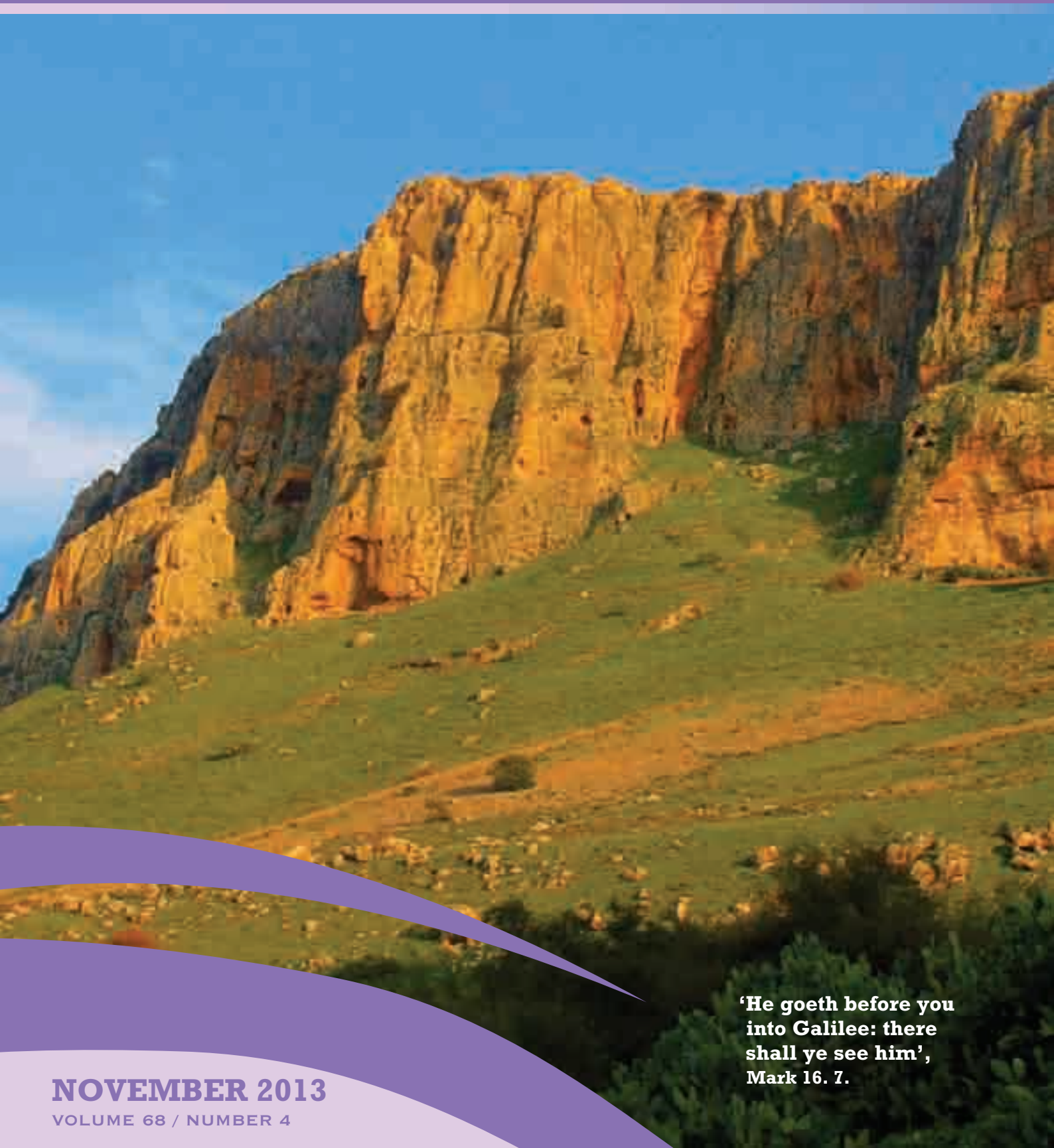


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**NOVEMBER 2013**

VOLUME 68 / NUMBER 4

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into Galilee: there  
shall ye see him',  
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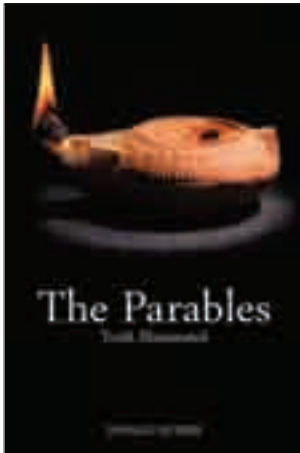




# Book Reviews

By JOHN BENNETT and JOHN SCARBROOK

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



## **The Parables: Truth Illuminated** Donald Norbie

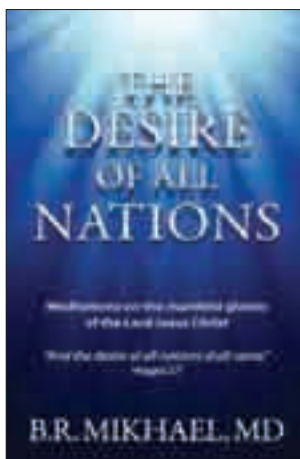
Paperback, 190 pages, Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, ON L3K 6A6, Canada. ISBN 978-1-926765-22- 8.

This is a straightforward consideration of the Lord's parables. There is a helpful introduction which seeks to identify and define terms such as parable, metaphor, allegory, etc., and which also addresses the issue of how far details are to be pressed. About three pages are given to each parable – approximately one thousand words – whilst the actual text is quoted [NKJV]. The author focuses on the main points of each parable rather than on the specific details. The story of the parable is told, perhaps some of it unnecessarily. In addition to the parables, there is a consideration of some word pictures and metaphors; for example, the rejected cornerstone, the good shepherd, wineskins, salt, and light. He lists helpful books for further study at the end of each chapter, as well as a verse or two from a hymn. There is an extensive bibliography. It is written in fluent prose, sentence length generally being relatively short. The publication is well presented.

The author begins appropriately with Matthew 13 and the comments are very helpful and balanced; the different ways of interpreting some of the parables here, such as the one on leaven, are discussed briefly. Noting some of the author's interpretations may be of interest to potential readers: the servant who buried the pound in a napkin and the five virgins without oil are professing believers only; the events in the parable of the ten virgins occur in this present church age, as do the events and preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of Matthew chapter 24 verses 1-14; the judgement of the sheep and goats will occur on earth prior to the setting up of the millennial kingdom; the invitation to the wedding feast is to all universally and this shows that the invitation to salvation is universal, as is God's love also. The 'stories' of the sheep and goats, and of Dives and Lazarus, are included as parables; the reviewer prefers to see them as actual incidents, involving in the one, actual, named individuals. The comments on them, especially the latter, are nevertheless informative and thoughtful.

For those who have not as yet looked much into the parables or who do not want an in-depth study, this book is a useful introduction, with just the right amount of comment.

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



## **The Desire of All Nations** B. R. Mikhael

Paperback, 166pp. Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, ON L3K 6A6, Canada. Price: £9.99 ISBN 978-1926765-77-8.

*The Desire of All Nations* (Hag. 2. 7) is a series of 'meditations on the manifold glories of the Lord Jesus Christ'. The book is divided into five sections in which MIKHAEL considers: The Pre-incarnate Christ, His Incarnation and Holy Life, His Sufferings and His Victory, His Present Work and His Coming Again. Truly, there can be no sweeter subject on which to meditate.

And meditations they certainly are. Anyone approaching this book with a desire to find detailed expository comment, like that of WALVOORD'S *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, is likely to be disappointed. They will not, however, be disappointed with the sweet, reverent, and varied thoughts on the Lord Jesus. These range from the consideration of types, such as Solomon's bed and chariot, S. of S. 3, to brief overviews of Old Testament passages, Ps. 16; 110; Isa. 42; 49, and reflections on phrases, such as 'yet a little while' in John's

Gospel. There are also contemplations of the manifold glories of His name, as revealed in the Chief Shepherd and Great High Priest.

Although the book has been arranged into chronological sections, it was originally published as separate articles in different magazines. This results in each meditation standing alone, and, therefore, the book as a whole lacks flow and the development of thought between each chapter. Nevertheless, this will suit some, as it means the book can be read at various intervals without losing sight of the overall theme. Be prepared for the highly frequent quotation of poems, hymns, and prose, all of which can be overwhelming at times!

Overall, the book is recommended as an encouragement to further reflect on the majesty and beauty of our Saviour. Complementary reading might also include *Our Glorious Lord* by JOHN RITCHIE or F. A. TATFORD'S *The Master*, amongst others.

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





### **The Song of Zechariah** Timothy Cross

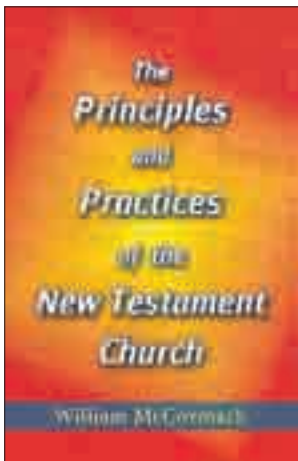
Paperback, 106pp. Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, ON L3K 6A6, Canada. Price £5.99 ISBN 978-1926765-64-8.

In the preface, TIMOTHY CROSS describes the song of Zechariah, recorded in Luke chapter 1 verses 67 to 79, as 'no ordinary hymn' but one that owes its origin 'to the working of the Holy Spirit of God in the heart, mind and tongue of the aged Zechariah'. He notes that these were the first recorded words of Zechariah after nine months of silence, a song primarily concerned not, as we might have anticipated, with his own son, John, who had just been born, but with the Lord Jesus. Sixteen chapters are then devoted to an analysis of the leading themes of the song. Within those chapters a vast number of subjects are considered, embracing God's mercy and His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises, the lineage and essential deity of Christ, the salvation provided in Christ, the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ, the joy of salvation and the light, life, and peace which comes to the believer in Christ. The sixteen chapters are short and very readable.

Sadly, this book does not provide the reader with an exposition of the song, but, rather, the author's application of it. In the opening chapter CROSS asserts 'The New Testament teaches that Christians are the true Israel' and the song is approached as relating to the church and not to Israel nationally, an 'amillennial' viewpoint that leads to confusion in the book regarding prophetic events. Other statements in the opening chapter relative to the grace of God and the work of Christ, though not expanded, are consistent with belief in the doctrine of 'particular redemption'.

Overall, this is not a book which I would recommend.

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



### **The Principles and Practices of the New Testament Church** William McCormack

Paperback, 44 pages, Published by John Ritchie Limited, 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland. ISBN 978-1-907731-27-3.

Although there are many books that have been published on this subject, it is appropriate that each new generation should be reminded of those things that distinguish the New Testament assembly. In the five chapters that make up this little booklet, the author covers such topics as: The Church: its meaning, foundation and place; Government and Discipline in the local church; Headship and Priesthood; Gifts; and the Practices of the New Testament Church.

It will be appreciated that covering such a subject within the scope of forty-four pages will mean that principles are often stated rather than explained. However, in certain key areas there is a slightly deeper treatment to provide some illumination of the principle under consideration. The author is to be commended for his exercise, and there is a basis upon which further study could be engendered. In this context it would have been useful to have a few books for further reading and more scripture references offered, perhaps in footnotes or endnotes.

Overall, this is a helpful booklet. The only minor issues that this reviewer might raise are the lack of mention of Phoebe in the section on deacons, the sparse references to scripture in dealing with temporary gifts, and the lack of mention of James chapter 5 in the context of healing. These might be considerations for any future reprint.



### **Realising a Vision through Faith** Colleen Redit with Peggy Loh

Hardback, 205 pages, Published by Christian Missions Charitable Trust, Chennai, India. Available from Precious Seed International. Price: £11.95. ISBN 978-1871642-57-5.

This is a book that traces the most remarkable story and work of Colleen Redit, founder of Christian Missions Charitable Trust, Chennai, India. However, in reading the book I was struck by the simple and very 'matter of fact' way in which this story is told. This beautiful book contains many photographs, and, at times, a detailed narrative, yet it does not convey much of the drama of the trials of missionary work amongst some of the poorest and neediest people of India. It is a book that seeks to let the facts speak for themselves.

What makes this book interesting and challenging is the thread that runs throughout. God is faithful! Yet the reader must pause and appreciate the remarkable nature of events that are recorded so simply. There is no attempt to emphasize the difficulties of financing or staffing a growing work of this nature and magnitude. There is little attempt to convey the burden of

such a work on the person responsible for the vision. What is communicated is the warmth, wisdom, and enthusiasm of Colleen Redit.

There is a lot of practical insight that might prove useful to those considering a work for the Lord. Being unfamiliar with the New Zealand background of the author I found it difficult to appreciate the Every Girl's Rally work. Equally, having never been to India, it is difficult to appreciate the challenges of working in that country. However, the replication of the Rally concept in an Indian context was an interesting insight into how difficulties and tensions can be overcome. Equally, it is encouraging to see something of the support of the commending assemblies, as well as those Indian believers who now share the vision, and the burden for its delivery. It needs to be remembered, this is an on-going work! This is not just a book to read. It is a book to ponder.

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# Editorial

## ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil’, 1 Thess. 5. 22.

I still remember with affection the days of childhood, and being able to play outside in the garden. It wasn’t just the pleasure of summer holidays and sun. There was that sense of additional freedom. Yet, as we came in from our garden activity things that we hadn’t realized were soon brought to our attention. Our hands were dirty, as well as other peripheral parts that had been exposed to the grass or the soil. It took a maternal eye to spot these blemishes!

In spiritual terms we do not have to spend long in the world to come back from our activities with similar levels of defilement. Sadly, the defilement is not just external. We can scrub the external clean with copious amounts of soap and water. It is a great pity that cleaning our minds is not quite so simple. What we see, what we hear, and sometimes what we touch, can have serious implications for our moral and spiritual welfare. The Christian needs to be especially sensitive, as well as having a keen sense of what is intrinsically good, and what is not.

There has been much discussion amongst commentators about how the verse above ought to be translated in our English version. Should we accept the KJV word ‘appearance’, when reality is meant rather than a mere semblance? I suspect that when William Tyndale worked on translating the Bible into English his desire was not to generate a discussion of semantics. Too often we can use our command of the English language as a cover for dabbling in things that we know we would be better leaving alone. Sailing close to the wind can cause even the experienced sailor to capsize!

It would be good if we allowed the simplicity of this verse to challenge our hearts. Does what we see, our first impressions, give us a sense of unease about pursuing a matter further? Is there an ‘appearance of evil’? If so, let us heed the advice of Paul to Timothy and flee. We can be reasonably sure that what is for our good will not have the appearance of evil.

In each magazine we try to provide a blend of that which is informative, expository, devotional, practical, and challenging. We are thankful to those who write for us. The time they commit to this work is considerable. In this issue we try again to provide that which is ‘good’, for the spiritual profit and blessing of the Lord’s people. May we all seek to immerse ourselves in the things of God that we might profit withal!





This article will seek to put forward the case that the one thousand year period referred to in Revelation chapter 20 is a literal period of Christ's reign on earth following the present age, rapture, tribulation, and second coming. Although the thousand years is only mentioned here, it is referred to six times in seven verses and used for three purposes: the period of Satan being bound; of Christ's reign; and between the resurrections of the just and unjust.<sup>1</sup> Now why should the thousand years not be taken literally, as with most if not all the other time periods in the book?

The view expressed in this article is generally called 'premillennialism' because it views Christ's coming as before, or pre-, a literal kingdom on earth. The main opposing view to premillennialism is amillennialism, which suggests the kingdom is spiritually fulfilled during this age by the church. Dating back to Augustine, around the 4th century, this view proposes that Satan was bound at the cross, thus commencing the 'reign' of Christ and His church who will spread the 'kingdom' until it achieves worldwide acceptance prior to Christ's second coming. The view, of course, fitted in nicely with the spread of religious Rome, which continued even after the demise of Imperial Rome. The end of the first millennium AD led to the period being spiritualized to represent a longer period of time, now 2000 years and still going. Even a superficial look at this poses some serious questions:

- Has Satan been bound since the cross? The New Testament makes it clear he is still very active, he is seen as a roaring lion, adversary and prince of this world. It would be easier to argue that his influence is spreading and increasing over time!
- The supposed 'reign' of Christ and His people now is also very questionable. The spread of organized religion, seen figuratively as Babylon, and literally through Rome and its subsidiaries, may well have occurred but much of it is false and in no way representative of Christ, considering the evils

# The Case for a Literal One

By **ALASTAIR SINCLAIR** Crosshouse, Scotland

and excesses it has practised through the ages. Sadly, though the reformers recognized the evil of this system, they did not reject its amillennial teaching, although as the gospel spread following the reformation some developed the postmillennial view. This purports that the world will be Christianized, bringing a long period of peace and prosperity prior to Christ's second coming, hence His coming is post, or after, the millennium. While a noble aspiration, sadly this has floundered after the last century of wars and misery, followed by the huge rise in secularism, atheism, humanism, the occult, and Islam. Rather than ascending into a period of theocratic rule, our world is descending into sin, chaos, and impending judgement. The United Kingdom is a good example of this deterioration; what was largely a Christian-influenced society is now described by our leaders as a 'post-Christian' society, and our Parliament as a place where 'we don't do God'. In fact, the laws now being proposed, passed, and applauded by all major political parties demonstrate we are now in an anti-Christian society. Only Christ's return and direct theocratic rule on earth will achieve the glorious conditions described in scripture and briefly reviewed in the previous article.

However, the case for a literal earthly millennium can be built on much firmer foundations than these obvious shortcomings in the alternative views. We will now consider some of these.

The first of these is the scriptures themselves. Not only is it consistent to interpret Revelation chapter 20 literally but this also applies throughout the scriptures. The Old Testament prophets contain many very specific prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus in incarnation. For example, Isaiah foretells the virgin birth, Micah identifies Bethlehem, Jeremiah

tells of the massacre of infants, and Hosea of the flight into Egypt. The historical books predict His coming from a woman, and descent from both Abraham and David. Similarly, passages like Psalm 22 and Isaiah chapter 53 predict, in detail, His crucifixion, suffering, humiliation, burial, and resurrection. In all, over one hundred detailed prophecies were fulfilled at His first coming.

Remarkably, these same Old Testament writers have made over two hundred detailed prophesies concerning His second coming. Why should these not also be literally fulfilled? Like the first prophecies they identify locations: Jerusalem, Zion, and Israel. Unconditional covenants or promises made to Abraham, regarding the land, and David, regarding the throne, are to be fulfilled. Geographic changes are outlined: Israel's borders, the areas of land for the nation, priests, and Prince are all found in Ezekiel, as well as eight chapters of essential detail of a temple yet to be built. Take Zechariah as just one example of this. He very accurately prophesied of the Lord's piercing, betrayal, the thirty pieces of silver, and the buying of the Potter's field. He also tells of His feet touching the Mount of Olives, its splitting in two, a new and miraculous river from Jerusalem, Israel's national repentance, renewal of the land, blessing on the whole earth, and David's throne being re-established. Why should these prophecies not be taken as literally as the ones already fulfilled?

The New Testament also has over 150 references to a coming kingdom with over 75% found in the three synoptic Gospels, which often have Jewish character and tie in closely to Old Testament prophecies. While a few identify the kingdom as then being





# Thousand Year Kingdom

present in some aspects, the majority point forward to the future. Similarly, when we come to the remaining thirty plus references in the New Testament a few do speak of the kingdom in its present revelation,<sup>2</sup> but, again, the majority look to the future, speaking of 'inheriting', or being 'heirs'. Peter speaks of a future 'entrance' to an 'everlasting kingdom', 2 Pet. 1. 11; Paul looks forward to 'the end' when the Lord Jesus delivers 'the kingdom' to God, after He has reigned in righteousness so that, as Peter again tells us, righteousness may then 'dwell' eternally on a new Heaven and new Earth. These terms distinguish the 1000 years' kingdom on this earth from its eternal continuance on the new one.<sup>3</sup> Paul looks forward to it in the final chapter of his final book.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, *vindicating Christ* requires a literal reign on earth. The last public glimpse this world saw of Him was hanging on a Roman cross under the mocking title 'King of the Jews'. Even His disciples were confounded by this, for they had been promised His 'coming in glory', and as 'Son of man', 'Coming in his kingdom', Matt. 16. 27-28. It had been prefigured on the Mount of Transfiguration, but still awaits fulfilment. Daniel chapter 7 verses 13-14 also requires fulfilment, and can also only truly be fulfilled by Christ as God's 'man' reigning on this earth, not only as King of Israel but King of kings and Lord of lords over all 'peoples, nations, and languages'. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, not

only promises them a 'coming' to raise them at the rapture, but also a 'coming' of manifestation.<sup>5</sup>

This manifestation is not only for Christ but also for His bride, the church; they will also be blessed in a literal millennium. Peter uses the word for manifestation three times in his First Epistle to encourage saints whose faith and hope are being tried, assuring them of reward when He appears and is fully revealed.<sup>6</sup> In Romans, the word is also used to warn of judgement on the ungodly, and to assure 'the sons of God' that they will share in His 'manifestation'.<sup>7</sup>

The same verse introduces another demand for a literal millennium, that of the creation. Paul's graphic description depicts this fallen creation groaning under the effects of mankind's sin. Poverty, famine, injustice, abortion, pollution, war, and many other ailments beset this present earth, but Christ will rectify them all, when, as God's man, He exposes the failure of every other form of government. Having witnessed in a few short decades the collapse and failure of communism, capitalism, and even so-called democracy, surely we can now see that only a literal millennium will demonstrate what adherence to God's commandments can produce. Not only that, but man's eventual further rebellion, when Satan is loosed, will prove conclusively that man's sin is a product of his nature, not environment.

Finally, we must address one more demand for a literal millennium: the nation of Israel! It is a fundamental misunderstanding of God's purpose for this nation which has caused many to reject a literal millennium. It is a fact of history that Christendom as a whole has, at best, been indifferent to the fate of the Jews, and, at worst, involved in their vilification,

isolation, and even persecution. The reformers, great men though they were, were largely unable to get over the centuries of long engrained anti-Semitism which the mediaeval church had developed. This is evident from the writings of many of them.<sup>8</sup> Yet, in addition to all the scriptures promising a future restoration of Israel, surely the great principle of God's sovereignty must demand a future for Israel? The covenants to Abraham and David demand it. So does the land bought by Jeremiah, the Temple described in detail by Ezekiel, and the great prophecies of Daniel. The intricate detail given by Zechariah, and the other prophets, demand it, and, in addition to all this, history demands it. How else can we explain the preservation of this tiny nation, despite the successive might of world powers trying to wipe it out? It is not the ingenuity or strength of their secular government, nor the false faith of their Christ-rejecting religious leaders that has preserved them. It can be nothing other than the sovereign purpose of the God who chose them. His word is 'yea and amen', and He will fulfil every promise made to them. As He has always done, He will judge the nations that persecute them, even the nations He raised for the purpose of disciplining them. They have been preserved so that a remnant of the true 'Israel of God' will 'look on him whom they pierced' and be restored. Then, they will be 'at the head of the nations' and Christ will reign on David's throne from Jerusalem for a thousand years.

Only this literal millennium fulfils the requirements of Satan restrained, scripture realized, Christ reigning, the church rewarded, the creation released, and Israel restored. Well might we pray, as a remnant soon will, 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven'.

## Endnotes

- 1 Dan. 12. 2; John 5. 29.
- 2 Rom. 14. 17; 1 Cor. 4. 20; Col. 4. 11.
- 3 1 Cor. 15. 24-26; 2 Pet. 3. 13.
- 4 2 Tim. 4. 1, 18.
- 5 1 Cor. 15. 23; 1 Cor. 1. 7.
- 6 1 Pet. 1. 7, 13; 4. 13.
- 7 Rom. 2. 5; Rom. 8. 19.
- 8 See H. A. OBERMAN, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism*, pg. xi.

ALASTAIR SINCLAIR is in fellowship in the assembly in Crosshouse, Ayrshire, Scotland.





## 2 Chronicles chapter 30 **Gathering God's Way**

proclaiming to the tribes the place and purpose of the meeting.

**The Place** – As the post went out to Israel as well as Judah, they were to impress upon the people the significance of the **place** where the Passover would be kept. It was not to be held at Dan or Bethel, places which were meant to distract Israel from the temple worship at Jerusalem. It was not to be held at the shrines or high places, whether significant for idolatry or the 'worship' of Jehovah. These were to be destroyed. Ten times in chapter 30 we read of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

This was the divinely appointed centre of gathering in Hezekiah's day. The New Testament assembly is the divinely appointed centre of gathering today. There were those of the professing people of God who laughed and mocked, v. 10, but this in no way detracted from the truth of the one place of gathering. One way of salvation, and only one way of gathering!

**The Period** – The priests and Levites took sixteen days to purify the sanctuary, overshooting the date of the Passover which should be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month. Hezekiah does not copy Jeroboam, who 'ordained a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month like unto the feast that is in Judah', 1 Kgs. 12. 32. He recognizes God's will in the dating of the festival, but is also aware of the proviso, 'If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean . . . yet he shall keep the Passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it', Num. 9. 10, 11. It is celebrated exactly one month later once the terms of Numbers chapter 9 are met. The remembrance of our blessed Lord is to be the first act of the first day of each new week.

The feast of unleavened bread which followed immediately after Passover lasted for seven days normally, but by general consent this was increased by a further seven days. Solomon had acted similarly in connection with the feast of tabernacles. This feast could be doubled in length, as it speaks of the believer's holiness of life and

# HEZEKIAH

## THE DEVOTED KING (2)

By **JOHN GRIFFITHS** Port Talbot, Wales

does not contravene any principle, or compromise any type or antitype.

**The Purpose** – 'that they should come to keep the Passover for they had not done it of a long time . . . as it was written', v. 5. Also see, 'by the word of the Lord', v. 12; 'according to the law', v. 16; 'than it was written', v. 18.

Our remembrance of the Lord should be celebrated on the first day of **every** week. This was the practice of believers in the Acts.<sup>2</sup> It should be



kept in accordance with the order of scripture . . . in simplicity and yet with the purpose of the gathering in mind, 'This do in remembrance of me'.

**The Problem** – 'For a multitude of the people . . . had not cleansed themselves . . . yet they eat the Passover . . . but Hezekiah prayed for them', v. 18. God heard his prayer and healed them, inasmuch as their hearts were right before God. The standard of God's holiness must be maintained amongst His people.<sup>3</sup>

**The Pleasure** – 'So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon . . . there was not the like in Jerusalem', v. 26. O, the joy to be felt when we engage in the things of the Lord and worship Him not out of duty but sheer delight, in keeping

with His desire!.

### Chapter 31

#### **Giving Generously**

providing for the priests and Levites.

This chapter divides into two parts:

Hezekiah's Twofold Appointment, vv. 2, 3 – courses for the priesthood; the portion of the king.

Hezekiah's Twofold Commandment, vv. 4-19 – the superabundance of their giving; the storehouses for their gifts.

Giving to the Lord and His servants is thus the thrust of the passage.

*Their giving was purposeful*, v. 4, 'to give . . . that they (priests and Levites) might be encouraged in the law of the Lord'.<sup>4</sup>

*Their giving was planned*, v. 5, 'the children of Israel brought the firstfruits'. Do we give of our firstfruits to the Lord? Cp. 1 Cor. 16. 1, 2.

*Their giving was plentiful*, vv. 5, 6, 10, 'brought in abundance'; 'brought they in abundantly'; 'laid them by heaps'; 'we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty', cp. 2 Cor. 8. 2 – 'liberality'; 2 Cor. 9. 5 – 'bounty'; 2 Cor. 8. 14 – 'abundance'.

*Their giving was proportionate*, vv. 5, 6, 'the tithe' or tenth. We are not asked to tithe, but under grace surely we should not expect to give less than they gave under the law! They were not restricted to tithing. This was only the minimum, for on top they also contributed 'freewill offerings', v. 14.

#### **His National Pride**

based on his tenure of office.

#### **He builds with foresight**

Hezekiah, realizing the threat of







Assyria now that he had refused to pay the tribute money to them, protected the water supply to Jerusalem against a siege. He also repaired the Broad Wall, raised towers and reconstructed the Millo, to seek to make Jerusalem impregnable.

The water supply ran from the spring at Gihon to the pool of Siloam. Hezekiah's tunnel was discovered by Sir Charles Warren in 1867. In 1880 the Siloam Inscription was found inside the tunnel and is now in a museum in Istanbul, Turkey.<sup>5</sup> God grant us the spiritual foresight to build with an eye to the future!

### **He battles with foes**

He was initially successful against the Philistines and brave in his decision to withhold tribute from Assyria, however, his faith failed him when the Assyrians came knocking at his door! He tried to 'buy off' the Assyrians by repaying the tribute money that had been owed. He raided the temple and his own treasures. He undid much of his good work in relation to the temple by his lack of trust in God. Sennacherib then laid siege to Judah, conquering forty-six cities before threatening Jerusalem. Hezekiah turns to Isaiah for reassurance before spreading the Assyrian's letter before the Lord in the temple. He prays for deliverance for Jerusalem on the basis that God may be exalted in the eyes of the heathen. Isaiah assures Hezekiah that his prayer has been heard and answered. Sennacherib will not invade Jerusalem, Isa. 37. 33-35. Angelic intervention overnight destroyed 185,000 of his soldiers. He returned by the way he had come, as the Lord had promised. Twenty years later he was killed by two of his sons whilst he was worshipping in the house of his gods. Secular material giving Sennacherib's version of these events can be found on a hexagonal cylinder in the British Museum. Lord Byron's poem of 1815, *The*

*Destruction of Sennacherib*, is also worth reading in this connection.

Two lessons, at least, should be learned from this episode. 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths', Prov. 3. 5, 6. Further, we need a comprehensive appreciation of the kind of God we believe in. He is sovereign; He is almighty; nothing is too hard for God. He is the God of the impossible!



### **He beseeches with fervour**

Isaiah chapter 38 verse 1 begins, 'In those days', and follows Sennacherib's defeat, but verse six suggests that the events of this chapter fall between the two Assyrian visits, the one fended off with tribute money and the other dealt with by God. We will take this point of view.

Isaiah delivers the Lord's message to Hezekiah. What a bombshell! 'Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live'. Is this chastisement for Hezekiah's lack of faith and looting

of the temple in order to pay the Assyrian tribute?

Hezekiah resorts to prayer. He was a man of prayer and the Lord granted him his requests on every recorded occasion: at the Passover; at the announcement of his death; at the siege of Jerusalem. Why did he pray for an extension to his life?

That the nation was faced with this powerful adversary and Hezekiah did not yet have a son to succeed him were two compelling reasons. Had not David been told, 'There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel', 2 Chr. 6. 16? Hezekiah also appeals on the grounds of his godly walk and perfect heart, Isa. 38. 3. After all, longevity was promised in the Old Testament for such character. Even in the New Testament this is not a foreign idea, 'And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight', 1 John 3. 22. His praying was accompanied by weeping and God responded, 'I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years'. May we learn the value of effectual fervent prayer, Jas. 5. 16.

### **Endnotes**

- 1 Hezekiah went back to Deuteronomy chapter 12 verse 5, 'But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek and thither thou shalt come'.
- 2 See Acts 20. 7.
- 3 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 27 reminds us of those not fit to remember the Lord. The next verse exhorts us, 'Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup'.
- 4 Note 2 Corinthians 9 verse 7.
- 5 See E W BULLINGER *The Companion Bible*, Pt. 3; pp. 99-103

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Few, if any, of us have ever faced a woman like Jezebel. She was the very influential and utterly ruthless wife of the king of Israel, the power behind Ahab's throne. When she issued a threat, as she did in 1 Kings chapter 19 verse 2, she had the influence and the power to carry out that threat to the letter, for she was a formidable foe.

Sadly, the prophet of chapter 19 is not the Elijah of chapter 18 of 1 Kings. The man who had publicly taken on the prophets of Baal and defeated them, the man who had been reliant upon the power of God, the man who had been the vessel for the manifestation of God's power, is now a shadow of his former self. The man who had ascended Carmel's mountain top is now in the valley of despair.

It would be critical of Elijah to ask questions about his faith. But I wonder how many of us have sat in the darkness and despair of our painful plight and asked the question, 'Why?' or, more personally, 'Why me?'. At such times of despondency, a clear exposition of scripture does not spring to mind. The brain does not function as it should. In the loneliness of the wilderness, sitting under a juniper tree, Elijah cries, 'It is enough . . . take away my life', 19. 4.

What can we learn of Elijah's situation? Mind, a support organization for those with mental health problems, indicates a number of warning signs to look for. Some of those are shown here in 1 Kings chapter 19.

**He felt a worthless failure, 'I am not better than my fathers', v. 4;**  
Depressed people feel a sense of worthlessness and failure. They have lost all sense of self-esteem.

**He was exhausted, 'he lay and slept', v. 5;**  
It is often thought that people who are depressed cannot sleep. This is not always the case – some can sleep but find it difficult to wake up and become active. They are lethargic.

**He was hungry and thirsty – the angel of the Lord supplies him with two meals, vv. 5, 7.**

# DEPRESSION A

Depressed people often do not take care of themselves. They neglect to eat or perform the normal activities of life associated with their appearance.

**He felt isolated and alone, 'I, even I only am left', vv. 10, 14.**

There is a real feeling of isolation and hopelessness. It seems there is little point in going on with life.

**He was a hunted man under threat of death, 'they seek my life, to take it away', vv. 10, 14.**

Having suffered some major setback, there is a marked change of behaviour in the person – what a contrast with Carmel.

In many ways, Elijah was at the physical and mental extremities of life. He felt the tremendous pressure associated with his work for God. He was, as we might say, 'at the end of his tether'! His request is a genuine, and heartfelt plea, 'he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life', v. 4. Have we ever felt like Elijah felt? The isolation of a path of faithfulness coupled with the persecution of a hate-filled and powerful individual would take the godliest to the point of no return! Yet, in his despair, at the lowest ebb of his experience, 'there came a voice unto him', v. 13. The God of the extreme drought, of the miraculous provision, and of the fire of Carmel, draws near in 'a sound of gentle stillness', v. 12 margin.

It is remarkable. The man who had seen, and had been the chosen vessel to demonstrate, the power of God comes to know the peace of God. His mind in turmoil, his life threatened, his feeling of isolation playing heavily upon him, God comes in the stillness. There is a sense of that 'peace of God which passeth all understanding . . . [keeping] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus', Phil. 4. 7.

But let us consider how God handles the case of Elijah, in order that we might appreciate, as believers, how we might comfort those in the

## Elijah

extremities of life and help them in their despair.

What did God provide for His suffering servant?

### Physical sustenance

'And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat', v. 5.

The instruction was to 'arise and eat'. We tend to major on the spiritual welfare of the individual, and it is right that the spiritual should be uppermost in our thoughts. However, in a situation like this, we have to tackle the physical needs before we can rightly address the spiritual. How can we speak on spiritual issues if the individual is hungry and weary? If we go back to Elijah's extremity we see that he was hungry, thirsty, and tired. This is where God starts.

### A listening ear

'The word of the Lord came unto him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?' v. 9.

God asks the question of Elijah, 'What doest thou here?' The omniscient God – the One who knows all things – asks Elijah what he is doing in that particular place. Surely, God already knows the answer! The reason why God asks the question, and asks it twice, vv. 9, 13, is to engage Elijah in conversation. He wants Elijah to 'tell Him how he feels'. You will note the open question that is asked.

Despite his sense of loneliness and isolation what Elijah needed was to realize he was not alone, he needed a listening ear. How patient and caring is our God! When His servant is in difficulties, He draws near. He is not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the still small voice. Elijah doesn't need the fire of







# BIBLICAL CASE STUDY

Carmel to devour the sacrifice. He needs the still small voice of calm for his troubled mind.<sup>1</sup>

## Reassurance as to the future

'Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel', v. 16.

This might be the most difficult point to replicate as we seek to support fellow saints who find themselves where Elijah was. This was God giving a revelation of His mind, the will and purpose of God. God takes Elijah into His confidence!

Elijah was in fear of his life because of Ahab and Jezebel his wife. They hated Elijah and were hunting him down to kill him. However, in the purposes of God it was Ahab and Jezebel that should fear. Elijah was to anoint their successor, Jehu, and Ahab and Jezebel were to die well before Elijah was taken up into heaven. What's more, Elijah was to anoint the man who would be responsible for Ahab's death in battle, Hazael, king of Syria.

It is worth pondering the ways of God in relation to His servants. Think of Job, as he lay in the depths of his sorry plight supported by

miserable comforters who blamed the situation upon Job himself. What did Job learn from his experience? He said, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee', Job. 42. 5. God blessed the latter end of Job. Not only did he gain more than he had lost, but his experience of His God became personal and direct. Perhaps we need to remind our hearts that it is when we come to an end of ourselves that our experience of God is deepened.

## Succession in the work of the Lord

'Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room', v. 16. 'So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat', v. 19.

God not only told Elijah that he had work for him to do but he also revealed the man who would carry on the work of the Lord after Elijah was gone. It would have been so easy for God to point out to Elijah that he was wrong. Apart from Obadiah, whom Elijah seemed to

have written off, and the prophets that he had hidden, there were seven thousand in Israel that had not bowed unto Baal. Equally, God was able to reveal Elisha as Elijah's ultimate successor. Things were not as bleak as Elijah seemed to think.

Yet God's handling of Elijah shows a degree of sensitivity that is worthy of our consideration. There is the danger that our patience runs thin and we so easily slip into the 'snap out of it and pull yourself together' mode. This is not so with God. He listens, Elijah repeats his view, and then God gently shows Elijah that he still has a work to do, and that God is sovereign.

As circumstances may overwhelm the saint of God it would be good to draw alongside, listen, oftentimes to repeated complaints, and then kindly show how God still has a work for them to do. There is a need to rebuild that sense of importance and indicate their value to the testimony of the Lord's people.

The writer is not a trained counsellor nor is this article written on the basis of medical training and expertise. What we have sought to trace through this passage is something of how God handled Elijah. This is but one example of many and, perhaps, some of the remedies may have been personal to Elijah and his circumstances. However, let us all seek and pray to be used of God to provide succour to those in hard places.

ANNIE FLINT's hymn captures the thought:

'He giveth more grace  
when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength  
when the labours increase,  
To added affliction  
He addeth His mercy  
To multiplied trials  
His multiplied peace'.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> We might draw a parallel with Paul's experience, 'At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me', 2 Tim. 4. 16-17.





The first two articles in this series have looked at God's glory in the Old Testament as the pre-requisite for worship, and in relation to the believer's work for God. The next two presented the glory of our Saviour and the glory of our salvation. This article is about the glory of His church, and the concluding one will be the glory at His coming.

# The Glory of God and the Church (5)

By **GARY McBRIDE** London, Ontario, Canada

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

## THE PURPOSES OF GOD

Paul ends his prayer in Ephesians chapter 3 with a wonderful doxology, vv. 20, 21. He is eloquent about the surpassing power of God – the fact that God can do far more than we can ask or think. This power is at work in us. Paul moves on from God's power to the church, and finishes his prayer with this thought, 'to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus'. God's power works in us, but glory flows to Him from the church.

This verse must be examined in context, but the language takes the subject out into eternity. The context has to do with the wisdom of God being displayed in the church. This is a result of Jew and Gentile being made one, that Gentiles 'should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel', v. 6.

It was Paul's privilege to preach among the Gentiles 'the unsearchable riches of Christ', v. 8. The purpose was that the splendour of the mystery, Jew and Gentile in one



body, would display God's wisdom to the occupants of the heavenlies. This was the fulfilment of God's eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is true that our individual salvation is to the 'praise of the glory of His grace', 1. 6. As a result, individual believers will show 'in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace', 2. 7. But the glory described here in chapter 3 has to do with believers universally as the body of Christ. This display of glory is not about practice, but has everything to do with the outworking of God's purposes. The 'manifold wisdom of God', v. 10, is on display through the composition of the church. That which was hidden in the past has now been made visible, namely, that Gentiles would be fellow-heirs.

This glory is also seen 'by' JND or



'in' A. T. ROBERTSON, Christ Jesus. All the attributes mentioned so far in this Epistle are visible in the church and in its head, Christ Jesus. Namely the love, mercy, grace, wisdom, and power of God are all seen in the church and in its risen Head.

The angelic world looks at this, and they learn of the wisdom of God. They see God's eternal purposes being worked out in Christ. They view the church and Christ and see the glory of God on display. This display of glory will be visible for all eternity.

The church universal is a holy temple, a spiritual house, a household of God, and the church of the living God. The church is the habitation of God in the Spirit, 2. 22. In the Old Testament Tabernacle the glory of God filled the Holy of Holies. The New Testament answer is the church, a holy temple, in which God resides in the Spirit.

## THE PERSON OF CHRIST

The church, by its very existence, reveals the glory of the Lord Jesus. The church is the result He anticipated in going to the cross, 'He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied', Isa. 53. 11. This was part of that joy that was set before Him that caused Him to endure the cross and despise the shame, Heb. 12. 2.

The church is that pearl of great price, for which the Lord Jesus, as the merchant man, sold all He had to purchase this pearl, Matt. 13. 45, 46. A pearl is formed as a result of a wound in the side, the only gemstone produced from a living organism.

A fitting metaphor of the church, purchased at great cost and now on display for His glory.

The church is a building, but the foundation, and the chief cornerstone, and the capstone is Christ. It is a body with its Head in heaven, Jesus Christ. It is a bride and He the heavenly Bridegroom. The church, His body, is the fullness of Him who fills all in all, Eph. 1. 23.

Colossians chapter 1 describes the creation of the universe and the formation of the church. Both are a result of the work of the Lord Jesus.



The prepositions in verses 16 and 17, 'by', 'through' and 'for', describe His relationship to His creation. Similar prepositions can be applied to Him in relation to the formation of the Church.

In verse 20 it is 'by him' that the work of reconciliation was accomplished. In verse 22 it is 'in him' and through





His death that this reconciling work was made possible, and by which He made peace. Though the word 'for' is not used, it is implied due to the position He occupies. He is the Head, the beginning, the firstborn and in all things He is to have the pre-eminence. As a result it can be said that the church was formed 'for

him' and, like the physical creation, the church displays His glory.

Revelation chapter 1 verses 5 and 6 describe the outcome of the work of the Lord Jesus. He loved us, washed us from our sins, and made us a 'kingdom of priests' JND. The outcome is that glory and dominion should go

to Him in time and in eternity. In 1 Peter chapter 2 believers are viewed collectively as a spiritual house, a holy nation, but also as a holy and a royal priesthood. This priesthood is seen when believers gather together and it also functions when spiritual sacrifices are offered, glory is given to God, and the gospel goes out to the world.

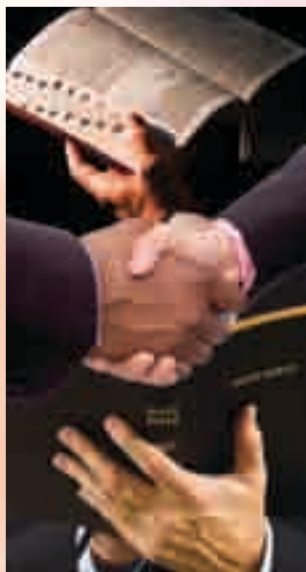
## THE PRACTICES OF THE CHURCH

Individual believers are saved in such a way that all the glory goes to God. There is no merit in us, no works that we can boast about, and no righteousness that we may present. We are bought with a price and, as a result, we are to glorify God in our bodies. Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, it should be done to the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10. 31.

Believers should let their testimony be seen through good works so that others see these and glorify God, Matt. 5. 16. We are His ambassadors and, as such, our goal is to bring glory to His name. Since this is true in the individual realm, how much more so in the times when we gather together as a local church.

There are corporate practices that are specifically designed to bring glory to God. Corporate worship, by its very nature, is all about God's glory. Worship ascribes worth to the Lord Jesus, and lifts up His name to the glory of God. The local church that does not worship misses this opportunity to be occupied with God's glory.

Many debate the interpretation of 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verses 1-16, as to what it means and how it is to be applied. What is clear is that the passage has to do with the headship of Christ and the glory of God. The simplest approach with regard to glory is that everything that speaks of man's glory is covered. The contrast is that which displays God's glory is visible. When a woman's head is covered, her glory, and the glory of the man, are said to be covered. When the man's head is



glory of God. In Romans chapter 15 verse 5, Paul prays for God to grant them to be like-minded. The purpose is that out of this unity they may with 'one mind and one mouth glorify God', v. 6. Disunity and selfishness put the focus on man, and rob God of His glory.

How God's people are received should also be to God's glory. Believers are to 'receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God', v. 7. Care should be exercised not to go beyond the word of God for to refuse to receive God's people when He has received them is to hide His glory.

Even in eternity, the church will proclaim the worthiness of God. Many commentators feel that the twenty-four elders of Revelation chapter 5 represent the church in heaven. These elders sing a new song, a phrase that speaks of the song of the redeemed. Of the five sayings in chapters 4 and 5 this is the only one specifically called a song. The song starts with a proclamation of the worthiness of the Lamb, a declaration of His glory.

uncovered the text tells us that God's glory is visible. We may not understand all that is involved but it is almost universally accepted that males should not have their heads covered in church gatherings. Verse 10 says that the angels observe the church as it gathers and they learn lessons about headship. They also see this display of God's glory in the uncovered head of the man. As seen earlier, the local church is to display His glory.

Unity in the local church is to the

*In Him it is ordained to raise,  
a temple to Jehovah's praise,  
Composed of all His saints who own,  
no Saviour but the 'Living Stone',  
How vast the building see it rise,  
the work how great,  
the plan how wise!  
O wondrous fabric! Pow'r unknown:  
that rests it on the Living Stone.*

[SAMUEL MEDLEY]

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# SPREADING THE

**This article is written with a view to encouraging God's people to take up the opportunities for spreading the written word of God. If it encourages even one brother or sister to do this it will have been an article worth writing.**

When I was a sixth year pupil at High School I had no classes on a Friday afternoon so I spent those afternoons tracting with another brother. Those were formative days when we learned how to 'cold call' people with God's word. We made many mistakes, and sometimes showed zeal without discernment, but we believe that God preserved us in this work, and taught us vital lessons.

Strangely, I never felt completely comfortable doing this work, though I knew how important it was. I found it much easier when I knew the person I was speaking to, or if the enquirer showed an interest in spiritual things and asked questions. Around this time I and a number of other brethren tried to write well-presented, attractively published tracts in plain English for distribution locally.

In 1990, Jack Hay spoke at a conference at High Parks, Hamilton, Scotland. He challenged the audience regarding their personal testimony.

How many of us, he asked, regularly visited our own neighbours with God's word? My father had done this regularly in the area we live in, but it was not something I had done as a matter of course. But I felt convicted that it was something I should do too. I started the next week. It was hard, but over these past twenty-two years this has proved to be a vital work. Many opportunities have been opened up, new contacts have been made, I have been asked to take local funerals, and many neighbours have attended gospel tent meetings held in our garden.

As I grew older, got married, and had a family, the opportunities to go tracting became less frequent. Meanwhile, I had an exercise about the fact that our 'assembly parish' in Ballingry was extending. Our sphere of responsibility now covered a number of villages that had previously been blessed with an assembly testimony but that had since, sadly, closed. I had less time but more money than I did as a student, and I could use it for spreading the word of God more widely. We began to put some money aside. The answer to this prayer was when an assembly nearby closed and the brethren who were making arrangement for disbursement of the assembly assets, knowing of my burden regarding gospel literature, gave me a substantial cheque. I was inspired by the fact that a brother

(now with Christ) had tracted the whole town of Glenrothes, around 50,000 homes, nine times. This started the work of 'Scotland Needs the Gospel'. All the homes in that town received a tract that year. We also had gospel meetings in the town around that time. A brother who lives in Glenrothes helped me to visit homes, and give booklets and Bibles to all who desired them.

Following this initial exercise I began, as the Lord gave help, to use Royal Mail to distribute tracts to homes across large areas of Scotland – especially those with no assembly testimony. Where possible we try to tie a distribution in with special gospel meetings in an area, although this is not always possible. My brother Ken runs an associated website [www.scotlandneedsthegospel.org](http://www.scotlandneedsthegospel.org), which is a useful way for people to contact us electronically and to read more of God's way of salvation in the privacy of their own homes.

The Lord has supported the work, allowing the printing and postage of many hundreds of thousands of tracts in Scotland. Large parts of rural Scotland have now been covered with the word of God, as well as some of the more densely populated areas of the central lowlands. A number of brethren across Scotland have volunteered to visit contacts and pass on Bibles in remote areas,

## 'SCOTLAND NEEDS





# WORD



for which we give God thanks. My exercise is still to tract every home in Scotland.

Where there is an assembly or assemblies in a postal district we endeavour to work in fellowship with them, particularly in the work of following up local contacts. The assembly at Ballingry has taken responsibility for regular mailings to a large area of the countryside around us, where there is no testimony, and for mounting a high-profile text by the side of the M90 Motorway (see attached). This sharing in our exercise has been a big encouragement. Is it perhaps a work that other assemblies could seriously consider, as God enables them?

In terms of outcomes the world would say there is precious little to show for these efforts, but God knows it all and the 'day will declare it'. We have had thousands of hits on the web site, hundreds of people who have received visits, many malicious letters and returns have been sent to us, but also many hundreds of positive requests for Bibles and extra literature have been received. A number have attended gospel meetings as a direct result of the tracts and two that we know have been saved, one of whom is now in assembly fellowship. We are in no doubt that many who have not contacted us have been blessed

eternally. We enjoy those scriptures: 'it shall not return unto me void', Isa. 55. 11; 'the seed **is** the word of God', Luke 8. 11; 'he that goes forth . . . bearing precious seed . . . shall **doubtless** come again with rejoicing', Ps. 126. 6; 'cast thy bread . . . **shalt find it** after many days', Eccles. 11. 1; 'the gospel . . . **is** the power of God', Rom. 1. 16.

We have subsequently come across believers and assemblies who put adverts in papers, buses, trains, and use other means to spread God's word. We still believe that nothing is better than meeting people face to face to discuss eternal matters, but the masses need to hear God's word and if the Lord's people do not have the same opportunities, or the gift to do this personal work, then perhaps they can spread God's word through other means. The Lord is coming!

To God be all the glory.

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# THE GOSPEL'

By **CRAIG MUNRO** Ballingry, Scotland





# The Recognition and Reward

No subject in relation to what we call assembly truth can be more important than that of rule among the assemblies of God's people. The assembly is not a place where everyone does that which is right in their own eyes. Nor is it ever intended by God that His assemblies should be governed and controlled by one man, however able and gifted he may be. Elders in the local church of God are in the plural. Aged men are not necessarily fitted to guide and feed the flock. Young men generally have not the experience or spiritual maturity to be an overseer. However, there will always be exceptions to these generalizations. In the days of the apostles, overseers were a distinct and recognized group. This is seen in Philippians chapter 1 verse 1, and Acts chapter 20 verse 17 where Paul sends for the elders to meet him at Miletus. Elders rule within the assembly where they have been raised up by God, and have no jurisdiction over another assembly. We do not read of a group of elders forming themselves as a district oversight. This is foreign to scripture. In this article we will briefly consider what the word of God teaches on the subject of elders or overseers.

## Their Necessitation

Since elders were needed even in the apostolic period, should the need be any less today? There is a crying need for godly leadership in the assemblies today. In every sphere in this world, rule of some sort is needed, otherwise chaos and confusion will follow. Would there be any peace or order in the national, ecclesiastical, or local spheres without rule? Can we imagine a country without government, a city without authority, a family without parental restraint? Without proper government, in these and other spheres in this world, we would have mass chaos and corruption. Consider a sad example of this in scripture where in Judges chapter 19 we have an appalling description given to us of conditions when there was no kingly rule, vv. 1, 21, 25. The result is exactly what we have stated and is an illustration of what an assembly would be without government. Elders are

needed for ruling, leading, feeding, and watching the flock. The work of elders should have the support and prayers of the assembly. Such work is often a thankless task.

## Their Ministration

In the New Testament the leaders in each local assembly are described as elders, Acts 20. 17, overseers, Acts 20. 28, and pastors, Eph. 4. 11. It should be clear by examining and comparing these scriptures that these terms are synonymous and refer to the same persons. They give an indication of the kind of work in which they engage. There is not the slightest hint of one bishop being set over one church, or a group of churches. The term elder refers to their experience, the overseer refers to their exercise, the pastor or shepherd refers to the overseers who will make sure that the flock of God is fed with spiritual food, Acts 20. 28.

Elders are not a board of legislators imposing their mind on the assembly, but are seen in scripture as labourers among the saints. What a difference! Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of their leaders labouring among them, 1 Thess. 5. 12. Plainly, elders are expected to work for the good and wellbeing of the saints. Eldership is not an office to fill, but a *work* to be done! Sadly, for some men in the assemblies it is only a position to be grasped at with no proper realization of the grave responsibility involved. It has been well said that overseers in God's assembly are not *appointed* by men, but *anointed* by the Holy Spirit. This is seen in Paul's words, Acts 20. 28. In addition to their rule the following ministries mark the true overseer. They are shepherds, feeding, nourishing and supporting the flock. In Hebrews chapter 13 we have some further interesting indications of the role of elders. An overseer is to be a watchman, v. 17; they watch for the souls of the saints. An overseer is to be a leader, v. 7.

## Their Recognition

How are elders appointed and recognized in the assembly? It is

rather interesting to see that Israel always had elders among them, even when down in Egypt, Exod. 3. 16. Moses was told by God Himself to bring before Him men whom 'thou knowest to be elders of the people', Num. 11. 16. Did Moses make them elders? No, he did not! They had already shown themselves to be true elders. They were equipped and fitted by God. Because of this, Moses chose them to share with him

the responsibilities of leadership. It is no different in this present church age. It is regrettable that it is possible to have self-made overseers, or men in the assembly who have been voted in as elders. Such ideas are not found in scripture.

Eldership in the New Testament was not a new thing, but rather a carry-over from Old Testament days. There are many references to the presence of elders in Israel. God demanded that elders function in the nation. The God who demanded proper rule and government among His people in Old Testament times requires the same today. Who, then, appoints or authorizes elders? In the early days of the history of the church it was the apostles, Acts 14. 23, or their delegates, Titus 1. 5, who appointed, or ordained, elders. Today we have no apostles. There is no foundation for the teaching that this authority was handed down to succeeding generations. In Acts chapter 14, Paul had been away from the assemblies in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, v. 21, but, during the period of his absence, men came to the fore who were raised up by God to guide and govern the saints. This shows that God was able to work a spiritual work in the lives of these men, and prepare and fit them by the Holy Spirit for leadership.

An elder must have the recognition of his brethren and the whole assembly, 1 Thess. 5. 12-13. There are three exhortations to the assembly in Thessalonica regarding their attitude towards the elders. First is *acknowledgement*, 'Know them which labour among you, and

By  
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# of Elders

are over you in the Lord'. To 'know them' means to get to know them, and to appreciate their character and work. It is by a man's behaviour, example, maturity, and care for the saints that his leadership qualities are manifest to the assembly. Second is *appreciation*, 'And to esteem them very highly for their works sake'. You know a man by his work. We are not asked to appreciate certain personalities! Third is *assistance*, 'And to be at peace among yourselves'. What a help it is to elders when the saints in the local assembly are happy with one another, and there is sweet fellowship. Do we support the overseers in their work?

## Their Qualification

We know that in the things of the world, qualification always precedes office. How very important it is that those who are to have the care of the assembly should possess certain spiritual qualifications. Sadly, some of the problems, and even disasters, in assembly life have been caused by men who have not been fitted to lead the saints. We need to see from scripture what God demands from those who attempt to take the position of an overseer, 1 Tim. 3. 1-7. The godliest of overseers are not perfect and infirmity marks the best of them, but God looks for the highest of standards. Their personal life, their public life, and their position at home must all be beyond reproach. Does the professed overseer have anything in his life that would be just cause for complaint? Does he have his own family under control? Before one can take care of the church of God he must prove his ability to effectively control his own house, v. 5. Is his public life in order? In relation to the world the overseer must have a good testimony and also be free from bringing reproach upon the assembly by his life in the world, v. 7.

There are two conditions in this passage dealing with overseership that would be helpful to briefly comment upon. Their meaning is often misunderstood. In verse 2 an overseer must be 'apt to teach'. This

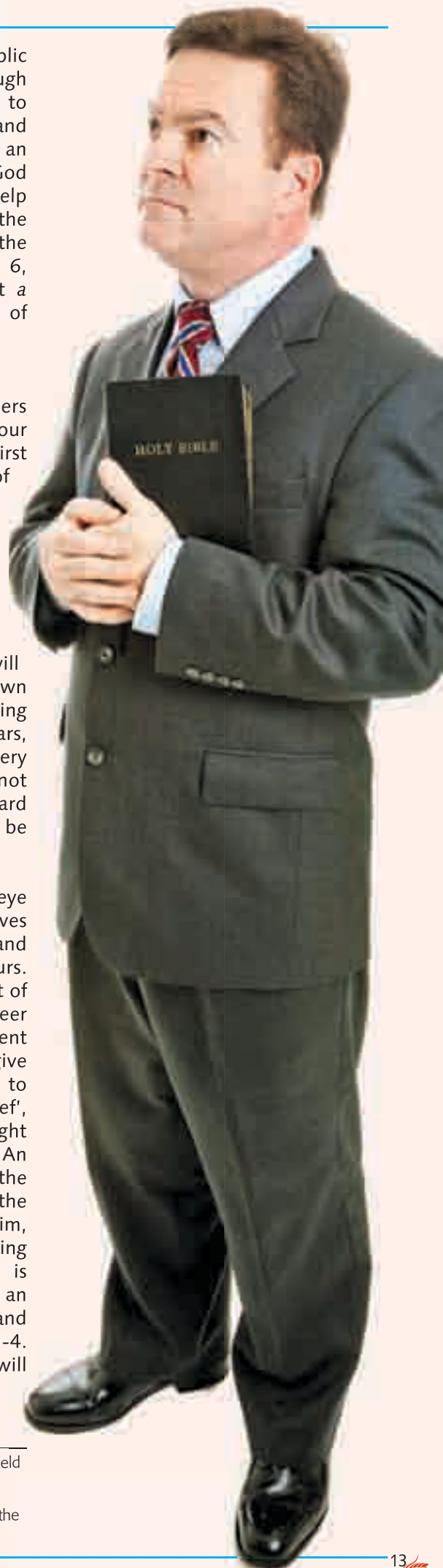
does not necessarily denote public teaching of the word of God, though it may include this, but refers to the ability to impart knowledge and instruction. The elder will have an understanding of the word of God and will have the ability to help believers in the assembly as to the interpretation and application of the scriptures. The thought in verse 6, not a novice, means simply not a *recent convert*. It refers to want of spiritual maturity or experience.

## Their Compensation

It is good to see that overseers will be rewarded for their labour of love. Peter speaks in his First Epistle, 5. 4, of the 'crown of glory' that is to be bestowed on all those who have taken up this important work of godly rule and faithful shepherding of the flock. The overseer's work may yield little return, but there is a day coming when nothing will be forgotten. This reward will come from the Chief Shepherd's own hand. An overseer may be reading these lines who has shed many tears, made many sacrifices, and toiled very arduously tending the flock. Fear not dear brother, the promise of reward is sure and all will be seen to be worthwhile in that coming day.

Yet it is solemn to think that the eye of the Great Shepherd never leaves the under-shepherds. He knows and measures the cost of their labours. Overseers should serve in the light of this. Every God-appointed overseer will have to stand at the judgement seat of Christ. Leaders must give account, and they should be able to do it 'with joy, and not with grief', Heb. 13. 17. This puts oversight work in a very solemn light. An overseer should do his work in the assembly in the knowledge that the Shepherd's eye is always upon him, watching his work, and observing his motive. An overseer's work is a spiritual work, a willing work, an unselfish work, a humble work, and an exemplary work, 1 Pet. 5. 1-4. Such features seen in an overseer will certainly have their reward!

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# DAVID LIVINGSTONE

By **JOHN BENNETT**

**2013 is the 200th anniversary of the birth of David Livingstone and the 140th anniversary of his death.  
What was crammed into those sixty years of his life is astounding!**

Livingstone was a man who received the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, was a Fellow of the Society, met members of, and led an expedition on behalf of, the British Government. He was lauded by ambassadors, governors, politicians, and academics. After his death, his remains were carried by native bearers over a thousand miles during a period of eight months before being shipped to London and buried in Westminster Abbey. It would be an understatement to say that his contribution to the development of Africa was massive.

David Livingstone was born in Blantyre, Scotland, the second eldest of seven children. His father, Neil Livingstone and his mother, Agnes Hunter, were committed Christians, his father being a Sunday School teacher who handed out Christian tracts while travelling as a door to door tea salesman. He was also an avid reader of books on theology and missionary work, a habit that was influential in his son David's early life.

Along with many of the Livingstones, at the age of ten David started work at the cotton mill, working twelve-hour days as a 'piecer', tying broken cotton threads on the spinning machines. Following gruelling days in the factory, he spent two hours at school, followed by his own private study. He taught himself Latin and developed a love of natural history. Although his father had a fear of science books, feeling that they undermined Christianity, David's interest in nature and science persisted. One of the earliest influences upon him was the book *Philosophy of a Future State* by the science teacher, and church minister Thomas Dick. It was this book that helped him to reconcile faith and science.

At the age of nineteen Livingstone was promoted from a 'piecer' to become a spinner and it was around this time that David became exercised in relation to his service for the Lord. David, and his father, had left the Church of Scotland on doctrinal grounds and gathered instead with a local Congregational Church. His subsequent reading of the missionary KARL GÜTZLAFF's *Appeal to the Churches of Britain and America on behalf of China* led him to consider medical study as a means of advancing the spread of the gospel. With his increased wages he began to save and by 1836 he had enough money to enter Anderson's University, Glasgow to study medicine. In 1840 he moved to London to complete his medical studies and, at the end of the year, he qualified as a Licentiate of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

With GÜTZLAFF's appeal still in his mind, Livingstone hoped to go to China as a missionary. However, in 1839 the First Opium War made this impossible. Then, while in London,

Livingstone met Robert Moffat, who was on leave from Kuruman, a missionary outpost in South Africa. Moffat's vision of expanding missionary work northwards, and T. F. Buxton's views that the African slave trade might be destroyed by 'legitimate trade' and the spread of Christianity, influenced Livingstone to focus on Southern Africa.

Livingstone spent his early years in Africa with the Bakwain (now in Botswana). From there he undertook a number of short expeditions which enabled him to see at first-hand the damage caused by the slave trade. This confirmed his belief that Christianity and legitimate trade should be brought to these areas. But these expeditions also developed Livingstone as a skilled navigator, linguist, and natural historian.



One point that distinguished Livingstone, apart from his fascination for Africa, was his respect for the peoples he met there. Livingstone was one of the first medical missionaries in central Africa; he was often the first European to meet local tribes. As such he won their trust as a healer and medicine man. The local villagers sought his skills in obstetrics, for the surgical removal of tumours, and ophthalmology. His accurate observations and extensive writings also provided invaluable information on African diseases. He was one of the first to administer quinine and, unlike previous expeditions in Africa, his parties of explorers suffered a comparatively low death rate.

However, Livingstone will always be remembered for his exploration of Africa. He spent thirty years there and, by the time of his death in 1873, it is estimated he had travelled over 46,000 kilometres, mostly on foot. In 1842, he began a four year expedition to find a route from the upper Zambezi to the coast, filling huge gaps in our knowledge of central and southern Africa. In 1849 and 1851, he travelled across the Kalahari, on the second trip sighting the upper Zambezi River. In 1855, Livingstone discovered a waterfall which he named 'Victoria Falls'. He reached the mouth of the Zambezi on the Indian Ocean in May 1856, becoming the first European to cross the width of southern Africa.

But what of Livingstone's legacy? Was he merely the man who enabled British colonial rule to be established in Africa? Rather, he will be remembered as the man who:

- made significant geographical discoveries and opened up Central Africa to missionaries.
- inspired abolitionists of the slave trade, and initiated education and health care for Africans.
- was held in esteem by many African chiefs and local people that enabled the later spread of the gospel to these people.



# DANIEL'S PROPHECY OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS

By **ANDREW WILSON** Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

(UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, ALL QUOTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE ARE FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION)

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## Daniel chapter 9 verses 24-27

### Introduction (Part Two): Restoration

The main theme of Daniel chapter 9 verses 24-27 is restoration. This idea of restoration is seen in Daniels' prophecy in five ways:

- 1 By the place of the prophecy in the book of Daniel.
- 2 Within the context of Daniel chapter 9 itself.
- 3 Within the prophecy itself, particularly in verse 24.
- 4 By the use of the time-marker: the seventy weeks.
- 5 Finally, by the place of the prophecy in its Old Testament context.

### The Prophecy within the Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel

Various suggestions have been offered to explain the arrangement of the book of Daniel. Daniel is commonly thought of as six chapters of 'histories' followed by six chapters of 'prophecy'. Additionally, in the first half of the book, Daniel is referred to in the third person ('this Daniel', 5. 12, etc.), whilst in the second half Daniel writes in the first person ('I Daniel', 7. 15, etc). One problem with this view is that, while we have twelve chapters in our English Bibles, in reality the book is composed of ten sections, for chapters 10-12 comprise one final vision. Another problem is that the first half of the book contains the prophecy concerning the great image in chapter 2. Thus, it is not true to say that the book balances history and prophecy in two equal sections. An alternative division of Daniel is based on the different languages that certain chapters were written in: Chapters 1, 2 verses 1-4 and chapters 8 to 12 are written in Hebrew,

while chapters 2 verse 4 to chapter 7 are written in Aramaic (the *lingua franca* of the time). However, again, this division does not appear to offer any significant insights into the book. In fact, both of these two schemes highlight the difficulty in trying to establish any unified or coherent purpose behind the arrangement of the book.

A third and more suggestive structure involves grouping the ten 'sections' of the book into two groups, chapters 1-5 and chapters 6-12, based on certain points of correspondence as set out in the table below.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in perhaps the strongest point of comparison, there is a clear correspondence between chapters 2 and 7 in the book: both focus on the four great world-empires of Gentile history. Other points of comparison include Daniel's refusal to abandon godly habits in chapters 1 and 6, the self-exaltation or deification of Nebuchadnezzar, and the 'little horn that becomes exceedingly great' in chapters 3 and 8, with the attendant persecution of the saints (other passages in the Bible would appear to show that the 'transgression of desolation' of chapter 8 verse 13 involves an idol just as in Chapter 3), and the two concluding parts of each section with their picture of the eventual judgement of haughty rulers like Belshazzar and Antiochus Epiphanes IV.

What is this division of the book of Daniel intended to teach? Simply that history repeats itself: whether we look at Daniel's resolute refusal to abandon godly habits under Nebuchadnezzar's new Babylonian regime, chapter 1, or under the incoming Persian administration, chapter 6, or whether we look at the rise of powerful leaders who seek to be worshipped, chapters 3 and 8, or the eventual downfall of such idolatrous

	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

and blasphemous men, chapters 5 and 10-12, the patterns of history repeat themselves. This means, too, that history itself (because of its repetitive nature), predicts and points forward to the rise of a yet-future figure who will repeat, on a scale still greater, the same policies as Nebuchadnezzar and Antiochus Epiphanes IV: the Antichrist himself.

Our interest here, however, centres on the correspondence between chapters 4 and 9. In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar is disciplined by God for a period of seven 'times' because of his sins. He is reduced to the state of a wild beast and driven from men, after which he is restored to his royal position. Similarly, in chapter 9, Daniel comes to understand that Israel's seventy-year exile for its sins is about to expire, after which Israel was to return to its homeland. In response to Daniel's prayer, God also promises that a period of seventy 'sevens' would elapse before God brings about Israel's total restoration.

Thus we see, on two different scales, the same lesson being learnt, personally by Nebuchadnezzar, and by Israel nationally. Both Nebuchadnezzar, as an individual, and Israel, the nation, were banished for their sins, but both would ultimately be restored to their rightful position once their sins were acknowledged and dealt with. In view of the ultimate judgement that must fall upon Babylon and upon the kingdoms of Antiochus (and, by extension, Antichrist himself), as depicted at the end of the two sections of Daniel's prophecy, we are asked to note in the penultimate sections, in chapters 4 and 9, that not all judgement is final. Rather, some judgement is intended to be *restorative*; there is forgiveness with God for those who are humbled under His mighty hand.

Restoration, therefore, is a significant theme in the book of Daniel, particularly in chapters 4 and 9.

### The Prophecy in its Immediate Context: Daniel Chapter 9

Turning to Daniel chapter 9 itself, we notice that the prophecy is given in response to Daniel's prayer for the restoration of Israel from their Babylonian exile. As verse 2 tells us, this seventy-year exile was itself prophesied by Jeremiah; it was a punishment from God on the Jews for disobeying God's laws and worshipping other gods. In verses 1-2, we read that Daniel, at the very end of this period of seventy years exile, comes to understand that the exile has nearly expired and soon God will allow His people

to return home to their own land. In Jeremiah chapter 29 verses 12-13, after the promise of a return after seventy years from Babylon in verses 10 and 11,<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah wrote that the fulfilment of the promise to return would be preceded by prayer, 'Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me and I will listen to you'. As a result, Daniel starts praying, confessing his people's sin and pleading for God's forgiveness. He calls upon God to restore Israel's fortunes by allowing God's holy city and its temple to be rebuilt.

It is important to notice the emphasis in Daniel's prayer upon two things: firstly, the city of Jerusalem and secondly, the people of Israel. Notice, firstly, the emphasis upon the city of Jerusalem:

- 'O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from **Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain**', Dan. 9. 16;
- 'for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on **Your sanctuary**, which is desolate', v. 17;
- 'open Your eyes and see our desolations, and **the city** which is called by Your name', v. 18;
- 'Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for **Your city** and Your people are called by Your name', v. 19.

Then, secondly, notice that the restoration concerns Daniel's people, the nation of Israel:

- 'O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day – **to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel**, those near and those far off in all the countries to which you have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You', v. 7;
- 'Yes, **all Israel** has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice', v. 11;
- 'And now, O Lord our God, who brought **Your people** out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day – we have sinned, we have done wickedly', v. 15.
- 'Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and **Your people** are called by Your name', v. 19.

Thus, the words 'city', 'sanctuary', 'Jerusalem', 'Israel', and 'people' are mentioned fifteen times in Daniel's prayer in verses 4 to 19.

The significance of this fact is seen when we notice the same words used in the prophecy itself: 'your people', v. 24, 'your holy city', v. 24, 'Jerusalem',



v. 25, 'the city', v. 26, and 'the sanctuary', v. 26. It would hardly seem necessary to labour the point that these words used in the prophecy refer to the same subjects in Daniel's prayer – except, sadly, for the fact that some commentators seem determined to avoid this inference, arguing that the prophecy does not really have to do with Israel nationally and territorially, but rather to the church spiritually. In particular, the amillennial approach which argues that Daniel's prophecy is completely fulfilled in Christ's death and the spiritual blessing of justification which flows from it seems to be a wholly inadequate interpretation of the passage. This is not to say that there is no spiritual element to Daniel's prophecy, as we shall see. However, the context of Daniel 9 with its focus upon Israel's national life means that limiting the prophecy to the spiritual is to give us but a partial view of the prophecy's glory.

On the other hand, the prophecy deals not simply with the nation of Israel and their political restoration, but also with the deeper issue of their spiritual restoration through the forgiveness of their sins. Thus, Daniel chapter 9, and in particular Daniel's prayer, makes reference to the words 'sin' (and its cognates) eight times, as well as synonyms, like 'done wickedly', 'committed iniquity', 'rebelled', 'unfaithfulness', 'transgressed', ten times, and to the word 'confession' twice. The idea of spiritual restoration is seen in the further fact that the angel Gabriel comes, in reply to Daniel's prayer, 'about the time of the evening sacrifice', v. 21. It would appear significant that the answer to Daniel's prayer should come at the time of sacrifice, signifying God's means for making atonement and providing forgiveness.

Thus, the critical/liberal view which sees in the prophecy an historical account of the Jews' political and military victory over Antiochus Epiphanes IV in the second century must also be considered fundamentally flawed (on this, as on other grounds) in view of the context of Daniel chapter 9 and its search for spiritual restoration. The events surrounding Antiochus' reign of terror and the eventual victory of the Jews did not deal in any fundamental or final way with the problems of sin and righteousness.

### **The Prophecy Itself**

Restoration is the key idea of the prophecy. The word itself is only used once in the prophecy, in verse 25, with the 'command to restore and build Jerusalem'. This continues the emphasis upon national Israel that has been seen throughout the chapter, an emphasis that is repeated at the

beginning of the prophecy in verse 24, 'Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city'.

However, the thought of restoration dominates the prophecy, particularly the programme of six objectives outlined in the rest of verse 24: 'to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy'.

These six objectives deal with primarily spiritual concerns, in particular the problem of sin. God promises that sin's baneful effects will be undone and that righteousness will be restored. This spiritual emphasis, set alongside the national and territorial aspect to the prophecy, means that neither the amillennialist (purely spiritual) interpretation of the prophecy, nor the critical/liberal (politically localized) interpretation of the prophecy provide us with a satisfying sense of having adequately comprehended the entirety of what the prophecy is pointing to.

To follow ALVA MCCLAIN's argument, the fact that the prophecy has to do with a spiritual and national restoration for the Jewish people means that neither the cross nor the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 provide any real or complete fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy, 'Even if we should adopt the "spiritualizing" scheme of interpretation, still the bed is too short and the cover too narrow. Where in the history of Acts, for example, can you find the finishing of Jewish transgression or an ending of Jewish sins? On the contrary, the transgression of the chosen nation increases by leaps and bounds'.<sup>3</sup> We may extend MCCLAIN's argument to encompass also the critical/liberal view: how do the events of Antiochus' persecution provide an answer to the problem of Jewish transgression or point us to a solution for Jewish sinfulness?

The only interpretative framework that accounts for the dual national/spiritual focus of the prophecy is the premillennial approach that looks to the fulfilment of the prophecy in a Jewish national and spiritual restoration that must still await fulfilment in the future.

### **The Seventy 'Weeks'**

The fact that the prophecy is set to a timetable of 'seventy sevens' also indicates that Jewish restoration is its key thought.

In the Bible, the number seven is associated with completion, fullness and rest. This is seen

not only in the weekly Sabbath, but also in the seventh Sabbatical year when the land was given its rest. Lev. 25. 1-7, and when slaves were set free, Exod. 21.

The Sabbath was of peculiarly Jewish significance. Ezekiel chapter 20 verses 12 and 20 tell us that the Sabbath was a sign between God and the Jewish nation, a sign of the special relationship between Israel and God. Sabbaths were not something God ever rebuked Gentiles or nations for failing to keep (and there are plenty of chapters in the Old Testament prophets devoted to God's judgement upon the nations). The Sabbaths were peculiarly Jewish, reminding the chosen people that Israel's God was the Creator and, therefore, owner of all things (including their land and possessions), reminding them of their redemption and freedom from Egyptian slavery, and pointing to a future promise of rest.

The Jubilee every forty-nine years, Lev. 25. 8, extended this principle; it was the year of restoration. Each person was able to return to his ancestral possession and slaves were free to return to their families. God said, 'The land is mine', Lev. 25. 23, and 'they are my servants', Lev. 25. 42.

Restoration in the year of Jubilee was based upon God's sovereign ownership of His people and His land.

The prophecy of the seventy sevens presents an extension of this concept of restoration on an even grander scale. Israel as a nation had lost its ancestral inheritance and its people were slaves among the Gentile nations. The seventy 'sevens' is God's programme for the restoration of Israel nationally (and internationally), as signified by the multiplication of the forty-nine years of Jubilee by ten.

## The Prophecy in its Old Testament Context

Of course, restoration is a central hope of the Old Testament prophets. Thus, Isaiah foresees the nations streaming up to Jerusalem to learn God's ways, 2. 1-3. Some interpreters take this to picture the blessing of the nations through the present day church. However, verse 4's promise of international peace, 'they shall beat their swords into plowshares . . . nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore', sees no fulfilment in the church or the preaching of the gospel. Hermeneutical consistency (and indeed the text itself, if words have meanings) suggests a future restoration of Israel exalted to be the head of the nations,

which live in harmony under God's laws. Micah repeats Isaiah's words and adds that 'the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever. And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem', Mic. 4. 7-8. Similarly, Ezekiel's message of Israel's departure from their land, chapters 1-24, and the glory of God from the temple, chapter 10, is mirrored by Israel's restoration to the land, chapters 34-39, and God's return to the temple, chapters 40-48, particularly chapter 43.

The same is true of prophets like Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah and Zechariah. Their hope involves a Jewish future restoration in distinctively ethnic, national (not individual) and territorial (as well as spiritual) terms. Such a hope seems millennial, for it is hard to imagine nation-states and national distinctions persisting in the eternal state. National distinctions like this (and between Israel and the church) are the basis (and definition) of so-called 'dispensational premillennialism'.

Thus, Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks is in perfect keeping with this central hope of the Old Testament prophets: ethnic Israel's national, spiritual and territorial restoration.

## Endnotes

- 1 Following the scheme of D. W. GOODING, *The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and Its Implications*, *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 (1981), pgs. 43-79
- 2 The encouragement of verse 11 with its familiar words about 'thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope' is often applied by Christians to present-day situations
- 3 ALVA J. MCCLAIN, *Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks*, BMH Books, 2007, pg. 36

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**ANDREW WILSON** was commended by his home assembly in Sydney in 1993 and has since been involved in an evangelistic and Bible teaching ministry in Australia and the UK.





# ARDS EVANGELICAL BOOKSHOP

## NEWTOWNARDS, NORTHERN IRELAND

Have you ever wondered what it's like to run a Christian bookshop? The economy; the internet; dying town centres; poor reading habits. Like Jacob, some may feel like saying 'All these things are against me'. Sit where we sit for a day or two and you may prefer to say, like Moses, 'I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect'. Allow us to share with you a few details of the work in which it is our joy to be engaged every day.

### Beginnings

Ards Evangelical Bookshop (A.E.B.) was opened in 1967 as a Christian witness in the bustling market town of Newtownards. It was taken over by the McCoubrey family in 1980, housed in a single unit in a small arcade in the town. As the town is overshadowed by Scrabo Tower, the text, 'The Name of the Lord is a strong tower' was quickly adopted as a motto for the shop. The Lord blessed, many contacts were made, the shop grew, and we moved to larger premises. The support, and indeed friendship, of believers locally proved to be the bedrock of our business. Very soon larger premises were needed and the 'Bible shop' became a landmark in the town.

Earlier this year, a gentleman returned to tell us that he came into our shop thirty years ago looking for a Bible for his wife who had just become a Christian. When asked if he was a Christian, he had replied, 'No', and was asked, 'Why not?' This challenged him so much that he trusted the Lord the following weekend. Thirty years later he is still rejoicing!

### Expansion

By the year 2000, we were bursting at the seams. The building could not accommodate further expansion and we had extra storehouses in various locations across the town. We looked for new premises and, again, the Lord provided and we moved into our current home, a 6,000 sq. ft. shop, still in the town centre.

By this time the internet and mail order side of the business was beginning to blossom and we were designing our

own mail order catalogues in-house. The mail order business became a most fulfilling part of our operation. Every day we speak to people from remote areas of the British Isles with no immediate access to a Christian bookshop. Requests range from, for example, a baptism gift, stationery for Sunday school prizes, or advice on a book for a neighbour with a particular question. Only eternity will reveal the results of the many remarkable conversations we have had over the years. It is a special joy, particularly in the summer time, when some visitors arrive and introduce themselves as customers whom we've spoken to numerous times over the years.

### Crimond House

In 2005, after much encouragement from friends, we entered the world of Christian publishing and reprinted an old classic novel, long out of print, called *The Watchers on the Longships*. It is the story of the effects of the Wesleyan revival in a small Cornish village. In 2008, we reprinted the treasured Two Version Bible, which has the Authorized Version with the Revised Version in the margin. Our latest effort is our Crimond Classics series, selected books which, by tapping the treasures of a previous era, we trust will be of real benefit to today's readers. So far we have produced books by David Baron, G. Campbell Morgan, Henry Grattan Guinness, J. R. Caldwell, F. W. Grant, R. F. Kingscote and others.

### The Future

Our vision for A.E.B. is for it to be

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It was during the middle and largest section of Luke's Gospel, as the Saviour journeyed to His death at Jerusalem, that He ministered on the snare of riches.<sup>1</sup> It is here, for example, that we read the parable of the rich man.<sup>2</sup> An entire chapter is also devoted to riches,<sup>3</sup> which culminates in the description of a rich man enduring the torments of hell. To those blessed with earthly possessions, the warning is clear, 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth', Luke 12. 15. Zacchaeus was one who learnt this vital lesson, 19. 1-10, but sadly King Ahab did not. Despite being already a rich man,<sup>4</sup> Ahab's encounter with Naboth revealed his insatiable appetite for material gain. MATTHEW HENRY remarks that 'as we find [the apostle] Paul contented in a prison, so Ahab discontented in a palace'.<sup>5</sup> The believer today needs to learn and possess the 'Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment'.<sup>6</sup>

The events of 1 Kings chapter 21 revolves around Naboth, a Jezreelite, who lived beside the King's palace in Samaria, v. 1. Ahab sought to buy a vineyard from his neighbour, vv. 1-2, but Naboth rightfully refused, v. 3; his inheritance was not a piece of real estate that could be bought or sold for material gain.<sup>7</sup> Then, under the guise of religion, Queen Jezebel arranged for Naboth to be murdered, vv. 8-14, which subsequently freed her husband to take possession of the vineyard. But it was Ahab's encounter with Elijah that brought the divine message of judgement and condemnation, vv. 17-24. Prior to developing the practical lessons from the chapter, the narrative outlines some important principles of the Bible. Note, for example:

- **Intrigue.** The plot of Naboth's vineyard is filled with suspense, particularly given the death of a martyr, vv. 13-14, and the anticipated judgement of the two perpetrators, vv. 19, 23. It is important that as we daily open the scriptures, we retain a sense of thrill and excitement in what we read and study. Our Bible readings should be the most fulfilling part of the day.

## Studies in the life of

# Elijah (4)

**'Naboth's Vineyard',  
1 Kgs. 21.  
1-29.**

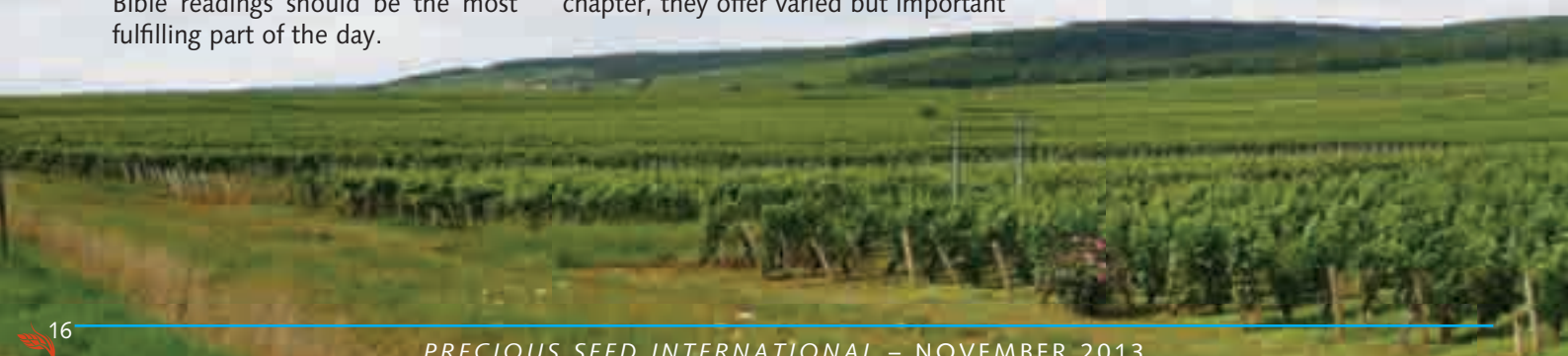
By **GRAEME HUTCHINSON**  
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- **Importance.** The chapter reveals the power and influence of the sinful nature. It is only one of many passages that remind us of what man is capable of doing. But we also learn other important truths, such as the inevitable persecution of the godly,<sup>8</sup> and the unfailing mercy of God, vv. 28-29. The only way to understand ourselves and God is to read His word daily and systematically.
- **Inspiration.** The words spoken to Ahab were conveyed by the prophet Elijah but they came directly from Jehovah, vv. 17, 28. This, of course, is true of scripture as a whole, for although men were used to write the scriptures they proceed from the very mouth of God.<sup>9</sup> It is certainly evident that the word of the Lord, as spoken to Ahab, was clear and powerful.<sup>10</sup>
- **Infallibility.** It is a sad indictment of our world that very few consider the scriptures to be inerrant and infallible. Young people are derided in schools and universities for holding to a truth considered by many to be outdated and untenable. But this fundamental aspect of our faith is precisely what the Bible teaches! For example, regarding the promise of divine judgement for Ahab and Jezebel, this was fulfilled in minute detail.<sup>11</sup> The inspired scriptures are infallible and we happily defend this truth which brings comfort and reassurance to our souls.

Regarding the principal characters of the chapter, they offer varied but important

lessons. The starting point, however, must be a consideration of the chapter's teaching on Jehovah. We learn, for example, that the actions of Ahab and Jezebel were committed under His all-seeing eye, vv. 20, 25. This was a truth that Abram's Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, had to learn as she fled from Sarai in Genesis chapter 16, for 'she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me', Gen. 16. 13. We too need to serve God with a conscious knowledge that He observes all things, including motives and actions, Eph. 6. 5-6. As the chapter concludes, we also learn that the events, difficult as they were for Naboth, were all under the sovereign and perfect will of God.<sup>12</sup> It is only by looking through the divine lens that we can begin to understand the events of this chapter.<sup>13</sup> However, perhaps the highest commendation for Naboth is that he anticipates the Saviour in His own service. For example, Naboth's temptation by Ahab, 1 Kgs. 21. 2, foreshadows the Lord's own temptation in the wilderness – although as the Son of God He was unable to sin.<sup>14</sup> Naboth's refusal to sell his vineyard was a display of his faithfulness to scripture, v. 3, and the devil was also defeated by the power of the word.<sup>15</sup> Naboth died as the result of the false witness of others, and the same was true of the Lord.<sup>16</sup> The enemy of Naboth was eventually defeated, v. 19, and the Lord secured a complete victory over the devil at Calvary.<sup>17</sup>

The four human characters in the







chapter (Naboth, Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah) also present important lessons for the believer today. Naboth's refusal to sell the vineyard, v. 3, was due to his respect and adherence to scripture.<sup>18</sup> Sadly, he and his family paid a heavy price, v. 14,<sup>19</sup> but that is often the way of the righteous.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Naboth will one day enjoy his inheritance when the Lord returns to reign on earth with millennial glory.<sup>21</sup> For King Ahab, despite enjoying prestige and wealth, he displayed all that was wrong with Israel and mankind generally. For example, in the previous chapter he kept alive someone who should have died – Ben-hadad, King of Syria, 1 Kgs. 20. 42 – whereas with Naboth he put to death someone who should have lived. The same was true of the generation of Israelites who put to death the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life, Acts 3. 15. As the epitome of evil, Jezebel hatched a devious and wicked plan to kill Naboth, 1 Kgs. 21. 8-10. The subsequent fast, vv. 9, 12, charge of blasphemy, vv. 10, 13, two witnesses, vv. 10, 13, and stoning, vv. 10, 13-14, were all attempts to give credence to a malicious crime. Scripture indicates that the Queen and her henchmen had some working knowledge of truth, but they lived in open rebellion against it.<sup>22</sup> The final character, Elijah, remains the primary spokesman for Jehovah, despite the fact that he now had a companion and helper in Elisha, 19. 21. As with previous commissions, 17. 1 and 18. 1, the prophet showed no reluctance to stand against the wicked king and utter the judgement of Jehovah, vv. 17-19. Notice how different Ahab and the Lord considered the character of Elijah – to Ahab he was an 'enemy', v. 20, whereas to the Lord he was His 'servant', 2 Kgs. 9. 36. We too may face the hostility of a sinful world, but this was foretold by the Lord before His crucifixion, John 16. 33. In addition, we remain sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, and have therefore the capacity to overcome the world.<sup>23</sup>

Another important feature of this incident is how it is packed with practical and varied lessons for the believer. Below is a summary of some of the more important principles:

- Greed. The love of wealth represents a snare for the soul, and to covet is to sin.<sup>24</sup> If the apostle Paul had to learn the virtue of contentment then we too need to follow his example.<sup>25</sup>
- Immaturity. Ahab displayed childish behaviour, v. 43; 1 Kgs. 21. 4. The believer, in contrast, should aim for spiritual growth and maturity.<sup>26</sup>
- Loyalty. Naboth was faithful to the teaching of scripture, despite the personal cost to himself and his family, vv. 3, 14, and the same attitude remains vital for the 21st Century. This is particularly important in a day when assembly principles are being either ignored or diluted.
- Order. Divine order is for males to exercise headship, and, when reversed, there will be chaos and sin, v. 25. The assembly remains a place where males and females can understand and function in their distinct but complementary roles.<sup>27</sup>
- Misrepresentation. In relaying the reaction to his proposal, Ahab failed to give a full and accurate account of Naboth's reasoning, v. 7. In contrast, the believer's words should be truthful and accurate.
- Hypocrisy. Jezebel masked her evil actions under the cloak of pseudo-religion, but God discerned the true motives of her heart, vv. 17-24. In contrast, the believer needs to avoid the pitfalls of hypocrisy, and develop a spirit of sincerity.<sup>28</sup>
- Accountability. Though Jezebel planned the death of Naboth, Jehovah held Ahab to account, v. 19. Each believer is personally accountable to God for their service in the assembly.<sup>29</sup>
- Sin. The passage reveals the wilful sin of Ahab and Jezebel, vv. 20, 25. It exercised a power which enslaved them and only the power of God can bring liberty.<sup>30</sup>

- Hatred. Naboth and Elijah were opposed by an evil tyranny and scripture presents a clear and honest assessment of the hatred faced by God's people, but we are assured of a bright future.<sup>31</sup>
- Judgement. Ahab was judged not only for his own sin, but also because he led the nation astray, v. 22, and similar judgement was given to Jeroboam and Baasha, v. 22.<sup>32</sup> Ahab humbled himself before God, v. 28, and the judgement was delayed until the next generation, 2 Kgs 10. 17. Remember that with privilege comes great responsibility.<sup>33</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 Luke 9. 51 to 19. 28.
- 2 Luke 12. 16-21.
- 3 Luke 16. 1-31.
- 4 Compare 1 Kgs. 22. 39.
- 5 HENRY M., *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, reprinted 1994, 2, pg. 540.
- 6 BURROUGHS, J., *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 1992.
- 7 Compare Lev. 25. 23-28 and Num. 36. 7.
- 8 Compare 2 Tim. 3. 12.
- 9 Matt. 4. 4; 2 Tim. 3. 16; 2 Pet. 1. 21.
- 10 Compare Heb. 4. 12.
- 11 Compare 1 Kgs. 21. 19 with 22. 38 and 1 Kgs. 21. 23 with 2 Kgs. 9. 36.
- 12 Ps. 18. 30; Rom. 12. 2.
- 13 Compare Ps. 73. 17.
- 14 Compare Heb. 4. 15.
- 15 Matt. 4. 4, 7, 10.
- 16 Matt. 26. 59-61.
- 17 Rom. 16. 20; Heb. 2. 14.
- 18 Lev. 25. 23-28; Num. 36. 7.
- 19 2 Kgs 9. 26.
- 20 Eccles. 8. 14.
- 21 Matt. 25. 21.
- 22 Read, for example, Lev. 24. 16 and Deut. 17. 6-7.
- 23 2 Cor. 6. 18; , 1 John 4. 4; 5. 4-5.
- 24 1 Tim. 6. 9-10; Exod. 20. 17.
- 25 Phil. 4. 11.
- 26 1 Cor. 14. 20; 2 Pet. 3. 18.
- 27 1 Cor. 11. 3.
- 28 Luke 12. 1; Phil. 1. 10.
- 29 1 Cor. 3. 13.
- 30 Luke 4. 18.
- 31 Amos 5. 10; John 15. 18-20; 1 Cor. 4. 13; 2 Tim. 2. 12.
- 32 See 1 Kgs. 15. 29; 16. 1-4.
- 33 Luke 12. 48.

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## The second phase: How false doctrine causes a reappraisal of the canon of scripture.

Everything seems to be progressing well when suddenly a wealthy man raised in a Christian home with an excellent education is excommunicated following an act of adultery with a virgin. He moves from Sinope, Pontus Asia, to Rome, where he tries to establish a 'canon' of scripture that is anti-Jewish, Gnostic, polytheistic, and amoral, under the guise of New Testament grace. He removes portions of the Pauline epistles that refer to Judaism, and the three Gospels written by Hebrew Christians. He retained only the Gospel of Luke, and proceeded to add his own opinions to Luke's writings. His name is Marcion, circa. 140 AD. His writings thus violated the decrees of Christ with regards to New Testament writings. This alerted many Christians to the need of finalizing the canon of scripture according to the *Evangelion* and the doctrine of the Apostles. Marcion is later labelled a heretic, and banished from the church of Rome.

Several men were raised up by God to defend the faith, and to reject the doctrine of Marcion. In 185 AD, Irenaeus, 130-202 AD, defended the doctrine of salvation through faith, that the New Testament was the

# The Canon of Scripture.

## Part Two By Dr. JOHN THROPAY Los Angeles, USA

fulfilment of the Old Testament, and that Christ is God manifest in flesh. He recognized twenty-one books and reaffirmed the authenticity of the four Gospels. Tertullian, 160-220 A.D., also rallied to defend the scriptures. Thus, the churches were galvanized to continue their work of selecting books for the canon as guided by the Comforter, and as prophesied by Christ Himself. Another stalwart for the preservation of sound doctrine was Hippolytus, 170-235 AD, who recognized twenty-two books. A little before 180 AD, Melito of Sardis makes the distinction between the 'books of the old covenant' and the 'books of the new covenant'. The first time that a 'canon' is noted is in AD 170 by an anonymous writer. The manuscript was found in the Ambrosian Library by an antiquities historian, Muratori. It included 24 books, missing only Hebrews, James and 3 John. It is known as the Muratorian Canon, named after its discoverer. Thus, by 180 AD, the canon of scripture was virtually complete with minor variations involving the absence or addition of

three or four books.

In 203 AD, Origen, a child prodigy, became head of the prestigious Alexandrian Christian school at age 18. After a dispute with the bishop of Alexandria, he was expelled, and opened up a new school in Caesarea. He declared the New Testament to be equally inspired as the Old Testament. He also included the writings of Clement, and the *Didache*, and the Epistle of Barnabas as scripture. He also regards the book of Hermas as inspired. He accepted Hebrews as authentic. Thus, by 250 AD, the present canon was almost entirely accepted.

## The third and final phase occurs after another false doctrine is introduced, Arianism, c. 320 AD.

Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter, taught that Christ was created in time and did not exist previously. Arius was a student of Origen. Origen believed that Christ eternally existed, but that His substance is different from that of the Father. Arius, and others before him, had begun teaching that a 'different substance' required that the incarnate Christ be specially created in time. God then raised up another teacher, Athanasius of Alexandria, Egypt, who further refined our understanding of the deity of Christ. He taught that Christ is co-existent, co-substantial, and equal with God. Athanasius was taught in the scriptures from his childhood. He was also a careful student of apostolic doctrine, and of the four Gospels. He was a skilled student of Greek and wrote in both Greek and in Egyptian. He is one of the first to carefully develop the Trinitarian doctrine that we hold today. It was precisely his formulation of these doctrines that were acclaimed at the council of Nicea in 325 AD. This required that he defy the highly respected teachings of Origen, and directly oppose Arius. He vehemently rejected Arianism. Athanasius'







# How was it arrived at?

definition of Christ's deity, and of the doctrine of the Trinity triumphed in the council of Nicea, 325 AD; Arianism was soundly defeated. The majority of bishops changed from supporting Arianism to that of the doctrines taught by Athanasius of the Egyptian Coptic Church. The Christology of John's Gospel and Paul's apostolic writings then came into clearer focus. The criterion that Christ had originally decreed<sup>1</sup> was now better understood under the Spirit's guidance. The canon of scripture was now ready to be completed, based on a deeper

understanding of Christ. Eusebius and Athanasius, and many others of the bishops of that day, now better enlightened, again sifted through the books still held in question. Athanasius, in his 39th Paschal letter of 367 AD, published the 'final' list of books that now comprises our New Testament. The basis for the final selection of which books were inspired is described by Athanasius in that same festal letter. He quotes John chapter 5 verse 39 as his guide: 'these are they that testify of ME', capitals for emphasis as written by Athanasius. He also states that he vigorously studied the writings of the apostles, the proto-canon formerly described. The Holy Spirit moved among all the leaders of that day. Eusebius, the most powerful supporter of Arianism, capitulated to the scriptural pleadings of Athanasius. The final books for the framework of God's building was finally based on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Eph. 2. 20. Finally, our Lord's prophecy had been fulfilled.

After this major agreement was reached among the bishops regarding the canon of scripture, Emperor Constantine commissioned Eusebius, in 331 AD, to deliver fifty Bibles for the Church of Constantinople. Athanasius (Apol. Const. 4) recorded around 340 Alexandrian scribes preparing Bibles for Constantine. It is now believed that the

Codex Sinaiticus, found in Egypt at the foot of Mt. Sinai in St. Catherine's Monastery, is one of the 50 Bibles that Constantine commissioned. The oldest Bibles

are the Codex Vaticanus, the Codex Sinaiticus, the Peshitta, and the Codex Alexandrinus. These are the earliest extant Christian Bibles. The Codex Sinaiticus was handwritten in Greek uncial letters at about the time of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great more than 1,600 years ago. The work of four scribes, it was written on vellum parchment made from the skins of donkeys or antelopes. It was preserved for centuries by the dry desert air in the 4th century Monastery, the oldest continuously inhabited Christian monastery. The Codex was discovered at the monastery in 1844 by the German biblical scholar and archaeologist Constantin von Tischendorf (1815-74). It is now available in digital form on the internet under [codexsinaiticus.org](http://codexsinaiticus.org).

## The aftermath of the canonization of the Bible

Ever since the biblical canon of scripture was completed, the doctrine of salvation, the deity of Christ, and of the Trinity has remained until this day. Millions of souls have been saved eternally. The gospel is announced to the world by a Bible that was designed by the Holy Spirit for this very purpose.

Detailed word studies in the Hebrew and the Greek and the Aramaic have shown the absolute precision of the word of God known as the Bible. 'Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar', Prov. 30. 5-6. May we read and obey the word in our hearts, minds and bodies. Its value for us eternally is incalculable!

The main references for this writing were F. F. BRUCE's books, *The Canon of the New Testament* and *The New Testament documents, are they reliable?* Also, quotations of Athanasius, available on the internet.

## Endnotes

1 In John 14. 26, and John 15. 26.

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As Paul draws his letter to the Philippians to a close he conscientiously thanks them for a financial gift, and uses the opportunity to express certain truths about Christian contentment and the resources that God puts at the disposal of His people. He diligently expresses love for them, while lifting their eyes to behold the greatness of their God. Simultaneously, he returns to themes from the opening paragraph of the letter, as THIELMAN explains:

'In 4. 10 – 20 Paul returns to the themes and style of the letter's opening prayer (1. 3 – 11). The similarities between the two sections include the note of joy that begins each section (1. 4/4. 10), the concern of each section with the Philippians' practical display of fellowship with Paul in the work of the gospel (1. 5, 7/4. 10, 14, 18), the importance to each section of the Philippians' progress in the faith (1. 6, 9 – 11/4. 17b), and the conclusion of each section with an ascription of glory to God (1. 11/4. 20). In 4. 10 – 20 Paul then provides a fitting conclusion to the body of the letter by visiting again the central themes of the letter's opening'.<sup>1</sup>

### Beginning a Theological Thank You Note

A Bible teacher of a former generation described this section as 'a rare blending of affection, of dignity, of delicacy, with a certain undertone of gentle pleasantry. It is an embodiment of ideal Christian courtesy'.<sup>2</sup> Their generosity caused Paul to rejoice in the Lord, for he saw their action as rooted in His work in them. It is important for believers to remember the basics: we must be kind and thoughtful of others – to do otherwise is a bad testimony.

'The apostle depicts their renewed support in somewhat figurative language by using imagery taken from horticulture; this is shown in MOULE's rendering of 'hath flourished again' as 'you have shot forth thought (as a branch or bud) for me; or, less lit., you have burgeoned into thought for me'.<sup>3</sup> Another adds, 'To be sure, there had been this concern, this interest, all along, just as throughout the winter-season the tree that seems to be dead is actually alive. But just as

# Philippians: The Joy and Suffering

## Chapter 4 Paul's Contented Gratitude

verses 10-20:

in spring-time the tree puts forth fresh shoots, thereby *proving* that it is alive, so also the Philippians' interest in Paul had at last found a way *to express and demonstrate* itself concretely'.<sup>4</sup> This language is appropriate, because the Philippians' kindness towards Paul was an organic reaction rooted in the Lord's work within them by means of the implanted divine life, Phil. 2. 13. It was not lack of interest in the apostle, but lack of opportunity to send a gift that hindered their practical help, 4. 10.

### Rags or Riches equals Satisfaction

In referring to their financial gift, Paul does not want there to be any mistaken notions. He was not desperately needy, nor was he entirely dependent on them for his physical maintenance. In large measure his independence stemmed from his super-circumstantial contentment, which encompassed every possible material scenario. The ever-eloquent SPURGEON describes this uncommon Christian attitude:

'contentment is one of the flowers of heaven, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated; it will not grow in us by nature; it is the new nature alone that can produce it, and even then we must be especially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in us. Paul says, 'I have *learned* ... to be content;' as much as to say, he did not know how at one time. It cost him some pains to attain to the mystery of that great truth...Do not indulge the notion that you can be contented with *learning*, or learn without discipline. It is not a power that may be exercised naturally, but a science to be acquired gradually. We know this from experience. Brother, hush that murmur, natural though it be, and continue a diligent pupil in the College of Content'.<sup>5</sup>

Paul demonstrated this grace whether

he abounded – enjoying ample provisions and overflowing to help others – or was abased – suffering meagre fare, privation, and other physical hardships, v. 12. WIERSBE remarks, 'The Greek word means "self-sufficient" and was a favourite word of the stoic philosophers. But the Christian is not sufficient in himself; he is sufficient in Christ. Because Christ lives within the Christian, he is

adequate for the demands of life'.<sup>6</sup>

He speaks of learning this satisfaction, using a word from Greek mystery religions; it means 'to be initiated into a mystery'. Just as other people sought to be initiated into the secret rites of secretive cults, like Mithraism, Paul apprehended the secret of contentment that transcends one's surroundings. W. W. FEREDAY comments,

'Blessed superiority over all circumstances — Christ engaging the heart, the Spirit operating powerfully in the soul! It is easier for some to be abased than to abound. David, when hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, trusted God; when dwelling at ease in Zion, Satan allured him into the foulest sins. Jehoshaphat, when weak, counted on God, saying, "We know not what to do"; when strong and rich, he joined affinity with Ahab and helped the ungodly'.<sup>7</sup>

### Power for every Season of Life

Both prosperity and penury have their temptations, as SMITH notes, 'In adversity we may be tempted by the devil to lose confidence in God and question His ways or His love. It was thus Job was tested (Job 1. 20-22; Job 2. 9, 10). In prosperity we may grow self-confident and forget God. It was so with David (Ps. 30. 6). Moses warns God's people lest in days of temporal fullness the heart be lifted up and God be forgotten (Deut. 8. 14)'.<sup>8</sup> 'Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food



# ring of the Furtherance of the Gospel Part Sixteen

## de and the Practical Fellowship of the Gospel

allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God', Prov. 30. 8-9 NKJV.

Paul's equanimity in his changing circumstances was rooted in his dependence on the Lord. In the famous words of chapter 4 verse 13, he affirms, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'. The word for 'can do' has the sense 'I receive strength/ability to accomplish something'. The second phrase 'who strengtheneth' is from the same word group as the well-known Greek word *dunamis* – from which we derive English words such as *dynamic*. Thus, Paul possessed comprehensive ability to meet any and every situation that he faced in the Lord's work. Whether he lived well or poorly materially he could handle it through – literally 'in' – the empowering Saviour. If one seeks one's satisfaction in Christ, then He will fill one with this supernatural contentment.

### A Proven Record of Faithful Support

Having made the point that he looked to God and not to man for his support, Paul reiterates his gratitude for their good deed towards him in his 'affliction', v. 14. They had come through with timely help once again. In verses 15-16 he details their past gifts, when other churches were unable to aid his pioneering endeavours in the gospel. He then raises their thoughts above mundane financial matters to

see their earthly gifts in terms of their spiritual importance.

To the Philippians, physical substance had been imparted, but Paul asserts that it is actually spiritual 'fruit' – that is, man-ward their generosity resulted in spiritual rewards to be enjoyed in glory. On the God-ward side, their gifts were viewed as spiritual sacrifices, after the order of the sweet smelling savour offerings in Leviticus.<sup>9</sup> This lifts their financial contributions to an entirely different level; material gifts please God. As J.H. JOWETT noted, 'How vast, then, is the range of an apparently local kindness! We thought we were ministering to a pauper, and in reality we were conversing with the King. We imagined that the fragrance would be shut up in a petty neighbourhood, and lo, the sweet aroma steals through the universe. We thought we were dealing only with Paul, and we find that we were ministering to Paul's Saviour and Lord'.<sup>10</sup>

The Philippians seemed not to be an economically robust group; therefore, would their generosity not put them on dangerous financial ground? Anticipating this anxiety, Paul directs them once again to God's provision in Christ, as HOLE maintains, 'But what of the Philippians themselves? They had further impoverished themselves, further reduced their already slender resources by their gifts in favour of an aged prisoner who could in no wise reciprocate or help them. Paul felt this and in verse 19 he expresses his confidence as to them. God would

supply all their need. Notice how he speaks of Him as, "My God," – the God whom Paul knew and had practically tested for himself. That God would be their Supplier, not according to their need, nor even according to Paul's ardent desires on their behalf, but according to His own riches in glory in Christ Jesus'.<sup>11</sup> The supply would be commensurate with the infinite wealth of God Himself – not merely out of His treasury, but qualitatively 'according to his riches in glory'. It is not surprising that these great truths culminate in a doxology: 'Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen', v. 20; such a deity deserves all honour and praise in keeping with His great person and work.

### Endnotes

- 1 FRANK THIELMAN, *NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995, Electronic ed. (Pradis.)
- 2 C. R. ERDMAN, *Philippians*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977, pg. 146.
- 3 H. C. G. MOULE, *The Epistle to the Philippians*. Cambridge: The University Press, 1893, pg. 116.
- 4 WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN, *Exposition of Philippians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963, pp. 202-203.
- 5 C. H. SPURGEON, Entry for Feb. 16 a.m., *Morning And Evening*, electronic ed. (Logos).
- 6 WARREN WIERSBE, *Be Joyful: Philippians*, electronic ed. (Quickverse).
- 7 W. W. FEREDAY, *Thoughts On Philippians*. Electronic ed. available here: <http://www.stempublishing.com/authors/fereday/PHILIPPI.html#a4>
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- 9 The Septuagint employs the same Greek word in Leviticus that Paul uses in Philippians chapter 4 verse 18.
- 10 J. H. JOWETT, *The High Calling*. London: Andrew Melrose, 1909, pg. 225.
- 11 F. B. HOLE, *Philippians*. Electronic ed. available here: <http://www.stempublishing.com/authors/hole/NT/PHILIPPI.html#a4>

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## Introduction

There are four passages in the book of Isaiah that are called songs of the Servant of Jehovah. The subject of these lyrics is a royal servant (*ebed*), meaning one who rules under another, as Joseph did. The Messiah rules under the authority of God, 'The head of Christ is God', 1 Cor. 11. 3. Each of these songs is in the section of Isaiah which was written to comfort God's people, chapters 40-66. Each song is about the Messiah, and three of them end joyfully with the admonition to sing unto the Lord.

The Servant songs are as follows:

**The Supreme Servant**, Isa. 42. 1-9 – sung by God the Father throughout;

**The Sovereign Servant**, Isa. 49. 1-13 – sung by God the Son, vv. 1-7, and God the Father, vv. 8-13;

**The Submissive Servant**, Isa. 50. 1-11 – sung by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;

**The Suffering Servant**, Isa. 52. 13 - 53. 12 – the first three verses sung by God, the last twelve verses by Israel.

## The Supreme Servant

In Isaiah chapter 42 verse 1, the Servant's task is to make right within history all aspects of human existence – moral, spiritual, political, social, and economic. 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven', Matt. 6. 10, will be globally and visibly fulfilled.

God the Father presents His royal Servant as 'my chosen One, in whom my soul delighteth' (Heb. *rahtsah* – to be well pleased). He repeated these words at the Lord Jesus' baptism in Matthew chapter 3 verse 17. 'I have put my Spirit upon Him' may refer to the Holy Spirit resting upon Christ from His incarnation, Isa. 11. 2, or to the anointing seen in vision by John the Baptist at the beginning of Christ's public ministry, Isa. 61. 1.

In His mission He will be successful and will not be defeated, 42. 2.

**He shall not cry** (Heb. *twahwak*): 'to cry out, especially for pain or sorrow, or for help'.<sup>1</sup> The Servant would not complain nor cry for justice. He would have no self-pity, neither would He shout in strife or dispute, Matt. 12. 19.

**Nor lift up**: 'to lift up and remove (anything)'. He will not raise His voice: (a) in a cry of protest;<sup>2</sup> or (b) for attention, like the loud talking in public places customarily done in the East to gain a hearing.

# The Servant Songs

By **ADAM THROPAY** Downey, California, USA

**Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street**: The street is where people raised their voices, weeping, and mourning in defeat.<sup>3</sup> It was also a place of religious hypocrisy, Matt. 7. 5. The supreme Servant is neither hypocritical nor defeated.

Having no selfish interests, He is motivated by the needs of others, Isa. 42. 3, cp. Phil. 2. 4. He is gentle, meek, gracious, and just. The Lord Jesus Christ's work in this creation includes establishing His righteous form of government in truth and justice. This will be realized to its fullest degree during the millennium.

In bringing about this righteous world order the Servant is neither violent nor oppressive, but is gentle with the 'bruised reeds' of humanity, careful that He does not hurt nor injure them further, v. 3. The spiritual life that is dying out, or is feeble – the 'smoking flax' or the 'flickering wick' – He will also treat in grace.

Often a bruised reed and a flickering wick are seen together in life situations. A person who is in a low spiritual condition (suggested by the flickering wick) may injure another person (the bruised reed) emotionally or physically. But the Lord Jesus is just and impartial, and will help both individuals according to their needs. The bruised reed must not be broken or stepped upon – that is, injured further, and the flickering wick must not be extinguished, but be fanned back into a strong flame. What an example for His followers to emulate! We, as believers, can virtually 'write off' someone who is not walking in close fellowship with the Lord. We can even callously 'kick' someone who is already knocked down. Neither of these responses reflects the perfect Servant we represent.

**He shall not fail**: (Heb. *kah-hah*) 'to be weak, feeble, grow dim', answering to the dimly burning wick of verse 3. Never weakening, nor being discouraged (Heb. *ratsats* – as in verse 3), He will go through circumstances that would crush others – but He will triumph.

He will not stop until He establishes with design, care, and exactness, a right order – with justice in the earth. Although the millennium is in view here, surely we in this era can trust such a One not to fail us, but to strengthen us in our own little difficulties.

God proves He is well-qualified to equip His Servant for the needs of mankind, v. 5. He created the universe by His word, showing His power. Just as we would unfold a sheet of fabric far smaller than ourselves, so the infinite God stretched out the heavens. He spread them out (Heb. *rawkah*) as a smith hammers out malleable metal with his tools, using wisdom and skill. He designed the earth with natural resources to meet every physical need. More than that, He gives breath (life) and spirit (Heb. *ruach*: 'air in motion', or 'the entire immaterial consciousness in man') to all.<sup>4</sup> As our Creator, He fully understands all our needs.

**I the Lord**: The 'I' is emphatic, meaning that this great, powerful Creator, just described above, promises that He will hold His Servant's hand, help, strengthen and protect Him – and how this was fulfilled is a delightful study in the four Gospels. The Lord Jesus was guaranteed success! He will be both a covenant for Israel, and a light to the Gentiles – a Messiah for all people, v. 6. He will open the eyes of the blind, and give deliverance to those in prison, v. 7. God, whose name is Jehovah, guarantees that this prophecy about the Servant will be fulfilled, and gives past fulfilled prophecies as evidence, v. 9. 'Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them'.

Believers, as His representatives on earth, have the privilege and the responsibility of demonstrating likeness to the Messiah, displaying God's love and grace, gentleness and meekness, and absolutely righteous behaviour without arrogance. Only in total and consistent dependence upon the Holy Spirit can these characteristics be lived out through you and me.



# of Isaiah<sup>[1]</sup>

## The Sovereign Servant

The second song begins with the Servant's prenatal call, and how He was prepared for service, Isaiah chapter 49 verses 1-3.

### A. Words from the Son, vv. 1-6

The Servant says that Jehovah made His mouth as 'a sharp sword' (*khereb* - a straight, tapering, cutting instrument with two edges). The sword is figurative of the revelation of God.<sup>5</sup> Piercing and dividing with His words, the Servant is God's mouthpiece.<sup>6</sup>

To the adulterous woman, already convicted by His very presence, He spoke gracious words of forgiveness and direction. At the same time, His straightforward cutting to the issue - 'He that is without sin among you' - struck the consciences of the Pharisees, her accusers. They knew the law of Moses, and recognized that they were guilty of being 'violent witnesses'. Deuteronomy chapter 19 verses 16-20, 'If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him'. The word translated 'false' means 'one who promotes violence and wrong', 'hatred characterized by violence',<sup>7</sup> 'one who acquires treasure and provision through oppression and exploitation of the poor'.<sup>8</sup> It refers to those who use God's law arbitrarily for their own benefit.<sup>9</sup> In this instance, the Pharisees used the woman as a 'trick' case in order to defame the Lord, hoping to have Him murdered - without, of course, their appearing responsible for His death.<sup>10</sup>

In a few words the Lord exposed the Pharisees as violating the very law of Moses they were claiming to uphold, and, as such, they were subject to the same punishment they were exacting on the woman. No wonder they dispersed quietly after His remark! His words were like a sword with two edges.

When 'my servant' is addressed by God as 'Israel' in verse 3, it is apparent from the context that the single Servant is in view, the One who epitomizes the true Israel of God, see verses 5 and 6 where the Servant will restore the nation to Himself. The Messiah is the quintessential Israel, 'a prince with

God,' the One in whom God will be glorified.

What would be the people's response to God's words, v. 4? The Servant faithfully records that although He would have laboured to exhaustion (*Heb. yawgah*), there would be no apparent results (*reek*). Though He would expend (*kalah*) His strength and vigor (*Heb. koakh*), it would seem wasted - for nothing, for emptiness (*toho*). To all appearances, He would leave no lasting impression!

But the Servant refused to be discouraged by this seeming failure. 'Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength', v. 5. 'Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him', John 13. 31. Despite appearances, He was fully confident in God's promises that He, the Servant, would restore Israel, be a light to the nations, and 'be my salvation unto the end of the earth', v. 6. Salvation is in a Person, available to all worldwide.

The Servant left the final vindication and the results of His labour with God. As He was content to commit His judgement to God's handling, so also should we be. 'For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps', 1 Pet. 2. 21.

### B. Words from the Father to His Servant, vv. 7-12

What would follow the Lord's quiet, apparently fruitless earthly ministry? The One who would be despised (*Heb. bazoh* - treated with contempt and scorn) by mankind, abhorred (*tebab* - loathe, hate with indignation) by the nation, and made a servant of rulers, will, at length, be revealed as God's chosen One, v. 7. 'Kings shall see (who

He really is!) and arise (in respect) and princes also shall worship (bow down and worship as deity), because of the Lord who is faithful'.

He will be helped in a day of salvation, preserved, and made the world ruler, v. 8. His government will free those who were imprisoned in darkness, v. 9. He will tend His people as only the ultimate Shepherd can, personally, and in His mercy, v. 10. Believers from everywhere will come to Him without hindrance, vv. 11-12.

In sharp contrast with the Messiah's low-key first visit, God points to His glorious global government that is yet to come. What a prospect! No wonder the heavens and earth are exhorted to sing, give praise, and be joyful, v. 13!

### Endnotes

- 1 See Exod. 14. 10, 15; 17. 4; Judg. 4. 3, Ps. 107. 6, Lam. 2. 18.
- 2 Compare Gen. 21. 16, Num. 14. 1; Judg. 2. 4.
- 3 Compare Isa. 15. 3; 24. 11; 33. 7.
- 4 Isa. 26. 9; Prov. 16. 32; Ps. 32. 2.
- 5 See Eph. 6. 17; Heb. 4. 12; Rev. 1. 16.
- 6 Matt. 10. 34; Luke 7. 44-48.
- 7 Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, pg. 329.
- 8 Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.
- 9 Zeph. 3. 4; Ezek. 22. 25-27.
- 10 John 8. 6.



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Perhaps the most private sphere of the Christian's life is his or her prayer life. Aspects of a man's prayer life may be heard by others in the assembly prayer meetings or in family devotions, but the larger part of anyone's prayer life is unseen by human eyes and not overheard by anyone. When we find seclusion and heaven notes, 'Behold, he prayeth', Acts 9. 11, it is then that we are able to express our thanksgivings; to lay our needs, concerns, and burdens before the Father; but there we also learn to bow to God's sovereignty. At such times, when alone before God, the supplicant is less tempted to pray *with* himself, or make long prayers for a pretence, or because they think they might be heard for their much speaking.<sup>1</sup>

Even when in Jerusalem, where hundreds flocked to the temple to pray at the set hours of prayer, the Lord Jesus did not seek to regulate the Jewish practice of collective prayer, but, from His Sermon on the Mount until His last address on prayer was given in the Upper Room on that night in which He was betrayed, He taught earnest hearts to pray. On both occasions when He taught them the Disciple's Prayer, often called the Lord's Prayer, they heard Him expressly command that they include the statement, 'Thy will be done'.<sup>2</sup> On both occasions, they may not have fully gauged how demanding that simple statement was to be. It was to remain unqualified by conditions that might limit the cost to the petitioner and the divine response he or she would find acceptable. Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, they would hear their Teacher pray, and note the inclusion of that memorable phrase, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt . . . thy will be done'.<sup>3</sup> Only then, for the first, were they confronted, in an absolute sense, with the import of the will of God. Previously, they may have marvelled at David's submission to God's will, when he declined to choose how he should be disciplined for his sin in numbering the people. He had cried, 'Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great'.<sup>4</sup>

# The Sovereignty in relation to Prayer

David, rightly, left the matter with his God, but the parallel is faint with the One, who was without fault, yet was willing to face the immeasurable suffering of Calvary, because it was the will of His Father.

Not only was the Lord Jesus the great example of prayer within the will of God, but the Holy Spirit's intercession for us is a present example of intercession 'according to the will of God'; 'He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God', Rom. 8. 26-28. In making intercession for us, the Holy Spirit is acting to help our infirmities, but He acts according to the will of a sovereign God. The objector might challenge the relevance of the two examples of the Son and the Holy Spirit to the humble child of God. The New Testament scriptures qualify the child of God's asking in prayer by the phrase 'according to his will'. As we pray, we need to recall that God is sovereign and respect the will of God. We cannot pray for His blessing on an unequal yoke, or on some dubious business practice. Like Paul we might pray for the removal of some thorn in the flesh, but we need to realize that He may not remove it, but may give us grace to bear it. Many dear saints have proved the sweetness of the words Paul heard, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness', 2 Cor. 12. 7-9. Paul's example is also of great value for two reasons: firstly, we note that Paul prayed three times about his debilitating condition, and learn that the sovereign God answers, when He will; secondly, Paul was given an answer that allowed him to glory more than three times in his infirmities, because the power of Christ tabernacled upon him. The sovereign God met his need in a way that surpassed his expectation.

The same apostle had known, from the time the risen Lord arrested him on the road to Damascus, that it was the will of God that he should suffer great things for Christ's name's sake, Acts 9. 16. Soon afterwards, the disciples had to let him down in a basket over the city wall when men sought to assassinate him, v. 25. Much later, he would have entered into the unruly mob at Ephesus, but for the restraint of the disciples and the advice of some Asiarchs – the ruling class drawn annually from the wealthy aristocrats, 19. 30-31. Nonetheless, Paul was determined to make what was to be his last journey to Jerusalem, although the threats from Jewish adversaries did cause him to change his travel arrangements from Macedonia, 20. 3. *En route* to Jerusalem, he confided in the Ephesian elders, whom he had invited to meet him at Miletus, that they would see his face no more.

After that tearful parting, Paul's company made for Caesarea, where a few days later, Agabus arrived, who prophesied that, on reaching Jerusalem, Paul would be arrested and bound by the Jews. The result was further tears that an adamant Paul declared were breaking his heart, 21. 10-13. Paul did not doubt the source of Agabus' prophecy but was certain that he was moving in the will of God. Despite many objections raised and the evident grief it was causing, Paul was not dissuaded from what he was convinced was the will of God. He remained of the view that it was the will of God for him that he should suffer for Christ's sake and that Jerusalem was on the pathway forward for the willing sufferer. Eventually, the whole company was able to say, 'The will of the Lord be done'.

It fell to another apostle to write specifically about prayer and the



# Y of God er

By **TOM WILSON**  
Glasgow, Scotland

sovereignty of God. In his First Epistle, John writes for the whole family of God. We learn in 1 John what John's objectives are, as he writes under the guidance of the Spirit of God. As clearly as he stated at John chapter 20 verse 31, the purpose of the Gospel he penned – 'that ye might believe' – he explains that he writes to believers to assure them of eternal life and to strengthen their faith, 1 John 5. 13. He also addresses the question of 'confidence'<sup>5</sup> four times in his brief Epistle. Its first occurrence at chapter 2 verse 28 shows this confidence is the converse of shame. We also learn in that context that the Holy Spirit is our teacher, that we might abide in Christ. The results would be two: our having boldness (or confidence) now, and our not being ashamed before Him as His coming, 4. 17, which also has the day of assessment in view. We learn, 'Herein is love made perfect with us', 4. 17 JND, RV. Love has addressed every issue that would have denied us a righteous standing in that day, and we are in the good of it now, for 'as he is, so are we in this world'.

The other two occurrences of 'confidence' or 'boldness' relate to prayer, 3. 21, where love is in action in our lives; 5. 14, where we cry to God. John strengthens faith by reminding us that our love for our brethren is the evidence that we have passed from death unto life. New life has that effect even to the extent that we accept the obligation to lay down our lives for the brethren, and, at the least, that we would minister to our poor brother, 3. 14-17. If our love for our brethren is not merely in word and on our tongue, but is seen in deed and in truth, then we are assured that our prayers will not be selfishly restricted to our needs and wants. John is assuring us that there will be clear evidence that we are keeping the commandments and doing the will of God. Where that evidence is seen, the prayers will be in the current of God's will and be answered. If love is active, we know that 'whatsoever we ask, we receive', 3. 22.

At chapter 5 verse 14, 'according to his will', is explicit in the context. John underscores the sovereignty of God. He acknowledges that the God, whose glory transcends all who would dare to challenge His rights, has absolute power and sovereign freedom of action. He need not seek approval for, or explain, His actions. Yet we have confidence to speak

to that God. If we ask according to His will, 'he heareth us'. For our reassurance, John restates that He hears us, and adds that He will answer our petitions. John observes, by the Spirit, that there may be instances where particular sins become evident, about which it would not be God's will that we pray, 5. 16.

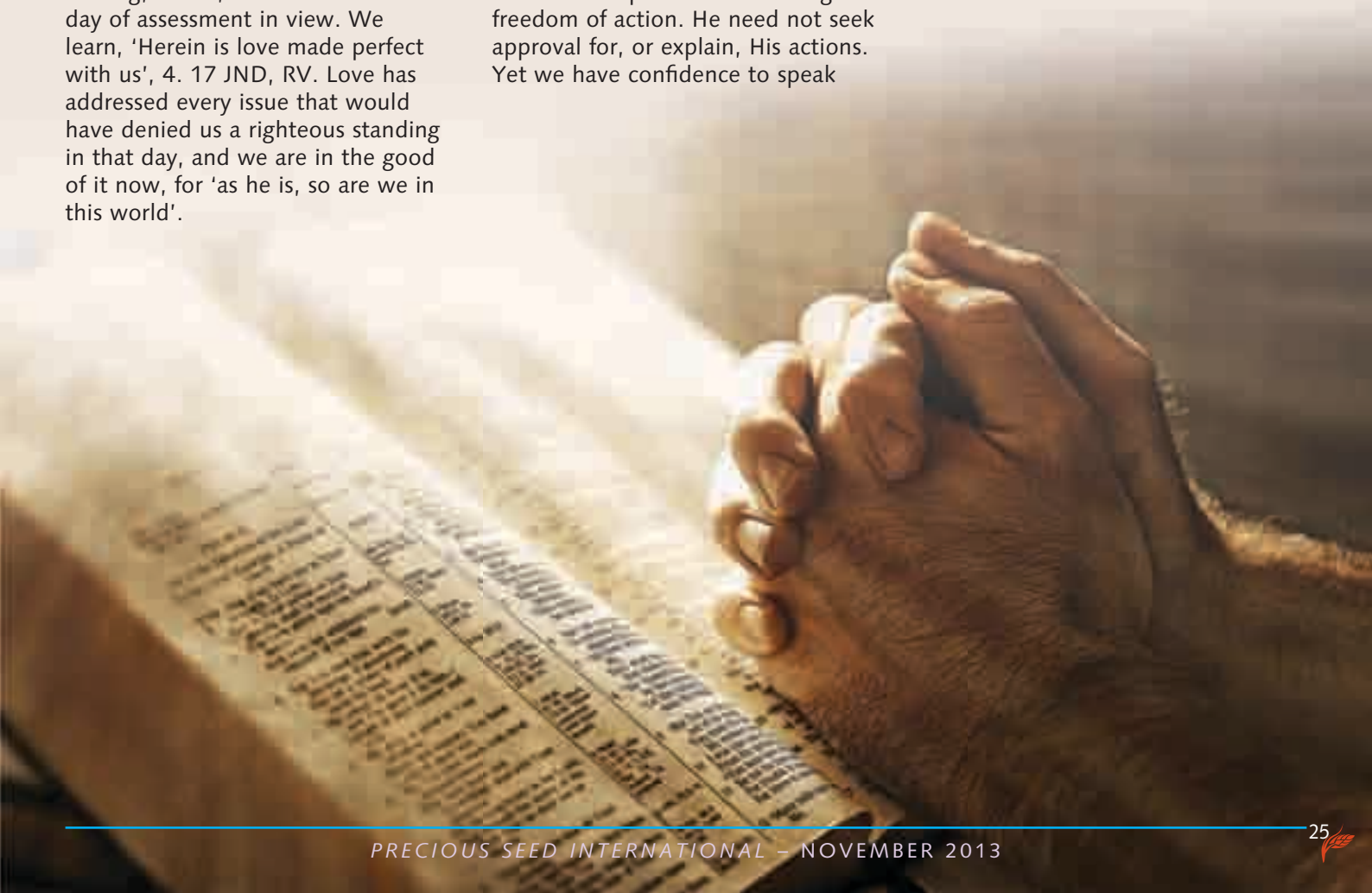
In the Disciple's Prayer, the disciples were taught to pray, 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven', Matt. 6. 10. As yet, the earth is still marked by rampant lawlessness, God's word is despised and His will ignored. Nonetheless, there are those who own that He is sovereign, even when they pray. Heaven values every one of them, who says, 'Thy will be done'.

## Endnotes

- 1 Luke 18. 11; Matt. 23. 14; 6. 7.
- 2 Matt. 6. 10; Luke 11. 2.
- 3 Matt. 26. 39, 42.
- 4 2 Sam. 24. 14.
- 5 Greek *parrhēsia*, 1 John 2. 28; 3. 21; 4. 17; 5. 14

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# REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK



## ENGLAND

### West Yorkshire

The assembly in Hemsworth is able to go into around ten local schools to take the assemblies. Once a year, the assembly takes the Open Air Mission's Bible exhibition into eight schools reaching around fifteen-hundred children with the gospel, as well as teachers and helpers. Once every three months, on a Saturday afternoon they have a free tea in the hall, followed by a gospel meeting. Around thirty unsaved have been coming in to hear the gospel message and some are now going to the Sunday gospel meeting.

In October the assembly commenced a work in the local markets, distributing tracts and booklets.

### Hertfordshire

The assembly at **Cheshunt** held a series of gospel meetings on Sunday evenings, entitled, '*God's programme for the future as revealed in the Bible*'.

### Berkshire

In May and July around eight thousand Seed Sower texts were distributed around Windsor in addition to tracts given out at the Datchet village fete.

### London

Steve and Judi Buckridge, with the help of other believers distributed nearly ten thousand specially written tracts at the Trooping of the Colour

They have also started a work at Heathrow Airport. This work includes: contributing to a staff Bible study on Wednesday lunchtimes; speaking with staff, which gives some clear opportunities to explain the gospel; meeting believers who are passing through the airport to provide assistance, fellowship, or encouragement; showing kindness to passengers around the terminals which from time to time also gives the chance to speak of the Lord.

In the future it is hoped it may include responding to deaths on board aircraft and helping those involved in emergencies. With over seventy thousand staff and seventy million passengers per year there is a huge variety of needs. The work is essentially about being led by the Lord to be in the right place at the right time to do the right thing.

### Nottinghamshire

The believers in the assembly at **Kirkby-in-Ashfield** continue to reach out to the lost in the town of Kirkby and its environs. On June 8th they held an evangelism day when, with the help of a group of young believers from local assemblies, they delivered tracts over a large area. Overall, some ten thousand leaflets and invitations were distributed, and new areas reached with the gospel. Following on from that effort the assembly held two nights of special meetings on: '*Why I believe the Bible is relevant in 2013*'. Michael Penfold (Bicester) gave help in the preaching. Although there were very few responses to the invitations, the saints were encouraged by the support of local believers. The meetings were considered profitable in building up the younger Christians who attended.

In the week commencing 1st July the assembly hosted the Bible Exhibition with Jonathan Black (London). The hall was open daily from around 1.30 to 8.30pm. In conjunction with this there was some visitation of contacts, some open-air preaching in the town centre precinct, and some further literature distribution. One school from the town sent fifty children through the exhibition and this visit was helpful in establishing a new contact for the assembly. However, the most encouraging aspect was in the number of adults that visited – over forty in total. One has been attending the gospel meetings ever since.

The assembly would value prayer for the school contact. They have requested the exhibition to visit the school in January, although dates have yet to be confirmed. Please also pray for James who has been attending the gospel meetings and showing real interest in 'turning his life around'. May he be brought to Christ who alone can save!

### East Sussex

During the third weekend in August, Eastbourne hosts the largest free airshow in the UK. This year the weather was beautiful and hundreds of thousands of visitors come to the town over the four days of the show. Over ten thousand postcards with texts were distributed amongst the visitors and in the local hotels. A stand was also set up outside Marine Hall, with literature and Bibles being given away. Many conversations were had and one older

gentleman in particular was delighted to accept a Bible – he had never had one before!



## SCOTLAND

At the end of June, Graeme Paterson helped with two weeks gospel work in Fife. Working, with some of the believers from the Ballingry assembly in the small villages where there is no witness, they had a week of children's and gospel meetings on the 'bus', firstly in **Kinglassie**, then in **Cardenden**.

Kinglassie was very encouraging with over fifty children attending through the week, on one occasion thirty-eight children and four adults were present. Over the week, the enthusiasm and interest of the children was great. The majority of these young people knew nothing about the Lord – it is real pioneering work!

The gospel meetings were also encouraging, with around a dozen teenagers attending each night. They were full of questions and stayed behind each night to try and find answers. One young lady was extremely troubled on the last night, please pray for her.

Cardenden was a bit different, as the bus was parked in the school grounds for an after school Bible club. Once again interest was good and over thirty children and some parents and teachers attended. The gospel meetings were not as busy as the previous week, however, once again a good number of teenagers attended.

A number of other schools were also visited and ten assemblies and fifteen classes were held over the fortnight.

Graeme also spent three weeks at Faskally House for Ayrshire and Tayside senior and junior camps. These too went very well. There was a good interest in the teaching and some have since asked to be baptized. Two teenagers who trusted the Lord on their return home from camp seem to be going on so far.

Again at the Juniors' camp, there were a some youngsters who made professions; two of these were from Plains, and have been telling their family of their salvation.





## Moray

The saints at Cullen had the joy of baptizing two young men. They asked to be baptized at the harbour in front of all their friends! It was tremendous experience with over one-hundred-and-fifty believers attending and dozens of unbelievers around the harbour area.

## Lanarkshire

Graeme Paterson continues the School work in Lanarkshire. It has been very encouraging through 2012/13 with over three-hundred-and-fifty school visits and many to new schools. This has increased for the new term with further requests from schools. There has also been an opportunity to hold a Bible Class type meeting for the sixth formers in a local Secondary school and Graeme has been asked to go with some schools on residential weeks with the idea of holding 'Faith Spots' each evening.

Graeme also had responsibility for the third week of the **Shetland** camp, which was well attended; many teenagers listened intently to the gospel. Some trusted the Lord for salvation and one talked with Graeme about assurance of her salvation. One lad asked for baptism. Please pray for these young people that the Lord will preserve them from this present evil age and also for another lad who is not far from the Kingdom of God.

## Aberdeenshire

Graeme Smith from **Inverurie** reports, 'We are thankful to the Lord that around 200 Bibles were gifted to many Primary 7 pupils in our local area as they moved on to secondary school. Please pray that they may read and understand the good news and trust the Saviour. Please pray that more schools will accept this free gift next year.

We also rejoice that a French student who visited us over the summer attended the gospel meetings each night at the Holiday Bible Club. Please pray that she will read the Bible and understand the way of salvation.

The Holiday Bible Club went well this year with some new children attending. Please pray that the good seed that was sown will bear fruit in their lives. Many of the parents heard the gospel at the BBQ on the last night. Please pray that they will come to know the Lord'.

During the months of June, July, and August, **Holburn** Gospel Hall held three gospel meetings in a small auditorium in the Winter Gardens of a local park. Several people came along to the services, while others heard of the Saviour as the services were broadcast to other parts of the Gardens.

From 9th-13th September, the assembly hosted the Aberdeenshire Bible Exhibition. Once again, the focus was centred principally on children from local schools with around 300 pupils, as well as accompanying adults, attending. The children listened well, and responded positively in the quiz sessions which followed each tour of the Exhibition. Feedback from the teachers, particularly in relation to content and presentation, was very positive. On two of the evenings, special sessions were held for pupils and parents associated with the external Bible Clubs run by members of the assembly. While few passers-by visited the Exhibition, those who did come, gave opportunities for good conversations. Please pray that what the visitors heard will bear fruit for eternity.

The assembly at **Peterhead** had two weeks of gospel meetings with Ian Jackson. Most if not all nights there were unbelievers present and whilst it would have been good to see some coming more frequently, the assembly are thankful that the gospel was faithfully preached. They also held Open Air meetings and they are looking to the Lord to bless the seed that has been sown.



Graeme Paterson spent a week in **Cardy** for a holiday club where each night over two-hundred children were present and on the Friday prize-giving two-hundred-and-forty children and one-hundred-and-fifty parents turned out!



## Tanzania

The assembly in **Dar** is actively involved in, and committed to, the work of translation. Robert Armstrong continues his visits to the assembly and the local believers are willing to spend many hours in the evenings going over the manuscripts with him. As Emmanuel, one of the local believers, pointed out, 'These books will be available for the Lord's work long after we are gone'. Six of the Ritchie *Focus* books have been printed and the remaining four are in the final stages of checking. Four other books, including commentaries on Philipians and the book of Ruth, are at various stages of the translation process. A leaflet, for visitors to the assembly,

explaining the Lord's Supper, is also currently being translated. Please pray for this important work.

## Botswana

In recent months, the Lord has saved three young men, all being the fruit of Sunday school work in **Gaborone West**, and in the village of **Tlokweng**.

## Argentina

Jim and Betty Burnett report, 'The assembly at **Concordia** has had a sad and turbulent history. At one point this resulted in the assembly ceasing to function for over three years. Over the last two years we have visited monthly and on each occasion there are only a few who gather for the meetings, however, the encouraging part is that several unbelievers have been present. Last Saturday evening four of the eight present had no assembly connection. Mirta who is in her late forties and is a devout Catholic came with a Bible and followed the message. Perhaps due to the lack of ritual and ceremony in the course of the message she raised her hand a couple of times as if in school to ask questions, which I answered. She is an intelligent woman with a family. Please pray for Mirta and also for others who are attending. We feel there is potential for the work to grow, but due to the distance and time from Parana and our present work load, we find it impossible to make further commitment. This very superstitious Roman Catholic city of 136,000 souls needs a missionary couple to strengthen the assembly, and from there to reach out to the lost.

Please pray for this and also for Don Eduardo and Doña Rosa. Both are over seventy years but faithfully continue to do an excellent job of evangelizing and conducting personal Bible studies with various individuals. They have mentioned that they 'would love to see the day when the work there flourishes again'.

## Sri Lanka

In June, Jack Hay visited Sri Lanka, accompanied by Allan Wilson of Cullen. In both **Hatton** and **Colombo** they had the privilege of visiting a number of schools and hundreds of young people heard of the Saviour. There was also an all-day conference in Colombo which brought good numbers from outlying areas, some of whom have no connection with any assembly. They all went home equipped with suitable literature. Some of the saints are under increasing pressure from militant Buddhists and Bethesda Gospel Hall has been named in a list of those who pose a threat to Buddhism.



# Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

## Head teachers removed in row over 'creationist' church

Two head teachers who allowed members of a US-based creationist church to help out at a Scottish primary school have been removed from their posts. Officials at South Lanarkshire Council said they wanted to establish why the Church of Christ group, which does not believe in evolution and condemns homosexual relationships, had been allowed to provide chaplaincy for eight years.

Alexandra MacKenzie, and her deputy Elizabeth Mockus, have been assigned other duties while an inquiry is carried out into the involvement of the fundamentalist Christian sect over a period of eight years at Kirktonholme Primary in East Kilbride. The local authority issued a statement confirming that the teachers had been replaced and given other roles in the council while the inquiry was conducted. The investigation was launched following complaints by parents after children took home two creationist books, 'How Do You Know God is Real?', and 'Exposing the Myth of Evolution', which they had been given at assembly. Mrs MacKenzie defended the decision to give the books to pupils in a letter, saying: "While I appreciate that not every family in our school are practising Christians, I was only too happy to accept this generous gift on your behalf. I hope you will all accept it in the spirit with which it was offered."

However, angry parents, at a public meeting, called for the teachers to be sacked, some threatened to remove their children from the primary school and one father said the books were an attempt to "brainwash" children. Jim Gilhooly, the council's director of education, has now told parents that a "full investigation" into management practices at the school has been instigated.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10307520/Head-teachers-removed-in-row-over-creationist-church.html>

## Bible trek inspires £1m visitor centre plans

Mary Jones walked 25 miles barefoot across difficult terrain in a bid to obtain a Bible in her own language. The story of a 15-year-old Welsh-speaking girl whose hunger for a Bible in her own language inspired one of the world's most successful movements will be retold in a £1m visitor centre which will open next year. Planning permission has been secured to transform the de-consecrated site of St Beuno's Church, at Llanycil, Bala, into a centre which will welcome visitors from across the world.

The story of Mary Jones, who in 1800 walked 25 miles barefoot across wild terrain from Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to Bala to get a Bible from the Rev Thomas Charles, helped trigger an unparalleled effort in international translations. According to local accounts, she had saved for six years to afford the book. She learned to read in a school Mr Charles organised and she would regularly walk two miles to a farm to study a copy of the Bible there. When she finally had saved enough money she made her way to Bala but learned that all copies had been sold. She was reportedly so distraught that Mr Charles sold her one that had already been promised to someone else. The clergyman, known for his passion for teaching children from poor families, was so touched by her determination that he helped establish The Bible Society four years later.

Mr Charles initially proposed to the Council of the Religious Tract Society to form a new Society to supply Wales with Bibles. In 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society was established in London. There is now an international fellowship of over 140 Bible societies.

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/bible-trek-inspires-1m-visitor-6024802>

## Dalmanutha: Biblical town referred to in the Gospel of Mark may have been discovered by archaeologists

In the New Testament, Dalmanutha is named as the location Jesus sails to with his disciples after feeding 4,000 by multiplying fish and loaves of bread. A town dating back more than 2,000 years has since been discovered on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee, in Israel's Ginosar valley. Archaeologists at the University of Reading now believe the ancient town could be Dalmanutha, after discovering it during a field survey.

The architectural remains and pottery suggest that Jewish residents and a polytheistic religion co-existed together within a community. Pottery pieces dating as early as the second century BCE also show that the town was prosperous and could have survived for centuries. The town is situated 500 feet away from another ancient town Migdal, which has been widely identified as Magdala, the birth place of Mary Magdalene, the first human witness of Christ's resurrection in the Bible.

The fields stretching between contemporary Migdal and the coast have produced many archaeological discoveries, and researchers at the University have linked it to the 1986 discovery of a 2,000-year-old-boat found on the shoreline.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/dalmanutha-biblical-town-referred-to-in-the-gospel-of-mark-may-have-been-discovered-by-archaeologists-8823956.html>

## Bits & Bobs



## Brilliant Butterfly Feature Challenges Darwinian Selection

How do butterflies' wings shine? Like almost all other butterflies, the *Morpho* has wings covered with scales. Typically, pigmentation patterns across these scales generate wing colours, but a *Morpho*'s scales deploy an additional feature.

On top of their scales, *Morpho* butterflies have countless tiny, tree-like structures with suspended branched arms that manipulate light waves. Spacing among the branches helps match targeted light-wavelengths, like blue for example. Repeated reflections of the same wavelength cause interference effects that, when viewed from certain angles, generate stunning iridescence.

Given the incredible detail of this system, it seems that whoever designed these precise, tree-like features had expert knowledge of optics and nanotechnology.

But secularists regularly assert that such a conclusion would not be "scientific"—by which they likely mean that God cannot be considered as an origins option, even if His craftsmanship is the best explanation for the evidence.

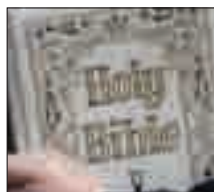
Researchers recently reported the discovery of another unique attribute embedded in *Morphos* that also offers no known survival advantage: the tree-like scale structures are strongly polar at their tops and non-polar where they attach to each scale. Publishing these findings, the study authors wrote, "Although this surface polarity gradient may not be essential for butterfly survival, but rather is a by-product of the process of scale development, this perspective on biological pattern design can offer opportunities for a variety of technological applications."

Put bluntly, if this newly found polarity gradient is not "essential for butterfly survival," then how could natural selection be its cause?

The PNAS study authors wrote, "*Morpho* butterflies are a brilliant spectacle of nature's capacity for photonic engineering." However, there is no reason—other than sheer bias—to credit nature with engineering butterfly optic structures that even human engineers have not yet been able to replicate.

The Creator God of the Bible shines as the real Engineer here.

<http://www.icr.org/article/7710/>







# A WORD FOR TODAY

Gap (body)  
Gephen (vine, grapevine)  
Goprit (sulphur)

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY**  
Newton Abbot, England

Viticulture or vine cultivation has been practised for many thousands of years. The Greeks were the leading exponents of this science, and it was extended by them throughout the Mediterranean world where the climatic conditions were found to be particularly conducive to the propagation of vines. Later, the process spread throughout the Roman Empire, so that the financial economies of Southern Europe became highly dependent on the grapes harvested from vineyards. So, for the people of the Mediterranean, the vine was a source of economic fruitfulness, as well as being integral to their cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup> But, in the Old Testament, the Hebrew noun for vine, *gephen*, is used mainly in a symbolic way to describe Israel's election, and its ultimate failure to produce spiritual fruit for God. In Psalm 80 verse 8, the drama of Israel's history unfolds when she is figuratively identified as a 'vine' that God plucked up out of Egypt and then planted in the Promised Land by the expulsion of the native nations. It was here that Israel took root and flourished under the hand of God, Ps. 80. 9-11. WILLIAM BROWN describes God's planting of Israel as His 'hands on' activity. He writes that 'the hand is not only God's victorious weapon against Israel's enemies. It is also the instrument that 'plants' a people on fertile soil. God can, as it were, wield a garden spade as effectively as a sword, for both modes of horticultural activity – clearing and cultivating – are deemed necessary for establishing Israel in the land',<sup>2</sup> see also Ps. 80. 14-15.

Isaiah continues Israel's story in a poem/parable of love and rebuke in chapter 5 of his prophecy. Although the imagery is changed here from a vine to a vineyard, the context is still the same. God is seen as a loving farmer who plants a vineyard, and who looked for the right harvest. Though the identity of the characters is not immediately clear, as the parable develops the reader is left in

no doubt that Israel is the intended target audience for God's rebuke, v. 7f. The harvest that Israel produced from this vineyard left a bitter taste in the mouth and, despite the care that God showed towards His people, the grapes were wild and sour, cp. Hos. 10. 1; Jer. 2. 21. God's rage against Israel is reflected in bitter irony as He uses His hand, this time not to plant, but to uproot Israel in judgement for her unfaithfulness, vv. 25-30. As ALEC MOTYER writes, 'According to Ezekiel 15:2-5 a vine is either good for fruit or good for nothing. Since the Lord's people are his vine, the same truth applies'.<sup>3</sup> God's love for Israel, however, means that He will eventually restore them to the land, and an indication of one of the blessings that He has in store for them will be literally seen in the replanting of vines, Zech. 8. 12. This will be to reverse God's previous judgement on His people when the agrarian peace of the land was shattered because Israel's vines were laid waste in the destruction of the land, see Hos. 2. 12; Joel 1. 7, 11.

Occasionally, the noun *gephen* can refer to an individual, as in Psalm 128, where the simple piety of a man of God is enhanced by a faithful wife who produces many children and who is compared to a fruitful vine, v. 3. In its wider context, *gephen* is used by the writer of Deuteronomy to describe the vine of apostasy characterized by the corruption and wickedness of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, 32. 32, cp. Rev. 14. 19. As MCCONVILLE points out, 'The depiction of the enemies concludes with a reflection on the false basis of the plenty they enjoy; their wine does not represent the blessing that comes from knowing the true God, but is the bitter fruit of falsehood and cruelty'.<sup>4</sup>

The equivalent Greek word used in the Septuagint (LXX) for the Hebrew noun *gephen* is ἀμπελος. It is this Greek word that is also used in the New Testament to refer to literal vines, and, metaphorically, as a title of the Lord. In James chapter 3 verse 12 the word is included in the writer's argument

to highlight the incongruity of the tongue compared to the constancy of nature. It is used in the expression, 'the fruit of the vine' that forms part of an prophetic statement made by our Lord at the end of the Passover meal and prior to Him going to the Mount of Olives, Matt. 26. 29 and parallels. But it is the self-disclosure of the title 'I am the true vine' in John chapter 15 verse 1 that makes this word so important. It identifies our Lord with Israel, and is a title firmly rooted in Old Testament theology. At the same time, it demonstrates a significant contrast with Israel. Hence the inclusion of the word 'true' in this Christological title. As VINCENT TAYLOR explains, 'The Johannine use of the name is, however, in an important sense new, since in the Old Testament the metaphor is always used of *degenerate* Israel'.<sup>5</sup> Some think that as our Lord and His disciples made their way into the garden of Gethsemane, they would have seen gates with the depiction of a vine representing Israel. It is at this point that His disciples may well have fully appreciated our Lord's earlier declaration. Here was truly the noble vine, Jer. 2. 21a, the true 'son of man', Ps. 80. 15(LXX), who would incorporate others within Himself and produce in them fruit for God's glory, John. 15. 2-8. Our Lord is the very life of His people and without Him we cannot produce fruit. What a challenge for us today to heed the Saviour's words and abide in Him, 'for without me ye can do nothing', John 15. 5.

## Further reading/study

### Introductory

VINCENT TAYLOR, *The Names of Jesus* (Chapter XXII – The True Vine).

### Advanced

C.K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John – An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (The True Vine – pp. 470-483).

### Endnotes

- 1 The Greek historian Thucydides once stated that 'the people of the Mediterranean began to emerge from barbarism when they learned to cultivate the olive and the vine'.
- 2 *Seeing the Psalms – A Theology of Metaphor*, pp. 176-177.
- 3 *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, pg. 68.
- 4 *Deuteronomy*, pg. 458.
- 5 *The Names of Jesus*, pp. 104-105.

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## QUESTION

**Are there scriptural grounds to justify leaving one assembly to join another in the same locality?**

## ANSWER

In the answer that appeared in the November 2010 magazine I began by referring to a former colleague who invariably responded to any query, no matter how simple, with the words 'it all depends'. On this occasion I find myself left with no choice other than to prefix my response to the above question with 'it all depends'. As to whether such a step would be right or not would depend on the motive for going; it would depend on the individual seeking to ascertain the mind of the Lord; it would depend on the circumstances that initiated the requirement to move etc. The fact that we may not have a specific example of this in the New Testament does not mean that such a decision is unscriptural. Due to the outreach conducted by brethren over the last century and a half, many areas have been privileged to have several assemblies located in a relatively small geographical area. That, coupled with the availability of public and personal transport, has made it easier to move from one fellowship to another. Consequently, things are possible today that were not so feasible in the days of the apostles.

I am assuming that the questioner is not thinking of situations created through force of circumstance but rather of those situations where personal choices are made. One example of this might be where someone is in a large meeting whilst

just a couple of miles away there is an assembly struggling to reach double figures. If it was felt that they could be of greater help, and serve the Lord more effectively, by leaving the larger company and moving to the smaller one that would be a laudable decision, and not one that would violate any biblical principle.

It is doubtful if many of us would have wanted to be in fellowship at Corinth. This was a carnal, divided assembly that desecrated the Lord's Supper, tolerated immorality, and was the only church which had issues with the requirement for women to wear a head covering. Despite these desperate conditions there were by contrast in that assembly those such as the house of Stephanas, some from the home of Chloe, as well as Fortunatus and Achaicus. These were spiritually-minded saints who must have been sorely grieved by the prevailing conditions, yet we do not read of them leaving Corinth and going into fellowship at Cenchrea, which was the next nearest assembly. It is also interesting to note that although the Corinthian church was in a low state spiritually, Paul still refers to it as 'the church of God' and the churches of Asia were all willing to salute it. The lesson to learn from this is to avoid an eager readiness to

'write off' an assembly because of its condition. This does not mean that we are to accept anything, nor does it give us any degree of licence to deviate from divine principles, but it should cause us to move with great caution and concern before we cease having fellowship with them.

However, there will be a number of readers who have had to make the heartbreaking and difficult choice to move from one assembly and go to another because of the scale of change in the practices of the assembly to which they originally belonged. We are living in days where biblical principles are being undermined, or deliberately set aside, and despite seeking to exhort the saints to hold fast to sound doctrine some have reached a point where they cannot continue in that fellowship. They did not leave just because they could not have their own way, nor did they leave at the first signs of a drift but, out of love for Christ and His people, they hoped and prayed that the saints would get back to New Testament principles. Eventually, they decided before the Lord they could remain no longer, and took the painful decision to leave. Such should not be criticized, but deserve our sympathy.

Questions for this column should be addressed to [info@preciousseed.org](mailto:info@preciousseed.org)

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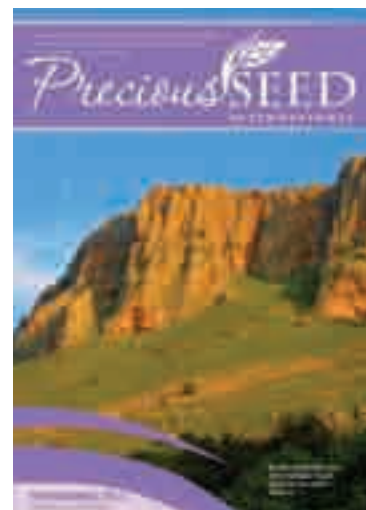


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## Front Cover Illustration

**WADI ARBEL.** Photo: John Chesney

The ancient village of Khirbet Hamam was located on a steep slope of the Nitai Mountain above the Wadi Arbel, which is captured in our stunning cover picture. It is about two miles west of the Sea of Galilee, and was one of the largest villages in Eastern Galilee during the Roman occupation of Israel. The Wadi Arbel formed part of the earliest travel route that existed between Jerusalem and Galilee. The site was first discovered by archaeologists in 2007, and subsequent excavations have brought to light the remains of one of the largest and best preserved synagogues in Galilee as well as suggesting that, in its day, it was the location of a thriving olive oil industry. Interestingly, within the synagogue complex itself, a mosaic floor has been unearthed depicting a series of artisans busy at work on what could possibly have been Solomon's Temple. This was the likely travel route that the Lord would have often taken during His lifetime, and the disciples probably passed here on their way to the Sea of Galilee as they obeyed the words of the angel to find their risen Lord, who had gone before them into Galilee, Mark 16. 7. Mark provides little more than this peremptory summons, but John narrates the subsequent scene for us as our Lord appears to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, John 21. 1-23. Whatever depiction might have been seen in the synagogue at Wadi Arbel, John points us to the fulfilment of prophecy in that the temple that had once been destroyed had now been raised again after three days, John 2. 19. What an experience it must have been for those early disciples as they took that journey along this ancient travel route to find their risen Lord, John 21. 1.



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