

A MAGAZINE TO ENCOURAGE THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES,
THE PRACTICE OF NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH PRINCIPLES
AND INTEREST IN GOSPEL WORK

Precious SEED

INTERNATIONAL



'And every man that
striveth for the mastery
is temperate in all things.
Now they do it to obtain a
corruptible crown; but we
an incorruptible',
1 Corinthians 9. 25.

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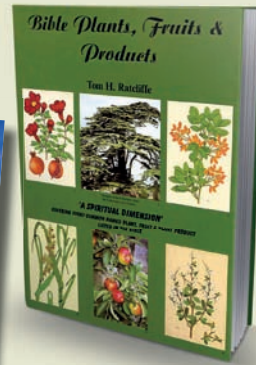
faith matters 1 and 2

Please note that Issue 1 of this pamphlet is no longer available. We eventually printed 45,000 copies and these have all been sold and, hopefully, distributed!

Issue 2 will be available in September with a testimony by Michael Browne and articles by Andrew Barnes, Andrew Dutton and Ian Jackson. By request, the typesize used for this second issue is 20% larger than that used in Issue 1.

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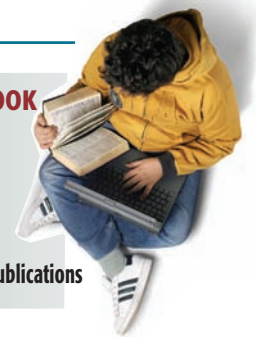
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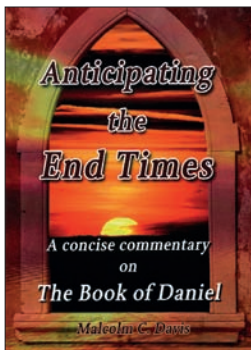
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Book Reviews

By JOHN BENNETT and JOHN SCARBROOK

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Anticipating The End Times: A Concise Commentary on the Book of Daniel

Malcolm C. Davis

Paperback, 144pp, Published by John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, KA3 1RH, Scotland. Price £6.99. ISBN 978-1-907731-02-0.

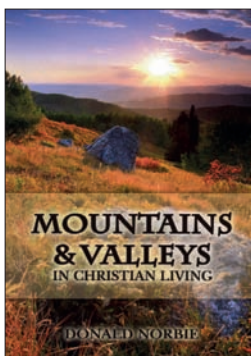
Given the number of works already available on the prophecy of Daniel, some may question whether another book is needed. Those who read this commentary will readily appreciate that it fills a place in the market by providing a concise summary of Daniel, giving an overview of the book, covering the main points of its interpretation, and, where certainty of interpretation is not possible, summarizing the main alternative views, for example when dealing with the 'king of fierce countenance' in chapter 8.

The book is written from a clear pre-millennial stance: the principle which the author has followed is 'to interpret literally wherever possible'. Obviously symbolical passages have been treated as referring to actual people and events, rather than to vague abstract ideas. He understands that this prophecy covers the beginning, course, and ending of that period known as the 'times of the Gentiles', and that it confirms the sovereignty of God over the affairs of mankind.

What is also stressed throughout is that prophecy is not given in order to satisfy our curiosity, but should have an impact on the way we live. Throughout this work there is, therefore, a repeated challenge to let its message affect behaviour, not least in imitating the character of Daniel himself. Chapter 13, 'Daniel's spiritual legacy for believers today', is therefore just as important as the preceding twelve chapters.

All those factors necessary for an understanding of this prophecy are noted: for example, those passages written in Hebrew and in Aramaic; the comparison and contrast between Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 and the vision of the beasts in chapter 7; and the significance of the Seventy Weeks. Above all, this book is a balanced work which will enable the reader to gain a perspective on this vital prophecy, and to be encouraged by the fact that 'the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men'.

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



Mountains & Valleys in Christian Living

Donald Norbie

Paperback, 90pp. Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. W., Port Colborne, ON L3K 6A6, Canada. Price: £7.50. ISBN 9-781897-117941.

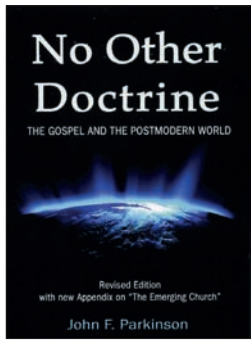
Mountains & Valleys in Christian Living is a delightful, easy reading and encouraging volume which contains a number of devotional and challenging meditations from the pen of DONALD NORBIE. As suggested within the preface, although there is no common theme to these meditations they are set forth to encourage the reader to put the Lord first in their lives and stimulate them to love and good works, Heb. 10. 24.

The seventeen meditations in all cover a variety of themes such as: The Security of the Believer (To cut the Covenant); Spiritual Growth (The truth about the Spirit and the washing of regeneration); Christian Acceptance (must we always agree?); A Pattern Life (mimics, Joseph, a pattern of faith and love); and Fruitful in Old Age (fear or faith, the sunset years) to name just a few. Each meditation is short and easily read within a few minutes whilst being interspersed with some of NORBIE's own poetry.

I found this book to be an enjoyable companion to pick up and read at opportune moments. Many of the meditations contain a precious jewel of practical truth which NORBIE is able to present with clarity and challenge. Although not every meditation will be relevant to every believer who reads this book (for example those on old age), there is much in the book which is. I did not personally find the poetry to be so helpful, much of it having a theme of awe and wonder about creation rather than Christ.

Much of what NORBIE writes is based upon a wealth of practical experience in Christian living and is, as a result, worthy of note and consideration. There is much too to draw the attention to the Lord Jesus and challenge us with regard to practical Christian living in Him. This book is recommended, but perhaps more appropriate for an older audience.

[Our thanks to Dan Rudge, Bracknell, UK, for this review]



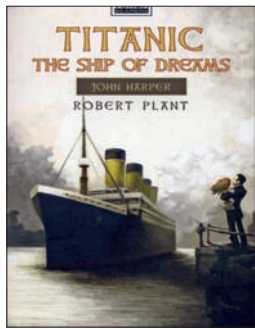
No Other Doctrine – The Gospel and the Modern World John F. Parkinson
Paperback, 198 pp, Published John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, KA3 1RH, Scotland.
Price £7.99. ISBN 978-1-904064-29-9.

This book has arisen from its author's firm conviction that the message of the gospel is as relevant and as necessary for the people of our day as it was for those of the first century. It has been written with the express purpose of helping, at an introductory level, college and university students who will almost certainly come up against the influences of postmodernism in the course of their studies and to make an older generation aware of current thinking. It will also be suitable as a means of explaining the relevance of the gospel to the non-Christian.

In the first three chapters JOHN PARKINSON takes his reader carefully through the content of the gospel, and examines the reaction both of Jews and of Gentiles of the first century. He stresses the similarities between the polytheism, the philosophies, and the occult practices of Paul's day, and the postmodernism and New Age mysticism of today. As the author takes us on from the modernism that sprang from the eighteenth century Enlightenment through to the relativism of our own day, he demonstrates the universal and enduring relevance of the gospel to fallen man. In so doing he is able not only to inform, but also to encourage believers to witness, confident in the knowledge that only the gospel can meet the deepest needs of the men and women of today.

The new edition of this valuable work, now offered with an appendix on postmodernism, is not for those believers who may wish to bury their heads in the sand. The author reminds us that, 'it is also vital to understand that our young people are being educated in the language, premises, and terminology of postmodern philosophy. Ought we not, as parents, to be interested in what our families may be imbibing at school and university?' This book will amply reward careful reading and reflection on its contents. Chapter 5, 'The Question of Origins', is pivotal. The Glossary of Terms is very helpful, and the Bibliography will encourage further study. This is a very valuable resource.

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



Titanic. The Ship of Dreams Robert Plant
Paperback, 176pp. Published by Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Fearn, Tain, Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Scotland. Price: £5.99. ISBN 978-1845506-41-4.

As 2012 is the 100th anniversary of the Titanic tragedy, this book, which is a story of aspects of that fateful maiden voyage, is of interest. Based upon historical research, it weaves an account which is a mixture of fact and fiction that charts the last few days and the testimony of a passenger who died, John Harper. The book commences with Harper and his daughter, Nana, making their way by train to Southampton dock as John seeks to make a trip to America to preach at the Moody Church in Chicago. There are cameos of the different people they meet both in the train as well as boarding and sailing in the ship. One particularly noticeable feature of the book is

the clear testimony to the gospel. It is evident in the child's simple faith and in her father's clear message to those he meets. In that sense it would be an excellent gift to any who are, as yet, not saved. However, it is also a gripping story! Switching from the child's view to the adult's view, it conveys the wonder and excitement of the child as well as the testimony of the father.

It is in the closing hours of the Titanic's voyage that the book shines. In the care and concern of the father for his child we find a testimony to the love of God, and the peace that He brings. Without dwelling upon the gruesome the book conveys the horror of the Titanic's sinking and the shock and bewilderment of those saved. Yet, in the midst of tragedy, God is at work in salvation. Although probably for those with a teenage reading age, this is, nevertheless, an excellent book that is highly recommended.



S.O.S. Titanic Jill Silverthorne
Paperback, 126pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ, UK. Price: £5.00. ISBN 978-1-84625-308-9.

This is another book written with the 100th anniversary of the Titanic tragedy as its background. Based upon historical research, it also weaves an account, which this time is largely fictional, that charts the days of this fateful voyage. The story centres around Chrissie and Luke Barwell, the children of Philip and Ella Barwell. With his business faltering and his wife dead, the father is forced to seek the help of his wife's sister, Alice, to provide for the children. Alice, who has secured a fortune from her former employer, comes to England to take the children to America for what is proposed to be a year's visit – they are to sail to America on the maiden voyage of the Titanic. JILL SILVERTHORNE provides a carefully crafted story which develops slowly but builds to a crescendo as the ship eventually founders. Clearly, given the background, there is much of

the ship and its magnificence. However, there are also other themes running through the story. Who is the mysterious Simkins? What is his link with Aunt Alice? What is the role of the fatherly Mr Nash? What is the importance of the pocket watch that Chrissie is given by her father?

This is a delightful book which would be an excellent Sunday School prize/gift. Whilst the story deals with real issues that affect the lives of children, it does so with gentleness and yet a clear statement of faith. It shows how faith can be found and seen in the most tragic of circumstances and how 'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform'.

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‘The fruit of the Spirit is love’, Gal. 5. 22.

Evidence of spiritual life is paramount in any new Christian but you expect to see spiritual progress and development in every believer. None of us can be complacent.

One of the most fundamental aspects of a changed life at conversion is given in our text, ‘love’. In the world it is a quality that is often talked about but not often seen. The Lord said, ‘By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another’, John 13. 35. Part of our testimony to the world should be the love that we display toward one another. Equally, it might be argued that many other fruits of the Spirit flow out from this first grace. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, ‘Love suffers long’, 1 Cor. 13. 4 NKJV.

Love is a very practical thing. Picking out just a few of the fruits of the Spirit we can see how practical it is. To demonstrate longsuffering when under prolonged attack necessitates great love and patience towards the brother or sister who attacks you. To show gentleness and self-control when under extreme provocation is, perhaps, a stronger clue to the spiritual character of the provoked than any so-called ‘stand for the truth’. The issue is not whether we should ‘stand for the truth’ but how we ‘stand for the truth’. If we do not demonstrate all the truth of God in our manner of life, and in our handling of the word of God, then any appeal we make for its maintenance is little more than empty rhetoric.

Sadly, I fear it might be worse than that. ‘But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another’, Gal. 5. 15. It is difficult to imagine such activity, which mirrors that of the adversary, 1 Pet. 5. 8; Rev. 12. 4, among fellow believers and yet the Corinthian and Galatian Epistles provide ample evidence. Yes, the truth of God must be defended but even after addressing such a fundamental doctrine as the truth of the resurrection, which was denied by some in Corinth, the apostle addresses them thus, ‘*my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast*’, 1 Cor. 15. 58 [emphasis mine]. If we do not wish to contribute to the decline of Christian testimony then in our stand for the truth of God we all need to manifest this fundamental fruit of the Spirit – ‘love’!

The original aim of this magazine was to ‘encourage the study of the scriptures, the practice of New Testament Church principles, and interest in gospel work’. As we continue with that endeavour it is good to see writers prepared to support the work, providing expository, practical, heart-warming, and challenging ministry. May the Lord be pleased to use the magazine to the blessing of His people and for the furtherance of His work and to His glory!

JOHN BENNETT
Ministry Articles Editor

THE TWO BEASTS

Before noticing the rise, activity, and ultimate destruction of the two beasts described in Revelation chapter 13, it is important to familiarize ourselves with the circumstances in which they appear on the world stage at the end time.

In the first place, it should be noted that they are the channels through which Satan, described as 'the dragon',¹ will implement his hatred against God's people. In short, Revelation chapter 12 concludes with Satan's persecution of Israel (the 'great tribulation'), and Revelation chapter 13 reveals how this will be accomplished.

In the second place, 'the dragon' and the two beasts represent a fearful trinity of evil. One example of the harmonious operation of this 'trinity' is found in Revelation chapter 16 verse 13, 'And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet'. In this connection, it should be noted that the second beast described in Revelation chapter 13 is called 'the false prophet'.² The 'satanic trinity' will counterfeit the divine 'Trinity'. 'The dragon' will answer to the Father in giving 'the beast' his 'power and his seat and great authority', Rev. 13. 2. 'The beast' will answer to the Son: he will accomplish the purpose of 'the dragon'. It will be through him that 'the dragon' achieves his objectives. Both 'the dragon' and 'the beast' will be worshipped, Rev. 13. 4. The 'false prophet' (the second 'beast' of the chapter) will answer to the Holy Spirit; it will be through his power, and under his direction, that 'the beast' and his image will be worshipped, Rev. 13. 12, 15. Significantly, the 'false prophet' will not be worshipped.

1) The first beast

His emergence and power are described in Revelation chapter 13 verses 1-10. The following should be noted:

His identity

The fact that John saw the 'beast'

rise up out of the sea', v. 1, strongly suggests that he will be a Gentile.³ The word 'beast' (meaning 'wild animal') is used, not because he will look like one, but because he will act like one in having a ferocious and devouring nature.

His description

He is depicted as having 'seven heads and ten horns', v. 1. His dark master, the 'great red dragon', is described in the same way, Rev. 12. 3. The details are explained in Revelation chapter 17 verses 9-13, from which

By
**JOHN
RIDDLE**
Cheshunt,
England

it is clear that the 'seven heads' represent a succession of kings, and the 'ten horns' represent contemporary kings. The 'seven heads' represent, in the first six cases, 'historical kingdoms (represented by kings)

who have been agents of Satan in waging bitter war against Israel, the people of God', J. ALLEN, and, in the seventh case, the beast himself who will both consummate and exceed the wickedness and blasphemy of his predecessors. The 'beast' will evidently be assassinated but raised by satanic power, v. 3, to become the 'eighth', Rev. 17. 11. That is, while he commences his career a human ruler, he will become a superhuman ruler. The words, 'which had the wound by a sword, and did live', v. 14, mark the transition from human to superhuman.

The 'ten horns' indicate that 'the beast' will rule over a ten-part world-wide kingdom. The 'beast' has the features of 'a leopard . . . a bear . . . a lion', features of Greece, Medo-Persia, and Babylon, Dan. 7. 4-6, suggesting that he will have the genius and power of past world empires.

His kingdom

This is evidently global, 'and **all** the world wondered after the beast . . . and power was given him over **all** kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And **all** that dwell upon the earth shall worship him', vv. 3, 7, 8. With the exception of 'the elect',⁴ the entire world will be given to the worship of Satan, v. 4, and to emperor-worship, vv. 4, 8. It is worth saying that it is better to think of the 'ten kings' represented by the 'ten horns', Rev.



17. 12, as signifying a ten-part global kingdom rather than a ten-part United States of Europe or Revived Roman Empire. The anticipated 'United States of Europe' will evidently be one of the members of the world kingdom of 'the beast'. Hence the expression, 'the kings of the earth and of the whole world', Rev. 16. 14, and the description of the united opposition to 'the Lord, and . . . his anointed' at the end-time, 'the kings of the earth set themselves . . . against the Lord, and against his anointed', Ps. 2. 2. John saw 'the beast, and the kings of the earth . . . gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse', Rev. 19. 19.

His career

He will be guilty of the greatest blasphemy in human history, vv. 5-6, and of the most intense and merciless opposition ever experienced by God's people, v. 7. His blasphemy is further described by Paul who calls 'that man of sin . . . the son of perdition', and continues, 'who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God', 2 Thess. 2. 3-4. His ability to act in this way is only by divine permission, and only for 'forty and two months', v. 5. That is, from 'the midst of the week' (the final seven years of the 'seventy weeks' prophecy, Dan. 9. 24-27), to its end: for three and a half years.

2) The second beast

The emergence and power of the second beast, or 'false prophet', are described in Revelation chapter 13 verses 11-18. The following should be noted:

His identity

The fact that John saw him 'coming up out of the earth', v. 11, strongly suggests that he will be of Jewish origin. Like 'the beast', he is satanically inspired, 'he spake as a dragon', v. 11. Like 'the beast', he has world-wide power, v. 12. His very title also suggests Jewish origin. The fact that he places the image of the beast in the rebuilt temple at Jerusalem, vv. 14-15, suggests that he will be the final Jewish ruler, but, bearing in mind that he

commands obedience to 'the beast', and enforces worship of 'the beast', it is apparent that he does not claim messiahship for himself. His whole objective is to glorify 'the beast', elsewhere called the 'man of sin'.

The false prophet is 'the king' of Daniel chapter 11 verses 36-39, who will 'neither . . . regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all'. The passage continues: 'But in his estate ('in his place' RV) shall he honour the god of forces; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour . . . thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory'. The 'king', alias 'the false prophet', will honour 'the god of forces', or 'god of fortresses' RV, perhaps 'god of munitions'. There can be no doubt that the 'god of fortresses' is 'the beast', of whom it is said, 'Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?' Rev. 13. 4. This may suggest that the beast will be a military man, whose superhuman cunning, driving force, and demonic influence will make him invincible - but only for a short time.

His career

His sole object is to engage the minds and hearts of men and women with 'the beast', and to that end 'he doeth great wonders . . . and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying . . . that they should make an image to the beast', vv. 13-14. The Lord Jesus referred to the 'image of the beast', calling it 'the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet', Matt. 24. 15. It will stand in the very place where, as already noted, the beast himself will make his impious and blasphemous claims, 2 Thess. 2. 4.⁵

The 'times of the Gentiles', Luke 21. 24, commenced with an image in 'the plain of Dura', Dan. 3. 1, and will end with the most sophisticated image the world has ever seen. It is tempting to believe that the image of gold erected in Babylonia was the image of a man, and that it was an image of Nebuchadnezzar himself, but this is not actually stated, whereas there is no doubt about the image in the rebuilt temple at Jerusalem. It is significant

that the image will not be erected in St. Peter's at Rome, or in Canterbury Cathedral, or in Mecca or Medina, but in Jerusalem. The reason is clear: the 'beast' will know that God's purposes centre on Jerusalem, and upon Israel, and he will therefore endeavour to frustrate the will of God. To that end, he will put down all religion, 'all that is called God, or that is worshipped'.

His control

The daily lives of men on earth at this time will be controlled by the introduction of a 'mark' applied to either their right hands or to their foreheads, v. 16.⁶ The fact that common transactions of everyday life are increasingly controlled by numbers on plastic cards, with technology already in place to confirm the identity of their owners, is the precursor of such a universal mark. To receive the mark will signify allegiance to the 'beast' and will carry exposure to divine judgement.⁷

But like 'the beast', the 'false prophet' will meet his doom at the return of the 'King of kings, and Lord of lords', Rev. 19. 16. 'And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone', Rev. 19. 20. After the millennium and the final rebellion of Satan, 'the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever', Rev. 20. 10.

Endnotes

- 1 Rev. 12. 3, 9, 13, 17; 13. 2, 4.
- 2 See also Rev. 19. 20; 20. 10.
- 3 cf. Dan. 7. 1-2.
- 4 See, for example, Rev. 14. 1-5.
- 5 The image is called 'the abomination of desolation', or 'the abomination which causeth desolation', JND footnote, because of the resulting tribulation, Matt. 24. 15-21.
- 6 It has been suggested by R. H. MOUNCE that 'the mark is to be interpreted as the name of the Beast inscribed simply as its numerical equivalent', cited by J. ALLEN.
- 7 Rev. 14. 9, 11; 15. 2; 16. 2; 19. 20; 20. 4.

JOHN RIDDLE was born into a Christian family in North London, saved as a boy of 13, and received into fellowship in New Barnet, Hertfordshire, at the age of 15. He travels widely, principally in the British Isles, conducting Bible Readings and ministering the word of God, and contributes to assembly periodicals.



Joash or Jehoash, the eighth king of Judah, reigned for forty years from 835-796 BC according to E. R. THIELE. His mother was Zibiah of Beersheba. His father was Ahaziah, a son of wicked Queen Athaliah and Jehoram of Judah, grandson of Ahab and Jezebel and a bad lot. Three evil reigns preceded Joash and three good reigns followed his. Though he is generally regarded as a good king, he finished badly as did Solomon. Demas is a New Testament example of this. The need to continue faithfully to the end is a salutary lesson for us all, 2 Tim. 4. 10.

JOASH *The Dep*

PART ONE By **JOHN GRIFFITHS** Port Talbot, Wales

Joash's history is recorded in 2 Kings chapters 11 and 12 and 2 Chronicles chapter 22 verse 10 to chapter 24 verse 27.

His life appears to be a three-act drama and in each set we see his dependency on others.

ACT 1: RESCUED and REARED – dependent on the instincts of Jehosheba the princess.

(i) The Messianic Viewpoint

Following the murder of her son Ahaziah at the hands of Jehu of Israel, Athaliah set about exterminating the royal seed of the house of David, even though this meant brutally disposing of her own grandsons. Jehosheba (or Jehoshabeath), Ahaziah's sister or half-sister, and thus a princess, married to Jehoiada, the high priest, rescued her nephew, the infant Joash, from among the corpses of his brothers. Aunt Jehosheba hid Joash and his nurse in a bedroom in the disused temple precincts.

Athaliah was the devil's instrument to seek to destroy the royal line to Christ. But God, in His sovereignty, preserved the line through Joash: 'given of the Lord'. What a time it was! Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, murders his six brothers to strengthen his place on the throne; the Arabians and Philistines attack Jehoram and leave only the youngest son alive; Jehu of Israel slays seventy of Ahab's house e.g., Jezebel, Ahaziah, Jehoram and forty-two 'nephews'; Hazael of Syria was a scourge of Israel and Baal-worship; to compound all this, Athaliah murders the seed royal. A time of murder, mystery and mayhem!

But God is sovereign – 'there shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel', 2 Chr. 7. 18.

Joash is delivered by his aunt and the royal seed is preserved. 'If God be for us who can be against us?' Not even Satan and his agents can thwart the divine purpose! Several of the devil's attacks have been blunted by babies subsequently hidden. Moses – the drowning of the male babies – hidden in the basket and the house. Joash – the slaying of the seed royal – hidden in the temple. Christ – the slaughter of the innocents – hidden in Egypt.

(ii) The Prophetic Viewpoint

Against a background of apostasy and judgement, Joash is a picture of Christ.

(iii) The Homiletic Viewpoint

Three people are linked with Joash in his formative years.

- A godly woman – Jehosheba: 'sworn of the Lord'.

When we consider her pedigree we are filled with amazement that this woman should be so strikingly different to her relatives. What an heroic aunt! The impact of this woman upon the world's history can be seen in her personal intervention, thus preserving the Messianic line. She was God's agent for this emergency. We bless God for spiritual women and godly sisters who have yielded to Christ and been greatly used as a result. She made a good wife for Jehoiada.

- A caring nurse

She played her part in the first act of this drama and nurtured and reared Joash for seven years. She kept the confidence of Joash's whereabouts secret all that time and was his constant companion and carer throughout. Paul speaks to the Thessalonian Christians, 'But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children', 1 Thess. 2. 7.

- A faithful priest – Jehoiada: 'known of the Lord'.

As high priest he was able to make the temple Joash's home. He oversaw the upbringing of the king and would have been his instructor and teacher.

How valuable for a young believer to be surrounded by people like the three in the record: to be preserved, to be nurtured and to be instructed by them. The influence of godly, caring, priestly believers on a young convert is incalculable, especially in the context of the house of God.

ACT 2: REIGNING and REFORMING

– dependent on the instruction of Jehoiada the priest.

Joash	Christ
He is removed from the scene of death.	Christ's resurrection and ascension.
He is hidden in the sanctuary.	In the heavenly sanctuary now, Heb. 9. 24.
Only a few know that he is alive.	In resurrection He revealed Himself only to His own.
There is a period of patient waiting (6 years).	An indeterminate period – 'until he come'.
The restoration of the Davidic dynasty.	Christ 'the root and offspring of David', Rev. 22. 16.
The coronation and public acclamation.	Christ's manifestation in glory and public recognition.
The usurper, Athaliah, punished.	The usurper, Satan, cast into the pit, then the lake of fire.
Idolatry stamped out.	No idolatry in Israel anymore.
'with rejoicing and with singing'; the city was quiet' (at peace).	The millennial reign of Christ; Jerusalem – the city of peace.
A covenant entered into including king, priest and people.	The New Covenant, Jer. 31. 31.

endent King

(i) Joash's Age

'Joash was 7 years of age when he began to reign'.

He was the youngest of three kings of Judah who were enthroned before the age of 10, the others being Josiah and Jehoiachin.

A nation requires strong leadership, especially in days of departure and declension.

'Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child', says Solomon, Eccles. 10. 16, though he qualifies this, 'Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished', 4. 13.

Likewise, each local church requires strong leadership. Experience is a factor in the descriptor 'elder' and this is reinforced by the requirement 'not a novice', literally, 'not one newly planted'. A recent convert is not considered suitable for leadership.

(ii) Joash's Advisor

'And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him', 2 Kgs. 12. 2.

Jehoiada, the high priest and uncle of Joash, was the power behind the throne. He was his mentor, advisor, instructor and father-figure. Paul says, 'For though ye have 10,000

instructors in Christ yet have ye not many fathers', 1 Cor. 4. 15.

The Lord was extremely provident in giving Jehoiada longevity of life in order to support the king. He lived for 130 years – the longest recorded life for a millennium! Praise God, our Great High Priest will never die – He ever liveth to make intercession for us. This ministry of Christ is further developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Jehoiada's epitaph epitomizes his suitability as Joash's advisor, 'He hath done good in Israel, both toward God and toward his house'. How grateful we should be for godly, priestly men of experience who have been our spiritual guides and mentors. 'Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God', Heb. 13. 7.

Jehoiada protected the infant-king, planned his sabbath-day coronation and propped him up, being his personal advisor and even choosing his two wives for him: one of whom was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem, the mother of Amaziah, 2 Kgs. 14. 2. Fewer wives than Solomon and many other kings but still one too many! Jehoiada also cleared the way for Joash's ambition to be fulfilled as he slew the priest of Baal and destroyed the temple of Baal.

The standard for the kings of Judah was David. Yet of Joash it is simply said, 'and did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him'.

Of his son, Amaziah, it is said, 'And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did', 2 Kgs. 14. 3.

This suggests that Joash was not a man after God's own heart, as was David, but a weak king always dependent at every stage of his life on others instead of God. 'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in men', however good these men may be!

Joash never progressed from relying on props – his faith and devotion should have been vested in his God. Can **we** stand on our own two feet in fellowship with God?

(iii) Joash's Aim

'Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord'? 2 Chr. 24. 4.

Having spent his early years in the temple buildings and being under the tutelage of Jehoiada, the high priest, it is a joy to see someone with a real exercise for the house of God. Where are the believers with the spiritual aim and ambition to repair 'the breaches of the house'?

Think of the costliness of the work; think of the cooperation of the workforce; think of the character of the building materials!

Joash needed to bring in the revenue for the house. His first effort required the support of the priests and Levites. It was spectacularly unsuccessful. JOHN HEADING states that the non-cooperation of the priests and Levites stemmed from the compulsory nature of the fundraising as opposed to freewill offerings, and it has to be admitted that the chest at the gate was far more effective. However, I suggest that the priests and Levites were unwilling to take on the extra work – reluctant to take on further responsibilities. 'Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord', Jer. 3. 10. Oh, for wholehearted people like Caleb!

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The Why

Have you heard the one about the minister of a small parish church who claimed he had a congregation of over 10,000? When the headlines first struck in November 2009 many were understandably clutching at their sides with laughter. However, when the chuckling had stopped and the facts were examined, the claims were proven to be true! Luss Parish Church at Loch Lomond, Scotland, with little more than room for 200 parishioners, was broadcasting their sermons on the internet to people from around the world on a weekly basis.

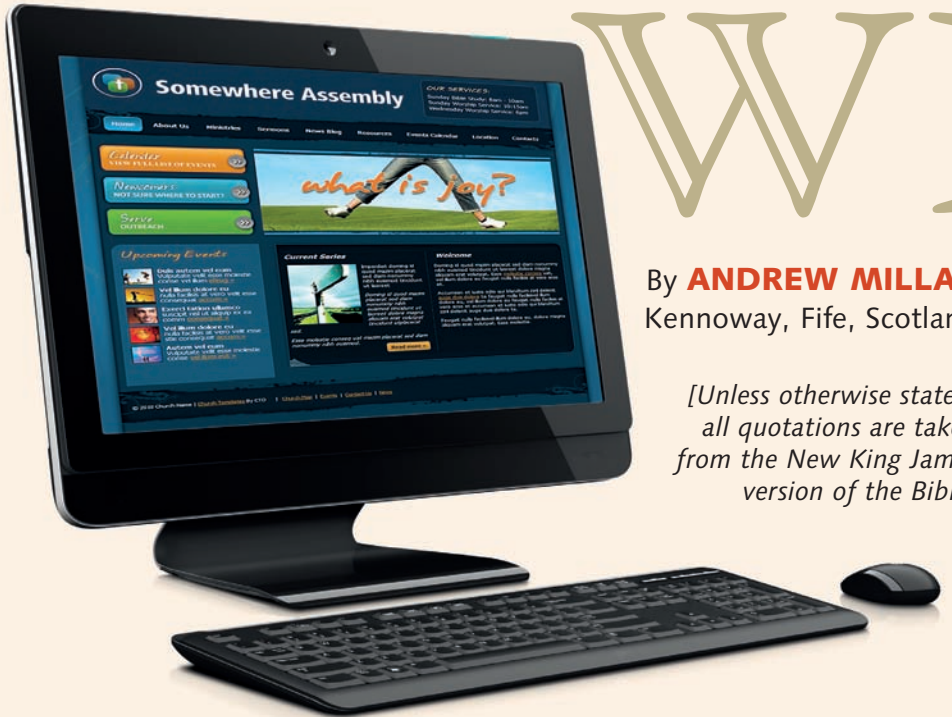
This minister had taken the words of Mark chapter 16 verse 15, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature', quite literally.

Whether we like it or not, our lives have been transformed by technology, and perhaps the most influential is the internet. When radio was introduced, it took 38 years to reach a market audience of 50 million, with television taking 13 years. When the internet was introduced it took a mere 4 years to reach that level. Our senses are being bombarded with information from every angle. A recent statistic suggested a week's worth of content from the New York Times contained more information than a person was likely to come across in a lifetime back in the 18th century.

With this in mind, when you first start to consider creating a website, it can be daunting, if not terrifying. So why on earth would you create your own website when it would seem you would be doing nothing more than being like John the Baptist, 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness'. Will anyone hear you; will anyone bother?

The answer to this is perhaps best summed up by a quote from the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by

CREATING AN ASS WIFE



By **ANDREW MILLAR**
Kennoway, Fife, Scotland

*[Unless otherwise stated,
all quotations are taken
from the New King James
version of the Bible]*

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, 'Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink'. This part of the poem depicts a mariner, lost at sea with provisions running low, desperate for a drink. Yet, although he is surrounded by water, none of it is fit to drink. This idea can be applied to the internet. Whilst there is a lot of information on it, some of it very useful, a lot of it can be described as useless at best and harmful at worst. Like the ancient mariner, desperate for a good drink of clean water, there are a lot of people, both believers and unbelievers, who are desperate for good quality information that quenches their thirst. Do we, as believers, do something about it or do we let that thirst go unquenched?

There is a natural fear amongst Christians about using new technologies. However, unfortunately, this means that as the popularity of the technology in question increases, the quantity of scriptural content is

almost non-existent. By the time we take action, we are battling against a flood, and are often too late. Searching the scriptures for examples of where Christians of the past used technology for the promotion of the gospel can be thought of as a fruitless task, and yet the word of God is full of examples describing how people used what was around them for the furtherance of the gospel.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus has been followed by a huge crowd of people; some are able-bodied, whilst others have disabilities. Jesus chooses this location to deliver one of His greatest sermons, because Christ was using the resources that were round about him to teach the people. The Sea of Galilee is shaped like a bowl and has strong winds that serve as a natural amplifier. A voice spoken downwind is easily carried a fair distance, thus enabling everyone, even a great crowd, to hear what Jesus was saying.





EMBLY WEBSITE (1)

WHY?

The Bibles that we carry and read are another example of how technology has been used to spread the word of God. For centuries we relied on dedicated scribes rewriting the scriptures on new parchment which naturally restricted the supply of complete volumes of scripture. The advent of the printing press meant the supply increased further, allowing more people to acquire a Bible and read it for themselves. The internet is a similar tool that can be used to increase the availability of God's word. When we put up content, we not only have the ability to reach people in our local area, or our own country, but nearly 2 billion people across the face of the earth.

However, it is not only the provision of good quality content that should prompt you to consider creating a website. It is essential to consider where people are getting information about your assembly from. If they walk past the door and their interest is stimulated, for many the first port of call will be the internet, to discover who you are and what you believe. Failure to find any information will result in one of two things happening. One, they will simply give up and move on to something else, or, two, they will try other sources. If you had no association with your assembly, how would you try to get in touch with someone who went there? For many, the only option would be to come along to a meeting, at best a daunting prospect to most who have no idea what it will be like. Equally,

considering the busyness of modern life, how many contacts are we losing by expecting them to be available at the times we designate?

So when you first start to consider building a site, think about why you are creating it. What purpose will it serve? What problem are you setting out to solve? Here are some possibilities to think about.

Sharing Information / Point of Contact

Using a website to get information out into the public domain can be quick and easy. Many assemblies are very active in tracting their local community, but the amount of information you can fit onto a tract is very limited. Also, as described above, if a person does have more questions, the windows of opportunity they have to get answers from us are sometimes limited to a couple of hours on a Sunday and perhaps some nights during the week. One of the ways around this is to include a website address where anyone who wants to know more can go and either get the answer, or submit a question to someone who can answer it.

Poor Image

In the modern day, with church attendance falling to an all-time low, one of the greatest barriers to getting people 'through the door', is the door itself. Our meeting places can vary from the traditional style church that has been around for hundreds of years, to the few rooms located 'down an alley and up a stair'. A website can break that barrier by letting people find out about you without them having to come through that door. Once the fear of the unknown has been removed, people are more likely to enter.

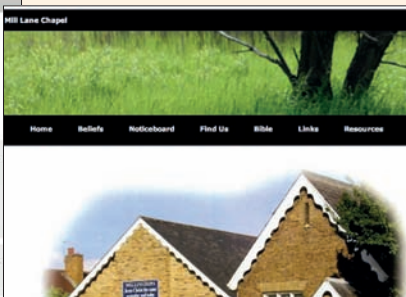
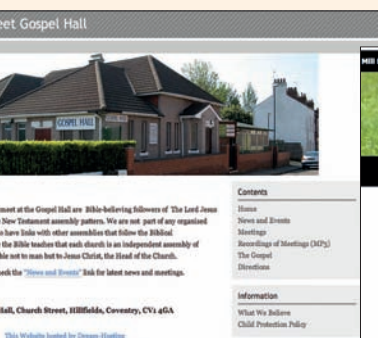
Sharing Sermons

We pour a huge amount of our time and energy into having meetings, with one of the most common being the gospel meeting. One of the popular ways websites are being used of recent times is as a storehouse for recordings of these meetings. This is a great mechanism for increasing the reach of both gospel and ministry. Whilst this may be of interest to those who are not believers, it is especially useful to those who may be housebound and unable to meet with the believers regularly. However, we need to add a note of caution. Is the material you put up fit to be put up? Poor quality recordings can do more to dissuade people than encourage. Does a recording dispel a poor image, or does it add to it?

Creating a website can be a useful tool for solving numerous problems. However, it is important to note that simply creating a website is not a cure in itself. It is fair to say that any work for the Lord in the local assembly doesn't take place in isolation, and the effects are felt across the board. So the process of creating a site must be taken with a wider view of all the assembly activity. If our website is going to be our public face to the world, we must first ensure that we are fit to face the world.

If you've considered creating a site, thought about why you are doing it, and what problems it might help you solve, the actual course of putting up a site can also be fraught with difficulty. In our next article, we'll consider the practical problems of getting a site up and running.

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Teaching and Guiding a Risi

Part 2: WHAT IS BIBLICAL TRAINING?

Students of all ages regularly attend institutions of higher learning to gain knowledge in a particular field. The objective is usually to acquire accreditation to pursue a desired occupation. However, training programs of this nature do not accomplish the same results when it comes to spiritual ministries. One does not pick a ministry, attend a Bible school, and then, by virtue of graduating from an accredited programme, be qualified to carry out the work of that ministry.

In the secular sense, training generally consists of teaching people how to do something so that they are enabled to do it themselves. Yet, when it comes to spiritual matters, the ability to minister and edify the body of Christ comes from God's supernatural gifts to His people, Eph. 4. 11-16. Accordingly, there are no training programmes in scripture to 'make' evangelists, teachers, or pastors. Scripture does lay out for us exhortations, encouragements, and examples to follow; it also outlines the idea of mentoring. These, however, are not the same as a specific training programme. Therefore, the job of one who mentors new Christians is to assist them to grow in Christ, to recognize their spiritual gifts and divine callings, and then to guide them into those callings.

In the King James Version of the Bible we find the verb 'train' only once: 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it', Prov. 22. 6. God does not provide a different child-training manual for different children – one manual (the Bible) is sufficient to properly train each and every child for the Lord. Similarly, there is one training manual to prepare each and every believer to honour God and properly serve Him; that manual is also the Bible.

Although the English word 'train' cannot be found in the King James Version of the New Testament, the idea of training is certainly present. The Greek noun *paideia* and its verb form *paideuo* convey a similar meaning to the Hebrew word translated 'train up', Prov. 22. 6. By examining the portions of Scripture in which *paideia*

and *paideuo* occur, we can increase our understanding of what biblical training comprises. **Paideia** occurs in Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4, 'bring them up in **the training**' NKJV, and again in 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16, 'for **instruction in righteousness**'. In the NASV, *paideia* is rendered in 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 as 'training'. *Paideia*, therefore, means 'education or training, which includes disciplinary correction'. The latter aspect of this training is clearly brought out in Hebrews chapter 12, where four times *paideia* is translated as 'chastening'. The related word *paideuo* means 'to train up, to educate, to instruct, to teach'. It is found in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 25, 'In meekness **instructing** those', and in Titus chapter 2 verse 12, '**Teaching** us that'. Biblical training therefore

includes: instruction in doctrine and righteousness, preparation for godly living, and disciplinary correction as needed.

We see, therefore, that the biblical approach to mentoring new believers for Christ does not correspond with the secular educational programmes of our day. It more closely resembles the child-rearing that God commands of parents, Prov. 22. 6. Parents are to train up their children for God through a variety of techniques which include teaching, instruction, encouragement, exhortation, reproof, guidance, and discipline and the home is the prime location for training children. ¹

Training at home

One of the training grounds most neglected by believers is the home. If the Bible is not the centre of the home, it cannot be called a true Christian home, even if all the individuals comprising the home have been born again. A Christian family is not a household of Christians, but a Christian household. In such a place, the following training methods might be used:

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1 Regular family devotions

Involve the entire family in prayer, reading the scripture, answering questions, and sharing gleanings from the word. Fathers should take the lead in teaching and applying scripture, 1 Cor. 14. 35. Depending on individual schedules, family devotions could take place in the early morning, after a meal, before bedtime, or whenever the family can gather together. After mealtime is also a great time to read aloud from a good Christian biography, a book on church history, or a publication on God's wonders in creation. Another idea is to assign each son one night a week on which to provide the family with a devotional thought after dinner. The family setting is a non-threatening environment for sons to learn to minister the word to others and pray aloud, and this training prepares them for assembly responsibilities.

2 Daily quiet times

As soon as children can read and write, start them off reading the Bible each day and give them 'quite time' notebooks in which to journal. Each day they should record what they learn of God and what they can apply to their lives. Dads are to be the primary spiritual leaders in their homes so they should meet regularly with their children to review these notebooks and to answer questions. As every family situation is unique, mums may have to assist with this work also. This time of review builds parental intimacy and instils children with a



ng Generation

life-long pattern of daily devotions and seeking His help for each day.

3 Bible study

I recommend that fathers take each of their children through study guides which cover the gamut from basic truths to the finer distinctions of doctrine. Believing children should learn the fundamentals of the faith early and then build on that foundation with the deeper teachings of God's word. Do not succumb to under-challenging your children; they often understand more than you think they can. Raise the bar and challenge them to jump; you will be surprised what they can achieve!

4 Character development

The following are a few suggestions to stimulate the character development of children. Develop a list of godly and ungodly character traits from Proverbs, and systematically teach these to your children. Teach biblical gender roles in the family and in the assembly. Read missionary stories and biographies of faithful men and women of God. Have regular one-on-one discussions with your children regarding their character bents which need to be corrected, and then work on it together. In our family, we refer to these bents as giants which need to be slain. It is important not to try to correct too much all at once; David and his mighty men conquered Goliath and his four giant brothers, one at a time.

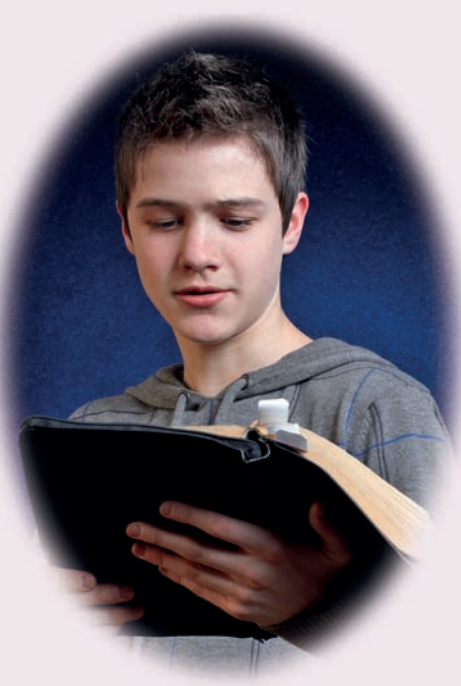
Training outside the home

Titus chapter 2 verses 1-7 identify a host of discipleship opportunities for men and women of all ages. Although the local church gathers for weekly teaching, these meetings are not to be the main means of training children, new converts, or young believers. We read that the first believers in Jerusalem continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, Acts 2. 42, and they gathered daily, Acts 2. 46. Paul, speaking to believers from Ephesus, said, 'I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house' Acts 20. 20 NKJV. True shepherds commit whatever time is necessary

to train up others for Christ. I call this one-to-one mentoring ministry 'trench work'. Pulpit ministry has its place, but, on a personal level, trench work is a far more effective means of discipleship. This fact is quite evident in the Lord's ministry to His disciples. As mentioned earlier, young believers cannot be neglected. Key activities in their spiritual development are:

1 Learning Christ

The Greek word for 'disciple' is *mathetes*, which literally means 'a learner'. The pursuit of the disciple is to learn Christ, Matt. 11. 29, and to be like Him, 10. 25. Guilt trips and accountability may work for a short time, but only love for Christ will propel the new believer onward in growth and service. Be sure to put good devotional books into the hands of new converts – teaching doctrine without learning Christ is deficient training.



2 Studying the Bible

Young believers need to be in as many weekly Bible studies as possible without neglecting the meetings of the church and family responsibilities. I have found periodic weekend men's or women's studies to be profitable also. These events not only provide a good atmosphere for intense study, but also encourage the development of meaningful relationships within the body of Christ. These associations tend to increase the new believers commitment to the challenging task of learning sound doctrine. Another

practical idea connected with Bible study is the questions notebook. This teaches the new believer that the Bible is the source of wisdom to live by and that it is best to seek God's counsel to resolve all of life's dilemmas.

3 Church involvement

Involvement builds commitment to the local body. Challenge those you are discipling to serve to the greatest capacity that they are able. Incidentally, observing their active service will also assist you to both recognize spiritual gifts, 1 Tim. 4. 14-15, and stir these up, 2 Tim. 1. 6. Elders should ensure that all those in fellowship have functional roles in the local church.

4 Discipling others

Witnessing for Christ strengthens one's profession, Rom. 10. 10, and a disciple learns the most while teaching others. The more time a mature believer spends with a new believer, the more evident his or her spiritual gifts becomes. This enables the shepherd to guide the young Christian into service which will exercise and develop these gifts and assist him or her to fulfil his or her personal calling in the body of Christ.

Summary

Just as every local church should have a vision for evangelical outreach and for seeing new church testimonies established, every shepherd should implant this same vision into those they disciple. Truth must be passed on, 'the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also', 2 Tim. 2. 2. The Greek word translated as 'men' in this verse is *anthropos*, which means human beings; it is certainly not gender specific, both men and women are to be trained to teach others.² Neither are there age limits for discipleship. Making and training disciples is Christ's plan for building His church; may we all do this in His way and for His glory!

Endnotes

- 1 See Mal. 2. 14-15; Eph. 6. 1; Deut. 6. 6-9; Tit. 2. 4-5
- 2 The context for women to teach is given us in Titus chapter 2 verses 3-5.

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Philippians: The Joy and Suffering

Chapter 3 verses 4-9: **BREAKING WITH THE PAST**

In order to further discredit false teachers in Philippi, Paul refers to his natural advantages and storied pre-conversion career in Judaism in verses 4-6. 'He himself possesses all that to which they attach so much value; nevertheless, he has renounced it all for the sake of Christ', as one commentator expresses it.¹ Another adds:

If ever a man was exemplary in a fleshly way, he was . . . We may say of him that for some years he *lived*, fortified with all the rites and ordinances and advantages and righteousness of Judaism. If ever educated and religious flesh was to be trusted, it was to be trusted in Saul of Tarsus. He was filled with religion and filled with the pride which was generated by his belief that all was so much gain to him.²

For the sake of argument he walks the reader through his Jewish background to demonstrate his superiority to his heretical rivals, v. 4, as well as highlighting the inherent excellence of Christ over what they were promoting.

The Credentials of Rabbi Saul of Tarsus

Firstly, he was 'circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel', v, 5, indicating that he was a pure-blood Jew born into an observant family. Unlike many post-exilic Jews, Paul's ancestors had not intermarried with Gentiles during the long centuries of dispersion, cp. Neh. 11. 23-27. In addition to their pure lineage, they were also well aware of their tribal affiliation; they belonged to the august tribe of Benjamin, which had furnished the first monarch of Israel. Could his Judaizing adversaries top this? FEE says no: 'The reason for this one is almost certainly for effect. Gentiles could become members only of Israel; Paul's membership was of a kind whereby he could trace his family origins. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin . . . in whose territory sat the Holy City itself. They were also notable because they alone had joined Judah in loyalty to the Davidic covenant'.³

What is more, Paul was 'a Hebrew of the Hebrews', a phrase that describes his cultural affinity with his ancestral language and customs. Though surrounded by the despised *goyim* ('the nations'), his family remained unassimilated. Rather than being overwhelmed by pervasive Hellenism, they preserved their ancient tongue, literature, and culture. Paul was fluent in Greek and familiar with Graeco-Roman philosophy and literature, Acts 17; yet he preserved his identity as a law-abiding

Jew. MARTIN summarizes it well, 'he is a true-blooded Jew from the cradle, and nursed in the ancestral faith'.⁴

Theology, Zeal, and a Religious Reputation

No one could accuse Paul of being a nominal Jew. On the contrary, he was a devout member of 'the strictest sect' of Judaism, Acts 26. 5, known as the Pharisees. Other passages tell us of his Oxbridge (or Ivy League) equivalent education at the feet of the learned theologian Gamaliel, Acts 22. 3. That he was not a half-hearted proponent of the family faith is evidenced by his reaction to the rise of Christianity, 'concerning zeal, persecuting the church',

v. 7. This last point was still fresh in the apostle's mind, as MARTIN shows, 'Paul seems never to have been able to forget his persecuting activity, based on that misdirected *zeal* for God (Acts 22:3; cf. Rom. 10:2) and his cause, of which he speaks here. The memory of it continually haunts him; so much so that he uses the present participle of the verb, *diokon*, *persecuting*, as if the action were before his eyes at the time of writing'.⁵

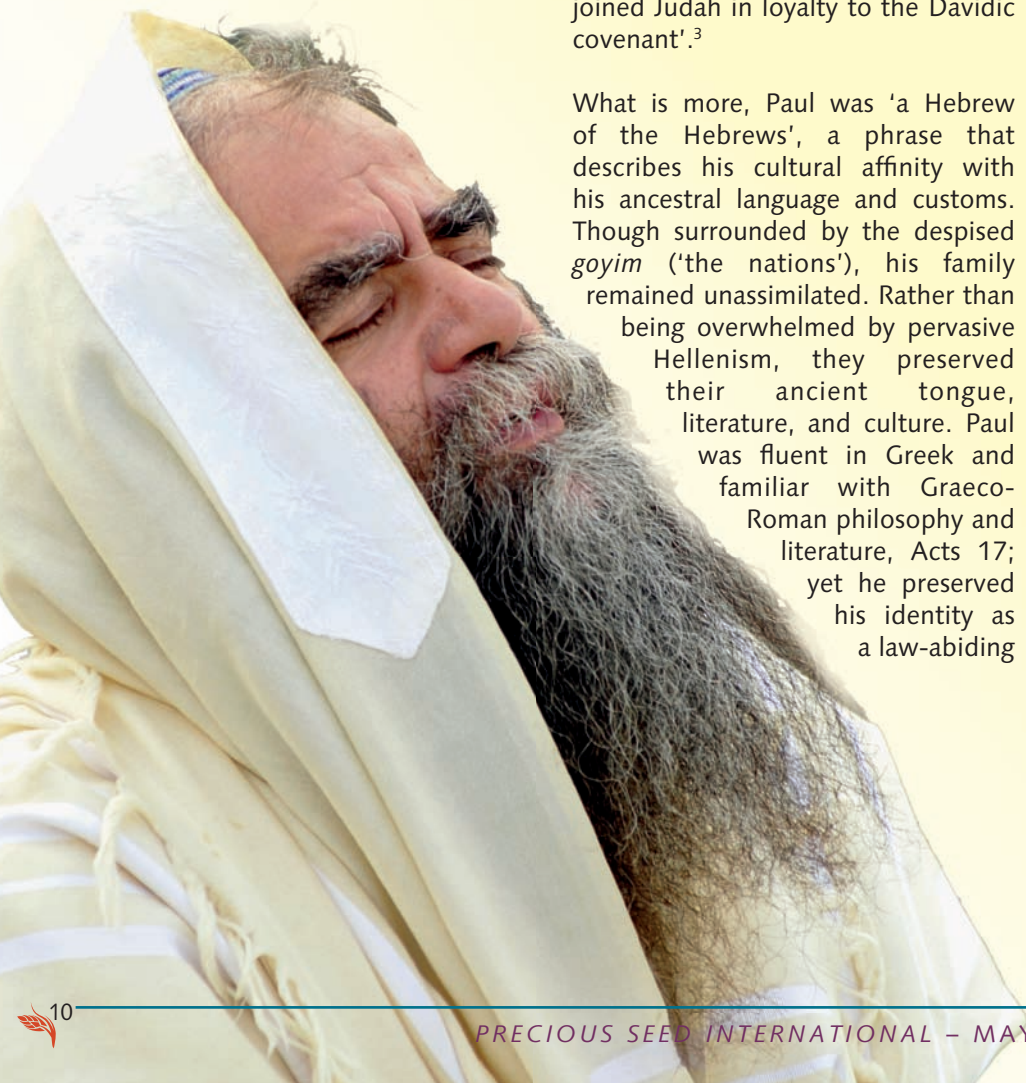
A classic commentary further describes his seriousness regarding religious matters, 'Foremost among the zealots stood Saul of Tarsus – had his adversaries ever shown a similar fervour? – had they so openly committed themselves? His zeal for the law outstripped theirs . . . If he did not now enforce the Mosaic ceremonial, it was not because he had never loved it, or had been quite careless when it was assaulted. Not one had laboured for it so prodigiously, or fought for it so ferociously'.⁶ The able classicist J. B. LIGHTFOOT's paraphrase of verse 8 brings out the force of the former persecutor's statements, 'I was zealous above them all; I asserted my principles with fire and sword; I persecuted, imprisoned, slew these infatuated Christians; this was my great claim to God's favour'.⁷

Furthermore, Saul's carefully cultivated image as a keeper of the law was

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T TO EMBRACE A MORE GLORIOUS PRESENT AND FUTURE

unassailable to any human observer ('blameless' as verse 8 tersely expresses it). In other words, his life seemed in line with law-keeping and adherence to the added traditions of his fathers – he was no obvious hypocrite (though this pious façade concealed a horrible struggle with sin, Rom. 7. 5-13). FEE clarifies, 'Here he is probably referring especially to matters of "food and drink" and "the observance of days", since, along with circumcision, these are the items regularly singled out whenever discussion of Torah observance emerges in his letters'.⁸

Spiritual Profit and Loss

Verse 7 succinctly articulates the vast sea-change in Paul's thinking concerning his previous religious attainments. DUNHAM explains the original wording, 'In the Greek text of these verses, the word for "gain" is plural and for "loss" singular. "For Christ's sake I have learned to count my former gains a loss." In this dramatic abruptness there is a notable contrast. Each of the outward privileges in Paul's catalogue had at one time been a distinct and separate gain, individual items of profit. Now – they are all one big bundle of loss; loss because they are useless'.⁹ By a conscious decision Paul valued his former benefits against what he had gained in Christ. Of course, there was no real comparison, for Christ so far exceeds anything that this world – religious or otherwise – has to offer.

The specific act of counting these things 'loss', demonstrates Christ's work within him and is itself reminiscent of what the Lord of glory did in the incarnation. HENDRIKSEN notes this phenomenon,

'Compare 'I have counted' (perfect tense) here with 'he did not count' (aorist) in 2:6. The verb indicates arriving at a sure judgment based on careful weighing of facts. Cf. Phil. 2:3. The similarity between 3:7 and 2:6 is striking. Christ "did not count his existence-in-a-manner-equal-to-God something to cling to, but emptied himself". This counting and this emptying is

reflected in Paul, who, by *having counted* things that were gain to him to be loss for Christ, *emptied* himself of 'all things' (Phil. 3:8) that he might gain Christ'.¹⁰

Embracing the Surpassing Excellence of the Knowledge of Christ

Just as the Thessalonians turned to worship the true Lord from their earlier veneration of impotent idols, 1 Thess. 1. 9-10, likewise Paul exchanged dead religious works and their pride-enhancing accomplishments to receive 'the surpassing worth' (ESV) of knowing Christ, Phil. 3. 8. In comparison with Him, all else is esteemed as 'dung' (AV; NET), 'filth' (JND), or 'rubbish' (NKJV; ESV; NASB).¹¹ Another writer remarks on the stark contrast, 'There is a powerful statement of divine grace in these verses. What Paul was and did was nothing. What Christ had done was everything. Nor was it just the Jewish background he counted loss. Paul gave his statement universal validity with the word "everything". Absolutely nothing could transcend for him the value of knowing Christ'.¹² MARTIN cogently adds, 'The goal of Paul's revaluation is the supreme one of a personal possession. He loses all, to gain—Christ'.¹³

DARBY'S translation accurately captures the sense of verse 9, 'And that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness, which would be on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which *is* of God through faith' (Italics original). Paul now enjoyed a righteousness from God – of divine design and execution – as opposed to one based on his past incessant striving after a standard that is unattainable by mankind. The law condemns human beings, for it reveals them to be transgressors, Gal. 3. 19; 1 Tim. 1. 9. In Christ Paul gains a righteousness which is attainable, for it is God's free gift apart from human works, Rom. 5. 1. It stands in contrast to what observant Jews – indeed all religious people who seek to come to God on the basis of their own efforts – vainly sought, Rom. 10. 3, 5.

To Paul, the greatness of this new life centred on his personal knowledge of Christ and relationship to Him. The righteousness that he was provided was wonderful, but his language focuses on winning the Lord and knowing Him, vv. 8-10. Christianity is not merely assent to dogma or understanding of certain doctrines; it is mainly a living connection to the risen Saviour. Knowing Him exceeds any earthly blessing and merits any suffering. What the Judaizers were offering could not hope to compare with the life and righteousness offered in Christ.

Endnotes

- 1 HERMANN OLSHAUSEN, *Biblical Commentary on the New Testament, Volume 5*. New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, & Co., 1859, pg. 423.
- 2 F.B. HOLE, *Philippians*. Electronic ed.: http://biblecentre.org/commentaries/fbh_54_philippians.htm#Philippians%203 Accessed on 10/13/11 [Italics original.]
- 3 GORDON FEE, *IVP New Testament Commentary: Philippians*. Electronic ed. (1999; Quickverse '08 STEP Files, 2006.)
- 4 RALPH P. MARTIN, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987, pg. 150.
- 5 MARTIN, pg. 151f.
- 6 JOHN EADIE, *A Commentary On The Greek Text Of The Epistle Of Paul To The Philippians*, New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1859, pg. 178.
- 7 J.B. LIGHTFOOT, *St. Paul's Epistle To The Philippians*. London: Macmillan & Co., 1903, pg. 148.
- 8 FEE, see note 3.
- 9 MAXIE D. DUNNAM, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 31: Philippians*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1982, pg. 287.
- 10 WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN, *New Testament Commentary Vol. 5: Exposition of Philippians*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962, pg. 161, fnt.#139. [Italics original.]
- 11 W.E. VINE notes Paul's irony in using this term: '... the plural here signifies 'bits of refuse,' and probably refers to the leavings of a feast, pieces thrown to the dogs, garbage. Judaizers regarded Gentile believers as dogs, while they themselves enjoyed God's banquet. Paul reverses the figure. The Judaizers are the dogs'. *Collected Writings of W. E. Vine: Philippians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997; electronic ed.
- 12 ANTHONY L. ASH, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Philippians*, College Press Publ., 1994, electronic ed., pdf., pg. 45.
- 13 MARTIN, pg. 155.

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CHURCH GATHERINGS TEACHING AND BEING TAUGHT

The last instruction given by the Lord Jesus to His own before His ascension established an order which is both spiritual and logical. 'Go', He said, and 'make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you'. We considered the primacy of gospel witness and outreach in a previous article, together with the vital step of obedience in baptism enjoined upon all believers. For further progression in the Christian pathway teaching is essential. We are often reminded that in early days those saved and baptized 'continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine', Acts 2. 42 and, as a result, the work flourished.

Throughout the years of Christian witness there have always been those who taught the truth of God's word, at times in peril of their lives; but a faithful God has preserved the testimony, and will continue to do so. In Acts chapter 11, we learn that when the gospel was preached and a company of believers was formed at Antioch, the preachers understood that there was a need for teachers. Barnabus was sent, but his ministry, though helpful and necessary, came short of the teaching needed for the believers to grow. When, later, Paul arrived we read 'that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people', v. 26, a good precedent for a church gathering to teach the scriptures.

In more recent times, and certainly within the memory of believers today, particularly in Western society, we have been singularly blessed with opportunities to hear the word of God taught, whether in and for the benefit of local companies of believers or by invitation within travelling distance to other assemblies. There are ministry meetings, conferences, Bible readings, weekends, residential weeks, Bible workshops and more,

some designed for younger believers, but all with a view that the word of God might be taught.

We need to bear in mind, however, that for the believer to receive blessing from the teaching, a number of important things are needed. First, the active involvement of the Spirit of God is essential in both the teacher and the taught. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, 'when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . . he will shew you things to come . . . he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you', John 16. 13-15; we cannot expect ungodly men to understand or comment intelligently on the scriptures, 'the things of the Spirit of God . . . are spiritually discerned', 1 Cor. 2. 14.

Also indispensable for teaching is the word of God. It may seem facile to say this, but opinions, traditions and habitual practice cannot take the place of the scriptures. In many places, and in many minds today, the scriptures have been relegated to a convenient assortment of ethics, of obscure history and favourite verses for occasional use. The word of God, however, should be our constant guide, our handbook for life, the monitor of our behaviour and a joy to our souls. To quote JACK HAY, 'Everything God wants us to know is in this book!'

Another crucial element required is a teacher! In Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11, the ascended Lord endowed the church with those who would

lead, guide, shepherd and instruct as required until the close of this church age. Examples are seen in New Testament times, Philip was an evangelist, Barnabus an exhorter, Peter fulfilled the role of a shepherd, John's writings are instructive and devotional but Paul was without doubt a teacher. Taking the great doctrines of faith, he explained them, analyzed them and applied them in a practical way. We have been well blessed over the years with those who are gifted and enabled to do this for the benefit

of believers and we thank God for them. Also, for those who encourage, comfort and challenge the saints, providing a balanced ministry so that all may receive food convenient from the word of God.

Sadly, today, many companies are small; age and infirmity have taken their toll so that travelling to other meetings is difficult. Those brethren left often do not feel competent to teach the scriptures and, despite their best efforts, restricted by circumstances, no one from the locality attends the gospel meeting. We do not limit the ability of our God, but is there a way whereby these saints could once more enjoy the full value of church gatherings rather than wait until the doors have to be closed?

Another vital factor in the teaching of the word of God is a desire on the part of the saints to be taught! That may sound strange to some, but it is a reality which needs to be addressed. It is very evident that ignorance

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RINGS

PART TWO

G TAUGHT



of the scriptures is endemic in our society. Children are brought up knowing nothing of the Bible, being taught neither at home nor at school. Christian morality is opposed as out-dated; religion of every persuasion is presented as divisive and suspect. Surrounded by this maelstrom of unbelief and immorality, believers are called to 'walk worthy' of their calling, at school, college, university, the workplace and in the neighbourhood. The apostle Peter encouraged his readers to 'be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ', 1 Pet. 3. 15-16; the secret of being able to do this, says Peter, is to 'set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts', v. 15 NIV. Having a knowledge and understanding of the scriptures is an integral part of truly knowing Him as Lord.

One problem is that many believers, including those associated with New Testament assemblies, are not reading the scriptures for themselves! As far as it is possible, the Bible should be daily, or, at least, regular, essential reading for every believer, preferably in an orderly and systematic manner, 1 Tim. 4. 13. An understanding of the basic outline and structure of each book, and of the whole Bible should be a minimum ambition for achievement. This will provide a foundation on which to build when hearing the word of God taught. When a teacher is competing with a lack of basic knowledge in his audience, he can only feed them on 'milk', necessary for 'babes in Christ', but inadequate for continuing development, 1 Cor. 3. 1-2.

It is not too difficult to gauge the level of desire for the teaching of the word of God by taking note of those who make every effort to be where scripture is taught, and, conversely, those who habitually absent themselves and make little or no attempt to attend such gatherings. Elders can encourage, exhort, offer help and seek to accommodate the needs of such. But, in the final analysis, there has to be within the individual believer that spark of desire to learn and know more; otherwise, sadly, there is often little that can be achieved. Deviation from the principles and practices taught in scripture usually originate from one of two sources; either from a refusal to accept the teaching, or because the teaching has never been given or heard in the first place. This latter reason applies to many believers at present in denominations.

Many assemblies substitute or

alternate ministry or teaching meetings with Bible readings. This arrangement gives all the brethren opportunity to comment or ask questions on a particular subject or passage of scripture under consideration. While there is no clear precedent in the Acts or indicated in the epistles for this type of church gathering, there is no doubt that if able and gifted teachers are present to address the questions and provide definitive answers, or explain the meaning of the verses, these occasions can prove profitable. It has been suggested that, in reality, the sisters are maybe the best judges of the spiritual benefit of these occasions!

With a wonderful heritage of excellent Bible teaching passed on by gifted and godly men, we are the beneficiaries of doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. Some would claim that the pressures of twenty-first century life, work, family etc. militate against the opportunity for serious study time. When, however, we in the UK consider the manual toil of our forefathers, often with large families, little money and no modern conveniences, truly we have no cause for complaint, and no valid excuses for not seeking out the places locally where the scriptures are taught.

There are helps to the study and understanding of scripture in the form of books and internet sites, but one of the greatest blessings we enjoy as believers is to gather with other saints to hear constructive, consecutive teaching from the word of God, to apply it to our hearts, and seek to live out and practise those things which are taught. This will result in glory being brought to the name of the Lord Jesus.

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‘THOU SHALT MAKE HIS SOUL AN OFFERING FOR SIN’

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In the Levitical law there were many different words for 'offering'. Different words were used to describe the various types used for the different needs as they occurred.

The Lord Jesus in His death was the true antitype and each had their fulfilment in Him. He was the great 'burnt offering', the true meat offering, and the perfect sin and trespass offering. Indeed, he was the fulfilment of every aspect set forth in this wonderful section of scripture.

We may well ask, then, why Isaiah chapter 53 describes His offering as a *trespass offering*, v. 10. Two things characterized the trespass offering. Firstly, it required the sacrifice of the ram for an atonement for the wrong done either to God or man. Secondly, it involved the restoration of what was wrongfully taken or omitted to be given, plus a fifth part added to compensate the loss. It was a making good of previous wrongs.

Who could estimate the wrong done to God in the sin of mankind? Who could even guess at the wrong done to man throughout human history? The Lord Jesus was made a trespass offering to make good the whole matter of human guilt. God had full compensation, as it were, and the fifth part tells us how God had far more. Equally, those saved by His blood stand in a place far beyond that known in man's original state. We do not go back to Eden but on to the heavenly city whose builder and maker is God.

But this phrase is also at the very heart of Calvary, its deepest mystery and its profoundest truth altogether outside our grasp. Without this fact there could be no salvation for any and here is something

only God in His infinite love and mercy could accomplish. We must join with this statement the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 20 verse 28, 'and to give his life a ransom for many'.

Both these statements speak of something only God could do, a work altogether essential to meet the need of fallen humanity. This work lay outside the province of human ability, a work neither the ablest nor holiest of mere men could accomplish. Man could not atone for his own sin or meet the ransom price for another. Many men have been crucified in the same way but none availed to save another. Many have died trying to help or spare the life of another but none could ransom their souls. It is this fact that makes the Lord's death



on the cross altogether beyond any other. It is this Divine dealing with His soul on behalf of sinners that makes His sorrows, His agony, so intense beyond all others. It is for this cause that believers go back to that scene in worship, awe, reverence, and love, for here were sorrows above all other sorrows, and suffering beyond compare!

In the phrase that is the title of this meditation we have one 'thou shalt'. In the remainder of the verse, and the verses that follow, there are five 'he shall' statements. These five stand in direct consequence of the one 'thou shalt'.

Without the words that form our meditation the Lord's death would be nothing more than a martyr's death, a gross miscarriage of justice by wicked men. But these words tell us otherwise, 'he hath put him to grief'. It was the hand of a sin-hating God which fell upon Him. It was He who made His soul an offering for sin. Man could not do that, only God could lay sin upon Him, only God could put Him to grief. This is the essential core of redemption, that which Christ endured alone at the hands of a holy God.

However, blessed is the outcome! The fruit of His sorrows come out in resurrection. His seed, His own blood-bought children, placed with Him in eternal glory, justified, and sanctified in His sight. This He will see and be satisfied. Who can tell the wideness of the glory of a reconciled universe which He will see? Who can appreciate how precious to Him, and what joy and satisfaction will be brought to Him, to see those He has purchased with Him eternally?

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1 John chapter 2 – Part 1

The fact that sinless perfection cannot be realized, 1. 8, 10, does not mean that we can be indifferent to sin. Chapter 2 verse 1 gives a further reason why John writes as he does in chapter 1 verses 4-10, 'that you may not sin'. John passionately seeks progress in holiness for all his readers, as is evident from the tender appeal 'My little children', a term that is characteristic of John and one that he learned from his Lord, John 13. 33. The term does not imply their immaturity; rather, earnest concern on the part of the apostle. Taken together with Chapter 1, these verses teach that sin should be only occasional in the life of a believer. 'And if anyone sins' perfect provision for timely restoration of fellowship is already in place: we have an Advocate with the Father. The word for advocate is the Greek '*parakletos*', literally 'one called alongside to help'. The same word is used of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel, 14. 16, 26; 15. 26; 16. 7, where it is translated, 'helper' NKJV, ESV, 'comforter' KJV. Again, John's use of 'we' includes his personal need.

Our Lord's advocacy is primarily with (lit. 'towards') the Father, suggesting His perfect access and fellowship with the Father, Rom. 8. 34. But advocacy also has a man-ward side. He is Jesus Christ the righteous - He will never minimize our sin, but uses the indwelling Spirit, John 14. 16, and the word of God, 13. 10, to make us conscious of sin and lead us to confession, 1 John 1. 9. Peter's experience provides an illustration of this gracious work, Luke 22. 31-33, 61. We must not polarize the Godhead and imagine that the Father's view is different from Christ's - both are holy and righteous, John 17. 11, 25; yet our Lord is uniquely qualified to restore the communion that has been compromised, He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.

Our Lord's advocacy is based upon the eternal value of the propitiation He made once for all at Calvary, Rom. 3. 25. 'Propitiation' (Gk. *hilasmos*) is a very important biblical concept¹ meaning the righteous removal of the wrath of God, so that mercy can flow out to the unworthy. It occurs only here and in chapter 4 verse 10 in the New Testament.² It is not simply that Christ *made* propitiation, but that He Himself *is* perpetually the propitiation for our sins. Thus, the living Person is the eternal proof that the righteousness of God has been fully satisfied through His suffering the penalty of sin at Calvary.³

Israel in the Old Testament became inward looking, imagining that they had a unique claim on God, Rom. 2. 17-20. Similarly, among John's opponents Gnostic élitism focused on the privileged few. By contrast we are reminded here that our Lord's propitiation for our sins is not for ours only but also for the whole

world. There is no limit on the scope and value of that mighty work - it is sufficient for all, but *efficient* only for those who believe.

Excursus: On the Day of Atonement in ancient Israel, atonement was made for the tabernacle itself, Lev. 16. 16. The tabernacle was defiled by the very presence of the sin-prone Israelites in the camp. Atonement was made in order that fellowship with a holy God could continue in spite of their uncleanness. Corresponding to this type, our fellowship is maintained by the perfect atonement of our Lord.

Walking in the light: Test - Obedience, 2. 3-6

Verses 3 to 6 supply a further test of fellowship with God: the believer is characterized by obedience. The section indicates definite *progress* in the knowledge of God: know Him, v. 4 . . . in Him, v. 5 . . . abides in Him, v. 6.

'By this' normally refers to what follows in this letter,⁴ we know that 'we have come to know him' (ESV). We have progressive knowledge of God based on experience. It is no accident that John uses the verb to 'know' so frequently. No doubt false teachers claim a superior *knowledge* that is, in fact, false pretence. By contrast, John looks for that progressive *experiential* knowledge which is the privilege of every true believer. The *evidence* of knowing God is that we keep His commandments. To 'keep' (Gk. *tereo*) is to be on the watch to obey and fulfil. The thought is common in John's writings.⁵

'He who says' is a recurring phrase, 4. 6, 9, and is somewhat more distant than 'if we say', 1. 6, 8, 10. The person with no concern to do the will of God, and who does not keep His commandments, is a liar. He is guilty of pretence, and the devil is the father of lies, John 8. 44; the truth is not in him, literally and emphatically, '*in him* the truth is not'.

'His word' (Gk. *logos*) denotes all of God's revealed will, comprising all His commandments. 'Truly', in contrast to false profession, 'the love of God is perfected in him'. The love of God here means *our love for God*.⁶ This verse supplies the first mention of love in this letter - a theme so common in John's Gospel and Letters that he has been justly termed the 'Apostle of love'. Note the correlation of obedience and love reflecting an important emphasis in the Lord's own teaching: 'If you love Me, keep My commandments', John 14. 15. 'Perfected' means 'brought to its ripe growth and due accomplishment in character and life', FINDLAY.

'By this' is forward looking (LAW), supported by the

punctuation in RV, ESV which have a colon at the end of verse 5. 'We know that we are in Him: he who says he abides in Him (God) ought himself also to walk just as He (Christ) walked'. For John this is an evidence of true fellowship with God. Our Lord is our perfect Example, 1 Pet. 2. 21: the believer not only claims to *abide* in God, compare John 15. 4-10, but also feels *duty bound* to walk even as Christ walked. We often use the word 'ought' in a weak sense, but here it means a weighty obligation; for other important Christian obligations.⁷ This verse significantly brings together 'abiding' and 'walking': true abiding will not lead to retreat, but is dynamic and practical, marked by progress in the knowledge of God, v. 3. On the subject of 'abiding', J. N. DARBY explains, 'it is dependence, practical habitual nearness of heart to Him and trust in Him, being attached to Him through a dependence on Him'.⁸

Walking in the light: love for the children of God, 2. 7-11

In this and the following sections of chapter 2, the focus of the test changes to *love*. First, the believer's walk in the light is evidenced by love for all fellow-believers. At the same time, his faithfulness is seen in steadfast *refusal* to love the world in its many guises, 2. 15-17. Between these two sections, three distinct groups within the family of God are identified, 2. 12-14.

A better supported reading for the opening of verse 7 is 'Beloved' ESV. This is thoroughly in keeping with the context – love. What exactly is the commandment? It is to love one another, 3. 23. It is not novel, in fact they have heard it 'from the beginning'. 'The beginning' refers to the start of their Christian lives. In his letter John is constantly directing the believers back to foundational truths they had been taught, in marked contrast to the innovations of those propagating error. On the other hand, the commandment to love *is* 'new' (Gk. *kainos*, fresh) in the sense that our Lord re-stated its importance, 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another', John 13. 34. The commandment becomes a fresh imperative in the light of His sacrifice.

'Which thing is true in Him and in you', v. 8; 'true' not in the sense of the opposite of false, but *real* and *complete* in contrast to the partial and imperfect. Christ is the complete and perfect Exemplar of the love of God, advocating that we love even our enemies, Matt. 5. 44. No one has ever loved as He did! Presently, we shall see that the whole concept of love has been redefined by His sacrifice, 4. 10. 'In Him' (Christ), the *perfect fruition* of the love of God is seen; 'in you' (believers), though real, it is as yet partial and *progressive*.

However, 'the darkness is passing away'.⁹ Christ's exaltation has guaranteed that the kingdom of light will ultimately prevail. The darkness is sure to pass away, but elements linger, and will do so, until the consummation of God's purposes. Yet 'the true light

is already shining', a decisive change has come about where there was unrelieved gloom. The believer has the light of God within, where once darkness reigned, Eph. 5. 8. Further, there is joyful *progress* in the light; true light shines, v. 8 . . . in the light, v. 9 . . . abiding in the light, v. 10.

Verses 9 to 11 continue an alternating set of contrasts in John's familiar style. Love for all those who love God is a key test of Christian profession. Loving one's brother is not mere camaraderie, or fondness for those who we happen to get along with, Luke 6. 32. Rather, it is a holy determination to love all those who belong to Christ *because* they are His. 'Brother' in this context is not necessarily to be taken as the equivalent of 'genuine believer': John will address a person on the ground of their profession, and supply tests designed to isolate those whose profession is spurious. His diagnosis is very serious: 'He who . . . hates his brother, is in darkness until now'. He has never known the light of the knowledge of God. The opposite behaviour, v. 10, is welcome evidence of abiding in the light. 'There is no cause for stumbling in him' probably means, 'I shall not stumble in the light', noting the close parallel, John 11. 9, 10.¹⁰

The brother-hater 'is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes'. The verse illustrates a terrible progression: 'in darkness' (domain), 'walks in darkness' (activity), 'the darkness has blinded his eyes' (resultant helpless condition). A man blinded by hatred cannot see where he is heading, and has no true perception of the character of his actions; his moral judgement is undermined.

The contrast is thus complete: hatred reveals a total absence of the love of God, and raises the gravest questions, whatever people may profess. How searching for all who profess to follow the Lord of love!

Progress in fellowship: Three groups addressed, 2. 12-14

These verses stand between positive and negative tests of love, 2. 7-11, 15-17. They provide an encouraging counter-balance to the sombre note struck in verse 11 and the stark warnings of verses 15 to 17. They also present some challenges in interpretation:¹¹

1. What is the significance of 'little children', 'fathers', 'young men'?
2. Why the repetition and variation in verb tenses? See RV, NASB.
3. What about female Christians?

Addressing each of these points in order:

- 1 It seems best to follow the formatting of NKJV and ESV and understand that John is twice addressing *three* groups of believers identified by *spiritual experience* rather than physical age (though there will often be a correlation with age). Note that in these verses 'little children'

is to be understood as the *most recent converts*, not believers generally as in the rest of the letter. 'Little children', 'fathers', 'young men' at first sight seems a peculiar order,¹² but it is noticeable that John has most to say to 'young men', the final category addressed in each case. As a sensitive pastor he recognizes the differing needs and challenges facing the believers according to their growth, Isa. 40. 11.

- 2 The simplest explanation of the repetition is that it is for emphasis. Love, the section topic, is for him the essence of Christianity and he wishes to make an urgent appeal to each group. The first three verbs are in the present tense, and the second set of three¹³ are considered to be 'epistolary aorists' – a pleasing touch whereby an ancient writer would place himself in the position of the recipient of the letter and say 'I wrote'. Rendering these in the English present tense is commonplace, e.g., ESV.
- 3 Female believers are not explicitly identified, but if the understanding of the three groups is correct (1), they have their place according to spiritual growth.

John and the rest of the apostles looked for definite progress and growth, 1 Cor. 3. 1-3; Heb. 5. 12. Are we growing in the knowledge of God as we should?

In reminding the 'little children', the most recent converts, that your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake', John is not informing them so much as *reminding* them that this is the basis of all that he is writing. Their sins are forgiven not because they deserve it, but for 'His Name's sake'. The term 'Name' points to both the person of Christ and His saving work, Acts 4. 12. PLUMMER observes, 'Names in Scripture are constantly given as marks of character possessed or of functions to be performed . . . the Name of Jesus Christ indicates His attributes and His relations to man and to God. It is through these that the sins of St. John's dear children have been forgiven'.

John addresses the 'fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning'. 'Fathers' are believers who are mature in the knowledge of God. 'The spiritually adult in the congregation . . . they have progressed into a deep communion with God', STOTT. Wisely, John does not lecture the 'fathers' at any length, neither should we! Progressively they have come to know 'Him who is from the beginning', the eternal God who is beyond the advancing years and who inhabits eternity, Ps. 90. 1, 2.

The 'young men' are at the forefront of spiritual warfare: 'You have overcome the wicked one' – again John happily recognizes their achievement before issuing warnings. Every case of true conversion is a victory, the liberation of a soul from the clutches of the 'wicked one' – Satan, 2. 14; 3. 12; 5. 18, 19. At the same time their victory is on-going, and verse 14 identifies their resources.

Additionally, 'the little children . . . have known the Father', cp. Gal. 4. 6.

The glory of young men is their strength, Prov. 20. 29, in this case *spiritual* strength. 'I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you'. We now discover the secret of their strength – the word of God has become a resident power within, John 15.7; 17. 6, 14. Our Lord modelled the means of victory in the wilderness with His fourfold appeal to Scripture, 'It is written', Matt. 4. 4, 6, 7, 10.

Whilst some interpreters have seen verses 12-14 simply as a digression, the relevance of John's comments to each group becomes clear, and supplies hope as we approach the next section with its warnings about the world:

- The *little children* know the Father, thus the love of the *world* should recede, v. 15.
- *Fathers* know Him that is from the beginning – the eternal One; by contrast the *world* is passing away, v. 17.
- The *young men* are strong through the word and have overcome the wicked one – the ruler of this *world*, John 14. 30.

Endnotes:

- 1 See a major discussion in L. MORRIS, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965, pgs. 144-213. In recent times some theologians who do not adhere to the biblical view of the wrath of God have tended to water down the term 'propitiation' to 'expiation' RSV, or 'atoning sacrifice' NRSV. Morris' contribution is a valuable exposition of the biblical passages in relation to this vitally important term.
- 2 See also Num. 5. 8 and Ps. 130. 4 LXX (Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament).
- 3 See Rom. 3. 25 where the similar noun *hilasterion* occurs.
- 4 See 2. 5; 3. 24; 4. 2, 13; 5. 2.
- 5 See 3. 22, 24; 5. 2, 3.
- 6 Compare 2. 15; 3. 17; 4. 12; 5. 3.
- 7 See 3. 16; 4. 11; 3 John 8.
- 8 DARBY JOHN N. *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible* (Vol. 3), Lancing: Kingston Bible Trust, pg. 375.
- 9 The present tense (NKJV) is an important improvement on KJV 'darkness is past', because it signifies that the powers of darkness have been decisively defeated, hostile elements of darkness remain in the present, though doomed to complete eradication.
- 10 Others understand, 'I shall not be a *cause* of stumbling to *other people*'; this has in its favour that the Greek word for stumbling, *skandalon*, normally refers to offence caused to others. But this is less likely.
- 11 Is there significance in the change in Greek word that John uses for children *teknia*, v. 12, *paidia*, v. 14? Christ used both *teknia*, John 13. 33, and *paidia*, John 21. 5, when addressing His own. STOTT comments, 'if any distinct flavour is preserved between them, *teknia* emphasizes the community of nature between the child and its parent, while *paidia* refers to the child's minority as one under discipline'. BRUCE adds, 'As both nouns take their precise meanings from their correlation in the two contexts with 'fathers' and 'young men', they must be synonymous, indicating a more restricted group than the general 'my little children' (*teknia*) of verses 1 and 28 or the 'little children' (*paidia*) of verse 18'.
- 12 Some expositors (LAW, FINDLAY) resolve this by taking 'little children' to refer to *all believers* as elsewhere in the letter, and then seeing only two component groups addressed 'fathers' and 'young men'. But the repeated parallelism of *three* groups counts against this understanding.
- 13 According to critical texts, the 'write' in v. 13c, 'I write to you, little children', is, in fact, in the past (aorist) tense, 'I have written': see RV, NASB. This better fits the symmetry of the three groups addressed.



RADIO OUTREACH



1912 was the year of the launch and demise of the mighty liner 'Titanic'; it was also the year that The Cumberland and Westmorland Gospel Tent was launched. The tent work was the vision of two businessmen for the evangelism of these two English counties. The spiritual needs of this area were laid on the hearts of John Laing (later Sir John Laing) and David Beattie. Various evangelists were tasked with developing the village work in the tent – a work which continued through both World Wars. In 1947 a motor caravan was procured, and, in 1948 brother John Knight was called and commended to work.

In 1966 a small radio station was opened in Douglas, Isle of Man, and broadcasting time was purchased. At this time John and his wife Miriam seized the opportunity to begin broadcasting to Cumbria. Means were provided to enable a small radio studio to be equipped to prepare gospel programmes and so the work of Radio Outreach began and developed in a way which no one anticipated. Through an American agent hearing the programmes, a world-wide door was opened for the station to broadcast the gospel to a much wider audience. In addition to broadcasting locally through Manx Radio, Radio Outreach has been able to transmit the gospel from Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Hong Kong, Arab World Radio, Malawi, Jordan, Nigeria, Swaziland, Trinidad, Cayman Islands, World Radio New Orleans, Radio Luxembourg, Glasgow, Radio Thamesmead London, FM radio Stornoway, Dallas and Houston.

The world of technology moves swiftly but through the Lord's provision, Radio Outreach has been able to keep pace. All recording is now fully digital and we have a main internet station

– Offshoremusicradio. We are most grateful to Christian professionals in the industry for their expert help and advice. Support has been forthcoming from Bracknell, Chandlers Ford, Staveley, Penrith and the fully equipped digital studio at the Gospel Hall in Bowness, Windermere.

At the beginning of 2009 brother John Knight was called home and the work was continued faithfully for twelve months by brother David Locke, a full-time evangelist from Workington. David also has since been called home. The station now has a new presenter – Bill Coates. Bill was born in Prestatyn, but since his family were originally from the Keswick area, family holidays were spent in Cumbria and Bill's love of the area and its people began at an early age. He was saved as a teenager and since 1972 has lived and worked in the Lake District. In 2004 Bill was asked to become a trustee of Radio Outreach and in 2009, following the homecall of David Locke, he began to present the weekly programmes.

And so the work continues, a work which started over forty years ago and has been brought into the 21st century by a dedicated team of people with a burden for the spread of the gospel, not just to the people of Cumbria but world-wide. A recent BBC survey estimated listener numbers of around 100,000 per week world-wide.

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 Link to last week's programme

Listen to a 3 minute 'thought-for-the-week' message from John Knight.
 Link to 3 minute message

Today: Friday, 6 April

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 23:30 www.offshoremusicradio.com
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 Sunday, 8 April
 15:30 www.replayradio.net
 18:00 www.offshoremusicradio.com
 19:00 www.tforadio.co.uk
 Monday, 9 April
 07:30 www.replayradio.net
 09:00 www.offshoremusicradio.com
 11:30 www.isles.fm
 Wednesday, 11 April
 14:30 www.isles.fm
 19:30 www.replayradio.net

MALAYSIAN ASSEMBLY CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (1911-2011)

The Klang Gospel Hall is situated in the town of Klang, five miles east of Port Klang, in the state of Selangor in Malaysia. Port Klang was formerly known as Port Swettenham named after Sir Frank Swettenham, the first British Resident-General of the Federated States of Malaya. Malaysia was then called Malaya. Malaya was divided into three administrative territories, British Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore, the Federated States of Selangor, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang, and finally the unfederated States of Kedah, Perlis, Trengganu, Kelantan and Johore. Britain held sway in all these territories until it gave full independence to the country on August 31st 1957. Unlike other foreign colonial powers in Asia and Africa the British left a very positive mark in the later development of the country.

The assembly in Klang began after Mr. Chew Boon Hean, who was in prison for opium abuse, was led to the Lord by Mr. T. R. Angus. On his return to Klang, Mr. Chew brought his whole family to the Lord and then started a small meeting in a shop in 1911. In 1912 Mr. Chew, with the help of other believers and by God's grace, built a meeting place and thus the assembly now meeting in Klang Gospel Hall began. Two assemblies were formed for both the Chinese-speaking and English-speaking believers.

The two World Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 disrupted the work of the Lord somewhat, but the believers remained faithful, and continued to worship and preach the gospel. We thank the Lord that missionaries from Britain and Australia faithfully and fearlessly stayed in the country and helped in the work in the Klang assembly. Klang Gospel Hall is deeply indebted to missionaries such as Mr. and Mrs T. R. Angus, their son David Angus and his wife, Mr. and Mrs E. V. Brewerton, Mr. S. S. Adams, Mr. Bill Wilson, Mr. A. E. Phillips, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Stott, and many others.

On the local front, Mr. Ma Tham Shun, Mr. Chew Tian Fong, Mr. Chew Shiu Swee, Dr. G. D. James and Mr. Lim Chin Kheng were the pioneers of the assembly. Others who came to know the Lord and played a pivotal role in the development of the assembly during those difficult years were Mr. Ng Eng Yen and his son Mr. Ng Kong Lam.



Klang Hall today

After the Second World War, Mr. Ng Kong Lam, Mr. Goh Keng Siew, Mr. and Mrs Chellappah Abishegam and many other faithful brethren worked diligently to spread the gospel in Klang and the surrounding areas. Open-air meetings were held and a children's work began in Port Klang and a distant village named Jenjarom. In the early fifties, an assembly was established in Jenjarom. Miss Daphne King and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Watt with the help of the brethren from Klang built the church there. A new building was erected, and Chinese and Tamil work began to grow by the grace of God. A beautiful new building was built for the Jenjarom assembly in 2011 and will be occupied soon, God willing.

The work in Port Klang also progressed well and a shop-lot was used to conduct meetings in 1973. The elders at Klang Gospel Hall felt it necessary to build a new hall on a piece of land already designated for worship. In 1979 a new building was constructed and subsequently renovated and enlarged in 2004. The building can now seat 300 people.

The work in Klang Gospel Hall grew in leaps and bounds. The young people of the late forties and early fifties had now become responsible young adults and began to take on greater

Klang old Hall



responsibility. With the able direction of Mr. Ng Kong Lam, Mr. Tom Watt, Mr. Chellappah Abishegam and later Dr. Alastair McGregor, the church grew into a vibrant community.

In the late seventies, the Greater Klang Evangelistic Crusade was launched. The English assembly was divided into three home fellowships with the aim of setting up three new assemblies. As a result a new assembly, Klang Jaya Gospel Hall, now known as Bethany Chapel was set up and given autonomy in January 2009. Later in 2009 another was established and known as Setia Alam Gospel Assembly in Setia Alam, a new township about six miles away from Klang Gospel Hall.

The Chinese work also progressed after the establishment of Jenjarom Gospel Hall. Believers who spoke Chinese also established a Chinese testimony in Port Klang Gospel Hall. The Chinese work is growing although there is a decrease in the number of children in the Sunday School in Klang. The Sunday School and the Youth Work in Jenjarom Gospel Hall is very encouraging. The brethren from the Chinese assembly have worked hard to spread the gospel among the Chinese-speaking community and have worked tirelessly to oversee the work in the three Chinese assemblies.

We also began a Tamil ministry in 2002 and soon a Tamil assembly was established in Klang Gospel Hall. The work has now been transferred to the Bethany Chapel with the support of the other assemblies.

We thank the Lord for His faithfulness and protection. By His grace and mercy He has seen us through difficult times. The work has been very encouraging and we trust in the Lord to direct us into more avenues of service. We now have five commended workers serving the Lord in our assemblies.

In all we have, only by God's grace and to His glory, established four English-speaking assemblies, three Chinese-speaking assemblies and one Tamil assembly in the last century. And thus when we celebrated our Centenary with a Thanksgiving Service on the 16th of September 2011, we rejoiced at the greatness and goodness of God. We prayed that if the Lord does not return soon, we will move with greater courage and resilience into the next century.



ARTEMAS

Paul intended to send relief to Titus, who was working on the island of Crete, so that he could be free to meet him at Nicopolis. This relief was to be in the person of either Artemas or Tychicus, Tit. 3. 12. We do not know who went in the end, but we do read of further activity on the part of Tychicus, 2 Tim. 4. 12, who was sent to Ephesus, so perhaps it was Artemas who went to Crete. Whatever actually happened, the important thing to understand is that either Artemas or Tychicus must have been competent men, who could be entrusted with carrying on Titus's important work and were prepared to make themselves available for the task.

TYCHICUS

The first time we hear about Tychicus is when the collection among Gentile assemblies for the poor saints in Jerusalem was complete, and Paul delivered it to Jerusalem. He was careful to take with him seven Gentile believers who had been associated with the gathering of the collection in Macedonia, Galatia, 1 Cor. 16. 1, and Asia. From Macedonia were 'Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus'; from Galatia, Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus [Lystra]; and finally, from Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus, Acts 20. 4. Paul's principal contact in Asia was Ephesus, so Tychicus was probably from that city. To be representative of the saints in such a matter would not be the prerogative of all, so Tychicus must have been well thought of by Paul and his own assembly in order to fulfill such a position.

Although we do not then hear of Tychicus for some time, he was obviously with Paul some years later during his first imprisonment in Rome, because it was Tychicus who delivered Paul's epistles to the

Personalities in the Past Those who were devoted

assemblies in Ephesus and Colosse. However, he was far more than a postman! He was commended by the apostle as a beloved brother, and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord. As well as earning this hard-won commendation, he had also shown a real interest in Paul's welfare and was now well able to pass on all the information that they might want to know about him and his circumstances. He was also able to comfort the hearts of the saints at Ephesus and Colosse and be in a position to bring back accurate news of the saints to Paul when he knew their state, Col. 4. 7-8.

During the time of Paul's release from imprisonment, he and Titus laboured on the island of Crete, and he had left Titus there to complete the unfinished business that they had started, as described in his Epistle to Titus. However, Paul wanted Titus to join him for the winter in Nicopolis (western Greece). Hence, he was arranging to send relief either in the person of Artemas or Tychicus, Tit. 3. 12. Which brother actually turned up we do not know. However, we do know that during his (short) second imprisonment in Rome, Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus, 2 Tim. 4. 12. Ephesus was an assembly where Tychicus had been before to deliver Paul's epistle (see above), so Paul had no embarrassment in sending him back, so he must still have been well thought of by the assembly with which he was originally associated.

In the context of the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, Paul had commended an unnamed brother to the Corinthians as 'our

brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things', 2 Cor. 8. 22. It might not have been Tychicus that he was referring to, but he certainly well earned such a comment, for he had been proved diligent in many things! May we too seek such commendation in the opportunities that arise for us to serve the Lord.

Tychicus' name means 'chance', 'fortuitous' or 'fateful'. However, it was not a matter of chance that earned him the scriptural, spiritual and suitable descriptions used of him.

CRESCENS

All we know about this brother is that he went from Rome where Paul was imprisoned, to Galatia, 2 Tim. 4. 10. Although spoken about in the same sentence as Demas the defector, no criticism is to be attached to Crescens because he went to Galatia, indeed the sentence finished by making the same statement about Titus who went to Dalmatia. The point is that unlike Tychicus, who was sent by Paul to Ephesus, 2 Tim. 4. 12, both Crescens and Titus went to their chosen destinations as a matter of their own exercise, rather than apostolic command (see Titus). This exercise is acknowledged by the apostle without a word of censure and no doubt follows from them learning about the situation in those places.

ERASTUS

The first we know of Erastus was when Paul 'sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus', Acts 19. 22. They went on before Paul who would arrive later after staying

ARTEMAS • TYCHICUS • CRESCENS
• EUBULUS • PUDENS • LINUS





Moral Epistles (8) By HOWARD BARNES Westhoughton, England

, dutiful and dear to Paul

on for a while in Asia. Then, it would seem that much later on one of Paul's last journeys, when he passed through Corinth, Erastus was with him but decided to stay behind in the city instead of continuing with him, 2 Tim. 4. 20, perhaps sensing the present spiritual need in that city. It is not known for sure that Erastus is the same one mentioned as the city treasurer of Corinth, Rom. 16. 23, but it is possible.

TROPHIMUS

Trophimus was a Gentile believer from Ephesus, Acts 21. 29. We first come across him along with Tychicus as representatives of the Asian assemblies travelling with Paul in connection with the collection for poor saints in Jerusalem, Acts 20. 4. He was with Paul in Jerusalem and it was he whom the Jews mistakenly thought had been taken into the temple by Paul, Acts 21. 29. This resulted in Paul's arrest and eventual loss of liberty.

It would seem that Trophimus accompanied Paul on his last journeys before his second imprisonment, and he fell ill at or near Miletus – a seaport some thirty miles from Ephesus – and was left there to recover, 2 Tim. 4. 20. Despite the modern-day claims of miracle healings, both Trophimus and Timothy, 1 Tim. 5. 23, knew ill health, which, if Paul had exercised a healing ministry for them, could easily have been overcome. Of course, miracles were used then as part of gospel outreach. This does not mean that God cannot answer prayers and heal believers today, but we would not expect this as part of a healing ministry.

EUBULUS, PUDENS, LINUS, AND CLAUDIA

These believers – three brethren and a sister – mentioned only once in the New Testament, seem to have been resident in Rome and in contact with the apostle Paul, who distinguishes them from 'all the brethren', who also sent their greetings, 2 Tim. 4. 21. Eubulus is mentioned on his own and he seems to have been especially close to Paul and Timothy, and Paul mentions them all as sending



greetings to Timothy. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he spoke about those in Rome who loved him and those who were envious of him, trying to increase his discomfort in confinement, Phil. 1. 15-16. The majority of the believers preached Christ, having been stirred up from silence by the apostle's activity in the

gospel in prison, v. 14, but some did it insincerely, v. 16. These four obviously belonged to the group of believers who loved the apostle. How sad to think that such behaviour could even be considered among Christians, let alone carried out.

CARPUS

Carpus was a Christian who lived at Troas, with whom Paul had left his cloak, books and parchments. Some have reasonably surmised that Paul was forced to leave these items at Troas with Carpus because of his hurried departure from the city, perhaps under arrest and on his way to Rome, 2 Tim. 4. 13. Carpus being entrusted with valuables reminds us of our responsibilities with regard to the things left with us, 2 Tim. 1. 14. These items were needed by the apostle and would bring comfort to him, so he instructs Timothy to bring them. The cloak would keep his body warm in his (possibly) subterranean prison cell, but his books and parchments would warm his heart. The parchments, being more expensive than the papyrus books, might have been copies of portions of the Old Testament, hence his 'especially the parchments'. Given the choice of reading matter, what would we choose if space was limited? Paul had little of this world's goods. He had already told Timothy that 'godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content', 1 Tim. 6. 6-8. Physical contentment was to be achieved simply by means of a cloak.

Endnote:

1 See Eph. 6. 21 and Col. 4. 7.

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CENS • ERASTUS • TROPHIMUS
TUS • CLAUDIA • CARPUS •





Israel's National Election

When the God of glory called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees to travel to a land which He would later show him, He intended to form from him a chosen nation, Israel. National election was a new departure in God's sovereign purposes. Previously, He had dealt with chosen individual men who trusted Him, such as Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Nations had been formed after the flood judgement, and man's rebellion at Babel had led to these being scattered across the earth. Abraham had once been an idolater like most other men, so that he had no special merit which qualified him for God's sovereign electing love. The Lord later told His people Israel through Moses that there was no natural reason in them why He chose them, because they were neither deserving, numerous, nor very remarkable as a nation, Deut. 7. 7-8. As with all whom God sovereignly chooses to be His own, He loved them because He loved them; that is, because His nature is love. Israel is the only nation on earth whom God has ever chosen and called 'my son' corporately, Hos. 11. 1. In this respect, Israel is absolutely unique. The Lord later assured them that they were 'the apple of his eye', very special, near, and dear to Him, Zech. 2. 8.

In the Past Their Purchase

Israel was redeemed nationally from slavery in Egypt under Pharaoh both by the shed blood of the Passover lamb slain on their behalf and also by God's almighty power from the pursuing Egyptians at the Red Sea. The Old Testament scriptures contain many reminders to Israel of their miraculous deliverance at the Exodus. No other nation has been redeemed in such a way.

Their Purpose

The Lord had several sovereign purposes in choosing and redeeming Israel. These included His call to them to become a kingdom of priests for His glory and a holy nation like Himself, Exod. 19. 6. Also, they were to become the recipients of God's revelation, which led directly to the formation of the scriptures. They certainly carefully guarded and passed these down to us. Israel was intended to be the Lord's witnesses

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF

in the world and to propagate the doctrine of the one true God, Isa. 43. 10-12, a task which they really failed to perform well. Finally, they were chosen to produce the Christ, Rom. 9. 5. All this meant that the Jews held the key to the way of salvation, as the Lord Jesus Himself said, John 4. 22.

Their Privileges and Promises

Paul summarizes his people's national privileges in Romans chapter 9 verses 4 and 5, namely:

- the adoption (national sonship mentioned above);
- the glory (the cloud of the Lord's presence in the tabernacle and temple sanctuary);
- the covenants (that is, the unconditional ones, the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants);
- the giving of the law (that is, the conditional Mosaic covenant);
- the service of God (the Aaronic priesthood and Levitical service);
- the promises (of ultimate blessing despite their temporary failure as His representatives);
- the fathers (the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, to whom the covenant promises of a land, a seed, and an everlasting house and kingdom were first made);
- 'of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came', v. 5.

Here we need to underline the largely unconditional nature of the Lord's covenants with, and promises to, Israel, dependent entirely on His own sovereign electing will and purpose for them. Therefore they cannot be cancelled or transferred to anyone else, and will be fulfilled literally one day.

Their Perversity and Punishment

Israel, however, despite every advantage given to them, proved from the beginning of their history to be a stubborn and rebellious people. They continually broke the Mosaic law and covenant by their idolatrous, immoral, and unjust behaviour over many centuries. Therefore, although the Lord eventually led them into their Promised Land under Joshua, gave them a measure of victory over

their enemies, and established His mediatorial kingship and temple in His chosen city, Jerusalem, He was later obliged to discipline them by allowing first the Assyrians, then the Babylonians to carry them into exile in foreign lands. There they were effectively cured of the sin of idolatry, and some of the exiles in Babylon were allowed, under the Lord's sovereign hand, to return to Jerusalem after seventy years to rebuild the temple and city walls. But

By
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England

Israel's culminating sin was their failure to recognize and welcome their prophesied Christ, their rejection of Him despite His morally perfect life, and their determination to crucify Him. For this, and

for their failure to repent at the preaching of the apostles after Christ's resurrection and ascension, they were again invaded by the Romans in AD 70, their temple was destroyed, and they have been dispersed among all nations for many centuries. God in His sovereignty has always used other nations to chastize them until they repent.

In the Present Their Parallel Position

During this age of grace, since Pentecost and the formation of the church comprising all believers in Christ, God has temporarily rejected and set aside His earthly people Israel





OF GOD AND ISRAEL

while the Holy Spirit is calling out of all nations a heavenly people as a bride for Christ. There are on earth at present, therefore, two parallel peoples of God, a heavenly one, the church, taking centre-stage in God's redemptive purposes today, and an earthly one, Israel, in dispersion and under God's discipline. But God has neither cancelled, nor transferred to the church, Israel's unconditional covenants and unfulfilled promises. They still apply to them, despite much current teaching to the contrary. Otherwise, the obvious literal meaning of much scripture, especially Old Testament scripture, is denied, and there is complete confusion in interpretation.

Their Miraculous Preservation

God's absolute sovereignty is seen clearly in the undeniable fact that the Jewish nation, despite several exiles and their present world-wide dispersion, has in large measure retained its separate identity, and has survived many attempts by

Gentile powers to annihilate them completely. More than that, it is seen in the way that the present nation state of Israel was re-established in their land in 1948, and has defeated several invasions by their hostile Arab neighbours. Without doubt, God's overruling sovereignty is evident here. He is owning His earthly people despite their present position under His discipline.

Their Current Prospects

Today, God is increasingly making Israel 'a burdensome stone' to all nations, Zech. 12. 3. World leaders do not know how to resolve the Middle East impasse. Scripture clearly predicts that this situation will continue and lead directly to the final world war, Armageddon, at the end of the future Great Tribulation, Dan. 11. 40-45. The coming evil prince will pretend to resolve the problem, but break his seven-year covenant with unbelieving Israel, Dan. 9. 26-27. Currently, we see various indications that God is sovereignly preparing the world for these end-time events.

In the Future

Their Rejection not Total

Romans chapters 9 to 11 are encouraging. Here Paul says that God has sovereignly overruled Israel's rejection of Christ, and their consequent temporary rejection by God. In this age of grace and the largely Gentile Church, God is not working nationally, but individually, so that anyone, Jew or Gentile, who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, Rom. 9. 30-10. 21. God had always promised to save a believing remnant of Israel from the fate of the unbelieving majority, Isa. 10. 20-23. Other prophets had also predicted this. Now Paul points out that there is still a remnant of Jews coming to faith, Rom. 11. 1-11. Today, these Jewish believers become part of the church and share her destiny. So the rejection of Israel is not total. God's sovereign purpose in Israel's stumbling over Christ was that salvation might go out to the Gentiles, the 'wild olive branches'. But this, in turn, was to provoke the Jews to jealousy and so result in their conversion, Rom. 11. 11-15.

Their Rejection not Final

Because 'the gifts and calling of God are without repentance', Rom. 11. 29, after the full complement of Gentiles have believed during the present church age, and we have been raptured to heaven, in sovereign grace God will remove Israel's partial blindness to the gospel and set them in the centre of His purposes again. 144,000 divinely-protected Jews will preach the gospel of the kingdom world-wide, Rev. 7. Then, when Christ appears in glory, the third part of Israelites who survive the tribulation will repent, believe, and be born again, Zech. 12-13. So 'all Israel shall be saved', and Christ will 'turn away ungodliness from Jacob', Rom. 11. 26. Thus God will graft the natural branches of His olive tree of covenant privilege and responsibility, which stems from His promises to the patriarchs, back into their own olive tree again, vv. 16-24.

Their Refining Necessary and Painful

God predicted to Daniel 490 further years of discipline for Israel to end their rebellion against Him, of which the last seven tribulation years will be the worst. This will be 'the time of Jacob's trouble', from which the Lord will come to save them, Jer. 30. 7. It will purify Israel spiritually by means of the Beast's persecution and God's own direct judgements, Rev. 6-19.

Their Regathering and Restoration Certain and Glorious

At the beginning of the millennial kingdom of Christ, all surviving Israelites will be regathered by His angels to their land to form the chief nation on earth, Matt. 24. 31. Gentiles will seek after the Jews, who will become God's witnesses to them at last, Zech. 8. 23. When Israel is in her sovereignly-given place under Christ, the whole earth will flourish and all its citizens will acknowledge the Lord's glory.

Doxology

With Paul, let us, therefore, praise God for the wisdom of all His sovereign ways of 'goodness and severity', grace and government, with the nation whom He calls 'Israel my glory', Rom. 11. 33-36; Isa. 46. 13!

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Introduction

Five hundred years ago this year, Martin Luther was awarded a doctorate by the University of Wittenberg. We may not think that this was anything out of the ordinary, but, in fact, this proved to be a catalyst in Luther's life, and paved the way for his later Reformation discovery. Through this preferment, Luther became a permanent member of the university's teaching faculty.

As a result of his lectures at the university, Luther discovered the true nature of the righteousness of God, which ultimately led to one of the defining moments in church history.

Luther's Early Years

Martin Luther entered an Augustinian monastery in Erfurt in 1505, following a somewhat harrowing experience during a summer thunderstorm. By taking holy orders, Luther hoped that his salvation would be assured.¹ Most people of his day considered monastic life to be a positive step in finding a way around future judgement, or, at least, enabling one to accumulate a significant credit balance in God's sight.² Luther's concern was symptomatic of an age where the terror of death and eternal judgement caused great religious anxiety for some.³ Luther felt more keenly than most individuals about his need of salvation. He constantly suffered from attacks of insecurity, and a deep-seated fear of death and the devil. He suffered from what John Bunyan would later describe as the 'bruised conscience'; the intense spiritual battle that ensues in the conscience of an individual who seeks to combat temptation.⁴ To continue the analogy with Bunyan, Luther alternated between the 'Slough of Despond' and 'Doubting Castle', never certain that he would finally attain the 'Celestial City'. His constant cry was how could he find a gracious God? What better place, then, to find the assurance that constantly evaded him than the monastery at Erfurt?

Typical of everything that Luther ever attempted, he completely immersed himself in the process of becoming a monk. If anyone was to achieve salvation through human effort, Luther would set the bar as an ascetic *par excellence*. Yet, despite observing canonical hours, keeping masses,

MARTIN LUTHER – D

reciting rosaries and the endless rounds of self-examination, Luther became more disillusioned, uncertain of his salvation, and even more certain that he was worthy of eternal damnation.⁵ Had Luther continued in this state of spiritual despair, he would unquestionably have succumbed to a mental breakdown, or something even worse. But God would lead him to discover the true nature of the righteousness of God, and to protest against a sixteenth-century church that had lost its way.

The Prevailing Theology

Luther's world was influenced by various kinds of scholastic theology. When he began his studies at the University of Erfurt in 1503, the prevailing influence was the *via moderna*. This form of theology taught that in the doctrine of justification, there was something that could be done to initiate the process of salvation.⁶ Luther was more directly influenced by this teaching than any other. Although the theologians of the *via moderna* tried to play down the effect of their teaching, there is no doubt that most individuals (including Luther) accepted that human effort could be efficacious with God. It was Luther's dissatisfaction with this works-righteousness system that eventually led to his reformation experience to which we now turn.

The Joy of Discovery – The 'Righteousness of God'

It is important to understand that Luther's 'Reformation Discovery' did not happen by chance. It was the end of a long and arduous voyage, a passage of time when Luther's guilt-ridden conscience came into dynamic tension with the biblical text. Luther's dissatisfaction with covenant theology gained momentum as he immersed himself in biblical studies. His first study from 1513-1514 was directed towards the book of Psalms. Working through the Psalms, Luther drew down heavily on the parallel experiences of Augustine, mirroring his own theological breakthrough with his.⁷ Despite initially maintaining

the principles of the *via moderna*, Luther's notes on the Psalms disclose a perceptible shift in his theology.⁸ He despaired of his own worth, but found in the Christology of the Psalms a new insight into the righteousness of God. He came to see the 'Justice of God' as a righteousness revealed in Jesus Christ and bestowed to man on the ground of faith.⁹ Luther linked this with the individual's personal relationship to God. By the end of his studies in the Psalms, Luther became disillusioned with the covenantal theology of the *via moderna*. What replaced it was a radical understanding of the way in which God justified the ungodly through Christ alone.

By
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The next phase in the development of his new theology brought him into contact with Paul's letter to the Romans.¹⁰ Here, at last, Luther found the answer to the 'justice of God' in Romans chapter 1 verse 17. He later recalled this experience, 'I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly . . . I was angry with God . . . Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience . . . ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted. At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live'". There I began to understand . . . the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live". Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates'.¹¹

Luther saw the righteousness of God as the exact opposite of human righteousness. Human beings were not active, but passive in respect of justification. Righteousness could not be realized by human effort.¹² The righteousness of God was something



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alien and extrinsic to humanity, or, 'the righteousness of another, instilled from without'.¹³ It came as a gift through faith in Christ alone; it was imputed, not imparted or infused, and could not be earned as a reward.¹⁴ Luther no longer remained angry with God.¹⁵ For Luther the God, now revealed in the gospel, was a God of grace and mercy, not a

he still regarded the law as retaining an important function in the Christian life. Luther developed the idea that the Christian remains in this life at one and the same time both righteous and sinner. So for Luther, Christians lived simultaneously in two worlds – one subject to the Spirit, the other subject to the flesh. In order to subdue and discipline the flesh, Christians need to engage with the law, which brings an awareness of sin. WESTERHOLM states that 'Luther even claimed that to the extent Christians are "flesh", they remain "under the law"'.¹⁷

We have reached the critical point in Luther's life. GEORGE indicates that 'Luther's doctrine of justification shattered the entire theology of merit and indeed the sacramental-penitential basis of the church itself'.¹⁸ Paradoxically, though, for Luther, the doctrine that for so long had haunted him now becomes the benchmark by which all other doctrines would be measured. His personal and religious struggles which led to his 'Reformation Discovery' provided him with a powerful matrix for the interpretation of

Paul's teaching.

punitive judge. Luther concluded that the 'works of the law' are inherently powerless to procure salvation. The Pauline expression 'works of the law' was interpreted by Luther as applying to any form of works-righteousness, and not simply to Judaism. Luther also referred to the law as a 'large and powerful hammer',¹⁶ required to break and crush the presumption of righteousness and reliance that a person placed on his good works. Thus, Luther viewed the law as playing a positive role in pointing people to Christ, but, negatively, in the sense that it could not justify the individual before God. Although Luther viewed the law as abrogated in terms of obtaining righteousness,

Abounding' and 'Jerusalem Sinner', which illuminated Luther's teaching about 'Anfechtung'.

- 5 LUTHER reflected later on this state of bondage during his lectures on Galatians in 1535 when he wrote, 'I went to confessions frequently, and I performed the assigned penances faithfully. Nevertheless, my conscience could never achieve certainty but was always in doubt and said, "You have not done this correctly. You were not contrite enough. You omitted this in your confession"'. (LW 27: No. 15).
- 6 TOMLIN states that when Luther read BIEL's textbook of dogmatic theology, he came across and was persuaded by the idea that God has entered into a covenant, or pact, with humanity. Within the framework of this agreement or covenant, sinners were capable of making a small moral effort on their own, without the help of God's grace. An initial effort was required before God would respond.
- 7 E.g., LW 11: 20.
- 8 MCGRATH states that there is every reason to suppose that Luther's discovery of the 'new' meaning of the 'righteousness of God' took place at some point during the year 1515, possibly while he was still delivering his first course of lectures upon the Psalter. (*Luther's Theology of the Cross*, pg. 98).
- 9 *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms 1521*, pg. 38.
- 10 RUPP draws a comparison with Luther turning to Romans by recalling the words of G.K. Chesterton about H.G. Wells that 'one could almost hear him growing in the night, so plain was the growth in maturity, independence and coherence.' (*Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms 1521*, pg. 40).
- 11 LW 34: 338. Whether Luther's 'Tower Experience' (*Turmerlebnis*) is totally accurate is a moot point, but MCCULLOCH suggests 'it was a turning point remembered later by Luther.' (*Reformation-Europe's House Divided*, pg. 119).
- 12 GEORGE states that Luther's break with the nominalist concepts of merit and grace was a fundamental step in his developing doctrine of justification. (*The Theology of the Reformers*, pg. 66).
- 13 This is where Luther ultimately departs from Augustine in terms of the *locus in quo* of righteousness. As MCGRATH states, 'Augustine located this gift within humanity, as a transforming reality; Luther argued that it is located outside us, being 'reckoned' or 'imputed' to humanity, not imparted'. (*Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, pg. 43).
- 14 MCGRATH states that the essential feature of Luther's theological breakthrough is thus the destruction of the framework upon which his early soteriology was based, and *thence* the necessity of reinterpretation of the concept of *iustitia Dei*. (*iustitia Dei*, pp. 193-194).
- 15 MCGRATH, *Justification By Faith*, pg. 52.
- 16 LW 26: 310.
- 17 *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, pg. 11.
- 18 *Martin Luther* in GREENMAN, JEFFREY P. AND LARSEN (ed) *Reading Romans through the Centuries*, pg. 116. This is, of course, a reference to the Roman Catholic church. [Editor]

Endnotes

- 1 'Oh, if I were to enter a monastery (I thought) and serve God in cowl and tonsure, he will reward and welcome me'. (LW 51: 83).
- 2 MCGRATH states that the priory was an austere place – yet, on the basis of the theology of the day, it seemed to Luther to guarantee his place in heaven. Was not becoming a monk the surest way to avoid hell?
- 3 This was a *late* medieval phenomenon, particularly post Black Death. For a graphic insight into the effect of the plague on Europe in 1348 see OWEN CHADWICK'S comments in *The Early Reformation on the Continent* at pg. 70.
- 4 RUPP sees a unique parallel between the spiritual experiences of both men. He argues that Bunyan drew heavily on Luther's commentary to the Galatians, which mirrored his own spiritual pilgrimage, and Bunyan's 'Grace

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‘And ye now therefore have sorrow’, John 16. 22

A STUDY IN JOHN 16

By **SAM TAUFEEK** Toronto, Canada

Since the time sin entered this world a new ‘order’ started. There would be no conception without sorrow and no birth without pain. Before man could enjoy food on his table his face would need to sweat and in sorrow he would eat. Pain became the gate to benefit. This gate is usually dark, fearful, and hard to see through. Shortly before going to the cross, the Lord Jesus wanted to encourage the disciples. In John chapter 16, He addressed His coming suffering and death, but like never before, for the cross was very near.

In Matthew chapter 16 verse 21 we read, ‘From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day’. The gate to the glorious resurrection was a gate of the greatest pain. It seems that the only words that rang in Peter’s ears were ‘suffer many things’ and ‘be killed’; his reaction indicates that the latter part of the Lord’s speech, ‘and be raised again the third day’, meant very little to him.

We are exhorted in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2 to look unto the Lord Jesus, as our perfect Example, to be able to run with patience the race that is set before us, for He could see *the joy* that was set before him, even through the pain and darkness of the cross.

In a brief study of John chapter 16 we might divide it into two main parts. The first is to focus on the Lord’s explanation of the necessity of the coming pain and how to face it, and the second is in regards to the promised glories to follow.

- 1 The information He was going to share with them in this chapter was vital for their faith and endurance during this coming period and thereafter, John 16. 1, 4, 25, 33.
- 2 It would be of greater benefit

for them to enquire of Him for an explanation, rather than to succumb to heavy sorrow. In His love and patience He would explain what was coming regardless of their limitations, vv. 5-6.

- 3 Parables are not suitable for this solemn situation, but rather straight talk, v. 25.
- 4 His departure was in their best interests, although they could not see this, or even have any desire to find it out, v. 7.
- 5 He understood and appreciated their difficulties as a compassionate shepherd, vv. 12, 20, 22.
- 6 He gave them a practical example of the feared pain of delivery that separates between temporal, limited joy, and much greater joy to come, v. 21.
- 7 When the Lord was with the disciples in the flesh they were fully dependent on Him to fill all their needs. Still, that was not the best set up the loving Father had in His grace for them, v. 4.

Now let us examine the comparison the Lord Jesus made between the blessings they had during His ministry in the flesh and the blessings His death and resurrection would bring.

- 1 They would gain new knowledge and appreciation of the love of the Father, v. 27.
- 2 They would be ready to receive and broadcast the living word of God without any limitations of the human mind, vv. 12, 13.
- 3 They would know the secret of overcoming the world, v. 33.
- 4 Sight would be replaced by faith, v. 26.
- 5 Circumstantial happiness would be replaced by eternal joy, v. 22.
- 6 They would receive the power of the Holy Spirit and the world would be convicted and ready for the message of salvation, vv. 7-11.
- 7 They would have peace in Him, regardless of tribulations and circumstances, v. 33.



- 8 All the resources of the Heavenly Father would be made available to them in His name, vv. 15, 23.
- 9 They would learn how to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ beyond the limitations of the flesh, v. 14.
- 10 They would never deny the risen Lord again, vv. 31, 32.
- 11 In general, they would understand the perfect plan of God in regards to their salvation.

Later, Peter would explain to us in his First Epistle about the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

My dear brother or sister in Christ, you may be facing a painful situation and your mind may be clouded with many questions. I pray that the Holy Spirit would use the simple thoughts above to encourage you. The empty tomb confirms beyond doubt that God is always in control. All pain is part of His perfect plan, as it was on the cross. You might not understand this now, but you can be assured that you will understand later on, and will then be fully satisfied through His love and grace.

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TRIP TO ISRAEL March 6 -16, 2012

By **ROY HILL**

On Tuesday 6th March, 99 readers of our magazine gathered at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport for *PSi's* first-ever trip to Israel. Almost 50% came from Canada and the USA and the rest from the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand – truly an international group drawn together by a love for the Lord and His word, and anxious to walk where He walked during His sojourn here on earth. The youngest was 9 years old and the eldest was 91! The arrangements for our trip were made by Thompson International in Northern Ireland, and Travex in Jerusalem, and we were assisted by the Israeli Embassy in London who arranged for an Israeli government member to speak to us, and regularly checked up on us during the trip to make sure we were safe and well. We stayed in 4- and 5-star hotels in Tel Aviv, Tiberias, and Jerusalem and all meals and tips to guides, drivers and hotel staff were included in the price.

We visited many of the usual sites and some less-visited ones. The latter included Wadi Hamam (a peaceful place on the Jesus Trail), The Peace Vista (from where there is a wonderful view of the whole of the Lake of Galilee), and a visit to soldiers in the Golan Heights, where we were able to chat, sit in their Humvees, and even to handle their weapons. These were very young men doing a very difficult job – their commander was 21 years of age! They spoke English fluently and were interested in our group and why we were in Israel.

Other popular sites visited included Joppa, Banias,

Ein Gedi, Caesarea, and Capernaum. We sailed, sang and read the scriptures on Lake Galilee, and in Jerusalem we visited the Mt. of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane (in a very quiet and private part), the Wailing Wall, the Western Wall Tunnels, Herodion, the Israel Museum, the Shrine of the Book, the Garden Tomb, and many other places including the Holocaust Museum. Later, we went to Qumran, and Masada, and had a float at a beautiful and comfortable place in the Dead Sea, farther to the south than tours normally go. The weather was excellent, except for one day which was very windy. A week before we arrived there had been snow in Jerusalem and while we were there terrorists fired over 400 rockets from Gaza into southern Israel. Exciting days!

Each evening in Tiberias we had a meeting after dinner, and our speakers included George Khalil (the Nazareth assembly), Jim Comte, who spoke of his work in Ontario, and Stan Farmer on the setting up of 'His Mansion', a ministry in the USA to rehabilitate drug, drink, and sex addicts, and to point them to the Lord. One evening we went to the Hot Springs at Hamat Gader and bathed there for some time. They really are hot!

Lunches ranged from a top hotel in a Dead Sea resort through to a picnic at Banias to an Arab restaurant in the Old City of Jerusalem. The food throughout was excellent.

In Jerusalem our speakers were Meno Kalisher, on Messianic Jews, Victor Kalisher, on the

Israeli Bible Society, Dr. Gabriel Barkay, the world-famous archaeologist, on the history of Jerusalem, and Bahig Mansour, who combines the roles of Israel's Ambassador to Nigeria and heads up the Religious Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem. Each evening throughout the tour there was a word of ministry shared by various brethren on the trip. On the Lord's Day half of our number remembered the Lord in the assembly in Nazareth, and the other half in the small assembly in Jerusalem. We had wonderful times in both and many tears were shed there. It was a pleasure to meet Mary Kilbride in Jerusalem and the Arab believers in Nazareth and to enjoy their fellowship.

We purchased from the Israel Bible Society five copies of their recently published *Hebrew Cross-Reference Bible* and gave one to each of our guides and one each also to Dr. Barkay and to Bahig Mansour. They were all graciously received and one of the guides wrote, 'I was deeply touched by your gift of the Bible and will certainly use it extensively'.

We set out to deliver a high-quality tour with the best hotels and guides, to miss out on churches, and so called 'holy sites', and to visit some off-the-beaten-track areas. Our guests believe we did that and more, and some have expressed a wish to book up now for the next tour. When will that be? Perhaps May or October 2013, DV. If you are interested in joining us then do let me know ASAP as we plan to restrict the numbers to 50 people.



UNVEILED - THE HISTORY OF THE K

Matthew chapter 13 rates alongside Leviticus chapter 23 and Revelation chapters 2 and 3 as a passage that unfolds future events before they happen. The Feasts, a calendar of Israel's agricultural year, foreshadow events from the Passover to Tabernacles, the cross to the kingdom on earth. The letters to the seven churches, in present-day western Turkey, outline the history of the church era from apostolic times until the rapture. Matthew chapter 13 foretells the history of the kingdom of heaven from the disciples' initial preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to the return of Christ to earth described as 'the end of the world' – the inter-advent period.

Matthew's Gospel is characterized by discourses. Chapter 13 is the third he records.

Chapters 5 to 7

The Principles Governing the Kingdom

Chapter 10

The Preachers of the Gospel of the Kingdom

Chapter 13

The Parables of the Growth of the Kingdom

The Context of the chapter

The chapters, Matthew 1 to 13, might be outlined as follows:

Chapters 1 to 9

The Credentials of the King

Chapter 10

The Commission of the King

Chapters 11 to 13

The Conspiracy against the King

In chapter 11 we have the *Rejection of the King*

'This generation' criticizes both John the Baptist and Jesus. Cities exalted to heaven, as to their privilege, will be brought down to hell, as to their punishment, because they 'repented not'. The 'wise and prudent' are not responsive to Messiah's claims. The national apostasy sweeping Israel results in their rejection of the moral and spiritual claims of Christ. He turns to individuals with the

By **JOHN GRIFFITHS** Port Talbot, Wales

invitation, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden', v. 28.

In chapter 12 we have the *Rebellion against the King*

Again criticism is levelled at both the disciples and the Lord. The point at issue is the use of the Sabbath day. The legalistic Pharisees call a council meeting to discuss ridding the world of Jesus. He stands accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan rather than the power of the Spirit. This is the unpardonable sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

'This generation' is replaced with stronger denunciation by our Lord, 'O generation of vipers', 'an evil and adulterous generation' and, 'this wicked generation', vv. 34, 39, 45. Our Lord proceeds to refute natural relationships in favour of spiritual family relationships. The kingdom of which He is about to speak consists of those who 'shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven', v. 50.

In chapter 13 we have the *Revelation of the King*

The establishment of the millennial kingdom on earth is deferred. Postponement is due to the King being rejected by Jew and Roman. Israel will be set aside from the mainstream of God's purpose and the Gentiles will be in line for blessing as the primary subjects of an interim kingdom, Acts 15. 14. The King has gone on a long journey and is Himself absent. The kingdom itself has no geographical boundaries.

Here on earth (for the parables are all earth related) there will be a kingdom not openly manifest but in mystery. Its subjects on earth will own allegiance to their King in heaven.

The Construction of the chapter

The first four parables are told in public, the last four in private. The first and eighth parable lay no claim to being part of the kingdom of heaven series. The second, third and fourth parables are linked because they are introduced by the threefold

repetition of 'another'. The fifth, sixth and seventh parables are linked because they are introduced by the threefold repetition of 'again'. The symmetry of these parables is 1-3-3-1.

An analysis of this chapter is as follows:

The Parable of the Commencement of the Kingdom,

vv. 1-9, 18-23;

The Parables of the Contamination of the Kingdom,

vv. 24-43;

The Parables of the Composition of the Kingdom,

vv. 44-50;

The Parable of the Constraint of the Kingdom,

v. 52.

The Characteristics of the chapter

1 Why use parables?

Verse 3, 'he spake many things unto them in parables'; verse 34, 'without a parable spake he not unto them'; verse 53, 'when Jesus had finished these parables'.

The disciples were prompted to ask, 'Why speakest thou unto them in parables?' v. 10. The Lord's reply is given in verses 11 to 17 and verses 34 and 35.

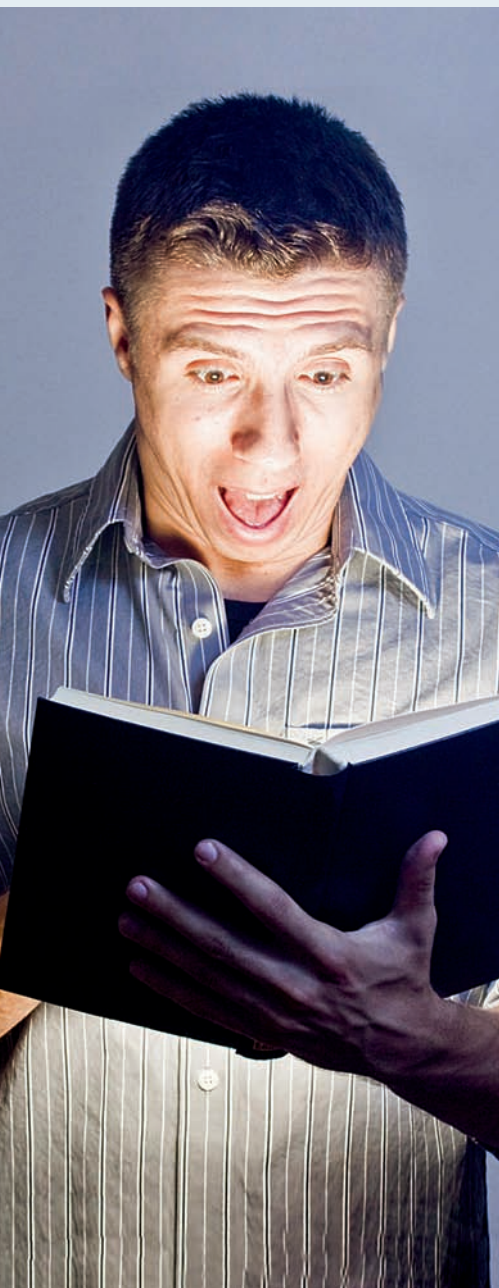
The parables were based on daily occurrences prompted by nature, agriculture etc., and used to illustrate spiritual truths. The general intention was to illustrate and enlighten. In this chapter the parables were deliberately used to leave the unbelieving multitude in the dark while enlightening the disciples. The word 'parable' means 'to put alongside' with a view to making a difficult concept clear.

The Lord justifies His use of parables in this way by quoting from two Old Testament passages. The first is found in Isaiah chapter 6 verses 9 and 10. There the persistent disobedience of the nation in response to Jehovah's overtures through the prophets

INGDOM OF HEAVEN (1)

resulted in judicial blindness to Israel. As in the case of Pharaoh who hardened his heart until the point where God stepped in and enforced the process, so the Lord sovereignly enforces the condition the nation has chosen in Christ's day. The multitudes might listen to the parables but they could not fathom their significance. Even the disciples requested an interpretation from the Lord.

The second quotation in verse 35 is taken from Psalm 78 verse 2. The psalmist paints a picture of a rebellious people who constantly offend and anger the Lord during their wilderness wanderings and in the promised land.



To those of believing heart and enquiring mind the Lord was about to unlock truth which had been kept secret hitherto. The unveiling of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven was about to proceed for the benefit of the disciples then and now.

2 Why use the term, 'kingdom of heaven'?

The 'kingdom of God' expresses the idea of the divine Person who is sovereign over the realm; God himself. The 'kingdom of heaven' tells of the seat of that Sovereign and the sphere out of which He exercises His rule, namely heaven.

God had to teach the Gentile monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, a salutary lesson. The man was puffed up with pride and had to be reduced to eating grass like any four-footed creature before he gave due recognition to God. Daniel writes, 'that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule', 4. 26. HARRY BELL opines that God's rule on earth, no longer administered through Israel or Judah, has been removed to heaven.

The argument as to whether the 'kingdom of God' and the 'kingdom of heaven' are synonymous or not must be resolved elsewhere! The use of the term is exclusive to Matthew's Gospel occurring thirty-two times. He only uses 'kingdom of God' four times. Other kingdom of heaven parables found in Matthew appear as follows: 18. 23; 20. 1; 22. 2; 25. 1 and 14.

The kingdom of heaven incorporates religious profession as well as genuine children of the kingdom. This will become obvious when parables 2, 3 and 4 are considered.

For the duration of the period when the kingdom and the church run parallel to one another, this sphere of profession is Christendom. However, it must never be forgotten that the church and the kingdom are distinct entities. They are not co-extensive.

JOHN GRIFFITHS is an elder in the assembly at Port Talbot, Wales. He has written for a number of assembly magazines.

The image shows the cover of the 'Precious Seed International' e-magazine for March 2012. The cover features a green background with a white boat on a grassy bank. The title 'Precious SEED INTERNATIONAL' is written in a stylized font. Below the title, it says 'e-magazine—March 2012'. There is a table of contents on the left side of the cover. The text 'e-magazine' is written in large yellow letters across the middle. Below that, there are three questions: 'Have you seen it?', 'Have you read it?', and 'Have you downloaded it and passed it on to fellow Christians?'. The bottom of the cover has the name 'John Bennett' and the title 'MINISTRY ARTICLES EDITOR'.

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e-magazine

Have you seen it?

Have you read it?

Have you downloaded it and passed it on to fellow Christians?

This new venture was commenced in December last year. It is an eight-page full colour magazine aimed at providing something of spiritual benefit for those 'on the move'. It is available for download from the *Precious Seed International* web site (www.preciousseed.org) and is in A4 pdf format.

From June 2012, the third issue of the e-magazine, we will make it available in a black and white format as well as the colour version. This should enable Kindle and other e-reader users to download it too.

Alternatively, you could print it off and take to some of those Christians who may not be able to get to all of the meetings because of illness or frailty. We hope that you find this new format helpful.

If you would like to receive a copy direct to your mailbox, a black and white copy to print off for someone else, or a regular reminder to say it is available on-line, then send us your email address to info@preciousseed.org and put in the subject of your email 'Request for e-magazine' or 'Request for e-magazine reminder'. We will do the rest.

Similarly, if you have any feedback for us about this e-magazine, use the email address above and send us a note. If you want this additional work to continue it will depend on feedback received – send us yours!

Please note that some other organisations go by the name of *Precious Seed International* on the internet. Please ensure when seeking to access *Precious Seed International* that you access www.preciousseed.org.

John Bennett
MINISTRY ARTICLES EDITOR



REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK



ENGLAND

Tyne and Wear

From **Gateshead**, brother Jim McMaster writes, 'As always, the backbone of the work continues to be the outreach to the homeless population of the area, most of whom are suffering deeply from drug and alcohol addiction problems. One of the most encouraging aspects of the last year has been the exercise of other believers to join me, particularly for the Sunday night soup kitchen; there are now a regular eight people from local assemblies who are committed to this great work. Not only do these believers aid in the practical aspects of feeding and distributing the material help but, without exception, each one is devotedly focused on bringing the gospel to these very needy souls. Due to the proximity of the city centre to the Gospel Hall we have had a steady stream of regulars into the meeting from the soup kitchen to

hear the gospel. The Lord has graciously touched many lives in this way and several are showing a deepening concern for their soul. Please pray for James who is earnestly seeking the truth, but is blinded by modern philosophy. Haggis has been antagonistic to the gospel for many years, but recent events have softened his heart and he has an open ear now to the gospel. We have many names on our list that we regularly pray for and are thankful for all who share this burden with us. This is so important as 2011 has seen one of our most tragic years with more than ten of our regulars losing their lives, either as a result of addiction or violence on the street. Mark is a typical example. One Sunday evening I spent a long time sharing the gospel with him and his girlfriend, but, one week later, when I was looking for him at the kitchen his friends reported his sudden death as a result of a drug overdose. On many occasions I have the tragic duty of attending these funerals which are most miserable occasions without the Lord. The Good News van continues to be the focus of the work and it is now recognized all over the city,

and speaks volumes just by its presence. Many believers have been involved in the collection and supply of the materials we use and some have asked for a list of the items we need most. Firstly, we are always on the lookout for good quality Bibles and New Testaments. We are constantly able to put the word of God into the hands of these people. We also try and use good Christian books, CDs and DVDs to get the gospel into the hands of our dear friends. Mostly the need is for sleeping bags, blankets, socks, and boxer shorts. Hygiene packs too are in very high demand, and we are thankful to those who spend lots of time collecting and compiling these for us'.

London

The saints at **Mayo Road Gospel Hall** held gospel meetings with Jonathan Black and Leslie Craig. These meetings were run alongside a Bible exhibition. Around 200 people came along to the exhibition, most of which had responded to invitations given out on the street. Each night some who had visited the exhibition were back under the preaching of the gospel. Many Bibles were distributed in various languages. Prayer is valued for such contacts that God will work and save in South East London.

Jonathan also conducted Gospel Meetings at **Bermondsey Gospel Hall**, along with a Bible exhibition. In this area it proved difficult to get people into the Hall but there were a few who came to the meetings. The assembly worked hard in the distribution of invitations and literature and each night packs were given out at the local tube station containing John chapter 3 verse 16 and gospel tracts.

Surrey

The assembly at Manor Road, **Guildford**, held a holiday Bible club and had the joy of seeing over thirty infant and junior schoolchildren attend each day. The sessions entitled, 'On your Marks', were designed to tie in with a 2012 Olympic theme. Each of the two-and-a-half hour sessions with Ray Tate were packed with things for the children to do and it was encouraging to see the attention given to God's word. Stories from Mark's Gospel were used to point to who the Lord Jesus

really is; the greatness of His Person, and the gracious forgiveness He offers through His death and resurrection. There was a good turnout of parents for the prize-giving on the Wednesday and they were most appreciative of the time their children had enjoyed with the believers. The Young People's Group also had a good session with Ray on the Monday evening as they were challenged to see the marvel of God's creation, as opposed to the theory of evolution that they had all been taught at school.



WALES

As mentioned in the previous issue, last September, the small assembly at **Tredegar**, hosted a Bible Exhibition, and over 500 came along to see it. 350 of these were local schoolchildren, and, as a result of this, the believers were invited into the local schools to help with Bible Explorers and lunch time clubs. This has enabled over 200 children to receive consecutive Bible teaching. Also, as a result of these contacts, the assembly has seen a number of people come along to



the meetings, and, at the Carol Service, out of twenty-four present, sixteen were unsaved. In days where we seem to have fewer people coming along to gospel meetings, these efforts should be an encouragement and challenge to us all. There are seven believers in assembly fellowship in Tredegar.

The assembly at **Cwmbran** has had the great joy of having four young people baptized in recent months. All of these were students for whom many had been praying. Please pray for their continued progress.

In February 2011, Ian Rees and his family moved to a house just outside Narberth, with the desire to take the gospel to the communities of a spiritually-dark Pembrokeshire. Having found a room to rent in **Tenby**, where there is currently no evangelical witness, meetings have been arranged for each Sunday evening. Titled, 'The Pulpit', the meetings are advertised as a place and time where the scriptures are read and explained. On the first night, twenty-two people were present, fifteen of which were believers from other assemblies, who were a great encouragement. Seven people came in as a result of the leafleting the local area by some young people who came to help with the work.



Aberdeenshire

The believers in the assembly at Inverurie distributed Precious Seed calendars in Newmachar. This was an opportunity for the assembly to work together, and being 'fellow-labourers in the gospel' was an encouragement to all involved.



The last issue, Feb. 2012, contained a report concerning a man from **Newcastle West**, Mike, who had started attending the meetings in March 2011, and had been coming to the gospel meeting on a regular basis.

Although he was reading the scriptures and asked a lot of questions, Mike seemed very mixed up in his understanding of the gospel. We can rejoice with the believers and thank the Lord that he finally saw his need of salvation and trusted the Lord as His Saviour after a gospel meeting.

Please continue to pray for Mike. He is going to have many tests in the early days of his new-found joy, but we can be confident that the Lord will give help. Please pray that as he studies the scriptures, the Lord will continue to bless him.

How often have we seen gospel opportunities develop through the school contacts of believers' children! Monica and Peter are examples of such contacts. Anna brought her friend, Alzbeta, from school to Sunday School and her parents then came to the gospel meeting. They are a Slovakian family and while communication isn't always simple, nevertheless they came. Alzbeta has come to the weekly children's club and her Mum has asked if the saints could get her daughter a Bible 'just like Anna's'!. Please pray for Alzbeta and her parents.

Our brother Harry Reid was able to visit **Gort, Roscommon and Athleague**. As on previous occasions, he was very well received by the dear Brazilian people in

each of these towns. It seems that the greatest concentration of the Brazilians is in the town of Gort (half an hour's drive south of Galway) where time was spent going around the housing schemes from door to door with tracts, gospel CDs and calendars all in the Portuguese language.

Out of the thousands of items distributed, it is encouraging to hear that not one has been refused. The people were so friendly and some even on the initial contact extended an invitation into their homes for coffee. Sadly, the economic situation in Ireland has meant that some of the Brazilian people who found it difficult to get work have returned to their homeland, but there are still a number coming to the country and it is evident that this door remains open for the spread of the gospel for the foreseeable future.

Roscommon is some seventy miles north-east of Gort, and Athleague is located about fifteen miles west of Roscommon. In Athleague there is a huge abattoir called KEPAK where almost a million animals are slaughtered each year. Around seventy Brazilian men work in the slaughterhouse, and, as on other visits, they were happy to receive the gospels in their mother tongue.



Brother Jonathan Kelso writes, 'Andi and I spoke with a young man, Florine from **Gura Raului**, who came seeking spiritual help today. He is a believer who has been struggling for quite a considerable period of time with a drink problem. About one week ago he pushed a knife in below his ribs and did himself quite a lot of harm. We called to see him after that and I could see he was miserable; I questioned him as to his desire to be back walking with God and his answer was very encouraging. He called us himself and made this arrangement to come and talk. We prayed together and discussed scriptures in relation to his present condition – he so much wants his 'first love' back again'.

Earlier in the day Jonathan had given a lift to a Romanian man who was also recovering from a knife wound. He had been waiting to get a train in Sibiu when a group of young men approached him. One of the men stabbed him, injuring his heart and the gang took off with his money. He was given some Christian literature.



One man called loan came to the meeting in **Orlat** for the first time recently. A few times, Jonathan has gone to the pharmacy with loan's wife and bought heart medicine for loan, but up until this point Jonathan had never seen him face to face. Those who knew him told how he used to be greatly feared in the community because of his aggressive and tough character. In the meeting Jonathan had a bag of sweets for whoever was the best behaved and referring to how loan was sitting up and listening very well he told the boys and girls that if he continued to sit listening the way he had begun he might then get the sweets instead of them. loan's attention was genuine, never losing his concentration once, and yes, he got the sweets! Please pray for this man; what a trophy of grace loan would be if he trusted Christ.

In another meeting in Orlat, two teenage girls waited after the meeting to talk. They both explained that they wanted to repent of their sins and get right with God. Anna-Maria, 16 years, and Angela, 19 years, both made professions of faith. Both of these girls have been very good attendees from the commencement of the meetings and we praise the Lord that His word is beginning to take effect in the hearts of those who are listening.



FRANCE

After almost twenty-eight years serving the Lord in France, Ronnie and Heather Skeene, from **Figeac**, are returning

to the UK. During their time in the country they have had the joy of seeing assemblies planted and strengthened in three locations; Istres, Gramat and most recently in Figeac. There are now around thirty in the assembly at Figeac and others coming along who are, as yet, not in fellowship. The rented building in which the assembly meets is becoming too small and they would value prayer as regarding larger premises. Many of those saved, have been contacts developed through 'friendship evangelism', which takes patience and time, but the Lord has blessed this with salvation.

Australia

Dandenong Gospel Hall in **Melbourne**, Australia, recently celebrated fifty years of assembly testimony. The believers combined this with their annual general meeting dinner and it was an occasion for much thanksgiving to God for His faithfulness over these many years. The assembly now has over eighty in fellowship from fourteen different nationalities and continues with several gospel outreach ministries and upholding scriptural principles. Website: www.dandenonggospelhall.com



DON'T WAIT FOUR MONTHS!

Over the next four months the world is coming to the UK! As they attend the 'Greatest Show on Earth', are you ready to share with them the 'Greatest News on Earth?' How are you going to turn conversations into opportunities to witness? Have you thought about it? And what opportunities might the Jubilee Year present?

Steve and Judi Buckeridge from Datchet and Johnny and Joy Black from Bermondsey have been doing just this. They have arranged the writing of two specific tracts and a calendar that shows outreach events that are being planned can be seen at http://www.keepandshare.com/calendar/show_event.php?i=1975988



Paul on Mars Hill was not ignorant of what was going on around him. He was able to use the customs and beliefs of the people as an opportunity to bring before ignorant, hell-bound sinners the glorious message of how they might be saved through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As well as witnessing, this is an opportunity for us to pray. Can we rediscover the power of prevailing prayer? Whilst our nation has neglected and rejected much of its Christian heritage, let us resolve not to allow that to defect us. We

know that man's deepest needs are not met by the fading glory associated with human endeavour or achievement, but by our Saviour.

So have you given thought to how you might take opportunities to speak a word for your Saviour? To be able to plant the living word in someone's ear? Will you be carrying some gospel leaflets with you every day and praying you will be able to pass them on? There are many Christians who have been planning how they might use this summer's events as opportunities for evangelism.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus? 'Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest'. One might sow, another reap, but it would be sad if due to lack of faith we waited four months before we got out – will you miss out on the joy?

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A WORD FOR TODAY

Κοίωεω (*Koinoneo*) – *Share, have a share in something*

Κοινωνία, ας, η (*Koinonia, as, e*) – *Partnership, association, communion, fellowship, close relationship*

Κοιῳικός, η, ον (*Koinonikos, e, on*) – *Liberal, generous*

One of the things that cricket enthusiasts are always keen to see, especially if they are English(!), is meaningful batting partnerships. This sort of partnership emphasizes the very English concept that a partnership is an arrangement where parties agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests. The Greek word, *koinonia*, however, is much more multifaceted, as WILLIAM BARCLAY states, 'When we examine the connexions in which it is used we come to see how wide and far-stretching is the fellowship which should characterize the Christian life.'¹

In the Septuagint (LXX), the noun *koinonia* is rarely used, and, where it is used, the meaning highlights a breach of faith with a neighbour, as in Leviticus chapter 6 verse 2. The related word *koinonos*, and the verb *koinoneo*, appear *passim* throughout the LXX, and provide both positive and negative instances of partnership associations. They refer to general alliances forged between leaders for military purposes, 2 Chr. 20. 35. Alliances of this kind were roundly condemned by God as being unholy, hence the prophet Eliezer is sent by God to prophesy against Jehoshaphat, cp. 2 Cor. 6. 14-18. In Proverbs chapter 28 verse 24, using one's parent's wealth, as eventually it will pass to you, is condemned by the writer as evidence of bad behaviour, or of being a partaker with, or a companion of, vandals. A salutary warning to all of us, even today! Similarly, in Isaiah chapter 1 verse 23, the leaders of Jerusalem are condemned for their sinful activities, and are described pejoratively, as 'cronies of thieves', Isa. 1. 23. Important to note, however, is that there are no instances in the LXX where any of these terms are used to describe a relationship or partnership between God and human beings.

But it is in the classical Greek period that the word *koinonia* becomes more embedded in the everyday language of the people, and takes on the meaning of human society or community. PLATO, for example, in *The Republic*, whilst valuing individuals and individual rights, explains *koinonia* as emphasizing a sense of duty and common ownership within society. This was to be contrasted with the Greek word *pleonexia*, which highlighted a mean and grasping spirit of self-interest. Thus, *koinonia* and its allied forms came to describe the spirit of generous giving and sharing within the community as contrasted with selfish individualism. Plato's work is, of course, viewed as influential to the communistic ideal, but we should not fail to recognize this important stage of word development as it is then applied by writers in the New Testament.

Principally, the word *koinonia* is found in Paul's writings with certain important exceptions. We indicated earlier that *koinonia* is multifaceted, and this is very evident when we turn to the New Testament. In Luke chapter 5 verse 10 the word is used in a general sense to describe business partners in a fishing enterprise, whereas in Hebrews chapter 10 verse 33, the term conveys the idea of companionship or empathy with others in the experience of suffering for Christ. A major text is found in Acts chapter

2 verse 42 where *koinonia* expresses the fellowship or the companionship evident in a local company of Christians who readily comply with apostolic teaching. Of interest here is that in the Greek text of Acts chapter 2 verse 42, the definite article appears before *koinonia*, so it is correctly rendered 'the fellowship'. When the definite article is used in this way, the emphasis is placed upon particular identity or even, in some contexts, by uniqueness. The expression of this unique local fellowship or community of believers

By

**BRIAN
CLATWORTHY**

Newton Abbot,
England

was evident in the practice of breaking bread and praying together. So fellowship in the New Testament church context is an expression of partnership evidenced by sharing in, sharing with, and sharing out the things of God. Other forms of sharing can also be identified:

- Romans chapter 15 verse 26, where the word is translated 'contribution', and refers to some form of gift made by Greek believers for poorer saints in Jerusalem. This was an expression of fellowship.
- Galatians chapter 2 verse 9 where the word is translated 'fellowship' and is used in the sense of extending communion to those who had a common identify. Hence the endearing expression, 'the right hand of fellowship'.
- Philippians chapter 3 verse 10 where the word is used of sharing or of participating in the sufferings of Christ. This does not mean that we as believers share in the vicarious sufferings of Christ, but rather experience that deep union with Christ that comes daily through denying self and taking up the cross.
- 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 4 where believers share in the divine nature. This should not be understood as implying that we participate in God's own essence, i.e., this is not some form of deification or *theosis* theology, but rather as RICHARD BAUCKHAM states, 'To share in divine nature is to become immortal and incorruptible'.³
- 1 John chapter 1 verse 3 where John indicates that the essence of true fellowship can only be found in partnership with God. But note that it is ethically conditioned, i.e., it cannot be for those who have chosen to walk in darkness, 1 John 1. 6.

All these uses in the New Testament imply that this spiritual partnership or fellowship of believers is not something loose or at arm's length. What fellowship involves is an active and dynamic engagement with God and other believers. Patently, fellowship is much more than mere attendance at assembly meetings, although that is an important aspect of Christian growth, Heb. 10. 25. If we truly recognize the value that God Himself has placed on this partnership with Him through Christ, then our response should be shown in the sincerity of our love for the Lord and His people, and our faithfulness in the fellowship of the gospel, Phil. 1. 5. Significantly, the New Testament does not sanction sleeping or limited liability partners!

For further reading/study

Introductory

HAROLD K. MOULTON, 'Partnership' (pg. 220-223) in *The Challenge of the Concordance*.

Advanced

CRAIG A. EVANS and STANLEY E. PORTER (Eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background*.

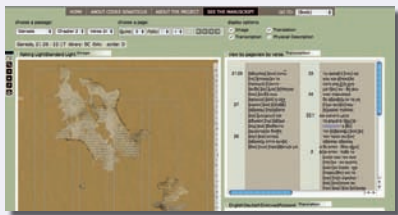
Endnotes

- 1 *New Testament Words*, pg. 173.
- 2 See also 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 4 and chapter 9 verse 13, where the word is translated 'distribution', and again refers to an expression of fellowship in giving to those less fortunate than them.
- 3 *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC), pg. 181.

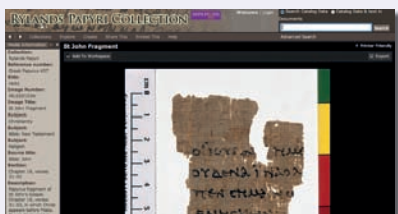


Ancient Biblical Manuscripts

This month, I will review websites that feature photographs of ancient biblical manuscripts. We know that the Lord has promised to preserve the scriptures, 'My words shall not pass away', Matt. 24. 35. It is encouraging to see how this promise has been fulfilled over the centuries, as extremely old copies of parts of the Bible are on prominent display in famous museums. I remember making a visit to the British Library in London (it was a date with my wife-to-be, in fact!) when I had the privilege of examining the Codex Sinaiticus. This handwritten document is a near-complete copy of the Greek New Testament, bound together with a sizable proportion of the Old Testament Septuagint Greek translation. The codex is around 1400 years old; it has recently been photographed and is available online at <http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx>. You can search by Bible passage, and view the actual corresponding parchment pages.



The oldest known surviving copy of any Greek New Testament manuscript is also archived in Britain, at the John Rylands Library in Manchester. This papyrus fragment of John's gospel is dated from the early 100s AD. Again, it can be viewed in a web browser at <http://enriqueta.man.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/ManchesterDev~93~3~22986~100256:St-John-Fragment>



There are also online copies of Old Testament manuscripts. The Dead Sea scrolls caused excitement when they were found in the middle of the 20th century in the caves of Qumran. The most remarkable discovery was a scroll of the book of Isaiah showed the almost complete agreement with the extant Hebrew text, which relied on more recent sources. God's word was carefully preserved by His divine sovereignty, using diligent, reverent scribes. The scroll of Isaiah (perhaps similar to the document the Lord would have unrolled in the synagogue, Luke 4. 17) can be explored online at <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>. The animation starts at the right hand end of the scroll (where the first page in Hebrew would begin), and you can move left with the mouse across the scroll.



More recent historical treasures are also available online. To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the King James Version last year, the King James Bible Trust set up a website to allow people to view pages from an original print of the 1611 version. Again, you can select a passage and view the corresponding page at <http://www.kingjamesbibletrust.org/the-king-james-bible/digitized-kjv-of-1611/genesis>. The text is quite clear, although in a very old-fashioned typeface. 'Blessed is he that readeth', Rev. 1. 3.



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Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

Twitter users invited to help choose the new Archbishop of Canterbury

The Church of England is to use the social networking site Twitter to help select the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Spokesman for the Church of England said the invitation would be made through the church press but also through other media including the social networking site Twitter, where the Church of England already posts news in nuggets of 140 characters or less. Tweeters and others will be asked to offer names and 'views on the needs of the diocese of Canterbury and the wider community'. It will also seek the views of people of all faiths and none, from the Chief Rabbi to Professor Richard Dawkins.



For the first time in history, the long and usually private process will begin with a widespread public consultation, to be finished by the end of May. The Crown Nominations Commission, which must present the Prime Minister with two possible successors to Dr. Rowan Williams, will also ask for contributions from 'senior figures in other faiths, the secular world and the life of the nation'.

The Bishop of Durham, the Rt. Rev. Justin Welby has 562 followers; the Bishop of Bradford, the Rt. Rev. Nick Baines, has 3,953; and the early front-runner for the job, the Archbishop of York, Dr. John Sentamu, has 21,558.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9164900/Twitter-users-invited-to-help-choose-the-new-Archbishop-of-Canterbury.html>

MPs reject relaxation of assisted suicide laws

MPs have backed the Director of Public Prosecutions over his guidance on assisted suicide, but rejected proposals to change the law. The motion put forward by Conservative, Richard Ottaway, welcomed the 2010 guidance and called for a government consultation on whether to put it on a statutory basis.

After a five-hour debate in which MPs from both sides made impassioned appeals, MPs gave their backing to the DPP's guidance, but refused to support any moves to relax the law on assisted suicide.

Mr Ottaway argued that courts should not 'have the last word' on assisted suicide, but rather Parliament, as representatives of the public.

He said that the law at present does not distinguish between a malicious person encouraging a suicidal person and 'the loving spouse who lovingly fulfils a partner's request'.

The DPP's guidance – which identified motive and public interest as the main factors in deciding whether to prosecute someone who helped another to die – was 'realistic and compassionate', he said.

An amendment calling for better palliative care was supported by more than a hundred MPs.

'We are absolutely delighted that the House has sent such a clear message that improving specialist palliative and hospice care is a priority and that assisted suicide is not the route we wish to take as a society', said Fiona Bruce, MP.

<http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/mps.reject.relaxation.of.assisted.suicide.laws/29545.htm>



Labour's Frank Field said the debate was really about euthanasia.

'Somehow we think this country is populated by all these husbands who love their wives and wives who love their husbands . . . all gathering around doing the right thing'.

'I also see a very nasty side sometimes about life, and I know perfectly well that in those circumstances those individuals would have no hesitation in trying to persuade people [what] the decent thing to do is - end their lives'.

Therese Coffey MP added, 'It was a mature debate but certainly clear that there was no appetite of the majority of the House to change the law as it stands today'.

<http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/mps.reject.relaxation.of.assisted.suicide.laws/29545.htm>



Bits & Bobs

You're having a laugh!

Scientists recently studied laughter in different animals, such as rats and primates, by tickling them. One study compared the sounds made by humans and great apes.

The researchers found many acoustic similarities, which has led them to believe that laughter in great apes shared the same evolutionary origin as laughter in humans, suggesting a common ancestor that giggled when tickled.

They concluded that 'laughter is at least 30 million to 60 million years old'. With a range of 30 million years, though, it's safe to assume that evolutionists have no idea when laughter evolved.

The BBC reported that tickling a gorilla 'sounds a lot like human laughter'. However, evolutionists maintain that people evolved from chimpanzees—not gorillas. Also, macaws, parrots, and other birds can mimic human laughter even more closely than any primate can, but evolutionists don't suggest that people evolved from parrots.

And recent reports found that pigeons have numerical abilities like those of primates. Researchers observed pigeons employing 'abstract numerical rules' that are 'indistinguishable from that displayed by monkeys'. Does this mean that primates share the same evolutionary origin as pigeons?

The case for laughter could be compared to shivering. When mammals, as well as some large insects and birds, get cold by an external stimulus, they react by shivering. This is the rapid contraction of large muscle groups generating heat, otherwise known as involuntary thermogenesis. An ability to shiver doesn't suggest that the creatures that do it come from a common ancestor. The same goes for laughing (the reaction) when tickled (the external stimulus).

So, it would make sense that rats would react, albeit subjectively, to the tickling. A variety of animals do, but does this reveal anything about how human laughter evolved? The answer is 'No'.

<http://www.icr.org/article/6623/>

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Animal Laughter Study Doesn't Help Evolution
by Frank Sherwin, M.A.

Scientists recently studied laughter in different animals, such as rats and primates, by tickling them. One study compared the sounds made by humans and great apes.

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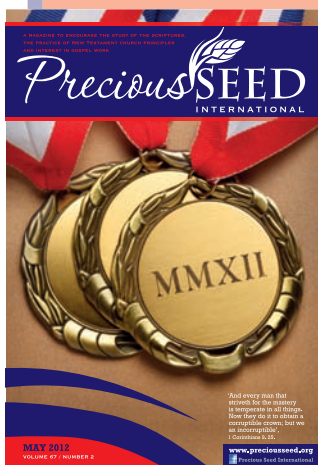
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Front Cover illustration:

Having spoken about running the race in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 24 the apostle's attention turns to competing in the games in verse 25. In order to be successful the athlete needed to be temperate. It was essential to exercise self-control and discipline in all things. It would involve diet and lots of time spent in rigorous training. Of course the ultimate goal is always to achieve the victor's crown!

In the 2012 London Olympics there will be many athletes who will maintain discipline in training regimes and diets. Athletes who are striving to be winners, aiming to bring home the gold medal.

In Paul's day they didn't have gold, silver or even bronze medals but they did have crowns, albeit a wreath consisting of leaves or a garland of flowers. Paul points out that these are corruptible. They will fade away and eventually perish. Paul challenges the Christian to live a temperate life. Disciplined, exhibiting self-control and having a body that is kept and brought under subjection because we are looking for an incorruptible crown! The believer has a wonderful hope, far better than a gold medal! We look forward to a crown and an inheritance that is glorious and incorruptible. Peter puts it like this in 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3 to 4, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you'.



Question Time

Conducted by

RICHARD COLLINGS

Unless otherwise stated all
scripture quotations are
from the New King
James Version

QUESTION

What is scriptural marriage?

ANSWER

It may be that the questioner had in mind the marriage of believers and was seeking guidance as to what would constitute a scriptural 'Christian' marriage. However, it must be appreciated that marriage is not something that has been invented by humans; it originated with God and is His arrangement designed for the good of individuals, families and society in general. It is not only His idea but He conducted the first wedding, bringing together one man and one woman in the Garden of Eden, and in so doing He established the precedent for the human race. Because the first marriage took place in Eden, it predates every form of religion or culture, and, as such, there is a definite sense in which unbelievers can be 'scripturally' married.

There were occasions during the Old Testament era when God tolerated bigamy, but His ideal is clearly defined in the words recorded in Genesis chapter 2, and endorsed by the Lord Jesus, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife', Mark 10. 4. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul picks up this same thought, but adds to it 'and the two shall become one flesh', Eph 5. 31. We can assert, therefore, that a scriptural marriage is the uniting of one man to one woman.

The actual process of the marriage 'ceremony' itself will vary from one culture to another. Most readers of this magazine will be used to a formal procedure endorsed by a person legally sanctioned to register the marriage, but this situation might not necessarily be true everywhere. However, in almost every form of society there is recognition that a marriage entails a duty of care, responsibility, and commitment that goes far beyond a mere relationship between a male and female. As already noted from the words of the Lord Jesus, marriage involves a man leaving his parents, and, in cleaving to his wife, he and she establish their own home. The husband becomes the head of the wife, and, as such, he has a responsibility to love her and to care for her, whilst she is to submit to him and show respect to him, Eph. 5. 33.

A marriage does not have to take place in a 'church' building, nor does it have to be conducted by a Christian person in order for it to be considered scriptural. As far as I am aware we do not read of any marriages being conducted in the tabernacle or the temple, nor do we have any record of any Old Testament prophet or New Testament apostle conducting such a service. A couple who choose to marry in a registry office, or on a beach in some exotic location, are no less married in the sight of God than those who prefer to conduct proceedings in a more 'spiritual' environment.

We are living in days when the sanctity of marriage is being eroded and its intended permanence is being undermined. As to its sanctity, the scriptures state, 'Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled', Heb. 13. 4 ESV. This is an instruction to be followed, for the writer is exhorting that marriage, and the marriage bed, should, in every way, be held in honour. That God designed marriage to be a lasting commitment is clearly emphasized in the words of the Lord, 'So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate', Matt. 19. 6.

Whilst the scriptures teach that sexual relationships before marriage are immoral we must not think that a marriage has to be consummated before God recognizes it as being valid. Adam and Eve became married when God brought Eve to Adam and he said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh', Gen. 2. 23. Joseph lived with Mary for many months and they were regarded as husband and wife under Jewish law, but their marriage was not consummated until after the birth of Jesus, Matt. 1. 25.