

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

# Precious SEED

INTERNATIONAL



“Then Elisha said,  
Shoot. And he shot.  
And he said, The  
arrow of the Lord’s  
deliverance ...’,  
2 Kgs. 13. 17.

**AUGUST 2012**  
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 Precious Seed International

The book for that special Christmas gift or for your own library or coffee table

## THE MESSIAH IN THE TEMPLE

BY ROGER LIEBI

610 Pages, Hardback and CD, £27.50 plus £2.50 p&p. Distributed by Decapolis Press.

This full-colour volume, originally published in German, has now been translated into English to reach a wider audience. Its author, ROGER LIEBI, is a Messianic Jew, and, as such, is ideally placed to bring out the symbolism and significance of the Second Temple in the light of the New Testament. The book is beautifully illustrated, with many photographs, diagrams, and artistic impressions, that guide the reader through the different parts of the Temple as it would have looked in the days the Lord walked in its precincts. The author makes use of recent archaeological discoveries to enhance the teaching. This is a unique book – you should have it!

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by Fred Cundick, 64pp, £3.95

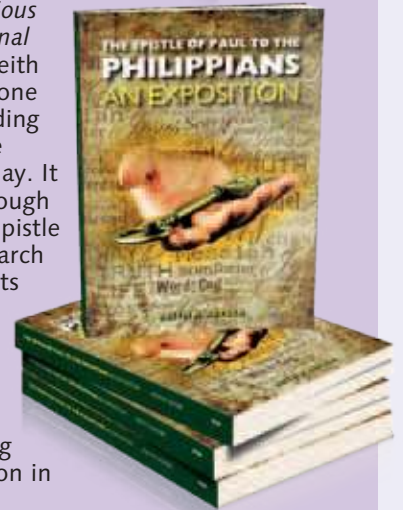
### PHILIPPIANS

by Keith Keyser, 120pp, £5.95

**Ezekiel** is a wonderful little booklet by the late and renowned Fred Cundick who ministered the word in most parts of the UK and was held in high esteem by all who heard him. This booklet deals with the prophecy of Ezekiel in a stirring way.



**Philippians** is based on a series of articles in *Precious Seed International* magazine by Keith Keyser who is one of the outstanding American Bible teachers of today. It deals in a thorough way with the Epistle and much research has gone into its preparation. It is a delightful read and has a Foreword by David Gooding – a big recommendation in itself!



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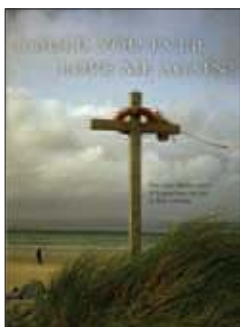




# Book Reviews

By JOHN BENNETT and JOHN SCARBROOK

Books are available from the publishers shown (or from John Ritchie in the UK or Gospel Folio Press in Canada), and **NOT** from Precious Seed Publications



## Could you ever love me again? Bob Cretney

Paperback, 190pp. Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly Street West, Port Colborne, ON, L3K 6A6, Canada. ISBN 978-1-926765-14-3.

This book is a record of the Gary Weeks story as it was told to the author, BOB CRETNEY. It is the story of a relatively naïve young man from a Christian, although single parent, home who goes off to university and begins the drift away from his profession of faith in Christ and commitment to Him. It is a story with which many might identify, either from personal experience, or from that of loved ones. The draw of a world of glamour, glitz and false glory becomes the factor that leads Gary into the world of entertainment with the promise of fame and fortune. After a break from the music industry to work as a pilot, a downturn in the aviation industry leads Gary back into music. The success returns and the potential of a major deal beckons before it all comes crashing down in the spring of 1978. However, the real change in Gary's life came as a result of a cruise and a tourist trip to Jerusalem. This is the beginning of his spiritual restoration and a life committed to the work of the Lord, initially in Ireland.

The difficulty with any book of this nature is striking the balance. The honesty that reveals the detail of the periods of a person's life spent away from the Lord is not to show how others might do the same, but it is to convey the unfailing love of God that always seeks to draw the wanderer back to Himself. However, it has to be emphasized that the prodigal can only be restored if they are prepared to heed the warning voice of conscience within, and humble themselves before the Lord. Similarly, Gary's restoration does not smooth out all of life's difficulties, but it does provide one who cares for each in the midst of their trials. This is a fascinating and delightfully heart-warming book to read.



## 'Help!' Booklets Edited by Dr. Paul Tautgers

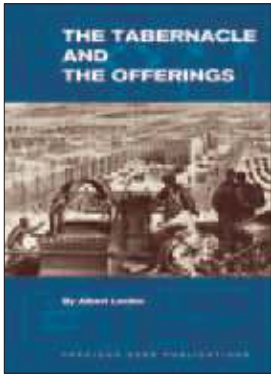
**'My Baby Has Died; I Have Breast Cancer; Someone I Love Has Cancer; Someone I Love Has Been Abused; My Marriage Has Grown Cold; My Toddler Rules The House; My Spouse Has Been Unfaithful; He's Struggling With Pornography'.**

Paperback, 60 pages each. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, U.K. HR6 8NZ. ISBN all: 978-18462552; then: 150/167/174/228/198/211/204/181.

This series of booklets, of which more are promised, is very helpful and of a high standard overall. It focuses on specific issues, but these are discussed in a wider context of general scriptural principles and teaching; such as, trusting in God at all times; viewing all things as under His control; identifying sins for what they are, and, as such, against God primarily; the role and relevance of a local church in pastoral issues; the importance of one's relationship to the Lord. Biblical ways forward and answers are explored with relevant references, usually quoted, and thoughtfully applied. For instance, on the issue of pornography, advice and guidelines are given based on Colossians chapter 3; on the issue of marital infidelity, bitterness, forgiveness and dealing with one's own sins are also considered. At the end of each booklet, there are ten personal application projects suggested. The gospel message is presented integrally as part the argument of each one. The booklets are generally suitable for unbelievers. A short bibliography is provided.

Obviously, one is not going to agree with everything. However, the tone of the books is also something that can be commended. The authors are coming alongside in a positive way and are speaking out of their own experience. The underlying theological perspective of Day One Publications is Reformed. This, however, only intrudes in any significant way in one of the books, the one dealing with the death of the unborn and of infants. Here the doctrine of election is considered and the author concludes that 'all children before they reach the state of moral awareness and culpability . . . are graciously saved . . . by God and are counted as elect by sovereign choice'. Some readers may be unhappy with the odd sentence here and there in others; in one we are told that the reader '*could* [reviewer's italics] be one of those people for whom Christ died' if he 'comes to salvation in Jesus Christ' – yet, 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18 is quoted a few lines previously.

[Our thanks to Bryan Charles, Appledore, England, for this review]



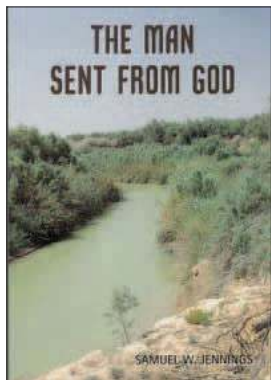
### **The Tabernacle and the Offerings** Albert Leckie

Paperback, 176pp. Published by Precious Seed Publications, The Glebe House, Stanton Drew, Bristol, UK, BS39 4EH. Price: £6.50. ISBN 978-1871642-44-5.

This is the second volume of the ministry of the late ALBERT LECKIE of Airdrie, Scotland. Although the name may not be known to the present generation, this book is written in a style that is both appealing and instructive.

ALBERT LECKIE was a well-known Bible teacher, noted particularly for his detailed exposition of scripture and his meticulous attention to detail. This book has been compiled from the tapes of the ministry given at the Trimsaran Bible Readings in Wales. However, every effort has been made to maintain the flow of our brother's consideration of the topics.

Typology is an area of study that has become neglected in recent times. Criticism has been levelled at some who have strayed into the realms of the fanciful. This book demonstrates LECKIE's knowledge of the scriptures and his ability to justify every picture and type from the word of God itself. Those who have profited from his first volume of writings, on Romans, will find similar help here. Those who look for a book that is Christ-exalting and heart-warming should purchase this volume and enjoy its depth and devotion.



### **The Man Sent From God** Samuel W. Jennings

Paperback, 160pp. Published by The Ministry for Europe Trust, 39 Ardmore Road, Holywood, Northern Ireland. BT18 0PJ. Price: £7.99. ISBN 5-060165-210565.

*The Man Sent From God* is a comprehensive character study of John the Baptist. JENNINGS leaves no stone unturned as he systematically analyses the life of the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. There is no doubt that the author's intention is not only to direct our attention to the Baptist, but also to the One of whom the Baptist spoke so often, the One 'who must increase'. This, JENNINGS achieves with great success.

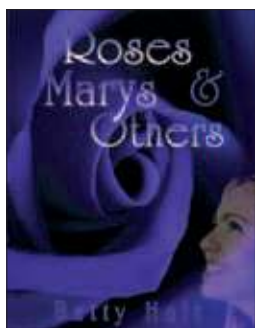
There are ten chapters which consider the life of John in a chronological order. Some chapters include: The Prophecies that went Beforehand; The Announcement of the Birth of John; John, the Forerunner of the Lord; The Testimony of Christ to John; and John the Baptist and Elijah.

Undoubtedly this is a broad and detailed study of every aspect of John's life. There is a strong emphasis in the book on the practical lessons which can be drawn from the teaching and this is both helpful and insightful. Occasionally the author is prone to wander, but these are generally side streets which are most interesting, including a detailed analysis of the burials of various Old Testament patriarchs and a comparison and contrast of the lives and ministry of Elijah and Elisha.

Despite this, the book is one I found to be quite difficult to read. Such is the writer's style that much of the text is punctuated with tables, bullet-points and very short paragraphs. In addition, the editing of the book is poor, often referring to 'Zachariah' (rather than Zacharias) and at one point 'Rebecca' (rather than Rebekah). There are numerous grammar and spelling mistakes all of which punctuate the flow of the book.

Notwithstanding the minor editorial irritants, the book in general was interesting to read and offered much food for thought, not only in practical Christian living but also on the Person of Christ. What sweeter subject could there be? This book is recommended, but perhaps better as a reference aid than a general reading book.

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



### **Roses, Marys & Others** Betty Holt

Paperback, 48pp. Published by Xulon Press. It is available from the author, Mrs. Betty Holt, 'Bethshan', 39 Worcester Close, Farnborough, Hants. GU14 8JW. Price: £15.00. ISBN 978-1609579-26-5.

This is a full-colour publication that explores something of the scripture record of the lives of fourteen women. It was written with women in mind, particularly 'those who are looking for a way to live godly and fruitful lives in a day when superficiality seems so predominant'.

Amongst the women covered, the reader can find chapters on Dorcas, Ruth, the woman with the issue of blood and the woman of Samaria. Each chapter is relatively short and can be read either as a specific meditation or as a basis for a slightly deeper study, especially if the guidelines for further discussion are explored at the end of the book.

The author is not afraid to tackle some of the more difficult issues in the lives of the women considered. For example, in the life of Rebekah, her lies and scheming to secure Jacob the birthright are not overlooked. Similarly, in the chapter on Sarah there is a gentle but persuasive consideration of the subject of submission.

This is a well-presented book that could be of benefit to many and a most helpful resource for those who have an exercise to work with younger women, either in the context of a camp work or in home Bible study. A Spanish edition is also available (ISBN 978-1609579-27-2) entitled *Rosas, Marias y Otras*. It is just a pity that the book should be so expensive as this will make it difficult to purchase copies for everyone in a women's study group.

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### 'Many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them', Mark 2. 2.

I wonder whether you long to see the situation described in our verse above. Perhaps, like me, you're part of a small company of believers that seeks to maintain a testimony for God, but seldom sees more than one or two people coming along to the gospel meeting or showing any interest in the subject of salvation from sin. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see the hall packed? Wouldn't it be wonderful to have to worry about the health and safety regulations as they might apply to such a large company, where they were stood outside trying to squeeze into the aisle that was already full?

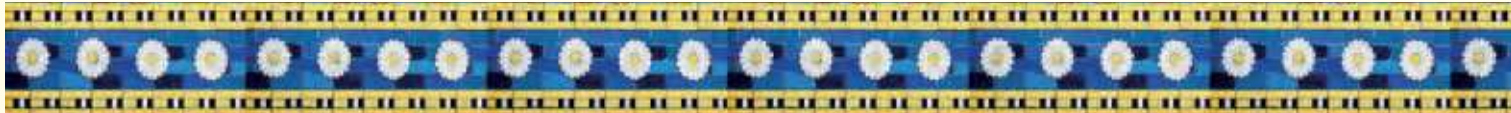
Perhaps you are part of a fellowship of Christians that regularly experiences a crowd at each meeting. If you are, I hope you rejoice in the goodness of God. Although in many parts of the world numbers attending places of worship are declining rapidly, we need to remind ourselves that God is still at work as souls are being saved and added to companies of the Lord's people.

However, I want us to consider one of the most striking points about this section of Mark's Gospel. So many people there, but so few blessed in the presence of the Saviour. What a tremendous demonstration of divine power in the forgiveness of sins and the healing of the man sick of the palsy, and yet so few recognize the Saviour and receive Him as their own. God was at work, and yet so many hardened their heart against the Lord. Perhaps this is where we need to adjust our thinking. A packed hall might be encouraging. A large crowd to hear the gospel might be thrilling. But what is really needed is a realization of God at work in the heart, conscience, and life of some needy sinner. That is when we will experience blessing. It may be a few that are saved; it may be many. Nevertheless, we will be sure that such blessing brings real converts.

One of the original aims of this magazine was to 'encourage . . . interest in gospel work'. Perhaps, as you read through the reports section of this magazine you might be encouraged to pray for the seed of the word of God that is being sown, in this country, and around the world. But what would be really good to know is that as a consequence of something that you have read, there is generated in your heart a desire to do something similar in your own locality. Often, the reports that we feature are already out-of-date but they will be worthy of inclusion if someone else sees one that rekindles in their heart a desire to reach the lost. May the Lord be pleased to use the magazine to the furtherance of His work in the gospel, and to His glory in the salvation of souls!

**JOHN BENNETT**  
Ministry Articles Editor





## Its Origins

Genesis chapter 10 verse 10 states that the origin of Babylon and Nimrod's rise to dominance over the people are connected. Nimrod was the first world leader and is a type of the Man of Sin who will dominate the nations at the end time. In chapter 11 verses 1-3, Nimrod led the people eastward, that is, toward the rising of the sun where he built the city and the tower in the land of Shinar. It is here that Babylon becomes the centre of heathen worship, for the tower would relate to the desire to establish a form of worship that is for the people, but not for God. In these actions we have the first attack of the adversary on the truth of God, and this was to prevail right through all time as the Babylonish system was carried across the world through the dispersion of the people who came under the judgement of God.

In addition to confounding their language, the Lord scattered the people over the broad acres of earth in the days of Peleg, Gen. 10. 25. Initially the population was in one place, Gen. 1. 9, but it would seem that in Nimrod's day the people were scattered across the earth and took with them their Babylonish doctrines and idolatry. Babylon is indeed 'The Mother of Harlots', Rev. 17. 5.

## The Ominous Warnings

There are two major prophecies that relate to the final doom of Babylon, both of which are very plain in their teaching: these are Isaiah chapters 13-14, and Jeremiah chapters 50-51. These prophecies set out the future judgement that will be brought upon Babylon in the closing days of the tribulation period, and both confirm what is detailed in the book of Revelation chapters 17-18. A cursory reading of Isaiah's prophecy relative to Babylon makes it very clear that

# BABYLON

the events recorded are those that will take place during tribulation days, for it refers to the 'day of the Lord', 13. 6, 9. This judgement extends beyond Babylon to the whole world, v. 11, when a man will be 'more precious than fine gold'. This reminds us of the words of the Lord that 'except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved', Matt. 24. 22. Again, in verse 19, Babylon's overthrow is detailed further and is confirmed by that which is recorded by John in Revelation chapter 18 verses 21-23.

It is interesting to note that chapter 14 speaks of Babylon as 'how is the golden city ceased'. When Saddam Hussein commenced the rebuilding of Babylon he used golden bricks to seek to re-establish it in its former glory as it was in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. It stands on the banks of the Euphrates in readiness for the time when the Lord will act against it. The book of Zechariah, chapter 5, also prophesies of the day when the restoration will take place, see verses 5-11. One day Babylon will become the financial centre of the world, for an ephah is the largest measure in Israel's units.

Jeremiah's prophecy brings before us the judgement of Babylon, not against the background of the tribulation as Isaiah does, but against the recovery of both Israel and Judah together, 50. 4-5. As far as the nation of Israel is concerned verse 20 states 'the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and

they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve'. There are a number of verses that the Lord brought to John when he wrote the book of Revelation that quite

evidently came from chapter 51. The people are told to flee out of the midst of her in verse 6. She is a golden cup, v. 7, and she dwells upon many waters in verse 13.

Babylon's overthrow is the same as that revealed in the book of Isaiah and confirmed in the book of Revelation, when, in chapter 50 verses 39-40, 'it shall be no more inhabited for ever', and will be 'as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah'. As we compare these verses with Revelation chapters 17-18, it is evident that they speak of the same time period and the same events that will take place under the hand of God. At no time in its former history did Babylon ever suffer the fate that is recorded in these prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and today she stands again in the present Iraq, which is the ancient Babylon, in preparation for the final judgement of God against it. These scriptures make it evident that what is recorded in Isaiah and Jeremiah is not history but still prophetic to us, the fulfilment of them will be at the end times in God's dealings with this world.

## Its Final Obliteration

The destruction of Babylon in the book of Revelation begins the third vision that John had. Each of these visions begin with the words, 'I was in the Spirit' – see 1.10; 4.2. The





third reference is in chapter 17 verse 3 when the Lord brings before us the great truth that those who have opposed Him and His ways will be finally dealt with and removed from the earth. It begins with Babylon because that was the source of all spiritual opposition to the will of God. It was here that the complete rejection of His thoughts and desires for humanity, originated. It was here that a global idolatry commenced.

In Revelation chapter 19 we see the fall of the Man of Sin and the false prophet and in the following chapter we have the final end of Satan. In addition, all the wicked unsaved dead are brought to account at the great white throne for their rejection of the truth that has been revealed. After these judgements, the Lord can bring in the new heaven and earth. We have the final use of the phrase 'in the spirit' in chapter 21 verse 10, and this vision reveals that once all that has set itself against the Lord has been judged, a glorious future can be seen for those who are redeemed.

Revelation chapters 17-18 present to us the future destiny of Babylon. In chapter 17 we have her flagrant rebellion, and in chapter 18 her fall is recorded. It is evident that only one judgement is before us – dealing with the tower of Babylon in chapter 17 and with the city itself in chapter 18. The first of these chapters sees the fall of a religious system, whereas chapter 18 speaks of Babylon, as a commercial centre that will be destroyed. With the fall of this city both aspects of what Babylon stands for comes under the wrath of God.

### Her Dominance

We are confronted in chapter 17 with a city that has had control throughout the whole world, and

she is seen to have superiority over the Man of Sin in verse 3, as she rides on the scarlet-coloured beast. Evidently, her power is world-wide for all the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, v. 2, and every nation of earth has been corrupted by her teachings, as all hold her doctrines in some form. In verse 15, she is sitting upon many waters, where the interpretation is given as being 'multitudes and nations and tongues'. Though some would link this with Rome, we must notice that this prophecy is recorded years before Rome comes to the fore and these features marked the nations even in John's day.

### Her Destruction is Divine

Although her destruction is definitely of God, He uses the ten kings and the beast to fulfil His will, 17. 17. We can observe that in His sovereignty the Lord uses men to bring to completion His desires. We also notice how that the time will come when the Antichrist, who is under her authority in chapter 17 as she rides him, will brook no rivals, as he enters into the temple at Jerusalem and announces that he is god.

The judgement of Babylon will be swift, coming in one day, 18. 8, 10, it will be violent, 18. 21, 'thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down', and it will be complete, 18. 21-24, for it will never rise again to trouble the earth.

### The Despair

It is evident that the commerce of the world will be centred in Babylon for when it's fall is recorded the other world rulers not associated with the Man of Sin bring their lament to bear upon it. In chapter 18 verses 9-19, we have the monarchs, the merchants and the mariners who all have made great profit out of the

existence of Babylon now lamenting her destruction. All cry, 'Woe woe', - what is obnoxious to God is the means of gain for the world, and with its fall their gain is lost. Well might they cry as they do!

### The Delight of Heaven

We have the thoughts of heaven expressed in chapter 18 verse 20 where we are told, 'Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her'. It is in chapter 19 that we have the four 'Alleluia's' that are raised at the fall of this corrupt thing that has opposed God down the centuries from its first rise back in Genesis chapter 11. The praise begins with 'much people in heaven'; it is taken up by the associates with the throne, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders, and finally by a great multitude, and as the sound of many waters, verses 4 and 6. This delight is turned into worship, for that which God has been robbed of as a result of the idolatry of Babylon can at last be given unreservedly to Him, and, thankfully, this will ultimately be eternal, with no opposition to His rightful claims and to the honour He deserves.

It is not for any Christian to be happy with any system that has it's origins in Babylon, where the truth of God has been discarded, and satanic doctrines have usurped the mind of God. Nor to support those who have been responsible for the casting out of any who would stand for the Lord, even to the point of martyrdom.

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**NORMAN MELLISH** was saved from an ungodly home where careless parents were given to alcohol. At 33 he went into full-time service for the Lord, commended by the Wythenshawe assembly in Manchester, England. Today, he expounds the word of God in the UK and abroad. He has written three books, one on Revelation, one on Daniel, and one on Philippians.







# JOASH *The Dep*

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

## **1 Joash's Aim** *(continued)*

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

At 30 years of age Joash shows a brief flash of maturity and independence when he questions Jehoiada as to the lack of progress in raising revenue. No answer is recorded but Joash now takes overall responsibility for the project, to the relief of the priests and Levites.

Joash refers to the law of Moses in his monologue with Jehoiada - perhaps an indication that he had been reading 'the testimony' given to him by Jehoiada at his coronation. Giving, to support the Lord's work in the New Testament, is always on a freewill basis. It is not based on the tithe, but is to be proportionate and cheerful. We should set aside for the Lord's work each and every Lord's day as the Lord enables.

The supervisors who received the money to pay the workmen were transparently honest and no public accounting was deemed necessary. Nevertheless, when the chest was emptied and the tellers counted up the revenue, this was undertaken by the king's scribe and the high priest's officer, with the king and high priest showing a keen interest.

Paul was aware of the propriety of handling finances. When the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem was to be conveyed to the elders of the church at Jerusalem it was placed in the hands of brethren chosen by the local assemblies, 2 Cor. 8. 19-22. Giving financially is part of our stewardship but only a part. We are expected to give of our time, talent, and gift, not just money, to further the Lord's work in support of the house of God.

Joash was involved not only in providing revenue but other resources, too: 'them that had the oversight of the house of the Lord',

2 Kgs. 12. 11; also, 'the carpenters and builders that wrought upon the house of the Lord, and the masons and hewers of stone'. As workmen, building God's house, 'let every man take heed how he buildeth', 1 Cor. 3. 10. The reason for the caution, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God', v. 16. We are building a temple of God: the local assembly. We need to 'take care' as to the principles, practices and persons that are built into the local assembly.

He not only resourced the workmen but the materials, i.e., timber, hewed stone, iron, brass and finally, the vessels of silver. Why? 'For the sons of Athaliah had broken up the house of God' and stolen the vessels for use in the house of Baal. This was the counterfeit religious system of that day. We are faced with Christendom today. It will become the apostate church following the rapture. We are to be separate from the world's organized religion as clearly and categorically as Jehoiada when he rid Jerusalem of Baal's house and priest. 'Come out of her my people', is the cry of God, Rev. 18. 4.

What are we building into the house, the temple of God? Is it gold, silver and precious stones or wood, hay and stubble? Is it that which is valued by God or that which has volume and bulk and will be consumed when tried by fire? I enjoyed 2 Chronicles chapter 24 verse 13, 'So the workmen wrought and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it'. A wonderful testimony to the workmen and a tribute to Joash and Jehoiada yet, sadly, we find this shortcoming, 'but the high places were not taken away'. It would require Hezekiah and Josiah to complete the work. 'I have not found thy works perfect (complete) before God', was the condemnation of the church at Sardis, Rev. 3. 2. Also, Paul cautions Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry - that you fulfil (complete) it', Col.



# endent King

4. 17. This should be our spiritual objective and we should bend all our energy to this end – assembly building, repairing the breaches and completing the work. The house of God was to be restored to its original state, 'in his state'; that is, as per the original pattern. We are expected to build according to the blueprint in the New Testament.

## ACT 3 RUINED and REWARDED

– dependent on the influence of Judah's princes.

Paul's words to the Galatians, may be modified, 'O foolish Joash who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?'

### 2 Joash's Degeneration

'Then the king hearkened unto them', i.e., the princes of Judah.

'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes', Ps. 118. 9. How telling is this verse as far as Joash is concerned!

The degradation of the nation and its leaders is seen in their plea to the king for leniency that idolatry might be resorted to. The high places were still available even if Baal had taken a blow. They wanted compromise and they wanted convenience. It was easier to visit the shrines than to go up to Jerusalem three times a year. God in His grace gives warning by the prophets but 'they would not give ear'. God forbid that we should compromise the assembly position, and meet out of convenience rather than conviction.

Zechariah is both a priest and a prophet. He is the son of Jehoiada and cousin of King Joash. Spirit energized, he condemns Judah's transgression, only to be stoned to death in the temple court by order of his cousin.

The influence of the princes has led the nation to idolatry, revealed the base ingratitude of Joash towards

his foster-parents, Jehoiada and Jehosheba, also their son Zechariah, and resulted in the iniquitous act of murder sanctioned by the king himself.

The New Testament reflects, 'from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias whom ye slew between the temple and the altar', Matt. 23.35. The Jewish scriptures begin with Genesis and end with Chronicles, hence, Abel and Zechariah are the first and last martyrs.

### 3 Joash's Discipline

'The Lord look upon it and require it', prayed Zechariah.

- God challenges Joash by His seers – but to no avail.
- God chastens Joash by the Syrians – but to no avail.

Hazael is first appeased as Joash robs the sanctuary and the treasury of their silver and gold and turns it over to him. This was not sufficient to prevent a small detachment of elite Syrian troops humiliating Judah's army and leaving Joash wounded – 'for they left him in great diseases'.

- God chided Joash by the sufferings which His instrument Hazael inflicted.

Hazael was anointed by Elijah as king



of Syria and was the Lord's rod to chasten His people – but to no avail. Sadly, he despised the chastening of the Lord instead of being exercised thereby, Heb. 12. 5-11.

### Joash's Death

*He lost respect*

Joash was slain by two of his own officers as a direct result of his murder of Zechariah. How demeaning that his death was carried out by two men whose fathers were Jewish but whose mothers were an Ammonite and Moabite respectively. Ammon and Moab were the result of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters.

*He lacked recognition*

Though buried in Jerusalem, the city of David, he was not buried in the sepulchres of the kings. But do you know who was? Jehoiada the high priest was buried with full honours because 'he had done good in Israel, both toward God and toward his house'.

*He is left off the record*

Four kings are omitted from our Lord's genealogy in Matthew chapter one – Ahaziah, Amaziah and, of course, Joash! Then, later, Jehoiachin.

What a lesson for us today. Those we think are worthy of recognition and reward at the judgement seat may well be those that lose out. Let us make sure that we are not in the category of those who lose their reward.

This passage may well have been written for Joash, 'But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and commiteth iniquity and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned', Ezek. 18. 24.

The challenge of Joash's life for us may be summarized in the words of Paul to the Galatians, 'Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?' 5. 7.

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# CREATING AN ASSEMBLY

# HIO

In the previous article we considered the reasons why you may want to create a website. If this has inspired you to create one, this article delves further into the steps you will need to follow in order to create your own site. Whilst it is impossible to cover everything in the space of one article, the following will apply, regardless of whether you decide to go it alone, and build a site yourself, or get someone with more experience to do it.



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

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

## Types of Site

Firstly, you need to consider the type of site that you want to deliver. Whilst the choice you make here will impact on later decisions, it in no way means that you are tied into one path. Many find that their site starts off on one track and gradually migrates to another as its popularity increases, users' give feedback, and you get a feel for the help that you can get from other people.

## Brochure Site

This type of site is similar to that of any type of printed brochure that you might pick up. Its main purpose is simply to provide an overview to the user, but not provide anything of any great depth. The content will remain more or less the same and not change with any great frequency. These types of site are by far the easiest to maintain, as they can be built and left alone for long periods of time. However, they will generate very few return visitors and have minimal impact.

## Dynamic Site

This type of site will have a variety of static content, as in the brochure site, but also content that changes frequently. In order to decide which kind of site you want to deliver, try writing down a list of all the different things that you want to display on the site. It is wise to spend a while thinking about the type of content that you can deliver, because it will be the content that keeps people coming back to your site. Some of the most common things to include are:

### About Us

Information about who you are and what you believe.

### Meeting Times

Details of meetings and services that are planned.

### Recordings

Audio and video recordings of meetings that have been held.

### Articles

Some assemblies put up articles about the Bible, how to be saved, living as a Christian, etc..

### Contact Details

These can include anything from a simple address, to directions, and maps.

As you write down each item, take time to think about how often that bit of content will need to change. As you start to log all these different components, you'll start to build up a picture of the kind of commitment you'll need in order to fulfil the burden. Be realistic when considering the time implications. The trap of good intentions is a common one, into which many fall. Whilst getting ideas together during the planning phase will come relatively easily, the practical implications of delivering can prove to be problematic. Therefore, it is sometimes wise to start off small and build up as and when time and resources permit you to do so. If you do find that you are designing a site that requires large amounts of time then you need to do one of two things:

1. Find more people who are willing to be involved and divide up the work.
2. Go back and review what you have done and remove or simplify in order to reduce the burden.

## Preparing your Content

Never underestimate the importance of high quality content, and the impact that it can have. Preparing your content ready for public consumption should take as long, if not longer, than the actual process of putting it up on the internet. Treat the preparation of your content in a similar way in which you would study scripture: in an organized and methodical fashion, taking great care to ensure that you have all your facts and references correct. Remember, the potential impact your website can have is immense. It can encourage a person who has never visited before to come in, but, equally, it can push them away. The subject of writing for the web is a topic in and of itself, but there are some easy rules to follow to get you on the way to producing great content. English novelist and journalist George Orwell, in one of his best known essays, 'Politics and the English language', provides six rules. Here are four that fit writing for the web perfectly:

- Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
- Never use a long word where a short one will do.





# ASSEMBLY WEBSITE (2)



- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word, if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

The fourth rule is particularly important. In an age where the vast majority of people have no knowledge of spiritual matters, much of the terminology that those of us that have been in assembly fellowship for many years use will be completely foreign. It is better to assume no knowledge and get your point across, than to assume knowledge and completely miss the target.

## Designing Your Site

Whilst great content will encourage people to come back, a good design is what will set your site apart from the rest. It is important to remember that the secret of a good design is not how good it looks, but how easily it lets readers get at the content. There are some truly beautiful sites out there that stun and impress when they first burst onto your screen. However, spend five minutes navigating round the site and you can get quickly lost. That's not to say that a well-designed site will look garish, but by making your site easy to navigate it will almost automatically look good.

Google can be taken as an ideal example. In the early days of the search giant it was very risky to have such a sparse layout, and yet it is

a feature that has contributed to its huge success. When we preach, we should never let the method by which we preach detract from the message. Likewise, the design on your site must never detract from the content, but instead gently steer the users and help them navigate to their destination.

Likewise, the use of colour can make or break a site. With the vast array of colours that are available it is often tempting to try and use as many bright colours as possible. Unfortunately, this can often become overpowering and distract the reader. It is best to stick to two or three main colours to avoid confusion.

The final area you will need to consider when designing your site is how it will look on another person's screen. Whilst it may look acceptable on your own screen, your content could be accessed not only from a desktop or laptop computer, but via a mobile, or tablet device. It's easy to get yourself tied in knots over trying to make it work on every device. However, this is where simple design wins out over a complex one.

## Creating Your Site

It is impossible within the space of one article to go into any great depth on how to create pages. However, whether you are going it alone, or getting someone to design your site, there are four things you need in order to get your first page on the web.

### Domain Name

In other words, the address people will type into their address bar to go to your website, e.g., www.example.com. Deciding on the type of domain you want will determine the cost. Prices can vary wildly, depending on who you use to buy it, but you should expect to pay between £2 and £30. For the popular '.org.uk' that most assemblies will use, expect to pay no more than £10.

### Hosting

Registering a domain is nothing without somewhere to point it to;

this is where hosting comes in. All it means is somewhere for you to store your files where they can be seen by a browser. Again, prices will vary wildly and it all depends on how much content you want to store. The larger the content, the higher the price point will be.

### Editor

HTML, the language that powers the web, is very easy to learn and use to create web pages. All you need to create these files is some kind of web editor. Many have found the likes of 'Dreamweaver' a very popular one, but, in reality, you can get by just using a simple text editor like 'Notepad'. You can also download a wide range of free tools from the web that can also help you.

Alternatively, you may wish to consider using some kind of content management system. These are usually web-based programmes that allow you to update content in a word processor type interface without ever having to touch HTML. Whilst the learning curve of using these can be high, they can be invaluable, especially if you want to devolve management to others.

### FTP Program

FTP stands for File Transfer Protocol and is the means by which you transfer your web pages from your computer, to the hosting account you set up. Sometimes, the editor you use can come with this already built in. If not, there are many free alternatives that can be downloaded from the web and that can accomplish the same result.

Creating a website is much like DIY. Once you know the concepts and understand the basics, just about anyone can jump in and start work. However, never underestimate the benefits of getting professionals in to help you with the most difficult bits. Whilst the initial outlay may be higher, the return on investment can be higher in the long run, through increased local visibility and local interactions and, the ultimate aim, to lead individuals to Christ.

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# Teaching and Guiding a Rising Generation

Spiritual training is quite different from secular training programmes. One does not become, for example, an evangelist by completing an accredited programme resembling that of secular professions, for evangelism is a gift, not a profession. At regeneration, each believer receives a spiritual gift (or gifts) from the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the church, 1 Cor. 12. 4, 11. Moreover, every believer has been called by God to perform a specific function within the church. A believer's effectiveness in this service will depend upon his or her spiritual maturity and the development and use of his or her spiritual gift(s).

Biblically speaking, there are two main objectives in preparing the next generation to serve Christ: training in righteousness, 2 Tim. 3. 16-17, and training for service, Eph. 4. 12-13.

'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, **thoroughly equipped for every good work**', 2 Tim. 3. 16-17 NKJV.

'And He Himself [Christ] gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, **for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ', Eph. 4. 11-12 NKJV.

These two passages show us the inseparable link between godly character and God-honouring service. Ministry which does not reflect the character of Christ does more harm than good. This is why the work of mentoring must focus on both character development and preparation for ministry. The Lord Jesus made the character of His Father known to everyone He came in contact with through His life and His works. Likewise, the passion of every believer should be that Christ might be manifest to the world by our joyful disposition, steadfast morality, and genuine care for others.

Christians have the responsibility of

training (mentoring) those who are younger in the Lord in the way of righteousness. The Greek word translated 'equipping', Eph. 4. 12, is the noun *oikodome*, which means 'building' or 'edifying'. All Christians are called to edify other members of the body of Christ, Eph. 4. 15-16. God-empowered ministry of this type builds up the church and every believer is called to the work of edifying others!

## Goal 1: Equipping in Righteousness

The divine work of sanctification begins in the believer's life immediately after he or she answers God's call of salvation. God begins to fashion the new believer into a holy vessel and each believer is exhorted to cooperate in the working out of what He is working into his or her life.<sup>1</sup> All believers will ultimately be conformed to the moral image of Christ;<sup>2</sup> there is no human choice in that aspect of sanctification – it is God's will and power that accomplishes this. Yet, there is an ongoing call to each believer not to resist God's working in his or her life, but instead to be yielded to Him. God promises to chasten those who choose not to submit to Him in order that they may be brought to a yielded position and experience sanctification, Heb. 12. 6. Consequently, sanctification in a practical sense is happening to every believer, but some are more serious about it than others and, accordingly, will reap a greater blessing of being further refined in this life. Paul implored the Christians at Rome to yield to God's ongoing work of sanctification, Rom. 12. 1-2.

Paul also exhorted Timothy to yield to God's sanctifying work in his life. Speaking of God's power, Paul wrote, 'Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began', 2 Tim. 1. 9 NKJV. Although Timothy had the choice of whether or not to cooperate with God's work of sanctification, his ability to fulfil his ministry would directly depend

upon how much he submitted to God's ongoing work of sanctification, 2. 21-22. Timothy's fruitful ministry is a testimony of what God can do with any believer-priest who aspires to have clean hands and a pure heart. From God's perspective, it would seem that the believer's righteous hands determine the spiritual value of what he or she may be carrying. The Mosaic law teaches us that unholy hands cannot offer up holy sacrifices to a holy God, Exod. 30. 18-20.

A vessel is used to hold or to transport something – from an earthly point of view it is what a vessel does, and not what it is that makes it important. Spiritually speaking, however, what a vessel is determines how it is used. The Bible refers to individuals as vessels and states that God will use both the yielded and the rebellious vessels to work His eternal purposes and to uphold His glory. Timothy was implored by Paul to flee youthful lusts in order to be a vessel of honour fit for God's intended use. While on earth, only those Christians who yield to God's work of sanctification will practically experience the life of Christ in selfless service. A good shepherd will affirm righteous behaviour through teaching and by practical example, and then apply the word of God to correct character bents and wrong attitudes they notice in a young believer – this ministry is called equipping in righteousness.

Inevitably, all believers will suffer failure – conviction, correction, and reproof are God's means for restoring the wayward back to the path of righteousness. The Holy Spirit, and other believers as directed by the Holy Spirit, will be involved in this ministry, as well as providing further training in righteousness to enable the stumbling believer to walk more successfully in the future. God-honouring service becomes increasingly feasible with spiritual maturity. May we heed our own missteps, be patient with younger believers, and also have the courage to first address those un-Christ-like bents and sins in our own lives so that we may assist others to overcome these sins also.





# Part 3: THE GOALS

By **WARREN HENDERSON**  
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## Goal 2: Equipping for Ministry

The opportunity to please God through selfless service is made possible to those who yield to God's ongoing work of sanctification. As there is nothing in and of the flesh that can please God, Rom. 7. 18, it is only those who continue to mortify the desires of the flesh and put aside their personal ambitions who are able to honour God through service. Thus, equipping in righteousness and equipping for ministry must go hand in hand.

The Lord Jesus gave some individuals, such as evangelists and teachers, as gifts to the church for a particular reason, 'for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ', Eph. 4. 12 NKJV. Every believer in the body of Christ has a work of ministry, the benefit of which will bless the entire body. For example, though the evangelist is skilful in reaching the lost for Christ, his or her main ministry to the church is to equip and to stir up others within the body to evangelize wherever God has placed them as a testimony to the lost. The result of which is that, in a collective sense, the church is stimulated and equipped to obey the great commission, Matt. 28. 19-20.

As believers rightly use their spiritual gifts, they equip others in the body to do ministry, which then passes the original blessing along to other believers in order to further edify the body. Visualize, for a moment, several children standing perfectly still in a wading pool while another child jumps into the pool. The resultant wave glides across the surface of the water and eventually bounces off every child in the pool. Each time the wave comes in contact with a child it is also reflected back across the pool; eventually it also makes contact with every other child, and so on.

This wave phenomenon illustrates how the initial edification of one member in the body equips other members to minister to the body; the blessing then continues to spread throughout the church. This enables individuals to reach their full potential in Christ and to fulfil God's sovereign purpose for their lives. A good shepherd will

assist fellow believers to recognize, to exercise and to develop their spiritual gift(s) to accomplish this goal.

In the first goal of training we recognized that the maturing process of a believer is enhanced by the practical instruction and correction of others in the body. This constructive feedback is also necessary to prepare believers for ministry. A young man desiring to be a carpenter cannot achieve the expertise needed to build houses by book-learning alone; he needs to be trained by a master carpenter. Nothing that the master teaches his apprentice will contradict the instruction within the carpentry manuals, yet the practical training and hands-on activities will be necessary to complete the learning process.

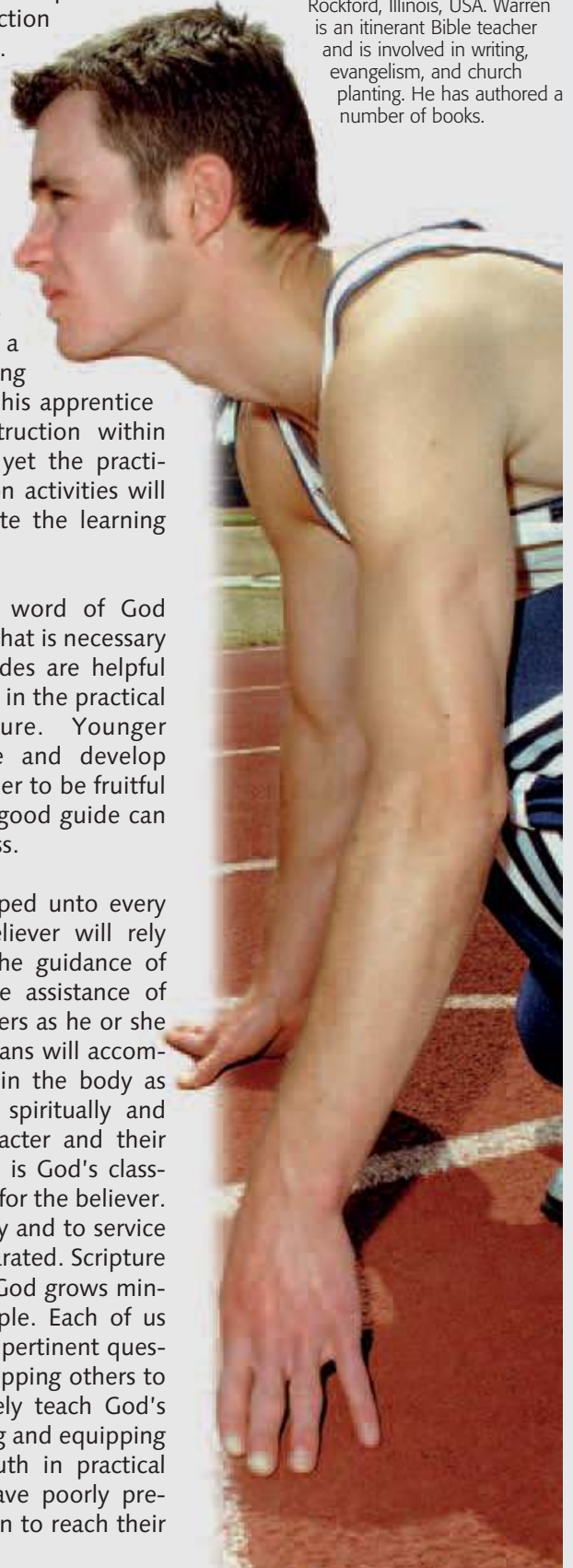
In the same way, the word of God guides believers into all that is necessary to please the Lord. Guides are helpful to better equip believers in the practical application of scripture. Younger believers must exercise and develop their spiritual gifts in order to be fruitful and bless the church; a good guide can help channel that process.

To be thoroughly equipped unto every good work, then, a believer will rely on the word of God, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the assistance of spiritually-minded believers as he or she matures in Christ. Christians will accomplish their ministry within the body as they continue to grow spiritually and develop Christ-like character and their spiritual gifts. The world is God's classroom, not a playground, for the believer. We are called to maturity and to service – the two cannot be separated. Scripture testifies to the fact that God grows ministries as He grows people. Each of us should ask ourselves the pertinent question, 'Is my ministry equipping others to fulfil theirs?' If we merely teach God's word without challenging and equipping believers to live out truth in practical service, then we will have poorly prepared the next generation to reach their potential in Christ.

## Endnotes

- 1 1 Thess. 5. 23; Heb. 13. 21.
- 2 Rom. 8. 29.

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# CHURCH GATHERING BREAKING OF BREAD

The law from Sinai was intrinsically 'holy, and just, and good', Rom. 7. 12. It did, however, make rigorous demands upon those living under its jurisdiction, with penalties imposed for failure to meet its requirements. Because of man's weakness, the claims of the law were met by the altar, and his only standing before God was on account of the gracious provision of atonement. 'The Lord's death', however, provided something far more substantial. Instead of the covering for sin granted by animal sacrifice, a complete cleansing was made possible by faith in the One who 'was de-livered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification', Rom 4. 25. This gracious provision was not accompanied by onerous legal demands engraved in stone, but with the challenge of a life of obedience founded on love for the Lord Jesus and love for others, John 13. 34-35; 14. 15, 23.

It began with a simple command to His own in the upper room. In anticipation of the 'much fruit' to be brought forth as a consequence of His death, the Lord Jesus wrote it upon their hearts in the form of a request. Taking the everyday objects to hand, as so often He did to illustrate His teaching, He lifted bread and a cup of wine from the supper table and gave thanks. The eleven disciples, familiar with the ritual of Passover, would no doubt have been puzzled by this departure from the well known customs. Then, referring to the bread as representative of His body, and the wine of His blood, He passed it to those at the table that each might partake; as they did so they heard His brief words of explanation, 'My body . . . my blood . . . for you . . . this do in remembrance of me', Luke 22. 19-20; so unpretentious, so humble, so profound!

The analogy he used was not entirely new to the disciples. Earlier in His ministry, on a hillside in Galilee, the Lord had said, 'I am the bread which came down from

heaven', John 6. 41. He spoke on that occasion of the need to eat His flesh and drink His blood as a means of eternal life. John chapter 6, however, has absolutely nothing to do with the symbolic events seen in the upper room. Set in the context of eating and drinking food to sustain life, He had fed the multitude and drawn lessons from the manna, He taught that He himself must become an integral part of the one who would know and enjoy eternal life. Confused understanding of this chapter has led to the wholly erroneous Romish doctrine of transubstantiation and to the Lutheran teaching of consubstantiation. Monastic Christendom has derived words like 'Eucharist' and 'Holy Communion' to describe their rituals involving bread and wine. The 'bread' has become a form of wafer known as 'the Host', from the Latin *hostia* meaning a victim, thus supporting the false doctrine of transubstantiation, which teaches that it becomes the actual body of the Lord when blessed by the officiating priest! In the practice of giving 'Last Rites' to those close to death, the 'sacraments' are often administered in the vain hope of ensuring eternal life!

All this is far removed from the simplicity of the Lord's words and actions just hours before He went to Calvary. The whole experience would have taken no more than a few minutes and doubtless would have been temporarily forgotten by the disciples as the events of the night unfolded. When, however, the Spirit was given at Pentecost, the meaning of the Lord's words in John chapter 14 verse 26 became clear, as remembrance was made of those things taught by Him. Among these was undoubtedly the instruction for what the scriptures refer to as 'The Lord's Supper', 1 Cor. 11. 20, or 'The Breaking of

Bread', Acts 2. 42; 20. 7. That which the Lord initiated in the gospel records was clearly practised by the early church, Acts 2. 42; 20. 7, and given doctrinal substance by the Spirit of God through the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 11, 23-30. Most readers of this magazine will be familiar with the form and structure of this church gathering as, 'upon the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread', Acts 20. 7. In the New Testament, the expression 'breaking bread' does not refer exclusively to this time of remembrance, but also to the eating of a meal, Acts 2. 46; 27. 35, the context determines the meaning. From the apostle's stern rebuke to the Corinthian church, it would appear that they had confused the two, resulting in

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# RINGS

## PART THREE

disorder, 1 Cor. 11. 20-22, 34. Much has been written and taught to good effect regarding both the privilege and responsibility associated with the believer's obedience to the Lord's desire that we should remember Him. A recent article written for *Young Precious Seed* by DANIEL RUDGE is worth reading in this connection. This can be found in the February 2011 magazine (Volume 8, issue 2) or at, [www.youngpreciousseed.org/magazine\\_detail.cfm?articleID=101](http://www.youngpreciousseed.org/magazine_detail.cfm?articleID=101), and clearly teaches that our attendance at and participation in the Lord's Supper is not to be taken lightly or without due consideration, but valued as an opportunity to express, whether silently or audibly, our appreciation of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. It is somewhat disappointing that, in certain companies of the Lord's people, this simple expression of obedience has been relegated to a far less frequent gathering than 'the first day of the week' indicated in scripture; or even consigned as a form of addendum to another meeting!

At the expense of repeating things which have been well documented,



it may be timely to remind our hearts of the purpose of this familiar church gathering. It is primarily an act of obedience in remembrance of the Lord. It should be characterized by simplicity, dignity and humility. Remember that the Lord has promised us His presence and, as we focus our minds and hearts on His blessed Person, the inevitable progression will be worship. Worship is defined as having or expressing feelings of profound adoration. Worship is not a matter of gift. The simplest believer can worship, but, by the same token, eloquence is not necessarily an evidence of spirituality. Neither is worship the product of emotions stirred up by rhythmic sound or visual attractions that appeal to the natural or aesthetic senses. Bearing in mind the intrinsic character of the One we worship, there should, of necessity, be a reverence and dignity in every approach to our sovereign Lord; He alone truly estimates the value and reality of our worship as He weighs it in the balance of the sanctuary.

The apostle Paul made it clear that the familiar words recorded in verses 23-30 of 1 Corinthians chapter 11, were given to him as a direct revelation from the Lord. He, of course, had not been in the upper room that night, but he clearly sets out the details and the purpose of the Lord's request to His own, which by the time the apostle wrote had evidently become an established practice in the New Testament churches.

Often, when these verses are read, we stop at verse 26 with the blessed anticipation that the remembrance is only "til he come", words which lift and cheer our hearts. The verses which follow, however, remind us that the first Corinthian Epistle is corrective in its teaching in view of the behaviour, or rather misbehaviour, of the believers!

In verse 27, 'wherefore' links our thoughts to the dignity of this occasion. Our participation should never be trivialised or treated in a flippant way. The apostle raises the possibility of one partaking of the bread and wine in an 'unworthy' manner. 'Unworthily' is an adverb which qualifies the manner of partaking, not the person; it places the emphasis on our state, not our standing. None should consider themselves worthy of any privilege as far as our nature is concerned. However, as the apostle reminds the Corinthians, 'but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God', 1 Cor. 6. 11. Yet if we harbour un-judged sin in our hearts, or hold a grievance against a fellow saint, our participation could be deemed 'unworthy'; our attitude is not consistent with the solemn significance of the occasion. By so doing we are 'not discerning the Lord's body', failing in the very purpose of our gathering, the remembrance of One who gave His all to put away our sins. Consistent behaviour after this manner can only expect the chastening hand of the Lord, as the Corinthians had learned to their cost, 1 Cor. 11. 30.

In verse 28 the apostle advocates self-examination before participation in the Lord's Supper. Some have taken this verse as a licence to any and all who profess salvation to have free access to the privileges enjoyed by the Lord's people when they 'come together', placing the onus of responsibility on the individual. On the contrary, however, the exhortation is for those believers already in fellowship to ensure that nothing in their lives, hidden or known, would preclude their full participation in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus.

According to Thy gracious Word,  
In meek humility  
This would I do, O Christ my Lord,  
I would remember Thee.

[J. MONTGOMERY]

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The gospel goes beyond mere assent to a set of doctrines, and links us to the Creator God through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, eternal life is relational and experiential – not merely cerebral or ritualistic, as in lifeless human religion. As the Lord prayerfully told His Father, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent', John 17. 3. For Paul, knowing Christ was the principal activity of his life; nothing else compares with intimately growing in one's relationship with the Saviour. Having received a right-eous standing before God through His Son, the apostle longs to know the Messiah with progressive intimacy, Phil. 3. 9-10.

### Knowing Christ excels everything else

Paul was converted more than two decades prior to writing Philippians; therefore, what is one to make of verse 10? F. B. HOLE points out the significance, "'That I may know HIM,'" seems to have been the very crown of Paul's desires. But then, did not Paul know Him? Certainly he did, as indeed every believer knows Him. He knew Him in fact in very much larger measure than most believers know Him. Yet there is such an infinitude in Christ, such depths to be known, that here we have the apostle still panting to know more and more. Have we not caught at least a little of the apostle's spirit? Do we not long to know our Saviour better – not merely to know about Him, but to know Himself in the intimacy of His love?'<sup>1</sup>

Greek scholar KENNETH WUEST further explains, 'The tense causes us to translate, "to come to know by experience." Paul wants to come to know the Lord Jesus in that fullness of experiential knowledge which is only wrought by being like Him. He wants to know also in an experiential way the power of Christ's resurrection. That is he wants to experience the same power which raised Christ from the dead surging through his own being, overcoming sin in his life and producing the Christian graces'.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, *The Pulpit Commentary* remarks, 'For the knowledge here

# Philippians: The Joy and Suffering

## Chapter 3 verses 10-14: **KNOWING CHRIST, WHO**

spoken of is a personal knowledge, gained, not by hearing or reading, but by direct personal communion with the Lord; it is not theoretical, but experimental'.<sup>3</sup>

The prime motivation in Paul's life – so great that it made him forsake his past successes in Judaism – was having the righteousness from God that permitted him to know Christ in everyday life. His quest for knowledge was not ivory tower speculative philosophy. Instead, it was a practical, real-life relationship with the Son of God. As one writer puts it, 'He wishes to become entirely "wrapped up" in Christ, so that Jesus will be "all the world" to him'.<sup>4</sup> In this age of information overload, believers must focus on the most important thing, emulating the apostle by seeking to know the Lord personally and experientially at all costs.

### Wonder Working Power

Experiencing a living relationship with Christ includes 'the power of his resurrection', which is the same power that positionally raises a believer from his fallen condition to sit in the heavenlies with Christ, Eph. 1. 19; 2. 6. In actuality, this power will one day physically transform and convey the saints to

glory when the Lord Jesus returns, 1 Cor. 15. 42-57. Even now, however, it gives a Christian the essential hope to endure sufferings and opposition in view of his eventual deliverance from this world and his foes. In short, the power of Christ's resurrection fortifies saints for the fellowship of His sufferings.

The quest for knowing Christ also includes 'the fellowship of his sufferings' – a sharing of the type of treatment that his Lord received in this world, in the manner of John chapter 15 verses 18-27. Paul did not avoid persecution, but recognized it instead as a necessary part of the believer's pilgrim pathway, 2 Tim. 3. 12; Acts 14. 22. He shunned not the derision and pain of the cross, but took it up as he followed his Master's footsteps.

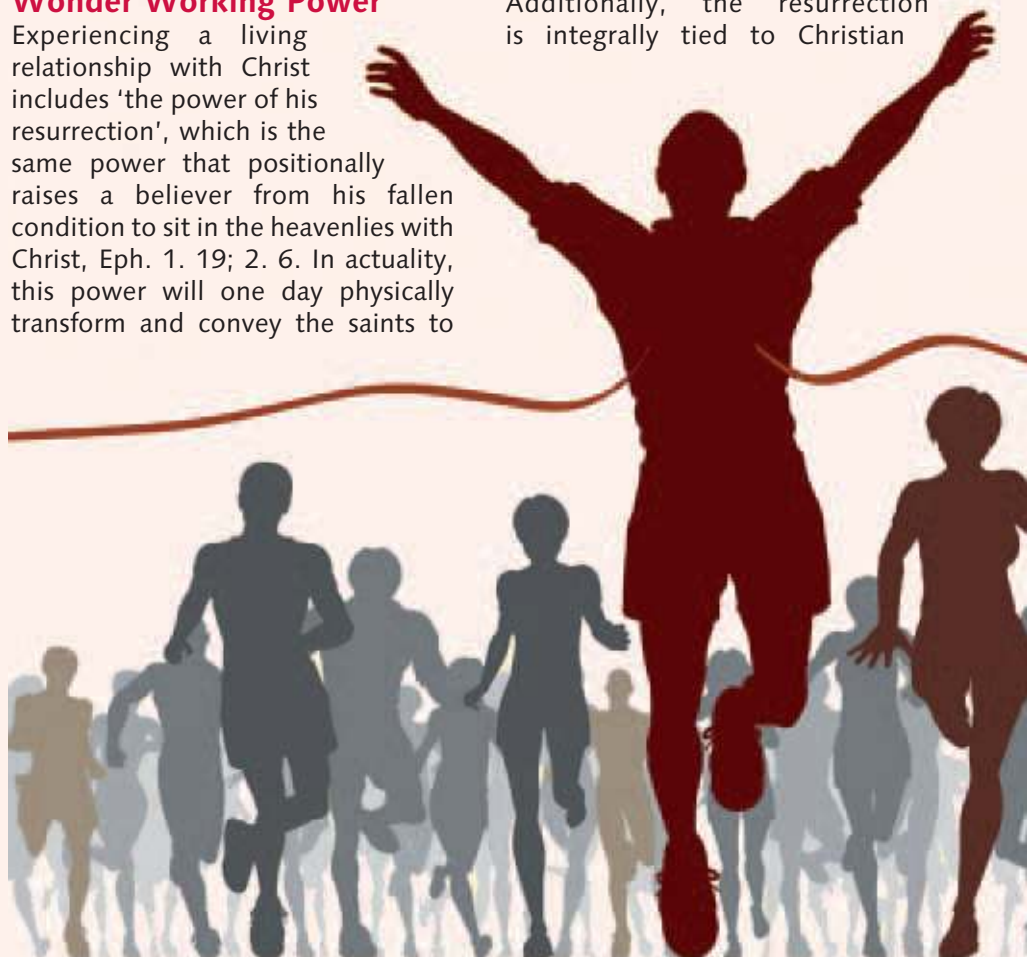
### Living the resurrected life now

Additionally, the resurrection is integrally tied to Christian

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# Running of the Furtherance of the Gospel Part Eleven

## WHILE REACHING FOR THE FINISH LINE

character development. As VINE comments on verse 11, 'Here Paul uses it of attaining, not to the physical resurrection (that is "of" the dead; this is *ek*, "from among" the dead), for that is assured to all believers hereafter (1 Cor. 15:52, 53; 1 Thess. 4:16), but to the present life of identification with Christ in His resurrection and its effects. This is confirmed by verse 12. That is to say, he desires so to live that his whole life may manifest the power of Christ as the Living One, raised from among the dead. This would be the perfect fulfillment of what he has already said, "to me to live is Christ," and the expression of his hope "that Christ shall be magnified in his body," even now. A life like that is an earnest of the physical resurrection to come, but that is not a matter of attainment but of grace'.<sup>5</sup>

### The Pursuit of God

One teacher points out the passage's theme of spiritual advancement, 'Pulsing through these verses are the ideas of growth and progress in Christ, as well as the idea of spending maximum energy in the cause of Christ. The theme of growth permeates the letter (1:6, 9-11, 2:1-4, 12f, etc.) The idea of energy demonstrates that though righteousness comes by faith and is God's work, it does not imply a lax and indolent "let God do it" attitude (cf. 2:12f). The course to be run and

the goal to be achieved are exciting and challenging, so that one who loves Christ because Christ loved him must run it'.<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to the verse's opening phrase, he does not doubt his ability to progress towards spiritual completion, as WUEST points out, 'The expression, "if by any means" is not an expression of doubt but one of humility. It is a modest but assured hope'.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, he affirms that he has not yet achieved the end point, v. 12. His spiritual transformation will only find completion when he is raised with Christ at His coming.

### Pursuing the Hound of Heaven

Paul next says 'I follow after' – or 'I press on' (NKJV, ESV) – referring to the aim of his life. The Greek graphically evokes the action, as one commentator explains, 'In the passive voice, *katelempthen* is rendered by an active in NIV: *Christ Jesus took hold of me*; it looks back to the time of his conversion. The aim of the apostle is set out in his desire to *take hold of* (*katalabo*), i.e., to make his own possession, the purpose for which the risen Christ appeared to him, and he frankly confesses that the goal of his endeavour has not yet been *taken hold of*. Hence his whole life is a pressing on to a future goal'.<sup>8</sup> He further notes, 'It is a strong expression for active and earnest endeavour . . . in the sense of "pursue and overtake", "chase and capture". This gives an excellent sense. The apostle presses forward in his Christian course in the full recognition that he is not yet perfect, but lives in confidence of ultimate salvation. If the attainment of perfection is denied, there is equally no quietism or indifferent acquiescence in his present experience. He is concerned to strain every nerve to pursue the ideal before him, and at last to capture the coveted prize (v. 14)'.<sup>9</sup>

Paul was seized by the Lord on the Damascus road for the specific purpose of glorifying God through his

apostleship, Acts 9. 15-16. Beyond his service, he was also apprehended for the purpose of knowing Christ and being with Him for eternity. THIELMAN agrees, saying, 'Paul vigorously pursues the knowledge of Christ, his sufferings, his resurrection power, and union with him at the final day because on the road to Damascus, Christ took hold of him (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). Had that event not taken place, Paul might still be busy 'persecuting (*dioko*) the church' (Phil. 3:6) instead of pressing on (*dioko*) toward these goals (vv. 12, 14)'.<sup>10</sup> MACARTHUR cogently explains, 'Paul was running spiritually to catch the very thing for which Christ Jesus had come after him. In other words, Paul's goal in life was consistent with Christ's goal in saving him'.<sup>11</sup>

### Better than Chariots of Fire

Racing imagery is prominent throughout verses 12 through 14. IRONSIDE observes this metaphor, 'Like the racer stripped for the contest, he struggles ardently on with his eye upon the goal, which is for him this out-resurrection. In view of it, suffering cannot daunt him, nor death terrorize him. He sees in both but an opportunity for fuller, sweeter fellowship with his Lord'.<sup>12</sup> Like a great sprinter, he does not look back – 'forgetting those things which are behind', v. 13; moreover, he stretches forward for the finish line. VINE elaborates on the call, 'The high calling . . . is the same as the "heavenly calling" in Hebrews 3:1. The prize is not the high calling, but will be bestowed in virtue of it and in relation to it. The calling belongs to all believers, it is a calling which directs their minds and aspirations heavenward. For it is "a holy calling" (2 Tim. 1:9). The calling is not merely to salvation, it is their spiritual life and experience, as that which leads to, and issues in, the kingdom of God in its future manifestation (see 1 Thess. 2:12). He calls them by the gospel to the obtaining of Christ's glory (2 Thess. 2:14). They are to make this calling sure (2 Pet. 1:10), not by making it secure, for it is theirs by grace, but by walking worthily of it (Eph. 4:1)'.<sup>13</sup>



The prize of this great call fixes the apostle's attention on successful completion of the course.

Like the apostle, the late sportswriter Bud Greenspan was especially drawn to feats of fortitude in running. As the *Los Angeles Times* recounts, 'He was especially partial to stories involving athletic perseverance, citing a pair of runners as prime examples, Tanzanian marathoner John Steven Aquari and British distance runner Dave Moorcroft. In the 1968 Mexico City Games, Aquari was the last man to finish the long race, hobbling into the darkening stadium more than an hour after the early finishers, his right leg bleeding and hastily bandaged, completing the marathon to the cheers of what few fans were left. Asked later by Greenspan why he had continued running, Aquari answered, "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. My country sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race." Moorcroft entered the 5,000-meter run in Los Angeles as the world-record holder, but also having recently suffered a stress fracture in his leg, a bout with hepatitis and a pelvic problem that interfered with his stride. He quickly fell off the pace and into last place, sprinting in ungainly fashion to keep from being lapped as the race ended. When Greenspan asked Moorcroft later why he had not quit, the runner replied, "Once you quit, it's easy to do it again. I did not want to set a precedent for the future".<sup>14</sup>

The *New York Times* provides this additional comment, 'Citing Mr. Akhwari's courage, Mr. Greenspan told The *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Sometimes the essence of the Olympic Games can be found in people who don't stand on the victory podium."<sup>15</sup>

Like Akhwari, our Lord calls us to run and finish the race; furthermore, like Moorcroft we are not to quit. Contrary to Greenspan's remarks, however, the believer will succeed, for in Christ he is an overcomer who will attain the goal and stand on God's victory podium – 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us', Rom. 8. 37. The scriptures further adduce, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this

is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' 1 John 5. 4-5.

### Keep your eyes on the prize

Spurgeon's eloquent observations form a fitting conclusion to our consideration of the high call and prize that relate to the Christian race, 'In our Christian pilgrimage it is well, for the most part, to be looking forward. Forward lies the crown, and onward is the goal. Whether it be for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love, the future must, after all, be the grand object of the eye of faith. Looking into the future we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect, and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Looking further yet, the believer's enlightened eye can see death's river passed, the gloomy stream forded, and the hills of light attained on which standeth the celestial city; he seeth himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than conqueror, crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with him, and made to sit together with him on his throne, even as he has overcome and has sat down with the Father on his throne. The thought of this future may well relieve the darkness of the past and the gloom of the

present. The joys of heaven will surely compensate for the sorrows of earth'.<sup>16</sup>

### Endnotes

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- 3 *Pulpit Commentary*, Rios, WI: Ages Software, pdf., pg. 7.
- 4 WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN, *New Testament Commentary Vol. 5 : Exposition of Philippians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962, pg. 167.
- 5 W. E. VINE, *Collected Writings of W. E. Vine: Philippians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, electronic ed. (Logos); italics original.
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- 9 *Ibid.*, pgs. 159-60.
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- 11 JOHN MACARTHUR, JR. *Philippians*. Electronic ed. (Quickverse 2008.)
- 12 H.A. IRONSIDE, *Notes on the Epistle to the Philippians*. Loizeaux Brothers: Neptune, NJ, 1922, pg. 85.
- 13 VINE, see note 5.
- 14 MIKE KUPPER, 'Bud Greenspan dies at 84; Olympic documentarian.' *Los Angeles Times*, 27/12/10; accessed on 31/10/11: [http://www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-bud-greenspan-20101227,0,1178619.story?track=rss&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+latimes%2Fnews%2Fobituaries+%28Los+Angeles+Times++Obituaries%29](http://www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-bud-greenspan-20101227,0,1178619.story?track=rss&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+latimes%2Fnews%2Fobituaries+%28Los+Angeles+Times++Obituaries%29)
- 15 RICHARD SANDOMIR, 'Bud Greenspan, 84, Dies; Filmed Olympics in Glory'. *New York Times*, 26/12/10; accessed here on 31/10/11: [www.nytimes.com/2010/12/26/sports/olympics/26greenspan.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/26/sports/olympics/26greenspan.html)
- 16 C.H. SPURGEON, comment on 2 Cor. 4. 18, Jan. 29 a.m., *Morning and Evening*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006; electronic ed. (Logos).

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## 1 John chapter 2 – Part 2

### Walking in the light: Test – refusal to love the world, 2. 15-17

John's warnings are often abrupt and thus all the more effective, 5. 21. This section focuses on an urgent warning that applies to all the children of God. But what exactly is meant by the 'world', and how does this relate to the truth that 'God so loved the world', John 3. 16? The answer to the latter question is that although the same Greek word *kosmos* is used in both passages, the meaning is different. In John chapter 3 verse 16 the 'world' denotes all of humanity, and points to the universal scope of God's sacrificial love. Here in chapter 2 verses 15 to 17, the 'world' is the evil *world system* ('godless world', NEB) in its alienation from God and in the grip of the devil, 5. 19. Also, unlike John chapter 3 verse 16, 'love' is here the selfish acquisitive love of fallen human beings.

How has such a seductive world system come about? In Eden, Satan, with diabolical cunning, sold Adam and Eve the idea that the good things of creation could be enjoyed independently of God, and, indeed, in rebellion against Him. Thus began a whole system of godless human organisation engineered and presided over by Satan; the good things of creation could now be enjoyed as *an end in themselves*, without reference to God. For fallen mankind, the material things of creation had supplanted the Creator!

'Do not love the world or the things in the world', v. 15. The key to understanding 'worldliness' is to note the verb 'love'. Worldliness is a matter of the *heart's affections*, not merely an external checklist issue. It is no part of Christianity to deny the believer the proper enjoyment of God's good gifts, 1 Tim. 6. 17. The things of the world can be *used*, but are not to be *misused*, 1 Cor. 7. 31. At the same time, the believer must be vigilant, knowing the potential of even God's good gifts (such as home, family, and business) to become all-consuming pursuits enticing the soul away from God. John's prohibition is both root and branch, 'the world or the things in the world', that is, its myriad component attractions. James and John speak with one voice on this vital matter, James 4. 4. Loving the world and loving God are irreconcilable opposites. As the Master taught, one cannot serve God and mammon, Matt. 6. 24.

Verse 16 spells out three aspects of a worldly mindset: 'the lust of the flesh' – that which appeals to the appetites of our sinful nature (flesh); 'the lust of the eyes' – that which is beautiful, carries aesthetic appeal, 'and the pride (vainglory RV) of life' – pursuit of success in this world, and seen as the

measure of how we evaluate people. From earliest times expositors have illustrated these desires from the story of the fall, 'So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh), that it was pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes), and a tree desirable to make one wise (pride of life), she took of its fruit and ate', Gen. 3. 6.

Verse 17 highlights a key consideration to help us overcome the world, 'the world is passing away, and the lust of it'. How tragic, therefore, to squander one's precious time, energy, and other resources on a system that is doomed, transient, and guaranteed to fade away along with those who are occupied with it! In pointed contrast with debased *desire*, there is the wholesome pursuit of *the will of God*: 'but he who does the will of God abides forever'. The believer who focuses on the will of God will reap an ever more bountiful harvest; for him eternal blessings have already begun!

### Walking in the light: Test – the Person of Christ, 2. 18-28

In the paragraph comprising verses 18 to 28, John focuses explicitly on false teachers, their unsettling departure, and their teaching. It is a sign of the times that they are active, for they embody the spirit of the coming Antichrist. Yet there is a safe path for believers. Such have an indwelling 'Anointing' from the Holy One, and they must shun novel and speculative doctrines, adhering steadfastly to the truth they have received during their early Christian instruction. Thus, to abide faithful to Christ will bring confidence in the light of His coming.

'Little children, it is the last hour', v. 18, alerts us to the fact that the consummation of God's purposes is imminent. Since more than nineteen centuries have elapsed since this declaration, modern readers may feel this needs some explanation. It is clear from the New Testament that the Christian era marks the culmination of the previous, preparatory ages.<sup>1</sup> All preceding ages led up to the advent of Christ, who pointed out the peculiar privileges of those who live in the era of fulfilment, Luke 10. 23, 24. The *only* factors that delay the arrival of the end-time events are, on the one hand, the filling up of the full measure of human wickedness, Gen. 15. 16, and, on the other hand, the vast scale of God's programme of salvation, 2 Pet. 3. 9. Therefore, it was as true then, as it is now, that 'it is the last hour'.<sup>2</sup>

'As you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come'. A marked feature of biblical prophecy is that ultimate fulfilments usually have foreshadowings.<sup>3</sup> In a closely parallel passage Paul writes, 'For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work . . . then the lawless one will be revealed', 2 Thess. 2. 7, 8. 'Antichrist' denotes one

who *usurps* the place of Christ and thus *opposes* God and Christ.<sup>4</sup> The Antichrist will be the monster of iniquity of the Great Tribulation period, 2 Thess. 2. 1-12. Note carefully that Satan deliberately *mimics* God's programme; just as the Messiah in Jewish thought is designated as 'the Coming One', Matt. 11. 3, so here Satan's man 'is coming'. As with our Lord and John the Baptist, Antichrist has many forerunners. The hearts of unregenerate men are being groomed thereby for the ultimate deception – man taking the place of God and receiving divine honours.

'They went out from us, but they were not of us', v. 19. It is startling to reflect on the fact that these 'antichrists' were once among the believers; Paul's insight when addressing the Ephesian elders a generation earlier was truly prophetic, Acts 20. 30. Having failed to win over a majority of the church, they 'went out from us'. *Doctrinally* they moved away from apostolic teaching, and *physically* they departed from the fellowship of the believers.

'If they had been of us, they would have continued with us'. John introduces the test of *continuance* or perseverance, which is a hallmark of genuineness. In our Lord's parable of the sower there was seed which showed initial promise, but faded away; by contrast, the seed in the good soil bore fruit with *perseverance*, Luke 8. 15 NASB. 'In the present situation the fact that the dissenters had left the apostolic fellowship simply showed that in heart they had never really belonged to it', BRUCE. This is much more than 'a move to another church'; by their action they are showing that they have abandoned the fundamental ground of Christianity itself.

'They went out' in order 'that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us'. Unsettling for the godly as their behaviour must have been, John detects an element of divine *sovereignty* over-arching the departure of those who withdrew. Their exit exposed their true character. Mere membership in a local church is no guarantee that one is a true believer! On the other hand this passage affords no excuse for lack of pastoral effort to recover erring believers, cp. Matt. 18. 12, 13.

'But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things', v. 20. John now turns to the resources at the believers' disposal. They are not dependent on dangerous teachers, because they have an anointing (Gk. *chrisma*) from the Holy One. Every genuine believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit as Christ's permanent gift. We are thus instinctively able to sense what is false. The 'Holy One', who was Himself anointed with the Spirit, Acts 10. 38, is Christ.<sup>5</sup> Just as He was anointed for His public ministry, He gives the Spirit to instruct and equip His people in their service for Him, John 15. 26; 16. 7. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,

but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given us by God', 1 Cor. 2. 12, 16.<sup>6</sup>

'I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it', v. 21. The Spirit is pre-eminently the Spirit of truth, John 14. 17; 15. 26. He will guide into all the truth – in the context particularly the truth about the person and work of Christ, 16. 13. For John, there can be no room for doubt regarding error on this subject: 'no lie is of the truth'.

'Who is a (the) liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?' v. 22. The definite article *the* liar should be read, ESV. This is the lie *par excellence*. 'To deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny that He is the Son of God, 5. 5, or that He has come in the flesh, 4. 2. This denial is deadly, because only in the Christ, the Son of God, who came in the flesh is eternal life to be had', 5. 11, BRUCE. Most errors, ancient and modern, relative to the Person of Christ can be traced back to a denial of the incarnation – that inscrutable union of deity and genuine, yet holy, humanity.

'He is (the) antichrist who denies the Father and the Son'.<sup>7</sup> Again (as ESV) the definite article should be read; John is identifying a specific opponent of the gospel; the fundamentals are being attacked. Such an individual is a forerunner of the ultimate end-time enemy of God and Christ.

'Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges (confesses ESV) the Son has the Father also', v. 23. The false teachers probably did not set out to denigrate the Father, but this is the implication of their teaching about Christ. The knowledge of the Father cannot be divorced from the knowledge of the Son, John 5. 23; 8. 19; 14. 7, for 'the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him', John 1. 18. To 'have the Father' is not simply to hold God's fatherhood as a doctrine, rather it means to have Him as *one's own Father*. To deny the Son is to forfeit the possibility of membership in God's family.

In verses 24 to 27 the apostle comforts and reassures the believers based on the *resources* they have from God. Whilst the false teachers might claim a spurious progress, 2 John 9, the emphasis in these verses on 'abiding' in Christ and in the teaching 'once for all delivered' is inescapable, cp. Jude 3.

'Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning', v. 24. The 'you' at the beginning of the sentence is emphatic, hence the RV rendering, 'As for you, let that abide in you'. John's readers are to stand in complete separation from these seducers. The key is to keep to the word of God, and the gospel truths they were instructed



in from the 'beginning' of their Christian experience; no innovative doctrines are to be entertained. How vital then, as now, that young Christians should be comprehensively established in sound biblical teaching!

'If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father'. On the other hand, maintaining doctrinal correctness is not an end in itself; the greater objective is thereby to enjoy the eternally enriching fellowship of the Father and the Son, John 15. 7, 9.

Christ is the subject of the sentence which could more literally be rendered: 'And the promise that He promised us is this – the life eternal', v. 25.<sup>8</sup> To abide in the fellowship of the Father and the Son, v. 24, is the very essence and glory of eternal life, 1. 2, 3. Christ Himself promises the believer the gift of eternal life, John 3.15; 4. 14; 6. 40.

'These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you', v. 26. 'These things' most likely refer to the immediate warnings about false teachers, rather than the entire letter. DARBY renders literally 'concerning those who lead you astray', which refers to the persistent *ambition*, but happily not the success, of those propagating error; NJKV paraphrases slightly but gives the correct sense.

'But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you', v. 27; again John points to the indwelling Spirit, who is a permanent sanctifying and illuminating resident in every true believer, Rom. 8. 9. 'And you do not need that anyone teach you'. John's meaning is that the Christians have no need of *these antichristian teachers*. The verse is not to be misapplied to those godly teachers who may from time to time bring us uncomfortable messages! The gift of pastor-teacher remains essential until the Lord comes, Eph. 4. 13, and, indeed, in verse 24 John has already emphasized the great value of early instruction in Christian doctrine.

'But as the same Anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him'. This sentence serves to summarize the essential teaching of this important section. The lines are clearly drawn between all true believers enjoying the anointing of the Holy Spirit and those propagating error. The Spirit of truth guides us into all the truth, especially truths concerning the person of Christ, John 16. 13. The path of preservation is steadfast *continuance* ('the same anointing teaches . . . abide', present tense) in what was *taught* by the apostles under the Spirit's guidance.

'And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming', v. 28. This verse is taken by some as the start of a new section, but is better understood as rounding off

that begun at verse 18. 'And now' introduces an emphatic summarizing statement, cp. John 17. 5, gathering up the implications of the section. Verse 18 alluded to the coming of Antichrist, but here we are reminded of the implications of the coming (Gk. *parousia*) of the true Christ. This is the only place where John uses the term 'coming', but here and elsewhere he refers to Christ being 'manifested', 3. 2. 'Abiding in the Anointing', v. 27, is not materially different from abiding 'in Him' (Christ). The believer who thus abides in communion with the Lord can have confidence in respect of His appearing, more literally RV, 'if He shall be manifested'. 'If' does not imply doubt either here or in chapter 3 verse 2 RV; it is simply a case of *when*. 'Manifestation', as noted earlier, is a favourite word of John's, John 21. 1, 14, and indicates that the One whom the heavens now conceal will be revealed to His waiting people.<sup>9</sup> 'Confidence' (Gk. *parrhesia*), 3.21; 4. 17; 5. 14, is literally 'freedom of speech', the opposite of shrinking in shame before Him. That coming will be followed by the judgement seat of Christ, 2 Cor. 5. 10, and the Master's searching eye will scrutinize every believer and their work, 1 Cor. 3. 13. All will be exposed. With this great prospect in view, faithful perseverance in the doctrine of the apostles, righteousness of life, and love for one's fellow believers generates confidence, but not complacency. That John uses the term 'we' suggests that he, too, hopes to be able to give account with joy as his 'little children' have remained loyal and true and enter into their 'full reward', 2 John 8 ESV, Heb. 13. 17.

### Endnotes

- 1 1 Cor. 10. 11; Heb. 1. 2; 9. 26.
- 2 Other similar references suggest this means the closing phase of the last days, see 'the last time', 1 Pet. 1. 5; scoffers arise 'in the last time', Jude 18.
- 3 For example, Daniel chapter 11 presents a prophecy which, in the early verses, had its fulfilment in Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned 175-164 BC. Yet, from verse 36 it refers to the future Antichrist, who *displays the same blasphemous and sacrilegious character as Antiochus*, but far transcends his forerunner. Similarly, the Olivet discourse links the tribulation experienced at the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 with the future great tribulation, see Mark 13.
- 4 The term is to be distinguished from 'false Christ', Matt. 24. 24 (Gk. *pseudochristos*).
- 5 See Ps. 16. 10; Mark 1. 24; John 6. 69; Acts 3. 14; Rev. 3. 7.
- 6 ESV, NKJV margin reflect a possible variant reading, 'But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge'. If this is adopted, John's telling point is that unlike the false teachers and their claims of esoteric knowledge, *all* God's people enjoy the illumination of the Spirit's teaching.
- 7 It is important to realize that to deny the Son is by implication to deny the Father also. Some have held that 'Sonship' was merely an *office* undertaken by our Lord at His incarnation, i.e., while confessing His eternal existence, they deny His *eternal Sonship*. However, if there were no Son, there could be no Father; it is inconceivable that God *became* Father only at the incarnation!
- 8 See 3. 23; 5. 11 for similar constructions.
- 9 The verb is passive (RIENECKER) reminding us that that great event will be brought about by God the Father, cp. 1 Tim. 6. 14, 15.



# A Holy Man of God

By **DONALD NORBIE**  
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[Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from the New King James Version]

After a meeting in Korea, a woman said to me, 'You are a holy man, a man of God'. I felt embarrassed, humbled, and speechless. Me? A holy man? A man of God? But should we not all be holy men and women, men and women of God? What does it mean to be holy, a man or woman of God?

When the tabernacle was completed there were ceremonies to consecrate it to the service of God, with all of its furniture and vessels. There was also a solemn service to consecrate the priests to their holy work. 'And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy', Exod. 40. 9.

The priests had been consecrated previously. 'And this what you shall do to them to hallow them for ministering to Me as priests', Exod. 29. 1. Aaron and his sons became holy men, set apart to serve God as priests. Who are the priests today, hallowed for ministry to God? Peter emphasizes that all believers are priests, 'a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ', 1 Pet. 2. 5. The priest was a priest twenty-four hours a day and was to live a holy life, a pure life for God. Hence, Peter exhorts all Christians, 'But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy"', 1 Pet. 1. 15-16. Remember the dignity of your calling as a priest, and live a holy life!

What is a man of God? He was a man who had spent much time with God. To be a man or woman of God one must invest time alone with God

and His word. He must become His friend, like Abraham, Jas. 2. 23. As he spends time in the presence of God he will be overwhelmed with the majesty and holiness of God; he will be moved to repentance and holiness. 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up', Isa. 6. 1. The holiness and purity of the Almighty caused him to cry out, 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips', v. 5. The man of God will never forget the awesome holiness of God and his own innate sinfulness. This will cause him to walk humbly before God.

The man of God will be aware of the fact that he is owned by God. He is God's property, God's slave. This will keep him from the fear of man. Paul could write to the Galatians, 'For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bond-servant (*doulos*, 'slave') of Christ', Gal. 1. 10. This will enable one to be fearless in proclaiming God's word whether to an individual or to a crowd. Elijah could confront the wicked King Ahab with God's ultimatum. John the Baptist pointed the finger of condemnation at King Herod for his adultery. They were men of God, fearless and uncompromising. Such men and women are needed today!

So, are you a holy man, a holy woman? Are we men and women of God? Do we recognize His claims upon our lives as slaves of God? Are we motivated to please Him primarily? Do we pursue holiness and abhor evil? This is the good life, the triumphant life!

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## How it all began in Inverurie, Aberdeenshire

One day in March 1871 a young man called John Ritchie walked into a shop in Inverurie and noticed a small bill in the window advertising gospel meetings in the town. Two evangelists, Donald Munro and Alex Carnie from the Northern Evangelistic Society, were to visit the town. This society had been founded the previous year by Donald Ross who had been the local superintendent of the North East Coast Mission, and he had been deeply involved in the 1859/60 revival in the North East of Scotland. Ross had resigned from the NECM on the basis that ministerial control had grown excessive, and he founded the Northern Evangelistic Society with 'no committee of directors, owning allegiance only to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and relying wholly on God for support'. The society focused on the inland parishes of Aberdeenshire, and so it was that the two evangelists were to be in Inverurie.

John Ritchie was no stranger to the gospel – he had Christian parents and had attended Sunday school – but it was mere curiosity which took him to these meetings in Inverurie. During the meetings there was significant opposition, and many attended to scoff and disrupt. One of the evangelists later recorded, 'There was such an exhibition of the devil I had never seen before. During our prayer time the scoffers hissed, cheered and shouted so that we could hardly hear our own voices'. John Ritchie returned to the meetings two weeks later, on the news that some of his friends had been saved, and, on 2nd April, in his own words he, 'through grace passed the boundary line of the devil's empire and entered the kingdom of God'.

On the following Monday, John told his employer that he had been saved and asked to be excused from selling drink, or, if that was not possible, that he be relieved from selling altogether. His employer was not prepared to make these exceptions and therefore 'let him go'. John, however, soon found employment with a local Christian.

A number of other conversions followed John Ritchie's, and, by the time the two evangelists left,

there were around thirty believers who continued to meet on Sunday mornings for prayer. Similar things were happening across the north-east at that time. During this time, tension developed between the Evangelistic Society and the denominations in the area. Donald Ross had ceased to take communion at the Free Church, because the saved and unsaved were together. Throughout the area those who had been converted began to search the scriptures to establish a way forward before God.

In Inverurie the small group of believers underwent some serious persecution – their own ministers preached against them, and they continued to search for the right way according to the scriptural pattern. They began to practise believer's baptism, using the River Don for the purpose. This proved a turning point as a number who had been associated with the group left. The believers got to know of a small group of Christians who were breaking bread in a nearby village – Old Rayne – and they decided to make a visit. What they witnessed had a profound impact on them. In John Ritchie's words, 'It was a wonderful gathering – the first of its kind we had seen – the meeting was held in a joiner's shop, planks of wood for seats supported by logs, a plain table covered by a white cloth on which the bread and wine were set. There was no platform, no chairman, and

*Inverurie Hall*



no speaker. We had often gone to hear the Lord's servants minister the word but here we had come simply to meet the Lord himself – to see no man save Jesus only'.

The Inverurie group continued to meet several evenings each week to study the scriptures and to seek a way forward. Eventually, twelve young men left their churches and set up a small assembly. They were soon joined by others, and a flourishing assembly was established. At around this time John Ritchie moved south to begin his own publishing business, and, though the assembly felt the loss, others stepped forward to fill the gap. Donald Ross held regular conferences bringing many good Bible teachers to the area which helped to establish the testimony and the believers involved.

The assembly was formed independently of any contact with other assemblies. John Ritchie wrote – 'The name of "brethren" was unknown to us – we had never heard or read of such a group'. The practises of the assembly were arrived at through a fresh reading of the word of God.

By the grace of God a thriving assembly of around sixty believers still exists in Inverurie, with active outreach programmes. In August this year, God willing, they will hold their 139th annual conference. There is a good mix of age groups, and, over the years, they have known the Lord's hand in blessing. At the weekly family service they regularly see attendances of 100, including good numbers of local people who still need the Saviour. They have a thriving children's work, supported by a local full-time worker, Graham Smith. Graham's school visits mean that around 1300 children every month are exposed to the scriptures, and these visits are augmented with Holiday Bible Clubs and annual Bible Exhibition visits.

Also, around 1500 Jubilee New Testaments were distributed to the schools around the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Bible teaching is carried on with regular consecutive programmes and house study groups, which the assembly see as providing opportunities to extend their reach into the community.



Two sad, dejected and confused people were walking along the road from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. Their hopes and aspirations had been shattered because the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they loved, had been crucified. They had hoped that He would have redeemed Israel. As they walked, the Lord joined them, but they were prevented from recognizing Him, Luke 24. 13-16. The Lord explained to them that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer before entering into His glory, vv. 25, 26, 'And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself', v. 27. The two disciples listened, were taught, blessed and comforted. Later they said, 'Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?' v. 32. It was not when they were enabled to recognize Him that their hearts burned within them, but when they saw Him revealed in the scriptures.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the dominant theme of the scriptures; He is seen in both the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah, whose name means 'Jehovah is salvation', wrote about 700 years before the Lord was born and the book he wrote contains more detailed Messianic prophecies concerning the 'sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow', 1 Pet. 1. 11, than any other book in the Old Testament. Isaiah tells us of God's suffering Servant who came to glorify His Father and do His will, and who will return to reign.

Israel, God's chosen people, failed to serve God faithfully, but the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Servant, could not, and did not, fail. He was 'obedient unto death, even the death of the cross', Phil. 2. 8. Isaiah brings the Lord before us as the holy, sinless substitute, taking the punishment our sins deserve from a holy God. Isaiah tells how our sins were imputed to Him so that we could be declared righteous, having the Lord's righteousness imputed to us.<sup>1</sup> In Isaiah we can

# The Suffering

By **CLIFF JONES** Cardiff, Wales

see His rejection by Israel, His suffering, sacrifice as the sin offering, resurrection and ultimate triumph. He satisfied divine justice. As a result of the suffering of God's perfect Servant, God will be able to redeem a repentant, believing remnant of His people, Israel, and provide salvation for Gentiles. The Lord will ultimately rule over the whole world in righteousness and peace.

## Behold My Servant, Isa. 52. 13-15

In these verses we have what amounts to a summary of what follows in chapter 53 verses 1-12. We are told in verse 13 to 'Behold' God's perfect Servant, that is, look intently at Him, scrutinize and consider Him. As we study His life we see Him behaving prudently, with divine wisdom. He has been exalted, raised to God's right hand and praised, for He is preeminent and all-sufficient. God has given Him a name which is above every name.<sup>2</sup>

When He was on the cross He was punished by God, His Father, for the sin of the whole world.<sup>3</sup> His agony was so great that He could not be recognized as a man, and people were astonished by the extent of His sufferings, v. 14. Following the Lord's substitutionary work on the cross, people of all nations would be saved eternally by putting their faith and trust in Him.<sup>4</sup> The Lord will have glory, glory such as will astonish those who see it. So great will be the contrast between the glory and the humiliation and suffering He experienced to glorify His Father and finish the work His Father had given Him to do that Gentile kings will be speechless. Gentiles will hear and see things of which they were previously unaware, v. 15.

## Rejected of men, Isa. 53. 1-3

The nation of Israel did not believe

the things which had been reported concerning the Lord.<sup>5</sup> The nation had waited for the Messiah but when He came the majority failed to recognize Him.<sup>6</sup> The people did not see a manifestation of the 'arm of the Lord', that is, the power of God in the Lord's birth, life, deeds, words and resurrection.

God delighted in His Son before the world was, and throughout His earthly ministry.<sup>7</sup> During the Lord's sinless life on earth He glorified His Father, always doing the things that pleased Him.<sup>8</sup> He grew up before God as a 'tender plant . . . a root out of a dry ground', v. 2, the 'dry ground' being the nation of Israel and the sinful world in general. The nation was likened to a lifeless stump out of which the Messianic Branch would grow.<sup>9</sup> Those who did not believe He was the Messiah could see no beauty in His Person, teaching, grace or moral glories. On earth He came from a lowly background, but they looked for a Messiah who would come in splendour, as a conqueror to deliver them from the power of Rome.

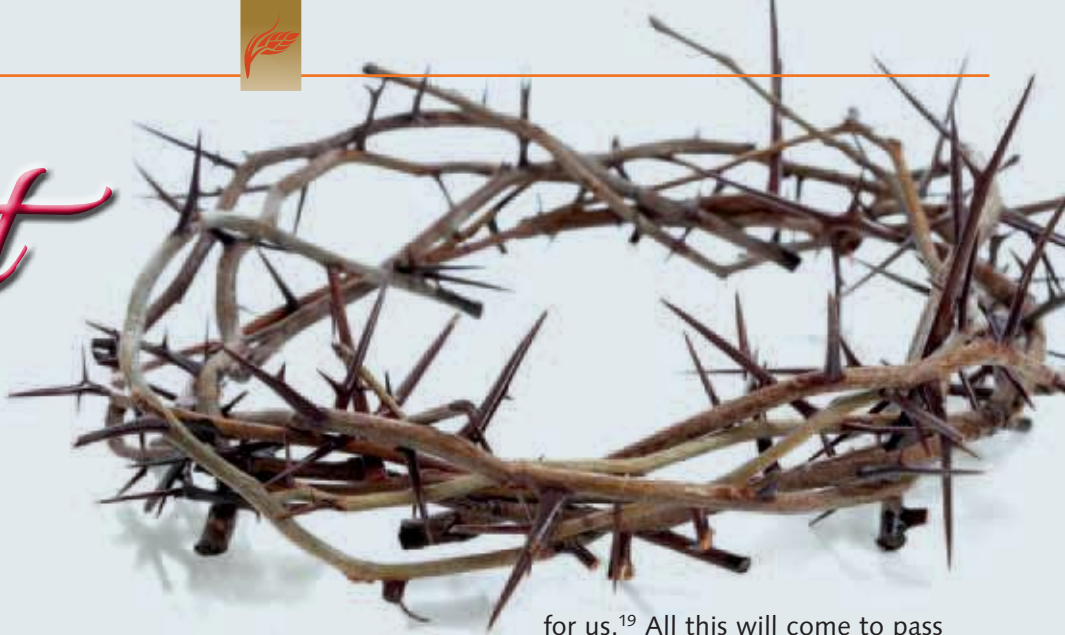
The Lord was despised, rejected and humiliated, but endured patiently. He, the source of all true joy, knew grief and sorrow, v. 3. The Jews rejected Him and His teaching; He 'came unto His own, and His own received Him not', John 1. 11.<sup>10</sup>

## Wounded for our transgressions, Isa. 53. 4-6

One day, repentant Israel will 'look on him whom they pierced',<sup>11</sup> and will say, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows', v. 4. When He was on the cross, men thought that the Lord was being punished for His own sins. They did not realize that He, the sinless One, was enduring the sufferings and punishment we deserve for our sins, v. 5. He suffered for our transgressions, sins and iniquities;



# Servant



He was our substitute, 1 Pet. 2. 24, making substitutionary atonement for our sins.

As a result of what He endured, we can be saved by grace through faith in what He accomplished, for He 'once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God', 1 Pet. 3. 18. The Lord 'made peace through the blood of his cross', Col. 1. 20. He was the great sin offering, and His shed blood cleanses us from all sin.<sup>12</sup>

We have all sinned and gone astray from God like lost sheep, but the Lord Jesus came 'to seek and to save that which was lost', Luke 19. 10. God 'laid on Him the iniquity of us all', v. 6, and He, the Good Shepherd, gave His life for the sheep.<sup>13</sup>

## He opened not His mouth, Isa. 53. 7-9

When speaking to the Ethiopian eunuch,<sup>14</sup> Philip told him of the Lord, the Lamb of God, who was led like a submissive, docile, sacrificial lamb being led to the slaughter, Isa. 53. 7. He, our Passover lamb was sacrificed for us.<sup>15</sup> He was subjected to unjust trials and, unless it was essential, He, the One of whom it was said, 'Never man spake like this man', John 7. 46, said nothing. He did nothing to prevent His crucifixion, for this was the will of God.<sup>16</sup>

The Lord was 'cut off'; He was sacrificed and died for the sins of the people, v. 8. Men intended to bury Him, the sinless One, among wicked men, but God ensured that He was buried in the new, unused sepulchre of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a disciple of the Lord, v. 9; cp. Matt. 27. 57-60.

## He shall be satisfied, Isa. 53. 10-12

It was the will of God to punish His beloved Son as a substitute

for sinners. He was punished 'for our iniquities'. His substitutionary sacrifice made possible the salvation of a remnant of repentant Israel and all who put their faith and trust in Him, for the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect, cleanses from all sin.<sup>17</sup>

The Lord was the trespass offering.<sup>18</sup> He will yet 'see His seed'. Those who have been saved are, as it were, His offspring. His days will be prolonged eternally, for He rose from the dead, Matt. 28. 6, and lives in the power of an endless life. God's plans and purposes will be fulfilled eternally through the Lord Jesus Christ, v. 10. The Lord, 'for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God', Heb. 12. 2. He will see the results of His sufferings and will be satisfied when He is surrounded by those who have been saved by grace and have peace with God, Rom. 5. 1. The Lord said, 'I and my Father are one', John 10. 30. He, God's 'righteous servant', knew and did His Father's will, and we have been graciously saved through our God-given knowledge of the righteous, suffering Servant of God, who is our Lord and Saviour, v. 11.

God will 'divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong', v. 12. Those of us who are saved are 'the great' and 'the strong' because of our association, by grace, with the Lord. We shall enjoy the benefits of the victory He gained at Calvary; we 'shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is'; we shall be with Him in the place He has prepared

for us.<sup>19</sup> All this will come to pass because He 'poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors', v. 12.<sup>20</sup> He interceded for those who crucified Him, and today, seated on the throne of God, He intercedes for us.<sup>21</sup>

Wonderful love, wonderful grace, wonderful salvation, wonderful Saviour!

## Endnotes

- 1 2 Cor. 5. 21.
- 2 Phil. 2. 9.
- 3 John 1. 29; 1 John 2. 2.
- 4 Eph. 2. 8.
- 5 v. 1; John 12. 37, 38.
- 6 Rom. 10. 16.
- 7 Prov. 8. 30; Matt. 3. 17; 17. 5.
- 8 John 8. 29.
- 9 Isa. 11. 1.
- 10 He wept over Jerusalem, Luke 19. 41, and on his way to the grave of Lazarus, John 11. 35, and in Gethsemane His soul was 'exceeding sorrowful', Matt. 26. 38. He was deserted by the nation, John 19. 15; by His disciples, Matt. 26. 56, and, on the cross, He gave what is surely the most awful cry ever uttered by a man when He cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Ps. 22. 1; Matt. 27. 46.
- 11 John 19. 37; Zech. 12. 10.
- 12 1 John 1. 7.
- 13 John 10. 11.
- 14 Acts 8. 32, 33.
- 15 1 Cor. 5. 7.
- 16 1 Pet. 1. 20; 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4.
- 17 1 Pet. 1. 19; 1 John 1. 7.
- 18 Isa. 53. 10; Lev. 6. 1-7.
- 19 1 Cor. 15. 54-57; 1 John 3. 2; John 14. 2, 3.
- 20 Cp. John 19. 18; Heb. 9. 28.
- 21 Luke 23. 34; Heb. 1. 3; Heb. 7. 24, 25; 9. 24.

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# Personalities in the Pastoral Epistles (9)

By **HOWARD BARNES** Westhoughton, England

## Those who were a disappointment to Paul

**Demas** (meaning: popular)

Demas was a fellow-labourer with the apostle Paul and was with him during his first imprisonment,<sup>1</sup> but deserted him during his second, 2 Tim. 4. 10. He seems to have been known to the believers at Colosse, since he and a number of others sent their personal greetings. However, when he is named in the letter to Philemon, his name appears right at the end of the sentence, i.e., 'Luke, the beloved physician, salutes you, and Demas', Col. 4. 14 JND. At this stage, Demas got a mention, but no special mention.

Apart from this we know nothing special about him, except the reason for his desertion, 'for Demas has forsaken me, having loved the present age', 2 Tim. 4. 10 JND, having gone to Thessalonica (probably his home city). The first reason the apostle gave for asking Timothy to do his best to come quickly to him, 2 Tim. 4. 9, was this sad departure of Demas – and then others on legitimate business – leaving him alone, apart from Luke.

Paul had just spoken about those who loved the thought of the appearing

of the Lord, v. 8, Who would award him – and them – a victor's crown of righteousness. Demas loved the 'near and now', not the 'then' of His coming. The current hardships involved in being associated with the apostle Paul were too much for Demas and present comforts were more to him than future rewards. He was not able to 'endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ', 2 Tim. 2. 3, being too entangled in the affairs of life down here, v. 4. How sad that, although he had been prepared to spend time with the apostle in easier days, now, in Paul's hours of greatest need, Demas was found wanting, putting his own present comforts before anything else. Sadly, there were others who had forsaken Paul at this time, 1. 15; 4. 4, so the defection of Demas must have been a severe blow.

Are we 'fair weather' Christians, or do we seek to stand by our fellow-believers in hard times, whatever the cost? t27

How long had Demas been cold in heart before his final break with Paul? He had now made ship-wreck of his testimony, even if he continued in assembly fellowship in Thessalonica,

1 Tim. 1. 19. Demas did not go back to seek the pleasures of 'the present evil world [age]', Gal. 1. 4, so no moral failure is implied – the 'ease' rather than the 'evil' appealed to him. FANNY CROSBY (1820 - 1915), the prolific hymn-writer, penned the words that should characterize our attitude to life in these circumstances, 'Not for ease or worldly pleasure, nor for fame my prayer shall be; Gladly will I toil and suffer, only let me walk with Thee'.

**Phygellus and Hermogenes**

Timothy already knew that the Christians from Asia had turned away from Paul and avoided him, 2 Tim. 1. 15. However, Paul had taken the opportunity to make a distinction in the case of Onesiphorus, who was also from Asia (i.e., Ephesus), but who had acted in a very commendable manner, risking himself in doing so. On the other hand, of those who had turned away from him, Paul especially mentioned Phygellus and Hermogenes, and one gets the impression that he was especially surprised about them, given their previous conduct towards him and their position among the saints. How great a contrast to Onesiphorus!

## Those who were a despair to Paul

**Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander**

Hymenaeus and Alexander are the notorious persons who had been excommunicated by Paul on his visit to Ephesus when he left Timothy behind, 1 Tim. 1. 20; they were 'delivered unto Satan'. Hymenaeus and Alexander are quoted by Paul as prominent among those who 'concerning faith have made shipwreck', v. 19 and the purpose of excommunicating them was that 'they may learn not to blaspheme'. In their case the action was meant to be corrective.

Paul mentions Hymenaeus again in writing his Second Epistle to Timothy, citing him as a leading example – along with Philetus – of those who were striving about words to no profit, subverting their hearers, 2 Tim.

2. 14. These were 'profane and vain babblings', who were increasing in ungodliness, v. 16. The bad thing was that 'their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus', v. 17. These were notorious ones 'who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some', v. 18. Hymenaeus had obviously not learned and was still a problem.

**Alexander**

The name Alexander was quite common in New Testament times, following the famous conqueror from Macedonia. One Alexander was the coppersmith (metalworker) whom Paul said did him 'much evil', 2 Tim. 4. 14. The context in which this statement was made leads us

to think that Alexander might have been responsible for Paul's re-arrest which led to his transfer to Rome and imprisonment. Maybe it was because of his fierce resistance to the gospel message that motivated his actions, v. 15. He warns Timothy about him, that he too should beware of this man.<sup>2</sup>

**Endnotes**

- 1 See Col. 4. 14 and Philem. 24.
- 2 Whether this Alexander is the same as the one mentioned in connection with Hymenaeus, 1 Tim. 1. 20, we cannot be sure, but it might be possible, if he had acted vindictively against the apostle in doing him 'much evil'.

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# BRINGING REFRESHMENT TO GOD'S PEOPLE

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

From the day of his conversion, Paul was greatly used to spread the gospel message, 'he is a chosen vessel unto me', Acts 9. 15. The book of the Acts and the Pauline Epistles reveal his triumphs, his trials, and his travels in preaching the word of God. It is obvious that in his journeys he had a love for fellow believers. In his writings some seventy names are mentioned. He never over-rates or under-estimates these people, but delights to commend them, some of whom are mentioned only once in scripture.

In 2 Timothy, Onesiphorus is mentioned in four verses only, but this man brought refreshment to God's people.<sup>1</sup> Onesiphorus – his name means 'one that brings profit' – certainly lived up to his name. He was a shining example of Paul's own ministry, for in chapter 1 verse 8 he writes, 'Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner'. Four simple truths regarding this brother challenge us today:

- His dedication, in spite of the conditions, v. 17.
- His devotion, in spite of Paul's chains, v. 16.
- His diligence in seeking out Paul, v. 17.
- His dependability in service as a Christian.

When we consider the conditions of Paul, in a dark, damp, dismal, dirty place, he was very appreciative of one who 'refreshed me', 'sought me', 'found me', and 'ministered unto me'. Looking at the context of his mention in scripture, we read of Phygellus and Hermogenes, 1. 15, who are ashamed of the truth, Hymenaeus and Philetus, 2. 17-18, who have erred concerning the truth, and Jannes and Jambres, who resisted the truth in Moses day, as do others in Paul's days, 3. 8. In the closing days of his life, we can almost discern his disappointment and despair as he

reflects upon these believers. But one shines through – Onesiphorus!

## His dedication

He was a brother not ashamed to spend time with a great servant of the Lord and to know that his service was much appreciated. Paul could reflect upon those who had turned from him, but this man turned towards him, in what we may consider was not conducive conditions. This was not a 'one off' visit, but 'he oft refreshed me'. We can ascertain from the scriptures the frequency of his mission, 'oft'; the urgency of his movements, 'sought me out very diligently'; and the constancy of his ministry, in the past and the present. Surely, Onesiphorus was 'a breath of fresh air' in the midst of the prison cell, and in relation to those who were no longer associated with Paul. Indeed, he was different to others. Is there not a need for such a ministry today, to give refreshment to those who may be finding the way difficult?

## His devotion

Proverbs chapter 29 verse 25 states, 'the fear of man bringeth a snare but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe'. Some may have been ashamed of Paul's imprisonment, but not this man. There may have been a measure of danger in his exercise, but 'he pressed on and feared not'. Surely, this is true devotion in action. He brought timely relief and comfort, but also refreshment of a spiritual nature, Philem. 5-7.

## His diligence

What lengths he went to in order to find Paul, 2 Tim. 1. 17. He never gave up in his search for Paul in whatever circumstances he was in. He may have aroused suspicion about himself in his search, but he was not ashamed. Potential risk was discarded. Some believe that he may have paid the ultimate price for his allegiance to Paul.

## His dependability

Think of the service he gave. We are unaware if his ministry in Ephesus was public, but whether in the city, or in sight of the chain of Paul, he was constant and dependable to the Lord's servant. He was a 'help', 1 Cor. 12. 28. He went out of his way, or we might use the phrase 'he went the extra mile', to seek out and be with Paul. This dear man may have accomplished more than many prominent men. Think of how the Lord could use Ananias in Acts chapter 9. We can so easily sing FRANCES HAVERGAL'S hymn, 'Lord speak to me that I may speak', but do we put it into practice?

Here is a brother who was faithful in his undertaking of what help he could be to the Lord's servant despite the conditions, the chain, and the cost. We acknowledge, today, his concern, his courage and his compensation. 'Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find', Prov. 20. 6.

Do we feel the challenge to consider today a brother or sister in Christ to whom we can bring refreshment? Onesiphorus's name is recorded only in this epistle, but his name lives on. May we remember that there are many serving the Lord today, unsung, unknown, unseen, doing a ministry to a saint, or saints, that they feel they can do before the Lord. How can we best help the people of God today?

## Endnotes

- 1 For a few examples of refreshment the reader is referred to: soothing music, 1 Sam. 16. 23, the harp in the hands of David; speaking/talking/listening, Elihu, one of Job's friends, Job 32. 20; visitation, Paul writes of a mutual sharing of refreshment, 'that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed', Rom. 15. 32; cp. 1 Cor. 16. 17-18.

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## Introduction

Subject to the constraints of time and space, and all the characteristics of our material environment, we find it very difficult to imagine what the total absence of these would be like. Yet there was a time(?) when no time, or space, or matter existed as we know them. There was absolutely nothing except God, an infinite being, limitless in power, wisdom, skill, holiness and love – God in the glory of His greatness and the greatness of His glory!

God chose to create the universe and everything in it. He was under no obligation to do this. He did it 'after the counsel of His own will', Eph. 1. 11. Where there was no time, time began. Where there was no matter, matter was formed. Where there was no life before, life began. None of these things 'just happened' of their own accord by some unknown random processes.<sup>1</sup> They all happened because God made them happen, because God wanted them to happen as part of an amazing eternal plan which He alone devised for a purpose He alone designed. It was an act of His sovereign will, executed by His limitless power, and for His pleasure and greater glory, as Revelation chapter 4 verse 11 tells us: our Lord is worthy of all glory and honour, 'for thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are, and were created'.

The glory of God involves His absolute perfection, His limitless power, His flawless wisdom. These are all displayed in creation. So we can learn about God from the book of nature – from its tiniest to its most gigantic forms, from the complexity of the living cell to the spatial immensity of the swirling galaxies, and everything else in between. Sadly, many do not see it, because 'their foolish heart was darkened' and 'they did not like to retain God in their knowledge', Rom. 1. 21, 28. But, like David, we can look up and say, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork,' and we can look in and say, 'I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made', Ps. 19. 1; 139. 14.

The universe had a beginning; it was created. We do not know when the beginning was, but we do know

# The Sovereignty of

that 'in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth', Gen. 1. 1. Scripture tells us of things which took place 'before the foundation of the world', Eph. 1. 4; 2 Tim. 1. 9. We know that the world we live in and the countless life-forms it contains were created by Him, for 'without Him was not anything made that was made', John 1. 3. We know this because the scriptures have revealed it to us. Agnostic scientists and thinkers, from evidences they have examined, have also now concluded that the universe did not always exist, that it had a beginning.<sup>2</sup>

From nothing God created everything, just because it was His sovereign will to do so. He alone decided to create and also decided and devised what to create and how to create. He could have created anything and have done it in any way. But what He created and how He did it reveal to us His glory, show us 'His eternal power and Godhead', Rom. 1. 20.

## What He created

However we look at the natural world, we must be impressed by at least three things – variety, complexity, and immensity. God could have created many things identical to each other or countless things all different. He could have created them all so large that nothing could measure them or so small that nothing could perceive them. What He created was His own decision for His own purpose. Let's consider a few aspects.

Begin with astronomy. The spatial distribution is vast, the measurements

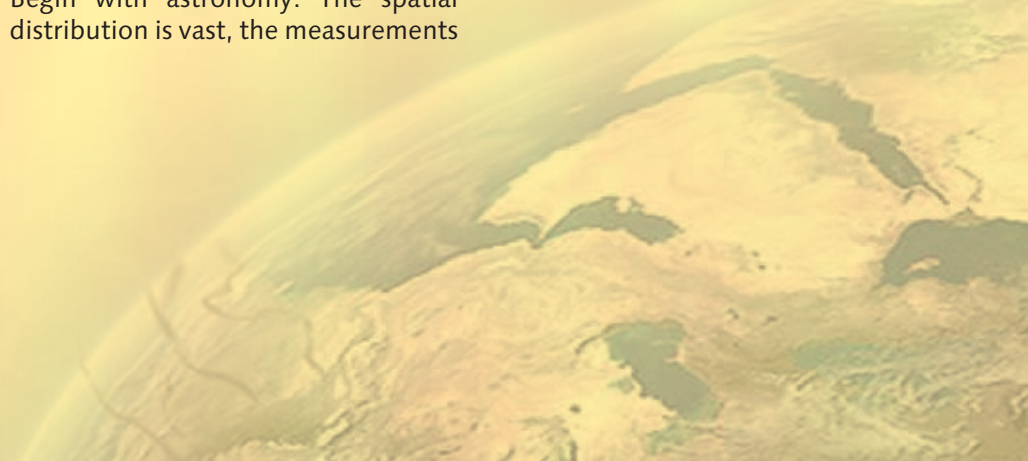
almost incomprehensible, the galaxies, let alone the stars, innumerable. The nearest star to earth, the third brightest in our skies, is Alpha Centauri. It is a mere 4.3 light-years distant,<sup>3</sup> but the farthest galaxy is probably several million light-years distant, and each is vast, composed of millions of stars. Why so vast? Because God is so great and He

By  
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wants us to know! And all the stars are different – in size, brilliance, colour, rotation . . . 'one differs from another in glory', 1 Cor. 15. 41. Why? Because God is the author of variety and beauty on a really massive scale! Look up, be moved and praise Him! (like David, Ps. 8. 3-4).

Go to the world of animals, birds, fishes, insects: fascinating behaviours (some we call good, some bad), unexplained habits and barely understood instincts, beautiful colours and amazing sizes from the huge blue whale to the microscopic plankton; or the vegetable kingdom with its similarly vast array of beauty and variety, usefulness or harmfulness, from the gigantic redwoods of western USA to the tiniest lichens in a common woodland.

Examine the unfolding secrets of the living cell – breathtaking complexity and efficiency, co-operative function and response, self-repair and replication – as a whole or in its parts, the overall physiology and the







# of God in Creation

detailed chemistry are truly amazing. Go deeper into molecular structure and marvel at architecture in miniature, molecules stereoscopically made for a specific purpose (DNA is a magnificent example), or deeper still into the mysteries of subatomic structure. The infinitely small, the infinitely large, and the infinitely complex all tell us about a God who is beyond our comprehension, for He designed and made it all. But let's never forget that He is not beyond our trust and our worship.

And man also – made 'in the image of God' with a unique dignity according to His sovereign will and plan. Beyond the 'fearful and wonderful' structure of the body and its prenatal formation, and the defining qualities of brain, mind and thought, there are the transcendent capacities of soul and spirit. These truly unique features of man were in God's mind when He made man, because, at another time, His own Son would take on manhood in order to die in our place and effect the work of redemption, planned also in His sovereign will before the foundation of the world. Amazing grace!

## How He created it

He created all these things by the 'breath of His mouth'. 'He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast', Ps. 33. 9. He did it all perfectly and instantaneously. The subsequent fall of Adam and its sad consequences for the human race

and its environment have changed many aspects of the original creation. Changes have occurred over the millennia since creation, dramatically by the flood described in Genesis chapters 6-7, and gradually ever since as original species have diversified and adapted to survive, some now extinct, and others struggling and groaning, Rom. 8. 22. A perfect creation has deteriorated, not improved, the direction of change in nature is downwards not upwards. But it will all be restored to Edenic perfection and glory when Christ comes to reign on earth, as planned long ago in the eternal counsels of God.

## How He upholds it

Meantime, centuries roll on, life continues, with change and decay all too apparent everywhere, not least in human behaviour. Will it all go out of control in a doomsday scenario as popular fiction likes to portray, and even present-day fears predict in terms of global warming and environmental collapse? Not at all! The One who created everything also upholds it according to His sovereign will and plan. It will not crash uncontrolled. Everything is upheld by the word of His power, Heb. 1. 3, from the spinning subatomic particles governed by nuclear forces, to the swirling galaxies governed by gravitational forces, and every process around us and within us governed by the laws of chemistry and physics. Those stable laws of nature are descriptions of His control and power. They will continue as long as God determines for His purposes alone.

## How He will conclude it

Sometime it will terminate. The universe is not eternal. It is temporary, though to us it seems permanent. Poetically, we speak of 'the everlasting hills' but in reality the only everlasting things are spiritual not material, and we have obtained them by faith.

2 Peter chapter 3 verses 10-13 tells us that with a great noise and with fervent heat (a big bang?!) the heavens and earth will pass away, and be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth. John also saw this in his vision described in Revelation chapter 21. After a millennium of peace and righteousness on earth under Messiah's perfect rule, at a time which God sovereignly decides, this earth and its surrounding universe will be 'folded up' like a worn-out garment, Heb. 1. 11-12.

Our Bible, which began with God's sovereign act of creation, concludes with His sovereign purposes of grace and glory fulfilled. The earth has been like a stage upon which the great drama of redemption has been enacted over millennia. Paradise has been lost and a new paradise regained. There is no sin or sorrow there. His servants serve Him and they shall reign for ever and ever. The one eternal and sovereign God is all, and in all.

## Endnotes

- 1 A widely accepted theory carrying the name of science states that things 'just happened' of their own accord by unknown random processes – in spite of being declared impossible by other laws of science.
- 2 From measurements of background infra-red radiation, an 'expanding universe' and 'the Big Bang theory' have been proposed. The evidence can be interpreted in other ways.
- 3 The light year is an immense distance which is difficult to grasp – the distance light travels in a year at its speed of 300,000 km/sec. The sun is 93 million miles from earth, and its light takes about 8 minutes to reach us. So a light year is around 6 million million miles (365x24x7.5x93 million).

**BERT CARGILL** was a chemistry lecturer for over thirty years, and has written several books and articles on this and other subjects. Married to Isobel, they have two daughters and a son, and six grandchildren. He has contributed to the work of the St. Monans assembly ever since his conversion as a teenager.



# MARTIN LUTHER – Doctor of Theology (2)

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newton Abbot, England

## Today's Relevance

When Paul visited the city of Thessalonica, he was accused of turning the world upside down by fomenting sedition against the authority of Rome, Acts 17. 6-7. In effect, his detractors were suggesting, judgements, that he was a bad person!<sup>1</sup> Some fifteen hundred years later, Martin Luther also turned his world upside down by challenging the authority of Papal Rome when he attacked the sale of indulgences by fastening his *Ninety-Five Theses* to a church door in Wittenburg. What began with Luther as an internal matter subsequently led to the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, and changed forever the course of church history. What is surprising, though, about Luther is that he did not, in fact, seek for new truth, but felt that he had been put into the position of defending and recovering truth from an institution that had lost its way.



For almost three hundred years, Luther's interpretation of Paul stood relatively unchallenged, although, in Germany, critics were beginning to sharpen their knives. A more sceptical approach to biblical authority during the nineteenth century brought about a challenge to received tradition, setting the agenda for future Pauline studies by specifically identifying a number of issues that would be debated by later theologians. One such issue was whether justification by faith alone was the central theme of Paul's theology as advocated by Luther. The concentration of terms relating to justification found almost exclusively in Romans and Galatians suggested to some, including ALBERT SCHWEITZER, that it was not a central Pauline theme. It was merely a polemic device to an otherwise peaceable doctrine, used by Paul in his disagreement with Judaism. For SCHWEITZER *et al*, the real centre of Paul's gravity was found in Romans chapters 5 to 8, which focused on union with Christ

and the work of the Holy Spirit. This approach intentionally undermined, and attempted to displace, the centrality of Luther's doctrine of justification by faith. It also opened up the floodgates for more diverse views being later formulated in the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul' (NPP). The NPP has gained considerable momentum during the 20th century particularly in the writings of individuals such as ED SANDERS, JAMES DUNN and N. T. (TOM) WRIGHT. DUNN is an influential writer and, as SIMON GATHERCOLE observes, 'Dunn's (commentary on) Romans has exercised particular influence'.<sup>2</sup> TOM WRIGHT is also highly influential, not only in the academic world, but as a writer of popular Christian material such as 'The New Testament for Everyone'.<sup>3</sup>

The main thrust of both DUNN's and WRIGHT's arguments are that Luther allowed his own particular conversion experience to influence his understanding and reading of Paul's theology. In short, Luther got Paul wrong in maintaining the contrast between justification by faith and justification by works, and, thus, turned 'Paul's letter to the Romans into personal introspective, and, to an extent, gloom-laden autobiography'.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, because Luther's theology was shaped in this way, it is claimed that he misread Paul in terms of salvation by an individualistic approach to the doctrine of justification.

One might stand back from this somewhat academic debate and ask what this has to do with believers in assembly fellowship. How could they be affected by such views? The simple answer to this is that the influence of the NPP is so widespread throughout Pauline studies that it has caused scholars such as DON CARSON to state that this new perspective is now so strong, especially in the world of English-language biblical scholarship, that only the rare major work on Paul does not interact with it, whether primarily by agreement, qualification, or disagreement. In short, if the views

of DUNN and WRIGHT are held to be the new orthodoxy then it poses 'a serious and potentially damaging challenge to a hallmark of Reformation theology: justification before God by faith alone, by grace alone'.<sup>5</sup>

While we do not see Luther as an infallible guide to Paul's theology, for us he captures its essence, even if *occasionally* he allows his own personal circumstances to direct his exegesis. We conclude that Luther did get Paul right in many important ways, not least, on his interpretation of the 'righteousness of God'. Here we stand, we can do no other!

## Endnotes

- 1 The verb 'to stir up sedition' or 'upset' is rarely used in the New Testament, but is found in the famous letter from the bad boy Theon to his father (P.Oxy.i.119: 10).
- 2 *Cit., op*, pg. 17.
- 3 For a succinct and useful insight into Wright's theology see STEPHEN KURHT's book 'Tom Wright for Everyone' published by SPCK In 2011.
- 4 'A Man More Sinned Against than Sinning? The Portrait of Martin Luther in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship' pg. 3, CARL R. TRUEMAN *Tyndale Fellowship*: Cambridge, 1-15.
- 5 *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pg. 379, D A CARSON and DOUGLAS J MOO. Earlier, it was indicated that the terms relating to justification occur in a small number of Paul's letters, hence critics argue that it was not a central Pauline theme. It is certainly true that Paul uses the verb 'to justify' and the noun 'righteousness' almost exclusively in Romans and Galatians. But the presence or absence of phrases or words in particular Pauline letters is not the only determining factor in establishing Paul's thought world. The purpose of the letter would undoubtedly order the subject matter. And if the letter to the Romans, for instance, is a treatise in which Paul carefully sets out his doctrinal position regarding the gospel of Christ, why should it surprise us to find that the theme of justification is central to his theology? The letter covers a wide range of theological issues, but what, in our view, acts as the single most important *Mitte* or the coherent force is Paul's unqualified commitment to forensic justification.

**BRIAN CLATWORTHY** is a member of the Precious Seed Trust.



## The Parable of the Commencement of the Kingdom Parable No. 1 - The Sower and the Seed, v. 1-9, 18-23

By **JOHN GRIFFITHS** Port Talbot, Wales

It is recorded of the Lord, 'Jesus [went] out of the house'. This may well symbolize the Lord turning away from the house of Israel before revealing, in parables, the new and unique form of the interim kingdom.

'And sat by the seaside' is suggestive that having turned from apostate Israel our Lord is resorting to the Gentiles. The imagery of the sea is a picture of the Gentile nations, Isa. 57. 20. This parable is not introduced by the phrase, 'the kingdom of heaven is like unto' because it is preparatory to the establishment of the kingdom. It sets out the means of its inauguration by the preaching of the word of the kingdom.

### The Sower

We are not explicitly told who the sower is either in the parable or its interpretation. The following parable identifies the sower as the Son of man. It seems a reasonable assumption that this is the case here. 'Son of man' is a title use on only three occasions outside of the Gospel records. It emphasizes Christ's manhood and His Messianic role. It is linked with Israel and the nations, not with the church. The sower is thought to be Christ. However, the seed of the word of the kingdom was sown by the Twelve and the Seventy primarily but they were acting under the auspices of Christ.

### The Seed

The seed, described by Matthew as the word of the kingdom, is described by Luke as the word of God, Luke 8. 11. Elsewhere it is described as the gospel of the kingdom. It was preached from the commencement of Jesus' public ministry through the book of the Acts until the gospel of the grace of God took precedence. It will be taken up again during the Tribulation, Matt. 24. 14. The character of the sower and the condition of the seed are not in

doubt. The variable factor derives from the nature of the soil.

### The Soil

The soil depicts the heart of the recipient of the gospel seed. The seed is universally sown, not just on the good ground. The results vary as the conditions of the hearts of mankind differ in their responses to the message, cp. verses 4 and 19.

#### 1 The Wayside Hearer

**HARDHEARTED** – No Understanding – Satan

The seed fell by the wayside and the birds came and snatched it away. This hearer's heart failed to understand the significance of the message. Then along came Satan and robbed the hearer of the seed of the gospel.

#### 2 The Stony Ground Hearer

**FAINTHEARTED** – No Root – Self

This seed fell on stony ground such as a rocky outcrop. Without any depth of soil for the roots to take hold and absorb food, the sun scorched the new growth and it quickly withered. Some appear to receive the word joyfully but, under persecution, they have no firmness and they flag. They are offended because life is not a bed of roses. They are called upon to suffer for Christ's sake, and are not prepared for the cost, cp. verses 5, 6, 20, 21.

#### 3 The Thorny Ground Hearer

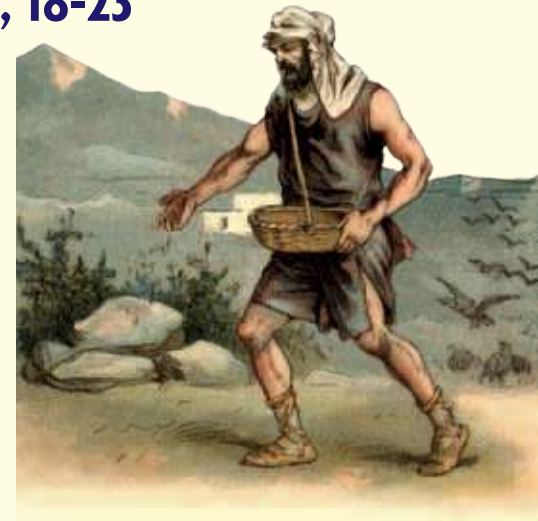
**HALFHEARTED** – No Fruit – Sin

The seed falls among thorns. The thorns grow and develop choking the growth of the seed. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches overwhelm the fruitful development of the gospel seed. Mark adds, 'and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word'. Luke introduces the 'pleasures of this life', cp. verses 7 and 22.

#### 4 The Good Ground Hearer

**WHOLEHEARTED** – With Understanding – Spirit of God

The seed germinates, grows and bears



fruit. There are different degrees of fruitfulness even in the wholehearted hearer; 100-fold, 60-fold and 30-fold. The degree of fruitfulness in the life of a believer varies with the degree of commitment. By their fruits ye shall know them. Spirituality in the believer's life is seen in the display of the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5. 22, 23.

Each of the Synoptic Gospels records the parable of the sower but they end distinctively.

'Who hath ears to hear, let him hear', Matt. 13. 9 - The Means of hearing.  
'Take heed what ye hear', Mark 4. 24 – The Material we hear.  
'Take heed how ye hear', Luke 8. 18 – The Method of hearing.

This expression peculiar to Matthew is used fourteen times in the New Testament and always by our Lord Jesus Christ. It appears seven times in the Gospel narratives and seven times in the letters to the churches, Rev. 2, 3. The importance of hearing is stamped upon our chapter.

Mark underscores the value of this parable. 'Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables?' Mark 4. 13. The understanding of this parable is basic to the appreciation of the remaining parables.

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



# To Have and to Hold

By **W. ROSS RAINEY** Plymouth, Michigan, USA

## Holding Forth

Writing to the Philippian Christians, the apostle Paul said, 'Holding forth the word of life', 2. 16. In the previous verse we are reminded of our position and purpose to 'shine as lights in the world', a world that is 'crooked and perverted' JND, because of sin. With untainted life we should be shining (not whining, please!) for our Lord and His glory, showing forth His life and shining forth His light, John 8. 12; Matt. 5. 14-16; Eph. 5. 8.

'Holding forth' means, literally, 'offering' or 'presenting', and, as followers of the very Lord of life and glory, we should be willing to spend and be spent, even to the point of exhaustion, in presenting and proclaiming the word of life and light amidst a spiritually dark world.

Many years ago the Light of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, flooded and filled the heart and life of a brilliant Cambridge student named Henry Martyn, setting him ablaze for God. Answering God's call to go forth as a missionary, he said, on the eve of his departure for India, 'I go to burn out for God'. And he did! Within the scope of the Philippian letter we have three splendid examples of those who, in their day, faithfully held forth the word of Life – namely, Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. How faithfully are we fulfilling this glad, yet great, responsibility today? It has been rightly said, 'Don't expect God to use you as a lighthouse somewhere else, if He can't use you as a candle where you are'.

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



Facing death, Samuel Rutherford said, 'I am in the happiest pass to which man ever came. Christ is mine, and I am His; and there is nothing now between me and resurrection, except – Paradise'. As a rule, young people are not facing death but life, and the great, all-important issue is simply this: can you say, as Samuel Rutherford could say, in life as well as in death, 'Christ is mine, and I am His'? If, then, Christ is mine, and I am His, we need to take to heart the words of the apostle Paul to his young colleague Timothy and 'lay hold on eternal life', 1 Tim. 6. 12. What did Paul mean?

Timothy, who already had eternal life, was commanded to get a grip on his never-ending life in Christ, to enter into that life from a practical standpoint, that life which alone is rich, real, radiant, running-over, and rewarding. And this command has its application to all true believers. If we have Christ as our Lord and Saviour we have eternal life. In view of this, we have a definite charge to lay hold of that life in Him, something to be appropriated practically here and now. If we are going to fulfil our God-given charge then certain basic responsibilities must be carried out.

## Holding Faith

In the midst of 'the good warfare', 1 Tim. 1. 18 JND, in which he participated as a young soldier of Jesus Christ, Timothy was exhorted by Paul as follows, 'Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck', v. 19. Some, like Hymenaeus and Alexander, had made shipwreck of their faith because of a failure to hold faith and a good conscience. They are not unlike many today. Nevertheless, two things would help Timothy in his warfare and enable him to avoid the pitfall of his erring and wayward brethren. First of all, he was to take a firm hold of faith in the Captain of his salvation, an unshakeable trust

in his Commanding Officer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, he was to hold a good conscience. This means avoiding: those who have a seared conscience, a conscience that is like branded flesh – dead, 1 Tim. 4. 2; some who have a defiled conscience, Titus 1. 15; and still others who have an evil conscience, Heb. 10. 22. May we be as those who hold faith and a good conscience day by day, holding a conscience which is truly under the control of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to His voice.

## Holding Fast

While Paul's words to Titus have to do with one of the required qualities of an elder, they nonetheless have their application to all believers, 'Holding fast the faithful word', Titus 1. 9. If we are going to really hold faith and a good conscience, then we must be in the word of God as a daily habit, clinging to it, and holding oneself face to face with it. The scriptures are described here as 'the faithful word', and this is so because their Author is infinitely faithful. The Bible is the book to live by, that is, to continually read, believe, obey, and hold fast to along life's pilgrim pathway.

It was GEORGE MÜLLER, one of the truly great men of faith and prayer, who wrote, 'The vigour of our spiritual life will be in proportion to the place held by the Word in our life and thoughts'. Out of his long and fruitful experience, he has given six suggestions on 'How to Read the Bible', and they are:

- 1 Read the Scriptures through regularly.
- 2 Read with prayer.
- 3 Read with meditation.
- 4 Read with reference to yourself.
- 5 Read with faith.
- 6 Read in order to carry into practice.





# REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK



## ENGLAND

### Merseyside

Titanic Opportunities - the City of Liverpool hosted an event in memory of the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic called 'Sea Odyssey'. This was a major success with thousands of people out and about in the city over one weekend (21-22 April). Local saints arranged to have a special leaflet about Titanic and its links to Liverpool, written and printed. This was distributed over the weekend. The leaflet proved to be very popular. As it was perceived as a tourist brochure, people were queuing up to receive one!

Jubilee Celebrations - many of the assemblies in Liverpool have taken advantage of the Jubilee celebrations by having a Community Tea for the local residents. This has been very popular with many people hearing the gospel and receiving Jubilee-style tracts. Some of the local sisters arranged a lunch for all believers over seventy years of age, on Sunday the 3rd June. The younger members of the assemblies served the older saints, which made for a good time of fellowship.

During the Jubilee Bank Holiday week in June the assembly in **Southport** arranged to have a week of open-air meetings in the town centre followed by meetings indoors in the evening. The theme of the Jubilee celebrations was used, and an invite was designed to look like an invitation to the Coronation. Over eight hundred invitations were given out to local residents along with a copy of the Jubilee Tract written by Jonathan Black of Bermondsey. This was a great opportunity to present the gospel.

The Olympic Torch - as the Olympic Torch passed through Liverpool and on through the Mersey Tunnel to Birkenhead and the Wirral, a team of believers gathered to give out a specially-written leaflet about the Olympic Torch. Three places were manned: City Centre, St. George's Hall, and Pier Head; also for the Torch's return journey on the Mersey Ferry from the Wirral Peninsula. This was another great opportunity to spread the word of God.

### London

The assembly at **Harrow** commenced a coffee morning at the end of 2011. This outreach work is called Open Door, and

the exercise is to invite contacts and local residents into the hall to get to know them better, and to speak to them about the gospel when an opportunity arises. Leading on from this work, the assembly hopes at some point to run a simple Bible study course for unbelievers who have an interest in finding out more about the scriptures.

The numbers of visitors attending Open Door each week is usually between five and seven although on one occasion nine came along. Those who attend all come regularly, and one man who had never been in the hall before has yet to miss a week. The assembly has also been encouraged by the support of believers from other places, including a couple on holiday from Germany, who travelled across from Islington to be with them on two occasions.

### Nottinghamshire

The assembly at **Kirkby-in-Ashfield** have held a series of Friday-night meetings, once a month, with the young people in the locality. They covered the subject of Bible covenants, and also aspects of prophecy.

### Cornwall

After much prayer, and a lengthy wait, the assembly at Seymour Gospel Hall, **St Austell**, conducted a week of gospel outreach in five of the Primary Schools in the town at the end of April, using the Open Air Mission's Exhibition entitled, 'The Life of Christ'. The groundwork was done by local saints approaching the schools to host the exhibition. They were delighted when, after some follow-up,

schools committed themselves to it, and filled the week's time-table fully.

The exhibition consists of eighteen boards that cover the whole gospel story, and about seven costumes for various characters in it to be portrayed, and to tell their part of the story as the presentation proceeds. This really worked, and the children were held almost spellbound for three-quarters of an hour as the Lord's life in embryo was revealed to them. Keith Bullock of the Open Air Mission led the presentation as the disciple Simon Peter. Following this, a questionnaire was handed out, and the children were engaged for another twenty minutes with frantic asking of questions to get correct answers. Even the exchanges during the presentation were evidence of the engagement of eye and thought made by the children through this lively and interactive method of getting the message over. The 'Take Home Pack' provided parents and children with an introduction to the work of the assembly for youth as well as scriptural puzzles and a competition to enter if they chose to.

The response has been very encouraging. Staff comments such as, 'You must do a follow up for us, it was terrific', and 'We had a marvellous afternoon's work as a result, really great!'. Several 'Thank You' cards have been received, and links with the schools deepened, including invitations to take morning assemblies have followed the visit.

The assembly has also been greatly encouraged to find that its Care Home



'The Life of Christ' being presented at a Primary School in Cornwall



visitation work has mushroomed over the past two years. So much so, that five such homes are visited for an hour-long service each month, and they have had to say to others, 'We can't help'. They have discovered a number of isolated believers in these homes who delight in the spiritual input the visits provide, and for at least two 'entertainment managers', the monthly visit is proclaimed as the highlight of their programme. It's a joy to know that such openings exist and a welcome is to be found for the things of the Lord.



## NORTHERN IRELAND

The assembly at **Cregagh Street, Belfast**, was greatly encouraged during four weeks of gospel meetings with John Rogers and Paul McCauley. Many unbelievers came in to hear the gospel, and they had the joy of hearing of some professing faith in Christ.

David Williamson and Kenneth Newell held gospel meetings with the small assembly at **Albertbridge Road, Belfast**. Some local unsaved people came into the meetings. Prayer is valued for this very needy area.

Leslie Craig and Terry Topley had encouraging gospel meetings with the assembly at **Clonkeen**, and are looking to the Lord for blessing.

## Wales

Ian and Rebecca Rees report from **Narberth, Pembrokeshire**, 'Work on the boys' dorm building, which had been suspended from May of last year, resumed once again as Rebecca and I scrubbed ceilings, and walls ready to be re-painted. The walls had got very damp over the winter, but now that the roof has been re-slatted, the outside walls re-pointed, and the heating restored, we hope to be able to white-wash walls, and ceilings, and then sand down, and paint the floor boards. A carpenter has been building new timber window-frames, too, as the present wooden ones are all rotten. The pressure point for us was that we were due to run another residential weekend for youngsters at the beginning of May. This was our annual **Berean residential YP weekend** for youngsters, held over the May Bank Holiday weekend. All told, there were forty of us for the weekend, twenty-three boys, thirteen girls, and four adults to run the weekend. The boys were able to sleep in their dorms, even though the work was not quite finished. The weekend seemed to go very well. The theme was Discipleship Today and the discussion

groups were enthusiastically supported. It was also a thrill for us to have the help of two believers who have started attending the Pulpit meetings in **Tenby**, and came along to join in with the youngsters.

I have now been preaching in Tenby for thirteen consecutive Sunday evenings. The community centre in Augustus Place, which we hire on an hourly basis, has been ideal. I am preaching through Genesis, and we have had an average of ten people in to listen to "the Pulpit", as the venture is called, during each of the Sunday evenings. Several of these make no profession of faith, but seem to come back each week for more. Do please continue to pray for this work, that it may result in a new assembly of believers gathering to the name of the Lord in Tenby. There seems to be a consistent core of six people who are either dissatisfied with the preaching they hear elsewhere, and are very supportive of this new venture, or who have no church membership at all, and come because they have no Bible knowledge either. We have also booked a stand for the Pembrokeshire Show, which is to run from the 14-16th August. We were able to meet a number of people there last year, and hope to do the same again this year.

We were also thrilled when our Sara and Joel were baptized in Carmarthen. Both have come into fellowship there. They were baptized along with another youngster, Iwan Rees, from Carmarthen. The Hall was packed, with many having to stand in the foyer, or the kitchen. This was a real encouragement to all in the Carmarthen meeting'



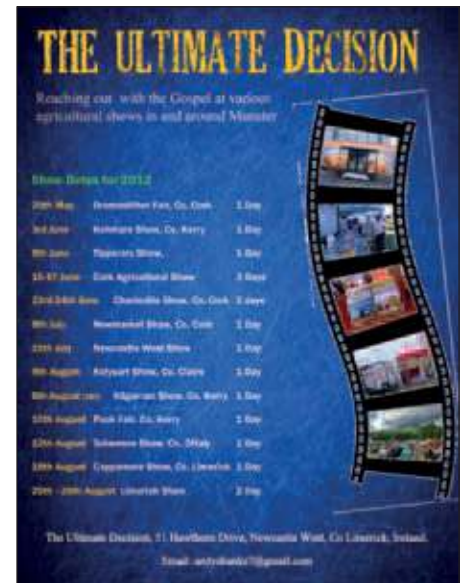
## IRELAND

A number of believers visited the Drumcolliher Show. This is a village fair to raise money for the local cancer respite hospice. The good weather throughout the afternoon helped bring

people to the fair. There were a number of good conversations and many people received gospel literature. A nun stopped by, and also a local man in his 70's who admitted after listening to the gospel that he had never heard the message before. A good number of children's packs were also distributed.

This was the first show for which the Exhibition unit (shown above) has been used. Andrew Shanks had hoped to be able to visit some local markets with the trailer, however the opportunities for this have not yet opened up. The believers continue to seek the Lord's will in this matter. They also plan to use the trailer this year for all the visits to agricultural shows across the South of Ireland.

The assembly in Newcastle West held their annual Holiday Bible Club from the 2nd-6th April, and were encouraged with thirty-two children coming each day. Twenty of these children were either there for the first time, or hadn't come in over a year. To see a number of parents at the prizegiving was a cause for rejoicing. Please pray for one lady, 'S', who had brought one of her sons to the club, and has since brought both her



The Itinerary (above) and the Stall (below).







sons along to Sunday School. This lady has now stayed during the gospel meeting as Sunday School is going on.

In May they also had a week-long visit from some American and Canadian believers. They distributed gospel literature into every home in Newcastle West, and a number of surrounding villages, and rural areas. They were also able to help with door-to-door work, and from this a number of contacts have been made to 'call back'.



David and Helen McKillen report as follows:

2012 began with an intensive period of gospel calendar distribution on the streets of **Cape Town**. The full-colour gospel poster calendars, with contact details and assembly meeting times etc., in many languages, have attracted the interest of many local assemblies. We assisted in the delivery and distribution of over 35,000 calendars locally in January and into February; at bus stations, on the sea fronts, at 24-hour filling stations, and in door-to-door work around many assembly halls. In the goodness of the Lord, we know of over thirty requests for Bible Study material, many other enquiries, not a few visitors at various assembly meetings – including some to observe the Breaking of Bread for the first time – and most gloriously of all, the news of two souls coming to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus through conviction from calendar texts they received. We know of calendars still being distributed – the total print run was over 200,000 – and some assemblies ordered reprints in February. We already have enquiries for 2013 and we do need the prayers of the Lord's people for wisdom as how best to cope, financially and logistically, with this increasing demand. It is a mighty tool in the realm of the "printed word" and almost universally acceptable. Our local 24-hour filling station has just finished – at the end of March – the distribution to customers of over 2,000 Poster Calendars. The great wonder is this very busy forecourt and shop is owned by a devout Muslim family, yet the staff [some of whom are believers] are permitted to give gospel calendars to all who will receive them.

A dear sister, who is a seamstress in our largest city referral hospital, has been distributing calendars there for four years.

From the testimony of this work, she was asked if she could provide Bibles for adults and children within the hospital. She was given space in a room to operate for a few hours each week. We gladly supplied the variety of English, Afrikaans and Xhosa Bibles we thought would be suitable and she set up the little stall last month. We have been greatly surprised at how the Lord has used this outlet in a massive hospital, and the demand for Bibles has far exceeded our expectations. Last week she was asked for two copies of *Believers Bible Commentary* by staff in the hospital. This is, for a local worker here, a significant investment in monetary terms, and we are thankful that in an unexpected quarter we can, through the labour of others, "cast [our] bread upon the waters", expecting the Lord to further bless this seed-sowing in such a needy sphere.

Following on from the introduction of a large colour Chart on "**Revelation and End Time Events**" and accompanying notes and study material with the ministry given, we were greatly encouraged at the response in the assembly where we commenced. We provide a leaflet for door-to-door distribution before each series, as well as notes each night and an A4 booklet at the end. We have a question box and the questions submitted are either answered within the ministry, or at a question and discussion night at the conclusion. The chart is a 4-metre full-colour version of Harry Ironside's *Revelation Chart*, and is a wonderful focal point and backdrop to the ministry. The interest and attendance – many from outside assembly circles and many unbelievers – was most encouraging, and the Lord blessed in salvation at the end of the first series. We have seen a real reawakening of interest in prophetic teaching in this area as a result and, in the will of the Lord, further series are planned.

I have just finished a month-long prophecy series in the two assemblies most local to where we live, in the Southern Peninsula part of Cape Town. **Steenberg** and **Grassy Park Assemblies** arranged to combine for the duration and requested two weeks in each hall, with the meetings moving venue mid-series. The interest has been excellent, and numbers have increased five-fold compared with normal attendance. We are seeing many believers coming in from denominations and confessing that they have had no teaching on any prophetic position in a generation, and the appetite for prophetic exposition is a huge encouragement in what is a very weighty undertaking. Four other local assemblies subsequently put off their week-night meeting to attend,

and in the last two weeks, we have seen the building packed. The Lord has given much enablement and strength in a very weighty subject.'



Jonathan Kelso reports, 'As I reflect on the past five days or so, I can see so much of the Lord's hand at work. On Sunday afternoon I was feeling a little deflated in mind and spirit; I went for a walk down into the gypsy quarters of Orlat and spoke to some people I knew, gave out some gospel leaflets which I brought with me, and then climbed up a grassy hill from which you can enjoy a panoramic view of the village. Just three days later, more than ninety people attended the weekly gospel meeting. I spoke on the coming again of the Lord Jesus and the urgent need to prepare for His soon return. Most of the people listened well, some very intently, and yet all left without anyone that we are aware of accepting God's way of salvation. Most of the people who were in attendance have now heard the gospel on numerous occasions, but are still not saved. As I looked down upon the little gypsy homes spread out immediately below the hill and looked at the Romanian houses, church spires and people going about their business, I couldn't but think of the Lord Jesus as He looked and wept over the city of Jerusalem.

On Sunday evening Andi and I went to speak with some men in **Gura Raului**, whom I felt compelled to go and speak to about the Lord. I rang one of their wives, and asked if it would be okay if we came to visit and told her the purpose of the visit. The men I had in mind are brothers from a large family, and are notorious for drinking, abusing their wives, and even sometimes their children. I really felt rebuked in myself because the resentment, and dislike I had built up inside myself against these men had created a barrier, which had prevented me from witnessing to them as I should. That evening when we arrived at Nicoleta's house, the men I wanted to talk with were working, digging a foundation for an extra room at a property further up the little pad. We were informed that they had been cursing us before we came, and were angry that we dare come to visit in one of their homes. I went and spoke with them, inviting them to come and listen to what I had on my mind; Ovidiu was drunk, and a little abusive; Vali was



quite impertinent, but Dan, Nicoleta's husband, set down his shovel, and came down to hear what I had to say. Another man, Vasile who was visiting in Gura Raului also came, and I spoke to them of the Saviour's love, and for their need to repent and get right with God. After praying, Dan thanked me for coming, and seemed to be genuine and sincere as he shook my hand, and conveyed his appreciation.

Beside where we have the store and the meeting room in Orlat, there are numerous little garden allotments where the Romanian folk, living in the apartment blocks come to grow their vegetables. These Romanian people have been quite against what we are doing for the gypsies in the area, and as a result, our popularity ratings have not been very high. On Monday, I took my chainsaw and spent three hours cutting wood for one of the local teachers who lives alone. Andi carried the fire wood into her store, and she really was affected by this act of kindness. Another couple of neighbours who saw what we were doing also came and helped, and soon barriers were broken down, and we were able to share some laughs together. The next day, one of these ladies came and asked me if I would possibly have anything for her dry skin and run-down condition. I gave her some moisturising cream and also multivitamins, to her delight; she returned later with a bunch of flowers – her way of saying thanks. Just days before, this same woman had shouted angrily at Andi and me, now she says 'Hello', smiles and waves every time we see her! Since then, another man came to me asking if

I could weld a broken part on his bicycle seat. Other Romanians have helped us a little as we made the gates for the perimeter fence. I love what Paul says, 'I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some', 1 Cor. 9. 22.

Yesterday, and today, have been very busy. One of my activities yesterday evening was treating two girls for hair lice infestation. One of the girls was brought to me by a girl I know, and she introduced Elena to me. Elena has come to live in Orlat only two weeks ago, and is from a broken home in another city around twenty or so miles from here. She is only fourteen years of age; she is four months pregnant and is living in a disused cattle shed. It took a long time to treat her hair, which hadn't been washed or brushed for ages; her head was alive with lice. Next, I treated her friend, Andea who brought Elena to me and her situation was equally as bad. Please pray that caring for these people and showing them love will draw them closer to the One who loves them best of all - the One whose name is LOVE.'



The saints from the assembly at **Avenida Mendonca Furtado** arranged to make a visit to **Belterra** for a gospel meeting. Belterra is about twenty-five miles into the interior, where Samuel and Ann Davidson's son, Andrew and his wife have been living and working for some time. The believers there had invited many of their friends and neighbours to the meeting, and around one hundred and fifty were present, with many unsaved

amongst them. This was too many to fit into the gospel hall, so they brought out the seating, and erected lighting, and had the meeting in the open air. The silent and reverent attention by the people present was very impressive. Please pray that there will be a positive response to the preaching of the gospel in the salvation of precious souls.

Floods have meant around fifty thousand people have lost their homes in the **Manaus** region. In the lower commercial area of the city, the streets are flooded and there were futile attempts made to try to have the water pumped back into the river. The people in the interior have suffered most, and many have had to leave their houses to stay with friends here in the town until the waters subside. Some of the halls in the interior have been flooded with water; there was three feet of water in the hall at **Piracoeira**. Not to be deterred, the saints had the meetings in boats!

It is also good to hear of the baptism of Noe in Manaus, and of the believers gathering at the Amazon's edge for the baptism of a young man called Wilson



who has been attending the assembly at **Diamantino** in **Santarem**.

The believers at Jalan Imbi Chapel, Kaula Lumpur marked fifty years of witness in July by producing a magazine, which highlighted the Lord's gracious, and faithful dealings with them throughout the period.

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In this magazine (*some countries only*) you will find the flyer and reservation form for this trip. If you intend to come you are advised to reserve your place as soon as ever possible. The previous trip in March 2012 was sold out and described as 'the best ever', even by seasoned Israel travellers. The deposit to reserve your place is £200.00 per person and you can book either on our website [www.preciousseed.org](http://www.preciousseed.org) or by sending a cheque to Roy Hill, The Glebe House, Stanton Drew, Bristol BS39 4ED.

**We hope you will join us.**





# A WORD FOR TODAY

גא'ל (*ga'al*) to redeem, deliver, ransom

גא'ל (*go'el*) nearest/kinsman redeemer

גא'ל (*go'el*) be defiled, desecrate

Such is the complexity of modern family life that most societies today have enacted specific laws that relate to families and domestic relationships. In the recent Queen's speech, which opened this year's session of the British Parliament, a tangible commitment was made by the government to introduce a family bill that promised flexibility, and justice for those in difficult circumstances. This is not, though, a new phenomenon, as centuries ago God made considerable provision in that part of the Old Testament known as the Pentateuch, or, as it is more commonly referred to today, the *torah*, for the benefit of families. One such provision was that of the role of a nearest kinsman, or kinsman redeemer, denoted in the Hebrew word *go'el*. This term is derived from the Hebrew word *ga'al* ('to redeem'), and is part of the technical legal terminology of Israel's family law. In the Bible and rabbinical tradition, the term indicates an individual, who, being the nearest relative of another person, has the responsibility of restoring the rights and privileges (including liberty) of that person, and avenging his or her wrongs. This is why, in modern English translations of the Old Testament, such as the New International Version, the term is translated as 'kinsman-redeemer', and 'avenger of blood', see for example Ruth chapter 3 verse 9 NIV, and Numbers chapter 35 verse 19 NIV.

In the Septuagint (LXX) the word-group of which *go'el* forms part is generally translated by the Greek verb λύτρωω, which signifies the payment of a ransom price, usually by way of redemption. For a detailed consideration of this word see the earlier article in *Precious Seed International* 2011, Volume 66 issue 2.

The kinsman was always a male relative, but the term is also applied in the Old Testament of angelic intervention in human affairs as in Genesis chapter 48 verse 16, where Jacob recounts how an angel had to redeem him from all harm. God Himself is described in a similar way when he explained to Moses, Exod. 6. 6, how he intended to redeem Israel out of Egyptian bondage 'with an outstretched arm'. The use of anthropomorphism in this biblical text shows just how close the relationship is between God, and the nation that would be redeemed by Him. God, literally, gave them liberty from enslavement. The prophet Isaiah makes this even more personal, when he poignantly reminded Israel that God was their only redeemer, and they belonged to Him, Isa. 43. 1; 49. 7. Even when Israel found itself in Babylon, God's appeal to them was based upon His redeeming love as a near kinsman, 48. 20. Israel stands in stark contrast to the cry of Job, who felt, at first, that there was no one close enough to him who could redeem (justify) him. Yet, in his search for God, he realized that it would be God Himself who would provide a kinsman-redeemer, and thereby vindicate his servant, Job. 19. 25.

We indicated that the provision of the *go'el* related to family matters, and this is seen in several specific areas in the Old Testament. Firstly, consider action forced upon individuals because of their inability to repay debt. This was often the case where the debtor was poor, and the debt could only be satisfied through the sale of ancestral property, or by the individual selling themselves into slavery.<sup>1</sup> In either contingency, a near relative, or kinsman, could redeem the debt by paying the ransom price, Lev. 25. 25. Technically, however, even if the seller of the land, or a kinsman redeemer, could not find the money later to redeem the debt, the sale only remained valid until the year of Jubilee, vv. 26-28.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the principle remained an important feature of day-to-day life in Israel, ensuring that individuals who had lost their property, or liberty, might be able to regain it, thus providing equally for the redemption of the land, v. 24.<sup>3</sup> A second application was where a near kinsman was obliged to redeem the lost opportunities of a male family member who had died without

issue. This was the principle of levirate (Latin = 'levir' = 'brother-in-law') marriage, which provided an exception to the prohibition on incest contained in Leviticus chapter 18 verse 16, by allowing the husband's brother to marry his widowed sister-in-law where there were no children of the original marriage, Deut. 25. 5. In this way the name of the deceased brother would be remembered (redeemed) through the first son born to the second marriage, Deut. 25. 6.<sup>4</sup> This is precisely the situation that prevailed in the book of Ruth, and why Naomi was so distraught that there would be no future possible unless this principle could be invoked for her dead sons, Ruth 1. 11.

By

**BRIAN  
CLATWORTHY**

Newton Abbot,  
England

A more controversial aspect of the principle of a kinsman-redeemer is seen in the so-called 'avenger of blood', Num. 35. 19-27, who was obligated to avenge the death of a family member. The exception to this rule was if the death had been manslaughter, in which case, the perpetrator could find sanctuary from the 'avenger of blood' in a city of refuge, Deut. 35. 22-25.

It is, of course, in the book of Ruth that the idea of the kinsman-redeemer is exemplified. Since Boaz is prepared to assume the role of the kinsman-redeemer over a closer relative who is reluctant to do so, Ruth 4. 6, he is able to pay the redemption price, and thus reclaim the land that originally belonged to Elimelech, and that would eventually have been transferred to Chilion and Mahlon, had they lived, vv. 1-10. In doing so, he also acquires Ruth as his wife, so that he can fulfil the levirate principle. Boaz, acting in his capacity as a kinsman-redeemer, highlights three important requirements needed in the redemption process:

- 1 The redeemer must be a near kinsman. Nothing short of this would start the process, i.e., he must have the right to redeem, Lev. 25. 48; Ruth 3. 12;
- 2 The redeemer must have the ability and desire to redeem, Ruth 4. 3-6;
- 3 The redeemer must pay the appropriate price to redeem, Lev. 25. 26-27; Ruth 4. 7-11.

The term kinsman-redeemer does not appear in the New Testament, but VINE suggests that Christ is His people's *go'el* in the following ways:

- By incarnation, and thereby saving His people from eternal disinheritance, Heb. 2. 14-18;
- By redemption, 1 Pet. 1. 18f.; cp. Isa. 49. 26;
- By avenging them in overcoming, by His own death, the one who had the power of death, Heb. 2. 14f.

As we think about Christ as our personal *go'el*, we should be filled with a great sense of indebtedness to the one who loved us enough to buy our freedom by His act of redemption. 'So shall the sayings of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be pleasing continually before thee, O Lord my helper, and my (kinsman) redeemer', Ps. 19. 14 LXX.

## For further reading/study

### Introductory

*Legal Images – Kinsman-Redeemer-Avenger* (pg. 501) in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Ed.) LELAND RYKEN

### Advanced

WENHAM, GORDON, *Exploring the Old Testament: Vol 1: The Pentateuch*

### Endnotes

- 1 Whilst slavery was recognized under the law, Exod. 21. 2-11; Deut. 15. 12, it did not sanction a creditor selling an impecunious debtor into slavery, Amos 2. 6b.
- 2 But not all property was automatically released in the year of Jubilee – for the exceptions see Leviticus chapter 25 verses 29 to 34.
- 3 Leviticus chapter 25 verses 47-49 also allowed a kinsman the opportunity to redeem a family member in bondage to a resident alien.
- 4 Some scholars are not sympathetic to this view – see the comments of ROBERT HUBBARD JR. at page 791 NIDOTTE (Vol. 1) and alternatively STEPHEN RENN at page 792, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*.



## Frequently Asked Questions

Asking questions is good biblical practice. Children should quiz their parents, Deut. 6. 20, and wives should ask questions of their husbands, 1 Cor. 14. 35. The traditional Jewish teaching method was for pupils to test their rabbi with hard questions. Quite the opposite way round to modern examinations! Most importantly of all, distressed believers are entitled to take their doubts and queries to a faithful God, e.g., Gen. 18. 23-33; Ps. 22. 1.



Asking questions is also a common occurrence on the internet. Lists of frequently asked questions (FAQs) are compiled and maintained on dedicated websites for general reading. In the early days of the World Wide Web, most FAQs concentrated on technological subjects. However, FAQs have now diversified to all kinds of topics. In this article, I will focus on useful FAQ sites for Christians.

The *Precious Seed International* question page regularly features 'old chestnuts' such as, 'Is it wrong for a woman to cut her hair?' and, 'Is it right for a Christian to drink alcohol?' Questions since the year 2000 are listed at <http://preciousseed.org/search.cfm?index=3&categoryID=12>. The *Believer's Magazine* runs a similar column, usually with less controversial questions and more concise answers. Questions since 2005 are listed at <http://believersmagazine.com/bm.php?query=Question+Box&start=1&search=1&i=1>.



Another useful resource is <http://www.gotquestions.org> which contains answers to over 300,000 questions. Users can search for specific questions, or browse through various categories. The site is available in several languages. I checked questions like 'Is eternal security biblical?', 'Should women teach publicly?' and, 'Is the gift of tongues for today?' In brief, the answers given are 'yes', 'no', and 'no' respectively. However, the full answers are much more detailed, including a range of useful scriptural references. The overall theology appears to be conservative and evangelical. My standard Berean warning applies: search the scriptures yourself to verify the accuracy of online discoveries.



Finally, I confess to an interest in Bible translation which gives rise to many questions. The Trinitarian Bible Society publishes online leaflets with information about the King James Version and the underlying *Textus Receptus* at <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/onlinearticles.html>. The Perspectives in Translation blog gives a range of opinions from translators working on recent Bible versions at <http://www.biblegateway.com/perspectives-in-translation/>.



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# Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

## Cameron CANNOT protect Church against gay marriage laws (says his own Justice Minister)

UK Prime Minister, David Cameron's promise to protect churches from gay marriage laws could hit legal hurdles, a Justice Minister admitted yesterday. Crispin Blunt said it would be hard to guarantee that clergy would not face court challenges if they refused to preside over same-sex unions. 'We're seeking to protect, indeed, proscribe religious organisations from offering gay marriage', said Mr. Blunt, who announced two years ago that he is gay.

'That may be problematic legally, but the proposals the Government are putting forward is that marriage should be equal in the eyes of the state, whether it's between a same-sex couple or between a man and a woman. We'll have to see what happens with that'. Mr. Blunt's comments appear to undermine reassurances from both Downing Street and Home Secretary Theresa May that churches will not be affected by the law.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2158442/Cameron-CANNOT-protect-Church-gay-marriage-laws-says-Justice-minister.html#ixzz1xno0CbAT>



## Bible Society is unable to hand out Bibles bearing the Olympics logo at London 2012

Although Bibles with the Olympics logo were handed out in Communist China, they won't be at London 2012. Under the Communist regime in China, the Bible Society was able to hand out copies of *The Good Book* with the Olympic logo emblazoned on the front cover at the 2008 games. At London 2012, however, it has been ruled out. 'The idea was to give them out during the Olympics, as a Christian welcome to our country', says the society's spokesman, Rachel Rounds. 'We had a special sports Bible prepared, with extra information in the front about what the Bible has to say about sport'. The charity has now abandoned the idea because of Olympic rules regarding the use of the logo. 'The Olympic movement has always been clear that it should not be used to promote any religion', says a source at the games. 'We have a multi-faith centre at the Olympic Park, where people can find Bibles. In Beijing, these Bibles appeared out of nowhere. They were not approved by the Chinese government'.



Rounds says, 'It would have been nice to be a part of the Olympics, but, it seems, Christianity has less of a place than we first thought. During the Beijing Olympics, Amity printing press published Bibles with the official Olympic logo on them'.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/news/9144128/Bible-society-is-unable-to-hand-out-Bibles-bearing-the-Olympics-logo-at-London-2012.html>

## Christian counsellors being 'closed down' says struck-off 'gay cure' psychotherapist

A Christian psychotherapist struck off after attempting to convert a homosexual man to heterosexuality said yesterday that counsellors with traditional views now face being 'closed down'. Lesley Pilkington, 61, spoke as she lost her appeal against her registration with her professional body being cancelled after an undercover journalist, posing as a patient, recorded her during a therapy session. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) said that, although Patrick Strudwick had 'deliberately misled' Mrs. Pilkington, she was guilty of professional malpractice. Mrs. Pilkington, who believes that homosexuality is sinful, practices a controversial counselling technique known as 'reparative therapy' involving counselling and prayer.

In 2009, Mr. Strudwick, using a false name, arranged two counselling sessions with Mrs. Pilkington telling her he was a 'believer' after meeting her at a conference. He later wrote about his experiences in an article in *The Guardian* and lodged a formal complaint with the BACP saying that he had been left disturbed by what took place. During the session, she asked him whether he had been abused as a child or bullied at school, and whether any of his relatives had been Freemasons as a possible cause of his homosexuality. A conduct hearing last year ruled that Mrs. Pilkington had fallen short of professional standards by making 'premature and reckless' diagnoses. An appeal panel threw out a number of adverse findings against Mrs. Pilkington, but found that she had failed to take enough steps to ensure that Mr. Strudwick fully understood what her counselling entailed, and the 'precise belief system that underpinned it'. The case is the latest in a series which have led those who maintain traditional views on sexuality to claim they are being pushed out of the public sphere.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/9283083/Christian-counsellors-being-closed-down-says-struck-off-gay-cure-psychotherapist.html>



# Bits & Bobs

## Is Richard Dawkins an ape?

In an interview with a black African bishop, the British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins identified himself as an African ape. 'I am an ape. I am an African ape. I am very proud to be an African ape and so you should be', Dawkins told the bemused cleric. Even though he did not intend it, Dawkins' statement brings out starkly the intuitive implausibility of evolutionary theory. When hearing those words, one is immediately struck by the obvious falsity of the claim. No matter what he may choose to call himself, Richard Dawkins is certainly no African ape.



To give an idea of the distance separating the two creatures, below are some things that Richard Dawkins can do, but which an ape – African or otherwise – could never do:

- Read a novel
- Reflect on his own existence
- Enjoy a Shakespeare play
- Wonder about the meaning of life
- Appreciate a Beethoven symphony
- Think about the theory of evolution
- Dream about his future
- Perceive right and wrong
- Complete a crossword puzzle
- Contemplate the size of the universe
- Form a mental concept of God

Richard Dawkins can do all this, and more, while even the brightest of apes is incapable of even grasping the point behind these mental activities. To suggest that there is some kind of fundamental equivalence between Professor Dawkins and an ape is not only demeaning, it is outright incredible. It is also indecent, since there is something almost blasphemous about a person putting himself on the same level as an animal.

Some people may think that Dawkins' self-description is a sign of humility, but the opposite may well be the case. Dawkins is a man who has been generously endowed with considerable abilities, but who stubbornly refuses to acknowledge the source of these gifts. 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights', we read in the first chapter of James' Epistle.

The truth is that we have all been created in God's image. Fallen though we are, we still bear the divine stamp in our being. We must never forget that. Above all, we must not teach our children that they come from animals. Not only is this untrue, but if we tell them that they are animals, they will eventually start acting like animals! We need to teach them that there is something more to humanity than the physical nature we share with the animal world. We must explain to them that those yearnings for goodness, for love, for immortality and transcendence, that sometimes stir in their souls, have been implanted there by God. Most importantly, we need to teach them love and respect for our Creator who gives us all good things, not only in this life, but also in the one to come.

Richard Dawkins' intelligence and the ability to speak and reason did not come from apes. Neither are they a product of chance. They are gifts from above. He should not be using these gifts to demean himself or the One who gifted him so liberally.

Source: <http://communities.washingtontimes.com/neighborhood/higher-things/2012/mar/17/richard-dawkins-ape/>

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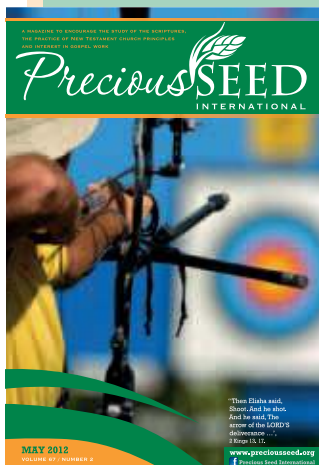
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**Front Cover illustration:**

Maurice Thompson writing concerning archery in 1879 said, 'There is no excellence in archery without great labour', and, 'You must be patient and careful; nor should you expect to become an accomplished archer without long and severe training'. One of the most difficult things about being a good archer is consistency in hitting the target. It takes long practice and the slightest distraction will result in the arrow going off target. The main problem is the large effort required in drawing back the bow string, but at the same time aiming without wavering. The Christian life is a constant day by day battle and we require weapons to fight off the enemy, however, as the Israelite, we must learn that the battle is not won with the weapons of this world, 'For I will not trust in my bow, Nor shall my sword save me.' Psa. 44. 6. Only by His strength and His armoury will we gain the victory Eph. 6. 11-18.



Question Time

Conducted by

**RICHARD COLLINGS**

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

**QUESTION**

**Should elders discuss matters relating to oversight with their wives?**

**ANSWER**

Before answering this interesting question there are a couple of matters that need to be clarified, even though it will not be possible to expand upon them. Firstly, whilst there are advantages in elders being married we must not assume that it is essential for them to be married, for marriage is not a pre-requisite to serving the Lord as an overseer. Secondly, apart from issues that are confidential, elders ought to share matters with the whole assembly and not just their wives.

Just after God made Adam he stated, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him', Gen. 2. 18. This was God's pattern for all marriages, and the closeness of the husband/wife relationship is such that it is described in the scriptures as being 'one flesh'. The wife is to be the intimate companion of her husband, in which she reciprocates his affections and takes an appropriate part in matters that concern him.

However, whilst the foregoing is a general principle, it has to be acknowledged that there will be times when the husband may not be at liberty to discuss matters with his wife. Of course, this scenario is not to be confused with his deliberately withholding something that he could, or should, legitimately discuss with her, but relates to matters where he is not permitted to divulge information. For example, there are several spheres of employment where husbands are duty bound not to disclose information to anyone, and, in these instances, no one would suggest that it violates God's pattern for marriage.

Similarly, in the course of their work as elders, brethren will occasionally be privy to matters that cannot be shared with others. This may relate to something that a person, or even a family in the assembly, have confided to them. It may relate to an action that has to be taken but the details have to be withheld temporarily, until such time as it is correct to make them known more publicly. There are numerous situations that could arise for which information needs to be held confidentially by the overseers, and in those instances they ought not to share things with their wives.

Whilst those who champion a politically correct agenda might suggest it would be good to have a woman's perspective on matters, our sole guide must be the word of God. The scriptures make it clear that the leadership of an assembly should only be taken by males who exhibit certain spiritual qualities. We do not read of female elders, nor are the wives of elders referred to as 'associate elders' or 'co-elders'. Undoubtedly the wife of an overseer will desire to support her husband in every way she can but this will not mean that she has to be informed of everything. She may be conscious of him feeling the strain of the burden of the work; she will be aware of the times when he will be away from the home visiting needy saints; she will also know of times when he has 'burned the midnight oil' because of the care of the assembly. In all these situations she will do all she can to encourage and sustain him in his service for the Lord, for without this assistance his task would be far more onerous – but none of this vital support necessitates her husband telling her things that should be known only by the elders.

Where there is mutual trust, respect, and love in their marriage, an elder's wife will readily accept her husband's need to honour confidentiality. She will understand that the very nature of his service means that there will be times when he carries burdens he cannot tell her about. She will also appreciate that his withholding information is not an evidence of a lack of love for her, but of his care for the Lord's people.

One reason why there ought to be a plurality of elders in an assembly is that, at times of stress when they would normally unburden themselves to their wives, they can count on the support of their fellow elders.