

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

Precious SEED

INTERNATIONAL



‘And he came to
Nazareth, where he
had been brought up’,
Luke 4. 16.

AUGUST 2013
VOLUME 68 / NUMBER 3



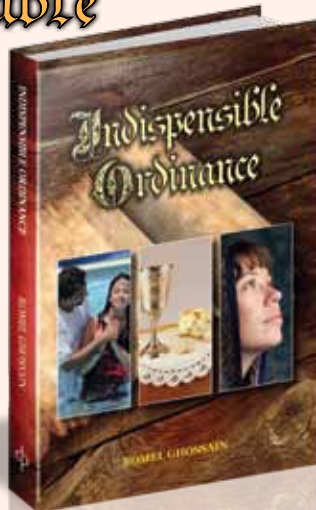
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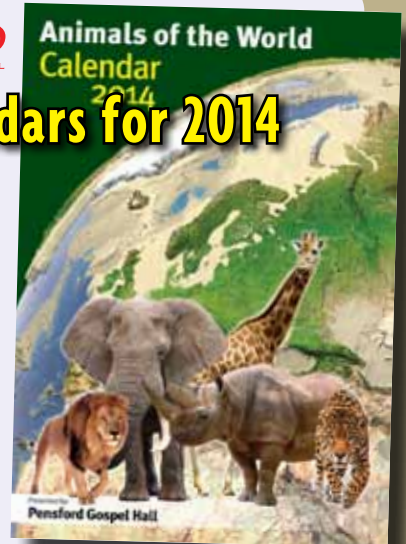


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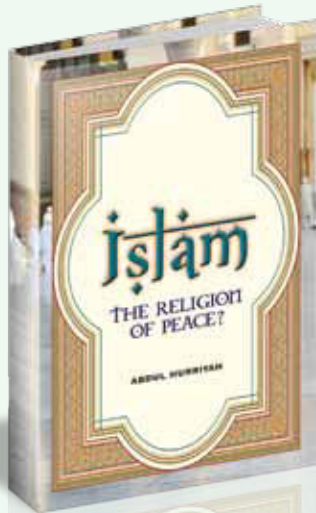


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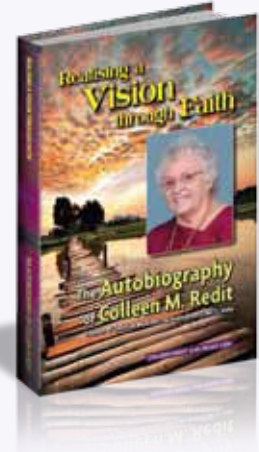


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- The magazine is published quarterly by the Precious Seed Trust, Registered Charity No. 326157.
- It is distributed, without charge, to over 100 countries.
- Numbers printed are over 15,000.
- About 50% of copies go overseas and half of these to 'third world' countries.
- Postage accounts for over 60% of our costs.
- Including postage, each magazine costs around £1.00 sterling.
- Gifts to help in the work may be sent in any major currency to any of the addresses shown opposite or through the website.

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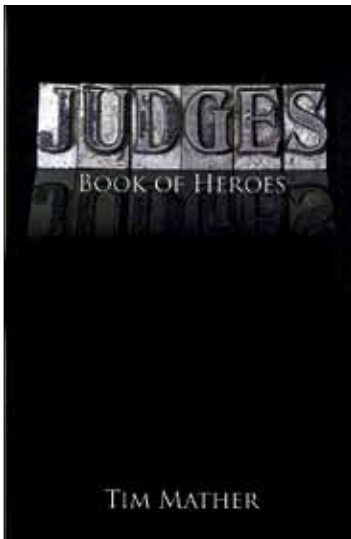
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Book Reviews

By JOHN BENNETT and JOHN SCARBROOK

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Judges – Book of Heroes Tim Mather

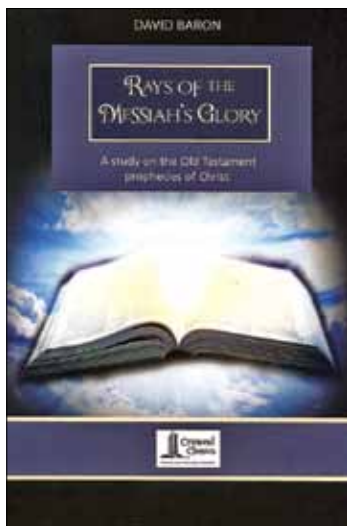
Paperback, 236pp. Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, ON., L3K 6A6, Canada. ISBN 978-1-926765-29-7.

There aren't too many books on the Judges of Israel. In that sense this book should be welcomed. However, it is far from a gap filler! This work is thought-provoking, challenging, and Christ-exalting and a worthy addition to the library of anyone wishing to get to grips with this much neglected book. As MATHER writes, 'Some judges were flawed heroes. Some were reluctant heroes. Some were unlikely heroes'. But, against that background, 'God is not looking for heroes but for men and women who are available to Him, and who will be faithful to Him'.

This is not merely a volume of character studies. In concluding the book with what the author calls two 'case studies', he is able to give an interesting commentary on the whole book. There are some difficult issues to cover and MATHER is not afraid to deal with them carefully and thoughtfully, although not pressing his view dogmatically. In the matter of Jephthah he says, 'Jephthah's sin was not human sacrifice, but human pride'.

There are some useful insights into the study of the book. The author writes about the 'Judges Cycle' consisting of four words: 'sin, servitude, sorrow, salvation'. He shows where this breaks down in the case of Samson, as we come to Judges chapter 13. He also gives a useful analysis of Jephthah's actions when faced with Ammonite aggression.

Overall, this is an excellent addition to anyone's study of Judges and a book that will both edify and encourage. My only disappointment with this recommended book is that it seems to lack thoroughness at the proof reading stage.



Rays of the Messiah's Glory David Baron

Paperback, 150pp., published by Crimond House Publications, Crimond House, 48 Frances Street, Newtownards, BT23 7DN. ISBN 978-0-9549922-7-9.

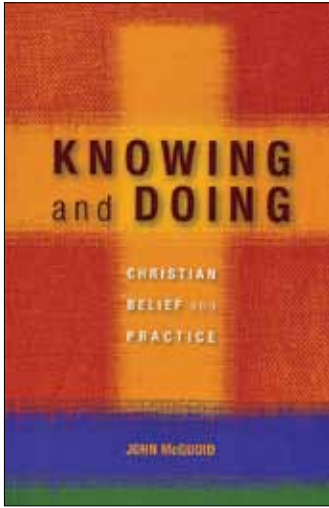
Those readers who are familiar with the writings of David Baron will be pleased to learn that this book has now been reissued for the benefit of another generation of believers. During the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the author was deeply involved in efforts to bring the gospel to the Jewish people, being associated with the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel, and, later, the Mildmay Mission to the Jews.

The theme of this book is succinctly expressed by the author in his preface, where he writes, 'The title and contents alone sufficiently indicate its (the book's) character and scope'. The seven chapters cover: Prophecies Predicted and Fulfilled; Messiah as Priest and King; Four Prophecies on Messiah as the Branch; the Branch and the Branches; Four Precious Titles of Messiah; Moses and Christ; and, finally, a chapter devoted to Isaiah chapter 53. An appendix has notes on Genesis chapter 3 verse 15; on Genesis chapter 49 verse 10; on Psalm 22; on the Branch; and an additional

note on Isaiah chapter 53. The book was first published some nine years after David Baron's conversion, and echoes the excitement which he experienced on coming to understand that Jesus of Nazareth was, in truth, Israel's long-promised Messiah. To take his readers on a journey through some significant passages of the Old Testament was obviously not only seen as a duty but as a pleasure. One is reminded of the enthusiasm of another converted Jew who, we are told by the Western Text of Acts chapter 18 verse 5, inserted the name of the Lord Jesus whenever he expounded those same Scriptures to his fellow-countrymen.

Inevitably, given the author's background and familiarity with Rabbinic teaching, he sometimes takes his readers into detailed discussion and argument which do not always engage the attention of Gentile readers. Nevertheless, the latter will be amply rewarded by receiving the insights and understandings of a Jewish believer whose eyes have been opened to understand the scriptures. This book is easily read, but will not fail to encourage a deeper study of the Old Testament and to confirm the truth of the risen Lord's words that 'all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me'.

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



Knowing and Doing John McQuoid

Paperback, 130pp. Published by Opal Trust, 1 Glenannan Park, Lockerbie, DG11 2FA, Scotland. ISBN 978-1-907098-03-1.

This book is designed for those new to the faith who wish to know more about God and His word and, through that knowledge, to obey Him. Composed of twenty short chapters, ranging from God, Creation, Sin and the Fall of Man, to Family, and Death and Judgement, it seeks to give a very simple introduction to biblical truth. Throughout, there is great emphasis given to simplicity and clarity, with scriptures being quoted extensively to support every point made. Although it is a translation that all might not be happy with, the author's desire for ease of reading has led him to use the New Living Translation.

While this book has much to commend it for use amongst those new converts with no spiritual background, there are a number of areas of concern. Some points of doctrine are incorrectly or poorly phrased. For example, the writer states, 'Adam and Eve were created holy like God', page 19. Similarly, not everyone would be comfortable with the use of 'the sinner's prayer', page 37, or 'the baptismal promise', page 48.

It is often difficult to create a book on a subject like this that is both simple to read and yet profound. This book makes easy reading but does not satisfy in its treatment of all its subjects, e.g., in its rather jarring references to the Lord as 'Jesus' throughout.



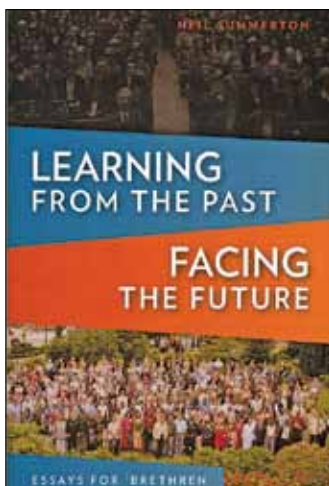
Twelve Hidden Heroes Rebecca Parkinson

Paperback, 102pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ, UK. Price: £5.00 ISBN 978-1-84625-273-0.

This is one of a short series of four books that considers 'hidden heroes' from both the Old and New Testaments. It is stated that the author believes the Bible to be 'a living book that is full of exciting stories that still challenge people's lives'. By choosing twelve hidden heroes and retelling their stories REBECCA PARKINSON seeks to illustrate her point.

It might be assumed that writing about people whom the biblical record does not name and about whom it provides little detail might involve the writer in conjecture at best and imaginative invention at worst. However, the author has worked hard at avoiding the fanciful but, at the same time, bidding us consider the thoughts and emotions of the individuals and their peers.

As you read through the short accounts in this book on Old Testament characters, whether of Hur, Bezalel, Mephibosheth's nurse, Barzillai and others, there is plenty of practical application. In the increasingly difficult task of finding good material for a Sunday School class or as a reading book for young Christians this volume is a welcome addition.



Learning from the Past, Facing the Future Neil Summerton

Paperback, 182 pp, published by Partnership Publications, 2 Blenheim Close, Cambridge, CB1 8DU, UK. ISBN 978-1-907098-05-5.

This has been a difficult book to review. Firstly, it is couched in language which is not easily accessible to a general readership, and, secondly, it is written from a perspective that many will not share – I doubt whether some readers may persevere beyond the first chapter!

It is clear from the outset that the author has a particularly dismissive view of the more 'traditional' assembly practices and this permeates the book. It is for this reason that Summerton's challenges, though often valid, might be rejected, because of the bias of the solutions he offers. For example, who would challenge the lack of spiritual power and divine blessing amongst assemblies? However, is the solution the development of international networking and more para-church organizations?

In the chapter on 'Unity, Independence, and Brethren Identity' the author speaks of the 'strengths of para-church Evangelicalism' that has expressed 'Evangelical unity in a way which transcends ecclesiological differences'. Indeed, he writes most favourably of 'expressions of supra-congregational unity'. One wonders whether this key issue of compromise on ecclesiological and eschatological differences does not engender an abandonment of 'distinctives' that some regard as crucial and biblical. Although Summerton stresses that he is not arguing for 'the abandonment of biblical principle', his assertions about 'culturally-relevant evangelism', 'culturally-relevant forms of worship', and 'releasing the resources of women' will be seen by many as exactly that – an abandonment of biblical principle.

Summerton's book is well researched, thorough in its analysis, and cogently argued. It offers many serious solutions to the problems perplexing evangelicals, but very few that are explored or supported from the substantial use of the scriptures. Sadly, for this reason it will contribute only to a polarization of views.

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Editorial

'Touched with the feeling of our infirmities', Heb 4. 15.

Touched! What a precious thought it is to know that we have a sympathetic and compassionate High Priest!

We live in a hard-hearted world. Some of that condition is linked to our innate sinfulness. We are consumed by self-interest, and the pursuit of our own will. I look on the world with a desire to engage in what is good for me. However, some of that hard-hearted approach is generated by a feeling of powerlessness to change what brings adversity to some. We see the starving and homeless, and do not know what we can do to radically change their lot.


In Matthew chapter 14 we see a similar situation. 'And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals', v. 15. They looked at the vastness of the crowd, and felt their impotence to provide for the need. Even after surveying what few resources they had, the response was 'What are they among so many?', John 6. 9.

What a difference to the reaction of the Lord! Matthew tells us, 'And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them', v. 14. We have a compassionate Saviour. He looked at the awfulness of our lost estate and came to save us. As our Great High Priest, He observes our weakness and failure, and yet is compassionate towards us.

But is compassion enough? Many people observe the plight of the suffering with compassion but they are helpless to effect significant change. True compassion leads to action, and this is demonstrated by the Saviour. Not only did He heal their sick but He provided for their hunger, to the extent that 'they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full', v. 20.

In a High Priestly setting, the writer bids us to 'come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need', Heb. 4. 16. Resources of mercy and grace were provided for those of the multitude in the wilderness. Resources are available for the believer today. But the challenge for all of us in this hard world is to cultivate a heart like the Saviour – 'touched', sympathetic, and compassionate. Oh that our hearts might be such that we can be taken up and used by the Lord to minister blessing!

This magazine contains much that we hope will be a blessing to the Lord's people. There is the informative, the expository, the devotional, the practical, and the challenging. We continue to look for the Lord's help, and the prayerful support of His people, as we seek to encourage one another, awaiting the coming of the Lord.



The Investiture of Christ in His 1000

Previous articles in this series have taken us from Old Testament prophecy through the Rapture and various events following up to Armageddon and Israel's repentance. In terms of the book of the Revelation this would bring us up to chapter 20, which commences with reference to a 1000 year period. This is, I believe, a literal millennium of Christ's restitution of Israel and perfect rule over the whole earth, indeed over the whole universe. Later in this article, we will consider the sort of conditions which will exist during this period, but first we must go back to events not yet considered in Revelation chapters 4 and 5, where the Lord Jesus is presented as 'the Lamb', is recognized, and invested with the absolute right to rule.

As covered in a previous article,¹ chapter 4 commences with John hearing a voice like a trumpet, and being called up to heaven, which, it was suggested, is a picture of the Rapture. This event will fulfil the promise of the Lord Jesus given to His disciples to 'receive you unto myself', and His prayer on behalf of all believers that 'they may behold my glory', John 14. 3; 17. 24. In verse 2, John describes a throne, its occupant, and the scene surrounding it. The One on the throne is revealed in appearance like a 'jasper and a sardine stone'. When first mentioned in Exodus chapter 28, these stones represent the last and first of Israel's twelve tribes. If arranged by birth, they are Benjamin and Reuben, whose names mean 'the son of my right hand', and 'behold a son' respectively. Alternatively, they may represent the tribes as they camp 'according to their tribes', in which case they speak of Naphtali, which means 'struggling', or 'wrestling', because his mother said 'I have prevailed', and Judah, the tribe entrusted with the sovereign right to rule. Either way, this speaks of the Lord Jesus. God is about to cause the assembled multitude to behold His Son, the Son of His right hand, who is also 'the lion of the

tribe of Judah', and the One who has 'prevailed', Rev. 5. 5.

Although an emerald rainbow also indicates mercy, primarily this throne is set for judgement. It is encircled by twenty-four 'elders', and four 'beasts', or living creatures. Much has been speculated about these beings, with many seeing the 'elders' as representative of the church. However, the 'elders' are surrendering crowns they already have, even though the Lamb is not yet invested. These crowns are not the 'diadems' associated with the Lord. The elders are seen as mature males, whereas, the church is seen as a young female, 'the bride'. Perhaps, most importantly, John refers to one of them in chapter 5 verse 5 and chapter 7 verse 13, which suggests that they are twenty-four individuals, most likely angels. These ancient ones, who have been involved in the administration of earth and the nations for centuries, are now relinquishing all rule and power. This will now reside solely in the sovereign, prevailing One. This transfer is climaxed in the Lamb taking the scroll from the right hand of the throne-sitter. The scroll is written on both sides and sealed, the precedent for which is found back in Jeremiah chapter 32. This suggests that the scroll is the title deeds of the universe awaiting its seals being opened in Revelation by the Lamb. The fact that He is so incomparable and uniquely able to do this is emphasized by a search of the celestial, terrestrial, and subterranean realms, which reveals no other able even to look at the scroll, far less open the seals. Little wonder this moment results in a three-fold doxology of praise to Him.

At the end of the initial period of judgement, chapter 20 introduces the thousand year period of rule, but gives little detail of conditions during this millennium. That detail, as we will see, is found particularly throughout the Old Testament, as it is primarily concerned with earth, not heaven. However, the description of the Lamb, given in chapter 5 verse 6, gives an indication of the

conditions. The Lamb is described as having 'seven horns' and 'seven eyes'; a survey of scripture will soon reveal that these are indicative of power and perception, and, having seven of each, they are seen in absolute or complete terms. This One has perfect understanding and total power; He is the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent One and His rule, though marked by unchallenged sovereignty, will be characterized by justice, equity, and benefit to the whole earth and all upon it. Many Old Testament passages give us detail of various aspects of this thousand year period, some of which we will consider more in the next article in this series, which will seek to justify a literal interpretation of the thousand years. But, to conclude this study, Psalm 72 will serve to summarize conditions which will prevail.

Psalm 72 concludes the first two books of psalms, many of which are attributed to David, hence, the closing summary 'the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended', v. 20. While David wrote many of the subsequent psalms of the book, this one seems to conclude his desires, and is set when Solomon has been installed as co-regent while David is still alive. Though some ascribe the psalm as 'of Solomon', it appears to be the thoughts of David, and, maybe, better a psalm 'for Solomon'. The mention of both the king and the king's son in the opening verse support this suggestion. The psalm covers the greatest period of Israel's monarchy, when the kingdom was at its largest, united, and most peaceful. However, there are aspects which clearly cannot be fully found in Solomon's rule, such as the endurance of the kingdom in verses 5 and 17, and its extent in verses 8-11. These clearly point forward to 'a greater than Solomon', indeed David's 'greater Son', the Lord Jesus Christ. His rule will be literal, just like Solomon's, and will be perfectly

and conditions

By **ALASTAIR SINCLAIR**
Crosshouse, Scotland

100 Year Kingdom

characterized by the conditions outlined in this psalm. Verse 3 speaks of '**peace**', even in the most unlikely and dangerous of places, while verse 7 confirms an 'abundance of peace'.

It should be noted that in both verses peace is coupled with righteousness and the righteous. Peace, like many of the conditions we are considering, is something that men desire, and search for today. Yet, despite the growth of democracy, and so-called human advancement, peace still proves elusive. In fact, the last century saw more perish in wars than

democracies. Even the much-lauded, including, sadly, by many believers, ideologies of capitalism and market forces have resulted in exploitation, and a widening gap between rich and poor.

These last conditions are condemned by prophets like Isaiah, Amos, and Micah, who long for days when the labourer reaps the just reward of his own labours, and **poverty** is removed. Rather than destroying unborn children, as governments of all types encourage today, Christ's kingdom will resolve the problem of



in all previous history. Why? Because mankind has rejected righteousness, without which peace can never be achieved. However, in the person of the Lord Jesus, 'righteousness and peace have kissed each other', Ps. 85. 10. This peace will extend beyond the realm of men, encompassing the animal kingdom, and, indeed, the whole creation, as seen in Isaiah chapter 11. Unlike every form of failed human government, He alone will bring true peace on a righteous basis. This is further seen in the repeated concern for the **poor**, Ps. 72. 2, 4, 12-14. The world's dictatorships oppress the poor in their millions. The nepotism of communism has failed them, as have the corrupt emerging

population, vv. 6-7, and **provision** for them, v. 16. Famine will be a thing of the past, as will economic crisis. He will achieve true **prosperity**, v. 15a, not the unsustainable 'boom and bust' of fickle stock markets. His rule will reach all **peoples**, regardless of their location, disposition, ethnicity, rank, or nationality, vv. 8-11. Verse 8 may also hint at another of man's great concerns rectified by Christ in the millennium, that of **pollution**. 'The river' is often interpreted as the Euphrates in relation to Solomon, but, in Zechariah chapter 14 verse 8, we read of a new river flowing all year, and sending living waters to cleanse the polluted Mediterranean and bring life to the Dead Sea.

From this river in Jerusalem Christ's reign will extend to 'the ends of the earth', reversing the adverse effects of man's misrule. Furthermore, the evils done by man's religion, as seen over the centuries from the excesses of conquistadors and crusaders in the name of professing Christianity to the slaughters perpetrated in the names of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, and every other false religion, sect, and cult will be ended, as **prayer** and **praise** will be ascribed to Him alone, Ps. 72. 15b. The even greater atheistic mass murderers of the last century, like Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, and those today in North Korea and elsewhere, who tried to establish dynasties and thousand year Reichs will be forgotten. But not so the King of kings and Lord of lords; the conditions He produces will not exist for a fleeting term of office, or even a generation or two, but, as we shall see, for a literal millennium. Despite the perfect conditions, sadly, the 1000 years ends with man's further rebellion. The final judgement and the end of the heavens and the earth serve only to usher in an eternal state with new heavens and earth, Rev. 20 and 21. Then, righteousness will not 'reign' but 'dwell' **permanently**, 2 Pet. 3. 13, as our inspired psalmist confirms, Ps. 72. 7, 17, and 19.

Well might we, like the psalmist, burst forth in praise to Him 'who alone does wondrous things', vv. 18-19, and look forward with anticipation to His glorious reign. In the meantime, we must preach Christ to a groaning creation, and its fallen creatures, Rom. 8. 19-22, showing them that the answer to their and the world's problems are to be found in Christ, not in the idealists and campaigners of the present age. Man's greatest problem is not war, animal welfare, poverty, famine, pollution, or global warming, but the problem of sin! Christ alone can resolve the sin question, and one day He will rectify all the other issues it has caused.

Endnote

1 Volume 66 Number 2, May 2011, pg. 2.

ALASTAIR SINCLAIR is in fellowship in the assembly in Crosshouse, Ayrshire, Scotland. He is a regular contributor to assembly magazines.

Hezekiah 'wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God . . . he did it with all his heart and prospered', 2 Chr. 31. 20, 21.¹

The Silent Years as to Record

– from birth to 25 years of age.

His Introduction – the preface

Hezekiah lived from 739-687 BC and reigned between 714/715-687 BC. He was the twelfth king of Judah or thirteenth monarch allowing for Queen Athaliah. He came to the throne at twenty-five years of age and reigned for twenty-nine years. He died aged fifty-four, after an extension to his life was granted by God. He was the son of a wicked father, Ahaz, and the father of a wicked son, Manasseh. This shows that salvation does not run in the blood; an evil father may have a believing son and vice versa.

More space is devoted to Hezekiah than to any other king of Judah. The accounts in Kings and Isaiah have similarities but Chronicles offers a different perspective.²

His Inheritance – the poisoned chalice

Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah when its political and spiritual state was at rock bottom, thanks to Ahaz. The nation was subject to Assyria, 2 Kgs. 16. 7, 8; the temple had been closed down and altars and shrines set up in every corner of Jerusalem, 2 Chr. 28. 24, so that 'worship' was diverted from God's chosen centre to the high places. Even the high priest, Urijah, was party to such arrangements, 2 Kgs. 16. 10-16.

Surely it was too late to return to the principles of Moses and the pattern of David? Not a bit of it! God has His man for the times: Hezekiah – 'the Lord has strengthened'.

'Too oft – weary and discouraged,
We pour a sad complaint;
Believing in a living Saviour,
Why should we ever faint?'

'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength', Isa. 40. 31.

HEZEKIAH

THE DEVOTED KING (1)

By **JOHN GRIFFITHS** Port Talbot, Wales

His Influences – parent; partner and prophet

Hezekiah's name suggests divine help to meet the daunting task that lay ahead. Ahaz was no role model for his son but, by contrast, his wife Abi, or Abijah, 'worshipper of Jehovah', was a godly mother to Hezekiah. Timothy was blessed with a godly mother and grandmother. How we need them today!

Hezekiah's wife was named Hephzibah, 'my delight is in her', 2 Kgs. 21. 1. She was another source of influence. She certainly left an impression upon Isaiah, who described Zion as Hephzibah, Isa. 62.4. These are the only two occasions of its use in scripture. How invaluable is the support and strength of a spiritual wife when engaged in the Lord's service.

Several prophets ministered during Hezekiah's lifetime: Hosea to Israel; Micah and Isaiah to Judah. Isaiah appears to have exerted considerable influence over Hezekiah just as Nathan with David. Hezekiah was well-versed in the scriptures of his day and his heroes were David and Moses.

These were silent years, as far as record is concerned, but years of preparation for leadership. Reformation, revival and blessing would have been impossible in the short timescale had it not been for the influences in his formative years and the divinely imparted strength noted above.³

The Successful Years of Reformation

– from 25-39 years of age.

His Personal Principles – based on trust, 2 Kgs. 18. 1-8.

His priority – 'he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord'. Is that our priority too?

His pattern – 'according to all that David his father did' - a rare statement linking Hezekiah with David and also used of Jehoshaphat and Josiah. Hezekiah went back to the beginning and back to basics. We need to do likewise, seeking the 'old paths' in the New Testament, rather than modern innovation.

His purpose – to rid Judah of idolatry. Even Samuel and Solomon worshipped the Lord at their high places but not David. Only Hezekiah and Josiah determined to rid the nation of them and return to the place of the name at Jerusalem. There were two kinds of high places. Those connected with blatant idolatry and those where Jehovah was worshipped, as a substitute for the temple at Jerusalem, 2 Chr. 33. 17.

Both were contrary to Moses' directive, Deut. 12. 5-7, the place where God had chosen to put His name. Hezekiah even went so far as to destroy Moses' brazen serpent which had been an object of idolatry for seven-hundred years. He declares it to be 'just a piece of brass!' In this, it is likely he was influenced by Isaiah's tirade against idolatry, Isa. 44.

His passion – 'He trusted in the Lord God of Israel'. It was this that distinguished Hezekiah from all the other kings of Israel and Judah. 'So that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah nor any that were before him'. Similar language is used only of Josiah, but not of his trust in Jehovah. What strength of faith Hezekiah displayed! Yet, he would fail in his strong point when faced with the Assyrian tribute challenge.

His pathway – 'For he clave to the Lord and departed not from following him'. Hezekiah



began well, ran well and finished well, despite the occasional serious deviation from the pathway. Jacob-like he clung to the Lord and was obedient to the principles laid down by Moses and the pattern exemplified in David.

His prosperity – ‘And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth’. Just like Joseph, who moved in the presence of the Lord, so Hezekiah here.

His progress – ‘He rebelled against the King of Assyria, and served him not’. Ahaz placed Judah under tribute to Assyria. God wanted Judah to trust Him and Him alone. They established links with Egypt, and later Babylon. Isaiah is particularly strong in his criticism of the league with Egypt and condemnatory of Hezekiah for his welcome to the Babylonian attaché. God wants us to trust Him exclusively and not to put our trust in man or the world.

Hezekiah cast off the yoke of Assyria. We are not to allow the monarchs

of our unconverted years to rule us now. Paul in writing to the Roman Christians tells them that they are no more subject to the sovereignty of death, sin, the law or the flesh. In ‘The Gospel for Believers’ we discover with delight that their tyranny has been broken. Is this **our** daily experience though?

‘He smote the Philistines even unto Gaza’

Do we know what it is to triumph over our enemies, particularly the Philistines of modernism, clericalism and ritualism?

His Spiritual Project – based on the temple, 2 Chr. 29-31.

Chapter 29

Getting Going – purifying the sanctuary and its servants.

Hezekiah's Promptness – v. 3, 17 and 36. His programme for the spiritual recovery of Judah was given priority above political and national concerns. The speed of the introduction of his measures is breathtaking, reminding us of today's expression that ‘he hit the road running’. The work began on the first day of the first month of the first year of his rule. The purification of the temple and its courts was completed in sixteen days. ‘The thing was done suddenly’, v. 36. May we ‘redeem the time’ in these evil days.

His Pointedness – ‘Be not now negligent’, v. 11. The need for such directness is strengthened when we consider, ‘But the priests were too few . . . their brethren the Levites did help them . . . until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests’, v. 34.

We need to maintain a state of sanctification before the Lord in order that our service is not hindered in any way, particularly in the sphere of priesthood, so that we are able to function consistently as both a holy and royal priesthood.

His Passion – ‘Hezekiah rose early . . . and went up to the house of the Lord’, v. 20. Six times the heart is mentioned in these chapters, 30. 22 margin. It is

a good sign when our heart is in the work and we begin our day with the Lord.

His Priority – ‘So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order’, v. 35. God is a God of order. At Corinth, Paul says, following his statement with regard to the Lord's supper, ‘And the rest will I set in order when I come’. Further, he exhorts the Corinthians, ‘Let all things be done decently and in order’, 1 Cor. 14. 40. Paul also instructs Titus concerning the assemblies on Crete, ‘that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting’, Tit. 1. 5.

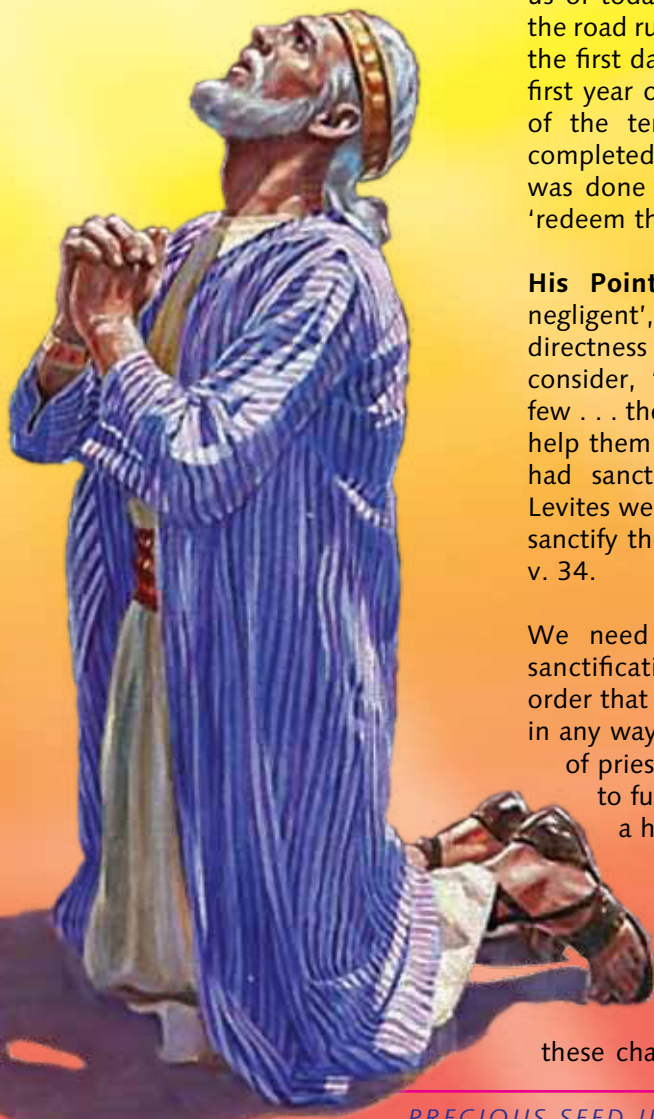
The order of Hezekiah is clear: purify the place of worship; purify the priests and Levites, note verses 12-14, **All** the families of Aaron are represented; prepare the people, v. 36, and, as a result, praise will go up to God.⁴

The praises of the people are associated with the burnt offering. When we consider what Christ is to God then we burst into song, v. 27, and praise, v. 30, and worship. The congregation worship, v. 28; the king and those with him worship, v. 29; the Levites worship, v. 30. The end result is that Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced, v. 36. Are we a praising or a pessimistic people?

Endnotes

- 1 The following passages unfold the life of this king of Judah: 2 Kgs. 18. 1-21; 2 Chr. 29. 1-32. 33; Isa. 36. 1-39. 8.
- 2 J. SIDLOW-BAXTER helpfully suggests: ‘Kings – biographical; personal; the throne; Israel/Judah; a prophet's perspective; indictment. Chronicles – statistical; official; the temple; mainly Judah; a priest's perspective; incitement. For instance, Kings devotes one verse only to the temple reformation whereas Chronicles majors on this’.
- 3 ‘And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart and prospered’, 2 Chr. 31. 21. What a commendation!
- 4 The preparation of the people is seen in verse 21, ‘a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah’.

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Why can't I mar

This is not the first time this question has been asked and it will certainly not be the last, if the Lord does not return soon. Many examples are cited as to how doing this has worked out well for some Christians, and many more have been cited as to how it led to spiritual disaster. I want any reader contemplating this path to know that the writer has no 'axe to grind', but seeks only your spiritual welfare. Perhaps a dear parent is reading this article and you are deeply worried because one of the family has opted for such a pathway, and you are trying everything in your power to make them see sense. I trust you will be more understanding not only of what is happening but why it is happening, and prayerfully seek God's help to know how you should act and react in such circumstances.

It would be easy to turn to verses of scripture and write off such an attitude, and I will refer to those verses, for the doctrine is unchanging. But I would like to consider the question in three ways. Firstly, from a natural standpoint; then, from a personal standpoint, that is from the questioner's point of view; and, lastly, from a spiritual standpoint.

The natural standpoint

The question of the right partner does not apply only to believers but also non-believers, hence, the rise in our modern society of match-making websites. Many lonely people resort to such places so that they can find the perfect partner; one with whom they can enjoy a wonderful future together. The world recognizes that there are many pitfalls along this road and therefore guidance is required before starting out. This is one of the reasons why such websites are so popular, especially for someone who has already made a mistake and does not wish to repeat it. But how can such websites help? They

will present the candidate with a number of questions such as, 'what are your likes and dislikes?', 'what is your ambition in life?', 'what are the values that you live by?'

They ask these questions so that they might gain a better understanding of the type of person you are, so they can introduce you to someone who is compatible, someone you are most likely to gel with. They see compatibility as a major factor when choosing a partner.

If two people are totally incompatible this will give rise to unpleasantness, arguments, strife, and, sadly, separation. The reasoning behind such websites is good, but whether you should depend on others to make your mind up for you in such an important matter is, at the least, debatable.

The personal standpoint

I wish now to look at the questioner's standpoint in a sympathetic way. Why would a believer contemplate walking this particular road? I am sure there are numerous answers to this question. Some may feel very much alone, and the loneliness only increases when they see other believers happily married and enjoying their family, children, and grandchildren. Perhaps they wonder why God has not led

them to a believing partner with

times the problem becomes all but unbearable. The writer speaks from experience as one who has made these jokes betimes, albeit without malice. I would urge those in such a position to remember that God knows what is best for His children, and while you may not understand it, keep trusting in Him.

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For others, it may be that they have become totally besotted with an unbeliever and either cannot see danger ahead, or do not want to see it, and any attempt to warn them is met with rebuff and unjust criticism. They can see only good and ultimate happiness coming from such a relationship. Could I ask that such a one asks themselves why they are contemplating marrying an unbeliever? Perhaps you have not been enjoying the Lord as once you did and have been spending more time with unbelieving friends rather than believers, and this has led to going where they go and enjoying what they enjoy. The gatherings of the Lord's people have lost their attraction and perhaps this has given rise to the question. I ask that you reconsider where your life is headed and turn again to the Lord for He and He alone knows the path of true joy and happiness for you.

But it may also be that a dear believer who is seeking to serve the Lord as best as they can has come into contact with a nice person at work who is not a Christian. This person has been very kind and considerate, making you feel special, and they have expressed their love for you. You, on the other hand, are not sure of your feelings for them but you just wish they were saved, and perhaps even feel that God could use the relationship so

that they do get saved. After all, you might argue, it has happened to other believers. This may well be the outcome, but would it not be better to pray that God will save



whom to share their life and enjoy an ever deepening relationship with God. Often they are the butt of well-intentioned jokes, which they take sportingly on occasions, but at other

ry an unbeliever?



them before making the all important decision, rather than hoping it might happen?

The spiritual standpoint

I wish to consider the doctrine as it is in the word of God and then conclude my remarks with what is probably the most glaring example from the word of one who demanded his own way in this matter.

As Christians, the word of God should be our first resolve and not our last resort, for it is most important. The psalmist says, 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee', Ps. 119. 11. What a lovely attitude to have! Our only fear is that we grieve the heart of our God!

So what does the word of God have to say in relation to the matter of a believer contemplating marrying an unbeliever? God says, 'Can two walk together except they be agreed', Amos 3. 3. This is one lesson the world has learned and therefore they try to match compatible people. How then can a Christian marry an unbeliever? What have they in common? Their ideals are different; their goals are different; and their motivation is different. One seeks to please themselves, albeit perhaps with good intentions, while the other should be seeking to please God.

Then again, we have Paul's words, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people', 2 Cor. 6. 14-16.

Whilst Paul is addressing the local church at Corinth, what is true of believers collectively must also be

true of us individually. Again, although Paul is not speaking specifically about marriage, what he says must include marriage, and therefore it is relevant to the question we are seeking to answer. Paul states a clear commandment, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together'. There is neither uncertainty nor compromise; this is something we should not do.

Paul then goes on to list five rhetorical questions which should be asked by any who are contemplating such a union. Taken as a whole, they prove that the believer and the unbeliever are totally incompatible. Therefore, believers should not be yoked together in marriage, or in any other union for that matter. Space does not allow an exposition of the passage but consider the words Paul uses in his argument: 'fellowship', 'communion', 'concord', 'part', or portion, and 'agreement'. The believer is as incompatible with an unbeliever as Christ is with Belial, but this should never lift us up in pride. It is merely pointing out a fact.

Paul finishes the argument by reminding the believers that they are the temple of God and He dwells among them. If this truth is made clear in relation to the local church, 1 Cor. 3, then, the same is seen to be true of the individual, 2 Cor. 6. Surely, no believer would deliberately enter into a relationship with an unbeliever knowing that this will undoubtedly upset their communion with God, and bring discord and disharmony to that special relationship.

Lastly, let us consider the most glaring example of a believer deliberately seeking to marry an unbeliever, and the tragic consequences that ensued. In Judges chapter 14 we read of Samson going down to Timnath where he saw a woman of the Philistines, and immediately fell in love with her. He came home and told his parents



that he had found the woman of his dreams, and demanded they get her to be his wife. I am sure Samson knew what he was doing was wrong, but he wanted his parents to give their blessing on the matter. But they also knew it was wrong and pleaded with him. Surely there was one of his own people who would make a good wife for him. Samson's reply was classic, 'Get her for me for she pleases me well'. In other words, she is the one I want and that is all that matters. He ploughed on regardless of how others felt, and this relationship ended in disaster, so much so, that the woman he loved became married to one of his companions.

This did not put Samson off. Soon, he found another unbelieving partner, and then a third, with each relationship having a detrimental effect on him spiritually. The last was Delilah and, sadly, he ended up losing his sight and being mocked and reviled by the Philistines before ultimately losing his life. Although God answered his prayer, so that he slew more of the enemy in his death than ever he did in his life, this just demonstrates the grace of our God.

So it could be for any who choose the same path. It is said, 'You go into a relationship with your eyes open, yet love is blind'. Why gamble with your spiritual well-being? If you are contemplating a similar move to that of Samson, be very careful. Heed the word of God, and heed the counsel of godly Christians, family or otherwise. They seek only your good spiritually – a wonderful life of communion and fellowship with God!

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The Glory of God in our Salvation

By **GARY McBRIDE**
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[Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are taken from the NKJ version of the scriptures].

The salvation of mankind was described in a wonderful sermon by evangelist E. V. HILL as 'God at His best'. HILL described redemption as a greater work than the creation of the universe. He ended the message with these words, 'When He saved my soul, cleansed and made me whole, it took a miracle of love and grace'. This salvation is so amazing that the Old Testament writers wished to know more about it, and, currently, the angels of heaven desire to look into and understand those things believers enjoy, 1 Pet. 1. 10-12.

Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3-14 describes the wonder of God's redemptive work, and three times over proclaims it was all for His glory. Salvation from start to finish is all about what God has done; the only part that belongs to man is to hear the gospel and to trust or believe, Eph. 1. 13. This section, verses 3-14, speaks of the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. On the Father's part, all that was done was to 'the praise of the glory of His grace'. When referring to the Son and the Holy Spirit the statements are 'to the praise of His glory'.

According to Ephesians chapter 1 verses 7-12, the Father's purposes are fulfilled in Christ, both in His incarnation in the past and in His exaltation in the future. Further, those Jews saved in the first century, called 'first fruits', are to the praise of His glory, v. 12.

In verses 13-14 the presence of the Holy Spirit in us as a seal for our security is the fulfillment of a promise made by the Lord Jesus. The Spirit in us is the guarantee that those who are forgiven will experience the redemption of the body at the return of Christ. This work of the Holy Spirit is said to be to 'the praise of His glory,' v. 14.

The work of salvation displays the wonder of God's grace. It is 'according to the riches of His grace', that God has redeemed us and extended to us the forgiveness of sins. His grace allows believers to be accepted in the Beloved. God is glorified because of His amazing grace.

Paul explains in Ephesians chapter 2 that salvation is a gift from God received by faith. The fact that it is from God, and not of works, eliminates the possibility of human merit, and thus removes any ground for boasting. Instead, all the glory goes to God, as believers are His workmanship and recipients of His gift.

This same principle is seen in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. The gospel is viewed as 'foolishness' by

the unsaved, but it is God's means of reaching the perishing. The type of people God reaches and saves are often held in low esteem by the world. God purposely takes what is despised by man, what is of no account, so that it becomes obvious that the work is of God. This is done so that no one could possibly take credit for, or even share in the glory of, what was done.

The wisdom of God is displayed by what Christ is to us. Christ is our source of righteousness; He is the cause of our sanctification, and He is the certainty for the redemption of our bodies. Again, all of this is for the glory of the Lord, and assures that all glory for the work of salvation goes to Him, 1 Cor. 1. 29-31.

Paul preached 'the gospel of the glory of Christ', adding this description, 'who is the image of God', 2 Cor. 4. 4. Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers lest the light of that glory should shine on them and they should be converted. For believers, it is only because that

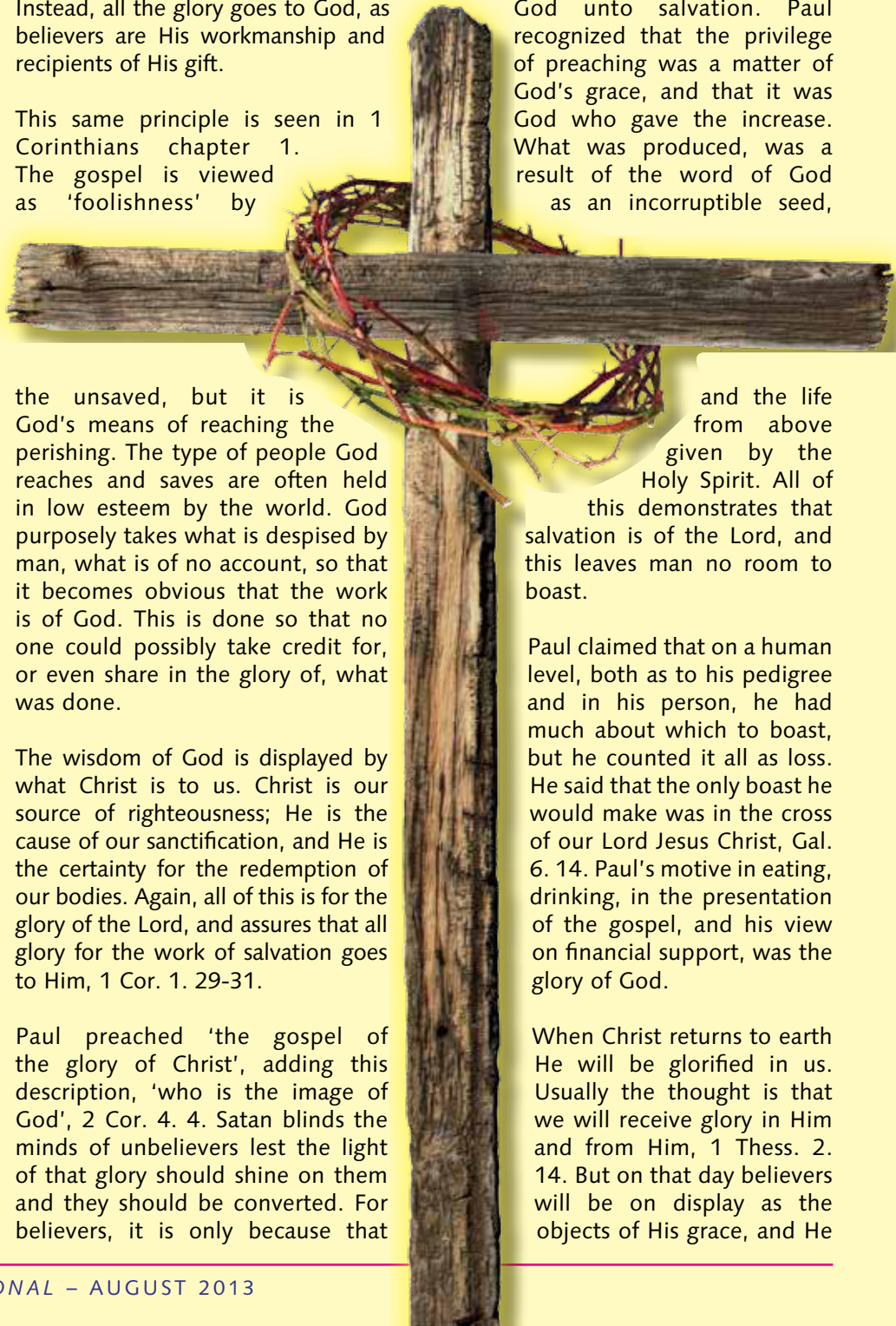
light shone in our hearts that we received the light of the 'knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ', v. 6.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Paul recognized that the privilege of preaching was a matter of God's grace, and that it was God who gave the increase. What was produced, was a result of the word of God as an incorruptible seed,

and the life from above given by the Holy Spirit. All of this demonstrates that salvation is of the Lord, and this leaves man no room to boast.

Paul claimed that on a human level, both as to his pedigree and in his person, he had much about which to boast, but he counted it all as loss. He said that the only boast he would make was in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Gal. 6. 14. Paul's motive in eating, drinking, in the presentation of the gospel, and his view on financial support, was the glory of God.

When Christ returns to earth He will be glorified in us. Usually the thought is that we will receive glory in Him and from Him, 1 Thess. 2. 14. But on that day believers will be on display as the objects of His grace, and He



God and Salvation (4)

will be admired as a result, 2 Thess. 1. 10. In fact, as sinners saved by grace we will be on display for all eternity, 'In the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus', Eph. 2. 7.

FANNY CROSBY's words ring true today, and will do so in eternity:

'To God be the glory
great things He hath done!
So loved He the world
that He gave us His Son'.

She went on to write:

'The vilest offender
who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus
a pardon receives'.

The chorus ends with:

'O come to the Father
through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory
– great things He hath done'.

In heaven, all the redeemed will sing a new song, a song that will proclaim the worthiness of the Lamb and give Him glory, Rev. 5. 9. Here and now His own can sing,

'Salvation's glory all be paid
To Him who sits upon the throne,
And to the Lamb
whose blood was shed;
Thou! Thou art worthy, Thou alone!
'Let us with joy adopt the strain
We soon shall sing forever there:
Worthy's the Lamb
for sinners slain,
Worthy alone the crown to wear!'

[ARCHIBALD RUTHERFORD]

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The Son of Man

By **DONALD NORBIE** Greely, Colorado, USA

[Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are taken from the NKJV]

In His life and ministry Jesus often spoke of Himself as 'the Son of Man'. He challenged those who thought to become His disciple with the words, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head', Matt. 8. 20. The term appears thirty-one times in Matthew, fourteen times in Mark, twenty-five times in Luke, and thirteen times in John. Jesus loved to use the title of Himself!

The term emphasizes His humanity. He is one of us, perfectly, completely human, apart from sin. And sin is not an essential part of humanity, but a corruption.

When Adam sinned and rebelled, the whole human race was present in him, genetically, and representatively. As such, he dragged the whole race down, and, today, we share his fallen nature and its penalty. Thus, we were 'in Adam' spiritually. But when we repent and receive Christ as Saviour we become linked to Him. We are 'in Christ' and share in His death, burial, and resurrection, Gal. 2. 20.

The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. And, as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man, 1 Cor. 15. 47, 49. Thank God for that second Man, the Son of Man come from heaven.

The Lord Jesus was familiar with Daniel's visions: 'And behold one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away. And His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed', Dan. 7. 13-14.

Jesus claimed this prophecy for Himself and affirmed that it described His coming again to set up His kingdom, Matt. 24. 30; 26. 64. When the high priest heard His claims, he exploded with anger, and demanded the death of Jesus. To him, this was blasphemy. And it was, unless Christ's claims were true. And today, around the world, believers look forward to His coming to catch up believers and to set up His kingdom. They pray, 'Thy kingdom come!'





A fresh Meditatio

One cannot but delight at this incident recorded only in John chapter 11. Over the years we may have heard many approaches to this chapter and the subsequent events of chapter 12. It may have been the raising of Lazarus, or the serving of Martha, or the worship of Mary, or the criticism of Mary's action at the supper.

We are aware, from our reading of the Gospel, that John is selective in recording the miracles of the Saviour. He refers to them as signs, John 20. 30. We can notice that the Lord is master of every circumstance, and that which is lacking is supplied by Him. In chapter 2 there is no wine. In chapter 6 there is no food. The words of the Lord's mother in chapter 2 verse 5 should be noted, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you do it'. It is a testimony to the hidden years of the Saviour bringing blessing.

The main characters in these two chapters are:

- *The Lord* – 'Jesus heard', v. 4; 'Jesus loved', v. 5; 'Jesus came', v. 17; 'Jesus wept', v. 35; 'Jesus said', v. 39.
- *The Ladies* – Mary and Martha. It is interesting to observe their reactions to the events that unfolded!
- *Lazarus himself* – We could easily overlook the experience that was his.

In this article I would like to present four simple truths that are precious in the story of Lazarus.

Lazarus means 'God hath helped', or 'God is my helper'. He is mentioned only in these two chapters, although another with the same name is mentioned in Luke chapter 16 in the story the Saviour told. Both were silent men.

The first truth for our encouragement is that which shines through the sacred text – *He was loved by the person of Christ*. Lazarus might have sought obscurity but we can see that, although he was a quiet and ordinary man, the most amazing miracle took place in his life.

Verse 1 tells us of the *place*: Bethany; the *people* who lived there; the *predicament* they were in, namely, Lazarus was sick. Verse 2 points to the incident in the following chapter – it has yet to take place. In verse 3 we are told the *concern of the sisters*.

They sent a brief note to the Lord; they brought their sorrow and grief to the Lord: 'Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick'. It is obvious that He made the Bethany household aware of His love for them. In their message they did not dictate to Him, but, in a few words, state the facts. They declare the Lord's love for Lazarus, although they did not mention him by name.

In verse 5 we have the *commendation of the sisters*. Interestingly, Mary's name is not mentioned, although we know she reveals her love for the Lord fully in the next chapter. All the family are loved by the Lord equally – He had no favourites at Bethany. In the midst of those who opposed the Saviour, it was good to know that this family were loved by the Lord, and the Spirit of God places it on record.

In verse 35 we notice the *compassion of the Saviour*: 'Jesus wept'. He entered into their sorrow. The sympathy of Christ is seen in that He weeps with those that weep. What love, as He came into the circumstances of a friend who had died!, Isa. 53. 3. Coming into verse 36, the Jews noticed His weeping, and said, 'Behold how he loved him'. They notice His love for Lazarus. This very Gospel presents to us the lovely truth that 'God so loved the world'. What love is this! Jeremiah chapter 31 verse 3 records, 'Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee'. Romans chapter 5 verse 8, Galatians chapter 2 verse 20, Ephesians chapter 2 verse 4 and many more verses encourage the believer in any age that the love of Christ is impartial, universal, and

yet personal. May our hearts be gladdened to be reassured that we, today, are loved by Christ.

The second thought in the experience of Lazarus was that he was *loosed by the power of Christ*.

Why did the Lord not heal Lazarus at a distance, as he had done in John chapter 4? Why did he not come sooner, a sentiment expressed by both

sisters, verses 21 and 32? If either of these options had taken place then we would not have recorded for us another '*I am*' saying of the Saviour. In verse 25, the Lord states, 'I am the resurrection and the life'. We know that the Lord's delays are not necessarily denials. He first mentioned that 'our friend Lazarus sleepeth', in verse 11. Then, in verse 14, He said 'Lazarus is dead'. Therefore, when He arrived at Bethany he had been buried. He had told His disciples that the sickness of Lazarus was 'for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby', v. 4. We notice the Lord arrives at the cave, and a stone was laid against it, v. 38.

At the word of the Lord, men could roll the stone away, but the display of the glory of God was His alone. The Lord gives the command in verse 39, 'Take ye away the stone' (remember, 'whatsoever he saith unto you do it'). Martha was filled with consternation, but the Lord had already said they would see the glory of God. We note that verse 43 records that the Lord cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus come forth'; He calls His own sheep by name.

What a contrast to that which we find in Daniel chapter 6! King Darius, with all his power, might, and with 120 princes over the kingdom, and three presidents stood by the den of lions and cried with a lamentable voice. Psalm 29 verse 4 states, 'The voice of the Lord is powerful'. Our Lord conquers death itself by a loud voice. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 16

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tion on Lazarus

reminds us of a day to come when 'The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God'. In that day not one person but many will be raised. We are not surprised, then, when we read in verse 44, 'He that was dead came forth'. Jesus said, 'Loose him and let him go'. Death was not the real end of the incident but the manifestation of the glory of God. 'O death! O grave! I do not dread your power', MARGARET CARSON. As believers, we are loosed by the power of Christ, praise His name! Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1 states, 'And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins'. What a glorious truth – *loosed by the power of Christ!*

In chapter 12 Lazarus was *linked with the presence of Christ*. Verse 2 tells us, 'Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him'. What a privilege to dine with Christ! Would it be his privilege to die for Christ, v. 10? John chapter 18 verse 26 records the question of the servant to Peter, 'Did not I see thee in the garden with him?' Peter wrote in his Epistle, 'We were with him in the holy mount', 2 Pet. 1. 18. The hymnwriter,

LIZZIE EDWARDS, reminds us of the privilege of keeping company with Christ, 'I must have the Saviour with me, for I dare not walk alone'. Those who experience the night with Him will enjoy the eternal day with Him. In the meanwhile, He assures us of His presence, Matt. 28. 20.

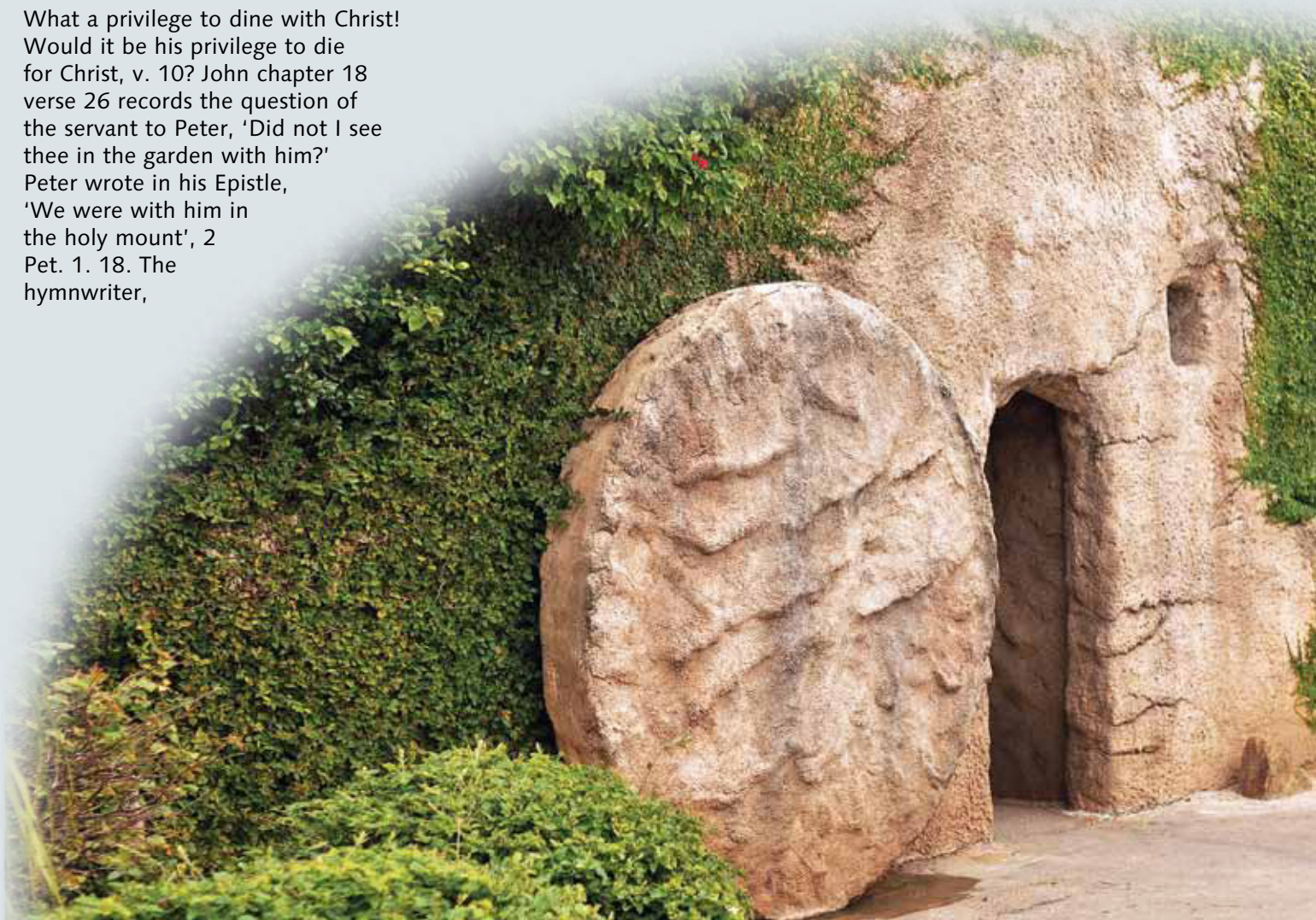
What a position is ours: loved by the person of Christ, loosed by the power of Christ, to be linked with the presence of Christ.

Finally, in John Chapter 12 verse 9, we note Lazarus is the *living proof of the purposes of Christ* and people wanted to see him. Some had witnessed his burial, but now he was raised from the dead. To think that Lazarus had only been raised from the dead, but they wanted him dead again! Thankfully, 'many believed on Jesus'. Lazarus had a new life. A life transformed cannot be denied.

A silent testimony may speak more of the power of Christ than the most eloquent of speakers. Of course, Lazarus would die again, but the scripture does not record the fact. Dear child of God, wherever God has placed you and I, we are a living proof of the purposes of Christ. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 10 reminds us that the Lord is 'bringing many sons unto glory'. We are watched by a wondering world. May our neighbours, relatives, and friends see we are lights shining in a dark place.

Lazarus was loved by the person of Christ, loosed by the power of Christ, linked with the presence of Christ, and living proof of the purposes of Christ. May the Lord bless our meditation on Lazarus and be an encouragement to every reader.

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The subject will be considered under the following headings:

- 1 Definition
- 2 Function
- 3 Qualifications
- 4 Selection
- 5 Compensation

DEACON

Definition

In considering the subject of 'Deacons', it is necessary for us to know what the word 'deacon' means. The Greek word *diakonos*, three times transliterated 'deacon' in the KJV, occurs thirty times in the New Testament, other renderings being 'minister' (twenty times), and 'servant' (seven times). The related verb *diakoneo* occurs twenty-two times and is always used in the sense of ministering to, or serving others. It should be noted that the word *diakonos* emphasizes a servant in relation to his work, whereas the Greek word *doulos*, meaning bond servant or slave, points to a servant in relation to his master.

Many have placed a restricted definition on the work of a deacon, regarding him as one occupied with the secular or administrative side of assembly work. The opening verses of Acts chapter 6 are often quoted in support of this; however, whilst according to the chapter the seven chosen men 'served tables' (to use the expression in verse 2), the apostles gave themselves to 'the ministry of the word', v. 4. Thus, both the seven and the twelve were fulfilling their respective 'deaconships' or ministries.

It is interesting to observe that angels served as deacons, 'and the angels ministered unto him', Mark 1. 13 – the verbal form of the word is used here, whilst in the parable of the king who made a marriage for his son, the corresponding noun is used of those who are presumably angels. The king bids his *servants* (i.e., deacons) to cast into outer darkness the man without a wedding garment, Matt. 22. 13. Indeed, angels have a present deaconship to fulfil, 'Are they not all *ministering* spirits, sent forth to *minister* for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' Heb. 1. 14.

Even Satan has his deacons, for we are told that 'it is no great thing if his *ministers* also be transformed

as the *ministers* of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works', 2 Cor. 11. 15. Then a secular ruler is said to be the deacon of God, 'For he is the *minister* of God to thee for good', Rom. 13. 4. These examples serve only to underline the fact that the word 'deacon' denotes one who renders any form of service, whether to the Lord or to men.

Function

Prior to Acts chapter 6, there is no recorded structure in the assembly at Jerusalem, nor any arranged service of administration. It is true that up to this point apostles had been recognized, and they had evidently dealt with financial matters (e.g., they 'brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet', Acts 4. 34, 35) as well as carrying out their spiritual work of preaching and teaching. But Acts chapter 6 presents to us a development in the situation, introduced because of a need that arose in the assembly. It should be noted that Paul addresses himself to 'all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons', Phil. 1. 1; thus, God has ordained that certain men, by reason of their qualifications and work, should be known and recognized as 'deacons'.

What, however, do we find today? In some assemblies certain men are designated 'deacons' and are expected to engage in more mundane matters such as the maintenance of the meeting room or dealing with financial affairs. Conversely, there are other assemblies where the idea of deacons and its implications are regarded as somewhat of a mystery, and are quietly ignored.

Not all members of a local church are necessarily deacons; young believers are hardly deacons, since they are not approved as yet, for they are still

developing in character and ability. The Levites in the Old Testament did not serve until they were thirty years of age, when their period of approval had been accomplished. However, all who serve in the assembly are the 'deacons'. Some may not serve for various reasons:

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- (i) young believers in the faith – these have been already referred to;
- (ii) those who are now too old to take part in any active service, but who served well in the past;
- (iii) those who do not have or have lost the spiritual and moral qualifications necessary for service.

Two forms of ministry are apparent among the Lord's people:

- (i) service according to the gifts given by the Spirit;
- (ii) service of a temporal and special nature.

Both are set forth in Acts chapter 6: (1) spiritual things, 'the ministry of the word'; and (2) temporal things, 'serve tables'. Indeed, the word is used for almost every kind of spiritual service rendered by believers, e.g., 'Paul . . . and Apollos . . . *ministers* by whom ye believed', 1 Cor. 3. 5 – the reference is to evangelists; 'unto us they did *minister* the things which are now reported unto you', 1 Pet. 1. 12 – Old Testament prophets; 'we will give ourselves . . . to the *ministry* of the word', Acts 6. 4 – apostolic and, by implication, teaching ministry; 'Epaphras, who is for you a faithful *minister* of Christ' – pastoral care. So that all the gifts mentioned in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 11 and 12 are embraced.

However, practical service and administration are also involved, thus 'the daily administration', Acts 6. 1; 'Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had

ONS



fulfilled their *ministry*', Acts 12. 25 – that of taking the relief to 'the brethren which dwelt in Judaea', Acts 11. 29; 'I go unto Jerusalem to *minister* unto the saints', Rom. 15. 25 – the reference here is to financial matters. Moreover, sisters are included for the Greek admits of a feminine form which has been translated 'deaconess', e.g., 'Phebe our sister, which is a *servant* of the church which is at Cenchrea', Rom. 16. 1. The service of sisters is quite distinct from that of brethren. These examples demonstrate the wide scope and dignity of deacon service.

Qualifications

The divine requirements for deacons are detailed in 1 Timothy chapter 3 verses 8-12; of the seven things listed four are positive and three are negative. The four important essentials in the case of women who serve, v. 11, should also be noted: (i) 'grave', (ii) 'not slanderers' – the reference is to slanderous gossip, (iii) 'sober' or temperate, (iv) 'faithful in all things' – there is the need for trustworthiness in all things committed to them. Verses 8 and 9 deal with personal qualifications: (i) 'grave', (ii) 'not doubletongued' – the idea is not taking one point of view in one place and a different point of view in another, (iii) 'not given to much wine' – there is the need for the strictest sobriety, (iv) 'not greedy of filthy lucre', i.e., free from the love of money, (v) 'holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience' – the scriptural significance of the word 'mystery' is that it is truth hidden but now revealed, here the substance of the mystery is the body of Christian doctrine; this mystery is best preserved in the casket of a pure conscience, one exercised to avoid offence towards God and men. Verse 10

is concerned with the proving of deacons, whilst verse 12 points out what might be termed domestic qualifications.

Further qualifications are brought out in Acts chapter 6 verse 3 in relation to those who serve in a practical way: (i) 'of honest report' or 'well reported of', i.e., news about them, as circulating around the company, should always be uplifting and positive, and not damaging and negative; (ii) 'full of the Holy Ghost' – entirely open for the Spirit to use; (iii) full of 'wisdom' – able to translate doctrine into practice, and principles into discernment.

Selection

This must be looked at in a twofold way:

- (i) As far as spiritual gifts are concerned, these are entirely according to God's selection and grace. Man has no part in this. Thus, 'the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will', 1 Cor. 12. 11; 'having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us', Rom. 12. 6; 'when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men', Eph. 4. 8.
- (ii) On the other hand, local administration is that kind of service for which the choice and distribution is made by the assembly. Thus, 'look ye out among you seven men', Acts 6. 3; the church must have a say in what it gives; the choice was left

to the assembly, but the men were then appointed by the apostles. Then again, 'whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem', 1 Cor. 16. 3; also, 'the brother . . . chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace', 2 Cor. 8. 18, 19. Such service is accomplished by those known to have the full confidence of the Lord's people, since the service is essentially on their behalf.

Compensation

'Those who have served well as deacons', 1 Tim. 3. 13, lit., 'purchase to themselves', i.e., gain for themselves, 'a good degree', i.e., standing – the expression seems to include both the honourable esteem of the assembly and the favour bestowed by God in regard to service and testimony. Indeed, the reference here probably looks on to the higher service hereafter which is the reward for faithful service here, 'Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities', Luke 19. 17. Remember the Lord's words, 'If any man serve me, him will my Father honour', John 12. 26. Picking up the words of 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 13, 'and great boldness in the faith' – the thought is that of making the faith known with boldness or confidence, an unhesitating declaration of the body of Christian doctrine. Deacons could hardly be expected to hold it, 1 Tim. 3. 9, without declaring it.

A deacon would do well to emulate his Lord who Himself could say, 'For even the Son of man came not to be *ministered* unto, but to *minister*', Mark 10. 45. Remember, 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have *ministered* to the saints, and do *minister*', Heb. 6. 10.



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CROSS CANADA CRUISERS

The geographically sprawling country of Canada provides unique opportunities for spirited individuals to draw attention to a cause. In recent years, wheelchairs, bicycles and running shoes have crossed mountains, prairies and plains to raise awareness of and funds for programmes like cancer research, childhood diabetes and landmine eradication.

In May 2008, a team of young men from various assemblies in North America set out to cross Canada with another objective on their minds. They were part of the inaugural season of Cross Canada Cruisers (C3), an evangelistic field-training ministry involving 1950's classic cars. The classic cars are used as a modern-day parable illustrating the 'Ruined, Rescued, and Restored' theme of the gospel message. The cars are an immediate attraction, as the sight of them induces warm memories for many relating to a bygone era. For those too young to remember, they are often drawn by the sheer intrigue of the young men and their unusual mode of transportation. In either case, with relative ease, conversations are initiated and transition can eventually be made from discussing the 'restoration of cars' to the 'restoration of lives'.

Each season begins in May with two weeks of orientation where team members are provided with extensive teaching by various gifted and experienced brothers. The book of Romans, along with salvation doctrines, themes and terminology occupy their first days of study. Different evangelistic tools and techniques are introduced and practised, including paint boards, rope tricks, presentation of testimonies, short gospel messages, etc. Of course, a basic introduction to classic cars and their maintenance is also provided! Throughout the road trip, various brothers will visit the team on location to teach morning classes, as well as participate in the afternoon, evening and weekend gospel efforts of the local assembly in the area being visited.

Week by week, the team travels to a different hosting assembly where they will partner with local saints in the work of the gospel. The hope of team organizers is that a team visit will provide an occasion for assemblies to think and pray strategically regarding their own evangelistic efforts. For this reason, the team does not come with a pre-packaged programme, but provides whatever advance assistance is necessary to organize a week of evangelism tailor-made for the aspirations and needs of the assembly. The hope, of course, is that the local believers will work together with the team in the gospel. Time spent together in this manner usually proves to be edifying and encouraging. Practically speaking, the assembly will then be well prepared to provide follow-up visits and nurturing for those who have expressed interest or have made a profession of faith.



Some assemblies prefer to take full advantage of the visiting cars, and register at local car shows, parades and events where they can be displayed and literature distributed. Shopping mall parking lots, public parking venues, farmer's markets and summer festivals provide excellent opportunities for literature tables to be set up along with prominent signs displaying the 'Ruined, Rescued, and Restored' theme. Other assemblies use the cars less, and choose to focus on door-to-door efforts around their halls and chapel buildings, children's clubs in parks, campus ministry, or open-air preaching in city centres.

Literature plays an important role in the C3 ministry. Early in the process, organizers were convinced that fresh, thoroughly biblical material could and should be made available to assemblies wishing to be involved in 'seed-sowing' activities. A brother from Winnipeg (Glenn Hayes) was eager to contribute his artistic abilities to the cause, and produced the beautiful painting entitled 'New Life for Old' featuring the restored '55 Oldsmobile. On the back is a short explanation of how this restored car serves as a modern-day parable illustrating the truths of the gospel, in particular, 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21. Gospel messages by Jabe Nicholson and William MacDonald have also been reproduced onto CD's. Such message titles include 'Highway to Heaven – Fiction or Fact?', 'Hope in the Storms of Life', and 'Uniqueness of Christianity'. Copies of these materials can be obtained via the website www.goodnewsgranary.org. Hundreds of thousands of these CD messages have been distributed throughout North America in public venues or in door-to-door efforts.



We invite you to pray with us, that our Lord would continue to guide and bless His work. Our desire is that our Lord would be magnified as young men are equipped and trained to 'proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvellous light', 2 Pet. 2.9.

Daniel chapter 9 verses 24-27

Introduction (Part One): Three Views

Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, Dan. 9. 24-27, has been variously described as 'perhaps the most important not only in the book of Daniel, but in the whole Bible',¹ 'the "backbone" of all prophecies',² and the 'indispensable chronological key to all New Testament prophecy'.³ JEROME, the 4th/5th century Church Father, wrote that 'None of the prophets has so clearly spoken concerning Christ as has this prophet Daniel. For not only did he assert that He would come, a prediction common to the other prophets as well, but also he set forth the very time at which He would come. Moreover he went through the various kings in order, stated the actual number of years involved, and announced beforehand the clearest signs of events to come'.⁴

Other commentators, however, are less effusive. SIR ROBERT ANDERSON writes, 'Well may Professor Driver and Dean Farrar comment upon the hopeless divergence which marks "the bewildering mass of explanations" offered by the numberless expositors of this passage'⁵ (however, Anderson continues, 'But there is no reason why the intelligent reader should follow these eminent critics who, in their "bewilderment", have adopted the most preposterous interpretation of it ever proposed'). Barnes, in his commentary, writes, 'Of this passage, Professor Stuart ("Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy", pg. 104) remarks, "It would require a volume of considerable magnitude even to give a history of the ever-varying and contradictory opinions of critics respecting this "*locus vexatissimus*".'⁶ Montgomery's description is the most memorable: 'the history of the exegesis of the seventy weeks is the dismal swamp of Old Testament criticism'.⁷

It is not hard to see what Montgomery is referring to. Consultation of a range of commentaries will leave a reader surprised at the diversity of viewpoints expressed. Virtually every line in the prophecy has three or sometimes more interpretations confidently asserted or tentatively suggested. Sadly, it is the case, then, that instead of pointing to Daniel's prophecy as one of the most striking proofs of the Divine inspiration of scripture, many evangelicals today are less than certain about what the prophecy is saying (even to the point of

embarrassed silence if the subject is raised). Many modern evangelical commentaries offer vague and evasive expositions, only occasionally being prepared to raise the head above the parapet, and even admitting to feeling 'at sea'.⁸ Meanwhile, leading modern works of systematic theology make virtually no mention of the passage in their treatment of future events. Add to this the fact that much modern evangelical preaching tries to avoid subjects like biblical prophecy as somehow divisive or distasteful, and it is little wonder that many modern Christians have heard little or nothing about Daniel's prophecy.

In this introduction, we are going to briefly survey the three main lines of interpretation: the liberal/critical view, the amillennial view and the premillennial view. Surprisingly enough, all of these three interpretive approaches offer some insights into the passage that help to illuminate its truth.

1. The Liberal/Critical View - Daniel chapter 9 refers to Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC

Liberal theologians deny the possibility of either divine action in history (particularly the miraculous) or the divine inspiration of the scriptures. Dismissing predictive prophecy as impossible, they are unable to read the book of Daniel (and this passage in particular) the way God intended it to be read. Instead, critical scholars resort to the conspiracy theory that the book of Daniel was written not before but after the events it foretold: an example of prophesying after the event (*vaticinium ex eventu*). Jerome wrote his commentary on Daniel, in part, to refute this theory, which was first put forward by the early anti-Christian writer, Porphyry, 'And because Porphyry saw that all these things had been fulfilled and could not deny that they had taken place, he overcame this evidence of historical accuracy by taking refuge in this evasion, contending that whatever is foretold concerning Antichrist at the end of the world was actually fulfilled in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, because of certain similarities to things which took place at his time. But this very attack testifies to Daniel's accuracy. For so striking was the reliability of what the prophet foretold, that he could not appear to unbelievers as a predictor of the future, but rather a narrator of things already past'.⁹

Thus, rather than having been written by Daniel in the 6th Century BC, it is alleged that an anonymous

author in the 2nd Century BC adopted Daniel's name to give his message added prestige. Thus, the book of Daniel is comprised of two parts: (a) pious court tales about a legendary figure called Daniel; (b) and 2nd Century history masquerading as predictive prophecy. All is intended to encourage faithful believers in the God of Israel during the severe persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes around 167 BC. The book is viewed (oxymoronically) as little more than a pious forgery. Even some professing Christian commentators adopt this position, despite the Lord's own witness to Daniel's historicity, the barely-disguised Deism behind the belief, and the circular and illogical reasoning involved in the denial of the possibility of predictive prophecy.

However harshly we dismiss the unbelieving presuppositions of these critical scholars, we must nevertheless notice that their view contains some truth within it. It is true that Daniel's book clearly focuses a lot of attention on the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes, the eighth king of the Seleucid dynasty which inherited the eastern provinces of Alexander the Great's empire. In chapters 8 and 11, particularly, we have a clear outline of the events leading up to the time when Antiochus brutally suppressed the Jews and their system of worship in Jerusalem. The temple sacrifices were stopped, an altar was erected to the Greek god Zeus, swine were sacrificed and Jewish practices like circumcision, the reading of the scriptures and the eating of ritually clean foods were prohibited. Thousands of Jews were put to death for refusing to cease practising the worship of the God of their fathers.

Further, some of the stories related in the book of Daniel would have presented obvious moral lessons for Jews suffering under the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is easy to see how the book of Daniel would have been an encouragement to Jews who refused to submit to Antiochus' newly-imposed religion. Daniel's refusal to eat the King's food in chapter 1 or to cease praying in chapter 6 would have emboldened Jews to refuse to submit to Antiochus' decrees, as would have Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's refusal to worship Nebuchadnezzar's god in chapter 3.

Turning particularly to Daniel chapter 9, the critical view holds that its 'prophecies' pointed to Antiochus' persecution; in particular, the statements in Daniel chapter 9 verses 26-27 about a 'ruler to come' (Antiochus) who brings 'an end to sacrifice and offering'. 'Messiah the Prince' therefore refers, not to our Lord Jesus Christ, but to the Jewish High Priest Onias III who was murdered at the time of Antiochus' persecution.

The reference to 'abominations', too, fits the way the Jews of Antiochus' day referred to the altars erected to Zeus throughout the land.

However, in addition to these points of correspondence between Antiochus' day and Daniel chapter 9, the critical view also quietly ignores other notable features of Daniel's prophecy which found no fulfilment in the life and times of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is thus guilty of selectively 'cherry-picking' certain parts of the prophecy to suit its scheme.

In summary, the critical view of this passage, despite its unbelieving basis and some glaring faults, helpfully alerts us to the fact that Daniel's prophecy concerns events that remarkably resemble what Antiochus Epiphanes perpetrated when he stopped the Jewish temple worship and set up the 'abomination of desolation', Dan. 11. 31, in it.

2. The Amillennial View - Daniel chapter 9 refers to Christ's sacrifice at Calvary

The amillennial (or covenant theology) view of Daniel's prophecy, in contrast to the critical/liberal view, is marked by devotion to the scriptures and to the person and work of Christ. More generally, the amillennial approach to scripture sees Christ's sacrificial death as inaugurating a spiritual kingdom which is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies of a glorious future golden age for Israel. The 1000-year reign of Christ, Rev. 20. 1-7, is not a literal future reign, but a present spiritual one – hence the term 'amillennial'. Therefore, it regards Daniel chapter 9 as relating, not to the people of Israel or to any events still in the future, but solely to the spiritual blessings for the present-day Church won through the work of Christ.

Thus, the amillennial position takes 'Messiah the Prince', spoken of in Daniel chapter 9 verse 26, to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death is foretold in the words, 'and after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off'. The covenant established in verse 27 is taken to refer, not to any covenant made by Antiochus Epiphanes (as in the critical view), but to the New Covenant established by Christ. The cessation of sacrifices in the same verse points not to any attempt to halt the proceedings in an earthly temple by Antiochus Epiphanes but to the fact that Christ's one sacrifice for sin for ever puts an end to animal sacrifices.

For all its Christ-centeredness, however, the amillennial approach to this passage is guilty of fanciful spiritualizing. As later articles will attempt to show, instead of starting with Daniel's

prophecy on its own terms, it imposes upon the passage familiar concepts borrowed from the New Testament. Further, it ignores contextual evidence and parallels within the book of Daniel that help to explain the prophecy. For example, the references in Daniel chapter 11 to Antiochus' 'covenant', vv. 28 and 30, his abrogation of this covenant, his halting of the 'daily sacrifices', v. 31, and his establishment of an 'abomination of desolation', v. 31, would seem to provide far more obvious clues to what the same terms mean when used in chapter 9 verse 27 than 'fast-forwards' to the book of Hebrews. The amillennial approach also imitates the critical by selectively appropriating only those elements from the prophecy that conveniently suit the scheme (with the difference that they are given personally edifying Christian life-applications), and ignoring others that do not.

In the amillennial view, Christ is the entire focus of the prophecy: His death, His new covenant and, through it, the fulfilment and abolition of the old covenant's animal sacrifices. Where the amillennial interpretation disappoints is in the way it avoids the obvious sense of the actual text of, and contextual clues within, Daniel's prophecy. However devotionally-appealing the construction might be (brought in on the back of well-known New Testament concepts), insufficient attention is given to laying down an exegetical foundation to sustain the edifice.

Thus, surprisingly, the liberal/critical view, for all its faults, actually performs a useful service. It shows how much more appropriate it is to understand Daniel's prophecy by the analogy of Antiochus' actions than the amillennial attempt to jump straight to New Testament themes.

Both the critical and the amillennial views are hampered by the pre-commitments they bring to the interpretation of the prophecy. The critical view, because of its functional atheism, is neither open to the possibility of predictive prophecy nor a straightforward reading of the book of Daniel; the amillennial view, by predetermining (on the basis of a particular 'Christ-centred' theological framework) what the prophecy *must* be saying, takes a short-cut straight to the New Testament. Either way, the passage has been prevented from speaking for itself on its own terms.

3. The Premillennial View – Daniel chapter 9 covers the Entire Sweep of History to the End of Time

Premillennialists believe that Christ will return at the end of a period of 'great tribulation' to reign over the earth for a thousand years, see Revelation

chapter 19 verse 11 through to chapter 20 verse 7; hence, Christ's coming is 'premillennial'. Therefore, they see the fulfilment of God's purposes involving not simply spiritual restoration, but the earth itself being restored to the Paradise it was originally created to be; to borrow language from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: 'Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth, One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end'. Premillennialists believe that Israel the nation, in particular, is eventually to be restored to the position that it was intended to occupy and that the Old Testament promises made to Israel of a glorious future are to be literally fulfilled in this millennial reign, which itself gives way eventually to the New Heavens and Earth.

Premillennialists, like amillennialists, view Christ and His death as the focus of Daniel's prophecy, as of the entire Bible. However, premillennialists, while viewing Christ's death as the central event of world history, observe that a considerable portion of scripture is concerned with history's final climax: the tumultuous events that will happen at the 'Time of the End', 11. 35, 40; 12. 4, 9. Thus, the premillennial view does not see the prophecy as solely fulfilled in Christ's death (as the amillennialist does), but sees it as also going on to speak about another 'Prince to come', Antichrist,¹⁰ of whom Antiochus Epiphanes was only a foreshadowing, and who makes a covenant with Israel for seven years, only to break it at its midpoint, set up an idol in a future Jewish temple, and bring upon the Jews the period called the Great Tribulation.

Therefore, the premillennial view takes Daniel's prophecy as a sequential overview of the entire divine programme from Daniel's time until the 'Time of the End'. The prophecy outlines a sequence of seven main events in the divine programme for Israel:

- 1 The Decree for the Rebuilding of Jerusalem
- 2 The Coming of the Messiah and His Death
- 3 The Destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70
- 4 Wars and Desolation until the End
- 5 A Covenant made between the 'Prince to Come' and Israel
- 6 The Covenant broken and Great Tribulation
- 7 The 'Prince to Come' destroyed

In this interpretation, we are presented with arguably the most amazing prophecy in the Bible and one of the most remarkable proofs of the trustworthiness of Bible prophecy. It gives us an overview and outline of God's plans for the history of the world unparalleled in scripture. The prophecy unfolds God's purposes from the exile to Christ, through the New Testament period, and on to the very end of time. It might be easy enough

	Critical/Liberal	Amillennial	Premillennial
Seventy 'Weeks'	Literal Years	Symbolic	Literal 'Sevens'
'Messiah the Prince'	Onias the High Priest	Our Lord Jesus Christ	Our Lord Jesus Christ
Prince to Come	Antiochus	Christ	Antichrist
City Destroyed	167 BC	AD 70	AD 70
Covenant	Antiochus' Covenant	New Covenant	Antichrist's Covenant
Sacrifices Stopped	167 BC	AD 70	Future
Abomination of Desolation	167 BC	AD 70?	Future
Destruction of 'Coming Prince'	167 BC	?	Future

to foretell successfully one event in the future (for example, 'wars and desolation'), but the difficulty of correctly predicting a sequence of events increases exponentially, putting this prophecy beyond the reach of merely human prognostication.

The table above presents the main interpretations of the three views.

Those who grasp at such signs will have discerned that I find that both the liberal/rationalist and the amillennial interpretations of this prophecy present difficulties of a far greater nature than those associated with the premillennial view. Even so, as we shall see, Daniel chapter 9 is a difficult passage to interpret whatever eschatological view one takes, and there are many questions that need to be resolved:

- Will there be sin during or at the end of the millennium, and if so, how does the promise of 'making an end of sin' or 'everlasting righteousness', v. 24, apply more suitably to a premillennial view than an amillennial one, that sees the fulfillment of the prophecy in Christ's death?
- What do the seventy 'weeks' refer to? Are they literal or symbolic, solar years or 'prophetic years'?
- Is it legitimate to speak of a 'parenthesis' between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks? Did the 'prophetic clock' stop with Christ's death, or is this statement unwarranted?
- What of the claims of some Bible scholars that this prophecy predicted the exact date of the coming of Christ?

While in future articles it will be argued that the premillennial interpretation best fits the actual data from Daniel's prophecy and its context, we will nevertheless continue to evaluate the validity of all three main interpretational approaches as we survey the setting of the prophecy, then proceed to an exposition of the prophecy itself, and, finally, address some of the interesting questions that arise from the interpretation of the passage.

Endnotes

- 1 A. C. GAEBELEIN, *A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel*, Pickering & Inglis, n.d., pp. 129-30.
- 2 J. M. BOICE (following Sir Edward Denny), *Daniel, An Expository Commentary*, Baker Books, 1989, pg. 96.
- 3 ALVA J. MCCLAIN, *Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks*, BMH Books, 2007, pg. 10.
- 4 JEROME, *Commentary on Daniel*, Prologue.
- 5 SIR R. ANDERSON, *Daniel in the Critics Den*, James Nisbet and Co, 1909, pg. 114.
- 6 ALBERT BARNES, *Notes on the Bible*, commenting upon Daniel chapter 9 verse 24.
- 7 J. A. MONTGOMERY, *The Book of Daniel*, ICC, T. & T. Clark, 1927, pg. 400.
- 8 JOYCE BALDWIN, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, IVP, 1978, pg. 9.
- 9 JEROME, *DANIEL*, Prologue.
- 10 In these articles, we are going to use the term 'Antichrist' interchangeably with the 'Prince to come'. The author is aware that some expositors argue that the Antichrist is the second 'beast' of Revelation chapter 13, the 'false prophet' of Revelation chapter 16 verses 13 and chapter 19 verse 20. However, if chapter 16 verse 13 presents us with a 'trinity' of evil, the 'false-prophet' is the third member (not the second); it is the first beast of Revelation chapter 13 that seems to correspondingly oppose our Lord Jesus Christ as world-ruler and thus merit the description Antichrist.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF EBENEZER GOSPEL HALL KILLAMARSH, DERBYSHIRE

Background and History

Killamarsh formed part of the North East Derbyshire coalfield and during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries was a small but significant mining community. During the early part of that period there was a strong evangelical witness in and around Sheffield, but it was not until the late 1920's that a couple in Killamarsh, Mr. and Mrs. Chapman, began holding meetings in their own home in Green Lane. By 1930 a small group of Christians was meeting in an upstairs room in Bridge Street, and in 1954 land was made available by the local Co-operative Society for a Gospel Hall to be built. This building was wholly financed and, to a large extent built, by the fifteen or so members of the church. Over the next thirty years, numbers, steadily increased to a peak of seventy seven in the late 80's, most of them as a result of gospel witness in the village. There are at present fifty-two members, the majority living in Killamarsh, in fact, within walking distance of the Hall.

Rebuilding

During 2008 the assembly had an exercise to build a larger facility to accommodate the current activities and provide opportunity for future development. The initial plans for an extension to the existing building were approved and work was started in the summer of 2009. Due to subsidence in a neighbouring plot and the discovery of a water course on land adjacent to the building, work had to be halted and remedial work carried out. This exhausted all the assembly funds and the project was temporarily suspended. The Lord provided however, and after a few months the assembly was once more able to press forward.

For a number of reasons the assembly felt that a new build would be more appropriate and were much before the Lord about the matter, conscious of the fact that 'except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it'. Encouragement and enablement came from a number of sources, not least from two assemblies who because of age and declining numbers had felt it necessary to close their doors and re-allocate the proceeds from the sale of their buildings; disappointing for the small companies involved, but reassuring for them to know that their closure would help to open other doors for a continuing testimony.

By the summer of 2011 it was felt that the Lord would have us take the next step. A number of quotations for the construction were obtained, planning approval was granted and, having

agreed a contract, work commenced in May 2012.

A number of the assembly watched with mixed emotions as the builders moved in and took all of twenty minutes to completely demolish the existing building! Site clearance followed, only to be suspended as asbestos was discovered underneath the concrete raft on which the old hall had been built. Again, the assembly caught its breath, as it faced a substantial cost for the asbestos removal, but having again laid the matter before the Lord within a short time work was able to continue.

Building work was completed toward the end of 2012, and in January 2013 an opening meeting was arranged with invitations to all the craftsmen and labourers who had been involved with the construction and fitting of the Gospel Hall. Many came with their families and a clear gospel message was given based on Matt. 7. 24-27, the wise and foolish builders! Over 100 people attended including the local vicar and representatives from the local council all of whom had also shown interest in the work.

Development and current activities

While still referred to as a village, Killamarsh, has expanded to small town size, with over 10,000 inhabitants. The pits have now closed but they have left a legacy of a close-knit community with many ex-miners among the older population. There are two primary/junior schools, two residential care homes, and all the usual amenities and facilities that one would expect to find in a socially-aware community. This gives the assembly ample opportunity to engage in 'outreach' work to all sections and ages within the neighbourhood. There are a good number of young families in the assembly and from these there are eighteen children who provide a nucleus for the 'Footsteps' (Sunday School) work. A number of students from the Sheffield universities join themselves to the assembly each year and provide much help and encouragement by their involvement in church activities.

Fifteen years ago one of our elders had both the desire and the opportunity to commence a Bible study class in a

local prison. This work has developed over the years and now two prisons in the Doncaster area are visited every week; two other members of the church are also involved in this work which provides a regular prayer focus. As a direct result of this outreach an encouraging number of men have made professions of faith and are showing good progress while still in prison. Several have continued in the community without re-offending following their release and this aspect of the outreach work is a real encouragement to all.

From time to time opportunity is given to take assembly in the village schools and assistance with this is given on a regular basis by Philip Kaye of Skelmanthorpe. A recent visit to the Gospel Hall by Jonathan Black with the Bible Exhibition saw some 240 children with teachers and assistants taken through the history and development of the Bible with a sound gospel emphasis. A good number from the village and from other assemblies also attended.

This year the assembly is running a ten-week outreach programme entitled 'The Open Book' – a 'Christianity Explored' type programme. Initial response from a large volume of invitations was slow but there are now a small number of regular attendees showing real interest. Structured, targeted tract and annual calendar distribution enable the assembly to ensure that most people in this growing community are touched with the gospel on a regular basis.

An annual assembly outing is arranged each summer, with invitations to children and parents who attend the regular church activities. There is also opportunity provided particularly in the summer months for organised barbeques, cycle rides, walks, etc.

As a company of the Lord's people we are constantly aware that we have an adversary who will do all he can to damage and disrupt the work. Please pray with us and for us that the work will progress, that elders will be given wisdom in ensuring effective use of gift and resources and that 'the word of the Lord will have free course and be glorified'.





Elijah's ministry took him on an emotional roller-coaster. He scaled heights (literally and spiritually) that few achieve, and he was remarkably courageous in his service. But he also knew what it was to be despondent, particularly with little evidence that his work had any lingering impact on the nation. With such 'ups-and-downs', Elijah remains an endearing Bible character. He is, after all, 'a man subject to like passions as we are', Jas. 5. 17.

Studies in The life of

'What doest thou here, Elijah?', 1 Kgs 19. 1-21.

By **GRAEME HUTCHINSON**
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Following his exploits on Mount Carmel, Elijah is found in his own 'slough of despond'. The prophet is given a message from Queen Jezebel that breathed hatred and opposition, 1 Kgs. 19. 2. She was committed to destroying Elijah in the same manner as he had dealt with the false prophets of Baal, 18. 40. In the New Testament, this brazen and idolatrous Queen would become known as a synonym for sin.¹ But Ahab was also guilty. He failed to discern the true power on Mount Carmel – notice how his summary centred on Elijah and not Jehovah, 19. 1. The prophet had clearly attributed the miracles to Jehovah,² but Ahab, as with sinners generally, was blind to the truth.³ These actions are deplorable but, sad to say, understandable. They spring from hearts that were deceitful and wicked, Jer. 17. 9. However, it is the reaction of Elijah that is more difficult to comprehend. In response to the threat from Jezebel, he fled for his life, 1 Kgs. 19. 3. Whereas his earlier movements had been directed by Jehovah,⁴ we read of no divine command for Elijah to retire to Beersheba.

It has been said that Bible characters often fail in their strongest virtue. Abram's confidence in God was certainly not as strong as it should have been when, in the face of famine, he departed for Egypt, Gen. 12. 10. David's love for God was momentarily displaced by Bathsheba, 2 Sam. 11. 2. Here, Elijah, the man of courage, feared for his life when threatened by Jezebel. This is a sobering lesson for believers today. If great men of God fail then no believer is immune to failure. As A W PINK remarks of Elijah, 'Though a man of God, he is a man and not an angel'.⁵

Along with his servant, Elijah fled south to Judah, 1 Kgs. 19. 3. Following a day's journey on his own the Bible narrative depicts a melancholic and depressed servant, v. 4, but one who ultimately received divine comfort, vv. 5-8. There are important lessons. Notice, for example, the timing. The disturbed mind of the prophet follows a particularly busy period of ministry in the preceding chapters. Often the mountain-top experience (when we fellowship with God) is followed by the valley (when we return to earth with a bump!). The disciples of the Lord had a similar experience when the glory they observed on the mount was immediately followed by a painful display of their own inadequacies.⁶ It was under a tree that Elijah uttered the words – 'it is enough', v. 4 – and he prayed for the Lord to take his life. In contrast, it was upon a tree that the Saviour cried 'it is finished' and He gave His life to bear away the sin of the world, John 19. 30.

We can safely assume that Elijah was, at this point, marked by tiredness. Having journeyed from Jezreel to Beersheba (approximately 150 miles) and then into the wilderness, the prophet would have been physically exhausted. For us, it is important that the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 19, is given the necessary periods of rest and recuperation.⁷ Elijah's physical condition may also, in part, explain his state of mind. He was naturally disappointed at the lack of spiritual revival in Israel; frustrated that Jezebel wielded such influence in the palace, and vulnerable that he was seemingly alone in his service for God, 1 Kgs. 19. 10, 14. No matter what lay within his mind, the desire for spiritual revival had not materialized, and Elijah therefore considered himself

as no better than his predecessors, v. 4. But note the therapy. God met the need of His servant by providing sleep and food. On this occasion the food was provided by an angel – perhaps an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ, vv. 5-7, rather than a bird, 17. 4, or a widow woman, 17. 9. The provision was also sufficient, for it enabled Elijah to undertake an extended journey to Horeb, 19. 8. Many believers today face problems that render them dejected and depressed. We can take heart that we serve the God of Elijah; we change but He cannot! The help given to Elijah may be our portion today, for He 'is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think', Eph. 3. 20.

With his arrival at Horeb, Elijah may have recalled an earlier incident in the Old Testament, Exod. 3. 1, 12. Certainly, his experiences in the cave, 1 Kgs. 19. 9, 13, when God displayed His presence, are similar to that of Moses in Exodus chapter 33 verses 21-23. What, then, are the characteristics of this counselling session? What principles can we apply when we encounter believers in their own slough of despond? Below are some of the more general approaches we may adopt, but the ultimate help for any troubled believer remains the Lord and His word.

- Sensitive. The Lord allowed Elijah to recuperate physically, 1 Kgs. 19. 4-8, before He called him to a more focused and intense session of spiritual education, vv. 9-18. We too need to be sensitive to the needs of other believers and not chide them with misguided accusations of weakness.
- One-to-One. It was not without significance that Elijah was

ah (3)

physically fed and spiritually nurtured when he was alone. There was certainly very little chance of disturbance on Mount Horeb! If we are to help others, then it is important that we give that which is often the most costly to us – our time and undivided attention.

- Conversational. Twice over Elijah was asked a leading question, 'what doest thou here,' vv. 9, 13. It would appear that the query served a two-fold purpose. Firstly, to enquire why Elijah was found away from his field of service. Secondly, it enabled the prophet to open up and talk freely about his concerns. Often a listening ear is the best we can offer the believer who is downcast, Jas. 1. 19.
- Patient. Elijah spoke of being alone in his service for God, 1 Kgs. 19. 10, 14, but this was a distorted view of life. What about Obadiah, 18. 3, the prophets in the cave, v. 4, or the repentant Israelites on Carmel, 18. 39? Elijah's viewpoint certainly required correction. Notice that it was corrected, but only at the very end of the recorded dialogue, and, even then, the words were gentle, 19. 18. If God is marked by patience (Rom. 15. 5, where the term means continuance or endurance) then so too should His children.
- Enlightening. The session allowed Elijah to deepen his understanding of God. Previously, divine power had been displayed via the miraculous (like a strong wind, earthquake and fire, 1 Kgs. 18. 38), but Elijah was to learn

that equally God can work through a 'still small voice', 19. 11-12. That was how the house of Ahab was eventually destroyed – through the divine word spoken to Elijah, his successor (Elisha), and an anointed King.⁸ In helping other believers, we should endeavour to help them deepen their grasp of God and His word.

- Helpful. Often the best antidote to melancholy is work. Hence, Elijah was instructed to leave Horeb and return north to continue his service, vv. 15-18. In helping others (to help themselves), we can point to the various and numerous tasks associated with the assembly.

Elijah obeyed the word of God, and travelled north to encounter his protégé, Elisha, as the latter worked in a field, vv. 19-21. The prophet had earlier expressed feelings of isolation, vv. 10, 14, but God tenderly provided a companion in a timely and gracious manner. Again, as A. W. PINK remarks, 'What comfort for the Tishbite now to have for his companion one so dutiful and affectionate disposition; and what a privilege for this young man to be under so eminent a tutor'.⁹ One of the many blessings of assembly fellowship is that we have a continual reminder that we are not alone in our service for God. That is one reason why we should be present when the assembly gatherings take place,



Heb. 10. 25-26. Regarding Elisha, the passage reveals a commendable attitude, for he was found working in the field to reap the benefits of the God-given rain (that fell in 1 Kings chapter 18 following the lengthy period of drought). The disciples that the Lord would call prior to His earthly ministry were also active in their field of secular work, Mark 1. 16, 19. There can be no excuse for slothfulness or inaction by the believer. Indeed, regarding Elisha, his affluence (possessing twelve yoke of oxen) was not used as an excuse for inactivity, for he was found working 'with the twelfth', 1 Kgs. 19. 19. However, the secular responsibilities of Elisha were superseded by an additional assignment, for Elijah passed his mantle to him – he was now called to the prophetic office of which the mantle was an outward sign, v. 19.¹⁰ Before leaving, Elisha displayed affection for his parents and, with his embrace, he showed an altogether different character than the idolaters in Israel who had happily kissed the idol Baal.¹¹ The chapter concludes with two important actions. Initially, Elisha provided a meal for the people (using his ploughing instruments as material for the fire, to show that he was wholly committed to his new responsibilities) and then he commenced his ministry to Elijah, v. 21. The dates in the Newberry Bible suggest that this phase of Elisha's life was to last 10 years and, no doubt, he received vital lessons that proved essential when he became the principal prophet in Israel.

Endnotes

- 1 Compare Rev. 2. 20.
- 2 1 Kgs. 18. 36-37.
- 3 Compare 2 Cor. 4. 4.
- 4 1 Kgs. 17. 3, 8; 18. 1, 36.
- 5 PINK A. W., *The Life of Elijah*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 1997, pg. 200.
- 6 Mark 9. 1-24
- 7 Compare Ps. 127. 2; Mark 6. 31.
- 8 Jehu, 2 Kgs. 9. 1-10; 10. 1-17.
- 9 PINK A. W., *The Life of Elijah*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 1997, pg. 251.
- 10 Compare Zech. 13. 4.
- 11 Compare verse 18 with verse 20.

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The Canon of Scripture

Part One By **Dr. JOHN THROPAY** Los Angeles, USA

The canon of scripture is a miracle of grace and the incredible work of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of our Lord. Its assemblage by the work of the Holy Spirit baffles the minds of mere humans. Its preservation shines throughout time in the ravages of martyrdoms, catastrophes, wars, neglect, and ignorance that bear witness to the indestructibility of its eternal voice. It is the very voice of Christ that lives within it. It is the voice of Christ that ordained it and set the decrees for its establishment. Therefore, the word 'canon' is used, which means a 'cane', or a 'reed', or a 'rule' to guide. It is the voice of Christ in the Old Testament, pre incarnation, and the voice of Christ in the New Testament, post incarnation, of the great Jehovah. Our Lord sealed the canon of the Old Testament in Luke chapter 11 verse 51. Here, Jesus refers to the first and last martyrs mentioned in the Old Testament. It is 'from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary' ESV. Abel was the first martyr found in Genesis chapter four, and Zechariah the last, 2 Chr. 24. 20-21. In the Hebrew Bible of Jesus' day, 2 Chronicles was the final book of the 39 which we still use today. The focus of these articles, however, will be the New Testament canon.

The New Testament Prophesied and Decreed by Christ

Christ's criteria for scriptures regarding Himself are best outlined by John, the disciple who rested on our Saviour's breast, and whom Jesus loved. After his incarnation, Christ predicted the coming of the New Testament writings, John 14. 26. Our Lord noted that the Comforter would teach us all things, and that the Holy Spirit would enable the memories of His disciples after His departure. The writings, directed by the Holy Spirit, would be able to be discerned, because they would 'testify' of Him, 15. 26. To testify of Him, they would have the life-giving power of salvation, 3. 16; His sinless nature would be acknowledged, 8. 46; His eternal deity would be clearly seen as the 'I am', the ever existent One, 8. 24, Exod. 3. 14. The testimony would proclaim Him as the final judge, John 5. 22, 27, 30. He is the One who can raise the dead, 6. 40, 44, 54.

His words are in agreement with the Old Testament writings and fulfil its prophecies, Luke 24. 44. All the books of the New Testament conform to the divine standards, verbally established by Christ Himself to His disciples.

The first phase: the foundation, a 'proto-canon', is laid for the future during apostolic times.

The apostle Peter, who had opened the door of the gospel to the Gentiles, Acts 10, read the Epistles of the apostle Paul to the Gentiles with great interest. He places Paul's Epistles on a par with the 'other scriptures'; their rejection would lead to one's destruction, whether it is scripture written by Paul or 'other scriptures', 'As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction', 2 Pet. 3. 16. Peter also acknowledged that he 'now held in his hand' (Greek: *echo*) something more secure than what he had witnessed and heard in the mount of transfiguration, 1. 19.

Paul's new revelations come from a 'word of the Lord', 1 Thess. 4. 15. These early writings were already treasured by Peter. In turn, the apostle Paul accepted the writing of Luke as scripture as well. He combines Deuteronomy chapter 25 verse 4 with a portion of Luke chapter 10 verse 7 in 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 18, and calls both of them 'scripture'. When Paul quotes from Luke and calls it scripture, the gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were still in the form of one book; thus Paul's comment actually includes both books written by Luke.

The apostle John notes the tremendous work of the Ephesian church early in his Apocalypse, and then places the capstone on the canon of scripture in Revelation chapter 22 verse 18. John notes that the patient Ephesians

were able to discern between the true apostles and those who were liars, Rev. 2. 2. Historically, Ephesus became one of the largest assemblies in late apostolic and early post-apostolic times; it became a centre for Christian leadership and Bible study.

Some biblical historians also point to Ephesus as the place where the four Gospels, the book of the Acts, and the thirteen epistles of Paul were unified as Christian scripture. What we call the 'four Gospels' were originally



called the Gospel, or the *Evangelion*, and were considered as one whole book. When the Gospel of Luke was separated from Acts to be part of the *Evangelion*, Acts continued to have the respect of inspired scripture.

The Holy Spirit guided the formation of the foundational books. The early Christians always combined Luke's writings with those of Paul's, since



How was it arrived at?

Luke's writings authenticate the apostleship of Paul. The Epistles of Paul were together called the *Apostolos* and thus comprised another book. They were all later separated into individual books. Since some used Paul's name falsely to write epistles, Paul signs the Epistles himself to authenticate them.¹ Among those in Ephesus who reviewed the writings were the apostle John, and, possibly, Onesimus. Onesimus is called a bishop of Ephesus in the post-apostolic writings of Ignatius of Antioch. This may help to explain how Onesimus' personal letter of

the Ephesian Christians. Evidently, some of the early writers were acutely aware of their special place in church history; at least Luke, Paul, Peter, and John knew that they were writing holy scripture when they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. By the end of the apostolic age, or early in the second century, the four Gospels, Acts, and the thirteen epistles of Paul form the basis for all future New Testament scripture selection by the church. This is already recognized by Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, 2. 20. The Ephesians were to preserve the foundational writings of the apostles

the church on two future occasions would lead to two more phases of canonization. Paul's inspired words, 'For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you', 1 Cor. 11. 19, would prove to be the Holy Spirit's method of completing the canon of scripture in fulfilment of Christ's prophecy.

During the subsequent 30-40 years, there is an irregular distribution of the scriptures because of intense persecution of the church; in addition, the variability depends on scribal availability, literacy, catastrophes, wars, and widespread martyrdom. Despite all of these factors, a small but dedicated group of faithful believers in different localities continued to faithfully copy and preserve the scriptures. The foundational writings continued to be considered scripture. In 115 A.D., only about 30 years after the death of Luke, and 20 years after the death of John, Ignatius of Antioch wrote that the *Evangelion* (the four Gospels) were authoritative. During the first half of the second century, the four Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles continued to be read throughout the churches. In addition, the 'General Epistles' of Peter, James, John and Jude, as well as the Apocalypse of John, were also commonly read among the churches. Godly men, guided by the Holy Spirit, were patiently discussing, and weighing the authenticity and doctrine of some of the books still held in question, such as Hebrews, the General Epistles (already referred to above) and, for some, the book of Revelation. Alexandria, Egypt, long known for its academia and its eloquent speaker, Apollos, Acts 18. 24, also developed an authoritative North African list of scripture; some were still not sure of 2 Peter, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation, while also still considering two epistles of Clement. In A.D. 95, Clement of Rome mentions eight books, Polycarp, a disciple of John mentions fifteen books, A.D. 108.



freedom from slavery was included as Paul's 13th epistle and made public to the world. It is called the Epistle to Philemon.

The early Christian church in apostolic times was given the awesome responsibility of proving who's message was faithful and true to the life-giving testimony of Christ. Both Paul and John make note of this to

upon which the rest of the scriptures would be 'fitly framed together'. Thus, the Ephesians were cognizant of their need to preserve the foundational writings of the apostles and prophets of New Testament scripture. The first phase of the canon's formation is then accomplished during the lives of the apostles and in the immediate post-apostolic period. The subsequent introduction of false doctrine into

Endnote

1 See 1 Cor. 16. 21, Gal. 6. 11, 2 Thess. 3. 17, Philem. 1. 19.

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Philippians: The Joy and Suffering of the Full

The Christian life is not an ivory tower affair – something merely academic that sounds good in theory, but has little effect on one's practice. The new life in Christ is an ethical one that begins in the mind, grips the will and affections, and flows over into one's life. Thoughts give birth to deeds and the human mind is not a vacuum; therefore, believers must mentally feed on virtuous and morally beautiful objects and people. Paul puts before them an exhortation to this effect in verses 8 and 9.

Out with the Old, in with the New

Having dealt with the expulsion of distracting anxiety through prayer and communion with the Lord, the apostle next turns to profitable things to fill Christians' minds. As HOLE writes, 'Care being driven out of our hearts there is room for all that is good to come in'.¹ MOULE eloquently adds, 'He begs them to give to their minds, thus "safeguarded" by the peace of God, all possible pure and healthful material to work upon, of course with a view to practice. Let them reflect on, take account of, estimate aright . . . all that was true and good; perhaps specially in contrast to the subtle perversions of moral principle favoured by the persons described above (3. 18, 19), who dreamed of making an impossible divorce between the spiritual and the moral'.² Taking their worries, needs, and desires to their sovereign High Priest in glory, they can then turn to the tremendously important work of meditation. Not emptying their minds, as the modern Eastern notion has it, but filling them with wholesome material for beneficial reflection and ethical living.

The 'finally' of verse 8 moves the reader to a new section, but does not entirely change the subject. The thought-flow of verses 7-9 is shown by MARTIN,

'Finally, to loipon (cf. 3:1) may be taken as little more than "and so", although it may have a logical connection with the foregoing

Chapter 4 AN EXHORTATION REGARDING

verses 8-9: verses and be translated: "it follows then, in this connection". On the second view, the celebrated list of ethical terms, which *finally* introduces, will continue the thought of the peace of God in verses 8-9. This gives a good sense to the apostle's admonition. If inner tranquillity is to be enjoyed continually and its influence shed abroad certain steps must be taken.

The present verse is governed by the verb *think, logizesthe*, which means more than "keep in mind" (Moffatt). It is rather "take into account (*logos*), reflect upon and then allow these things to shape your conduct". The following verse is a continuation of Paul's message with a call to explicit action: "put it into practice".³

In short, right praying leads to the enjoyment of God's peace, which in turn leads to right thinking, ending in right living.



Truth and its Companions

Like the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5. 22-25, the list of edifying qualities in verse 8 presents different aspects of the same thing, the components of Christian thinking. Finding 'whatever' before each virtue links them together in a comprehensive chain. As one writer puts it, 'The entire compass of Christian morality is here designed to be presented before them. It is not different objects,

but one and the same moral nature, which the apostle here denotes in its various relations. The first four predicates denote this moral nature in itself, the two last, according to the moral sentiments of approbation which it elicits'.⁴ Thus, believers are not to pick and choose from this list; instead, they must mentally chew over each of these sublime attributes.

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Things that are 'true' appropriately head the list. More than just factually true, the word connotes a moral dimension of character. KENT explains, "'True" (*alethe*) has the sense of valid, reliable, and honest – the opposite of false. It characterizes God (Rom 3:4) and should also characterize believers'.⁵ Another amplifies his description, saying, '[It] signifies what is "morally true," as at 1 Cor. 5:8, where it is joined with *ελικριυεια* (sincerity) . . . So also Eph. 4:21, where HARLESS observes, "The good is always at the same time the true, the evil is always at the same time the untrue".⁶ Finally, in his extremely helpful way MOULE adds, 'Both in the sense of truth-speaking and truth-being. Truthfulness of word, and sincerity of character, are absolutely indispensable to holiness. Nothing is more unsanctified than a double meaning, or a double purpose, however "pious" the 'fraud''.⁷ Believers must be open and transparent, living in a way that reflects the Son of God who is the truth, John 14. 6.

Noblesse Oblige

'Honest' is the next term on the list. Many translate it 'noble' NKJV, or 'honourable' ESV; while the *New English Translation* has 'worthy of respect'. One lexicon defines it as, 'Serious; of good character, honourable, worthy, respectable'.⁸ So the believer's thoughts ought to dwell on high things rather than low, and on what commends respectful attitudes. As ASH remarks, 'Thought should not centre on the cheap and vulgar'.⁹ In addition to being a necessary characteristic of mature



Perseverance of the Gospel Part Fifteen

THE BELIEVER'S THOUGHT LIFE

Christian men, Titus 2. 2, it is also one of the qualifications for deacons and their wives, 1 Tim. 3. 8, 11.

'Just' is rendered 'right' by some, e.g., NASB; it 'means to be just, both with regard to men and in obeying the divine standard'.¹⁰ My father, who was also a believer, used to tell me that the people that he had the most trouble with in business were professing Christians. This sad testimony ought not to be! Saints should live up to that name in maintaining their testimony in school, at work, and at home. A sense of decency and fairness must pervade the Christian's life.

Purity may seem passé, and exceedingly rare in the modern world, but it must characterize the believer's thoughts. LOUW and NIDA define it as 'pertaining to being without moral defect or blemish and hence pure—'pure, without defect'.¹¹ EADIE adds this definition, 'neither tainted nor corrupt—free from all debasing elements, clear in nature, transparent in purpose, leaving no blot on the conscience and no stain on the character'.¹² 1 John chapter 3 verse 3 uses it to describe the Lord Jesus. It is used in exhortations to Christian women, Titus 2. 5; 1 Pet. 3. 2; as well as to leaders like Timothy, 1 Tim. 5. 22. It is also the first adjective describing the wisdom from above, Jas. 3. 17. It is rendered 'chaste', depicting the church as a bride, 2 Cor. 11. 2. Other than the passage under consideration, it also occurs in 2 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 11, bringing its total New Testament appearances to eight. Yet its importance far exceeds the number of times it occurs in that sacred volume. In the contemporary scene that is so saturated by pornography, vulgar humour, and debased images erroneously branded as art, purity makes a Christian stand out from the defiled and corrupting world in which he lives. Our reading, viewing, and listening habits must be consistent with the pure things with which we are to fill our minds.

Character that is worthy of Acclaim

'Lovely' conveys the concept of amiability. According to MOULE, 'of good report' is '... sweet-spoken; "loveliness" in the special respect of kindly and winning speech'.¹³ As if this is not enough, Paul says, if there is anything else virtuous and praiseworthy to think about, v. 8, then by all means, set your mind upon these things. Each of the named qualities that he lists is chiefly found in the Lord Jesus Christ. By contemplating Him, one allows these salutary ideals to course through our mind. Furthermore, many of these things are to be observed in the lives of the biblical heroes of the faith. Even more recent Christians may furnish opportunities to mentally dwell on these virtues. In reading biographies of Whitefield, the Wesleys, McCheyne, Spurgeon, Watchman Nee, Jim Elliot, Amy Carmichael, and other modern believers, much purity, nobility, and loveliness come before the thoughtful reader.



In verse 9, Paul reminds the believers to practise what he had expounded to them from the scriptures, 'what they had learned and received'. They were to internalize it – not just grasp it intellectually, but also receive it, in the sense of making it part of their moral framework. What is more, they are to remember what they 'had heard and seen' in the apostle's personal behaviour and example. Biblical Christianity is meant to be passed on from generation to generation. This includes teaching

the fundamentals of the faith, but also involves instruction by example. It is passing the truth from spiritual father to spiritual son, and from mother in the faith to daughter in the faith. The apostle backed up his public teaching with a commensurate private example. Modern Christians must follow his example as well, passing on the apostles' doctrine to others, while living in fellowship with 'the God of peace', v. 9.

Endnotes

- 1 F.B. HOLE, *Philippians*. Electronic ed., accessed here: http://biblecentre.org/commentaries/fbh_54_philippians.htm#Philippians%204 Accessed on 28/11/11.
- 2 H. C. G. MOULE, *The Epistle to the Philippians, With Introduction and Notes*. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893, pg. 114.
- 3 RALPH P. MARTIN, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Vol. 11. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987, pp. 177-178.
- 4 AUGUSTUS WIESINGER, *Biblical Commentary on the New Testament* by Dr. Hermann Olshausen, Volume 5. Translated New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, & Co., 1857-1859, pg. 451.
- 5 HOMER A. KENT, JR., *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Philippians*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1978, electronic ed.
- 6 WIESINGER, pg. 451.
- 7 MOULE, pg. 114 [Italics original].
- 8 BARCLAY MOON NEWMAN, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*. Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 1993, pg. 162.
- 9 ANTHONY L. ASH, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Philippians*. College Press Publishing Co., 2000, pg. 57.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 JOHANNES P. LOUW AND EUGENE ALBERT NIDA, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*. electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. New York: United Bible societies, 1996, pg. 3.
- 12 JOHN EADIE, *Commentary On The Greek Text On The Epistle Of Paul to the Philippians*. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1859, pg. 258.
- 13 H. C. G. MOULE, *The Epistle to the Philippians, With Introduction and Notes*. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893, pg. 115.

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Speaking of the sovereignty of God in respect of the nations the Bible says, His 'dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation... he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand', Dan. 4. 34-35.

The Sovereignty over the Nations

By **RICHARD CATCHPOLE**
South Norwood, England

The sovereignty of God in the past as illustrated in history

(i) As seen in the division of mankind into nations

The first time the word 'nations' appears in the Bible is in Genesis chapter 10 where it occurs five times, vv. 5, 20, 31, 32. The actual Hebrew word is used once more in the chapter, its very first occurrence, and is translated 'the Gentiles', v. 5. The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings and chapter 10 records the origin of the nations. The opening and closing verses remind us that this is a list of the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, that three men, sons of the same father, formed the fountain head of the world's nations, so that Paul would later say that God 'hath made of one blood all nations', Acts 17. 24-62.

In general terms we might say the descendants of Japheth spread out to the East and the West and embrace the Indo-European nations. The descendants of Ham spread out into the South, and embrace the peoples of Ethiopia, Egypt and Africa. The descendants of Shem occupied a central location embracing Israel and the line of divine promise and revelation. Moses would later say, 'When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel', Deut. 32. 8. It was the Lord who divided to each nation their

inheritance; the Lord who set their boundaries.

(ii) As seen in God's dominion over the nations and His work on behalf of the children of Israel

Consider what He did to Egypt in connection with the Exodus, the judgements God brought on Egypt, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, and the destruction of Egypt's army. Then, in connection with their entrance into Canaan, God's ability to put the dread and fear of Israel upon all nations, to give the land to His people casting out from before them nations greater and mightier than they, and, equally, His ability 'to put out the nations little by little... lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee', and His leaving some in order to prove Israel by them.¹ When the children of Israel were in the land, God used the Assyrians and Babylonians to discipline them, and raised up Cyrus, that a remnant might return.²

(iii) As seen in His determination regarding the Gentiles

In the dream of the image given to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2 God revealed details of the kingdoms that would follow, the successive rising of the kingdoms of Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, details that are all now a matter of history.

The sovereignty of God in the present with its implications practically

(i) Our responsibility toward the 'powers that be'

In Romans chapter 13 verse 1 the

apostle says, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God'. The verse is asserting a general principle equally applicable to every age, namely that the governing authorities are 'ordained', 'appointed' and 'ordered' as determined by God and a number of verses can be considered in connection with that general principle, verses that demonstrate the breadth of God's sovereignty in regard to those in authority. As to the *persons* who hold power, the WHOMSOEVER of divine sovereignty, Dan. 4. 17. Concerning the *perimeters* of their rule, the WHERESOEVER of God's sovereignty, Dan. 2. 38. Then regarding the *purposes* of those who rule the WHITHERSOEVER of God's sovereignty, Prov. 21. 1. Since the powers that be are ordained of God, twice in Romans chapter 13 Paul says we should 'be subject', vv. 1, 5.

(ii) Our responsibility to pray:

In 1 Timothy 2 Paul exhorts the believers to pray 'for', or on behalf of, 'all men', v. 1. But then he says in verse 2, 'For kings and for all in authority', the supreme rulers of the nations and for all that hold public office in the various strands of government, both nationally and locally. But we might ask, 'What relevance does that have to the sovereignty of God in the affairs of the nations'? Paul goes on to indicate that such prayers have relevance not only to the affairs of national life but also to the believer's daily life, 'that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty'. Why can our prayers affect such matters?



Y of God Nations



Surely, because of the sovereignty of God, His ultimate control over the affairs of the nations. When the church is removed at the Rapture, the Bible indicates that conditions amongst the nations will rapidly degenerate. Even though at first men might say, 'Peace, peace', in reality it will be an illusion that will culminate in the manifestation of the Man of Sin. The conditions that prevail in our nation morally and spiritually in the present day should surely come to us as a clarion call to pray.

(iii) Our responsibility to preach Not now in regard to God's sovereignty of the powers that be, but rather in connection with His redemptive purpose, God is currently visiting the Gentiles (nations) to take out of them a people for His name, Acts 15. 14. In the Old Testament one nation, Israel, was central to God's movements, but, as to the present, we read in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 that the wrath of God is come upon them to the uttermost, and that for three reasons: they killed the Lord Jesus; they rejected the gospel; and they sought to frustrate God's purpose to bless others, v. 16. In Romans chapter 11, tracing their setting aside, Paul says, 'Through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles'. The apostle is asserting that Israel's fall has become, not the cause, but, in His sovereignty, the occasion for God to reach out in blessing to the Gentiles, v. 11. But there is something more we must add, for in reaching out to the Gentiles God has in view future dealings with Israel 'for to provoke them to jealousy', v. 11. Consistent with divine purpose we are called to

go and 'preach the gospel to every creature', Mark 16. 15.

The sovereignty of God in respect of the future, as indicated in prophecy

The last book of the Bible describes in some detail the judgements that are yet to come upon the earth, and which will culminate in the manifestation of the Lord in glory and the establishing of Christ's kingdom upon earth, Rev. 11. 15.

(i) In connection with the period of tribulation

Revelation chapters 6 to 19 record the judgements that will come upon the earth during the tribulation period, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials. On earth it will seem that all is chaotic and disordered, but in connection with each of those series of seven there is a progressive development that testifies to the sovereign control of God. In connection with the fourth seal, the judgement is confined to a fourth part of the earth, 6. 8. In connection with the trumpets, a third part is repeatedly mentioned.³ But with the vials there seems no limitation, for in chapter 16 verse 1 John says, 'I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth'. There is thus a progressive intensity connected with these judgements, another testimony to the sovereignty of God in the affairs of the nations.

(ii) In connection with the plans of rulers

In Daniel chapter 2 in the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar the times of the Gentiles ends, as far as the kingdoms of men are concerned, with a kingdom represented in the image by the feet and toes. Other passages indicate the ten toes are symbolic of a confederation of ten kings that will ultimately give their power to one

man, the first beast of Revelation chapter 13. Whatever human intrigue might lie behind their actions the scripture says the ten kings will 'have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast', and three verses later this explanation is given: 'God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will and give their power unto the beast', Rev. 17. 12-16.

(iii) In connection with the passing of the nations

The opening verses of Zechariah chapter 14 refer to the nations which will come against Jerusalem prior to the manifestation of the Lord in glory, and verse 1 describes how the spoils of the battle will be divided by the triumphant forces within the walls of the city, and their success is attributed, not to themselves but to the Lord, 'For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle', v. 2.

(iv) In connection with the possession of the kingdom

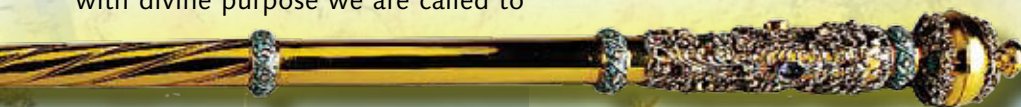
Despite the hostility of the nations and their rejection of Christ, God's purpose is to bring His Son back into the scene of His rejection, to give Him the nations for His inheritance, and establish the kingdom in His hand.⁴ Other passages relative to the nations and God's sovereignty in respect of millennial days can be studied to profit.⁵

Having considered the sovereignty of God over the nations surely we must say, 'Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?', Jer. 10. 7!

Endnotes

- 1 Deut. 2. 25; 7. 1, 22; Judg. 3. 1.
- 2 Isa. 10. 5; Jer. 25. 11; Isa. 45. 1-4.
- 3 Rev. 8. 7-9, 11-12; 9. 15.
- 4 Heb. 1. 6; Ps. 2. 8; Dan. 2. 44.
- 5 For example, Matt. 25. 32; Micah 4. 2; Isa. 19. 23-25; Zech. 14. 16; Rev. 20. 8-9.

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The Coffee Morning



As the United Kingdom has lost its tradition of church attendance, for many the only time they enter a church is to attend a wedding or a funeral, this makes the task of getting people to come to a gospel meeting all the more difficult. Equally, some halls are no longer an integral part of their community in the way they once were. As the population has moved out of the town and into the suburbs, some halls have become detached from the people they are trying to reach. Although our commission in the gospel is to 'go', this article seeks to give a few different perspectives on how we might encourage people to come into the hall and, as a consequence, be exposed to the word of God.

When and Where?

For some, the idea of a coffee morning arose from a gospel campaign. The evangelist suggested advertising and holding a coffee morning each day. It proved most profitable and, as a consequence, it has been continued. After a passage of time, it continues with good numbers present, and the assemblies concerned have seen people saved as a result. This is always encouraging.

Whether, as part of the opportunities afforded by a new building, or as a way of reaching their community, some assemblies have started a coffee morning as a new venture. Although, at the beginning, numbers attending were small, they have risen. For most assemblies the majority of those who attend are retired people who live nearby – widows and widowers who are lonely, and who appreciate getting outside of their 'four walls'. The coffee morning has become an extension of the work they do with Senior Citizens. Others have seen young mothers come along as a means of providing themselves with conversation and social interaction. What is desirable in each case is to see a regular group who come along week by week.

The location of some halls may offer opportunities to reach local shoppers, whilst other halls may be more suitable for a community outreach. One assembly collects people from the Multiple Sclerosis care home close to the hall, and believers collecting people in wheelchairs to enable them to come to their coffee morning is a testimony in itself. Alternatively, there are those who have used local community centres as the venue for their coffee morning, as the location of the hall does not lend itself to the activity, and because such centres are often situated in the neighbourhood of those who will come. In each case it is important to think about where the assembly building is situated and what, as a consequence, you may be able to use as a means of building bridges and reaching the lost.

What?

The format of coffee mornings varies from place to place. Overall, most of those who hold regular coffee mornings feel it important to provide an opportunity to meet and chat together over light refreshments. One reason for the exercise is to provide an activity but, more particularly, to befriend people and engage them in conversation about the Lord. We can demonstrate the love of God for sinners by our interest in, and care for, the people amongst whom we live and work, and this activity can help to break down barriers in preparation for when we invite them along to our gospel meetings.

1 Some assemblies have a more formal part to their coffee morning with a time of hymn singing, followed by a brother presenting a simple gospel message and closing in prayer.

It is good to consider who is attending the coffee morning. Where those who come are mainly elderly, some have found a time of hymn singing has been welcomed, particularly where 'favourite' hymns might be chosen and sung.

2 Some retain a less formal approach throughout, but where the emphasis is upon the offer of literature and personal conversation, coupled with an invitation to other meetings.

Whether some return for the Sunday gospel service and attend other activities is difficult to anticipate, but most have seen some response over time. One

assembly has seen approximately fifty older people join them for lunch, giving them a good opportunity to share the gospel. A number of these friends have also joined them for an occasional walk to a local beauty spot – an afternoon out being quite a treat for them. Overall, this has opened up new avenues of spreading the gospel, albeit informally at first!

How?

1 The passer-by

The location of a hall is key to this approach. Some halls may offer opportunities to invite those who pass by, particularly if it is in a place that sees regular pedestrian traffic. However, even if the location of the hall is ideal, someone standing outside to engage people in conversation and invite them in, or a separate notice board indicating the coffee morning, is essential. This is often a way of developing those who have a gift for personal work!

2 The offer of transport of friends and family to the hall

This may be necessary solely because of the location of the hall or because of those you wish to invite. Some assemblies have their own minibus, or the use of community transport, and these are alternatives that might be explored. It is worth mentioning the feedback that can be gained through those who give lifts. It also provides further opportunities to speak of the Saviour.

3 Exploring community provision

The situation of day-care centres, residential homes for the elderly, other care facilities and community provision offers significant opportunities. A little local research may provide an insight into what happens within reach of our church building. There may be difficulties to overcome and personnel needs are obvious, but presenting the gospel is always easier when people know us and have come to respect us for our interest in them as people, and love for them as sinners in need of a Saviour. We know it is the Lord's desire that 'all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth'.

This article has been compiled through conversations with a number of believers. The editor thanks John Baker (Cardiff), Stuart Dan (Efford, Plymouth), Mike Oakes (Redcar) for their particular input, as well as others who have offered certain insights.





The Lord Himself

By **CLIFF JONES** Cardiff, Wales

There are a number of occasions in the Scriptures when we read of things done by the Lord Jesus Christ **Himself**. They describe events which have a profound significance and are deeply moving and instructive.

Gave Himself

The Lord 'gave himself for our sins', Gal. 1. 4. He, the Holy One, came down to earth, and became what He had never been before. The Lord came unto His own, the Jews, but they did not receive Him, John 1. 11. Rather, He was 'despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief', Isa. 53. 3.

What could cause the Lord to leave heaven, a sphere in which He had shared glory with His Father from before the world was created? It was love for His Father, and for us, that caused Him to come down to earth. He came to do His Father's will, to glorify His Father, and complete the work His Father had given Him to do.¹ The work He did, and the precious blood He shed, has an infinite and eternal value because of who He is. He gave Himself for us, to save us from the guilt and penalty of sin. He redeemed us so that we might be free from the dominion of sin, and be with Him eternally.²

Girded Himself

The Lord, who made all things and holds all things together,³ came down to this earth, 'made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men', Phil. 2. 7. What amazing grace and humility was His!

Against the background of the tension among the disciples because they wanted pre-eminence in the kingdom of God,⁴ the Lord rose from supper, 'laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself'. He poured water into a bowl, washed

the disciples' feet and wiped them with the towel. What a wonder to think that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten, eternal, beloved Son of God, bowed at the disciples' feet, including those of Judas Iscariot who was to betray Him! What an act of grace!

Our Lord said, 'I am meek and lowly in heart', Matt. 11. 29. Let us pray that the gracious mind that was in the Lord might be in us also.⁵

Pleased not Himself

The Lord was ever His Father's delight. At the start of His public ministry and towards the end of that earthly ministry, God said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'.⁶

Romans chapter 15 verse 3 brings before us the fact that the Lord, throughout His time on earth, sought, above all things, to glorify His Father, and do His will. The Lord voluntarily endured reproaches, mockery, and the hatred, enmity and hostility of men to God.⁷ What a challenge to us to be less self-centred, and more God-centred in our lives!

Glorified not Himself

The Lord 'glorified not himself to be made an high priest', Heb. 5. 5. The Lord Jesus did not seek self-gratification in this office as our Great High Priest. The Lord's eternal priesthood was, like Aaron's, divinely appointed, but the Lord is the Son of God and His priesthood is of a higher order. It is not of the Levitical order. He is 'a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec'.⁸

Jesus Himself drew near

In Luke 24 we have an account of one of the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ. Two sad, disappointed, dejected and confused people were walking from Jerusalem

to a village called Emmaus. They were the Lord's disciples: they loved Him and were sad because He had been crucified. As they walked, 'Jesus himself drew near, and went with them', v. 15, but they were prevented from knowing Him, v. 16. It was as the Lord revealed Himself in the Old Testament scriptures that their heart burned within them.

The knowledge that the Lord had risen from the dead, and was alive, turned the sadness of the disciples into great joy, and this has been the experience of believers ever since. Is it ours?

The Lord Himself shall descend

The love of the Lord for us is so great that He wants us to be with Him forever. Thus, we read, 'The Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord'.⁹

Prospects for the world are grim. Yet, for the believer the Lord could come at any moment! Until He comes, let us, as individuals, and as assemblies of the Lord's people, seek to serve and witness for Him in love, doing His will, showing love to one another, and to the lost around us.

Endnotes

- 1 John 17. 4; 19. 30.
- 2 Rom. 6. 14; 1 Thess. 4. 17.
- 3 Col. 1. 16, 17.
- 4 Mark 9. 34; 10. 35-45; Luke 9. 46.
- 5 Phil. 2. 5.
- 6 Matt. 3. 17; 17. 5.
- 7 Rom. 5. 10; Col. 1. 21.
- 8 Ps. 110. 4; Heb. 5. 6.
- 9 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17.

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REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK



ENGLAND

Liverpool

The gospel radio programme on local university radio is a work which Stephen Baker has embarked on. This is a one-hour programme on Mondays from 19:00. People can access the programme via the Internet at www.radiohope.co.uk (The Living Hope Show), or local people can access the programme via the radio on MW 1350. Please continue to pray for this potentially fruitful means of outreach. Stephen readily admits to being a complete amateur at this type of outreach, and needs lots of prayer and patience as he tries to get it right. 'There have been lots of hiccups over the weeks and learning to keep things short and snappy so that our audience will keep tuned in is a challenge'. The University is not very helpful when it comes to listener statistics but other similar radio stations have a listening audience of over 20,000. People are listening and we will leave 'how many' in the Lord's hands, and pray for fruit in due season. Please pray for Ernie, Kazia, Gary and Dean who have all been involved in helping get the radio work off the ground – these people are unbelievers; please pray that their exposure to what is being done might speak to them.



Salisbury

The small assembly in **Salisbury** (only four in fellowship), had a week working with local schools during which over 1,500 children heard the gospel.



IRELAND

At the end of 2012, after much prayer and discussion, the assembly at **Gorey** recognized elders for the very first time. It was encouraging to see how seriously the young believers took this task. God worked in very real and powerful ways as they addressed this crucial issue, and it was a thrill to see the oneness of mind among the Christians in acknowledging three men to take up this work. The task these men face is huge. Pray that they would have an ever closer walk with the Lord, and thus know the wisdom, grace, love, and courage they will need for this task.

The past few months have seen increased spiritual maturity in many of the believers. One of the greatest proofs of this maturing being the obvious love and care demonstrated for each other. As they have endeavoured to keep centred on Christ and His word a beautiful sense of family has blossomed. As this young church grows they are increasingly under pressure for space in their current premises. They have been trying to find a new place to rent but, so far, been unable to find anything suitable. Please pray that the Lord would make their next move very clear.

The work among the children and young people has also been encouraging. Those attending the youth club have been challenged by the claims of the gospel on their lives. The Sunday School is having a positive impact in the lives of the children belonging to the assembly. The Schools' work, which has lain dormant for almost 2 years, has suddenly sprung to life again in recent months. A school principal asked if Michael McKillen would come and teach the Bible over six one-hour lessons. Whilst he was doing this, the teacher recommended the lessons to another local school. As a result Michael was able to teach in that school for the very first time. A third school has now also taken this

on. All the classes have responded enthusiastically to the teaching. Most interestingly, one principal, who is involved in running the local Catholic parish youth group, has asked if Michael would come and teach the young people in that group. This has been provisionally arranged for September and is a potentially massive opening for the gospel. Please pray for blessing and for wisdom in handling this opportunity.



As noted in our last edition, one of the first events after the assembly at **Newcastle West** moved into their new building was the baptism of Gerry and Nadina McCall. It is a thrill to report that on May 19th Nadina's mother, Phil, was saved. It is truly exciting to see the Lord working in this family. Furthermore, one day a few weeks ago a woman showed up at the hall to find out more; she had seen the story the local paper had run on the meeting. Simone came out to the meeting that Thursday night and has kept coming. A Bible study was started with her, and, over the weeks, she came out of the spiritual fog, and is now saved and baptized. Simone brought her neighbour, Grace, for the baptism. Grace enjoyed her time and said she wanted to come out to the meetings with Simone. Please pray that this will be the means of this lady's salvation. Pray also for Simone's two children, that they too will come to know the Saviour.





OVERSEAS

South Africa



Nelson Mandela Stadium, Port Elizabeth

At Easter, the assembly at **Port Elizabeth** ran a bookstall at their four-day Easter conference. This was the first time in twenty years that this had been offered in Port Elizabeth, and the interest and uptake was most encouraging. They sold out of many basic and fundamental books, as well as seeing a good interest in study Bibles. There are quite a few younger believers in the Eastern Cape with an appetite for the word of God, and many hours were spent in discussion in homes after the formal meetings were ended each day.

The assembly in **Belhar, Mitchell's Plain**, have recently conducted a series of meetings with David McKillen on, 'The Foundation of the Church'. This included positive teaching to counter the massive influence of Pentecostal and extreme charismatic error which abounds in the area. Three Saturday 'Study Days' were also convened in order to help younger believers in how to study, and what materials to use. The assembly in Belhar is the youngest in the Province, established from outreach work and cottage meetings in the north of the Mitchell's Plain area. It is a little more than ten years old. There are only two more senior brothers and some of the elders are younger men. These saints really feel their need of support and, from a small beginning, the interest



Mitchell's Plain

in the ministry and teaching grew nightly and the hall filled. Six other assemblies supported the Study Days with their young people.

Brazil



Macapá

Samuel Davidson accompanied by two local brethren, Jerson and Rosinor, undertook a week's visit to the city of **Macapá**, which is about a 28-hour boat journey down river in the neighbouring state of Amapá. This is a small assembly, which was formed about three years ago. They are seeking to follow New Testament principles, and faithfully continue to preach the gospel. They are in the final stages of constructing a new gospel hall in a poor district of the city. A paralyzed man, Sr. Osvaldo, who was saved some time ago, was recently baptized, and is now in very happy fellowship.

The assemblies in the **Santarém** region carry on steadily in their gospel witness, and there has been a little fruit seen this year. One special encouragement has been that a number of professing believers, who have been contacted through the bookshop, are now meeting with the Santarém assemblies. Although not yet in fellowship, because of family problems, they nevertheless show great joy in having found what



Santarém

they had been seeking for. Please pray for Sr. Afonso, Sr. Junior and their families.

Cyprus

From the Logos School, Gary Love writes, 'Forty years after the Turkish invasion, Cyprus is again in the spotlight as it struggles with its huge financial debt. Many believers have been in contact with us, concerned for the school's wellbeing and wondering how the situation is affecting the Lord's work through the Logos School; we appreciate their concern. Although we were initially told that schools would be exempt from a tax cut, over the weekend of 21st April this decision was reversed.



Many Cypriots have suffered heavy financial losses due to bank closures; there are individuals and businesses that have lost millions. Property prices are expected to fall, but at the moment all valuation of property, whether land or buildings, has been suspended. Clearly, we must wait until the market settles before we can move forward with the possible erection of new school buildings.

It will be over the next few months and years that the impact of the proposed financial changes will begin to show. The economy of Cyprus is expected to contract by over 10% in the next year. Unemployment, already at 15%, may double as a result. Unemployment benefit only lasts for about 7 months. Many families will begin to struggle to pay bills, including school fees. Please pray for wisdom as we attempt to discern genuine cases of need.

Many of our students now see the Logos School as a place of security and peace, coming from a home



where one parent may already be unemployed, while the other knows that there is every likelihood that he or she, too, will soon be out of work. Cyprus needs your prayers.

On a more cheerful note, last week we were delighted to hear of a young man in the school giving his life to the Lord. Eric is fifteen, and in Grade 10. He is a Cypriot and has been in Logos since Kindergarten. This year he has been showing a particular interest in extracurricular clubs and activities, and many of the teachers had been praying for him, as he seemed to be 'not far from the kingdom'"

In their free time, some of our female teachers continue to work among the girls, many of whom are Muslim. The girls' parents allow them to attend 'out of school' meetings so long as there are no males present! A little while ago, a Friday evening and Saturday morning were given to Bible study and discussion, and several girls had honest and encouraging chats with their teachers. Remember, in particular, Anna and Neneh who both said they would like to be saved, but have not yet taken the step of faith.

Pray for a Lebanese boy whose parents are divorced. Over the past two years he has longed to see his father who lives in Lebanon. All his father's promises to visit him have been broken. Recently, during an RE lesson, he said, 'In my religion (Islam) we believe that Jesus was a prophet, but I believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world!'

Remember an Italian-French girl who came to Cyprus specifically to attend Logos School, encouraged to do so by the daughter of one of our teachers. She was saved in Romania, and has a bright testimony among her peers. She is earnestly seeking the salvation of her mother and father. Her father is now threatening to send her to a non-religious school in

France because, he says, she is being brainwashed at Logos.

Pray for a Russian student whose father was diagnosed with inoperable stomach cancer in Moscow, and is now being given chemotherapy in Israel. Please pray for his salvation as an ex-teacher of Logos school witnesses to him!'

Romania

Nicu and Lavinia live in the village of **Gura Raului** with their two children Mihiala and Nicusor. Nicu comes from a family of fifteen brothers and sisters, who are interspersed throughout the gypsy community in the village.

Some months ago Nicu lost his job as a refuse collector; he is an alcoholic and some drink-related incident led to his expulsion from work. This was a terrible blow and has resulted in additional hardship for the family. The winter months were very difficult for them – living off meagre benefits, Nicu struggling with his drink problem, hungry children, and much stress.

Jonathan Kelso took Nicu into Sibiu in search of work, but it came to nothing. Things were getting desperate for the family. Nicu managed to get occasional work in the forest, cutting wood, but he broke his collar bone and was unable to work for weeks. Lavinia decided she must do something, so she went to Sibiu to find work and, after making a few enquires, Lavinia was told she could begin work the next day as a cleaner at the station. It seemed like good news, but, after working long hours for two months or so, it became evident that most of her monthly wage was being 'eaten' up in bus fares to and from Gura Raului, and she was no better off. Lavinia was suffering every day from

extreme headaches and finally she ended up sick.

Nicu recovered enough from his shoulder injury to go back to occasional work in the forest, but soon after – more problems! Jonathan received a phone call from Nicu's mother-in-law, Floarea, reporting that he had fallen in the forest, and his hand had been badly cut by the chainsaw he was using. Going as quickly as was possible to their home, with the first aid kit and not knowing what to expect, Jonathan discovered that the damage to his right hand was severe, and he was losing quite a lot of blood. It didn't help matters that there was also a fair amount of alcohol in his system. For the next two weeks, Nicu's injury was attended to; applying new dressings and bandages regularly. It was clear that Nicu was affected by the care shown and, one day, he made it known that he wanted to be saved. It was a joy to hear this young man ask God for forgiveness and for salvation, and that God would also save his family.

Becoming a Christian was a very courageous step for Nicu and it was clear that he would require much support and prayer along the way. Lavinia was sympathetic to the gospel, but, at this stage, she was not prepared to take the step of faith required. Nicu had prayed for her; was God going to answer this man's cry? He so much needed her for support, but her decision had to be very personal.

At the end of May, Lavinia waited after the morning meeting finished. She spoke with Ruth and made her intentions clear – she wanted to be saved! Ruth brought her back home and read and discussed the important issues regarding salvation, and, in a simple prayer, Lavinia asked the Lord to save her.

Students at the 40th Anniversary Concert



Gura Raului

The Precious SEED Tour to Israel, May 2013

By **ROY HILL** Pensford, Bristol, England

This year we had a group of 49 made up of people from all parts of the UK, plus some from Canada and the USA. The weather was glorious throughout, non-stop sunshine, and temperatures ranging from a low of 85F in Jerusalem to over 100F at Masada. The arrangements were made between Precious Seed International, Thompson Travel International in Northern Ireland, and Travex in Jerusalem. We stayed in five-star hotels in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and a four-star in Tiberias. We were in Israel for a total of 11 days, from 21-31 May.

We had a one-night stay in Tel Aviv and visited Joppa before heading north to Caesarea, and then on to Tiberias. We visited all the usual sites in the Galilee area, and some unusual ones, like the Peace Vista (the best, if not only, place for a view of the whole of the lake), and Wadi Hamam, part of the Jesus Trail. We also arranged a rendezvous with soldiers of the Israel Defence Force, who man the borders with Lebanon and Syria in the Golan Heights, and had an interesting and happy time with them. We sailed across the lake, and really enjoyed that experience, stopping for a reading half-way across.

On the evenings in Tiberias after dinner we had a visit from George Khalil from the Nazareth Assembly reporting on the work there, ministry from Roy Hill, a film on the story of Zvi as he fled Poland as a young boy during World War II, and a PowerPoint presentation by Andy Street on the history and development of the work of Echoes of Service.

On the Lord's Day we had fellowship with the Nazareth Assembly and were encouraged to meet local believers, and other visitors from Germany and Holland. The saints there have a very nice hall, and provided an excellent lunch for the group and the other visitors. We then went to the Mount of Precipice with its amazing views and 'entered and passed through Jericho', with a stop there to purchase the local delicious dates.

Our days in Jerusalem were pretty full, though there was one free day when people did their own thing. During the day we visited many sites, including Gethsemane, the Garden Tomb, the Temple Institute, the Wailing Wall, and the Western Wall Tunnel.

We stayed in the Inbal Hotel and, in the evenings, we had a number of local speakers, including Meno Kalisher of the Jerusalem Assembly (a large and growing group of Messianic believers), Aviel Schneider, editor of a magazine called *Israel Today*, Dr. Gabriel Barkay, a world-renowned archaeologist associated with the Bar Ilan university in Tel Aviv, and finally Joel McIlreach of The Bible Society in Israel who gave a wonderfully encouraging report of his work in distributing scriptures to Jews in the land of Israel.

Throughout, we had the services of a truly amazing guide called Tito Anidjar, whose knowledge of the land is outstanding and his humour kept our attention throughout.

All in all it was a wonderful occasion and many new friendships were made. We hope to arrange a trip in October 2014, DV. That is about 15 months away so why not plan now to come with us then?



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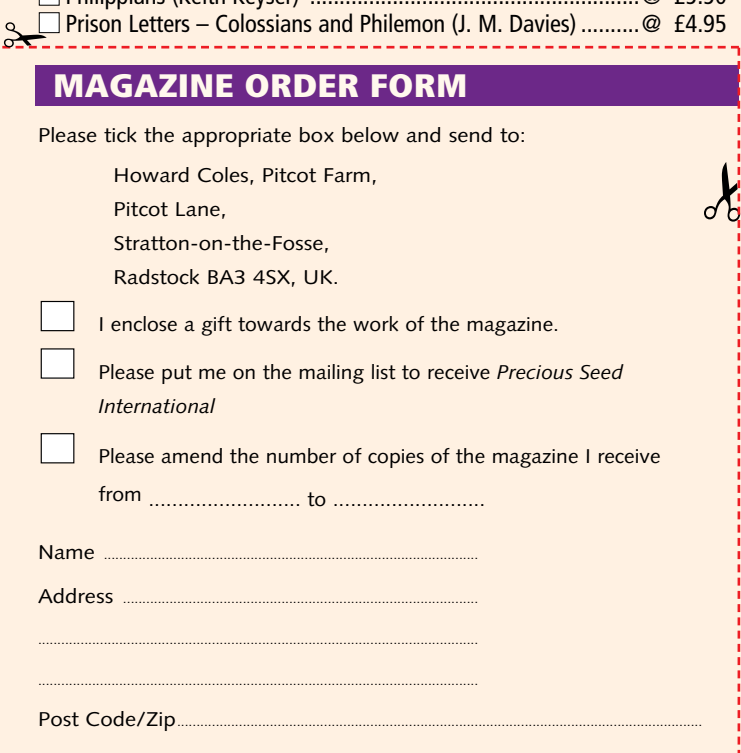
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Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

Church of England gives up fight against gay marriage

The Church of England has effectively accepted defeat over gay marriage, signalling that it will no longer fight against a change in the law. In a short statement, the established Church said that the scale of the majorities in both the Commons and Lords made clear that it is the will of Parliament that same sex couples 'should' be allowed to marry.

The Bishop of Leicester, who leads the bishops in the House of Lords, said they would now concentrate their efforts on 'improving' rather than halting an historic redefinition of marriage. It represents a dramatic change of tack in the year since the Church insisted that gay marriage posed one of the biggest threats of disestablishment of the Church of England since the reign of Henry VIII. And it comes despite a warning from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, that the redefinition of marriage would undermine the 'cornerstone' of society.

The climb-down comes as the newest diocesan bishop in the Church of England said that support for gay marriage was 'understandable' because of the way gay people had been treated in Britain in the past.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10101900/Church-of-England-gives-up-fight-against-gay-marriage.html>



Pope Francis says atheists who do good are redeemed by Jesus

Pope Francis has said atheists who are good are redeemed by Jesus in a homily urging that people of differing beliefs work together.

The leader of the world's 1.2 billion Roman Catholics made his comments at the morning Mass in his residence - a daily event where he speaks without prepared comments. He told the story of a Catholic who asked a priest if even atheists had been redeemed by Jesus. 'Even them, everyone', the Pope answered, according to Vatican Radio. 'We all have the duty to do good', he said. 'Just do good and we'll find a meeting point', the Pope said in a hypothetical conversation in which someone told a priest: 'But I don't believe. I'm an atheist'. Francis's reaching out to atheists, and people who belong to no religion, is a marked contrast to the attitude of former Pope Benedict.



<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2330135/Pope-Francis-says-atheists-good-redeemed-Jesus.html>

Google: Motorola's tattoos could replace passwords

The technology, which aims to remove the need to enter passwords and replace them simply with a phone being close to a user's body, was one of the suggestions Dennis Woodside, Motorola's chief executive, made to California's D11 conference yesterday. The tattoos have been developed by Massachusetts-based engineering firm MC10, and contain flexible electronic circuits that are attached to the wearer's skin using a rubber stamp.

Nokia has previously experimented with integrating tattoos into mobile phones, and Motorola's senior vice president of advance research, Regina Dugan, a former head of the US Pentagon's Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency, demonstrated the silicon-based technology that uses bendable electronic circuits. Initially designed for medical purposes, Motorola hopes the 'Biostamps' could now be used for consumer authentication purposes.



Motorola is also investigating the Proteus Digital Health pill, which has already been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration and was given European regulatory approval in 2010. Its computer chip is powered by a battery using the acid in a user's stomach. The pill creates a unique signal like an ECG trace that can be picked up by devices outside the body and which could be used to verify a user's identity. It can be taken daily for up to a month, it has been claimed.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/mobile-phones/10090863/Google-Motorolas-tattoos-could-replace-passwords.html>

Bits & Bobs



'World's oldest Torah' found at world's oldest university

It was virtually ignored for centuries, but what may be the world's oldest Torah has been discovered at the world's oldest university. The priceless scroll was found in the archives of Bologna University, which was founded in 1088 and predates both Oxford and Cambridge.

The scroll, written in Hebrew, is 118ft long and 25 inches wide and consists of the first five books of the Jewish Bible, from Bereshit (the equivalent of Genesis) to Devarim (Deuteronomy). It had been wrongly dated to the 17th century by a librarian who studied it in 1889, but it now transpires that it is more than 800 years old.

The discovery was made by Mauro Perani, the university's professor of Hebrew. He recently re-examined the scroll and noticed that the script was from a Babylonian tradition that suggested it was much older than previously thought.

The Torah, inscribed on soft lamb skin, also bore 'letters and symbols' that were forbidden in later copies under rules laid down by Jewish scholars, Prof. Perani said. 'At that point I sent photos of the scroll to some of the world's leading experts. They all agreed that it dated to the 12th or 13th centuries. One scholar believed it could even date back to the 11th century'. The scroll was then subjected to carbon dating tests by the University of Salento in Italy and a laboratory at the University of Illinois in the United States.

The tests confirmed the scholars' opinions, dating the text to between 1155 and 1225. 'That makes it the oldest complete Torah scroll in the world', said Prof. Perani.

Torah scrolls are extremely rare because most were eventually destroyed after being used in Jewish liturgies. Until now, the oldest Torah script in existence dated from the 14th century. The scroll may have come from a Dominican monastery in Bologna, possibly during the 19th century. Prof. Perani said it was not unusual for Dominican friars to have an ancient Torah because there was close collaboration between Christian and Jewish scholars in the early Middle Ages. Bologna has had a strong Jewish community for centuries and the university first began teaching Hebrew studies in the 15th century.

It will be put on display at Bologna University. It will also be photographed and uploaded in digital format onto the library's website.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10086330/Worlds-oldest-Torah-found-at-worlds-oldest-university.html>

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Front Cover illustration:

NAZARETH. Photo: John Chesney.

The town of Nazareth is located in lower Galilee in a high valley near to the south of the Lebanese range of hills. It is close to the Jezreel Valley and as the town commands an impressive view down to the Plain of Esdraelon, some scholars think that the name Nazareth was derived from a Hebrew word meaning 'watchtower'. Others, however, think that the name is a word-play on a Hebrew word meaning 'branch', which would then prophetically identify our Lord with the text of Isaiah chapter 11 verse 1. Nazareth was an insignificant place during our Lord's lifetime, and its inhabitants were regarded as being fairly unconventional hence the negative comment made by Nathanael in John chapter 1 verse 46. The title 'Jesus (Christ) of Nazareth' is used on a number of occasions in the New Testament. Significantly, it is used by Peter in his address to the nation of Israel on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 verse 22. Our Lord also uses the title when He personally reveals Himself to Saul on the Damascus Road, Acts 22. 8. Even though our Lord subsequently left

Nazareth, He made two later visits to teach in the synagogue. It was on one of these return visits that He read a number of verses from a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. When He had finished reading the set text from Chapter 61, He tells a waiting congregation that the words that He had read to them were now literally fulfilled in their hearing, Luke 4. 21. Their response to the Saviour's claim mirrors how men always view Jesus of Nazareth - some speak well of Him, others reject Him and seek to destroy Him.

Conducted by

RICHARD COLLINGS

QUESTION

What guidance does the scripture give regarding organ donation?

ANSWER

This is an extremely complex question and one regarding which I have no medical knowledge that would qualify me to give any response. It is a complex issue because some might be willing to donate replaceable things, such as blood or bone marrow, but would feel less inclined to agree to the transplanting of solid organs. Furthermore, is there a point beyond which it would not be right for medical expertise to intervene, if so what is that point? It is also a very sensitive issue, for it is almost certain that there will be readers of this magazine who are either the recipients of an organ, or are the donors of an organ. Each will have acted as they felt right before the Lord, and I trust that my answer will offend no one and encourage everyone.

The capability to carry out organ donation is a relatively recent breakthrough in medicine and so we would not expect to find an example of it in the scriptures. Therefore, to answer this question we have to focus on principles, although even that generates its difficulties.

Based on the apostle Paul's teaching in the closing verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 6 some may take the view that as we do not have absolute rights over our bodies we do not have the authority to participate in organ donation or reception. Whilst that is a strong point we cannot ignore what the apostle wrote in his letter to the churches of Galatia, 'For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me', Gal. 4. 15 NKJV. Even if Paul is speaking figuratively I do not think he would have used an illustration that he considered to be contrary to biblical teaching.

There might be a minority of Christians who consider that it is not right to try to extend the duration of life, citing that 'there is a time to be born and a time to die'. However, on that basis we would have to refuse all medical help, other than palliative care. That opinion would also be in conflict with the practice of the Saviour for, during His earthly ministry, we read that He 'went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil', Acts 10. 38. Each time the Lord healed He was extending the life of the individual concerned. However, there were many times Jesus healed not to extend life but to improve the quality of life. The man with the withered hand in the synagogue, the blind men on the road to Jericho, and the infirmed man at Bethesda did not necessarily have their lifespan increased, but the quality of their lives was improved beyond measure.

Those who believe that organ donation is justifiable might point to the scriptural exhortation that we should love one another, and one of the noblest ways in which this love can be demonstrated is through the willingness to donate an organ. We are also exhorted to love our enemies, and on three occasions in the Epistles we are told, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', Rom. 13. 9; Gal. 5. 14; Jas. 2. 8. Therefore, many may be happy to donate organs to ensure the preservation or extension of life of someone they do not know and who may not be a believer.

Whilst I do not think that in principle organ donation is morally or scripturally wrong, 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind', and 'Let us not therefore judge one another', Rom. 14. 5 and 13. Of one thing we can be sure, whether we are donors or recipients of an organ, this will have no impact on our glorified bodies when the Lord returns for 'We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed', 1 Cor. 15. 51-52. Then, each of us will have bodies 'fashioned like unto his glorious body', Phil. 3. 21. 'What a day of rejoicing that will be!'

Questions for this column should be addressed to info@preciousseed.org

