had given orders that the sanctuary was to be preserved but such was the rage of the soldiers that the magnificent Herodian temple was deliberately set on fire.<sup>6</sup> In the burning temple the gold melted and ran down between the stones. To get the gold the soldiers prised the stones apart.

A greater than Titus had said, 'There shall not be left one stone upon another', Matt. 24. 2. The subsequent history of Jerusalem is summarized in three statements: (a) 'and the end thereof shall be with a flood'; (b) 'and even unto the end shall be war' RV; (c) 'desolations are determined'. These statements cover the intervening centuries until the commencement of the seventieth week. The word 'flood' in the Old Testament is used frequently of an enemy invasion, Nah. 1. 8; Isa. 28. 28. It is simply a matter of historical record that, in these intervening years down to the present, Jerusalem has

endured thirty-six major wars, experienced twenty sieges and been destroyed seventeen times.

When subsequent New Testament revelation is taken into account, it is clear that within this time-break lies: (a) the resurrection of Christ on the 17th of the month Nisan and His ascension forty days later; (b) the setting aside temporarily of the nation of Israel, Rom. 11. 25; (c) the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the incorporation of the church, Acts 2; (d) the mission of the church in the preaching of the gospel worldwide; (e) the removal of the church from earth when Christ comes to the air; 1 Thess. 4. 13-18. It should be noticed that since the church is not introduced until after Israel is set aside, it is clear that the church must be removed before Israel comes back into the prophetic timetable, with the confirmation of the covenant of the next verse.

### The Power Displayed, v. 27

One week of this prophecy awaits fulfilment. Consistent exegesis demands that this is a period of 7 years of 360 days – making a total of 2520 days. If the first coming of Christ was accurate to the day, there is a very strong case for accuracy in the date of the second coming of Christ to earth. The starting point of this period is the 'confirming' of a covenant between one identified as 'he' and a leader in Israel who speaks for the 'many'. The only possible antecedent for the 'he', both grammatically, the nearest antecedent, and logically, is the one







described as 'The Coming Prince' in the previous verse. The use of the word 'Prince' suggests one who stands in contrast to Messiah the Prince and it has been shown that he is the powerful leader from the West. Other scriptures, Dan. 2. 40-43; 7. 7-8, indicate that he will lead a ten-power world kingdom on the pattern of, but far greater than, the Roman Empire. He is depicted as the Beast from the sea, Rev. 13. 1-2, and called the 'Man of Sin', 2 Thess. 2. 3.

The emergence of a leader in Israel able to enter into such a covenant assumes that Israel as a people are back in their own land and, as a nation, are able to decide their own destiny. For a period of 2554 years from 606 BC to 1948 this was never so. It must therefore be of prophetic significance that only since Israel became an independent nation on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948 could such a covenant be made. They await a charismatic leader able to command a majority vote for peace. When such arises, he will be the one of whom the Lord warned that he would 'come in his own name', John 5. 43, to claim the allegiance of the apostate nation of Israel.<sup>7</sup>

This seven-year covenant, underwritten by the powerful Western leader, (a) brings peace in Israel (b) permits the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, 2 Thess. 2. 3-4, and (c) allows the re-establishment of the sacrificial system of Judaism. Isaiah has described it in scathing terms as 'a covenant with death' and 'an

agreement with hell', Isa. 28. 18. The confirmation of this covenant commences the seven-year tribulation, whose details are unfolded in Revelation chapter 6 verse 16.

In the middle of this period, at the three and a half years stage, a crisis develops. Suddenly, the recently established sacrificial system is interrupted. The 'sacrifice', the blood offerings, and the 'oblation', the non-blood offerings, of Judaism are made to cease. The action that brings this about is described thus, 'Upon the wing of desolations shall come one that maketh desolate' RV. The most justifiable interpretation is to see the 'wing' as the 'wing' or 'pinnacle' of the temple from which Satan sought to persuade Christ to make a public claim to deity, Matt. 4. 5. It is here that the leader in Israel, the False Prophet, will place the image he has made of the Beast, Rev. 13. 14, and demand his worship. This is identified by the Lord as, 'the abomination of desolation', Matt. 24. 15. This happening, at the mid-point of the week, introduces the 'great tribulation', Matt. 24. 21, spoken of by Jeremiah as 'the time of Jacob's trouble', Jer. 30. 7, when unparalleled judgement breaks on earth. This is the period when Jerusalem is 'trodden under foot for forty-two months', Rev. 11. 2, and every one who will not worship the Beast is put to death.

This idolatry, the worship of Satan's man, is allowed to continue to the 'consummation', a word meaning 'full

end'. The judgement of this man will take place on the last day of this seven-year week, as Christ arrives on earth with the armies of heaven, Rev. 19. 11. The word 'determined' is the same word as in verse 26 and means 'decreed' – heaven has passed its judicial sentence upon unbelieving mankind both in Israel and the nations. Unbelievers who worship the Beast, bow to his image, and take his mark will share his doom. That judgement is defined in the final statement of the text – 'shall wrath be poured upon the desolator' RV. This points to the confrontation at Armageddon between Christ and the Man of Sin who has led the world into terrible desolation. The record of scripture is concise, 'And the beast was taken and with him the false prophet . . . these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone', Rev. 19. 20. The desolator removed to the Lake of Fire and his armies destroyed, Rev. 19. 20-21, Christ moves to Jerusalem, Ps. 24. 7-10, to claim the crown refused Him when He came the first time. The promises to Abraham and David will be fulfilled in the kingdom established at this point. The record of Zechariah thrills, 'And he shall speak unto the nations, and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth', Zech. 9. 10.

### References

- 1 See Jer. 25. 1 where the year in our dating becomes 607 BC.
- 2 See 2 Chron. 36. 22-23; Ezra 6. 6-12; Ezra 7. 12-26.
- 3 The first month in the Jewish and Babylonian year.
- 4 The return of a remnant of the nation of Israel here involved around 50,000 persons.
- 5 The 'anointed' is the Old Testament designation of the prophet-priest-king in whom all divine promises would be made good to Israel.
- 6 See *Josephus Wars* book VI chap V para. 6
- 7 He would answer to John's vision when he wrote, 'I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth', Rev. 13. 11, and identified in other scriptures as, 'the false prophet', Rev. 16. 13; 19. 20; 20. 10, and 'the antichrist', 1 John 2. 18.

**JIM ALLEN** was born in N. Ireland and went to Malaysia in 1955 in government service. He returned there in 1968 as a commended missionary. In latter years he has resided in N. Ireland and is engaged in preaching the gospel and in ministry to the saints at home and abroad.





# REHOBOM

*This is the first article in a new series that explores the practical lessons that we can all learn from the biblical record of the lives of the Kings of Judah.*

Rehoboam was the fourth and the least significant of the kings of Israel and the first king of Judah. We ask ourselves why, and would have to conclude that the fault lay with him. At the commencement of our study this comes as a challenge to us all. It is all too easy to blame the difficulties we face and the lack of encouragement we have received for our failures in matters relating to our service for God, as if previous generations had better opportunity to do well, rather than facing up to the fact that the answer to our problems lies with us.

We will look at four aspects of this man's life:

- His ancestry**
- His legacy**
- His folly**
- His infidelity**

### **His ancestry**

What a pedigree Rehoboam had when we consider his grandfather David and father Solomon! I have no doubt that he could not remember much about David personally but others would have recounted his exploits. Even today, David is still a revered national hero in Israel's history. In all probability Rehoboam would have sung psalms that David, and indeed his father, had written as they went up to the house of the Lord. Rehoboam's heart must have been stirred as he thought of his grandfather – a man who was tender-hearted, yet fearless and courageous on the battlefield.

And what of Solomon his father, the wisest man that ever lived, yet his only son was so unwise! Solomon, the king that kings and queens respected, was the man whose favour was much sought after and whose fame spread throughout the then known world.

No one suggests that these men were without fault, for their failures are highlighted in the word of God as a warning to us all. But if Rehoboam needed an example to follow as he sought to rule the people of God, surely there was none better than David, a man after God's own heart. And if it was advice he required then who better to give it than his own father. Sadly, both of these great men and their legacies seem to have made little impact on the life of this young man.

### **His legacy**

We are particularly thinking in respect to the nation, Israel. David had subdued the nations on all the borders of the land. He could rule without fear. Solomon had literally put Israel on the map of world affairs with every nation acknowledging his glory and greatness; even the Lord Jesus corroborated this fact. The people had been well governed, albeit, latterly, Solomon's lavish lifestyle would be a burden to them. In spite of this, Rehoboam's task should have been a relatively easy one for there was no 'credit crunch', nor costly wars to finance. There was no civil unrest, although he ought to have recognized the possibility of it with Jeroboam's exile to Egypt.

On top of this, we can think of the wonderful spiritual legacy that was left to him, for the ark of the covenant no longer dwelt under curtains but was now permanently housed in the temple in Jerusalem. This was the place where God had chosen to place His name and if the tabernacle was beautiful how much more the temple with its gold in abundance and ornate workmanship which well befitted the presence of the most high God. Had not his father sat in dire amazement at the dedication of it saying, 'The . . . heaven of heavens cannot contain thee far less this house that I have built', 1 Kgs. 8. 27, and did not David write in Psalm 122, 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord'? What an appreciation these men had of the house of God and the God of the house. Oh, if only some of that





# M

By **IAN AFFLECK**  
Lossiemouth, Scotland

enthusiasm had rubbed off onto Rehoboam then he could have been up there with them in God's roll of honour. Instead, we see this great nation divided, the temple forsaken, idolatry being practised in the land and the legacy which Rehoboam was left sadly being frittered away. What a warning to all who read, for good days do not last forever. May God help us to be careful as to our actions lest we, likewise, destroy the great legacy which we, who gather to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, have been left.

### His folly

We read in 2 Chronicles chapter 10 that Rehoboam is about to ascend the throne after the death of his father and is immediately faced with a problem that could have disastrous consequences. The lesson is that with authority always comes responsibility. God was testing this young man to prove his fitness to lead His people, and, sadly, he failed the test.

Jeroboam was recalled from his self-imposed exile in Egypt to speak on behalf of the ten tribes and if Rehoboam saw this as a threat to his being crowned he never showed it.

Israel's request was simple: if you lighten the heavy yoke that your father laid on us and do not overburden us then we will be your servants. The problem seems to be that of excessive taxation, not an uncommon complaint even today. To Rehoboam's credit he seeks advice of his father's wise and experienced counsellors, but then chose to forsake it for the advice of his young companions. They may have been good young men but they lacked experience in dealing with great matters such as these and their advice was seriously flawed. But that advice was accepted by Rehoboam, who in turn spoke roughly to the people and treated them as of no consequence. How sad! That could only make matters worse and that attitude has the same affect even today, for leaders cannot ride roughshod over the people they lead.

The result, in this instance, was a divided nation; the southern kingdom

was called Judah, which remained loyal to Rehoboam, and the northern kingdom Israel, which was by far the greater part of the nation, rebelled against him. This meant there was strife between brothers and sisters, and it is difficult to imagine that the people who were at peace with their national neighbours could no longer live at peace among themselves. Oh, the reproach that brought to them but, far worse, to the God they served! Was there not an Abraham among them who would speak up and say, 'Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren', Gen. 13. 8. Let all who read be slow to criticize the men of Rehoboam's day for one feels there is a great need for Abraham-like men in our day.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 11, we find Rehoboam making ready for war with Israel, but we note that God sent His prophet Shemaiah to speak to him and warn him from taking this course of action since the circumstances were the Lord's doing. Here we see the sovereign hand of God, as is the case in all our circumstances, and we do well to accept this simple fact. One has said, 'God is behind everything and there is nothing behind God'. Rehoboam continues to strengthen himself and prepare the people to defend themselves and, while this may be a good practice, nevertheless one cannot help thinking that even behind this action lay a lack of trust in his God.

### His infidelity

We note sad words recorded by the Spirit in 2 Chronicles chapter 12 about this man. When he had

established the kingdom and strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord. Now the forsaking of the advice of wise elder men had disastrous consequences but this action would be even more so.

In the fifth year of his reign, the Egyptians came against him, no doubt eyeing the treasures of the house of God. Once more, God sends Shemaiah to warn Rehoboam that this attack is a direct result of him forsaking the law of the Lord. We all do well to heed such a warning. We say to sinners that they cannot live as they please and not expect God to intervene, yet this is just as true concerning believers as well. That is why Solomon wrote, 'The way of transgressors is hard', Prov. 13. 15.

Shishak took away the treasures of the house of God; those things that had a spiritual value and were precious to God were lost, stolen by a man who could place only a material value on them. May God preserve us today from giving up that which is of value to Him!

It would seem as if God's patience with Rehoboam paid off, for he humbled himself and acknowledged the Lord as righteous. He had no complaints about what God had done but rather he was contrite and the Lord granted deliverance. What a God we have, who in judgement remembers mercy! We thank God He is still the same today, for He is the unchanging God.

Probably the next three years were the best of Rehoboam's life, but sadly behind all of Rehoboam's actions, and left on the divine record, are these words, 'He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord', 2 Chron. 12. 14. We are left with this challenge: 'Is our heart right with God? Where do our affections lie?' Surely, it becomes us all to say with Peter, 'Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee', John 21. 17.

**IAN AFFLECK** has been in fellowship in the Lossiemouth assembly, Scotland, for thirty-six years and has been an elder for almost thirty years. He retains an active interest in the proclamation of the gospel and has been privileged to minister to the Lord's people throughout the UK, Canada and India.





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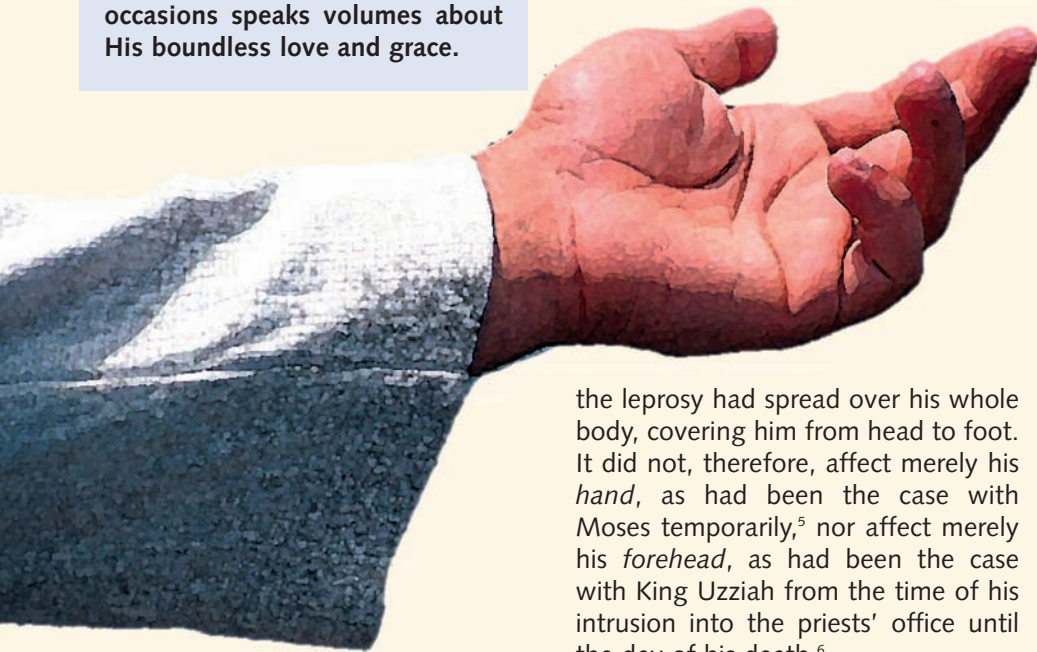


Although there are over forty references to our Lord's hands in the Gospels, we read there of only three occasions on which He 'stretched out' His hand. But, in one way or another, each of these occasions speaks volumes about His boundless love and grace.

# Our Lord's Outstretched Hand

By **MALCOLM HORLOCK** Cardiff, Wales

(Unless otherwise stated, all quotations of Scripture are from the New King James Version)



regarded as a 'stroke' from God, and was referred to as 'the finger of God'.<sup>11</sup> And so this man who, in popular belief, had been touched by 'the finger of God' was now, in actuality, touched by the outstretched hand of Jesus. 'And immediately', Doctor Luke says, 'the leprosy left him'.

the leprosy had spread over his whole body, covering him from head to foot. It did not, therefore, affect merely his *hand*, as had been the case with Moses temporarily,<sup>5</sup> nor affect merely his *forehead*, as had been the case with King Uzziah from the time of his intrusion into the priests' office until the day of his death.<sup>6</sup>

(ii) We read in Matthew chapter 12 of the second case when our Lord 'stretched out' His hand. 'While He was still speaking to the people', Matthew reports, 'behold, His mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to Him. But He replied to the man who told Him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"' And **stretching out His hand** toward His disciples, He said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother"<sup>12</sup>.

(i) First, we read in Luke chapter 5 that, 'While' the Lord Jesus 'was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged Him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean". And immediately the leprosy left him'.<sup>1</sup>

Luke draws particular attention to our Lord's physical contact with the poor man.

## In the sweep of our Lord's outstretched hand in the house we see an intimate spiritual relationship.

## In the touch of our Lord's outstretched hand in the city, we see unique cleansing power.

The man who came to Jesus was in a most sad and distressing condition. According to the Law of Moses, a leper was cut off from *all* social contact, forbidden to come near the dwellings of his fellow-men. 'He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp' were the words of Leviticus chapter 13.<sup>2</sup> As usual, the Rabbis went far beyond the teaching of the Law. 'If a leper was seen on a public street it was considered permissible to pelt him with eggs or even stones'.<sup>3</sup> The leper was required to keep at least two yards from a healthy person, or fifty yards if the wind was blowing from the leper's direction.<sup>4</sup>

For our Lord did not send him, as Elisha had once sent Naaman, the leprous commander of the Syrian army, to wash seven times in the Jordan.<sup>7</sup> Nor did our Lord do as Naaman had expected Elisha to do – to wave His hand over the leprosy and heal it.<sup>8</sup> No, our Lord didn't wave His hand; He '*stretched out*' His hand. He actually touched the leper, no doubt '*stretching out*' His hand because the leper hadn't dared come near enough to Him for Him to touch him. What a moment that must have been! I wonder when the poor man had last felt a human touch?

We are not told what it was that His mother and brothers wished to speak to Him about that day. We know only that, according to Luke's account of the incident, when they arrived, 'His mother and brothers . . . could not approach him because of the crowd' inside the house.<sup>13</sup>

And, in this case, the man not only *had* leprosy, but, according to Doctor Luke, he was '*full of leprosy*'. That is,

I said above that here 'we see *unique* cleansing power'. And it was '*unique*' because scripture makes it clear that *only God* can cure leprosy.<sup>9</sup> When Benhadad II, the King of Syria, had sent Naaman to Jehoram King of Israel to be cured, Jehoram suspected that Benhadad was looking for a quarrel. '*Am I God*, to kill and make alive', was his indignant response, 'that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy?'<sup>10</sup>

The Lord had recently crossed swords sharply with the scribes and the Pharisees, and it is by no means impossible therefore that Mary and His brothers<sup>14</sup> were mainly concerned for His safety and had come to discourage Him from being so confrontational. But we have no way of knowing whether this was so or not. What we do know is that, to the man who informed Him they were outside, the Lord made it clear that even the closest of earthly relationships must yield and give way to spiritual relationships – that the

Among the Jews, leprosy was





# stretched Hands

spiritual ties between Him and His disciples were far closer than even the ties of family.

It is important to recognize that, in doing this, He was showing no disrespect either for His mother or His brothers. He was simply pointing to a higher and more intimate relationship.

How great is the privilege enjoyed by every Christian that he or she is so closely united to the Lord Jesus that He is 'not ashamed to call them brethren'!<sup>15</sup>

(iii) We read in Matthew 14 of the third and last case when our Lord 'stretched out' His hand. Some time, we are told, between three and six o'clock in the morning, Jesus approached His apostles 'walking on the sea'. When the disciples, who had by then rowed a little over half-way across the Sea of Galilee, saw Him, 'they were terrified . . . But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid". And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water".<sup>16</sup> . . . He said, "Come". And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus **stretched out His hand** and caught him ('took firm hold of him')'.<sup>17</sup>

## In the grip of our Lord's outstretched hand in the storm we see timely preserving care.

I say 'timely', because we are told explicitly that, when Peter took His eyes off the Lord Jesus (focusing them on the violent effects of the wind rather than on Him) and began to sink, 'immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him'.<sup>18</sup>

And I suggest that, in these three incidents, we see mirrored what the Lord Jesus has done, or does, for each one of us. For (i) we too have received cleansing from our sin and defilement from Him; (ii) we too have come into

the good of the most wonderful spiritual relationship *with Him*; and (iii) many times, when we have felt unable to cope and about to sink, we too have been upheld and brought through our trials *by Him*.

I claimed at the outset that there are only three incidents recorded in the Gospels in which our Lord is said to have stretched out His hand. And so there are.

But, towards the close of his Gospel, the apostle John informs us that our Lord Jesus once used a very similar expression when addressing the apostle Peter, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, *you will stretch out your hands*, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go'.<sup>19</sup> 'This', John explains, 'He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God'.<sup>20</sup>

For my part, I understand our Lord's words 'you will stretch out your hands', not only as a reference to Peter's martyrdom, but to the actual manner of Peter's death; namely, death by crucifixion.<sup>21</sup> And I suggest therefore that our Lord's own death by crucifixion could also be described, in part at least, in terms of 'the stretching out of His hands'.

And so, if (i) in the touch of our Lord's outstretched hand in the city we see evidence of *unique cleansing power*, (ii) in the sweep of our Lord's outstretched hand in the house we see evidence of *an intimate spiritual relationship*, and (iii) in the grip of our Lord's outstretched hand in the storm we see evidence of *timely preserving care*, it is as we envisage our Lord's outstretched arms and hands on the cross that we see the demonstration of His fathomless love for us all.

### Footnotes

- 1 Luke 5. 12-13 ESV.
- 2 Lev. 13. 46. According to the teaching of the Rabbis, lepers could not enter a walled town. In un-walled towns there was a place set apart for lepers in the synagogue, into which they had to enter before others and from which they could leave only after others. Any violation of these rules was punished by forty

stripes save one. See ALFRED EDERSHEIM, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book III, Chapter 15.

- 3 JOHN ORTBERG, *Love Beyond Reason*, page 50.
- 4 'No less a distance than four cubits (six feet) must be kept from a leper; or, if the wind came from that direction, a hundred were scarcely sufficient. Rabbi Meir would not eat an egg purchased in a street where there was a leper. Another Rabbi boasted, that he always threw stones at them to keep them far off, while others hid themselves or ran away', ALFRED EDERSHEIM, *ibid*.
- 5 Exod. 4. 6-7.
- 6 2 Chr. 26. 15-21.
- 7 2 Kgs. 5. 10. And what a story that was! 'The military commander who was cleansed', you might say, 'by seven ducks in a dirty river'! (See 2 Kgs. 5. 14.)
- 8 2 Kgs. 5. 11.
- 9 Compare Num. 12. 10-13.
- 10 2 Kgs 5. 7. This accounts in part for the reply which our Lord gave to the messengers who had been sent by John the Baptist to enquire, 'Are you the coming one, or are we to look for another?' 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see', Jesus said, directing both them and John then, not only to the blind receiving their sight and the dead being raised up, but to the fact that 'the lepers are cleansed', Matt. 11. 4-5. Among the Jews, to heal someone of leprosy was considered as difficult as raising the dead; see JAMES R. EDWARDS, *The Gospel according to Mark*, page 69. 'For the lepers, he (Moses) suffered them not to come into the city at all, nor to live with any others, as if they were in effect dead persons', FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book III, Chapter XI, paragraph 3.
- 11 R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Miracles*, page 231. In Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 the word 'plague' ('stroke') is used in connection with leprosy twenty-one times.
- 12 Matt. 12. 46-50 ESV.
- 13 Luke 8. 19.
- 14 We are told elsewhere that His brothers did not believe in Him, John 7. 5.
- 15 Heb. 2. 11-12.
- 16 'The Egyptians, in their hieroglyphics, were wont to represent an impossibility by painting the figure of a man . . . walking on the sea', R. TUCK, *The Pulpit Commentary on Matthew*, Homily on Matthew 14. 29-30.
- 17 Matt. 14. 24-31.
- 18 We should note the double 'immediate' of verses 27 and 31 of Matthew chapter 14. The Saviour did not delay one moment either before speaking to arrest the disciples' fears or before reaching out to grasp and save Peter.
- 19 John 21. 18 *literal translation*.
- 20 John 21. 19.
- 21 I note in particular the similar expressions used by John to describe our Lord's own death by crucifixion; see John 12. 33; 18. 32. Some critics have claimed that the order in John 21 verse 18 (of the stretching out of the hands before being girded and led out for execution) is contrary to the sequence of events in the case of crucifixion. But 'the general procedure for crucifixion by the Romans' was for the cross-beam to be bound to the outstretched arms of the man to be crucified, 'who had then to carry it to the place of crucifixion'; G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John* (in the Word Biblical Commentary series), pages 408-409. Compare 'He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull', John 19. 17.

**MALCOLM HORLOCK** is an elder in the Rhiwbina assembly in Cardiff and is a consultant to Precious Seed Trust.





# THE GOOD SHEPHERD



The central chapters of John's Gospel are interconnected and developed in a very interesting way. The central theme is the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ as the good Shepherd. This study follows His involvement in word and action as He establishes His credentials as the one sent to accomplish the Father's will by 'laying down His life and taking it up again'. We commence with the failure of the shepherds of Israel in chapter 9 and conclude with the astonishing episode of washing His disciples' feet in chapter 13.

In John chapter 9, we have the story of a blind man who finds the Saviour and has his sight restored. Or, we could say that he was a lost sheep in the fold of Israel who is found by the true shepherd, 10. 1. The religious leaders of Israel did not recognize the voice of the true Shepherd. In fact, they accused Him of being false, 'The Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of (excommunicated from) the synagogue', 9. 22.

Instead of these shepherds of the nation recognizing and rejoicing in the restoration of one of their 'sheep's' eyesight, they put him out of the synagogue, disgraced and disowned. These religious leaders were more concerned with their traditions and status than the word of God. They assumed that they were pleasing God, while all the time their minds were closed as to who Jesus really was. They saw their position as leaders of the Jewish flock threatened by the actions and teachings of the young rabbi from Nazareth.

But the excommunication of the newly-seeing man from the synagogue led to him being found by the good Shepherd who had just given to him, not only physical sight, but would give an even greater blessing, spiritual sight! When he met his Benefactor face to face, he obviously did not recognize Him. He had met Him, heard His

command, 'Go, wash', but couldn't see Him. And so he has to ask, 'Who is he, Lord, that I might believe?' What an unforgettable experience to hear the words, 'Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee'! For the first time, he was seeing the Son of God, Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world, face to face!

The prophecy against the shepherds of Israel detailed in Ezekiel chapter 34 is summarized in verses 4 and 5, 'The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was

lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled over them. And they were scattered because there is no shepherd'. This story is a living parable. The thieves and robbers are direct references to the false shepherds who treated this man so disgracefully. In contrast, the heart of the good Shepherd went out after this disfigured and sick sheep, giving him not only his sight but life in abundance.

As we enter John chapter 10 and listen to the familiar words, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you', our first question is, to whom is the Lord speaking? The final words of chapter 9 give us the answer, 'Your sin remaineth'. So, He is continuing to address the same people, the religious hierarchy of Israel, referred to above. He accuses them of an improper entry into the fold in contrast to His own entry by the door. Therefore, this is a pivotal chapter as it introduces a dispensational change, summarized in chapter 1 verse 17, 'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ'.

The 'the door into the sheepfold', 10. 1, is referring to the gate of a winter sheepfold. This was a communal enclosure in which a number of flocks were kept in safety

By  
**DREW CRAIG**  
Dundonald,  
Northern Ireland





# D IN ACTION PART ONE

during the long winter nights and were guarded by a gatekeeper, the 'porter'. The shepherds would come for their flocks and be admitted by him. Obviously, he would open to the bona fide shepherds. The Lord was clearly signalling that He had the proper credentials to be admitted as the true Shepherd into the fold, which was Israel. The Old Testament scriptures abound in prophetic references to the coming of such a One. Details of His ancestry, through the patriarchs, kings and prophets, the place and nature of His birth are all well recorded.

We might ask, in this context, who is the porter? It seems He is referring to John the Baptist, the introducer of the Shepherd to the nation as 'the Lamb of God'. As He emerges from the Jordan waters at His baptism, the heavens are opened, the Spirit of God descends and authenticates His divine credentials, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased', Matt. 3. 17.

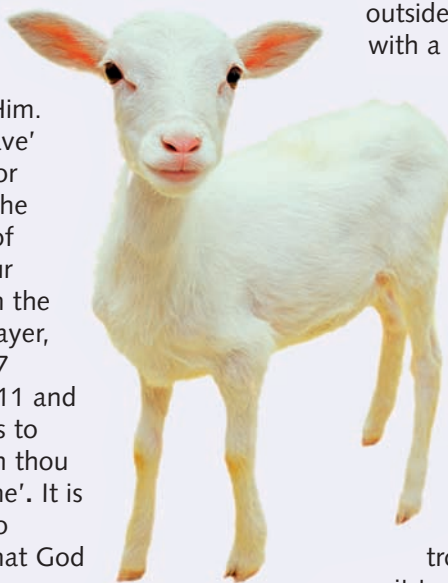
As we move to verse 7, the Shepherd refers to another sheepfold door, not guarded by a porter but by Himself. It is a reference to the summer sheepfold, a stone-built pen, the entrance to which is an opening without a door. When night comes, the shepherd counts and inspects his sheep as they pass under the rod, Ezek. 20. 37. He lights a fire and then positions himself across the opening and becomes the door of the sheep.

This Shepherd, however, lifts the natural to the supernatural and continues, 'By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture', John 10. 9. He has come not only to bring security to the flock, but liberty. He will do it by laying down His life for the sheep. We grasp the pathos of this as He continues, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again', v. 17. This is a preordained agreement within the Godhead, planned from eternity. But not just for the salvation of

Jewish sheep! The good news of eternal life would be preached to the Jew first, 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles . . . But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel', Matt. 10. 5-6. However, He makes clear in this discourse, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this (Jewish) fold; them (Gentiles) also I must bring . . . and there shall be one flock and one shepherd', John 10. 16 NKJV. Note 'flock' as opposed to 'fold'.

Here, we need to contemplate the verb 'have' that He uses for both sets of sheep. Twice over, in verses 3 and 4, He calls His Jewish sheep 'his own', saying that He knows their names, that they will hear His voice and follow Him. The verb 'have' indicates prior ownership, the divine plan of election. Four times over in the following prayer, in chapter 17 verses 6, 9, 11 and 24, He refers to 'those whom thou hast given me'. It is well for us to remember that God is the first cause of our salvation and, in chapter 6 verse 44, we have this truth reinforced, 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him'.

Verse 18 is the high water mark of this discourse, 'No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power (authority) to lay it down, and I have power (authority) to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father'. What a statement! It is unparalleled in all time and beyond human comprehension! In speaking these words with all that they implied, the good Shepherd signalled the way by which He would fulfil His Father's will expressed in the best known verse of scripture, John 3. 16.



The title of this study is 'The Good Shepherd in Action'. It is not surprising, therefore, that He now illustrates that He means what He says. How best can He demonstrate it? He allows the deepest sorrow and heartbreak to enter the little home in Bethany with an illness that led to the death of his close friend Lazarus whose sisters Mary and Martha were grief stricken. 'Lord', they chided in succession, 'if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died', 11. 21, 32. The good Shepherd's reaction is vividly described for us in verses 33-35 in three terse statements: 'He groaned in the spirit'; 'and was troubled'; 'Jesus wept'. To 'groan' has the meaning of righteous anger even to the point of rage. Why so?

What filled the Shepherd's gentle soul with indignation? As He stood outside that tomb, its mouth closed with a stone, He saw that the man created by God, His Father, in His image, was now a rotting corpse, as the results of sin and, because of it, death. The arch enemy, the deceiver himself, was responsible and that made the good Shepherd exceedingly angry. This resulted in His 'being troubled'. This is the same expression used regarding the 'troubling' of the waters, John 5. 4-7. When a calm pool is troubled, it ripples, we might say it trembles. I have a firm conviction that as the Lord stood there He literally trembled. Was it because that knowing all that was to befall Him, the horror of Gethsemane, the cruelty of Pilate's judgement hall, and, above it all, the purpose for which He came to defeat him who had the power of death, pay the ransom price for man's redemption and meet the requirement of His Holy Father, that He trembled?

*To be continued*

**DREW CRAIG** has for the last thirty-five years been in the assembly formed in Brooklands, Dundonald, Belfast, which commenced as an outreach from the Gospel Hall in Dundonald. The Lord has blessed the work with many conversions and baptisms over the years and during this time Drew has been occupied with preaching, teaching and shepherding in the assembly.





# How to GIVE

The following is not intended to be seen as a request for funds for *Precious Seed International*, the aim of the article is to provide ideas that will enable believers to maximise the effectiveness of their giving to whatever cause they feel exercised to support.

Readers often contact us seeking guidance as to how they may financially support the work of *Precious Seed International*. Whilst the magazine is provided free of charge as the Lord enables, the cost of producing it is significant and increases year on year. However, our God is faithful and we have proved Him many times.

Giving can be done in various ways and it is hoped that the following will be of help. For those in the United Kingdom, cheques can be sent to the treasurer at the address given on the back page of the current magazine, or they may contribute using the website.

## OVERSEAS GIVING

Donations from abroad can be accepted in cheque form although anyone wishing to contribute from outside the UK should ideally send the gifts in sterling, otherwise *Precious Seed International* will incur a currency conversion charge. However we are happy to accept gifts in any of the major international currencies. These gifts may be sent to our addresses in the UK, Australia, Canada or the USA. Alternatively, many readers may prefer to donate via our website.

## GIFT AID

Gift Aid is tax relief on money donated to UK charities.

We treat donations as if the donor had already deducted basic rate tax from them. The charity can then reclaim this tax to increase the value of a donation.

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Donors must:  
Pay enough UK income tax and/or capital gains tax to cover the amount of tax the charity will reclaim;  
Give the charity a gift aid declaration, which should include: their name; their

By **MICHAEL JONES**

Cardiff, Wales

home address; the charity's name; details of the donation, saying that it is a gift aid donation; confirmation that they have paid UK tax – to cover the tax the charity will reclaim.

A declaration can be made to cover individual donations, a series of donations, donations made during a specified period, or to cover all future donations. They can also be backdated for up to 6 years prior to the date of the declaration provided the donation was made since 6th April 2000.

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If donors pay the:

1. *basic rate of tax*, they can claim tax relief only at this rate;
2. *higher rate of tax*, they can claim higher rate relief on the payments by entering the donations in the gift aid box on their self-assessment tax return. Donors who receive a form P810 can declare their gift aid payments on it.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Giving is very much a personal exercise 'as God hath prospered', 1 Cor. 16. 2. Whilst this article uses the work of *Precious Seed International* as its background the principles can be applied to many other aspects of the Lord's work.

## LEGACIES

Before using this method, it would be advisable to consult a solicitor in advance to avoid problems arising. To minimise the amount of time with a solicitor, ensure that your wishes have been clearly thought through and the necessary details of potential recipients obtained.

## ONLINE DONATIONS

For those who have access to a computer then a very easy way to donate is to use the facility which is on our web site at [www.preciousseed.org](http://www.preciousseed.org). From the front page, press the 'Donate' button and follow the instructions.

We use a secure site, provided by World Pay, so as to eliminate worries about giving details of your credit or debit card. This method can be used by those living abroad as well as those in the UK.

## STEWARDSHIP VOUCHERS

For those who have accounts with Stewardship donations using a voucher system can be made to registered charities. As we are a registered charity, (No. 326157), we can accept these vouchers from anyone wishing to support our work in this way.

## RECEIPTS

We acknowledge all gifts (unless otherwise directed) so if you send a gift and do not receive a receipt then please contact us as soon as possible.

## CONCLUSION

We have a great God and it has been our privilege to be engaged in the work of producing the magazine. As we get letters of appreciation from so many parts of the world it is a joy to know that we are 'workers together' in serving Him.

**MICHAEL JONES** is a former treasurer of Precious Seed Trust, having served in that capacity for many years. Now retired, he is in fellowship with the assembly at Adamsdown Gospel Hall, Cardiff, Wales.

## The Parable of the Unjust Steward.

### Luke 16. 1-13. Part 2.

#### INTRODUCTION

In the previous article, we noted that by means of this parable our Lord taught something of the long-term benefit and gain which God's people can secure for themselves if they use their wealth properly.

We saw that the steward of the parable resolved to put 'every one of his master's debtors' in *his* debt by reducing the amounts by which they were already in *his master's* debt. His hope and expectation was that, by means of this ploy, he could ensure that these debtors would happily *take him in* when the time finally came that his master *threw him out!*

Having spoken of (i) the steward's accusation and the master's response, vv. 1-2; (ii) the steward's dilemma and decision, vv. 3-4; and (iii) the steward's ingenious scheme, vv. 5-7, the Lord Jesus next turned the spotlight on the master's commendation. And that is where we take up the story.

#### EXPOSITION

##### *The Master's Commendation.*

**Verse 8a.** 'The master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly'. Although the word translated 'master' is normally translated 'lord' in the New Testament,<sup>1</sup> and in by far the majority of cases refers to the Lord Jesus, it almost certainly refers here to the master in the parable.<sup>2</sup> I say this for two reasons. First, in the immediate context, this is the word used by the Saviour three times in the parable to refer to the rich man.<sup>3</sup> And, second, the structure of the section from verse 1 to verse 13 points in the same direction. The clear impression given is that everything from, 'There was a certain rich man', through to, 'You cannot serve God and mammon' represents a single unit comprising that which our Lord 'said to His disciples'.

That the master in the story should commend (should 'praise'<sup>4</sup>) the steward constitutes no difficulty. The 'unjust' and unprincipled steward was applauded, not for his fraudulent actions, but for his resourcefulness, prudence and foresight.<sup>5</sup>

If some should find it difficult to believe that any master would commend such a man for his actions, they would do well to consider an incident in the life of King Charles II. Following the English civil war in the seventeenth century, Irishmen were given large estates in Ireland by Parliament. But when Charles II was restored to the throne, they lost everything. One of these men, Colonel Thomas Blood, gained the confidence of the elderly custodian of the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London, and, on 9 May 1671, Colonel Blood and his accomplices overpowered him and made off with the royal crown and other items. They succeeded in getting out of the Jewel House, but were captured before they could escape from the Tower itself. Remarkably, Colonel Blood somehow managed to secure an audience with King Charles himself, at which the King not only granted the Colonel a pardon but also bestowed on him valuable land in

Ireland. One of the likely explanations of the king's actions is that he was impressed by Blood's initiative and enterprise.<sup>6</sup>

Whether or not that is the true explanation for the actions of King Charles, here in His parable the Saviour spoke of a 'rich man' who most certainly was impressed by his servant's wisdom and foresight. But it is important to note that the Lord Jesus made it clear that the master's praise was reserved for the steward's shrewdness and wise use of his opportunity, and that his praise did not extend to the steward's unfaithfulness and disloyalty. 'It is the astuteness of the plan that is praised: and there is all the difference in the world between "I applaud the dishonest steward because he acted cleverly" and "I applaud the clever steward because he acted dishonestly" . . . The steward is a rascal; but he is a wonderfully clever rascal'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the master commended the *dishonest* steward because he acted *wisely*, not the *wise* steward because he acted *dishonestly!*

But before we rush on to consider our Lord's application of the parable, we must first file away in our minds that the steward's wisdom consisted in taking advantage of those resources and means which belonged to someone else – and which were at his disposal only for a relatively short time – to accomplish his own end and purpose, namely, to secure some long-term benefit for himself when the inevitable day of reckoning came.<sup>8</sup>

##### **Our Lord's comments, vv. 8b-13.**

##### ***(i) The need for wisdom and foresight in the use of our earthly riches and possessions, vv. 8b-9.***

**Verse 8b.** The Saviour first drew attention to the distressing fact that 'the sons of<sup>9</sup> this world' ('the sons of this age', literally<sup>10</sup>) normally show far greater shrewdness with reference to their earthly and temporal concerns than 'the sons of light' (a term denoting the Lord's disciples<sup>11</sup>) do with reference to their heavenly and eternal concerns.

'The sons of this age' are those described long before by David as the 'men of the world, who have their portion in this life'.<sup>12</sup> The Lord was clearly saddened that such men were considerably wiser in seizing *their* opportunities and using their wealth to secure their own ends *in the present world*, than were His own followers in seizing their opportunities and using their wealth to further their interests *in the world to come*.

'In their generation' (by which I understand the Lord to mean 'in their dealings with one another' or 'with reference to their own interests') the men of this world are very quick to adopt the best ways and means of attaining their earthly objectives.

Such men, whose interests are bounded by the horizons of this world and who have no interest either in heaven or in God, are foolish enough in *the choice* of their goals, but they are astute enough when it comes to *the pursuit and attainment* of their goals – just as was the unjust steward. And to that extent, we who claim to aim for higher things and eternal riches have much to learn from them.

**Verse 9.** We can see at a glance that this verse is couched throughout in the language of the preceding parable.

The words 'I (emphatic) say to you' introduce *our Lord's* application of the parable to His hearers in contrast to the words of *the earthly lord* which He had reported in the previous verse. In brief, just as the steward's wisdom consisted in his adroit use of the goods which were available to him only for a brief time so as to secure his future and lasting benefit, so we, by the proper use of that 'mammon' which is at our disposal now (but which will soon fail us), can secure for ourselves lasting treasure in heaven.

'Make to yourselves<sup>13</sup> friends', the Saviour said, but clearly 'not fickle friends of the sort that the prodigal son is said to have made', Luke 15. 13, 16.<sup>14</sup> Do not, that is, use your wealth to build larger barns as the rich fool in chapter 12,<sup>15</sup> nor to build some sumptuous palace as the rich man in the second part of this chapter.<sup>16</sup> Invest your riches rather in works of mercy – in providing aid and succour to the poor and destitute – in effect, in helping the Lazaruses of this world.<sup>17</sup>

'By ('by means of', 'out of', 'with the help of') unrighteous mammon'. The word 'mammon' was used in a semi-personified sense to signify earthly goods, especially riches, money.<sup>18</sup>

It is possible that 'mammon' is described here as 'unrighteous', not because it is inherently bad, but because it is tainted by the unrighteous attitudes and actions which the pursuit of money often engenders, frequently being acquired *unjustly* (dishonestly<sup>19</sup>) by *unjust* men, to then be used for *unjust* and corrupt purposes or hoarded in an *unjust* manner. Such earthly possessions have the mark of an evil world stamped upon them. Alternatively, the Lord may have used the word 'unrighteous' simply to indicate that He had in mind 'earthly and material' wealth. Note His use of the identical expression ('unrighteous mammon') in verse 11, where it stands in contrast to 'the true riches', in the same way that, in verse 12, 'what is another man's' stands in contrast to 'what is your own'.

Note also that the correct translation reads, 'when *it* fails', and not 'when *you* fail' (as in the NKJV). Our Lord was referring to that time when earthly wealth and possessions will cease to be of any use or value to us. Certainly, the time will come when our riches and our money will fail each one of us; 'for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out'.<sup>20</sup>

We are simply stewards, and the Lord requires us to put to good use *on earth* that which *one day* will necessarily fail us so that *one day* we shall reap the benefit of it *in heaven*. That is, with the same foresight shown by the steward in the parable, we are to turn to our own and eternal advantage the very same wealth which the unrighteous use to further their own ends.

There can be little doubt that our Lord's words 'that . . . they may receive you' was a well-known idiom which should be understood in an impersonal way, namely, 'that . . . you may be received'.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, there is no need for us to speculate as to who the 'they' might represent.<sup>22</sup>

The expression 'everlasting habitations' (literally 'eternal tents' or 'eternal tabernacles') stands in deliberate contrast, I suggest, not so much to the temporary homes of the debtors

within which the prudent steward secured himself a place,<sup>23</sup> as with the transitory nature of all our earthly goods.

In summary, an accurate rendering of verse 9 would be, 'And I say to you, make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it fails, you may be received into the eternal tabernacles'. Our Lord's teaching was then very much in line with the words of Solomon, 'Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed'.<sup>24</sup>

No doubt many are familiar with the saying of Jim Elliot, one of five missionaries martyred in Ecuador in 1956, 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose'.<sup>25</sup> But I guess that not so many know that, in his journal, Jim Elliot followed those words by quoting Luke chapter 16 verse 9!

Interestingly, Philip Henry, who lived back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>26</sup> was credited with a very similar saying. In the biography which he wrote of his father, the notable Bible commentator Matthew Henry, he recalled his father's acts of charity, adding that he used to say, 'He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which he cannot lose'.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, some 1300 years before Philip Henry (and some 1600 years before Jim Elliot), Augustine (the so-called 'Church father'), clearly with Luke 16 in the background, had written not dissimilar words: 'Give those things to the poor which you cannot keep, that you may receive those things which you cannot lose'.<sup>28</sup>

Was Jim Elliot, I wonder, familiar with either (or both) of these earlier sayings? Certainly his linked quotation of Luke chapter 16 verse 9 suggests most strongly that, when he penned his now-famous saying, he (in company with both Augustine and Philip Henry) had in mind particularly the eternal benefits to be 'gained' by the believer from giving to the poor.

But it is One unspeakably greater than Augustine, Philip Henry or Jim Elliot who would have us know that treasures in heaven are *laid* up when treasures on earth are *given* up. As the apostle Paul expressed it sometime later, those who are 'rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share' store up for themselves 'a good foundation for the time to come'.<sup>29</sup>

## **(ii) The need for faithfulness in the use of our earthly riches and possessions, vv. 10-12.**

**Verse 10.** Turning from the foresight which the steward clearly possessed to the faithfulness which he equally clearly lacked, our Lord stated one of His oft-repeated principles of reward in His kingdom, 'He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much'.<sup>30</sup> The believer's faithfulness, that is, is to be gauged not by the amount entrusted to him but by how he uses it.

'What is least' points to that which is of relatively little value or importance in itself. Given the surrounding context, it may well be that our Lord was meeting the possible objection that the use of one's money is far too trivial a matter to be of interest to God in the day of reckoning and account. That is certainly not so, our Lord was saying. For a person's attitude to 'small' things provides an index to his or her character. 'Compared with the real and eternal riches, the mammon of unrighteousness is a very small matter . . . But our employment of it gives enough opportunity to demonstrate

whether we have been faithful'.<sup>31</sup>

Long before he became President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln was employed as a shopkeeper in charge of a general store at New Salem, a former village in Illinois. And the following two incidents give an insight into the character of the man known to posterity as 'Honest Abe'.

'On one occasion he sold a woman a little bill of goods amounting in value, by the reckoning, to two dollars and six and a quarter cents. He received the money, and the woman went away. On adding the items of the bill again, to make himself sure of correctness, he found that he had taken six and a quarter cents too much. It was night, and closing and locking the store, he started out on foot, a distance of two or three miles, for the house of his defrauded customer, and delivering over to her the sum whose possession had so much troubled him, went home satisfied.

'On another occasion, just as he was closing the store for the night, a woman entered, and asked for half a pound of tea. The tea was weighed out and paid for, and the store was left for the night. The next morning, Abraham entered to begin the duties of the day, when he discovered a four-ounce weight on the scales. He saw at once that he had made a mistake, and, shutting the store, he took a long walk before breakfast to deliver the remainder of the tea'.<sup>32</sup>

Mr. Lincoln refused to compromise his honesty, even when only paltry amounts were at stake. In so doing, before ever Abraham Lincoln proved himself 'faithful in much', he first proved himself 'faithful in what is least'.

But our Lord's words also served as a guard against any possible misunderstanding. The Saviour was certainly *not* extolling the *unfaithfulness* of the steward.<sup>33</sup> For, although *the steward's* shrewdness was demonstrated in his *unfaithfulness* and *unrighteousness*, *the disciple's* wisdom is to be demonstrated in his faithfulness and righteousness in the use of his wealth and goods.

**Verses 11-12.** These verses bring home the specific application of verse 10 as far as our use of money is concerned. The implication of what our Lord said is that we should both *live* and *give* in the present in the light of the future.

It is highly likely that our Lord taught in Aramaic.<sup>34</sup> In which case, **verse 11** provided His hearers with a lengthy play on several words having the same Aramaic root; namely 'mammon', 'faithful', 'commit to one's trust', and 'true'.

Make no mistake, our Lord was saying, the improper use (in this context, the selfish and self-indulgent use) of *earth's* possessions and wealth will disqualify us and unfit us for *heaven's* riches – which he described here as 'the true riches'. 'True', that is, in the sense of the real, the genuine riches which are eternally secure.

Slightly paraphrased, in **verse 12** our Lord's taught, 'If you are not *trustworthy* with someone else's possessions, who is going to *entrust* to you possessions of your own?'<sup>35</sup> And we each need to be reminded constantly that, in the final analysis, everything we have belongs to someone else, and is ours on loan ('on trust') only.

It is true, of course, that, in one sense, all I possess *is* mine.

We might think, for instance, of the words of Peter to Ananias in Acts chapter 5, 'While it remained, was it not *your own*? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?'<sup>36</sup>

But in another, far higher, sense, all I have belongs to the Lord. We might now think, for instance, of the prayer of David, when he and the princes of Israel gave most liberally to provide for the building of the house of God, 'Who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from you, and of *your own* we have given you'.<sup>37</sup>

At the end of the day, nothing I have in this passing world is my own. And I will certainly not be able to take any of my money or possessions with me when I leave it. Yet, it is a most sobering thought that one of the issues which will be raised at the Judgement Seat of Christ will be my stewardship of money. And the One who will sit there to review my service makes it clear in this verse that anything I then receive as my own imperishable possession will be determined by how I handled that which I have now on trust from and for Him.

Let us not fool ourselves. The stewardship of our money doesn't mean simply giving God a tenth of our income and then doing as we please with the rest. When John Calvin died, Pope Pius IV said of him, 'The strength of that heretic came from the fact that money was nothing to him'.<sup>38</sup> That's not a bad testimony, coming, as it did, from an enemy! Would that it could always be said of me!

The questions which face me at the practical level are simple, 'What is my investment strategy? How much am I willing to invest in heaven's eternal riches?' Or, to express it in a slightly different way, 'How much currency do I want to convert?'

### **(iii) Serving one Master, v. 13.**

**Verse 13.** Jesus concluded His message by sounding a loud and solemn warning. He drew attention to the danger that the very same riches which, according to verse 9, can be a very *good servant*, can equally be a very *bad master*.

You can serve God *with* mammon, our Lord insisted, but you cannot serve God *and* mammon! You can make use of *mammon for God* and His service; but, alas, you can also serve mammon as an end in itself – in effect, making a *god of mammon*!<sup>39</sup> For, as the apostle Paul observed, 'covetousness . . . is idolatry'.<sup>40</sup>

As far then as the earthly goods and wealth now at my disposal are concerned, one key issue for me is whether I possess *them* or whether *they* possess *me*. I have been put in trust *with* them; I am not to put my trust *in* them.<sup>41</sup>

And I note the two very different words our Lord used here when speaking of service. Translated literally, He said, 'No *household servant* can *serve* as a *slave* two lords'. It would have been possible, of course, for a man to be a domestic servant to two masters (working part of his time for each),<sup>42</sup> but he could not be the absolute property of two masters, which is implied by 'serving as a slave'.<sup>43</sup> He would, necessarily, love one more than the other, or he would, at the least, be more devoted to ('hold fast to') the one more than the other.<sup>44</sup> And we can no more serve two masters than we can walk in two directions at the same time.

## The Pharisees' reaction, v. 14.

**Verse 14.** It is clear that Jesus' teaching touched the Pharisees on a raw nerve, and 'they derided Him' – 'they turned up their noses at' Him, literally.<sup>45</sup> They sneered at Him, ridiculing His teaching that His followers should be compassionate and generous with their wealth. But this is hardly surprising for these men were, Luke notes, 'lovers of money'.<sup>46</sup>

At the beginning of chapter 15, it was the Pharisees who had criticized the Saviour because they thought Him too lax.<sup>47</sup> Now they poured scorn on His teaching because they thought it too harsh and demanding.

Alas, the Pharisees utterly failed to use their money to make friends of the poor and disadvantaged. And, in His next story, our Lord proceeds to portray them as the rich man who, following death, was tormented in the flame of Hades.<sup>48</sup> This 'rich man' wasn't accused by our Lord of robbing or mistreating the poor man Lazarus, nor even of driving him away from his ornamental gate. The 'rich man' stands condemned simply on account of his indifference and neglect.<sup>49</sup>

Much as we might like to, we cannot evade the force of our Lord's teaching. He has entrusted some of us with considerable wealth. May He give each of us the wisdom and the will to make the right and proper use of that wealth.

### Footnotes

- 1 The word 'κύριος' is translated 'lord/Lord' in 673 of its 687 occurrences in the New King James Version of the New Testament.
- 2 The Saviour later used this word again (five times) to refer to the 'master' of a 'steward', Luke 12. 42-47. See too its use in Luke 12 verses 36-37. Whereas, it is true that on one occasion the expression 'then the Lord said' ('εἶπεν δε ο κυριος ακουσατε') does refer to the Lord Jesus rather than a character in the parable He had just told (Luke 18. 6), an almost identical Greek expression ('και ειπεν ο κυριος') occurs in another parable, where 'the master/lord' undoubtedly refers to a character in the parable, Luke 14. 23. The case is very different in Luke chapter 18 verse 6, where there is no 'master' in the preceding parable (that of the Unjust Judge) and therefore no room for possible misunderstanding; the words, 'Then the Lord said' clearly being there a reference to the Saviour's own words.
- 3 Luke 16. 3, 5 (twice).
- 4 The verb translated 'commended' (επαινω) is found only five other times in the New Testament, Rom. 15. 9 (being a quotation from 2 Sam. 22. 50); 1 Cor. 11. 2, 17, 22 (twice). It is, however, the intensive form of a word (αινω) which occurs a further nine times. Both words mean 'to praise'.
- 5 Other 'unsavoury' characters feature prominently in our Lord's parables; for example, the neighbour who doesn't want to be bothered at night, Luke 11. 7-8, the unjust judge, Luke 18. 2-5, and the man who pockets the treasure which should have belonged to someone else by buying his field, Matt. 13. 44. Compare also the apostle Peter's commendation of Sarah's subjection to Abraham, which Peter based on an Old Testament passage that also exposed her unbelief, 1 Pet. 3. 6 with Gen. 18. 11-12.
- 6 See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Blood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Blood)
- 7 T. W. MANSON, *The Sayings of Jesus*, page 292.
- 8 The steward 'had wit enough to see that his future prospects depend on his present exertions', J. MOFFATT, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, article 'Mammon'.
- 9 To be 'a son of' is a Hebrew idiom meaning 'to share the characteristics of'; note its use in Matt. 13. 38; Mark 3. 17; Acts 4. 36; Eph. 2. 2.
- 10 Compare Luke 20. 34.
- 11 See John 12. 36; 1 Thess. 5. 5.
- 12 Ps. 17. 14.
- 13 Compare 'make to yourselves purses that will not grow old, an unfailing treasure in the heavens', Luke 12. 33 literal translation.
- 14 DAVID GOODING, *According to Luke*, page 273.
- 15 Luke 12. 18.
- 16 Luke 16. 19.
- 17 Luke's has much to say about the responsibility of believers to the poor and needy. See, for example, Luke 3. 11; 6. 30-35; 11. 41; 12. 33-34; 14. 12-14; 18. 22.

- 18 See F. HAUCK, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume IV, pages 388-389.
- 19 F. HAUCK, *ibid.*, page 390.
- 20 1 Tim. 6. 7; cf. Job 1. 21a.
- 21 'Luke not infrequently employs the third person plural of an active instead of a passive verb, and that even where there is no question of action', J. N. DARBY, *Collected Writings*, volume 13, page 174. See, for example, Luke 6. 38, 44 (twice); 14. 35, and, especially Luke 12. 20, where 'This night your soul will be required of you' reads literally, 'This night they shall require your soul of you'. For a similar usage in John's Gospel, see C. K. BARRETT, *The Gospel according to St. John* on John 15. 6 and John 20. 2.
- 22 Those who have engaged in such unnecessary speculation have come up with a vast array of guesses, ranging from the angels, God and good works to the beneficiaries of the generous giving of those they are then thought to welcome into heaven.
- 23 Contrary to A. PLUMMER, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, page 386.
- 24 Prov. 19. 17 ESV; cf. 1 Tim. 6. 17-19.
- 25 Extracted from Jim Elliot's journal entry for 28 October 1949. The actual entry is reproduced at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jim%27s\\_Journal.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jim%27s_Journal.jpg).
- 26 PHILIP HENRY was born on 24 August 1631 and died on 24 June 1696.
- 27 Quoted from *The Life of Mr. Philip Henry*, included in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. Matthew Henry*, published by Joseph Ogle Robinson in 1833, page 35. (Available online at Google Books.)
- 28 Quoted by THOMAS WATSON in *The Beatitudes* (under the heading 'A discourse of mercifulness') – available online at [http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/ipb-e/epl-10/web/watson-beatitudes.html#\\_Toc411063745](http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/ipb-e/epl-10/web/watson-beatitudes.html#_Toc411063745).
- 29 1 Tim. 6. 18-19.
- 30 Compare Matt. 25. 21, 23; Luke 19. 17.
- 31 DAVID GOODING, *According to Luke*, page 274.
- 32 Quoted from JOSIAH GILBERT HOLLAND, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, published 1866, chapter 3 – available online at [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Life\\_of\\_Abraham\\_Lincoln\\_\(Holland\)](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Life_of_Abraham_Lincoln_(Holland)).
- 33 See the notes above on verse 8a.
- 34 Aramaic was the predominant language in Palestine in the first century A.D. Indeed, Aramaic was so common that the reading of the Hebrew Scripture in the synagogue was accompanied by translation into Aramaic. In addition to such strong circumstantial evidence, we find direct evidence that Jesus spoke Aramaic as his primary language from the Gospel of Mark in particular. Note those occasions where Mark quotes and translates Aramaic expressions: Mark 5. 41; 7. 11, 34; 14. 36; 15. 34.
- 35 The play on the words 'trustworthy' and 'entrust' is intentional, and reflects the Aramaic words our Lord most likely used.
- 36 Acts 5. 4.
- 37 1 Chr. 29. 14.
- 38 THEA VAN HALSEMA, *This was John Calvin*, pages 164-165.
- 39 Compare, 'covetousness, which is idolatry', Col. 3. 5.
- 40 Col. 3. 5.
- 41 See 1 Tim. 6. 17. Indeed, it is 'most likely' that the word 'mammon' which Jesus used was derived from the Aramaic word meaning 'that in which one trusts', F. HAUCK, *ibid.*, page 388.
- 42 Apparently this situation often did exist. In the context of the Passover, the Talmud laid down, 'A servant belonging to two masters must not eat of the sacrifice of both masters', *Tractate Pesachim*, 8. 1.
- 43 See K. H. RENGSTORF, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume II, pages 270-271.
- 44 'As the second clause is less strong than the first, the "or" may be understood in the sense of "or at least"', A. PLUMMER, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, page 387.
- 45 The verb is in the imperfect tense, which has the idea of continued action in the past. That is, 'they kept on turning their noses up at Him'. The word occurs only once again in the New Testament, of the Jewish rulers who 'turned up their noses' at our Lord on the cross, Luke 23. 35. (It is the word used in the Greek Old Testament for the ridicule directed at the Saviour on the cross by those around, Psa. 22. 7.)
- 46 This particular word occurs only once again in the entire New Testament, 1 Tim. 3. 2. The noun occurs only in 1 Tim. 6. 10, 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil'.
- 47 Luke 15. 1-2.
- 48 Luke 16. 19-31.
- 49 In the world to come, Jesus said, 'a great gulf' is fixed between the rich man and the poor man, but in the present world the poor man was so close that the rich man almost tripped over him every day on the way in and out of his house.



## A HISTORY OF THE BLAIRHALL ASSEMBLY, SCOTLAND

Blairhall is a small village of approximately 1000 people in West Fife, Scotland. The Gospel Hall is situated at the North Lodge of what was the original estate of Comrie Castle.

During the early 1930's social movements within the mining industry resulted in the commencement of the assembly at Blairhall. Provision of new housing in Blairhall attracted mining families from Kely and Valleyfield, and population movements, as a result of the declining Lanarkshire coalfield, all provided the catalyst for the start of the assembly. Many assembly-minded Christians with a proven track record of church planting were among those relocating.

The assembly commenced in 1937 with twelve believers meeting in the front room of a house, at 20 East Avenue, which is still standing. Immediately, plans were put in place for the building of a hall on land leased from a local Catholic landowner. The building was completed in 1938 and the assembly was inaugurated with a gospel campaign. Some local people were saved and backsliders restored, resulting in growth in numbers.

The arrival in the early 1940's of a number of Christians among the 'Bevin Boys' (conscripts who were sent to work in the coal mining industry and were named after Ernest Bevin, *Minister for Labour and National Service* in the wartime coalition Government) resulted in numbers again increasing.

A post-war open-air gospel campaign and the marriages of several assembly members increased the number in fellowship to twenty. This was the beginning of the assembly's association with the Fife Assemblies Gospel Outreach. Blairhall assembly continued to support the Lord's work both at home and abroad with time spent each week reading and praying with regard to missionaries and their work.

At this time the assembly conference was established as an annual event in May of each year and an anniversary celebration took place each September.

During the next two decades more mining families moved into the area following work and with the provision of new housing in the neighbouring village of Oakley. Gospel campaigns throughout the decade saw conversions of assembly members' children as well as local residents and as a result numbers grew to around thirty. Sunday school was well established by this time with annual events such as the trip and prizegiving forming bridges with the community.

There was an active Bible class with some being converted and moving into assembly fellowship. Blue collar and professional people also began to arrive in the area at this time.

Sunday school and Bible class work continued and the Friday night young people's event drew considerable numbers from surrounding areas. Further gospel campaigns resulted in conversions with additions to the assembly compensating for those who left for work and marriage. Assembly members' families continued to be added to the fellowship, keeping numbers stable at around thirty during this period.

The start of the general decline in the mining industry during the 1970's affected assembly numbers and the character of the local community.

Support for the annual conference waned, as was the case at many conferences at that time, which prompted re-establishment of the anniversary celebrations and fellowship oriented events. Systematic teaching was incorporated into these events primarily for the benefit of the local assembly members.

Sunday school and Bible class work was augmented with weekend camps involving the whole assembly.

People leaving following their marriage and a search for work for second-generation members of the assembly resulted in a slight decrease in numbers although provision of new private houses in Comrie meant some movement of believers into the area.

In the 1980's many of those who had started the assembly were called home, though their departure was in part compensated by the conversion and addition to the assembly of their great grandchildren, as well as some local people.

The Christmas Carol Service helped to maintain contact with the local community after the demise of the Sunday school and Bible class. Tract distribution bi-annually remains a feature of assembly life. A 'festival-type' approach to evangelism was tried at Easter and Harvest as we approached the end of the millennium but this had limited success. Christmas remains the only festival which attracts large numbers in local support.

A programme of *Religious Education Resources* was inaugurated and introduced to primary schools in the area.

Bibles were, and continue to be, provided. Advice is given on taking school assemblies with overhead projector transparencies. *Real Life* Postal Sunday School is promoted and arrangements made for Bible story-tellers to visit schools.

Since the beginning of 2000 the believers have experimented with informal presentations starting with a 'Back to the Bible' series on Wednesday nights at monthly intervals. This continued with another on the plight of children around the world entitled, 'Windows on the World' focussing on the main continents. The presentations were worthwhile and had good support from neighbouring assemblies but the activity failed in the objective of creating a bridge into the local community.

*Religious Education Resources*, however, was expanded into over thirty schools.

Priority has recently been given to producing tracts and Bible-reading plans for local distribution. Internal assembly magazines called *Outlook* and *Focus* are also regular features of assembly life.

During this period progress was made towards Charity status for the assembly under the banner of *Blairhall Evangelical Outreach*, now a reality giving real tax benefits and helping to financially compensate for reducing numbers. These have now returned to the original number of twelve.

The assembly website [www.blairhallgospelhall.co.uk](http://www.blairhallgospelhall.co.uk) commenced soon after the start of the new millennium and continues with monthly updates for its 'Children's Corner' and 'Thought for the Month'. This is an attempt to communicate with the growing number of internet users.

Work continues and in the last twelve months the hall was well filled for the 2009 Carol Service, followed by visits to twelve local schools in February. In March 2010 one of the largest congregations ever to meet in the hall gathered to celebrate the life and work of one of the sisters who had been involved in the assembly work and testimony for over fifty years.

As a final note of encouragement, in April many of the believers attended the baptism, at a neighbouring assembly, of one of the great, great grand-daughters of the founders of the assembly.

**'O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever', Ps. 136. 1.**





# Personalities in the Those who were a delight

Timothy never met Paul in Troas and in all probability he never got down to Corinth. In fact, when Paul arrived in Troas, he did not find Titus, but soon moved on to Macedonia where, eventually, Titus turned up. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians from Macedonia telling them of his joy at their positive reaction to his stern letter, no mention is made of Timothy having been in Corinth. However, he is mentioned as being with Paul then, 2 Cor. 1. 1, giving us the strong impression that Timothy got no further than Macedonia, i.e., Philippi, Thessalonica, etc.

Paul himself eventually arrived at Corinth, Acts 20. 2, and there he wrote his letter to the Romans. In it Paul sends the greetings of Timothy, his workfellow, Rom. 16. 21, who was obviously with him. Timothy then accompanied Paul and the other representatives of the Gentile assemblies to deliver the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, Acts 20. 4. This is the final mention of Timothy in Acts.

The next news we have of Timothy is with Paul when he was imprisoned at Rome. When Paul wrote his Epistles to the Colossians, Philemon, and to the Philippians, he mentions Timothy, though not in Ephesians. To the Philippians, Paul wrote in his own name and that of Timothy as 'the servants of Jesus Christ', Phil. 1. 1; similarly to the Colossians he names Timothy as our (or the) brother, Col. 1. 1. However, to the Philippians he wrote much more about Timothy. First, he said he hoped to send Timothy to them shortly, so that he could bring back news of their spiritual state, Phil. 2. 19. Then, he tells them why Timothy was his special choice for the work. He stated that he had 'no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state', 2. 20. This is a remarkable statement for Paul to make, comparing Timothy with himself, but even more so when he contrasts Timothy with others, for 'all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's', v. 21. This too is a remarkable statement for the very opposite reason. The general situation was that the things of Jesus Christ, e.g., the welfare of the saints and the gospel, were of no concern to the world and perhaps of little real interest to the majority of Christians, cp. 1 Cor. 10. 24, 33. The Philippians

had firsthand knowledge of Timothy with regard to the gospel, for he had provided them with the proof in serving with Paul, as a slave son with his slave father. This is a vivid picture! In those days, if a slave had any skill or trade, he was duty bound to teach it to his son, so that they together could serve their master. For this reason, Paul was happy to send him as soon as possible, v. 23. However, he also hoped to come himself shortly, v. 24. With regard to Timothy's interest in them, they were assured of this too.

It seems that Paul was eventually released, and during his busy few years of freedom, one of the places he visited was Ephesus. Timothy was with him and was left there to complete the work that he and Paul had been carrying out. In the letter that Paul wrote to him, he encouraged and instructed Timothy personally, and then gave him specific instructions for the assembly at Ephesus.

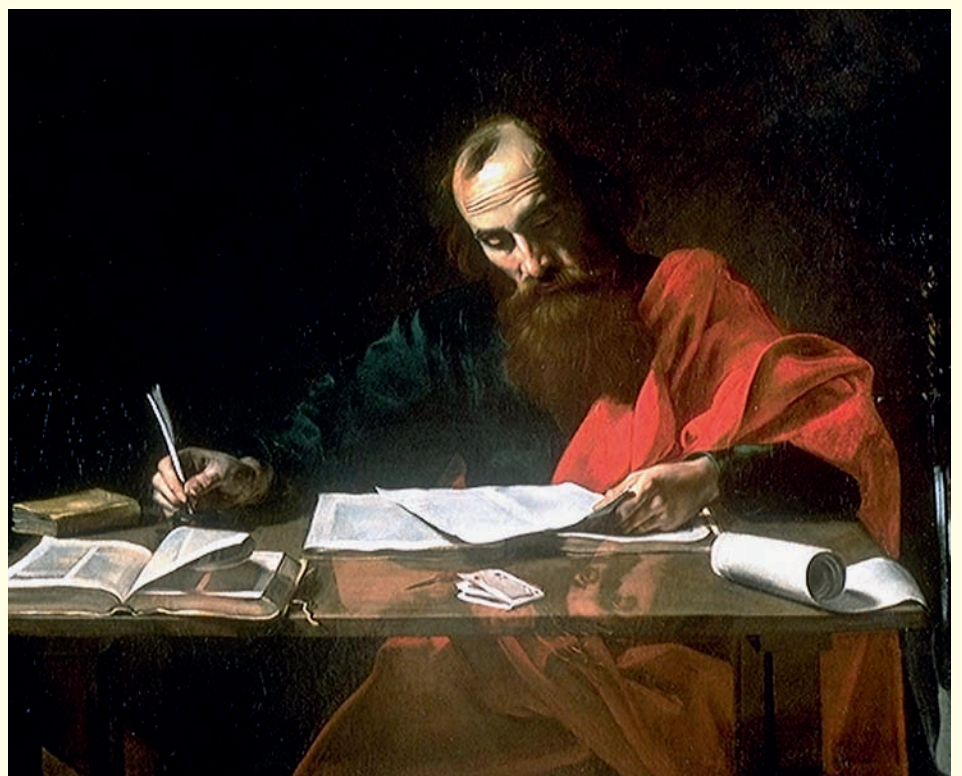
Not too many years before, Paul had warned the elders of the assembly at

Ephesus, 'after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them', Acts 20. 29-30. Spiritual decay was already setting in at Ephesus, and Timothy was being told how to protect the flock. Specifically, Paul reminds him, 'I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

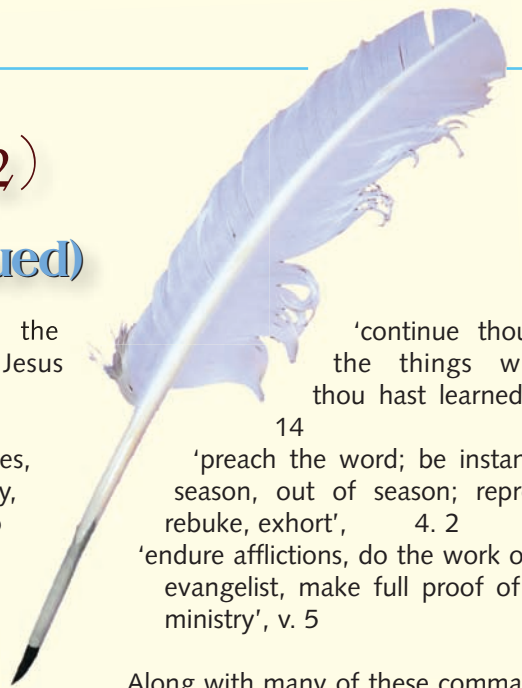
neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith', 1 Tim. 1. 3-4. Summing up, Paul wrote, 'This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy . . . that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience', vv. 18-19.

With respect to the positive aspect of the teaching, Paul gives the reason for his writing to Timothy as, 'If I delay, in order that thou mayest know how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the

By  
**HOWARD  
BARNES**  
Westhoughton,  
England







# Pastoral Epistles (2)

## to Paul: TIMOTHY (continued)

truth', 3. 15 JND. This behaviour in the local assembly covered, among other things, prayer (chapter 2) and leadership and service (chapter 3). Then, in chapter 4, Paul told Timothy about problems that would arise in the future, so there follows another set of commands addressing Timothy's suitable behaviour for such times, for his own integrity's sake and in the best interests of the assembly:

- 'these things command and teach', v. 11
- 'let no man despise thy youth', v. 12
- 'be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity', v. 12
- 'give attendance to [public] reading, to exhortation, to doctrine', v. 13
- 'neglect not the gift that is in thee', v. 14
- 'meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all', v. 15
- 'take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee', v. 16

In chapter 5, after dealing with some specific items of behaviour by members of the assembly, e.g., widows, Paul again exhorts Timothy with some final commands:

- 'observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality', v. 21
- 'lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure', v. 22
- 'drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities', v. 23.

Finally, in chapter 6, Paul finished his instructions:

- 'O man of God, flee these things [e.g., love of money]; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness', v. 11
- 'fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life', v. 12
- 'keep this commandment without

spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ', v. 14.

Collecting up all his entreaties, Paul finally exhorts, 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust', 1 Tim. 6. 20. What a charge!

Some time after writing his first letter to Timothy, Paul was re-arrested and taken back to Rome. From there he wrote another letter to Timothy in which he asked him: to come quickly, 2 Tim. 4. 9, at least before winter, v. 21; and to bring Mark with him, and also the cloak he had left at Troas, the books and the parchments, vv. 11-13. When we hear Paul saying, 'Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy', 1. 4, we have some more insight into the character of Timothy, since he was given to weeping, probably on the occasions when he and Paul had to part, cp. Acts 20. 37. On the other hand, we see the particular joy that Paul got from Timothy's company. In this epistle, there are many commands for Timothy to comply with – some important ones are:

- 'stir up the gift of God, which is in thee', 2 Tim. 1. 6
- 'be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner', v. 8
- 'be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel', v. 8.
- 'hold fast the form of sound words', v. 13.
- 'be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus', 2. 1
- 'commit thou to faithful men [the things that thou hast heard of me]', v. 2.
- 'endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ', v. 3
- 'study to shew thyself approved unto God . . . rightly dividing the word of truth', v. 15.
- 'flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace', v. 22.
- 'turn away [from ungodly men, vv. 2-4]', 3. 5

'continue thou in the things which thou hast learned', v.

14

'preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort', 4. 2

'endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry', v. 5

Along with many of these commands, Paul gave reasons for them being relevant and possible, for instance, Timothy was to stir up his gift because, 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind', 1. 7. This three-fold benefit is indispensable for the servant of God. This promise also becomes the reason for the following command, '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', v. 8. Whatever hesitation or even fearfulness there might have been in Timothy's retiring character, this could be eclipsed by the new spirit of power within him from God.

Whether or not Timothy arrived before Paul's eventual execution, we do not know, but even after Paul's death, what a help these letters must have been to Timothy personally and to those to whom he passed on copies!

At some unknown place and time Timothy himself suffered imprisonment, for scripture records his release. Heb. 13. 23. Given the difficulty in knowing who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, or precisely when it was written, it is difficult to place Timothy's imprisonment and release.

**HOWARD BARNES** worked in scientific research - latterly as a research professor in the University of Aberystwyth, Wales. Howard now spends his time preaching and teaching at home and abroad. He also writes extensively and has a special interest in speaking in schools. He is in fellowship in the assembly at Westhoughton, England.





The Dispensational Aspect (The Church which is His Body)	The Local Aspect (The Church of God)	
Col. 1. 18; Eph. 1. 22, 23	THE BODY	1 Cor. 12. 14-27
Matt. 16. 18	THE BUILDING	1 Cor. 3. 9
Eph. 5. 24, 25, 32	THE BRIDE	2 Cor. 11. 2
John 10. 16	THE FLOCK OF GOD	Acts 20. 28, 29; 1 Pet. 5. 2
Eph. 2. 21	THE TEMPLE OF GOD	1 Cor. 3. 16; 2 Cor. 6. 16
Eph. 2. 15	THE NEW MAN	1 Cor. 10. 32
THE CITY - Rev. 21. 2, 10	THE HOUSE OF GOD - 1 Tim. 3. 15	
THE PEARL - Matt. 13. 45, 46	THE PILLAR/GROUND - 1 Tim. 3. 15	
	THE LAMPSTAND - Rev. 1. 12, 20	
	THE FIELD - 1 Cor. 3. 9	
	THE EPISTLE - 2 Cor. 3. 2, 3	

As to its functions, the local church may also be considered as a hospital, Gal. 6. 1, 2; 1 Thess. 2. 7, and a school, 1 Cor. 14. 9, 26; Gal. 6. 6. However, these designations are not in the text.

The local church is described as:

the church of God/churches of God	their proprietor is God
churches of Christ	their purchaser is Christ
churches of the saints	their composition spiritually
churches of the Gentiles	their composition ethnically
churches of Galatia	province where located
the church in (at) Ephesus	city where located
the church which is in his house	house where located

## Local Church Metaphors

### The Assembly as the Body – Its Unity, Variety and Diversity of Gift

'Now ye are (the) body of Christ and members in particular', 1 Cor. 12. 27. This is not the material, physical body of Christ. This is the local church at Corinth likened to the human body. The assembly is a living, vibrant organism, not a man-made organization such as a club. The body illustrates the truth of unity; it is an organic whole. It also displays variety, inasmuch as it has many members, for example, foot, hand, ear, eye. Diversity is seen in the differing functions of the members, as they exercise their Spirit-given gifts in the context of the assembly.

Unity and diversity are seen together in harmony; they are not mutually exclusive. That this reference is local and not dispensational is supported by verse 27. The absence of the article indicates that the Corinthian assembly is 'body of Christ' in character, though patently not *the* body of Christ, the church of the dispensation. Further, when the church of the dispensation is in view, the body equates to the

church whilst the Head is Christ. Here, the body and head are both used to illustrate facets of the Corinthian church. Are we maintaining the unity of the Spirit and exercising the diverse gifts for the good of the assembly and the glory of God?

### The Assembly as the Building – Its Unity and Quality of Teaching

#### The Ongoing Development of an Assembly, 1 Cor. 3. 9-15.

The foundation of any local assembly is Jesus Christ, that is, a ministry of Christ. 'We preach Christ crucified', 1 Cor. 1. 23. Matthew chapter 7 verse 24 says, 'Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock'. Here, the sayings of Jesus, His teachings, are the rock-foundation.

The assembly at Corinth was the result of Paul's gospel preaching over a period of time. Once the foundation was in place, Paul moved on and others were responsible for raising the superstructure of the building. The quality of the materials used is emphasized. Crucial to its growth is the quality of preaching and teaching, as

# Metaphor

the testing by fire reveals. Quality and not volume will be rewarded at the Judgement Seat of Christ. It is not how much but how well I have built for God that will count.

We are challenged to build quality people, principles and preaching into the local gathering.

### The Occupying Deity of an Assembly, Eph. 2. 22.

The Ephesian letter is primarily about the church of the dispensation. However, chapter 2 verse 22 is the exception. The design and purpose of a local church is emphasized. It is marked by the unity of Jew and Gentile – 'builded together'. Its purpose is to be the place where God dwells among His people in the person of the Holy Spirit. It is worth noticing the comparison and contrast between verses 21 and 22:

v. 21: The Dispensational Church	v. 22: The Local Church
'In whom' (Jesus Christ)	'In whom' (the Lord)
'all the building'	'ye also are builded'
'framed together'	'builded together'
'holy temple'	'habitation of God'
'in the Lord'	'through the Spirit'

### The Assembly as the Bride – Its Unity and Purity of Intention

The Folly of Boasting: 'bear with me', v. 1  
 The Father of the Bride: 'betrothed to one husband', v. 2  
 The Fear of Beguilement: 'as the serpent . . . so your minds', v. 3

In verse 2 we are left in no doubt as to Paul's love for the Corinthian assembly. His jealousy (zeal) is clearly expressed. Paul's love is translated into his labour on behalf of the saints, 'I have espoused (betrothed) you to one husband'. He is seen as the father of the church giving her away to her Beloved. His longing is, 'That I may



# ...s of the Church

By  
**JOHN GRIFFITHS**  
Port Talbot,  
Wales

present you as a chaste virgin to Christ'. Paul does not want the assembly to be defiled in any way but is concerned that her purity of intention is maintained until the day when she is presented to her heavenly Bridegroom. There is always the fear of satanic attack and Paul thinks of Eve and her seduction and sin in Eden. May God enable us to remain pure. Satan seeks to destroy the unity of the body, the sanctity of the building and the purity of the bride.

## The Assembly as the Flock of God – Its Responsibility

**Paul Cautions the Elders, Acts 20. 28.**

Sheep need shepherds. So the assembly needs spiritual shepherds, also called elders, over-seers, bishops. The work of the shepherd is twofold: pastoral/ to tend, Acts 20. 28, and protective/to defend, Acts 20. 29, 30.

Sheep must have their needs met. They require leadership and feeding. The 'little flock' also needs protection from enemies without and within. There are predators that enter in to devour, due, at least in part, to the lack of the scriptural practice of reception, and the carnal party leaders who rise up within to divide the assembly causing schisms.

**Peter Challenges the Elders, 1 Peter 5. 2.**

Peter was once exhorted by the Lord, 'Feed my lambs', and, 'Feed my sheep'. Now, he exhorts his fellow-elders to tend or pastor the flock. The role is to be engaged in without pressure or payment. They are to shepherd the flock, not by the principle of enforcement but rather by positive example, remembering that they are under-shepherds awaiting the advent of the chief Shepherd with His reward.

## The Assembly as Temple of God – Its Sanctity

**Sanctification from False Teachings and their Effects, 1 Cor. 3. 16.**

The expression 'temple of God' would have significance for both Jew and Gentile. Though their ideas would be dissimilar, the themes of sacredness and deity would stand out along with that of the functioning priests.

The local assembly is indwelt by a divine Person, the Holy Spirit. False

How incongruous to seek the fellowship of pagan temples and that of the present-day temple, the assembly. Our intimacy with God in verse 16 is followed by the instruction, 'Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord'. If Gentiles are called to separate from religious associations here, Jewish believers are called to sever their links with Judaism in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 13, and we are enjoined to separation from religious systems in Revelation chapter 18 verse 4. Our call to 'come out' is from the present system of sectarianism that will soon become the apostate church, religious Babylon, Rome and her daughters.

## The Assembly as the New Man – Its Harmony

The dispensational aspect is portrayed in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 15, 'to make of twain (two) one new man'.

The distinctions, Jew and Gentile, are lost in the church of the dispensation. The local expression of the church is likewise seen to be without national or ethnic differences. When a Jewish or Gentile believer at Corinth enters into fellowship with the local assembly, such distinctions recognized by the world are dispensed with in the assembly. Prior to the existence of the local church there had been only Jew and Gentile; the new community, the church of God, does not recognize such differences in its midst. National identities count for nothing as, by God's grace, Jew and Gentile are harmoniously integrated into the living organism. There should be no ethnic or racial discrimination in the assembly. We are all saints, believers, disciples.



teachers who by their teaching would defile the assembly and its divine Occupant thus come under God's punitive judgement. The assembly is to be marked by consecration, not desecration. It is the sphere of God's dwelling with His people. Here, He is worshipped, praised and adored. This is where holy priests function in offering spiritual sacrifices.

**Separation from False Temples and their Evils, 2 Cor. 6. 16.**

'What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?'

**JOHN GRIFFITHS** is an elder in the assembly at Port Talbot, Wales. He ministers the word of God throughout the UK. This is his first article for *Precious Seed International*. He is a retired headteacher.





Although verses 12-26 focus on Paul's immediate circumstances, they are really an amplification of the thoughts developed in verses 3-11. God, who promised that the good work in the saints would continue until the day of Christ, vv. 5-6, now explains something of the progress of the message that produces this transformation. In fact, verses 3-11 set the tone for the rest of the epistle, as ROBERT C. SWIFT explains:

'Verses 12-26, besides linking with the prologue, also point forward to succeeding sections in the epistle. Verses 23-26, for example, clearly foreshadow 2. 5-11. Following Christ's example, Paul released any claim on privileges he rightly possessed in order to serve the needs of others more effectively. In that way, as well as by the mention of his anticipated coming to them, 1. 27; 2. 24, this section points to what lies ahead in the epistle. These verses form a smooth and natural transition to the body of the letter which begins at 1. 27'.<sup>1</sup>

The advancement of the gospel as recorded in Philippians reaches an autobiographical point in verse 12. The apostle turns from generalities to his current imprisonment and how it had impacted upon the dissemination of the good news. Contrary to human wisdom, the plan of God includes this surprising development, and uses it to spread Christ's message where it otherwise would not go. What is more, his imprisonment profoundly affects his brothers in Philippi by motivating them to preach the word of God in his place. Finally, it reveals the prisoner's attitude toward the true meaning of life, showing it to be a Christ-centred life.

### Prison Ministry from the Inside

The opening words of this section must have astonished his first readers, 'But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel', Phil. 1. 12. How could this extremely negative development help the ministry forward? If an internationally famous evangelist or missionary were to be imprisoned today, scores of prayer meetings

# Philippians: The Joy and Suffering

## Chapter 1: The Gospel's Progress amidst Opposition and Suffering

### Section 2: Verses 12-26

#### Paul's imprisonment and its effect on the gospel

would be devoted to praying for his immediate release. Yet the apostle affirms that his legal difficulties were actually a boon to the spread of the gospel. His attitude is exemplary for suffering Christians: they must see God's hand behind the positive and negative occurrences in their lives. As MOTYER puts it, 'Paul belonged to that never-to-be-repeated apostolic band – the men who could say "Be imitators of me"'. The result is that we find here something more than extracts from the diary of a fascinating man: this is an example of true Christian living; this is a statement of principle for the guidance of the saints'.<sup>2</sup>

#### On Duty for the Lord in the most Unlikely Place

Paul's assessment of his situation revealed a spiritual worldview which recognized God's sovereign hand behind every situation in life. Nor were his words an overstatement, for now Christ's glad tidings were going into unexpected places, even among the elite Praetorian guard. The KJV of verse 13 has, 'in all the palace'. Literally, it is 'to the praetorian', which could refer to the palace where the Praetorian guard protected the emperor or to the soldiers themselves. It seems likely that he refers to people, rather than a specific geographic location, although the same sentries to whom he would witness were also employed in the court itself. Thus, the gospel penetrated the inner quarters of the ruler and bore spiritual fruit, 4. 22.

Ironically, when he says he is 'set', it translates, '*keimai* . . . a military term, emphasizing the point that in prison he is enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Tim. 2. 3-4), and as much "on duty" as the guards posted to watch over him are on duty in the service of

Rome'.<sup>3</sup> Even a prison can be a springboard for the word of God, which cannot be bound, 2 Tim. 2. 9.

The apostle's confinement also emboldens his more timid brethren to openly proclaim the despised message of the cross. When the Lord sets aside some of His servants, it often stirs others to rise and labour in their place. Human wisdom supposes that persecution would cause others to draw back from identifying with the rejected Christ. Frequently, the reverse transpires. Rather than arrest the

By

**KEITH  
KEYSER**

Gilbertsville,  
Pennsylvania,  
USA

gospel's advance, Stephen's martyrdom spread the Christians like seed, compare Acts 8. 4 with 11. 19-21.

Apparently, that bold speaker's message and death also lodged in Saul of Tarsus' mind, for the Lord

told him, 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks', Acts 9. 5. In his later sermons at Pisidian Antioch and Athens, Acts chapters 13 and 17, Paul made some of the same points that Stephen made in Acts chapter 7.

#### A Team of Rivals

More surprisingly, this unforeseen turn of events motivated some who disliked Paul to redouble their evangelistic efforts in a futile attempt to make his experience more galling, v. 16. They were motivated by 'envy





# Bringing of the Furtherance of the Gospel Part Four

and strife', v. 15, and probably sought to increase their own popularity and influence by doing what he could not do. One scholar describes the former term thus, '*Erietheia*, derived from *erithon*, a hired servant, means labour for hire, and is commonly used of hired canvassers, in the sense of factiousness, party spirit'.<sup>4</sup> On the two terms MACARTHUR adds, 'Strife is from *eris*, which refers to contention, especially with a spirit of enmity. As it is used here, it is frequently associated with envy and jealousy, as well as with other sinful passions, such as greed and malice. Envy leads to competition, hostility, and conflict'.<sup>5</sup> These preachers are free; whereas, it is obvious that Paul lacked the Almighty's favour – why else would he be in prison? Instead of naming his adversaries or defending his own honour, the great missionary rejoices in the further proclamation of Christ, v. 18. Though he deplores their base motives, as long as the true gospel is preached he is happy.

## The Goal of Paul's Life

Paul's next statement is somewhat perplexing, 'For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ', v. 19. Specifically, 'this' and 'salvation' are the puzzling words. On the former word, it is best to understand it in the broadest sense possible: all of these happenings – imprisonment, support of those who love him, opposition from those who detest him – work toward the greater goal of his 'salvation'. Contextually, it is clear that he is not referring to salvation from God's wrath (other scriptures make it clear that this was already a past occurrence, e.g., John 5: 24; Rom. 5: 1; 8: 1). Some Bible teachers suggest that he is speaking of his 'deliverance' from prison. While this is possible, the verses that come

after indicate that he envisages salvation from all human and satanic opposition in the great task of magnifying Christ. He points out in verse 19 that the saints' intercession and the power of the Holy Spirit are the tools that strengthen him to overcome his foes and accomplish this task. The phrase 'turn to my salvation' echoes the Septuagint wording of Job chapter 13 verse 16, and Paul's situation is analogous to that Old Testament hero.<sup>6</sup> Job was maligned as unrighteous; yet, in the



end, God exonerated him. Likewise, Paul sees himself being vindicated before the Romans and all other adversaries in glorifying Christ through his sufferings. At a higher Judgement Seat than Rome, all of these things would be marshalled to show the rightness of the Lord Jesus, His apostle, and His gospel.

It all comes down to Paul's personal credo, 'For me to live Christ; to die gain', 1. 21 literal rendering. If one puts anything else into the first part of that statement, then they cannot say 'To die is gain'. For example, if one declares, 'For me to live is sport', then they cannot say 'to die is gain' (there is no reserved seating at the World Cup for dead men). Or, another might affirm, 'For me to live is business'; the global economic events of the last two years demonstrate that one's business may not last this life, let alone the next. The only way to be able to say, 'To die is gain' is to have Christ as the object, chief joy, and highest good of one's life. Paul can say this because

the Lord Jesus is everything to him – more important than possessions, health, wealth, friends, family, or even life itself. Later in this epistle, he asserts that, 'I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ', 3. 8 ESV. For Paul, living is about Christ; therefore, dying would be gain, for he would gain unfettered and undistracted access to the Lord.

In the final verse of this section, Paul faces the real possibility that he may be executed. This does not frighten him. If he dies, he goes to be with the Lord, which is 'very much better', v. 23 JND, NAS. If he lives, he generates more fruit for the Lord's glory. It is a 'win-win' situation! Nonetheless, he recognizes that the young church in Philippi would benefit from his continuing in the body. What is more, verse 25 indicates that he knew – possibly by revelation – he would be released and return to them. He thus looks forward to their 'furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again', vv. 25-26.

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- 6 The Septuagint, abbreviated LXX, was an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures; it is sometimes quoted in the New Testament by the Lord and His apostles.

**KEITH KEYSER** is a commended full-time worker and is in fellowship in the assembly meeting at Gilbertville, Pennsylvania. He ministers throughout North America and has spent some time in Spain. He also regularly writes for assembly magazines.



# COMMANDS TO FOR THE LAST

In 1976 the noted Christian philosopher and theologian, FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER, published a book entitled, *How Should We Then Live?* In it the author traces the reasons for modern society's sorry and sordid state of affairs and presents the only viable alternative – namely, living by Christian ethics, acceptance of God's revelation, and the total affirmation of the Bible's morals, values, and meaning.

Dr. SCHAEFFER's book title is taken from Ezekiel chapter 33 verse 10 amid the context of the prophet's great watchman passage. 'How should we then live?' is a question which Christians may well ask themselves in these last days of the church age. The answer, of course, is found in the word of God.

Jude may well have asked it in his day, but, whether or not he did, he has, nevertheless, given us at least eight commands as to how all true believers should live as this age of grace draws swiftly to its close.

The first of these commands is:

## **Earnestly Contend for the Faith, v. 3**

Today, false teachers have crept into the professing church and are actively proclaiming their subversive doctrines as never before. In view of this, true Christians must 'contend for the faith', that is, the truth of the Bible which was once for all delivered to the saints. Yet, at the same time, they must avoid being contentious.

For example, we must contend for:

- The inerrancy and infallibility of the scriptures.
- The deity of Christ.
- The virgin birth of Christ.
- The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ.
- Christ's bodily resurrection.
- Christ's coming again.
- Man's fall through sin.
- Man's need of salvation through faith in Christ and His shed blood.
- The eternal judgement of all who die in their sins without Christ.

The second command is:

## **Remember the Teaching and Warnings of the Apostles, v. 17**

'But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

It is human to forget what we should remember and to remember what we should forget. Thus, Jude reminds his readers, and us, how that the apostles 'told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit', vv. 18-19.

The next command is:

## **Building up yourselves on your most Holy Faith v. 20a**

It should be stressed that the word for 'building up' is in the present tense. In other words, 'keep on building up yourselves on your most holy faith'.

John Quincy Adams (1767-1848) was the sixth president of the United States (1825-29). As secretary of state, he helped formulate the Monroe Doctrine and later became an active campaigner against slavery. It was he who said, 'My custom is to read four or five chapters of the Bible every morning immediately after rising. It seems to me the most suitable manner of beginning the day. It is an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue'.

The fourth command is:

## **Pray in the Holy Spirit, v. 20b**

Again, it should be noted that the word for 'pray' is in the present tense. Prayer is one of the most important resources, if not *the* most important, that the true believer has on which to build up himself. But what does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit? One thing, it does not mean the perfunctory *saying* of prayers. Rather, it means true spiritual communion with

the Lord, our praying being motivated, guided, and empowered by the Holy Spirit Himself, cf. Eph. 6. 18; Rom. 8. 26; Col. 4. 2, 12; 1 Thess. 5. 17. And this is only possible as we 'walk in the Spirit', Gal. 5. 16.

The fifth command is:

## **Keep yourselves in the Love of God, v. 21a**

Of this command, DR. H. A. IRONSIDE has said, 'It is as though I say to my child, "Keep in the sunshine". The sun shines whether we enjoy it or not. And so God's love abides unchanging. But we need to keep in the conscious enjoyment of it. Let nothing make the tried soul doubt that love. Circumstances cannot alter it, nor can our own failures. The soul needs to rely upon it, and thus be borne in triumph above the conflict and the discouraging episodes incident to the life of faith'.<sup>1</sup>

At a great flower exhibition in London, one of the prizes was taken by a magnificent geranium bloom in an old tin can, brought there by a child from a tenement house. Being interviewed by a patron of the exhibition on the success of her flower, she told him simply how a lady gave her a slip. She



# O CHRISTIANS DAYS

By **ROSS RAINEY** Dearborn, Michigan, USA

found an old can in the dustbin, scraped up the dirt from the alley to fill it, and planted the slip. 'Then', she said, 'in the morning I put it in the east window, and in the afternoon I put it in the west window, and, well, sir, I just keep it in the sun'.

The next command is:

## Expect the Rapture v. 21b

It should be noted that the word for 'looking' is in the present tense, observing also that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are prominent in verses 20 and 21. It has been suggested that 'building' and 'praying' speak of the believer's work of faith; 'keeping', of his labour of love; and 'looking' of his patience of hope, 1 Thess. 1. 3.

WARREN W. WIERSBE has stated that, 'The word translated looking . . . means "earnestly expecting". It describes an attitude of life that is motivated by the promise of our Lord's return. The apostates can only look for judgment, but God's people are looking for mercy. Not only is our salvation from sin the gift of God's mercy, but so also is the deliverance of His church from this evil world. In His mercy, He will come for us and take us to Himself'.<sup>2</sup>

The seventh command is:

## Evangelize the lost, vv. 22-23

In fulfilling our Lord's commission to, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature', Mark 16. 15, WIERSBE has discerningly commented that, 'Not every Christian is equipped to deal with false teachers or with those they have influenced and captured. It takes a good knowledge of the word, a faithful walk with God, an understanding of Satan's devices, and certainly the fullness of the Spirit of God'.<sup>3</sup>

The eighth and last command is:

## Guard the Purity of your Testimony v. 23b

In dealing with confused, deceived, lost people we need to exercise

caution, lest we ourselves become contaminated by the sin of those we try to help. Sin is contagious. Thus, at all times, and in every circumstance, the Christian must be on his guard.

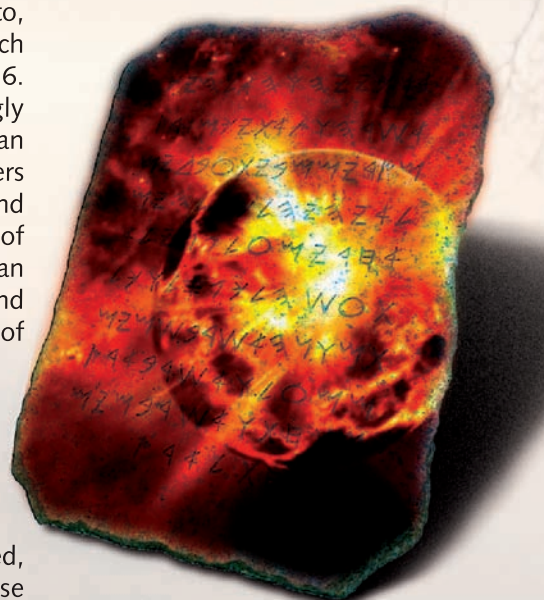
Here, then, are eight biblical guidelines for God's people who live in a worldwide scene of abounding evil and increasing apostasy: earnestly contend for the faith, remember the teaching and warnings of the apostles, build up yourselves on your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, expect the rapture, evangelize the lost, and guard the purity of your testimony.

'Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Saviour, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen', Jude 24-25 NKJV.

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**W. ROSS RAINEY** is in fellowship with the assembly in Dearborn, Michigan, and is a commended full-time worker of over fifty years. A former editor of *Food for the Flock* magazine, he is a contributor to other assembly publications and continues to minister throughout the USA and Canada.



# Flee Lust

By **DONALD NORBIE**  
Greeley, Colorado, USA

God created man, male and female, and commanded them to multiply. The goal of sexual desire is children, the propagation of the human race. Animals also have this drive to reproduce. So sex is good, God made it.

But man is made in the image of God, he is more than animal. God made one woman for one man and joined them together as one flesh, Gen. 2. 24, a bond Jesus said should not be broken except by death, Matt. 19. 6. A Christian wedding celebrates the sanctity and permanence of the union.

Paul warned Timothy, 'Flee youthful lusts', 2 Tim. 2. 22. Sexual desire begins at puberty and is strongest in the teens and twenties. But that intense desire continues to old age, even into the eighties. Hence, at any age, the admonition is timely, 'Flee youthful lusts'. But what does that mean?

Flee that which would excite illegitimate passion. What excites a man's passion? A harlot knows. She wants to entice the man so she dresses provocatively to inflame his lust. A prominent dress designer said he got his ideas for women's dresses by visiting the city district where prostitutes plied their trade.

Peter urges women to dress modestly, 1 Pet. 3. 1-5. This means she keeps her body covered and causes men to focus on her face and character. A woman can help men think chastely by dressing modestly. By doing this she will help them, and herself, to flee lust.

God tells man to get married and channel this natural, sexual desire toward his wife. Be faithful and committed to one another. This will bring the most happiness, both for you and your children. Yes, flee youthful lusts and live a holy life for God!

**DONALD NORBIE** is in fellowship with the assembly in Greeley, Colorado, and is a commended full-time worker. A regular contributor to *Precious Seed International* and other assembly magazines his ministry is widely appreciated throughout North America and the UK.





# REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK



## Merseyside

During April, the assembly at **Huyton** held gospel meetings with Andrew Dutton and Stephen Baker. These meetings were very encouraging in terms of the numbers of unsaved coming in. They have resulted in increased numbers of people coming to the regular gospel meeting (averaging eight to ten unsaved a week) and to the monthly community gospel tea (between twenty-two and twenty-eight in each time).

The assembly at **Prestwich** held a gospel outreach in May. It was hard to get people along to the meetings, but encouraging when visiting in the area to see the respect that people had for those who visit regularly. Some teenage boys did come into the meetings. Jeremy Singer, Stephen Baker and Phil Raggett helped with the meetings.

In June, the assembly at **Irby** held gospel meetings with Stephen Baker and Phil Armstrong. The meetings were well attended in terms of unsaved coming along. The Lord was good and on one of the days, a grandmother and her granddaughter, who were visited in the afternoon, came to the meeting in the evening. The granddaughter is studying Religious Studies and Philosophy and showed an interest in coming back after her exams were finished – sadly she hasn't.

Every year in **Southport** a week of open-air meetings is undertaken and it proved again to be a good opportunity for people to hear the gospel. A number of brethren helped with the preaching. Monday started with a verbal attack from a Seventh Day Adventist insisting that we should be preaching the keeping of the law in addition to the gospel. Some names to pray for are, Lucy and Sarah (students), Maureen (a lady who confessed she was racked with guilt), Susie and Alan (Alan suffers from depression), Jack (Jack agreed for a Bible Study Course to be sent to him –

he has not replied to the e-mail yet but he was very interested when chatting in the street), Jenny (this young woman recently had a miscarriage and as a result was angry with God), Beverly (a Buddhist lady who chatted for quite a while), and Alex, Walter and Beverly - all young people who showed an interest in what was being preached with varying degrees of response and antagonism. There also was an encounter with one sad old lady (known to God) who was angry that the believers had the audacity to come and preach on the streets.

## Gloucestershire

This year is the 50th Anniversary of the testimony at Bethany Gospel Hall in the Hesters Way Estate, **Cheltenham**, and the saints wondered what they should do to celebrate and commemorate this event. Just after their Combined Easter Conference one of the younger men suggested having an 'Open Day' to mark the occasion and after having set it out before the Lord, the assembly agreed to go ahead and arrange such an event for the 31st July.

The content of the event included:

- a book stall with free literature, including Bibles
- a kids' craft section
- a comprehensive exhibition of the history of the assembly with photos on display panels around the hall, DVDs of Sunday School outings, parties, Mums and Toddlers and PowerPoint presentations of activities over the fifty years
- a coffee shop open all day with free refreshments
- a large marquee and a gazebo in the car park with seating, a BBQ, games and competitions for all.
- a Visitors Book and a questionnaire provided for comment

*Bethany Gospel Hall believers*



Over 5,000 flyers were distributed inviting people to come along, and the response was astonishing. There was a constant flow of people (some of whom had been Sunday School, Seekers, and Kids Klub children over the years) all day coming in and enjoying the time. Two hundred came through the hall and many comments were made and interesting conversations held with those known from the past. There also were some good new contacts made.

Since the Open Day, the assembly has seen more people coming in to the gospel meeting and are anticipating numbers increasing in the children's Kids Klub when it restarts in September and other activities like the Coffee Morning. The assembly, most of whom are in their late seventies and eighties, were greatly encouraged as they worked together.

## Sussex

The assembly at **Nutley** arranged two weeks of gospel meetings in July with Hugh Doey, Don Rogers and others sharing in the responsibility for preaching. The believers were encouraged as one or two came in from the village and some good contacts and conversations ensued.

The Ayrshire Bible Exhibition visited **Eastbourne** in June for two weeks and while the number of schools attending was down on previous years, good opportunities were taken with the more than 350 children and teachers who did come along. Graeme Paterson was invited into two of the schools and the local saints also went in and presented prizes at another school.

'The World's Biggest Seafront Air Show' took place again in Eastbourne for four days in August and the believers from Marine Hall took the opportunity to distribute free postcards with texts on the back. Having ordered 10,000 of these to top up the current stock, they were surprised by the fact that nearly all supplies had gone by the third day. In addition to the postcards, they also distributed a number of CD's (Nothing Happens by Chance) with a local scene on the cover and specially





produced gospel tracts. It was thrilling to see adults and children run along the sea-front after the believers, asking for the postcards! Makes a change from being complained about! Only the Lord knows where the seed has gone.

## Durham



August 7th to 10th saw the Tall Ships spectacle in **Hartlepool** and with over one million visitors, proved a tremendous opportunity to take the gospel to many souls who are lost.

With over thirty thousand 'John 3. 16' bags and another thirty thousand text bags, Alan Barber and a number of others spent the four days distributing to and engaging with many of the spectators. One man told Alan that John 3. 16 was the only Bible verse he knew; one lady cried as she read the verse on the bag. Many conversations were held with believers who once ran well and with some who used to be in assembly fellowship. Copies of *Ultimate Questions* in Dutch, Russian and German were handed out to the ship crew members. Two people came to the gospel meeting as a result of reading the banner displayed at the entrance gate.

## Cornwall

The saints in Seymour Gospel Hall, **St. Austell**, have moved into their new hall. They are very grateful to the Lord for the way in which He has so graciously provided for this project



*Seymour Gospel Hall's new building*

through the generous and faithful giving of His people. They are praying that the work will have a real impact in the locality and are planning some 'Opening Meetings', details of which will follow, in the next issue, DV.

## London

Nitish Patel has been involved in six weeks of outreach and meetings in the **Wembley** area. Many tracts were distributed and unsaved were present most times. One Saturday there were fourteen outsiders in the hall listening to the gospel. A number of good conversations were held with people passing by. One Hindu man told a brother that he had never even heard of a book called the Bible! Another said that he had heard of the name of Jesus but knew absolutely nothing about Him and that this was the first time anyone had spoken to him about the subject. A Roman Catholic man called Octavio from Gujarat has shown much interest and continues to come and a nominal Christian couple from Gujarat have been coming every week. Kirit who was saved last year had his wife, Asha, and two young daughters join him from India in May. Though he feared she might stop him coming, it was a great joy to see she also has been coming to the meetings with him. Mahendra who was contacted last year still comes along when he is free but he is not saved yet. There are thousands of Indian students in Wembley and it is a great task to reach them before they finish their courses and return to India.

## Camp work

There have been many camps held up and down the country during the summer months and it is encouraging to hear of so many young people being brought into such close contact with the gospel. In our deeply anti-Christian culture we thank God for

believers, who give so much time to plan, attend and pray for these opportunities. We ought to be seriously praying that the up-coming generation will rise to heights of spiritual attainment that we so often feel our generation has failed to do. Camp work is exhausting but can be exhilarating, so we pray it will also be fruitful. There are too many camps to give reports of them all – below are some short reports from a selection.

## Leicester

Held under canvas, the camp is conducted over two weeks. The first (the girls' camp) was taken by Ian Jackson. There were about fifty-five girls present and some older teenage girls with little or no background were showing particular interest. Please pray, as they have returned home, that the interest will continue. The second week (boys' camp) was conducted by Paul McCauley.

## Chepstow

The believers at Orton Road Gospel Hall, Peterborough, held their annual young people's camp at Chepstow this year with Stephen Clegg as the speaker. His topic of 'Dare to be Different' and the use of some personal experiences in the gospel left the young people with a real sense of the challenge they have to face as Christians in a hostile world, and the importance of living for the Lord. Three of the young people made professions of faith.

## Cheddar

Although many will associate Cheddar with cheese and its magnificent gorge, hundreds of young people from the South West associate it with a Christian camp. Each year, for many years, in a farmer's field outside the town and latterly in the grounds of a secondary school in the heart of the town, children have slept under canvas and enjoyed a week of Christian teaching, good fellowship and fun. This year's camp, held in the first week of August, was the largest camp ever held.

Because of a clash of dates, two hundred, mostly from the south of England and south Wales, turned up on site for one week only, instead of the usual two. The day starts and ends with quiet times in the tents, led by tent leaders (believers in assembly fellowship who are over 18 years old).



*Ian Rees with the campers at Cheddar*



This year's quiet times were based on the subject of Peter – his life and letters. All campers (youngsters between the ages of 10 and 17) and leaders attend both the morning and the evening Bible teaching sessions. The morning studies this year were on the life of Joseph and the evening ones were on Paul's missionary journeys. These sessions have been blessed of the Lord in years past in that many campers have professed to be saved and others have gone home to their various assemblies to ask to be baptized and then to be received into assembly fellowship.

Although the primary work of the camp is to teach and preach the gospel to the campers, each year we have been able to draw close to tent leaders as well as campers and to encourage them in their walk with the Lord. We have been delighted to see tent leaders grow in faith and discipleship over the years, first as campers and then as leaders, for we all have issues to wrestle with and matters over which we need to be challenged or encouraged, no matter how old we are. Please pray for this work, its follow-up weekend in November near Bridgewater and its week away in Cornwall over the Easter holiday.



The believers at Ballingry, Fife, held two weeks of gospel meetings in **Crosshill**. The preaching was shared between Jack Hay (Perth), and the local brethren. The support from assemblies locally was good and an encouraging number of unsaved were present in the tent. Particular encouragements were the presence of one local councillor and another man who had refused invitations for the previous fifteen gospel series. It was felt that a number came under conviction as the gospel was faithfully

preached. Prayer is requested that there might be fruit in salvation.

The same tent was pitched for the first time at **Scotlandwell**, Fife. By the kind permission of a local farmer a further week of meetings were held here with the gospel being preached again by Jack Hay (Perth) and local brethren. It was good to see a number of locals present under the gospel, particularly the farmer and his wife, and prayer is requested for this couple, and others who came, that they might be saved.



In June 2007, the Ultimate Decision gospel outreach started in the South West of Ireland. A tent and caravan were set up at agricultural shows in Co. Cork and Co. Tipperary to distribute gospel literature. It became clear there was an opportunity in this setting and after much prayer the work continued to develop and also join up with the gospel outreach in the market in Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, which had been started some years previously.

The work has grown over the last three years and between the months of May and September a stand is erected at the **Newcastle West** market twice a month, and also at seven or eight agricultural shows in the Counties **Limerick, Cork, Kerry and Tipperary**. This work mainly covers market towns and rural areas all of which are over 90% Catholic with little other gospel work going on.

Gospel tracts, CD's and Bibles are freely handed out and scripture texts are displayed on a large digital screen with the text changing every twenty seconds. In the last three years there have been in excess of 4,000 children's packs given out in addition to other materials.



The **Charleville** show in June had great weather and while it was felt that many laughed at the scriptures, it is good to remember 'His word does not return void'. Over 350 Kids Packs were handed out.

The weather at the Newcastle West show in July meant numbers were down, but quite a few conversations were held and some literature passed on.

In August the **Cappamore and Limerick** shows enjoyed better weather and much more literature was given out. At Limerick all of the John 3.16 bags and Kids Packs that the team had were given away.

You can keep up to date with this work at [www.ncwbiblefellowship.com](http://www.ncwbiblefellowship.com) or alternatively you can write for more information to The Ultimate Decision, c/o 51 Hawthorn Drive, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, Ireland.

## Newcastle West

Over the past few months a few new faces have been at the meetings. Ewa is a young mother that Remi Pacha (Canada) had met last year. When he was with the believers again this year, he was in Tesco buying some

*Newcastle West Town Square.*





groceries. At the checkout the girl said, 'Hello Mr Pacha'. She said she was reading the Bible he had given her the previous year. Remi invited her for a Bible study and she willingly accepted the invitation. They met at the home of Ewa and Adam Olczuk from the fellowship and talked for three hours. Ewa has now started to come to meetings on a Sunday.

Teresa is a woman from the Congo who recently arrived in Newcastle West and found out about the assembly on the web. She is a believer and has been attending quite regularly. Her husband was assassinated five years ago in the Congo, she has four children (probably in their 20's) and three of them have been at the meetings with her. Hannah has also started coming to the Thursday night meeting; she is a single mum who recently lost custody of her daughter and has had a few broken relationships. Do pray for her salvation. Patricia is a single mum from South Africa who recently moved to the area. The contact with her came through a gospel magazine delivered to her house. She was saved two years ago while living in Dublin and has been out at the meetings a couple of times. She has indicated that she wants to come to the Fellowship; she has two young children. George is an Irish man living in the Netherlands. He e-mailed last month to say he had found the assembly website. He said he was looking to move back to Ireland and in particular Newcastle West where his daughter has recently moved. It turns out his daughter and partner moved in next door to Andrew and Gillian Shanks who are in the assembly. George has been saved about a year and had been going to the Fellowship in Limerick before moving to the Netherlands. If it all works out he plans to get a job here and would like to come to the meeting.

## Gorey

Three weeks of Kids Clubs and outreach took place in Riverchapel and Gorey in July and August. On the first Monday ninety-six children turned up and they all gave great attention to the word of God. The parents were all very supportive. By the end of the week the attendance was still around one hundred every day and a few registered for Bible Beginners courses. So, many people have heard God's word.



## Germany

Situated about one kilometre from the Swiss border in the village of **Altenburg**, the assembly of about sixty believers had the joy of seeing three converts baptized. The baptisms took place in the river Rhine. One of those baptized has worked in the home of a couple in the assembly for over fifteen years and came to know the Lord, no doubt influenced by the consistent godly living of her employers. This lady's husband and that of another lady also baptized are both unsaved. Both were at the baptisms and heard the brethren explain the importance of being saved and what baptism meant. The other person baptized was a young man – it was good to see him take this step. There are many young people who attend the meetings in Altenburg and prayer would be valued that they would really have the strength to live sanctified lives for the Lord.

## Romania Gura Raului

In May, a sick gypsy woman, Cassiana, visited a poor Romanian family she had heard about. She brought them some food, much to the amazement of this little family. Three young girls were living with their aged grandparents; the eldest, a boy of seventeen was working away from home as a shepherd. Their twenty-eight-year-old mother died four years ago and the 'father', an abusive, chronic alcoholic, is responsible for a large percentage of their misery. Their living conditions were appalling and Cassiana reported to brother George Sortan what she had discovered. George and Vasile visited the home and were saddened that these three young girls, Petruta, Irian and Vasilica were having to live in such

terrible conditions. The family was invited to come to hear the gospel in the little hall in Gura Raului. The three girls and their grandmother came and the grandmother trusted Christ. The following week, the eldest girl, Petruta was saved. The saints discussed their circumstances and decided to try and improve their living conditions and over the next few weeks worked to turn the little place where they lived into more of a home. One day when visiting, the old man signalled he wanted to pray. What a prayer it was! A prayer of repentance and then thanksgiving for the love, grace and mercy of God. The loving act of our dear sick sister, Cassiana, has been the gateway to a tremendous work of the Lord in that family.

## Geoagiu

Work amongst the gypsies has been a real battle and it has been obvious that Satan is not prepared to give in without a fight. Jonathan Kelso, writes, 'I personally have witnessed the effects of the resistance being waged by the power of Satan and his demonic host as he tries to weaken the effects of the gospel's power. We continue to preach God's message of good news and souls are still trusting Christ as Saviour'.

In June, sixteen new gypsy believers in the village of Geoagiu were baptized. The little assembly in the village continues to grow, but is under constant attack from the devil. Almost always in the meetings in Geoagiu and Salistea many unsaved are in attendance and whilst this is a great opportunity for gospel preaching, it is also important not to neglect teaching the believers, so having a programme specifically for them is important.

## Brazil Brasilia

The saints have had the joy of seeing three people baptized. One of these was a man who was saved during the conference in February. He is around thirty-five years of age and his previous life was one of motorcycles and everything connected with that. Now he is a new creature in Christ, he has sold the bike and is in assembly fellowship. A real trophy of grace!





worked principally with English language material. However, we have recently put together Leader's Packs for the French-speaking world and the first 100 sets have been sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

*The Opal Trust is an assembly-based charity operating out of Lockerbie in Scotland. The Trust's objective is to supply affordable Bibles and books to 'the Developing World'. Geoff Ruston is the Secretary to the Trust and he writes:*

A challenge put to me by my friend John Lewis, who is now a fellow trustee, when we were attending a major Christian Resources Exhibition in 2001, was to ultimately lead to the establishment of the Opal Trust in 2004. As international sales manager for a major Christian Book Distributor, John was deeply concerned at the lack of Bibles and Christian books in the 'Developing World' at affordable prices. Those that were available were usually way beyond the means of the general population so that whole congregations would perhaps have to share just two or three copies of the scriptures and some church leaders would not have a complete copy of the Bible.

At the time, I was managing the GLO bookshop in Motherwell and for over twenty years had been involved in various ways in the UK Christian book scene. John's challenge was, 'Is there something we could do with the benefit of our combined experience to establish a trust to meet the desperate needs that exist?'. And so OPAL (an acronym for Overseas Publishing And Literature) was born.

Using our contacts with publishers and distributors on both sides of the Atlantic to acquire suitable donated or cheap materials, we have been able over the past five years to send literature in varying quantities to seventy different countries from Slovakia in the north to Botswana in the south and from Jamaica in the west to Myanmar in the east. We have been particularly proactive in sub-Saharan Africa having established a distribution point in Chingola in the Copperbelt of Zambia and we are indebted to Medical Missionary News not only for their valued help in delivering regular supplies to keep this centre well stocked but also for their help in distributing orders to a number of other countries.

Thousands of Bibles and books have been distributed and our Leader's Packs in particular (a study Bible, concordance, dictionary, commentary and other helpful books on preaching, apologetics, leadership and prayer, etc.) have proved very popular with national workers and students, and have formed the backbone for small church libraries. Initially we

More recently we have begun to develop our own publishing programme and have co-printed a modern translation of the Bible in French, arranged a reprint of 20,000 copies of the Bemba Bible for Zambia, most of which have already been sold, and have facilitated a revision and reprint of the Chokwe Bible in association with the Angola Literature Fund. We have also published the first of what will be a series of children's books based on various parables in English and in Chichewa for Malawi which have been written by missionary Jonathan Newell. A version of *Pilgrim's Progress* in an African setting is due for publication later this year. John McQuoid, one-time missionary to Ethiopia and retired trustee of Echoes of Service, is writing a book on basic Bible doctrines and Christian living, in simple English, as a discipleship tool for the developing world.

Other recent opportunities have resulted in delivery of a Portuguese version of Vine's *Expository Dictionary* to Angola, literature resources to Papua New Guinea and Hungary and the development of a library in Lahore, Pakistan.

We are always looking for gifts of used Bibles and Christian books in good readable condition. Where suitable, these are donated to Theological Colleges, Bible Schools and church libraries. Recent consignments have gone to Pakistan, Ethiopia and Tanzania to either establish new, or augment existing libraries.

Having outgrown our previous warehouse we have recently moved to new premises which are proving much more suitable to our growing needs. The Lord graciously continues to provide.

It is a great a thrill to get regular feedback

from recipients - here are just one or two extracts:

**From Zimbabwe** I cannot really tell you in words the joy I am feeling now I have received my most lovely Bible so I can read God's Holy word every day. My family is very happy that I can read my Bible to them. I would love to be able to pay you something for this wonderful Bible but we are so poor. Please forgive us.

**From Ghana** These books will help our young pastors who are ministering in a very poor and Islamic-dominated area.

**From Zambia** A trainee nurse leafed through one of these Bibles and said, 'It's lovely but I can't afford it', before asking the price. When I told her, she just hugged it to her and wouldn't let it out of her hand.



Inside the warehouse

In addition, we rejoiced to learn that a book supplied from Lockerbie and transported by MMN to our store in Chingola, had been instrumental in the conversion of the late Zambian president Levy Mwanawasa. The power of the printed page! What a privilege to partner together and build into peoples' lives for eternity. To our God be all the glory!

Please pray that the Lord will continue to enable us to help believers in these developing countries to access not only their own copies of the Holy Scriptures but sound literature to assist their spiritual development.'

**Further information can be obtained from:**  
**Geoff Ruston, The Opal Trust,**  
**1 Glenannan Park, Lockerbie, DG11 2FA. Scottish**  
**Charity number SC034750.**  
**Tel./Fax +44 (0)1576 203670.**  
**E-mail: info@opaltrust.org.**



The new warehouse





# A WORD FOR TODAY

(elpizo) hope, hope for

(elpis, idos, e) hope

(Elymas, a, ho) Elymas

The writer SAMUEL JOHNSON once said that no place affords a more striking conviction of the vanity of human hopes than a public library. Johnson, however, failed to appreciate that of all texts, the Bible alone carries all the hopes of humanity within its pages. But this hope is not founded on uncertainty or wishful thinking, senses that are often associated with the English word hope. Rather, what the Greek noun *elpis* emphasizes in the New Testament is a hope that is both steadfast and certain. As PHILLIPS' simple paraphrase of Hebrews chapter 11 verse 1 paradoxically asserts, 'being certain of things we cannot see'.<sup>1</sup> Doubt never comes into the equation, because certainty in the life to come is guaranteed for the believer, by the love of God in Christ, Rom. 5. 1-5. MOULTON suggests that one definition of the word hope as used in the New Testament is 'the joyful expectation of good things to come'.<sup>2</sup>

Our survey of the Greek word *elpis* will help us to see this more clearly, thus providing us with the assurance that hope brings for the future.

We start with the use of the noun *elpis* in the Septuagint (LXX) where it is mainly translated by the Hebrew noun *tiqwah*. This Hebrew noun generally expresses human aspiration. For example, in Ruth chapter 1 verse 12, Naomi hopes for the possibility of a fresh start in life even though she knows that the reality is far different. The psalmist in Psalm 9 verse 18 maintains that the poor always (intuitively) hope for better things. In essence, where there is life there is hope, Eccles. 9. 4, but, sadly, it is no more than wishful thinking!<sup>3</sup> *Per contra*, when the word is used in relationship to God, as in Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11 and Zechariah chapter 9 verse 12, what is in view is the guarantee by God of deliverance and future blessing for His people.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the hope of God's people is always certain and sure because it is not based on some woolly desire, but wholly reliant on God's immutable character and promises. Those who place their trust in God can quietly wait upon Him to fulfil His word, Isa. 25. 9; 30. 15.

During the classical Greek period the word hope simply brought comfort in momentary distress, a transient feeling of relief that was always tempered with uncertainty. Hence, Stoicism viewed hope as no more than a subjective projection of the future without any tangible effect on the present. Their experience was paralleled by the Ephesians before their conversion to Christ in that they were without God and without hope in the world, Eph. 2. 12. But when the Ephesians were converted, they were born again into a living hope that was guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, 1 Pet. 1. 3.

The literature of the late Second Temple period of Judaism acts as a literary nexus between the Old and New Testaments, and while not inspired, reveals how the eschatological hope in God was sustained for a conquered nation for almost four hundred years of divine silence. When we then move into the New Testament, it should not surprise us to find that hope is again linked to an eschatological framework.

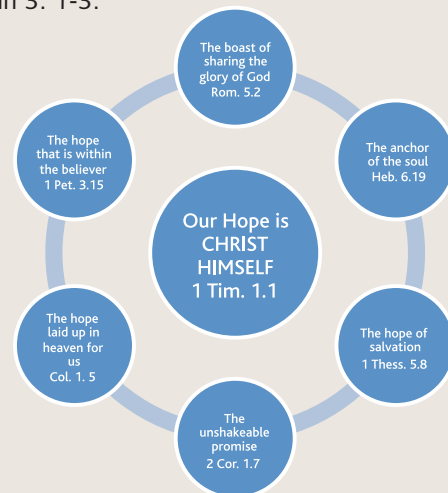
By  
**BRIAN CLATWORTHY**  
Newton Abbot,  
England

Of the 53 occurrences of *elpis* in the New Testament, Paul uses the word 37 times, mainly in Romans where it occurs 13 times. It is very much, therefore, a Pauline word, and an indispensable part of his vocabulary. It is included in the triad of great qualities listed in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 13. Whilst it is linked with faith and love, it is a temporal quality that will be discontinued in the next age, cf, Rom. 8. 24; 2 Cor. 5. 7. Often in the New Testament 'hope' is almost indistinguishable from 'faith', hence Paul's comments in Romans chapter 4 verse 18 in relationship to Abraham. As SCHREINER points out, 'To say that Abraham "believed in hope" means that he trusted that God would actualize in the future the promise vouchsafed to him'.<sup>5</sup>

For Paul, hope of eternal salvation is fixed in the person and work of Christ, Eph. 1. 12, and this thought colours his usage of *elpis*. It is his principal word when he thinks of the hope that resurrection brings to those who have died, Acts 23. 6. What a contrast with the pagan who had no hope, 1 Thess. 4. 13. Hope is set before us as a motivator, Heb. 6. 18, enabling us to persevere and endure the rigours of this life in the certain knowledge of one day inheriting eternal life, Rom. 5. 3-5; 1 Thess. 1. 3; Tit. 1. 2.

The diagram below shows some of the more general uses of the word. Notice how Christ Himself is our hope. He alone is the nucleus around which every aspiration circulates.

In 1872, JOHN DARBY wrote, perhaps his finest hymn, which he simply entitled 'The Hope of Day'. In the first line of the first stanza he exclaims 'And is it so, I shall be like Thy Son'. What a sanctifying hope this becomes as we daily look for the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Tit. 2. 13; 1 John 3. 1-3.



### For further reading/study

#### Introductory

RYKEN LELAND, WILHOIT AND LONGMAN, Dictionary of Biblical Imagery.

#### Advanced

MOULTON, JAMES HOPE and MILLIGAN GEORGE, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament.

#### Reference

- 1 New Testament in Modern English.
- 2 The Challenge of the Concordance, p.240.
- 3 Paul brings the death knell to this false reasoning in relationship to Christ in his argument on bodily resurrection in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 19.
- 4 The Hebrew of Zechariah chapter 9 verse 12 is difficult to translate. The text could be paraphrased as 'The expectant prisoners shall return'.
- 5 Romans, p 237.



## RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN'S WORK WEB SITES

Those who are engaged in Sunday School or Children's work will be aware of the difficulties of retaining the interest of the children in their care. Providing Bible-based activities that will emphasize the word of God, engage the interest, and develop the child's understanding of basic truth is an increasingly difficult task. It is for this reason that the following web sites might offer some resources to those who desire to provide a diversity of activity while at the same time maintaining a consistency of teaching.

<http://www.gospelhall.org/downloads/gary-sharps-sunday-school-lessons-book.html>

<http://www.gospelhall.org/downloads/sunday-school-worksheets.html>

This web site is included twice (two separate links) as it offers both lessons and worksheets. Those involved in children's work will appreciate the need for planning. This applies to the overall curriculum, to ensure a planned coverage of scripture, as well as the individual lesson for the time. Looking through the vast range of material (325 lessons from the second link) there is ample: crosswords, word-finds, colouring tasks, as well as 'fill-in-the-blank' story reviews. All of these can be downloaded in Adobe pdf format.



If this does not supply what you want then there are five different Bible worksheet puzzle maker items of software that can also be downloaded to enable you to build your own.

What both links also provide is a sequenced curriculum taking you through the major Bible stories from Genesis and Creation through to the River of Life in Revelation. Clearly, coming from an assembly web site the user can have confidence in the orthodoxy of the material overall.

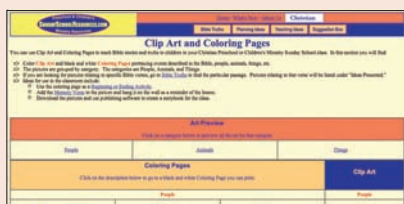
<http://www.millarsoft.co.uk/>

Another assembly-based web site with some resources that might prove useful. While the range is fairly limited the artists involved may be recognised for their drawings if not their names!



<http://www.sundayschoolresources.com/clipartcoloringpages.htm>

As the page link suggests, this site provides some simple graphics that could be used to develop memory verse cards or colouring tasks for the younger child. These are always heavily used and such a range of material is always welcome.



<http://www.kidsundayschool.com/Main/Resources/printableresources.php>

Although not all the material on this site will suit readers of this magazine it does contain some worthwhile ideas. The Bible Detective activity is designed to encourage children to search and read the scriptures for themselves. There is also a further range of texts to colour and ideas on rewards that can be made to encourage the children.



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# Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

## Bits & Bobs

### Suicide clinic Dignitas under investigation

The controversial suicide clinic Dignitas is under investigation by the Swiss authorities over claims that it provided drugs to a patient to allow him to end his life, despite his distressed mental condition. Swiss laws on assisted suicide state that each patient must be of sound mind and able to understand the consequences of their actions. But details have now emerged that a DIY suicide kit prescribed by a Zurich gynaecologist was given to a 39-year-old Spanish man in spite of the fact that he suffered from paranoid schizophrenia.



The authorities described the incident as a 'serious neglect of care' and warned that the doctor should have investigated more carefully.

Dignitas has long campaigned for further liberalisation of the law claiming that anyone should be able to seek assistance in ending their life, irrespective of whether or not they are terminally ill. Dignitas, which was founded in 1998, has been the subject of fierce criticism since its inception.

Soraya Wernli, a nurse employed by Dignitas for two-and-a-half years, until March 2005, accused the organisation of being a 'production line of death concerned only with profits'. She resigned from her job at the clinic and contacted the Swiss police.

In April 2010, police divers found a group of over 60 cremation urns in Lake Zurich. Each of the urns bore the logo of the Nordheim crematorium used by Dignitas. Ms. Wernli told *The Times* eighteen months before the incident that the clinic had dropped at least 300 urns in the lake. In March 2010, Ludwig Minelli admitted in an interview with *The Atlantic*, a US magazine, that when he had enough urns to fill his car he drove to a quiet spot on Lake Zurich and tossed them into the water!

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1282912/Dignitas-probed-patient-suffering-paranoid-schizophrenia-given-suicide-kit.html>

### Glasgow City Council Spending is 'absurd'

A Scottish council is set to shower thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money on a controversial homosexual arts festival despite facing large budget cuts, according to the Scottish Daily Mail. Glasgow City Council is facing cuts of nearly £200 million, and has begun a cost cutting exercise which is expected to see 2,800 workers leave their jobs over the next year. But the council is still planning to spend £25,000 on the highly contentious Glasgay! festival, a decision which has been branded as 'absurd' by critics.



httpSource: [://www.christian.org.uk/news/cash-strapped-scots-council-is-still-funding-gay-festival/?e130810](http://www.christian.org.uk/news/cash-strapped-scots-council-is-still-funding-gay-festival/?e130810)

### Ed Miliband would scrap free speech safeguard

Free speech laws that allow people to express their opinions about homosexual conduct should be scrapped, Labour leadership hopeful Ed Miliband says. Incredibly, he claims that the law – which has been backed by Parliament on four occasions – makes it harder to convict murderers. His extraordinary comments appear in an opinion article he wrote for a homosexual website.

Source: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/ed-miliband-would-scrap-free-speech-safeguard/>

### Stamps to commemorate 400th year of KJV

The Royal Mail is planning to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible with a series of special stamps. The commemorative stamps, which are due to be produced next year, have been prompted by numerous requests from members of the general public.



The move has been welcomed by Mervyn Storey, MLA for North Antrim constituency in N. Ireland, who was one of those who petitioned. Mr Storey said, 'The Authorized, or King James Version of the Bible, is the most influential piece of literature in the English language. However, the King James Version didn't just influence our literature and language, it also had a beneficial influence upon political and constitutional affairs'. He added, 'Some time ago I wrote to the Royal Mail requesting that along with what others are doing the Royal Mail should mark this important anniversary with special commemorative stamps'.

Source: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/royal-mail-to-celebrate-king-james-bibles-anniversary/>

### Is the 'God particle' singular or plural?

Finding the Higgs boson is the primary aim of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) experiment in Geneva, but new results from a rival study taking place in the USA suggest there may be five versions of the elusive subatomic particle, which has never been detected despite five decades of research.

Leon Lederman, the Nobel laureate, dubbed the theoretical boson 'the God particle' because its discovery could unify understanding of the content of the universe and help humans 'know the mind of God'.

It is crucial to the accepted Standard Model of the cosmos which explains how subatomic particles are bound together by three of the four fundamental forces of nature - weak nuclear force, strong nuclear force and electromagnetism. The Higgs boson is thought to mediate the force through which all the other particles acquire mass. But scientists overseeing the DZero experiment at the Tevatron particle accelerator in Illinois said the suggestion that five different particles could be responsible for this transaction may point to new laws of physics beyond the Standard Model.

Researchers at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory outside Chicago observed that collisions of protons and anti-protons produced pairs of matter particles one per cent more often than they yielded anti-matter particles. This 'asymmetry' of matter and anti-matter is beyond what could be explained by the Standard Model and could be accounted for by the existence of five Higgs bosons with similar masses but different electric charges', the researchers said. Three would have a neutral charge and one each would have a negative and positive electric charge. This is known as the two-Higgs doublet model. Dr. Adam Martin said, 'In models with an extra Higgs doublet, it's easy to have large new physics effects like this DZero result.'

'What's difficult is to have those large effects without damaging anything else that we have already measured.'

The Standard Model fits just about every test we've thrown at it. To fit in a new effect in one particular place is not easy'.

Evidence for the Higgs boson in one or many forms could be uncovered by the LHC, the world's most powerful "atom smasher" which is buried 100 metres under the French-Swiss border.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/large-hadron-collider/7829090/The-God-particle-may-exist-in-five-forms-Large-Hadron-Colliders-rival-project-finds.html>

*Chairman and General Editor:*

**ROY HILL**

The Glebe House, Stanton Drew,  
Bristol BS39 4EH, UK

*Treasurer:*

**HOWARD COLES**

Pitcot Farm, Pitcot Lane, Stratton-on-the-Fosse,  
Radstock BA3 4SX, UK

*Secretary:*

**JOHN SCARSBROOK**

34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh,  
Sheffield S21 1HW, UK

*Magazine Section Editors:*

**Ministry – JOHN BENNETT**

19 Alfreton Road, Pinxton, Nottingham NG16 6JZ

**Reports and News – SANDY JACK**

62 Kings Avenue, Eastbourne BN21 2PD

**Histories, Services – IAN GRANT**

2 Corse Wynd, Kingswell, Aberdeen AB15 8TP

**YPS – STEPHEN BAKER**

25 General Drive, West Derby, Liverpool L12 4ZB

*Other Trust Members:*

**Brian Clatworthy – David Coles**

**Richard Collings – Ian Rees – Ken Totton**

All committee members can be contacted at  
[info@preciousseed.org](mailto:info@preciousseed.org)

FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

Mount Hermon is Israel's most majestic mountain. Situated in the north of the kingdom it dominates the landscape and can be seen from many miles away. At a height of 9232ft (2814m) it is snow-capped virtually all the year round. The first Bible mention of Hermon is in Deut. 3. 8-9, where the mountain was called 'Sirion' by the Sidonians, and 'Shenir' by the Amorites. Hermon means 'sanctuary' and from early times it appeared to be a place to declare the greatness of God, 'Hermon shall rejoice in thy name', Ps. 89. 12. It is commonly believed that Mount Hermon was the mountain where the Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured. According to Matthew chapter 17 verse 1, the Lord Jesus with his disciples ascended a high mountain and was transfigured before them, 'His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light', Matt. 17. 2. The experience was frightening but most memorable to the disciples. Peter testifies in his second epistle that on this holy mount, they were 'eye witnesses of his majesty', 2 Pet. 1. 16 followed by this statement, 'For he received from God



the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him on the holy mount', 2 Pet. 1. 17-18. What a privilege it must have been to hear that voice from heaven. What a privilege is ours, to hear that same voice from heaven, as God desires to speak to us every day!

# Question Time

CONDUCTED BY RICHARD COLLINGS

## QUESTION

**Can past sins prevent current service for the Lord?**

## ANSWER

Years ago I worked with a colleague who had the annoying habit of not supplying a direct answer to a direct question. Stephen's responses were invariably prefixed with the phrase 'it all depends', a trait that often resulted in the simplest of queries taking on a complexity not intended by the unwitting enquirer. Without wishing to emulate this tiresome trait, the above question leaves me no alternative but to commence my answer with the words 'it all depends'.

That we have all sinned since our conversion is beyond dispute, yet this doesn't preclude us serving the Lord - if it did then no one would be able to serve Him. Therefore, it all depends on the nature of the past sins as to whether specific areas of service are not possible. Furthermore, whilst some sins will prevent us engaging in certain aspects of Christian service they will not exclude us from all facets of the Lord's work. For that reason, it also depends on the nature of the service as to whether a person would be barred from such work.

One past sin was sufficient to prevent Moses from leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land, cf Num. 20. 11-12. When Paul sets out the qualities required in overseers he states that they 'must be blameless' 1 Tim. 3. 2. To be blameless indicates that there is nothing in the overseer's life, past or present, that would give anyone just cause to point a condemnatory finger. This means that the wicked person who was excommunicated in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and who was subsequently restored would never be able to serve as an elder in Corinth, or anywhere else.

Without attempting to enumerate every possible nuance of evil we may summarize by stating that, as a principle, brethren with criminal records will not be able to serve as elders. People on a sex offender's register, or its equivalent, would not be able to serve the Lord in children's work. However, to balance these things out we mustn't lose sight of the fact that God is patient and forgiving. He ever seeks the restoration of His people, albeit such restoration is possible only on the basis of genuine repentance.

Prior to seeking to engage in any form of spiritual service the primary need for believers is to ensure that they have a right relationship with the Lord, for only thereby are they suitable for His work. This would necessitate the confession and forsaking of former sins for as the proverb states, 'He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy', Prov. 28. 13 NKJV.

In his final letter Paul writes extensively concerning the features that must mark those who are God's workmen and he exhorts Timothy to 'be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed', 2 Tim. 2. 15 NKJV. The apostle is urging Timothy to make every effort to present himself approved unto God. To gain that divine approval he would need to discipline himself so that he would consistently manifest to God those qualities that satisfy His requirements for service.

Later in that section, Paul states, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master', 2 Tim. 2 19-21 NKJV. In His sovereignty God can employ anyone or anything, but if we desire to be suitable for His service we need to ensure we are living sanctified lives. The hymn rightly states, 'Emptied that Thou shouldst fill me, a clean vessel in Thy hand'.

We must also be alert to the wiles of the devil, for he will seek to do anything to prevent the rise of those who would serve the Lord. One strategy he uses is to rob saints of the blessedness of forgiveness, by perpetually reminding them of past failings. How many believers have confessed, repented of, and forsaken things that had taken place in yesteryear but allowed those failings to hang over them. Feelings of guilt, stirred up by the 'accuser of our brethren', Rev. 12. 10, cause these saints to think they are not eligible to engage in service for Christ when, in many instances, they could, and should, be serving Him.

Peter is an excellent example of someone who sinned and yet was subsequently restored and mightily used by God. The Lord said to him, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren', Luke 22. 31-32 NKJV.

Within the constraints of this answer, it is not possible to think of every permutation of sin and query whether such would, or would not, debar someone from ongoing service for the Lord. Where anyone has concerns about their former behaviour they should seek the counsel of spiritually mature leaders. These brethren would need to examine each individual case and, based on the direct or general teaching of the scriptures, come to a decision about that person's suitability for service.

