

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

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**'When Jesus came
into the coasts
of Caesarea
Philippi, he asked
his disciples,
saying, Whom do
men say that I the
Son of man am?'**
Matt. 16. 13.

faith matters 4

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COVER STORY
The big issue?

This issue of 'Faith Matters' has been written by a number of individuals who are bible believing Christians and would like to bring to your attention some really important issues.

Most of us would agree that our society and world is grappling with major issues many of which seem quite insurmountable. Financially most of the world's major economies are fighting to maintain stability. In terms of morality, while many may feel that they have won the liberty to live as they choose, we are facing many social and emotional problems as a result of this. Medically the world is stretched as it attempts to find answers to remedy major diseases. The problems are limitless and yet the human race with all its cleverness and ingenuity continues to look for and provide answers.

As you read through this issue you will see that we are addressing the greatest problem that the human race faces i.e. sin and death. Life experience matches the statement of the bible when it says 'for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'. Rom. 3, 23. No one's perfect I hear you say, and you are right, but have you ever considered why? As you read these articles (if you can access a bible it would be useful to check what

it says for yourself) you will not only see answers to why we are imperfect but you will be asked to consider what God has done to rectify the problem of our guilt and sin. The solution is stated in simple words 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners', 1. Tim. 1.15.

Some of the articles might be a little strange to you. For instance we have a piece on 'loving your enemies'. This was something that Jesus taught that is most unnatural and yet as you read it, I hope that you will see that He (Jesus) is the prime example of how to do this as he loved us and died for us when we had no time for him, indeed we could be described effectively as His enemies. We also have an interesting story of how a man became a Christian; I think you will find his story makes for interesting reading.

There are a couple of other articles but I'll leave you to explore them for yourself. If you find this booklet a help to you or if you have any questions please contact me at stepcar61@me.com. If I can help I would be happy to do so. *Stephen G Baker Liverpool*

"The problems are limitless and yet the human race with all its cleverness and ingenuity continues to look for and provide answers."

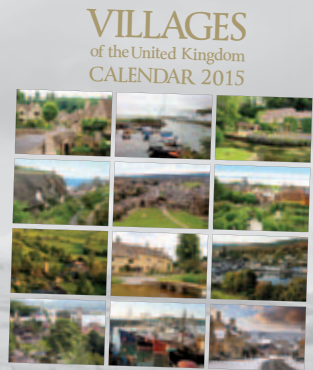
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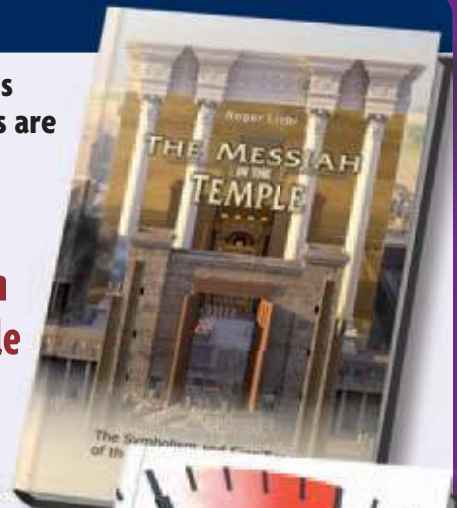
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Book Reviews

Compiled by JOHN BENNETT

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Life in the Big Story – Your Place in God’s Unfolding Plan

Heidi Johnston

Paperback, 192 pp. Published by IVP, Norton Street, Nottingham, NG7 3HR, UK. Price £8. 99. ISBN 978-1-84474-579-1.

'What a refreshing change this is'. So writes a well-known academic, author, and Bible teacher in his endorsement of this book. Indeed this is a volume which will perhaps offer some surprises for some readers. It encourages readers to confront the big questions of life and of our place in it – questions about each individual's significance, purpose, and destiny. But who would think of looking in the book of Deuteronomy for answers to such questions? Our author does – with considerable impact, and without employing ecclesiastical and theological terms which might be off-putting to her target readership.

The book consists of seventeen chapters of about a dozen pages each, with headings such as: 'Why bother with obedience?', 'Fear and Freedom', 'The call to holiness', 'The

Word became flesh'. In retracing Israel's history, the author allows the book of Deuteronomy to describe the crisis points in that chosen nation's relationship with God, and identifies the precise parallels in His dealings with our own generation. She knows the value of understatement, and the power of 'sweet reasonableness', being content, when appropriate, to let the facts speak for themselves. Her method is deceptively simple, and uncomplicated; she takes some of the main events in Israel's history, explains their significance, reinforces the lessons with illustrations taken from everyday life, and applies those lessons to ourselves. At the end of each chapter there are some questions suitable for group discussion, together with scripture references.

The Foreword informs us that this volume 'takes both believers and seekers on a pilgrimage to discover the meaning of our individual stories – our identity, our purpose, our destiny'. Although the book is aimed at a younger readership, its message transcends age groups: for the unbeliever, a call to repentance and faith; for the believer, the challenge of holy living. That the answers to life's most important questions are to be found in scripture, and ultimately in our Lord Jesus Christ, is the theme of this book.



Led by His Hand

Malcolm Coombes, ex- R.N.

Paperback, 198 pp. M. J. Coombes [Micro-Entreprise], Orange, France. ISBN: 978-20-9530290-1-7.

This book is an extended personal testimony by a servant of the Lord who will be known, at least by name, to many PS readers. It complements *Safe in His Hands*, written by his wife, Hannah. It mainly traces his life from 1959, when he was converted, to 1976, when he and his family moved to France from Lebanon. The author's aim is to show us how the Lord helped, led and taught him; and this it does commendably.

Various people are mentioned: the Australian believers instrumental in his conversion; sailors he met on board ship; the lady with whom he lodged in Amman; Douglas and Marjorie Howell, fellow-missionaries in the Middle East; believers in Lebanon, such as Boulos and Paulus; his wife, Hannah; *et alia*. Experiences narrated include: deserting from the navy; meeting with various assemblies, including those at Tonypany and

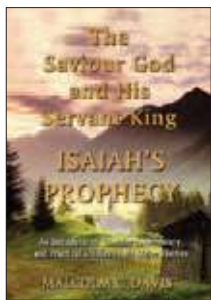
Treboeth, Swansea; commendation to full-time service; courtship and marriage; running the Manarah Christian bookshop in Zahle, Lebanon, amongst others.

There are occasional touches of humour: a letter from Hannah arrives for him, which is a reply to one written by a Palestinian brother and friend – this brother translates it for him, and it says, 'I accept your proposal [of marriage] but with these conditions', and we read, 'As a boy in Rhondda, I had done some boxing, but I had never been knocked out before'.

This is a very readable book. It is as if the author is speaking to us, but there is no chattiness. It is largely narrative with dialogue; the reader can often see God's hand, without being told unnecessarily again and again. The dialogue, however, is not paragraphed. Punctuation is somewhat awry at times, but this does not hinder comprehension.

This book is well worth reading, as is his wife's, published in 2007, and also the book by D. and M. Howell entitled *An Unknown Road*, published by Ritchie, 2001. They are all a stimulus and encouragement to devoted service for the Master.

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



The Saviour God and His Servant King Malcolm C. Davis.

Paperback, 260 pp. Published by John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland, KA3 1RH. Price: £7.99. ISBN 13-978-1-907731-83-9.

The subtitle of this book is 'Isaiah's Prophecy – An Introduction, Concise Commentary, and Practical Studies in his Major Themes'. It is, in essence, two books in one: the first part is an introduction to the prophecy of Isaiah, together with a valuable synopsis of each of the sixty-six chapters. The second part is made up of twelve studies of major themes which are to be found in this prophecy. In spite of its subtitle, the book is not a detailed commentary as such, but provides a valuable overview of the prophecy. The introduction and chapter-by-chapter summary will be appreciated by all who want to grasp the flow of

Isaiah's message. The author puts each chapter into its historical context, and enables the general reader to understand how the message of this book harmonizes with the Bible's total revelation of the divine plan and purpose. The second part of the book offers twelve studies ranging from 'The Character of God' and 'Messianic Prophecies' through to 'Idolatry', and to studies of the nations to which Isaiah refers. The final study is on 'The Day of the Lord'.

In these days, it is very encouraging to find a writer who accepts the unity of authorship of Isaiah, and is prepared to approach this prophecy honestly from a clear premillennial standpoint. This is helpful in countering so much of the confusion which has been occasioned by, for example, the misleading chapter headings found in some Bibles, which treat several chapters in Isaiah as if these were addressed directly to the church. The book is scholarly rather than academic, and brings the reader face-to-face with the devotional thoughts and spiritual lessons which may be drawn from a study of this prophet. Among its merits, the book is an antidote to the practice of selecting isolated verses, and making them fit preconceived ideas. The author's integrity in his handling of this prophecy is something which we may profitably imitate. Altogether, this is a very useful addition to any believer's bookshelf.

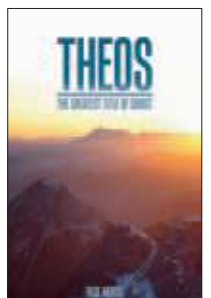


The Song of Zechariah Timothy Cross

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 being relative to the Church, and not to Israel nationally, an 'a-millennial' 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]



Theos: The Greatest Title of Christ Rick Morse

Paperback, 66pp. Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, ON L3K 6A6, Canada. Price: £5.99. ISBN 978-1926765-97-6.

This book is a 'consideration of the biblical doctrine of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ'. As such, it treats a doctrine which is of the utmost importance, and one which is being set aside all too readily in some modern-day 'Christian' circles. As MORSE makes clear from the outset, it is not just Christianity, but the world at large which is becoming more and more ignorant of the Person and deity of the Lord Jesus. This book is therefore timely.

The overall structure of the book is somewhat awkward. Early chapters consider: The Rise of Secular Humanism, The Deity of Christ, Salvation and Christ's Deity, Christ's Claim to be God (traced through John's Gospel) and Early Belief in Christ's Deity (traced through the witness of the writers of the New Testament).

Although these chapters hold some interest, they tend to draw attention away from the most useful and longest chapter of the book, which comes at the end. This is entitled: Theos: The Unique Title of God, and briefly expounds the eleven portions of the New Testament where the word Theos is directly applied to the Lord Jesus, e.g., Matt. 1. 23; John 20. 28; Rom. 9. 5; etc. Despite the structure, the book reads well, and is simple enough to be understood by younger believers without compromising detail. Over time, subsequent editions may benefit from an expanded consideration of verses, which, at a cursory reading, may seem to militate against the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Overall, the book is recommended for younger believers, and contains a gospel challenge, suggesting that the book was not written for believers only. Those seeking further help, or a more detailed treatment of the subject, might enjoy Sir Robert Anderson's *The Lord From Heaven, My Lord and My God* by J. W. DE SILVA, or the more scholarly approach of Robert Gromacki in *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ*.

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

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By RICHARD COLLINGS

Editorial

‘Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others’, Phil. 2. 4.

‘We all deserve a little “me” time’. This was the focus of the advert promoting another ‘must have’ product. Yet, in that simple statement, there lies the nub of human thinking – ‘me’ first. We are encouraged to think of ourselves. In our planning we are expected to factor in ‘what’s in it for me’. Sadly, bombarded with such material and such thought processes of the world, believers are often drawn into the same mindset.

However, the Christian is expected to swim against that tide. To emphasize this, Paul presents the greatest example of what the Christian’s attitude to life should be, ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus’, Phil. 2. 5. The Lord relinquished that position of honour and glory that was rightfully His in order that He might assume the lowest place, and pass through the death of the cross. Why? For others, including you and me! Seeing us in our desperate need brought the Saviour to earth, and led Him to go to the cross, its darkness and judgement, in order that we might be saved.

How do we live our Christian lives in the light of the example of Christ? Do we put the spiritual interests and welfare of others before ourselves? Or, do we prefer to press our own rights? A. T. Robertson offers the following interpretation of our verse, ‘Not keeping an eye on the main chance for number one, but for the good of others’. Such an attitude does not come naturally. Verse 12 of the chapter suggests that it is something that we have to work at, letting the Holy Spirit accomplish His own work in our hearts. Philippians chapter 3 indicates what our attitude should be to all those things that might be regarded as advantageous to ‘me’. Are we pressing towards the mark? Are we seeking to manifest a Christ-like life, seeking the spiritual blessing of others, even when it is at our own expense? We need to challenge our own hearts on a regular basis!

In this issue of the magazine, we tackle a couple of topical questions, as well as seeing a number of profitable series come to an end. We thank John Hall for his short series on the priesthood, particularly as it was his first! The series on prophetic truth, which concluded in our last magazine, has a follow-up article, which explores the implications of these truths. We express our sincere thanks to the authors once more, and trust that in this issue, as in each of them, there will be material to cheer as well as challenge the Lord’s people.

There is a separate note regarding the retirement of Roy Hill from the committee. In view of this I am pleased to announce that Rutherford Rabey, from the Wylam assembly, in England, becomes chairman of the Trust, and I take on the additional responsibility of General Editor of the magazine.



Is the study of prophecy purely academic and impractical?

First of all, there is a very limited sense in which this is partly true. We cannot be sure exactly how some prophetic passages in scripture will be fulfilled. For example, we cannot be quite sure of the nationality of the first beast of Revelation chapter 13 before he appears on the world stage. Nor can we be sure about the precise meaning of all the symbols used in apocalyptic passages, although some are explained in scripture. Dogmatism on points of interpretation such as these is unwise and can lead to acrimonious arguments between brethren, which is wrong, and discredits the legitimate study of prophecy. We need to exercise gracious tolerance of one another's personal views in such matters, and to have a teachable and humble spirit, for there are some uncertainties in the very detailed interpretation of prophecy. But the main aim of this article is to point out that, with regard to the major predictions of Bible prophecy, the practical effects of our views concerning their interpretation are, indeed, very real, serious, and more far-reaching than is supposed by many sincere Christians today. Doctrine affects behaviour in this area of interpretation, just as it does in all others.

How literally should we interpret prophetic predictions?

Since prophetic predictions are an integral part of all scripture, it follows that they should be interpreted according to the principle which we use in interpreting scripture in general. And the rule which Christians should follow in interpreting scriptures concerning salvation and the Christian life is, 'where the literal sense makes perfectly good sense, seek no other sense', or, 'literal wherever possible'.¹ As in all literary works, there is often some figurative language, but we usually understand what is meant by this. As a general rule, it is true to say that the Bible means what it says, and says what it means. And although some predictions include various symbols, still these represent literal people, objects, and events, not vague abstract ideas. Many predictions are written in lucidly clear language, and simply need to be accepted in simple faith. For example, the prediction of the second coming of

The Practical Effects of

Christ in glory to the Mount of Olives in Zechariah chapter 14 is quite clear, as is the description of the architecture and worship of the Millennial Temple in Ezekiel chapters 40-48.

How serious are the errors of amillennialism?

Ever since Augustine in the fourth century AD introduced the idea that prophetic scripture should be interpreted in a way different from other scripture, namely, in a spiritualized way only, the majority of Christendom has adopted a faulty, dual principle of interpretation, which persists today. See, for example, the widely-read writings of John Calvin, Louis Berkhof,² and John Stott. These writers did not believe in a literal, future millennial kingdom of Christ on earth, and denied that there would ever be a literal future kingdom. Likewise, amillennialists spiritualize the predictions concerning the Tribulation, and interpret it to mean the sufferings of this present age. This deprives these scriptures of all real meaning, and is an error in interpretation.

Most practical errors to which this view leads, however, are caused by its confusion of the New Testament church, God's heavenly people, with God's Old Testament earthly people, Israel. Many sincere Christians today believe that the church has replaced Israel in God's purposes, and that Israel has no future. This is contradicted by Romans chapters 9-11, and the existence of the state of Israel in their Promised Land today. Scripture concerning the future of Israel is beginning to be fulfilled before our eyes.

But this confusion of the church with Israel has led to a confusion of the present age of grace, 'the acceptable year of the Lord', with the age of law which preceded it. Consequently, the medieval Catholic Church thought that they had jurisdiction over the secular state, and ought to implement all the principles and punishments of the Mosaic Law in the present age. The results of this error were horrendous: the Inquisitions; the burning of

witches and so-called 'heretics', some of whom were true believers, while others were unfortunate Jews; and the attempts to establish the earthly kingdom of God in Palestine by force of arms in the misguided Crusades with all their atrocities. A similar, though not identical, well-meaning error, namely Fifth Monarchism,³ led Oliver Cromwell to suppose that God wanted him to prepare the world for the beginning of the millennial kingdom by force of arms, regicide, and establishing the Puritan Commonwealth.

By
**MALCOLM
C. DAVIS**
Leeds,
England

Another consequence of confusing the church with Israel has been that the professing church has reverted to Old Testament Judaistic practices, vestments, and architecture, with all their elaborate rituals and separation between clergy and laity, which copies the distinction between the Jewish priesthood and the common people.

Furthermore, amillennialism⁴ leads Christians to suppose that it is our duty to enter the institutions of the secular world, as William Wilberforce did with some good effect, in order to reform them for God, and to make this present world a better place to live in. Whilst Christians are meant to act as salt and light in the world to slow down its corruption, it is a mistake to think that the church will be able to reform the world radically. The world will not become a completely better place until Christ intervenes supernaturally, at His coming in glory to establish His millennial kingdom. Then, but not before, Christians will reign with Him.

What are the effects of other mistaken views?

Postmillennialists⁵ believe that Christ will return only after the whole world has been converted by the preaching of the gospel, and has enjoyed a millennium of peace. Sadly, this is a delusion unsupported by scripture, which asserts that conditions in the world will get progressively worse towards the end of the age, and that only a minority of mankind will



Prophetic Interpretation

believe the gospel and be saved from the judgements to come. Christ will intervene to rectify the situation when He comes again in glory to reign.⁶

Other errors involve a mistaken view of the timing of the rapture of the church to heaven. Post-tribulationists believe that the church will go through the whole of the tribulation, and be raptured at the same time as Christ comes in glory to reign. If this were true, then the rapture could hardly be the comforting hope which it is presented in scripture as being; rather, this view would cause Christians great anxiety, if not despair and terror, just like the world around us.⁷

The mid-tribulation rapture view,⁸ which believes that the rapture of the church will occur after the first half of the tribulation, suffers from similar drawbacks, including the loss of imminence.

The partial rapture view, which believes that only faithful believers will be raptured before the tribulation starts, makes participation in the rapture a reward for good works, rather than a promise of grace. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and 1 Corinthians chapter 15, indicate that all church believers will be raptured at the same time.⁹

What are the positive practical benefits of the premillennial, pre-tribulational, dispensational view of prophetic predictions?

First, it best accords with a simple, believing acceptance of the literal truth of all the relevant scriptures, and throws a flood of light on the meaning and inter-relationship of all scripture from Genesis to Revelation that no other view does so satisfactorily.

Secondly, the truth of the constant imminence of the rapture of the church leads to sober, vigilant living every day, and thus promotes practical holiness.

Thirdly, in this way Christians can act as salt and light in the world, not from a position of close involvement in its corrupt institutions, but from a position of healthy separation from,

yet loving concern for, individuals ensnared in them.

Fourthly, this view has encouraged continuous, vigorous, world-wide evangelism to the lost to save them from suffering the coming wrath of God, rather than attempting to reform the institutions of the present world from within.

Fifthly, this view has encouraged more diligent study of Bible prophecy than other views.¹⁰

Sixthly, by distinguishing the New Testament church, the heavenly people of God, from His parallel earthly people Israel, this view supports the application of New Testament church principles, and rejects all attempts to revert to Old Testament Judaistic practices and rituals.

Finally, this view is the only one which gives Christians the sure and certain hope of imminent rapture to heaven that scripture seems to hold before us for our encouragement in the difficulties of our pilgrim pathway.

Conclusion

We must conclude, therefore, that our understanding of Bible prophecy as a whole, and its prophetic predictions in particular, are very practical in their effects upon our daily lives, and outlook on the world around us. It remains to say that we appreciate that many sincere Christians today may be living very holy and useful lives for our Lord without, perhaps, understanding much, if anything, of the issues involved in the interpretation of prophetic scripture, either because they have never been taught them, or because they have never studied them closely. Many simple believers are just waiting for their Lord to come for them at some time, without understanding at all how and when this could be. To such we wish to say that if they were to consider the issues raised in this article, and to study and accept the premillennial view of prophetic scripture advocated above, their service would be better directed and informed, and they would be given a more encouraging and imminent

hope than they have so far enjoyed. Maranatha! The Lord is coming soon! Amen!

Endnotes

- 1 'There could be no more decisive reason for giving a literal interpretation to the prophecies of the second advent than is set up by the fact that the prophecies of the first advent were thus fulfilled', CHAFER, L. S., *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 5, Kregel Publications, 1976, pg. 281. For further development of this argument, see BONAR, H., *Prophetic Landmarks*, Nisbet, 1876, pp. 246-7.
- 2 BERKHOF, L., *Systematic Theology*.
- 3 See, for example, the Wikipedia article Fifth Monarchists and studies of their history under Fifth Monarchism.
- 4 It should be pointed out that there are other Christians who believe they should become involved in the institutions of the secular world, but they do not subscribe to amillennialist eschatology. [Editor]
- 5 Although an advocate of Replacement Theology, see, for example, BOETTNER, L., *The Millennium*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958. Earlier instances of this doctrine might be found in À BRAKEL, W., *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, and GRIBBEN, C., *The Puritan Millennium*.
- 6 See Matt. 13 and 24; 2 Thess. 2; 2 Tim. 3; and Rev. 6-20.
- 7 The post-tribulation view also fails to take due account of the scriptures, which state that the church is exempt from the coming wrath of God altogether, and of the many differences between Christ's coming to the air, and His later coming to the earth. Furthermore, in Revelation chapters 6-18, the church, or churches, do not appear on earth during the tribulation visions, only before and afterwards. Finally, Paul presents the rapture as an ever-imminent hope, able to happen at any moment. The post-tribulation view means that it cannot be imminent at all, but at least seven years away. This fact could cause either despair, or careless living. Aspects of the post-tribulation view are expressed in DAVIS, J. J., *Christ's Victorious Kingdom*, Baker, 1986.
- 8 See, for example, ARCHER, GLEASON, *The Case for the Mid-Seventieth-Week Rapture Position*.
- 9 Further information is available at: <https://bible.org/seriespage/premillennialism-and-tribulation-%E2%80%94-part-v-partial-rapture-theory>.
- 10 See, for example, HORNER, Barry E., *Future Israel*, B&H Publishing, 2007, pp. 152-3.

MALCOLM DAVIS is in fellowship with the believers at Harehills Gospel Hall in Leeds. He has written a number of articles for *Precious Seed International* as well as other assembly magazines, and has authored a number of books, including one on Revelation.



Chaos reigned in the royal residence at Jerusalem. Amon's brief and godless occupancy of the throne had been brought to an untimely end by his servants, fearful, maybe, of a return to the cruel and idolatrous days of Manasseh's early reign. With anarchic haste, 'the people of the land' turned on the assassins and slew them. Could it be that they had hoped for a revival of the immoral practices which accompanied idolatry, and saw in Amon a willing promoter of such behaviour? Whatever the reasons, they then took the eight-year-old Josiah and placed him on the throne, thinking, no doubt, that they could manipulate a boy king to achieve their ends; to their mind he was 'the people's choice' – or was he?

Some 270 years or so before, as Jeroboam, king of the ten tribes, stood by his idolatrous altar at Bethel, an un-named 'man of God' suddenly appeared, and, addressing the altar rather than the king, he denounced, 'O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places . . . and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee', 1 Kgs. 13. 2; the man of God then went his way. The prophecy, initially known only to those who heard it spoken, and to the old prophet who buried the man of God, was, however, retained in the memory of the men of Bethel, and handed down, 2 Kgs. 23. 17. The fact that it was recorded, and sealed in heaven, assured its fulfilment, but, perhaps, Jedidah, whose name means 'beloved', the mother of Josiah, was aware of the prophet's words, and named her son Josiah, 'given by the Lord', in the hope that he would be the one to challenge the unbridled idolatry in the nation.

It is a significant indication of the morality of those days when we consider that Amon was only sixteen years of age when his son Josiah was born. The lad would have received no paternal guidance of any value, but would it be a speculation too far to suggest that he sat upon his

JOSIAH (1)

grandfather Manasseh's knee and, though young, was taught valuable truths born out of hard experience, and that his mother, who doubtless named him, was also an influence for good amid the corruption surrounding the child king?

The details of Josiah's reign should be read and compared in both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. After the traumas which had engulfed the nation since the death of Hezekiah, the record of Josiah comes as a relief; a welcome sunrise after a dark and stormy night, a time of repairing, of restoration and attempted reformation. However, the commendable efforts of Josiah must be read in parallel with the writings of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and, possibly, Habakkuk as well. All spoke of the forthcoming captivity, in view of the morally degraded state of the nation. Zephaniah, himself a descendent of Hezekiah, doubtless able to tread the royal courts, saw, at first hand, the low spiritual ebb to which the nation had fallen; he wrote, 'Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary; they have done violence to the law', Zeph. 3. 1-4. What an indictment! And through such a quagmire, the young Josiah 'walked in all the way of David his father!' 2 Kgs. 22. 2.

'Spiritual progress' should be the ambition of the Lord's people in every age. It marked out the steps of godly men and women from patriarchal days, and throughout the biblical history of monarchy, captivity, and beyond. It was the

desire of apostolic writers for the early church, and has been the aspiration of spiritual leaders and elders for their flocks to this present day. From his earliest years, Josiah made progress.

In coming to the throne he looked for a role model, one whose life would provide examples, and precedents which he could endeavour to reproduce. He found it, not in his immediate predecessors, nor yet in great-grandfather Hezekiah. Rather, his pattern was David, 'the man after

God's own heart'. From this pathway, in those vital formative years, 'he declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left'. The advice of Solomon to his son was to 'walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous', Prov. 2. 20. The Hebrew believers were exhorted to 'Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God . . . and imitate their faith', Heb. 13. 7 ESV. Josiah did just that.

By the time Josiah was sixteen, 'while he was yet young', 2 Chr. 34. 3, progress was evident. Still continuing to appreciate the example of David, he now began to seek after 'the God of David his father'. As he learned more of the character of the one true God, at twenty years of age he turned his attention to the offensive trappings of idolatry, which littered the city, and the land. There had been no king over the ten tribes of Israel for more than fifty years, since Assyria had carried them away, and re-peopled the land with a motley selection of immigrants, 2 Kgs. 17. 24-34. So, Josiah extended his reforms into the northern territory, as far as Naphtali which is in Galilee.

Six more years passed by and Josiah's spiritual progress continued. Gathering around him a group of

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faithful supporters, he set his sights on repairing the temple; the God of David his father had now become his God, and this was Jehovah's chosen dwelling place, 2 Chr. 34. 8. The Levites had been conscientious in gathering the atonement money during the years of reform, and this was now made available to the builders to commence the renovation of the temple. Since the days of Solomon, the temple had endured a somewhat chequered history. Instead of it being the focal point of Israel's national life, the unity of the nation had been destroyed by Jeroboam, who placed idols in Bethel and Dan to prevent the ten tribes from worshipping at the Jerusalem temple, 1 Kgs. 12. 26-31. In the years that followed, the temple suffered neglect, and defilement in varying degrees, though some kings such as Asa and Jehoshaphat did seek to uphold the law and maintain the temple service. Joash, for whom the temple had been a place of refuge for the first six years of his life, repaired the building, after the ravages of Athaliah. Hezekiah, in his day, carried out a major restoration, after its abandonment by Ahaz who 'cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors', 2 Chr. 28. 24. Now Josiah, after the worst excesses of Manasseh's reign, commenced a programme of work to reinstate the fabric of the building. 'The men did the work faithfully', 34. 12, and, in due course, a measure of order was established; the Levites regained some of their former dignity, and there were scribes, officers and porters. Something vital, however, was missing, and its discovery was about to revolutionize and revitalize the whole project!

As the work continued in the temple and the silver was carefully measured out to meet the cost, underneath it all, Hilkiah found a book. To his priestly eye, there was no mistaking its contents; this was 'a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses', 34. 14. How long it had lain there unopened, unread, and unheeded, Hilkiah had no idea. It may have been placed in the temple by Hezekiah at the commencement of his reign, over eighty years before, in accordance with the word of God through Moses. In

His first thought was to share his discovery with Shaphan the scribe; he was one who would be expected to know something of the law and its importance. The response of different individuals on being brought face to face with the word of God is remarkably instructive. Hilkiah knew it was important, and he knew also that others should be aware of it. We can well imagine that it was with trembling hands, and bated breath, that he exclaimed, 'I have found the book of the law in the house of the

Lord'. Its significance, however, was lost on Shaphan! Having taken the book from Hilkiah, 2 Kings chapter 22, verse 8 tells us, 'he read it', with no apparent effect!

It would seem that one of Shaphan's duties was to hold a regular audience with the king to keep him abreast of progress. On this occasion, as usual, he informs Josiah of the finances, the overseers, and the workmen. Then, remarkably, almost, it would appear, as an afterthought, he said, 'Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book', which he proceeded to read to the king. The effect on Josiah was immediate and devastating, 'when the king heard the words of the law, he

rent his clothes'. Having called his advisors, his privy council, his first instruction was 'Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book . . . for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us', 2 Kgs. 22. 13.

What effect does the word of God have on our lives as we read it?



Deuteronomy chapter 17, some 350 years before the monarchy was introduced in Israel, instruction was given to regulate the life and behaviour of kings. Among other directives, he was to write a copy of the law in a book. More than that, it was to be with him, he was to read it all the days of his life, in order that 'he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them', v. 19. Hilkiah knew that, whatever its provenance, it must not remain hidden.

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Why does God allow

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As the children of God, brought into God's divine plan by faith in Jesus Christ, we have the great honour and privilege of glorifying Christ, regardless of the situation in which we find ourselves. As we surrender ourselves to Him in the workplace, our extended family, at school, and as citizens of nations where God has placed us, the great Master Planner is able to use us, even in places of persecution. One molecule of water on its own has no effect. However, divinely guided waters, with innumerable molecules working in unison, can save the Lord's people, and then drown their enemies, as in the crossing of the Red Sea. Christ's voice, like that of 'many waters', Rev. 1. 15, typifies what God can do with countless helpless and dependent servants obeying His voice through the Holy Spirit. We seem unimportant, and maybe unnecessary, when we are harshly rejected, and despised by evil persons who hold sway in our lives. But it may be that a small act of obedience, in the midst of persecution, that displays God's love will be rewarded in a coming day, to our surprise, Matt. 25. 34-45.

Man has rejected God's rule

From the beginning, man has sought to rule himself. First, Adam rejected Jehovah's fellowship, and rule in his life, Gen. 3. 8. With the history of the flood still fresh in their minds, God's name is again rejected. In Genesis chapter 11 verse 4, man sought for the knowledge of the stars, instead of the stars' Creator. They sought to make their own name, or rule, instead of calling on the name of the Lord. Again, during the times of the judges in Israel, we read twice that every man did that which 'was right in his own eyes', Judg. 17. 6; 21. 25.

A significant turn of events occurred during the time of Samuel. Israel refused to acknowledge Jehovah as their King, and they desired to have their own king; thus, God said, 'They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them', 1 Sam. 8. 7. The evil of man's rule was rehearsed by Samuel to the people. The king would take advantage of his authority. He would take their sons and force them to become his servants. He would take their daughters, and he would take their lands. He would tax the people,

by taking a tenth of their money, and then give money to his servants. Finally, the people themselves would become his servants. The people of Israel chose man's rule, with its covetousness, arrogance, injustices, and inequities over the truthful, humble, and just reign of Jehovah, Ps. 45. 4. Jehovah's final statement was, 'And ye have this day rejected your God', 1 Sam. 10. 19.

There are no men who are not inherently evil; none can supplant God's rule

God allows evil men to rule because of man's choice to reject the authority of God. God in his mercy thereafter looks for godly men to help guide His people. Even King David, 'a man after his own heart', 1 Sam. 13. 14, succumbed to man's innate frailty towards evil.¹ The dismal conclusion of Jehovah's search is relayed to Ezekiel in chapter 22 and verse 30, 'And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none'. This continues in Romans chapter 3 verse 23, 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'. By rejecting God's rule, mankind has assumed a responsibility for itself that it cannot handle. God placed government into the hands of men after the flood despite their failings. Man was originally made to govern the earth; in man's broken state of sin, he still brings some semblance of order to humanity.

God's ultimate fulfilment of righteousness is in spite of evil

Despite the fact that mankind in general rejects God's rule, they can never eliminate God's ultimate authority over man's final destiny. The scarlet thread of God's grace and righteousness, placed on the finger of Zarah and in the window of Rahab, is woven throughout history. Mercy, grace and truth is humbly, but resplendently, displayed at the cross, and in His glorious resurrection. Regardless of the evil, a glorious future now awaits mankind. Christ in His grace and mercy will ultimately rule supreme during His millennial reign. Man's evil, even to the extreme of Armageddon, cannot thwart God's just, kind, and humble rule that He will bestow on this earth in a coming day.²





Evil Men to Rule? (1)

Therefore, God allows evil men to rule, since it is the desire of their will. Without man's self-governance, there would be a worse situation of anarchy. Man's government will not change God's final outcome of peace and justice during His millennial reign.

Throughout history, God's will is woven through tribulation in at least six ways:

1) Man's evil rule can result in magnifying God's power!

An arrogant Pharaoh challenges God's power, 'And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go', Exod. 5. 2. God's answer is, 'For this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth', Exod. 9. 16; Rom. 9. 17. God's overwhelming victory for His people at the Red Sea is still declared the world over, even today.

Another arrogant and evil ruler is found in the New Testament. King Herod Agrippa I, in Acts chapter 12 verse 21, makes an oration, and accepts the people's adulation as they praise him as a god. He did not give God the glory, and was then eaten of worms. His successor, King Herod Agrippa II, delivers Paul to Rome, and after King Agrippa II there are no further successors to the Idumean throne. The glory of the sons of Esau is lost, and neither they, nor their glory, are ever mentioned again in scripture, or in secular history. The glory of Christ, however, is still proclaimed, and the evangelization of the world as preached by the apostle Paul is still evident today.

There are other scriptural examples that can be used, but one of the greatest is the case of Pilate. He delivered Christ to be crucified. The startling result is Christ's glorious resurrection, which still resounds throughout history today. History tells us that Pilate afterwards lost his position and died in ignominy.³

2) Man's evil rule can be used by God for correction

A notable example in Biblical history

is Nebuchadnezzar. He is used by God in various ways. He is used by God to chastise the southern tribes, and will be mentioned later as a testimony of salvation. God uses Nebuchadnezzar independently of his evil, and his pagan beliefs in divination through livers and images, Ezek. 21. 21. Nebuchadnezzar's pagan beliefs, and his earthly power and influence, have all passed away. However, the resulting corrective influence on God's people is most impressive, and long lasting, 'For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation', Hab. 1. 6; 'O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction', v. 12; 2 Kgs. 20. 17, 18. Judah's expectation of a rebuilt temple, their prayers, their devotion to the reading of God's word under Ezra, and the earnest rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel will result in the glorification of Christ. The 'desire of all nations', a messianic reference to Jesus Christ, will fill the temple with His glory, Hag. 2. 7. This same temple is later embellished by Herod. The Light of the world would hold discussions with the learned men of that day at the age of twelve. It is there that He teaches about the widow's mite. It is later the place of Christian worship in Solomon's Porch. Our Lord later prophesies its destruction as a result of His people's rejection of Him.

Later, after Babylon fulfils its purpose, it, likewise, comes under God's judgement for its own evil, Isa. 13. 19; 14. 4. In a similar fashion, Assyria is raised up by God for judgement on the northern tribes of Israel, and then is judged by God, 10. 5-19.

3) Man's evil rule can be God's instrument to bless His people

Man's evil rule does not rule God, or limit God's possibilities. God can act in righteousness, in spite of man's evil actions. One of history's most ruthless despots, who governed the largest conquered part of the world that was ever known until that time, was Cyrus. Cyrus was raised up to fulfil the exercise of God's righteousness, not because of any righteousness of Cyrus, but because of God's sovereignty. This wonderful prophecy of Isaiah chapter

45 verse 13 gives hope to the people of Israel 150 years before the birth of Cyrus. This would give the Lord's people confidence when dealing with him. They would not be intimidated, nor frightened by his cruelty, since they already know that God will effect His righteousness through Cyrus, even in spite of his wicked character.

4) Man's evil rule can be converted to a testimony of salvation.

Nebuchadnezzar is lifted up; his mind is hardened in pride for having a kingdom whose military might surpassed that of king David. His wealth surpassed that of king Solomon. The rich treasures of Israel were now his. God then deposed him from his throne, and took away his glory. He was driven from men, and his heart became like that of an animal, Dan. 5. 21. After Nebuchadnezzar is humiliated by God for seven years, he lifts up his eyes to heaven, and his understanding returns. Nebuchadnezzar recognizes God's authority. He praises, extols and honours Him. Nebuchadnezzar then makes a proclamation, according to the custom of that day. That proclamation is heralded throughout his entire kingdom. In those days, the king's word was considered final and true. Many would have heard the message and believed in God.

Another example is the 'king of Nineveh', Jon. 3. 6-7. The king 'laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles'. In verse 5, 'the greatest of them even to the least of them' fasted and put on sackcloth. When a leader humbles himself publicly, the spiritual effects are salutary for the people of his nation.

Endnotes

- 1 See 2 Sam. 12. 10; Ps. 51.
- 2 See Isa. 14. 27; Jer. 4. 28; Eph. 1. 9; Eph. 3. 11.
- 3 See <http://www.biography.com/people/pontius-pilate-9440686#awesm=~oGOLp7BrKFBko9>

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The first coming of Christ was in obscurity and humility. He veiled the outward display of glory and took upon Himself 'the form of a servant', and 'the likeness of men'.¹ The next time He comes to earth will be markedly different, in that glory will characterize His appearance. He will appear then as He appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, shining brighter than the noon-day sun; no longer the lowly Man of sorrows but rather the King of glory.

The Glory of His Coming

By
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The word most often used in the New Testament for this event is *parousia*, which means 'appearance and subsequent presence'. Theologically, the word 'revelation' is used to distinguish this visible appearance from the 'rapture'. At the revelation of Christ, every eye will see Him, Rev. 1. 7, all the world will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, Matt. 24. 30.

The Glory of His Person

Titus chapter 2 verses 11-13 present two appearances of the Lord Jesus. In both verses 11 and 13, the word rendered 'appeared' and 'appearance' comes from the word *epiphany*. It is a word that means to 'make visible or to be manifest'. In verse 11, grace was made visible in the person of the Lord Jesus. In the Gospels, though primarily the Gospel of John, grace is associated with Christ as to His character and conduct. The figure of speech here in Titus is 'personification', where an object or concept is presented as a person.

In verse 13, it is glory that is personified, in the person of 'our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ' JND. 'The blessed hope' and the 'appearing of the glory' JND, are best viewed as applying to the same event. In the same way, Darby links 'our great God and Saviour' as one, as opposed to the KJV rendering of 'our great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ'. The thought is that when the Lord Jesus comes to earth again, there will be, in His person, a manifestation of glory.

The scene is described in Revelation chapter 19 verses 11-21, with the Lord Jesus coming on a white horse,

His eyes as a flame of fire and His robe dipped in blood. He has a name written, 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. The Lord Himself compares His coming to lightning flashing from the east to the west, Matt. 24. 27.

In Zechariah chapter 6 verses 9-14 the prophecy relates to this same glory, as the 'the man whose name is the Branch' is introduced to the world. The same phrase that occurs at the beginning of verse 9 is also found in John chapter 19 verse 5, 'Behold the man'. It is Pilate who makes the announcement as the representative of human government. This is the last the world sees of Him – the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. A man disfigured and beaten, His form so battered He no longer looks like a man.

When the world hears that phrase once again, it will not be the representative of human government but the Almighty God that makes the pronouncement. The volume will be greater, and the audience larger, and the response will no longer be, 'We will not have this man reign over us'; no longer the Man of sorrows, but the Messiah in splendour. The Lord of Hosts says of Him, 'He shall bear the glory'; He is seen as a priest on His throne. The passage goes on to say, 'The counsel of peace shall be between them both', likely meaning that the office of prophet and priest will be united in Christ. The silver and gold for the temple, Zech. 6. 11, are made into elaborate crowns, see margin, in anticipation of a crowning day that is coming by and by.

It is at this time that all of humanity will bow the knee, and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. The Lord will

be King over all the earth, and His reign will be glorious. The angels of God will worship Him, and all the universe will proclaim His worthiness.

The Glory of His Power

The Lord Jesus will also display the greatness of His power when He returns to earth at the revelation. He will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels 'in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ', 2 Thess. 1. 7, 8. It is at that time the unsaved will be banished from the presence of the Lord, and the glory or majesty of His power, v. 9.

This coming of the Lord is in great contrast to His first coming. Isaiah chapter 42 verse 2 expresses the gentleness of the Lord Jesus at His first coming, 'He shall not cry nor lift up'. The passage goes on to talk of His tender dealings with humanity. Later, in the same chapter, verse 13 says, 'The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man: He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies' NKJV. Two different words are used for 'cry out'; the second phrase is rendered as 'shall shout mightily' in the Septuagint. In verse 3, the 'will not cry out' has to do with His compassion, whereas the 'cry out' in verse 13 has to do with His conquest.

In Isaiah chapter 63 the Lord Jesus is pictured as coming from Edom, as One who treads the winepress of the wrath of God. 'He is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength', v. 1. Isaiah goes on to speak of the Lord's fury, anger, and vengeance as He executes judgement



on the earth. The coming 'man of sin' will, in a singular way, experience defeat when the Lord Jesus comes, and will 'consume him with the breath of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming', 2 Thess. 2. 8 NKJV. This beast, and the false prophet, will be cast alive into the lake of fire.

When the Lord Jesus comes, the sight will be spectacular, riding a white horse, His head crowned with many crowns, and clothed in a robe dipped in blood. He has a sharp sword that is seen coming out of His mouth with which He will strike the nations. The armies that gather to do war against Him will be destroyed by that sword, the spoken word of God.

Joel pictures the nations gathered in the 'valley of decision', the 'valley of Jehoshaphat' or, more common to us, the 'plains of Megiddo'. The Lord will come in judgement because the wickedness is great. He will roar and cry out, and, in response, the 'heavens and the earth shall shake', Joel 3. 16. When His feet touch the Mount of Olives, the mountain will be split in two, and a valley will be formed.

The Glory of His People

The hope for the believer is linked first to the rapture of the church, but this hope also extends to the revelation of Jesus Christ at His second coming to earth. Our hope is to anticipate His glory, both seeing it and sharing in it. Collectively, the church, the bride of Christ, will be presented to Him as 'a glorious church not having spot, or wrinkle', Eph. 5. 27. When He appears for us, our bodies will be changed from these earthly bodies to be made like His glorious body. The gospel gives the guarantee of sins

forgiven, but also that believers will share in the glory of our Lord Jesus. The Lord's prayer in John chapter 17 includes the request that those given to Him might be with Him and see His glory. The prospect includes the promise that each believer will be presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, Jude 24.

The whole creation is groaning in anticipation of the day when it enters into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. 8. 21. It is at the second coming that the church, the bride of Christ, is presented to the world in dazzling splendour. She is identified with the city that comes down from heaven and having the very glory of God. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 10, it is the Lord

Jesus who will be glorified in His saints. What an amazing fact that He will be glorified in us, sinners saved by grace but clothed in His righteousness!

The Glory of His Peace

When the Lord Jesus returns and establishes His kingdom, finally there will be peace on earth. This peace is linked to His person and presence. This is the One of whom Jacob spoke and referred to as Shiloh. He is the Prince of peace, Isa. 9. 6. Micah chapter 5 verse 5 says of Him, 'this man shall be the peace'.

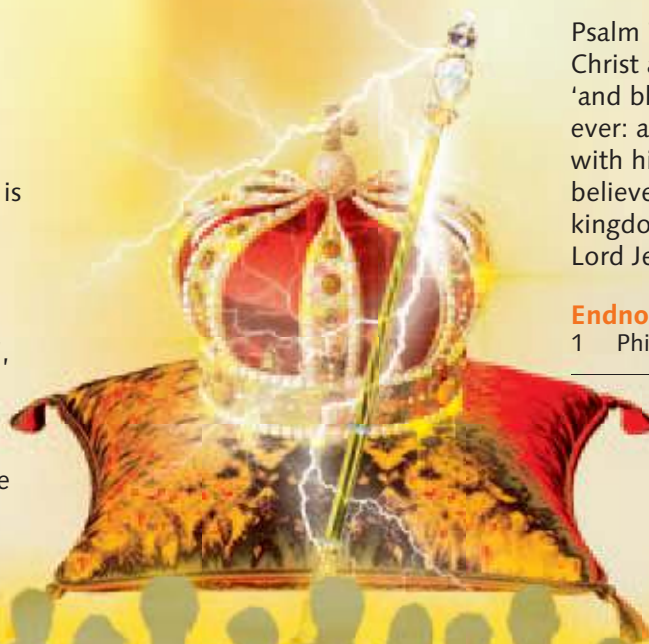
'The whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea', Hab. 2. 14. He will rule over the nations with a rod of iron, but that rule will be in righteousness and truth. All the nations will come to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts. When He enters the city the question will be asked, 'Who is this King of glory?' The response will be, 'The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory', Ps. 24. 10. The very name of the city will be changed to 'Jehovah Shammah', 'The Lord is there'.

Psalms 72 speaks of the reign of Christ and ends with these words, 'and blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory', v. 19. To which every believer should say, 'Amen'; 'Thy kingdom come'; and, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus'.

Endnotes

1 Phil. 2. 7.

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We have to recognize that we no longer live in a society where people go regularly to church. In our experience at Redcar, England, attendance at our weekly gospel service is on the decline. We do not have either a Sunday School or Children's Meeting to teach the next generation the things of God. So how are we going to reach the local population with the gospel?

DOOR-TO-DOOR

spiritual matters, and this can help in the preaching of the gospel.

author on many occasions during the last thirty years.

It gives an indication of who God might be talking to. We know that no man comes to the Saviour unless the Father draws him, John 6. 44, so we are visiting some with whom God might be dealing. It is through the scriptures that God draws people to the Saviour. The sinner hears the word, learns its meaning, and comes as the Father draws him.

The first step is to put a letter through the door a few days ahead of the planned visit. This letter, if possible, should be headed with the name of the assembly (ideally with a picture of the building which the recipients might recognize, even though they don't know its name), give brief details of who is planning

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to call on them, stating that they wish to discuss some basic questions about Christianity. The approximate time of the visit should be stated, e.g., between 2:00 and 4:00 pm on the Sunday afternoon. We should carry a copy of the same letter with us, and show it to the resident. If they don't want to talk to us that wish should be fully respected.

Some assemblies have re-arranged their Sunday programme, so that after the breaking of bread service they have a Family Service, and then a ministry meeting on a Sunday evening. This has worked well in some situations, but in others it has not made any real difference. Other assemblies now have their Gospel Service on the Sunday afternoon, but again the response from the local population has been very varied. Other ideas that are being tried include an informal Coffee Morning (see *Precious Seed International*, August 2013; Volume 68/Number 3), and visits to retirement and care homes, as well as the regular distribution of tracts. Others have an open air witness during the summer months or school visitation, special evangelistic efforts, etc. This particular article concentrates on one method of taking the gospel to the general population – door-to-door visitation.

Preparation

Many of us dread Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, etc., ringing our door bell wanting to talk to us. They often have a Bible under their arm and literature which they would encourage us to take. We have perhaps seen them visiting houses a few doors away, and we anxiously wait knowing that our turn will soon be coming; we might even pretend not to be at home! If you feel like this you are not alone. Some, however, gladly embrace the opportunity to challenge them with the gospel.

To start, state in the letter a number of questions that could be discussed, e.g.:

- Do you believe that there is a God?
- Why do you think the world is in such a mess?
- Do you think the Bible can help you in your everyday life?
- What is your opinion about Jesus Christ?
- What do you think the gospel is?

Why visit door-to-door?

It does fulfil in its own way the Lord's command to take the gospel to every creature. If the gospel gives offence we should not be surprised.

It gives an insight into the way people in our neighbourhood think about

But with the above in mind, of many not liking 'religious people' knocking on their doors, how are we, whom the Lord has commanded, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature', going to approach people on their doorstep with the good news of a Saviour? We too may have a Bible with us, and literature to leave, so how can we avoid the same reaction to us as some might give to a visit from 'religious people'? This article provides one method that has been used by the

Not all the above subjects need to be raised, but each one gives a starter for discussion, and an opportunity to share our beliefs. The reader might think of other questions that could be raised and be more appropriate.

The point of the letter-posting is to avoid any deception about why we





DOOR WORK

are visiting, and then, as opportunity allows, through the different suggested topics, share the gospel. It might be that the householder will want to ask other questions and talk about quite different subjects, and we should be pleased to have a go at answering their questions, or trying to get the answers.

At the conclusion of the visit, it would be good to offer an invitation to the gospel service (or coffee morning, etc.) and leave an appropriate tract. Whether the visit is successful or otherwise, it is worthwhile to try and finish up by saying something like, 'Just remember, God loves us and sent His Son to die for us on the cross'. If we achieve that, then whatever has been discussed (or not) previously, we have left a basic gospel message. It is suggested a few notes be made of the meeting, and kept as a private record for reference at a future date.

The purpose of the above procedure is: (a) residents have been informed that we are calling; (b) they have had a few days to reflect upon the type of questions that we wish to discuss and; (c) if they don't want to talk to us then they don't have to.

Practical considerations

I limit myself to visiting a maximum of twenty homes at a time, and usually on a Sunday because in England that is still seen as a 'religious' day. However, even that timing is not without its difficulties, because now people go shopping on a Sunday, and there is also, in the winter months, competition from watching sport on a Sunday afternoon. It is also the day 'family' might be visiting. If we are visiting senior citizen bungalows,

then possibly another day would be equally appropriate, but do take into account that the elderly don't always get up too early, and often have a nap in an afternoon. Late morning for them seems the best time.

Why only twenty homes? I find door-to-door work quite demanding. I never know what response I'm going to get. In spite of the precautions I've taken to let people know of the visit, perhaps half of them will not be in, or just don't open the door. Of the remaining, half will not be interested, and we might finish up with just two fruitful discussions, i.e., an opportunity to answer queries and to share the gospel fully. There is a need to be alert to comments such as, 'We were watching this nature programme on TV last night talking about how creatures have evolved'. The subject of evolution is one that is regularly brought up to justify people's feelings that there is no God! Having had, say, up to twenty minutes of what might be difficult discussion with the householder, one could well feel a bit exhausted, and ready to call it a day and go home, and yet one might have to face some other tricky discussion at the next house. It can be difficult work, not knowing how each family will react to the visit!

Some general observations

Generally speaking, the vast majority of people are polite and friendly. They are not sure if there is a God, don't know much about Jesus Christ, and are not familiar with the Bible. One needs to be gentle with such people, listen to what they say, and, as opportunity allows, share with them God's love in sending the Saviour to save them from sin.

Today, in England, many people still do have some 'religious' background – they were sent to Sunday school, or children's meetings, when they were young, but now don't seem to have any beliefs. Some, who now never attend any place of worship, nevertheless seem to definitely think that there is a God because they believe He is looking after their mother, (for example), in heaven.

A number of elderly people pray, believe there is a God, but don't know why Jesus came. Some state that their beliefs are private between them and God.

A very small number might make comments about the people who attend the Gospel Hall. One can also visit a whole estate of 150 houses, not only finding no Christians, but not even any church-goers.

In the north-east of England, those who do attend church are largely Church of England, Roman Catholics, or Methodists. Some Roman Catholics could know the gospel as well as ourselves, but regrettably add to it customs and practices that are not biblically based. Methodists often like to talk about Charles Wesley's hymns, and discussion on a hymn such as, 'And can it be', gives a lot of opportunity to discuss the gospel.

If you would like to see a typical introductory letter, or discuss more fully this suggested method for 'door-to-door' work, then e-mail me at mikeoakes@ntlworld.com.

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Introduction

One of the characteristics of God is that He is orderly. It has ever been His purpose that there should be order throughout His creation that would be achieved by some having authority to which others would submit. In the Old Testament this principle is seen both in family life, and in the life of the nation of Israel. Even in this church age, God's purpose has not changed, for we learn that 'the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God', 1. Cor. 11. 3. As the human physical head governs the body to which it belongs, so authority is invested in the head in the spiritual sphere.

However, the responsibilities of headship extend beyond the duty of exercising authority; it includes relationship, guidance, and care. This truth is displayed perfectly by Christ who, as Head of the church, is 'the saviour of the body . . . Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it', Eph. 5. 23-25.

Although we live in an age marked by open rebellion against God, one sphere where He expects headship, and the attendant submissiveness, to be evident is within the church of God. Such is the importance of this matter that God has designed a very simple symbolism for it whereby His people may be conscious of it each time they meet together as a local church. When assembled, the males are to ensure that they wear nothing on their head, whilst the females are to ensure that their heads are covered.

There is only one section in the scriptures that gives us teaching on this symbolism, and it is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verses 3-16. The purpose of this article is to give an overview of that section; for a detailed exposition please refer to articles written by Malcolm Horlock in issues 2 and 3 of volume 62 of *Precious Seed International*.¹

An outline of the section

These verses do not give us an exposition of headship; what they

The Symbols of H

do is set out how we demonstrate the recognition of headship, and Paul bases his reasoning on three things. Those are:

- Divine order, vv. 3-6;
- Creation order, vv. 7-12;
- Natural order, vv. 13-15.

Divine order, vv. 3-6

Although in verse 3 Paul informs us that the head of Christ is God, he does not elaborate on that; maybe, he mentions it as an incentive to the church at Corinth. If Christ was prepared to recognize, and submit to, One who was His head, then the saints at Corinth, and, hence, believers today, should accept and submit to what Paul is teaching. Within the assembly, Christ is the Head of every man, and their uncovered heads symbolize that fact. Because many brethren do not wear a head covering at any time, there is the possibility that we fail to appreciate the truth being symbolized as we enter a meeting. Equally, the woman must have her head covered, to symbolize the fact that she recognizes that the man is her spiritual head.

These things are not optional; a man's uncovered head is symbolic of Christ's authority over him, so if he prays, having something on his head, he dishonours Christ – he brings shame upon Christ. Similarly, a woman who does not cover her head brings dishonour, shame, upon the man, for he is her head. In effect, she is saying, 'I am subject to no one and do not acknowledge the authority of the man'. It is salutary to recall what happened the first time a woman acted like that.²

Creation order, vv. 7-12

There are those who state that the teaching given by Paul in this section is based on the custom and culture that prevailed in first-century Greece, but that argument is inadmissible, for, in verses 7-12, Paul is taking his

readers back to first principles inaugurated by God in Eden. The apostle is highlighting the fact that in creation order women have a subordinate place to men, and for that reason the males should not cover their heads, but women ought to wear something on theirs to symbolize their position of subordination, v. 10. Three

reasons are then supplied to verify what is being stated.

By
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Firstly, man is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the

man. The word 'image' in this context is used in the sense of representation, i.e., the man represents God in the sense that God has delegated to him authority over the woman. The man is also the glory of God in that he came direct from God; he was made for God, and was the pinnacle of God's creation on earth, and something of God's glory is reflected in the man.

Secondly, man did not owe his origin in any way to the woman, but rather she owed her origin to him – she came from him, and, therefore, in some degree the glory for her existence is due to the man. It has been well said that the bone God used to form the woman neither came from his head nor his feet but from his side, a place of protection, affection, and equality of worth.

Thirdly, man was not made for the woman but the woman was made for the man. God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him', Gen. 2. 18 NKJV.

Based on what has just been taught, a woman ought to cover her head. Man has been given authority by God over the woman and the glory for her existence is the man – the spiritual woman



eadship

recognizes that authority by wearing a symbol of it on her head. In addition, she is man's glory and such glory should be out of sight in the place where only God's glory should be displayed, and, therefore, the woman wears a head covering to symbolize that also. This divinely mandated order and symbolism is being observed by unseen spectators, the angels. These heavenly beings would have seen what happened in the Garden of Eden, when the first woman acted independently of the man. Now they can observe sisters accepting their position of subjection, and demonstrating that acceptance by wearing a head covering.

The section concludes with a word of caution for the brethren. What has been taught from verse 7 should not result in them thinking they are superior to the sisters. In verses 7-10, the focus has been on creation order, but, in verses 11 and 12, we are brought into the sphere of the new creation – hence the expression 'in the Lord'. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Jack Hunter states, 'The authority of the man does not make him independent of the woman and the subordination of the woman does not make her dispensable'.³

That mutual need of each other in the new creation is but a reflection of God's plans for the continuation of the

human race. Woman might owe her origin to man, but without the woman there would have been no more men, for man is 'by the woman'. All this interdependence has been ordered by God; it is all part of His purpose.

Natural order, vv. 13-15

In this final section we are given another explanation why a woman's head should be covered, but nothing is stated about the man not covering his head. This is because Paul is going to focus on the hair of the woman. Men's hair is not intended to be a covering in the sense that a woman's hair is. Long hair on a man is a shame, but long hair on a woman is a glory to her. The point needs to be made here that the word 'covering' in verse 14 is different to the word 'cover' used in the earlier part of the chapter. These verses are not teaching that a woman's hair serves as her head covering, but rather that people know intuitively that women's heads are to be covered by hair in a way that men's heads are not.

Having emphasized that nature utilises hair length as one way of making a distinction between the males and the females, we now come back to the question posed in verse 13 – is it befitting for a woman to pray with her head uncovered? Paul's point is this, if a woman participates with her head uncovered she is making herself the same as a man, but

nature clearly shows that they are not the same. Therefore, for a woman to participate in the church with an uncovered head she is acting contrary to what nature teaches.

Conclusion

Although the apostle had set out three clear reasons why a woman's head should be covered, and two reasons why a man's should be uncovered, there might have been some at Corinth who were prepared to be contentious about the issue. Having delivered his teaching, Paul does not intend to engage in contention. If anyone was to disagree with his teaching, he wanted them to realize that they were out of line with the teaching of all the apostles and all the churches of God. The only place where there may have been any problem over this head covering issue was Corinth – the most carnal church to which Paul wrote.

The teaching of these verses is being rejected in many Christian groups today, and a variety of reasons are given as to why we need not follow this doctrine. One argument is that the word 'man' refers to husbands, but this is a ridiculous argument for if the word 'man' in verse 3 refers to the husband then we must translate it consistently like that throughout the whole section. Is Christ only the head of married men and not head of those who are single; is it acceptable for unmarried men to cover their heads when praying but married men must not? In what sense is the husband by the woman in verse 12? The male has been made by God the head of the woman, and, whilst in Western culture that is now being rejected, the one sphere where it ought to be recognized is in the churches of God.

Endnotes

- 1 The series of articles commences here: http://www.preciousseed.org/article_detail.cfm?articleID=2203
- 2 Gen. 3. 6.
- 3 HUNTER, JACK, 1 Corinthians, part of the *What the Bible Teaches* series of commentaries, John Ritchie.

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Ananias

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

The book of the Acts is a very interesting book, being the only inspired account of the development of the early church. This is exemplified when we compare Acts chapter 8 verse 3, in which we read, 'Saul, he made havock of the church', with chapter 9 verse 31, 'Then had the churches rest'. Something drastic must have happened! Saul of Tarsus had 'changed sides'.

Even today, God is pleased to use humble men and women for the accomplishment of His purposes. 'But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, 1 Cor. 1. 27. Although Saul had set out on another mission to persecute believers of 'this way', and this time the target was Damascus, he was to meet the Lord from heaven, but also a godly man on earth, and his name was Ananias. He is not to be confused with another of the same name in chapter 5, and a high priest in chapters 23 and 24. Who was this man?

A certain disciple

Luke uses the word 'certain'. Ananias was no one outstanding, or prominent, for little is said of him, and he is referred to only in one other scripture. He was, however, a disciple that God was able to use.

A consistent man

Ananias was spoken to by name, suggesting that he lived in communion with the Lord, and was at His disposal. He did not boast in what he did for the Lord. Paul speaks of him in chapter 22 verse 12 as 'having a good report'. He was a simple, devout man. Here is a challenge for us, that we may be known for our good deeds in our service for the Lord.

The location of Ananias

There was a company of believers at Damascus, verse 19, and Ananias was one of them. Saul was intent on persecuting the believers there,

even this godly man. God had other thoughts, v. 2! Although Saul had letters in his hand, carrying the authority of the high priest, he was soon to come under a greater authority, the Lord himself. Like Ananias, the Lord still seeks to plant His people in certain locations – often difficult locations. We may not understand this fully, but we must bow to His will for our lives – as the chorus says, 'You in your small corner, and I in mine'!

The dedication of Ananias

Ananias knew the Lord's voice. Note his answer, 'Behold, I am here, Lord', v. 10. He was ready to do God's bidding. His answer also showed his acceptance, and ready availability, 'I am here, Lord'. Knowing what Ananias knew of Saul, how would we have reacted?

The direction given to Ananias

Ananias was given clear instructions from the Lord – the place, the house, and the man. The purpose was to 'inquire . . . for one called Saul, of Tarsus'. Going to the street called Straight might have been the easy part, but he had heard of the evil done to the Lord's people by Saul. That was his concern. What a reputation Saul had, for, even after his conversion it is recorded that they were afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple, v. 26.

What the Lord did was to map out for Ananias not the past but the future, the potential of the man he was to meet. He was a chosen vessel – what a thought! When we seek to speak about the Saviour do we think of the potential of a soul? One that we lead to Christ may do greater things than ourselves!

The motivation of Ananias

'Go thy way', v. 15. Ananias' movements were in response to the clear guidance of God. How important to know the clear guidance of the Lord in every situation!



His greeting is significant, 'Brother Saul', v. 17. What would we have said to one who had caused so much havoc in the church? He immediately identified himself with Saul. It is interesting, too, that verse 12 records that Saul had received a vision of one 'putting his hand' on him. In reality, verse 17 records Ananias putting his hands (plural) on him. Ananias' actions were equal to his words!

Ananias's commendation

Some years later Paul recounts his testimony and says of Ananias, 'Having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there', 22. 12. Reviewing the scriptures relating to this man, we can think of the language of the psalmist, 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way', Ps.37. 23.

His example indicates that God can use the humblest of saints. Let us never be afraid to obey God's will, for God's way and will are best.

O use me Lord, use even me,
Just as thou wilt and when,
and where,
Until thy blessed face I see,
Thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share.

[F. R. HAVERGAL]

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Daniel chapter 9

Daniel's Seventieth Seven, verse 27

One over-riding consideration must drive our interpretation of this verse: what Christ Himself said about it on the Mount of Olives. Christ's insistence that the 'abomination of desolation' was yet to be fulfilled, Matt. 24. 15, means that the critical/rationalist view (that Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled in 174 BC during Antiochus Epiphanes' atrocities) is, at best, inadequate. Further, Christ said that His coming would occur 'immediately after the tribulation of those days', Matt. 24. 29. This means that the amillennial view (which argues that the prophecy was completely fulfilled in Christ's first coming and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and, therefore, has no yet-future fulfilment) is also erroneous.

Approaching the prophecy from the standpoint of what Christ Himself said about it leaves us with no alternative but to view Daniel's seventieth 'seven' as yet future. Thus, in this article, we shall concentrate mainly on a premillennial interpretation of the passage. Having surveyed the first four stages of the prophetic programme in the two previous verses, we come to the last three events in verse 27.

5. A Covenant is made for the final 'seven'

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one seven.

The prediction in verse 26 of continual wars over Jerusalem provides us with the setting for this final verse of the prophecy. The 'Prince to come', v. 26, will enforce a treaty with the Jews. 'The unusual verb used is "make a strong covenant", *gabar*, bears this out for it has the implication of forcing an agreement by means of superior strength'.¹ Presumably this will involve a peace deal, solving the 'Jewish problem' in the Middle East, and giving the Jews protection from their enemies and the freedom to worship God in such a way that the sacrificial system is resumed in a Jewish temple.

DENNETT writes, 'What is asserted here is, that the future head of the revived Roman Empire will make a covenant with "the many", that is, with the mass or majority of the Jews, who at

that time will again be in their own land; the mention of the sacrifice and the oblation puts it beyond doubt that Jerusalem is in question, and that the temple has been rebuilt. This prince will enter into an alliance with the Jewish nation, apart from the godly remnant, professedly as befriending their cause, and as protecting them from their adversaries'.²

What, then, is the nature of the covenant established by the 'Prince to come' that this verse speaks of? Some commentators refer back to Isaiah chapter 28 verses 15 and 18 with its 'covenant with death', that protects against the 'overflowing scourge' which shall 'pass through'. At first sight, connecting Isaiah with Daniel might sound a bit stretched: an 'overflowing scourge' might refer to any sort of plague or pestilence, and a 'covenant with death' might involve any sort of 'deal with the Devil'.

However, the Assyrian invasion in the days of Hezekiah, 710 BC, seems to be the climactic event, not only of Isaiah's life and prophecy, but of his view of the future course of Jerusalem's history. Isaiah chapter 8 verses 5-8 speak of Sennacherib the Assyrian's siege of Jerusalem as an 'overflowing flood' that 'reaches to the neck' and fills 'Immanuel's land', while Isaiah chapter 10 verses 22-23, also uses the terms 'destruction', 'decreed', 'overflow' and 'a determined end' of the Assyrian invasion, terms which find an echo in Daniel chapter 9 verses 24-27.

The prophecy of Micah, Isaiah's contemporary, also attaches enormous importance to this invasion. Thus, after the promise of the Messianic kingdom, Mic. 4. 1-8, the scene switches to the Babylonian captivity and return, vv. 9-10, and then to an Assyrian invasion, 4. 11 - 5. 5. Micah sees Messianic significance in this event, prophesying that 'the Judge of Israel will be struck upon the cheek', 5. 1 - a picture, perhaps, of the way Hezekiah was insulted by the Assyrian ambassadors, but continues by saying that 'out of Bethlehem Ephrathah . . . shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting', v. 2, and in verses 3 and 4, we are told of the magnificence of this One's reign of peace. Quite obviously, Micah's prophecy transcends Hezekiah's situation, and anticipates Christ's humiliation and ensuing glorious reign.

But the following verses, vv. 5-15, again speak about a yet-future Assyrian invasion, involving terrible destruction, and the eventual peace and power of the Jewish people. Therefore, the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib seems to be a prophetic picture of an end-time invasion of Immanuel's land.

WILLIAM KELLY writes, 'They had hoped to escape by making a covenant with this prince [i.e., the 'Prince to come' of Daniel 9:26-27]; they fondly thought, as it is said in Isaiah, to be thus delivered from the overflowing scourge, i.e., I suppose, the king of the north that becomes the great head of the eastern powers of the world arrayed against the western. The mass of the Jews will make a covenant with the great prince of the west, who will then be nominally their friend'.³

Interestingly, the Romans first intervened in the affairs of Jewish national life in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, Dan. 11. 30, insisting that Antiochus' forces should leave Egypt, which Antiochus had virtually conquered, and which had appealed to Rome for help. The Roman Senate's representative, Popilius Laenas, famously drew a circle around Antiochus in the sand, and insisted that Antiochus should not step outside the circle until he had given assurance that he would withdraw from Egypt. Although Antiochus' subsequent withdrawal from Egypt prompted him to ransack Jerusalem as he returned home, setting up an altar to Zeus in the temple and persecuting the Jews, the Roman intervention as international powerbroker is, perhaps, a picture of the way that the future 'Prince to come' will intervene in the affairs of the Jews, and a coming 'King of the North'.

6. Sacrifices will be brought to an end and an abomination will be set up

But in the middle of the seven He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering

In the middle, properly, the half-way point, of the seven-year deal, the 'Prince to come' will forcibly intervene to halt the Jewish temple sacrifices. He will usher in a period described in terrible terms: the 'great tribulation', Rev. 7. 14, also spoken of by Christ in Matthew chapter 24 verse 21, 'a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time', Dan. 12. 1, the 'time of Jacob's trouble', Jer. 30. 7. As we see from the foreshadowing in Antiochus Epiphanes in Daniel 8, there

will be fierce persecution of the Jews, and an idolatrous system of worship set up in the temple.

For Christians who accept the New Testament witness, we are assured that the 'Prince to come' will indeed set up an idol in the Jewish Temple, and will force the entire world to worship it, 2 Thess. 2. 4; Rev. 13. 14-15. This is what our Lord Jesus referred to when he spoke about the abomination of desolation in the Olivet Discourse, Matt. 24. 15; Mark 13. 14.

Most commentators suggest that the 'Prince to come' will break the treaty he made with the Jews. ANDERSON writes that his establishment of the abomination of desolation is 'in violation of his treaty obligations to respect and defend the religion of the Jews'.⁴ Perhaps this would account for the attack from a 'King of the North', for, with the protection of the 'Prince to come' withdrawn, the northern army advances. However, some argue against this idea,⁵ insisting that the treaty will stand firm to the end. Certainly, we would expect the false Prince to continue to protect the idolatrous worship in the Temple.

And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate

Commentators struggle to explain what the 'wing' of abominations refers to. Some surmise that it refers to the wing of an army, or means the 'extreme' example of abomination. Others suggest the 'wing', or pinnacle, of the temple, mentioned in Luke chapter 4 verse 9, as the place where the idol will be set up. The ancient Greek and Latin translations simply say, 'and in the temple', as does Paul, 2 Thess. 2. 4, 'in the temple of God', while the Lord says 'in the holy place', Matt. 24. 15. Others take the word 'wing' in the metaphorical sense of 'affording protection' JND, and speak of the 'protection, or wing, of these idols' being 'sought by the people . . . the apostate masses, who bow before the Antichrist'. However, the preposition 'under' would perhaps have been used instead of 'upon the wing' if protection was intended. Other translations suggest the idea of 'the ensuing result swiftly coming' – that is, because of the abomination, the desolator shall come in judgement, presumably like a swift eagle to the prey.

The word 'abomination' is usually used in the Old Testament with reference to idols. The phrase 'abomination of desolation', Dan. 11. 31 and 12. 11, refers to the idolatrous worship set

up by Antiochus Epiphanes in Jerusalem, and which is a foreshadowing of what Antichrist will likewise do. The Hebrew word 'desolation' can either mean 'devastation' or, in the subjective sense 'astonishment', 8. 27. Thus, some translate the expression, 'the appalling abomination'. However, the five references in Daniel chapter 9, vv. 17, 18, 26, 27, 27, appear to mean 'desolation' in the objective sense of what will befall Jerusalem.

The verse speaks of ensuing desolation, or literally, a person who brings desolation: 'one who makes desolate'. Some identify this one as 'the Prince to come'; however, others take this to be the King of the North. Thus GAEBELEIN writes, 'Who is the desolator? The King of the North, the Assyrian of the endtime; he is the one of whom we read in a previous chapter and whose terrible work against the apostate nation is here once more touched upon as falling into the second half of the last prophetic week'.⁷ TREGELLES offers a third mediating option, 'an abomination . . . that on account of which, God brings in desolation'.⁸ That is, God, through His agent of destruction, punishes the majority of the Jews because they follow the Antichrist, and worship his image, for Daniel chapter 12 verse 11 says that it is the 'abomination that maketh desolate' KJV.

7. The Desolator will be destroyed

Even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolator

Whoever the desolator is, he will be destroyed. KEIL and DELITZSCH write, 'The words [the consummation determined] remind us of Isaiah 10:23 and Isaiah 28:22, and signify . . . the inflexibly decreed judgment of destruction'. A few versions speak of the consummation being poured out upon the desolate (KJV, JND, NKJV, NASB), but most translate the participle here the same way as it was translated earlier in the verse, 'upon the desolator'. Taking it as 'the desolate', i.e., Jerusalem, presents the problem that God's purposes for Daniel's people, and holy city, are eventually for their good, not their destruction.

Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 similarly refer to an attack from the far north, of Gog from the land of Magog, who leads a huge army against the land of Israel just before the setting up of the millennial temple, chapters 40-48. References from this passage are carried over to Revelation chapter 19, and suggest that the destruction of the 'desolator' will be accomplished by the return of Christ at the Battle of Armageddon.

Critical and Amillennialist Interpretations

Critical interpreters of Daniel's prophecy find in verse 27 the strongest arguments for their viewpoint. In particular, the fact that the verse speaks of: (a) the bringing 'an end to sacrifice and offering'; (b) 'abominations'; and (c) 'desolation' enables them to cross-reference chapter 8 verse 11, where 'by him the daily sacrifices were taken away and the place of His sanctuary was cast down', and chapter 11 verse 31, which speaks of the taking 'away of the daily sacrifices', and the placing 'there the abomination of desolation'. In these verses, of course, Antiochus Epiphanes' actions, replacing Jewish worship with an altar to Zeus, are clearly in view. The parallels could hardly be stronger. Indeed, the very same expression 'abomination of desolation' is used in 1 Maccabees chapter 1 verse 54 of the altar to Zeus that Antiochus set up in the Jewish temple.

From one angle, of course, this helpfully shows that the amillennial interpretation, which attempts to find references in chapter 9 verse 27 to Christ's New Covenant and the cessation of the animal sacrifices of Judaism, is imposition not exposition.

The amillennial idea that the 'he' who shall 'confirm a covenant', v. 27, refers to Christ establishing His (New) covenant is also strained and unnatural, for we would expect the 'he' to refer back to the last mentioned person in verse 26, that is, the 'Prince to come'. Ignoring the grammatical link between 'he', v. 27, and 'the Prince to come', v. 26b, amillennial commentators justify switching the subject to Christ, by arguing that 'this entire passage is Messianic in nature', YOUNG. This is less than the whole truth, of course, for a second 'Prince' has been introduced, setting him and Messiah the Prince in obvious contrast. Thus, to simply assume that Christ is in view in verse 27 is unwarranted, nor would we expect the prophecy to jump back and forth between the two central figures without specifying which 'Prince' was in view.

Amillennialist commentators attempt to deal with the mention of the abomination of desolation, v. 27, by arguing that the Jews themselves, in continuing to offer sacrifices after Christ's death, offered abominations, and that this brought upon themselves the desolation of AD 70. However, the word 'abomination', as we have seen, usually refers to idols, not to animal sacrifices, which even Paul offered in Acts chapter 21. Others argue for some 'abomination'

sometime during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, but, as ANDERSON says, 'That this prophecy was not fulfilled by Titus is as certain as history can make it', adding, 'making all allowance for the contemptible time-serving of Josephus and his admiration for Titus, his testimony on this point is too full and explicit to admit of doubt'.⁹

Amillennial commentators also argue that the 'desolation' of verse 27 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus which, according to their theology of replacement, did away with Judaism forever, and its special ethnic, national, religious and territorial position, being fulfilled by the church in God's plans. However, 'the figment that a prophecy of temporal and spiritual good for the Jews was fulfilled by their rejection and ruin is one of the very wildest vagaries of interpretation'.¹⁰

The critical interpretation, on the other hand, can point to obvious and forceful parallels between verse 27 and Antiochus' reign of terror, although there are problems too. Foremost among them is the question of what is the 'covenant' that Antiochus made with the 'many' for 'one seven'? Some suggest that this may refer to the harsh edict imposed by Antiochus upon the Jewish people, which forbade the worship of God, circumcision, dietary laws, reading the scriptures, and so on. However, it is hard to understand in what way this was a 'covenant'.

Others latch onto the fact that 1 Maccabees chapter 1 verses 11-15 speak of some of the 'wicked men' among the Jews 'who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow. So this device pleased them well. Then, certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king, who gave them licence to do after the ordinances of the heathen'.

The problems with this suggestion, are: (1) despite the use of the word, what was described hardly amounts to a 'covenant', patronage and permission from Antiochus does not amount to a covenant; and (2) the order of events is back to front, for verse 27 places the 'covenant' after the destruction of the city and sanctuary mentioned in verse 26, while the 'covenant' that Maccabees mentions occurred long before Antiochus' attack upon the city. The critical scholar might argue that verse 27 is to be explained as a reiteration of the same events as verse 26, or that the prophecy is

incoherent or jumbled up. However, to blame the prophecy when it does not fit a scheme of interpretation is begging the question; rather, it is the interpretation that is confused. Thus, while there are definite parallels between verse 27 and the career of Antiochus Epiphanes, the match-up is less than perfect.

For critical scholars, near enough is good enough when interpreting scripture. However, for the humble believer who trembles at God's word, the fact that Antiochus presents strong parallels but not perfect alignments, means that, like all other biblical types, he is but a foreshadowing of what the scripture is pointing to. Only the prophetic antitype, the 'Prince to come', will perfectly fulfil Daniel's prophecy.

Conclusion

Our Lord Jesus Christ's own words about a future abomination of desolation require that Daniel chapter 9 verse 27 is telling of the career of the yet-future Antichrist, of whom Antiochus was but a foreshadowing.

Endnotes

- 1 J. G. BALDWIN, *Daniel*, TOTC, IVP, 1978, pg. 191
- 2 EDWARD DENNETT, *Daniel the Prophet and the Times of the Gentiles*, Central Bible Truth Depot, 1967, pgs. 153-4
- 3 WILLIAM KELLY, *The Great Prophecies of Daniel*, Pickering and Inglis, 1897, pg. 163
- 4 SIR R. ANDERSON, *The Coming Prince*, Kregel Publications, 1984, pg. 84
- 5 H. S. PAISLEY, *This Daniel*, Olive Press, 1991, pg. 137
- 6 A. C. GAEBELEIN, *The Prophet Daniel*, Pickering and Inglis, n.d., pg. 149
- 7 GAEBELEIN, pgs. 149-150
- 8 S. P. TREGELLES, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1852, pg. 114
- 9 ANDERSON, *The Coming Prince*, pgs. 84-5 and footnote
- 10 SIR R. ANDERSON, *Daniel in the Critics Den*, Nisbet, 1909, pg. 137

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THE ASSEMBLY AT RED ROW, NORTHUMBERLAND, ENGLAND

The assembly situated in the village of Red Row, Northumberland, has the distinction of being the most northerly assembly in England. There are currently four assemblies in the County, and Red Row is the most rural. Glanton Exclusive assemblies were more prevalent in Northumberland, but five have closed in recent years with only one remaining.

Red Row is in an area which once boasted in coal mining but all that has gone, apart from some opencast mining. The coastal area, north of Amble (the nearest town) to Berwick upon Tweed, is classed as an area of outstanding beauty, including Holy Island. (Lindisfarne).

It is difficult to establish a date as to the commencement of the testimony at Red Row. However, in 1910, some believers gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, meeting in a home. In 1911, a local Methodist Church in the village closed its doors and many of the believing members came to the 'home meeting' and learned of the truth of baptism, the breaking of bread, and assembly principles. Several were baptized in the North Sea, less than 2 miles from the village.

Consequently, the house became too small for the assembly so the owner of the house, together with another brother, partners in a bakery business, made a large room available above the bakery. When the saints gathered mid-week, they enjoyed the fellowship, and also the smell of the bread being baked for the next day!

In 1934 a decision was taken to purchase a plot of land in the village from the local colliery company for £52 and a hall was built for £500. The hall is located on the

only main road through the village, which now has a bypass.

Believers from Tyneside travelled to Red Row for it's opening, when Harold St. John and P. McCallum were the ministering brethren, the latter being the architect. Shortly after this, the Burnham brothers, Sidney and Albert, held a series of gospel meetings. Open-air meetings took place in the district and invitations were given out to those meetings. God blessed the effort, as the hall was packed night after night and souls were saved, baptized, and came into fellowship.

At that time, the only employment available was connected with the coal mines, which meant that ambitious young men had to move away, causing an age gap in the assembly. Some older saints used to refer to the assembly as being at Broomhill. This was where the local railway station was, long since closed, which some visiting speakers used, as it was only a short distance from Red Row.

The assembly is near the former RAF station at Acklington and many airmen sought fellowship with the saints, who made their homes open to them. Latterly, it became a prison which was visited by a brother in the assembly until his home-call.

One of the local villages was completely demolished in the early 1970's and people moved to a new

housing estate. This sadly disturbed the close-knit community.

Gospel campaigns have been held over the years with adults and children's meetings but, sadly, today there is no children's work undertaken. The Annual Conference was an occasion when believers gathered in good numbers, which was a testimony to the local inhabitants. Because of the smallness of the numbers in the fellowship the last was held in 2010.

The assembly in 1992 reached twenty-two members, but since then, many have passed away or, with age, moved to be nearer family. There are currently nine believers in fellowship.

A series of gospel meetings were held in 2013 in relation to future events. Every home in the four nearby villages was invited, but the response was poor. However, some came from local churches and were challenged, as such teaching is lacking in their respective fellowships. Tracting has been undertaken in the villages in the area with very little response. The believers long to break through the apathy and indifference of the people in the area, sadly a reflection of the days in which we live.

Over the last few years a visitors' book at the hall has shown many believers coming to the area on holiday, some from as far as Northern Ireland, and this is a real encouragement to the assembly. In 2013, one such couple moved from the South and are now in fellowship.

Prayer is valued for 2014 as the assembly celebrates eighty years since the hall was built. May the testimony be strengthened numerically and spiritually for the Lord's glory! Brethren pray for us.





The Glory of Service

In this article, we survey the essentials of what it means to be a servant of God. We were once the slaves of sin and Satan, but, by God's infinite mercy and grace, we have been redeemed, and now belong to Him.¹ This is prefigured by the experience of Israel in the days of the exodus. They once groaned under the tyranny of Pharaoh, but God, in fulfilment of His covenant promises to Abraham, sent them a deliverer in Moses, judged the Egyptians and their gods, and liberated His people to serve Him thenceforth.² Thus, they embarked on a completely new era with the dignified status of His servant-people, and the glorious privilege of approaching Him in worship. Whilst the term is sometimes applied to spiritual leaders,³ it should be understood that every believer is a servant,⁴ and the constant realization of our dignity and responsibilities as God's servants is of the utmost practical importance. God's delight in faithful service is seen in the honorific way the term 'my servant', or 'servant of the Lord' is applied to Job, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, David, Eliakim, and, especially, the Lord Jesus.⁵

The Servant and His Master

'Servant' is a relational term and points to the fact that Jesus is our Master and Lord, John 13. 14, 'If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet'. In their letters, the apostles Paul, James, Peter, and Jude each delighted to introduce themselves as 'a (bond) servant of Jesus Christ'. As we ponder the lordship of Christ in relation to our servant calling, the following should be noted:

Our Master has exclusive ownership of us. He has redeemed us by the shedding of His own precious blood.⁶ He has emancipated us from slavery to sin, and now we belong to Him – absolutely.

We are to be totally available to the

THE BELIEVER AS

[Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotations are taken from NKJV]

Master, in every department of life, and at all times.⁷

It should be our priority to please Christ,⁸ and we should allow this to take precedence over lesser pursuits.

We live in a culture where people are fixated by their own rights – human rights, consumer rights, civil rights, marital rights. Yet, for the believer all rights over our lives belong to the Lamb of God who has purchased us by His death.⁹

Our Lord Jesus is Himself the perfect Servant of the Lord. Eternally God's equal and fellow, He entered this

Some are called to serve Christ in a comparatively restricted sphere. The liberated demoniac aspired to follow Jesus, but was sent back to his own locality to tell them what great things the Lord had done for him.¹¹ Others are called to a much more expansive ministry, for example, Paul.¹²

The key question to ask is, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?' Acts 9. 6, and then to respond with Mary, 'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word', Luke 1. 38 ESV. No one need feel exempt on grounds of old age, for we read concerning

Anna that she 'was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day', Luke 2. 37.

The following contexts are worth noting in relation to our service for Christ:

The local church. The local church is likened to a tilled field.¹³ As in

the field of Boaz, there is work for every believer. Gifts and functions differ, but happy is the assembly that is busily, and unitedly, serving the Lord Christ! Elders, whilst modelling the servant mindset of the Lord Jesus, should be concerned to ensure that all are engaged. The worship of the church, and the preaching of the gospel, are two very precious forms of service, each priestly in character.¹⁴

The home. Our homes are places where the Lord's presence and peace can be enjoyed. Neighbours should sense this when they come under our roof. Mary and Martha placed themselves, and their home at Bethany, at the Lord's disposal, and how precious this must have been during His final days on earth!



world in the form of a bondservant. He 'became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross', Phil. 2. 8. A major part of serving Christ is serving others, and not only our fellow-believers, emulating One who 'did not come to be served, but to serve', Mark 10. 43-45. As the fulfilment of the suffering Servant in Isaiah's prophecy, and in His service to God and needy men, the Lord Jesus modelled true and costly service – He left us an example, that we should follow His steps.

Spheres of Service

The Lord is sovereign in relation to the equipment, endowment, direction, and sphere of duty of His servants.¹⁰ With this in mind, the Parables of the Pounds and Talents will repay careful study.



A SERVANT

By **KEN TOTTON**
Cambridge, England

Our homes are resources to be used for evangelism, pastoral work, and hospitality to strangers.¹⁵ Note, for example, how Priscilla and Aquila used their home to great advantage in relation to the instruction of Apollos.¹⁶

The world. Our workaday lives are integral to our mission in this world. God desires to have His servants everywhere, and in every legitimate walk of life. This conviction revolutionizes how we view our secular callings. Paul could direct slaves at Colossae, 'Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ', Col. 3. 23, 24. How often the gospel is promoted when a Christ-like employee 'goes the second mile', not by coercion but in the joyful consciousness that the eye of his Master is ever upon him!

Servant Characteristics

What features should characterize the servant of God? At the top of the list must be obedience. In the beautifully suggestive passage in Exodus chapter 21, the Hebrew servant has the option to walk free, but, instead, chooses to remain in devoted service to his master. His ear is drilled with an awl at the door of the house. The servant's ear is most important, as the channel for receiving the master's commands. The pierced ear testifies not only to a devoted servant, but also a worthy master. He delights to abide under his master's direction and control.

A further feature of the ideal servant is maintenance of focus. The behaviour of Abraham's servant in Genesis chapter 24 provides a master-class in seeing the assigned task through to successful completion. We can so easily get distracted into time-wasting trivia in

this bewitching world!

The Parable of the Pounds, Luke chapter 19, suggests that each servant, by trading, could gain further resources wherewith to serve the master. Conversely, the man who abused his trust had the pound taken from him.¹⁷ This implies that we should be concerned to develop our gifts, and opportunities to enhance our usefulness to the Lord.¹⁸

Humility should be a marked feature of any servant of Christ. As the Lord Jesus said, 'So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say,



"We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do", Luke 17. 10. Concerning those who serve in spiritual leadership, we read, 'a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will', 2 Tim. 2. 24-26.

The Servant's Future

Our lives in this world provide unique opportunities for the service of God.¹⁹ We should be concerned not only to start well, and continue, but also to finish well. Archippus was exhorted to

complete his ministry, whereas Paul could look forward to 'the crown of righteousness'.²⁰ In this respect, the conscientious servant will always have the judgement seat of Christ in view – the solemn day of review and reward. What consummate joy for those who receive their Lord's commendation, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord', Matt. 25. 23! It is clear from these words that the present life is 'training for reigning'. In Revelation chapter 22 verses 3 to 5 we read, 'and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads . . . And they shall reign forever and ever'. What a delightful paradox; it is precisely in being His bondservants and engaging in priestly service that we shall reign! To know Him is life eternal; to serve Him is perfect freedom.²¹

My Master lead me
to Thy door,
Pierce this now
willing ear
once more:
Thy bonds are
freedom - let me stay
With Thee, to toil,
endure, obey.

[H. C. G. MOULE]

Endnotes

- 1 Rom. 6. 17-18; Rev. 1. 1; 2. 20.
- 2 Exod. 8. 1.
- 3 2 Tim. 2. 24.
- 4 1 Thess. 1. 9.
- 5 Job. 1. 8; Gen. 26. 24; Num. 12. 7-8; Josh. 24. 29; Num. 14. 24; 2 Sam. 3. 18; Isa. 22. 20; Matt. 12. 18.
- 6 1 Pet. 1. 19.
- 7 2 Tim. 2. 21.
- 8 2 Cor. 5. 9.
- 9 Rev. 5. 9.
- 10 1 Cor. 12. 4-7.
- 11 Mark 5. 19.
- 12 Rom. 15. 19.
- 13 1 Cor. 3. 9.
- 14 Phil. 3. 3; Rom. 15. 16.
- 15 Heb. 13. 2.
- 16 Acts 18. 26.
- 17 Luke 19. 26.
- 18 2 Tim. 1. 6; 1 Cor. 14. 13.
- 19 John 9. 4 ESV.
- 20 Col. 4. 17; 2 Tim. 4. 8.
- 21 John 8. 36; 1 Cor. 7. 22; Gal. 5. 1.

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What does it mean to die with C

Ordinarily, we speak of Christian living, but it is an essential fact of New Testament teaching that living for God can be realized only when 'death' has occurred beforehand. As will be seen later, since the cross God has nothing more to do with man 'after the flesh'. All have to stand on the other side of death. As believers, we are linked to a risen man, as partakers of His resurrection life. We must be 'dead and risen men'. Sadly, this is so often obscured, and lost in our thinking by popular notions of 'being better'. Indeed, we are often told of this necessity, but rarely how it is to be done. All such notions are unscriptural, however fair their promise.

'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me', v. 23. It is these words which will occupy our thoughts.

It will be seen that the Lord's words are in two parts, which may be thought of as:

- Negative – let him deny himself and take up his cross daily
- Positive – and follow me.

The Character demanded

We shall never be willing to part with anything of this world until we learn to see it as God sees it. At our conversion, we saw it as under the judgement of God, ripe for His wrath, and we ourselves as condemned with it. If any have not yet seen this, may you soon learn to 'flee from the wrath to come'! It was in this capacity that the Thessalonians 'turned to God', and most, if not all, believers learned that, as unbelievers, the wrath of God abideth on us.

But, having trusted in Christ, and begun to learn of His love as shown by His sacrifice for us, that it was the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me, then the world ought, of necessity, to be viewed in an even more dreadful light – the world that hated, despised, rejected and crucified the One whom we love dearly. It is then that we find we have a basic and fundamental decision to make as to our attitude to that world, and our relationship with it. Shall we desire the fellowship of a world that killed Him, and would do so again were that possible? 'Whosoever . . . will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God', Jas. 4. 4. Can we be comfortable, at home, find our pleasure, in a godless world, where every motive and expression becomes increasingly corrupt and vile? This is the basic issue which will come out of these words.

But before this issue will be decided, another, more vital issue, must be addressed, which will have the greatest possible bearing on the former circumstance.

We must now look at what is stated in Luke chapter 9. There are those who feel that the term 'disciple' is not appropriate to believers of the church era. They argue that it belongs to the Jewish believers who followed Christ on earth, not to this dispensation of grace. It is suggested that our links to Christ, as raised and seated together with Him, stand on a far higher plane. That, of course, is true. The church-age saint has a unique position. When we read the Gospel records, all is in a Jewish context. It is Israel's Messiah that is presented to them, and the disciples are clearly representative of a godly remnant which both believe, and receive Him. And it is in the light of Israel and the Kingdom that so much of the teaching is given. But it is not exclusively so, and Luke in particular, as a Gentile writing for a Gentile, reflects that circumstance.

'Disciples' is how those who believe and receive Him are viewed by men in this world. This is plainly seen in John chapter 9, 'Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples' is the language of the scribes to the poor man who had been born blind. Does this, then, apply to church-age believers? Clearly it does. The gospel has now gone over the bounds of Israel to the Gentile nations. These Gentiles believe, and are baptized, and gather together in His name, as previously specified in Matthew's Gospel. In Acts chapter 11, we read that the disciples were called

Christians first at Antioch. They had been disciples in men's eyes and so marked, so different, so compelling had been their testimony to Him whom they confessed that they were called 'Christ's ones', seeing they were so like Him. They were disciples who earned that title. Note that they did not profess to be Christians who ought to be disciples – they were disciples who were plainly Christ's.

The facts are that true discipleship is so demanding, so costly, that it can only be taken up by such as are both prompted and empowered by the indwelling Spirit.

The Context of His words

The twelve had just enjoyed a short period of successful and exhilarating testimony. They had returned weary, but elated, by all that had taken place. There was every sign to them that He was the Messiah, and that they were announcing the Kingdom, soon to come. They had had the joy and privilege of acting for Him as His representatives.

By
EDDIE HONEYBALL
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Christ? Luke 9. 18-27 (Part 1)

His power had been using them to heal and deliver. It all seemed to be so triumphant, and blessed, so easy. They go apart with him to rest, and He feeds the multitude. John, telling of this, says that 'they sought to take Him by force and make Him a king'. It was the hour of popularity, based not on faith but on material wishes. We can see how, in this atmosphere, their expectations were like the crowd's, purely on an earthly level.

The Challenge of His words

But the Lord cannot allow false hopes to flourish in their hearts. He will not have a people attracted by outward and material prospects, or enthusiasm buoyed up with thoughts of personal advantage. We must be aware that some are still winning converts on false pretences, promising healing and health, success and prosperity, happiness and freedom from cares to those who comply with their appeals. All is false and ends in disillusionment. It is true that there is unfailing joy and blessing in Christ, but not on the superficial level of modern expectation and not hand-in-hand with worldly conduct.

'Whom do men say that I am?' Their answers declare where they are spiritually. Incidentally, these records show that even where the signs and wonders were authentic these did not promote true faith, saving faith, in Him. How less so when what is claimed is spurious.

'But whom do ye say that I am?' All rests on this – our laying hold on Him personally as 'the Christ of God', the 'Son of the living God' as elsewhere. All too often, we simply believe certain teachings, accept certain truths, about Him. This goes deeper; what is your relationship to Me personally? Clearly, it was right, but it will be tested and challenged to the utmost in the days ahead, and only what was genuine, real, and certain could possibly survive the ordeal. If we are going to take up the challenge of Christ's words today we must have Him personally as the supreme and only object of our faith and love, otherwise we will inevitably break down and take a lower position of faith and obedience.

Thus, their false dreams of glory are about to be shattered. He was the Christ of God indeed, worthy of all their faith and trust. But, 'He must suffer many things and be rejected'. Death, not glory, lay ahead for Him at the hands of the nation. Death and resurrection must precede the Kingdom that will come, but not as they had expected.

But He was still calling. They must still follow, and come after Him in this intervening period of rejection. Would faith still be in Him as the Christ of God, when all it brings is rejection and death? These words are still full of meaning for us today. He is still in rejection, and the same requirement is asked of us; the same reality must be faced, both spiritually and, still often, literally. It has been so in every generation, for the one who will come after the Man of Calvary.

EDDIE HONEYBALL is in fellowship in the assembly in Denston, Suffolk. Now in his late 70s he has laboured in this area all his life.



The Chairman retires

For those of us who have known and worked with Roy Hill over the years of his involvement with Precious Seed, it is difficult to envisage the ministry without his advice, guidance, and leadership. Yet, on 31st August 2014, we have to say farewell as Roy decided it is time to step down from the Trust.

Roy Hill joined the Precious Seed Committee in May 1986, becoming chairman in January 1998. Thus, 2014 will see him complete twenty-eight years of service to this work, with sixteen of those years as the chairman of the Trust. Just a cursory glance at the history of the work would indicate that 1997-98 was a difficult time. The magazine that started with six copies per year had reduced to five copies and, from January 1998, was moving to four copies per year.



Equally, other changes had taken place in terms of the personnel involved. The retirement of the editor, the death of the former treasurer, and the joining of new members meant the work was going through a difficult time of transition. Roy, never one to avoid a challenge, has steered us through those years, and into

the 21st century. He has brought his considerable experience and expertise in the printing and publishing business to bear upon this work and has transformed it, whilst at the same time maintaining its adherence to scriptural truth.

It is difficult to summarize the significance of the contribution that Roy has made to the work. Above all, he has been its ambassador, its visionary, and its guide. He has continuously developed the presentation of the magazine without diluting its content, increased and streamlined the number of books published, led the work into providing gospel literature in the form of *Faith Matters* and the calendars, enabled authors to see their labours in print through Decapolis Press, and, in recent years, led two successful and popular Precious Seed trips to Israel.

Whilst it is difficult to envisage the work without him, we now have another transition to manage. We would seek the Lord's help, and the prayerful support of His people. To Roy Hill we express our deepest thanks and appreciation, wishing him the Lord's continued blessing in his other ongoing ministries.



THE PRIESTHOOD (3)

By **JOHN HALL**
Harrogate, England

There were three offerings made on the High Priest's behalf.

Foremost, he brought the bullock for the sin offering. The sin offering: He who knew no sin was made sin for us.¹ Consequently, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ.²

Then, the first ram is taken for the burnt offering, reminding us that the perfect life of Christ was all for God's glory. For us today, Paul tells us to 'present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God', Rom. 12. 1.

After that, the second ram was taken as the offering of consecration. When the ram was slain, Moses took of the blood of the sacrifice and applied it to Aaron in specific areas. It is applied to the ear, (sensitivity to God's word), the thumb, (handling the things of God), and the great toe, (a balanced walk). Paul would remind us, 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?' 1 Cor. 6. 19.

His Clothing

What a resplendent figure the High Priest must have seemed as he stood before Israel clothed in garments of 'glory and of beauty'. In a coming day our Great High Priest will stand before us, and, once we manage to gather our thoughts together, we will be able to say, 'It was a true report that I heard in mine own land . . . and behold the half was not told me', 1 Kgs. 10. 6-7.

As Aaron moved around the camp amongst the people, he would be observed by all, clad in his priestly garments, and they would know that they had been designed by God, and represented the dignity of his office. Hence, there would be nothing slovenly or casual about his demeanour or dress. Equally, we should be adorned with those characteristics and aspects of Christ which bring glory to His name. As one hymn-writer wrote, 'Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me'.

It would be very obvious to the

people, as they observed Aaron, that the quality of his garments, whether it was the texture, or the material, or the workmanship, was the very best of its kind! It comprised fine linen, pure gold, precious stones, costly ointment, and all assembled by skilful workmanship that emanated out of 'wise hearts'. Whilst Aaron's garments are a picture of Christ, the principle that runs through the whole of scripture is that God expects His people to always bring the very best that they have to Him. How sad it



is to read in Malachi's prophecy the words of Jehovah to His people 'Ye have robbed me', as they gave of the second best of their tithes, offerings, and service to Him.

When Aaron was clothed with his priestly garments, they made him fit for the high office he had been called to fulfil. They covered him with a dignity which was not his own. Paul, as he writes to the Colossian believers in chapter 3, tells us how this can be

achieved with us. In verse 10 we are enjoined to 'put on' the new man and his characteristics, v. 12, the whole to be enveloped in love, v. 14. Having done all this, as verse 15 states, we should let the peace of God rule in our hearts, and let the word of Christ dwell in us, v. 16.

In Exodus God details the priestly garments. He begins with the outermost, i.e., the breastplate of judgement, and then moves inward setting before us God's standards. Then, as we move inwards through the articles of clothing, differing glories of the Christ of God are revealed. In the book of Leviticus, however, we find that the order begins with the innermost garment, and then moves outward. This is because it sets before us the practical order in which the priest dresses himself. The first article being linen, which reminds us that purity should characterize the believer.

Conclusion

Our God is a God of order and harmony. He is very jealous of His own glory. When we look at the garments, glory, and beauty of the priesthood, we see that the materials used in the Tabernacle were very similar in composition, and texture. The same materials were used, the colours were identical, and the workmanship was also to the same high standard. Nothing was out of harmony, and each blended together, and were complementary the one to the other. The simple lesson that we learn from this is that the house of God, and the child of God, should be in perfect accord, both blended together. As Paul writes to Timothy, 'That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God', 1 Tim. 3. 15. How vital to see the man of God, part of a royal priesthood, officiating in the house of God to the praise of His glory.

Endnotes

- 1 2 Cor. 5. 21.
- 2 Rom. 8. 1.

JOHN HALL is in fellowship in the Woodfield Gospel Hall, Harrogate, England. This is his first series of articles for Precious Seed.



Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

Bits & Bobs

What is 'Nothing'?

Russia sentences secret agents over theft of Gutenberg Bible

Russia has sentenced three agents belonging to its Federal Security Service (FSB) for trying to sell a rare 15th-Century Bible, officials say. Colonel Sergei Vedishchev was given more than three years in a penal colony for stealing the two-volume Gutenberg edition from Moscow State University. He had offered it to a collector for under \$1.15m (£700,000), a fraction of its estimated value. His two accomplices received lighter sentences for trying to find a buyer. The three men were caught in a sting operation by their own agency.



The Bible, which was produced by German printer Johannes Gutenberg in the 1450s, was stolen from the Moscow University's safe in 2009. Vedishchev and his co-conspirators were arrested last year at the meeting place of the potential buyer in a sting operation arranged by the FSB.

Court spokeswoman Irina Zhirnova said the book was 'priceless' and that experts expected it to fetch at least \$20.4m. 'These people were not art specialists', she said, 'it just happened that one of them got access to this rare book and then they set about thinking about how to cash in'. 'The book is to undergo repair work after a page was cut out for the buyer to check its authenticity', she added.

The 15th-Century Gutenberg Bible was the first real book to be mass-produced using movable type printing techniques.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-27738164>



It seems like a simple question. The Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary defines 'nothing' as, a) 'something that does not exist; b) the absence of all magnitude or quantity'. To the average mind, 'nothing' is an understandable, and understood concept. Yet those in the evolutionary community are attempting to redefine nothing. In an article about the theoretical branch of physics known as string physics or string theory, Dr. Michio Kaku suggested that string theory can explain the existence of the universe. Dr. Kaku said that 'a string is concentrated energy from which everything else is made. A string is so tiny that it can't be seen with any of our instruments'. Dr. Kaku also suggested that string theory could inform us about the events that allegedly happened before the Big Bang. These strings certainly seem to contain a wealth of potential.

In the article, he was asked, 'If strings create everything, what created the antecedent space and time?' His response to this question was, 'The probable answer is that space, time, and everything around us comes from nothingness'. Dr. Kaku was then asked, 'Nothingness is actually filled with physical reality?' To which he matter-of-factly responded, 'That's right. We think nothingness is actually chock-full of interactions'.

Observe the sleight of hand that took place in Dr. Kaku's answers. If there ever were a time when nothing (zero matter or energy) existed, then nothing would currently exist. Knowing that, Dr. Kaku, and many of his fellow string theorists, say that the universe came from nothing. Yet, when asked to define nothing, they simply say that nothing was actually filled with something. Let's get this straight: the universe came from nothing, but nothing is really something? One is reminded of Alice's encounter with Humpty Dumpty in Wonderland, in which Humpty stated, 'When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less'.

Simply changing the definition of nothing to something will not overcome the problem that atheists have for explaining the existence of matter. In truth, string theory, the Big Bang, and every other materialistic theory fall woefully short of explaining the existence of the universe. The most accurate statement that has ever been made on the subject was written some 3,500 years ago, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'.

<http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=9&article=1797>

Has King David's citadel been found? Israeli archaeologist claims to have discovered site captured in the conquest of Jerusalem

An Israeli archaeologist says he has found the legendary citadel captured by King David in his conquest of Jerusalem. Eli Shukron has spent two decades uncovering a massive fortification of five-ton stones stacked twenty-one feet wide, and claims 'the whole site we can compare to the Bible perfectly'. The fortification was built eight-hundred years before King David would have captured it from its Jebusite rulers, and Shukron says the biblical story of David's conquest of Jerusalem provides clues that point to this particular fortification as David's entry point into the city.



<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2621612/Has-King-Davids-citadel-Israeli-archaeologist-claims-discovered-site-captured-conquest-Jerusalem.html>

Noah COULD have floated his boat, say scientists: Ark really could have coped with two of every animal

The story of a man building a giant wooden boat to help his family and the entire animal kingdom survive a terrifying flood is one of the more contentious parts of the Bible. But research by physics students suggests that a structure on the scale of Noah's ark as described in the ancient text could have been built. And what's more, they say it would have been buoyant, even with two of every animal on Earth on board. However, while the ark would have stayed afloat, they're not sure if every animal would have fitted inside.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2595943/Did-animals-really-float-two-two-Noahs-Ark-coped-animal-claim-physicists.html>

North Korea gives South Korean missionary life sentence

North Korea has sentenced a South Korean Baptist missionary to hard-labour for life for allegedly spying and trying to set up underground churches, the latest in a string of missionaries to run into trouble in the rigidly controlled North.

North Korean state media said the missionary was tried and admitted to anti-North Korean religious acts, and 'malignantly hurting the dignity' of the country's supreme leadership, a reference to the ruling Kim family.

Christian missionaries have been drawn over the years to totalitarian North Korea, which tolerates only strictly sanctioned religious services. North Korean defectors have said that the distribution of Bibles, and secret prayer services, can mean banishment to a labour camp, or execution.



http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/AS_NKOREA_JAILED_SOUTH_KOREAN?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT



The Servant Songs

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

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Isaiah 52. 13-15 and 53. 1-12

This song begins as it ends, setting forth the ultimate exaltation of the Servant of Jehovah, the Seed of David. The second section of the song, beginning at Isaiah chapter 53 verse 1, starts with a question asked by Israel, 'Who hath believed our report?' (*shemooh*) that which was heard (as opposed to that which we spoke). Israel confesses that the report was actually for them, but who among them actually believed it?

To whom is the arm of the Lord: the Arm of the Lord is the eternal One, Isa. 51. 9; the Judge of the people, 51. 5, and the One that people will trust, v. 5. Some day God's Arm will rule for Him over this earth, 40. 10. The Arm is the Servant of these songs.

Revealed: (*galah*) – made bare, uncovered. They now confess that the Arm was revealed to Israel. But they did not recognize Him! Isaiah chapter 52 verse 10 records, 'The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God'. The Arm was uncovered to all the nations, because the people for whom the message was first sent rejected it.

Verse 2

He shall grow up before him (God) **as a tender plant:** (*younaik*) a tender shoot or green sprout, springing up from the roots. The royal house of David is likened to a high cedar tree, Ezek. 17. 22. However, the actual trunk of the house of David had been severed, and looked like it would die without any offspring, Jer. 22. 30. After centuries had passed, this tender, insignificant branch grew out of the stump, see Isa. 11. 1.

And as a root: (*shouresh*) Here are His humble beginnings. He did not grow out of the top of the cedar, but out of its roots. To the average person, these suckers are only a menace to be removed, so as not to deplete nourishment from the rest of the plant. This was the sentiment of the high priest, Caiaphas, who suggested that that 'one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not', John 11. 49-50. But this

sprout will some day become a tall sheltering cedar, Ezek. 17. 22-24. The Lord, having 'brought down the high tree, will exalt the low tree'.

The words **out of a dry ground**, show that the Servant will sprout in the midst of drought, barrenness, and deadness. This was God's estimate of Israel. They were dead and barren, in no spiritual condition to produce anything pleasing to God. Yet, in such an atmosphere grew the only One who ever pleased God completely.¹

The tender shoot went unrecognized and unappreciated. He was not attractive to Israel when He came. In their estimation.

He hath no form: (*toar*) outline, shape, beautiful form; nor comeliness, (*hodor*) splendour, something worthy of admiration, beauty. They saw in Him no splendour, attractiveness, or anything that would inspire their admiration.

And when we shall see him: (*rooh* with long tense, permanent importance intended) to behold with intention, purposely.

There is no beauty: (*mareh*) appearance **that we should desire him.** By all worldly standards, there was no reason for them to be impressed.

Verse 3

Israel continues to confess how they had viewed and treated Him.

He is despised: (*booz*) made little account of, slighted, treated contemptuously and proudly. They not only hated Him, but they made sure that He felt their dislike.

And rejected: (*khodal*) to forsake, leave in the lurch, refuse to give assistance to.

Of men: (*ishim*) men of high degree.

There were no respectable men that would support Him with their authority. The great men of His nation withdrew their hands from helping Him. Yet, they now confess that HE Himself was

A man: (*ish*) a man of high degree, although humble in appearance. His high degree came from His character, and moral glory, rather than from His appearance, popularity, or outward wealth. His rank and power were divinely derived before He came, not due to His associating with poor, illiterate disciples after His coming.

Of sorrows: (*makhoun*) having pain, afflictions, sorrows, mental anguish.

The Lord Jesus had much sorrow of heart. This sorrow was not for Himself, but for Israel and humanity in general. He could see the end result of their rejection of Him, and it gave Him pain. He wept over Jerusalem as He thought of its destruction, Luke 19. 41-44. At His crucifixion, He said to the daughters of Jerusalem, 'Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children', Luke 23. 27-31.

And acquainted with (*yoda*) knowing **grief:** (*kholee*) sickness, disease, pain, suffering. They acknowledge that He had great concern, and fully understood the results of sin, as seen in ailments that sinful man experienced, Matt. 8. 16, 17.

And we hid as it were our faces from him: to their chagrin, they had been ashamed to be seen, or recognized as, associated with Him in any way.

He was despised (*booz*, as above) **and we esteemed:** (*chashabh*) reckoned, valued him not: Israel confesses that they placed absolutely no value upon Him at all!

Verse 4

begins the third section of this song



of Isaiah^[4]

as an admission that the Servant's sufferings were vicarious for Israel.

They acknowledge, **Surely he hath borne:** (*nasa* – to lift up and carry away) **our griefs and carried** (*sahval* – to carry or bear away with pain and suffering) **our sorrows** (as verse 3). Israel now confesses that the sorrow, and mental anguish that they saw in Him was really anguish and sorrow for Israel. At His first coming, they had thought that His sorrow, and grief, was the result of self-pity. Now, they recognize that He was sorrowing on their account. It was His grief for them. Therefore, they use the personal pronoun 'our' griefs and 'our' sorrows.

Yet we did esteem him: They had considered Him to be one who was stricken: (*noga* – to strike or blow) with judgement or calamities brought on by God. They thought He was afflicted with a hateful, shocking disease, or plague.² They also concluded that in His death, He was smitten (*nah-chah* – to strike, smite, strike home or deep so as to wound or kill) of God – realizing that His death was supernatural, they concluded that God had killed Him for His sinfulness. 'The construction signifies one who has been defeated in conflict with His Lord'.³

And afflicted: (*ganah*) to oppress, humble, cause misery with intensity and repetitiveness

While He was bearing the sin that caused their grief and sorrows, they thought God was punishing Him more severely than others, because of some serious sin that He had committed. They were right about the punishment, but they were wrong about the reason for it.

Verse 5

But: In contrast to what they had thought, they now confess their error and state the true cause of the Servant's sufferings.

He was wounded: (*kholal*) to pierce

through, mortally wounding, to pierce through with many swords.

For our transgressions: (*peh-shag*) to revolt, rebel, refuse subjection, or allegiance to rightful authority. His wounding was for their own rebelliousness, not His.

He was bruised: (*dachah*) to break into small pieces, smite, crush. This word designates the most severe inward and outward sufferings. 'There are no stronger expressions [*kholal* and *dachah*] in the Hebrew language to denote a violent and painful death'.⁴

The 'pual' verbal pattern indicates intensity and repetition. For at least three hours, the Servant experienced a piercing through as with multiple swords, and suffered repeated, intense blows that would crush, or break Him in pieces. These sufferings would have been inflicted by God during the darkness, Matt. 27. 45. 'The pure passives denote a calamity inflicted by violence from without'.⁵

They confess that His crushing was for our iniquities: (*avon*) to turn aside or go the wrong way; 'iniquities' are sins of ignorance, or actions resulting from being deceived. 'Transgressions' are direct, deliberate acts of rebellion against God. The combined punishment for these is expressed in the word 'bruised', or 'crushed'.

The chastisement: (*musar*) primarily discipline or correction, secondarily punishment; 'His suffering was a *musar*, which is an indirect affirmation that it was God who had inflicted it upon Him'.⁶ In scripture, the word is often used of God's discipline or chastisement of others.⁷

Of: leading to our peace: (*shalom*) general well-being, blessedness.

Was upon him: or, was laid upon Him.

And with his stripes: (*haboorah*) wound, bruise, stroke – referring to those sufferings inflicted by God, v. 5. we are healed: This refers to healing from the disease called sin.

Verse 6

is an acknowledgement of Israel's sin and the substitutionary death of the Servant

All we like sheep have gone astray: This phrase answers to the word 'iniquities' in the previous verse. What a confession! 'All we . . . have gone astray'. People stray when they are deceived, and lured away from the truth. The Jewish nation as a whole wandered out of the right ways of the Lord. Proud Israelite leaders refused to acknowledge their waywardness, and the perfection of their Messiah Jesus while He was on earth, but this sinfulness will be mourned when the Lord returns to earth the second time, Zech. 12. 10.

We have turned every one to his own way: An accurate description of the word 'transgressions' in verse 5. They deliberately and intentionally rebelled against Him, and refused to bow to His authority.

And the Lord: *YHVH* or Jehovah **hath laid:** (*poga*) caused to meet, caused to strike, caused to fall upon, on Him: that is, the Messiah Jesus.

The iniquity: (*avon*) **of us all:** This includes every individual Israelite, and may encompass the entire world. Any who can take the place of sinner and transgressor can look to the Lord Jesus as the One who bore his/her sins.

Here is the doctrine of substitution. Salvation is offered absolutely freely because another has taken my place and suffered for my sins. My sins were laid on the Lord Jesus as He died on my behalf. If the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, has been punished for my sins, how can God also punish me for them?

Endnotes

- 1 To this day, Israel claims that the Messiah will come when they are spiritually mature, worthy, and ready to receive Him. By focusing on their own 'worthiness' they missed out on their Messiah when He came the first time, Rom. 10. 1-3.
- 2 KEIL AND DELITZSCH, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 7, pg. 317.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid, pg. 318
- 7 Prov. 3. 11; Job 5. 17; Isa. 26. 16.

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The Power of CHOICE



By
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Do you have choice in life or are you simply a pawn where your actions are determined by your genes, environment, or a god who has predestined your every movement? In the creation account, after God has created the animals, He states, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth', Gen. 1. 26 NKJV. Although man is much like the animal creation physically, he is unique in his likeness to God. God 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life', 2. 7; He made man sovereign over the Earth.

This God-likeness has given man his 'massive' intelligence, conscience, and choice. Animals are driven by instinct. We do not expect them to make moral decisions. No one charges a lion with murder when it kills. This is its nature, and instinct drives it. It is a predator. But man is different; he can choose actions based on moral principles. So, in a court of law, one will be judged for one's actions.

God then gave man a moral choice. 'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"', vv. 16-17. There was no physical need; they had plenty of food. This was a test of their faith in God, and obedience to Him.

But they utterly failed the test. The devil came to Eve and told her that God had lied to her. To eat of the fruit would only bring her happiness. She believed the devil, and doubted God's love and truthfulness. Adam followed her example and also ate, chapt. 3. The devil's tactics are the same today. He is the father of lies and a murderer, John 8. 44.

But their rebellion did not just affect them. The whole human race was 'in Adam', both physically and representatively. He was literally the head of the human race. All of mankind now share in an inherited sinful nature, with the weakness and tendency to sin. David was keenly aware of this when he wrote as a broken man after his fall into adultery, 'Behold I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin my mother conceived me', Ps. 51. 5.

Honest men and women will confess that they struggle with this evil tendency, both in thought and action. They were born with a moral weakness. We are 'by nature children of wrath', Eph. 2. 3. All men share this genetic weakness. But man still has choice, and some choose to do terribly evil sins. All sin is not the same, and God will judge men according to their works. There are degrees of punishment, as there are degrees of reward, Luke 12. 47- 48. A judge must decide on punishment fitting the crime, and so it will be at the great white throne judgement, Rev. 20.

Calvinism teaches that man is not only born with a weakness to sin but is so mortally wounded that he cannot even choose to repent and receive Christ. Calvinists believe that God chooses some to be saved almost arbitrarily. One source puts it this way: 'When God calls his elect into salvation, they cannot resist. God offers to all people the gospel message. This is called the external call. But to the elect, God extends an internal call and it cannot be resisted'¹ Further, to these He sends His Holy Spirit who regenerates them and then they are finally able to choose Christ. Calvinists feel that this is glorifying to God and His sovereignty.

But this is not the God portrayed throughout scripture. From the beginning of Genesis, God is described as a loving, compassionate God. He is a God who loves all of mankind, not just the elect,

John 3. 16. Beginning with Cain, Gen. 4, He pleads with man to repent, and to turn from sin. In chapter 6, He is pictured as a God who is grieved by the rebellion and sin of man. There is a strong conflict of wills, and this has been the history of man.

God in His infinite love has provided salvation which is available to all. Christ's death on the cross is adequate payment for the sin of the whole world, 1 John 2. 1, 2. There is no partiality with God; James points out that this is sin, Jas. 2. 9. Now God commands all of mankind to repent, Acts 17. 30. God never commands that which man is unable to do. Our God is a loving, compassionate God, with arms stretched out to the world. Praise God!

As we face life with all of its decisions, we must mark the spiritual choices as most critical. As with Eve, we must choose either to trust God and obey Him, or listen to the tempter. This is an awesome choice that will determine the direction of our life and ultimate destiny. Abel chose the pathway of faith, and offered to God the correct offering, Heb. 11. 4, and so he heads that list of godly men and women who, by faith, pleased God.

The first choice is to believe God and repent of our sin, because, as earlier stated, God now 'commands all men everywhere to repent', Acts 17. 30. Repentance is that change of thinking that leads to a change of direction in life. It is the first act of faith. And this is followed by a trust in God for salvation, and forgiveness. Today, our knowledge of God's plan of salvation is complete since Christ has come. But, in every age, repentance and trust in God were required for salvation.

When one has made this momentous choice and is on their way to heaven, life is still full of choices. Will you choose to give your body to God, and live a holy life, or live selfishly, Rom. 12. 1-2? If you marry, will you marry a believer who will be one with you in your spiritual desires? As we saturate our lives with God's word, our lives will become more and more holy and pleasing to God, Ps. 1. But Satan never gives up in his attempt to turn us from faith and obedience. Remember Adam and Eve's downfall. Choose to trust God and to obey Him!

Endnotes

¹ Source here: www.calvinistcorner.com/tulip.htm. See also: www.theopedia.com/Calvinism.





CREGAGH STREET ASSEMBLY, BELFAST, N. IRELAND

The origins of the Cregagh Street assembly are to be found in the burden of a number of believers, mostly associated with the Victoria Hall assembly, Belfast, to see the gospel brought to the Woodstock Road area of the city. A site was procured in Roslyn Street, and in 1918 a wooden hall was erected and the assembly commenced, with the full fellowship of other assemblies in the city.

Throughout the 1920's the Lord's blessing was experienced in abundant measure as the gospel was preached in and around Belfast. Many lives were changed as God's Spirit worked powerfully. The Roslyn Street assembly shared in the blessing. Particularly memorable was a series of gospel meetings conducted by Mr. Frank Knox – his first series after his commendation to full-time gospel preaching.

By 1927 the assembly had outgrown the facilities of the Roslyn Street hall. The Lord had greatly blessed the work, and in 1927 the decision was taken to re-locate to a vacated National School, in Cregagh Street, less than one mile from the original wooden building. The former school-house in Cregagh Street now became known as Roslyn Gospel Hall, and remained so, until a new building was erected in 1938. At this point the decision was taken to call it 'Cregagh Street Gospel Hall'. The period, 1927 to 1938, saw a steady growth in assembly numbers, with clear evidences of the Lord's blessing in the salvation of sinners, and also in the gathering together of believers who were attracted by the scriptural principles being taught and practised.

The decision to re-build on the same site was made following fruitful gospel meetings conducted by Mr. John Hutchinson, first in the Gospel Hall, and then in a tent erected in the Loopland area of the Cregagh Road. In the early summer of 1938, the old school-house was demolished and by autumn of the same year a much larger building was ready for use. To God's glory let it be recorded that it was opened free of all debt! The first public meetings were held on Lord's Day, 6th November 1938.

During the years of the Second World War the assembly maintained its outreach to the surrounding area, and many series of gospel meetings took place. Open-air meetings and

By **DESMOND HONAN**

'marches' around neighbouring streets to announce the indoor meetings were a regular feature. In addition, the entire district was systematically tracted. In those years, there was village work on both Wednesday and Saturday afternoons during the summer months; younger men cycled out to places like Ballygowan and Saintfield, a few miles outside Belfast, for tract distribution and open-air preaching.

During these years, two vacant shops were rented with a view to holding 'cottage meetings', as they were commonly called. In 1943, a small shop in Shamrock Street was used for children's and adult meetings. This type of outreach gave opportunity to young men to get involved, and thus fellowship in serving the Lord was promoted.

The following year, a larger shop at the corner of London Road and Donard Street was rented. It had been unoccupied for some time and was in poor condition, but a team of willing workers soon had it ready for meetings. Thus began what became known as 'The London Road Work'. It continued for about three years. During that period, two series of gospel meetings were held, one by Mr. Sam Thompson, Newtownards, and the other by Mr. Edward Fairfield who was home on furlough from Venezuela. Good interest was shown by the local residents and the Lord's blessing was experienced, with 'fruit' remaining to the present day.

A feature of the Cregagh Street assembly from its inception has been its interest in missionary outreach. Amongst those who have gone overseas, with the commendation of the assembly are David Long, William Walker, Jack King, Kenneth Elliott, Jim Walmsley and Leonard Mullan. These devoted servants of Christ, along with their wives, have carried the gospel to many distant parts of the world. In



addition to those mentioned above, two sisters, both qualified nurses, went to Central Africa – Miss Emily Wells and Miss Ina Esplin. In the 1930's a sisters' sewing class was formed. In its first years, it was largely a 'Bandage Class' where many hundreds of bandages were prepared for shipping to mission stations in Africa and India. As this work developed, many kinds of clothing were sewn, knitted or crocheted. In the 1950's the emphasis was on making hand-stitched patchwork quilts, which eventually reached mission hospitals where they were highly appreciated!

During the war, hundreds of air-raid shelters had been built in the streets. One such large structure had been built directly outside the gate of Cregagh Street Hall and was still intact in April 1947, when Mr. Harold Paisley came to conduct his first series of gospel meetings in Belfast. The elders obtained permission to have a full-size announcement of the gospel meetings painted on the gable wall of the shelter where it was clearly visible from the Cregagh Road. The meetings continued for about seven weeks, with excellent attendances and many confessions of faith in the Lord Jesus. It was a time of outstanding blessings.

In drawing this record to a conclusion, it should be added that in the 1950's two new assemblies were formed, drawing their initial membership mainly from the Cregagh Street company. These two assemblies are known as 'Castlereagh Gospel Hall' and 'Glenburn Gospel Hall'. These advances were made with the wholehearted fellowship of the 'parent' assembly. All praise and glory go to Him who is 'the Head of the Church'. The Cregagh Street assembly is now much depleted in numbers, but in spite of this, a vigorous outreach in the gospel is maintained, both in the hall and in the open-air. Interest in overseas work remains a marked feature of the assembly's life.

It was a source of much joy when Paul McCauley expressed to the elders his exercise to devote himself to the preaching of the gospel and to the teaching of the word, in a full-time capacity. The elders and the entire assembly heartily endorse Paul's step of faith. His commendation to 'the grace of God for the work to which the Lord has called him' was on 1st April, 2009.



REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK



ENGLAND

Kirkby-in-Ashfield

Since January of this year, the assembly in Kirkby-in-Ashfield has been involved in a town centre outreach in the Idlewells Shopping Centre in Sutton-in-Ashfield, a neighbouring town. Permission was given to set up a table in the Centre from which they could give out free gospel literature. The table is in a great position, next to the coffee shop, and sees regular footfall.

The believers have been very encouraged by the overall response with many useful contacts made. There have been a number of people who have been along to the Gospel Hall since – some on an occasional basis and some regularly. Apart from conversations with those needing the gospel, a number of believers have also been spoken to, and a few have taken the opportunity to attend Bible teaching at the Hall.

Please pray that permission might continue to be granted for this outreach.



At the end of April and with the help of Jonathan Black of London, the assembly was given the opportunity to set up a Bible Exhibition in one of the schools in the town of Kirkby. They were given sole use of a sports hall, which offered



ample space and a range of facilities. During the course of four days, parents, governors, and every pupil in the school came through the exhibition – over 500 people. Two other schools also sent pupils. Although the response from parents was minimal, there was very positive feedback from the pupils and teachers, ranging from the Foundation classes through to Year 6. The assembly is are hoping to follow up the head teacher's invitation to visit the school for other activities, personnel permitting!

Please pray for continuing access to this and other schools to take the message of the Bible to a rising generation.

Liverpool

The football match outreach work which Crete Gospel Hall, Liverpool, runs when Liverpool Football Club (LFC) play at home, has been very encouraging during this winter season. Thousands of leaflets are handed out on a match day and many conversations take place over a cup of tea or coffee with fans. Some come back each week which makes it easier to develop contacts. The tracts which have been written by local believers on a LFC theme attract a lot of attention. We are regularly asked for supplies by believers so that they can hand them out when they come across LFC fans. This year the tract had the title, 'Could this be the year?' This was warmly welcomed by the fans, and many hoped that this would be the case. However, they discovered that fulfilled dreams cannot be certain, despite their faith in the team. We trust that they will discover that faith in Christ has a guaranteed result! The offer of a free bible, by texting the word 'BIBLE', which is on the back of each leaflet, has resulted in over twenty Bibles being sent out this year so far.

Hereford

A team of believers, Andy Little, 'JP', Geoff Cox, Trevor Howard and Clive Williams attended the Hereford Fair

to preach the gospel and although the weather was very unsettled, this didn't hinder any of the activities over the three days.

On arrival, a man called Reg was waiting for them at the preaching position. On speaking with him, it was discovered he has been coming there to listen for over twenty years! Sadly, Reg seems no nearer to salvation now than he was when he first came. His health is deteriorating so he was urged to trust the Saviour.

At last year's Fair, Andy had a very interesting conversation with Luis, who was definitely searching. This year Luis returned to find Andy, and to tell him that since last year he has become a Christian and was baptized last Sunday; he even showed some photos of his baptism. Luis kept speaking about the Lord, and His grace to him.

Dan, a young man, came up and asked Geoff a question about the Bible's teaching on homosexuality. It was not a threatening question, but came from a real interest. Geoff said that the Bible standard was one man, one woman, and that everything outside that was wrong. They had a lovely, gentle, and friendly conversation. He asked how God forgives, and Geoff shared the gospel; he then said that forgiveness was one thing, but could God change lives. They looked at 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 9-11, and how God had changed many; he listened well as Geoff told him the problem was our sinful hearts which only God could forgive. At the end, he took an *Ultimate Questions* booklet.

A group of four people listened to Clive for a while. Three of them walked off, but the fourth, Terry, stayed, and Geoff spoke with him. He said that there was no proof that Jesus existed, which Geoff dealt with. Then, he asked why Jesus didn't protect April Jones, the young girl who was murdered recently in Wales. Geoff tried to deal with this sympathetically, saying that we cannot always understand these things but that God allows such things and always brings good out of them. Geoff reminded him that God had to watch His own Son die on the cross. Then, he moved on to the fact that if God were to stop all wrong he would have to turn all of us into robots. Geoff shared the gospel and, at that point, one of the three, an older man, came back and



listened. Eventually, Terry accepted a couple of leaflets.

Adam listened to the preaching, and Andy then spoke to him. He said that he had been a bad lad growing up, but had changed, and was now reading his Bible and prayed. Adam is now a dad and hopes that his son will have respect for God. Andy was able to share the gospel, and speak about knowing the one we pray to, and enjoying a relationship with Him rather than just asking Him for His help when we are in trouble. He seemed to relate to this, and said that he would like to know God. Andy encouraged him to keep reading his Bible, and gave him a booklet which he was pleased to receive. Cain was a young lad on his bike who listened to Clive. He said that he 'believed in Jesus' and when JP asked him what that meant, he was very vague. After a conversation about Hebrews chapter 2 verse 3, Cain accepted a John's Gospel.

There were many conversations with groups of young people, some spoke with the team several times as they passed by. Several of these young people confessed that they had never heard this message of the gospel before, and, thankfully, many of these young people took literature away promising to read it.

At the Hereford town centre open-air meeting, Sam stopped, and listened for quite a time. Trevor spoke to him afterwards, and a long conversation followed. Sam proved to be very interested in the message of the Bible, and was pleased to have his many questions answered. He was pleased to receive literature at the end of the conversation. During the two hours of witnessing, it was encouraging to see the number of passing showmen, from the near-by fair, who were prepared to come up and speak with Clive, whom they recognized from other fairs.

Helen listened for some time, and, when engaged in conversation, she said that she 'believed all these things'. Talking to her, it was obvious that she didn't believe such things and is a spiritualist. She kept referring to the angels and karma. Hard going, but opportunity was given to share the gospel!

Cheshunt

The assembly at Mill Lane, Cheshunt held their annual Holiday Bible Club during the February half-term and, again, it proved to be a very happy and profitable time with the children. The theme this year was some of 'God's Wonderful

Sevens': Creation, Jericho, Naaman, seven loaves, and the seventh hour. The children soon got into the swing of the talks, and learned and contributed well. As always, the learning of the memory verses, and completing the worksheets, was excellent. Since the Holiday Bible Club, the assembly has seen new children coming to Sunday school, although, sadly, some of the others have not been as regular as they were.

Ely

During March, David Tinkler spent a week with the believers at Ely, Cambridgeshire, and visited most of the Infant/Junior schools in the city and surrounding villages. It is always a busy but very enjoyable week, with great fellowship and good opportunities to speak of the Lord.



Gardenstown

The assembly at Gardenstown has been encouraged with the profession of faith of a young man, who had been attending the gospel meeting for over a year. Please pray that his conversion will cause others in this village, his friends and family, some of who have been coming to the gospel meetings, to consider their own need of the Saviour.



Carmarthen

The assembly in Carmarthen ran a Holiday Bible Club during the February half-term. A good number of children came along. The assembly has not had a Sunday School for many years, but one has now been started. Some of those children who attended the Bible Club come along, and the assembly is thrilled to see a weekly children's work recommence. Some children have even shown an interest in going to Camp this summer. A youth evening has been running for a year or so now, once a fortnight on a Friday. Up to thirty attend this youth night. The young men in fellowship have also recently agreed to use the other Friday evenings in the month to tract towns and villages around Carmarthen. On one of these Fridays recently, every house in the town of Whitland was leafleted with a gospel tract and an invitation to the gospel

meeting in Carmarthen. With so many youngsters attending, the assembly is drawing up plans to renovate the hall. It is thrilling to go to Saturday night meetings and conferences in the area and find large numbers of teenagers attending, sometimes more youngsters under thirty years of age than 'oldsters' over thirty! It has been a real encouragement, too, to hear young men, recently-baptized, taking part in morning-meeting worship, and beginning to preach the gospel with depth and understanding. The Lord has blessed, with much encouragement in the assemblies in this part of West Wales. Please pray that nothing comes in to hinder this work. There are several hard-working shepherds and gifted Bible teachers in the assemblies in this area who are teaching and shepherding the youngsters in their assemblies and the results are plain to see.

Tenby

In relation to the work in Tenby, Ian and Rebecca Rees write: 'Various key moments in our witness at the Pulpit in Tenby have been passing. This Easter holiday we held our first Holiday Bible Club. Known as the FROG CLUB, (Fully Rely On God) we were able to use the basement of Deer Park Baptist Church for four mornings leading up to Good Friday. Although we did not have huge numbers attending, despite having distributed 500 leaflets to the Primary Schools in Tenby, we did have about 10 children there every day, and we have been told that is a good response from Tenby families! Ian goes into Tenby Junior School to take school assemblies twice a month, as well as doing Welsh reading with the children, and he is starting a weekly Bible Club in this school during Thursday lunchtimes. It may be that the FROG club, and this weekly Bible Club, will result in the start of a weekly children's meeting in Tenby. The facilities at the Baptist Church were second to none, and they have very kindly offered us their basement for youth work whenever we need it, 'no strings attached'. The building is a beautiful grade 2 listed building in the centre of Tenby, and seats several hundred people. There are about twenty-three left in membership, and they are more than willing for us to use their facilities as they have not used them for some time now. We are grateful to them, and to the Lord, for their kindness. Several of them come to "The Pulpit" every Sunday evening'.

'The need for our own premises is becoming more evident as we extend



the work in Tenby. We were unable to use the community centre for the FROG club, as it is used for judo, karate, keep fit, dog training, etc, during the day. There is an old chapel up for sale in Tenby, fully-renovated with superb kitchen, toilets, etc, but it is very pricey. The biggest problem in Tenby is that it is a very small, historic town, and planning permission and land to build a hall would be very difficult to get. Some have suggested buying an old shop and doing it up, but that would need change of use, which is not always easy to get either. We know the Lord is in these things, and if we get the right guidance from Him everything will fall into place. We have booked the community centre for evening meetings on Thursdays starting in the first week of June this year. We have also asked to use the centre from 5.00 pm on the first Sunday of the month to arrange a tea followed by the meeting at 6.30pm. We were thrilled at the last tea when a friend of one of our regulars attended for the first time, remained for the meeting, and asked me several questions afterwards. His lady friend, who invited him, thought it a wonderful answer to prayer that he came to tea, let alone stay to the meeting. Deer Park Baptist church has again offered us their basement and the contents of two huge walk-in cupboards full of equipment for a mother and toddlers group and a youth evening. Rebecca would love to start a mother and toddler group with the help of Alwina, a lovely Christian mum. Alwina and her husband, Wiyu, recently left membership of the Baptist church in Tenby, and are seeking fellowship with the Blue Street assembly, Carmarthen, with a view to helping us start an assembly in Tenby, DV. They are a big encouragement to us. We have also thought about starting a coffee morning in Tenby, as well as a regular book-stand. It would be good for us to have premises of our own from which to run these things. Having said that, not having our own premises, has advantages too. We have no heavy overheads, and people feel less threatened coming in to a community centre for meetings than they would if we had our own hall. The Lord knows, but do please pray with us that we might know how to proceed wisely'.

Aberystwyth

Ian also continues bi-weekly visits to Aberystwyth on Monday evenings during term times. They have been going through Ezra/Nehemiah/Haggai/Zechariah with a small group of students there.



Mississippi

Jabe Nicholson writes, 'We have just returned from Day 2 involved in tornado relief in Louisville, MS, thirty miles southeast of our home. In the area where we were working both days (each day with a team of college students who attend our Bible study) the devastation was almost complete. The EF4 tornado was traveling in excess of 170 miles per hour as it swept through the neighbourhood'.

'The house where we worked yesterday was completely removed from its concrete base, with the exception of a few bricks at the bottom of the fireplace. We spent the day cutting up trees, removing branches, sorting through household items (almost all of it ruined), and gathering out items like metal to be salvaged. When we left, each family received a Bible with the names of the workers in the front. We also left them our rakes, shovels, etc'.

'Many of the people are quite traumatized, as you can imagine. I talked with a teacher I knew from one of the schools I visit with supplies. Her aunt worked in a daycare centre in Louisville. All the children had been picked up but one. When the storm hit, she protected the child with her body. She was killed but the child's life was saved. A graphic picture of Another who saved others, though He did not save Himself'.

'We were able to contact the main distribution centre there on the first day, and get their list of needed items. I took the team to Walmart and filled the truck with newborn diapers/nappies, bread, peanut butter, bleach, laundry powder, children's socks and underwear, and many other items. The centre was very grateful and surprised when they asked who was donating it. "It's from the Lord", I said. "You're the first person so far that just gave the Lord the honour", the supervisor replied. But I know there are many of God's



dear people here, giving of their time, energy, and material help who would want the Lord to have the glory, too'.

'No atheist organizations in sight for some reason. Mostly, it is the people of God who are cleaning up, feeding the workers and the homeless, and caring for the ones who have lost so much. Interestingly, the owners of the place where we worked today told us they were believers, but that this experience, especially the love of the saints in helping them, had moved them to "recommit their lives to the Lord". In the coming weeks, I hope to make regular contact with the distribution centres in each town hit by the worst of the storms. That way I can just bring the things they need at that time. Every day is a different shopping list. Generally, this also gives me the privilege of leaving "Hope in the Storms of Life" CDs to be distributed to the folks in need'.



Xalapa

Timothy and Jenna Stevenson write, 'We had five weeks of gospel meetings at the beginning of the year in Xalapa city centre. We were encouraged to see good interest, as we counted more than thirty people attending the hall for the first time. God drew near and blessed His word, not only to sinners, but to others obtaining assurance of salvation. We recently baptized a twenty-three-year-old man, in a lagoon outside the city. He trusted Christ on the last day of 2013 during our visit to the conference in Ciudad del Carmen, where David and Penelope Alves serve the Lord. We continue with weekly open-air meetings in three different locations in Xalapa, and the large town of Coatepec. We enjoy our weekly visits to an Alcoholics Anonymous centre each Tuesday, and each Friday in Coatepec when many listen attentively to the gospel. Pray for Jonathan, a recovering alcoholic, who asked me this week how he could be saved. We also continue, when possible, to visit the towns of San Juan and Actopan. Yesterday, we visited the government offices in Xalapa to ask permission to preach in Parque Juarez, in the city centre. A recent ban prohibits any kind of religious activities, but we may obtain special permission. Pray that the Lord's will may be done, as we know that even the king's heart is in His hand'.





A WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY**
Newton Abbot, England

Pará-klhsij (pará-klesis)
a calling to one's aid, summons
Pará-klhtoj-on, (pará-kletos, -on),
advocate, pleader, intercessor
Par-akoh, h,j,h (pa-akoe, es,e)
a hearing amiss, disobedience

One of the enduring features of English common law is that it is based on the adversarial system of justice. This gives rise to the practice of advocacy, where parties are represented by advocates who argue out their client's respective cases in the presence of an impartial adjudicator. It is in sharp contrast to an inquisitorial system of justice, where the case at issue is investigated by either a presiding judge, or more than one judge. This notion of a representative, or someone who pleads on behalf of another, is relevant to the meaning of the rare Greek noun *parákleto*s, which is used in a judicial sense in both the Old Testament and Rabbinic literature.¹ It is a derivative of the Greek verb *parakaleo*, which was used in a less judicial sense to describe acts of comfort or encouragement, e.g., 2 Cor. 1. 6; Eph. 6. 22.

In the Septuagint (LXX) the noun *parákleto*s is rarely used, although it is found more frequently in the book of Job than anywhere else. In Job chapter 16 verse 2, Job criticizes his so-called comforters, who, in the trial of his faith, are found to be incompetent advocates. They pretend to be friends of the accused, but instead of speaking well of Job's character and thereby enlisting the sympathy of God as judge, they reveal their own short-comings, and their self-serving interests. In fact, the whole drama of the story is demonstrated through a judicial process that proves that Job was 'blameless and upright', Job 1. 1 NKJV, or ultimately declared *sadaq* ('righteous').² BARCLAY points to the fact that *parákleto*s became transliterated into later Jewish language, and that in the Targum translation of Job chapter 33 verse 23, Elihu tells Job that in order to redeem man from going down into the pit, a special angelic agency, a mediator, an interpreter, a *parákleto*s is necessary.³ A parallel to this can be seen in Zechariah chapter 3 verse 1 *et seq* where the angel of the Lord intercedes for the high priest Joshua. As the word was mainly associated with a legal context, especially in day-to-day matters, it was used to describe a legal assistant, or advocate in a court of justice. For example, in the writings of the famous ancient Greek logographer and lawyer Demosthenes (circa 4th century BC), reference is made to a person who comes to the aid of another in a judicial setting as a *parákleto*s.⁴ Similarly, the church historian Eusebius refers to a man named Epagathos who acts as the *parákleto*s for persecuted

brethren before the local governor.⁵ What is interesting to note about the use of *parákleto*s by these writers is that there is no hint that the representative gave any form of comfort to the defendant, but that they merely helped to plead the cause of the accused. But this representation was not considered to be of a professional nature where a different Greek word for legal representative, *syndikos*, would have been used. It may well be that the later Latin translation of the Greek word *parákleto*s by *advocatus* has somewhat coloured our understanding of the term advocate, as implying a professional calling or hiring a lawyer, rather than identifying someone who simply comes to the help or aid of another. And this latter meaning is certainly what we find not only in religious rabbinic texts, but also in Mandaeen writings of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.⁶

When we turn to the New Testament, *parákleto*s is exclusively restricted to the writings of John, but the concept of a supporter, or friend of the accused, is also present in Paul's writings, e.g., Rom. 8. 26-34. DEISSMANN mentions the fact that the work of the advocate in the Hellenistic world in which Paul lived was so common that many of the speaking examples were made into reports of actual cases, cp. today's All English Law Reports.⁷ One difficulty that our English translators have had to cope with is the multifarious nature of the word *parákleto*s, which does

not have a direct English equivalent. Even though John uses it on only five occasions, selecting the appropriate English word in each context continues to be a challenge for translators.⁸ The table below provides a suggested guide to John's use of the word *parákleto*s in context.

It is a great comfort to know that not only do we have a *parákleto*s on earth supporting us, but also one in heaven interceding for us. Whom then shall we fear, Rom. 8. 31. Or, in the words of JOHN NEWTON, 'Against me earth and hell combine, but on my side is power divine'.¹⁰

For further reading/study
Introductory

CARSON, D. A., *The Gospel According to John*, pp. 498-509.

Advanced

KITTEL, G., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Abridged in One Volume) (*parákleto*s – pp. 782-784)

Endnotes

- 1 J. BEHM (TDNT) states that the rabbis have *parákleto*s as a loan word and use it for advocate before God.
- 2 For a more in-depth study of *sadaq* and its cognates see 'Word for Today' in *Precious Seed International*, 2010, Vol. 65. 3.
- 3 *New Testament Words*, pg. 219.
- 4 *Desmosthenes*, 19, 1.
- 5 *Ecclesiastical History* 5. 1. 10.
- 6 The Mandaeans were a dualistic religious group famous for their Gnostic view of Christianity.
- 7 DEISSMANN, A., *Light from the Ancient East*, pg. 336.
- 8 Unsurprisingly, the Amplified New Testament gives the complete semantic range!
- 9 *The Gospel According to John*, pg. 499.
- 10 *Hymn XLVI – Olney Hymns*.

TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION (S)	CONTEXT
John 14. 16	(another) Comforter (RV) (another) Counsellor (NIV) (another) Encourager (NRSV) (another) Advocate/Helper (NKJV)	Here our Lord makes provision for His disciples after His own ministry as a <i>parákleto</i> s on earth has ended. The gift of the Holy Spirit (another <i>parákleto</i> s) is linked directly to a formal request by Christ. In verse 26, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and is sent by Christ in chapter 16 verse 7. Since the context is about the exodus of Christ, then the sense of loss would have been poignantly felt by the disciples. The use of such words as Comforter (someone who strengthened someone else), and Helper seem therefore apposite.
John 16. 7	(your) Advocate (NEB) He who is to befriend you (KNOX) (the) Counsellor (NIV) (the) Helper (ESV)	This is probably the only context within John's gospel that requires <i>parákleto</i> s to be translated by the word Advocate. As CARSON states, 'In John's usage, the legal overtones are sharpest in 16.7-11, but there the Paraclete serves rather more as a prosecuting attorney than as counsel for the defence . . . and even so, the Paraclete's ministry extends beyond the legal sphere'. ⁹
John 15. 26	(the) one coming to stand by you (PHILLIPS) (the) Counsellor (NIV) (the) Advocate (NRSV) (the) Helper (NKJV)	Although the context here is similar to that in chapter 14 verse 26, the thrust of the ministry of the <i>parákleto</i> s (Holy Spirit) is now focused on empowering the disciples in their witness for and to Christ. Thus, the idea of someone coming to stand by them, to help them in their witness, seems to be appropriate.
1 John 2. 1	(an) advocate (KJV) (we have) a Counsel for defence (BERKELEY) (we have) one to plead our cause (NEB)	Here John reveals part of the current ministry of the <i>parákleto</i> s (Christ Himself) exercised for us in heaven. Perhaps Counsel for the defence appositely sums up our Lord's work as He pleads our cause with the Father and those who accuse us.
John 14. 26	(the) Comforter (KJV) (the) Counsellor (NIV) (the) Advocate (NRSV) (the) Helper (ESV)	Here the context is slightly different in that the ministry of the <i>parákleto</i> s (the Holy Spirit) is extended to fill out the teaching of Christ, words such as Counsellor or Helper seem therefore apt.

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QUESTION

Is the way we gather the most important issue in our Christian life?

ANSWER

This is not an easy question to answer for it is almost certain that whatever response is given I will be in a 'no win' situation. If I answer, 'Yes', there will be many who will believe that I have overlooked the practical exhortations contained throughout the scriptures as to how we should live day by day. If I answer, 'No', there will be those who will take issue, believing that I have failed to give sufficient priority to the clear teaching in the Epistles as to how God's people should meet together.

The children of Israel were never left to their own opinions as to where they kept the Passover, 'But at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the pass-over at even' Deut. 16. 6. In addition, throughout their meandering in the wilderness, there was only one gathering centre ordained by God where He would meet with His people, and that was the tabernacle. Once the nation was settled in the land the same principle applied, although for obvious reasons the tabernacle had been replaced by the temple.

As a consequence of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus at Calvary, the ritualism and ceremonial apparatus of the Old Testament has been superseded by a completely new order of things. God's pattern of gathering for His people in this age is detailed for us in the Epistles, particularly those written by the apostle Paul, and we have no more right to decide how and where we meet than Israel did in the Old Testament.

When people were saved in the years that immediately followed the Day of Pentecost, they left the heathen temple or the Jewish synagogue, and met together in churches. These churches were founded on the teaching of the apostles, and, in any one locality, all the believers would be united in their doctrines and practices. Sadly, error began to infiltrate, and eventually Christians fragmented into different groups. No longer were all of one accord in one place, but in each place there would be several

groups, so that today we are divided into numerous denominations and fellowships.

This lack of unity is completely contrary to what God desires; it has robbed believers of much blessing, and it must be very confusing to the world. We ought to have a conviction about where and how we gather, and, whilst we will never find a perfect church, it is our responsibility to examine the scriptures, and, wherever possible, meet with those who comply with the principles enshrined within the word of God. The importance of these matters should not be underestimated, and one of the principal objectives of this magazine is to help promote an adherence to scriptural doctrines concerning church practice.

However, we need to guard against elevating 'church' doctrine above other vital aspects of our Christian behaviour and beliefs. In reading Revelation chapter 2 verses 1-7, it would seem that the church at Ephesus complied very vigorously with matters of sound doctrine but that was not sufficient. The words communicated to them by the Lord are very solemn, 'Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love', Rev. 2. 4.

To be doctrinally sound but deficient in love for Christ, so that He no longer holds the primary place of affection in our lives, is wrong. Our observance of assembly truth should be the product of love for the Lord, and we ought not to relegate that to a lesser level of importance. Neither should we consider that faithfulness to church principles is more essential than love for one another, or that it is of greater significance than our belief in the deity of Christ, or of salvation by grace through faith, or of the doctrine of God.

Where we gather and how we function as churches are important, vitally important, but are these the most important aspects of our Christian lives? Some may believe they are, but based on the foregoing paragraph I do not think so.

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FACTS AND FIGURES

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- It is distributed, without charge, to over 100 countries.
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- About 50% of copies go overseas and half of these to 'third world' countries.
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- Including postage, each magazine costs around £1.00 sterling.
- Gifts to help in the work may be sent in any major currency to any of the addresses shown opposite or through the website.

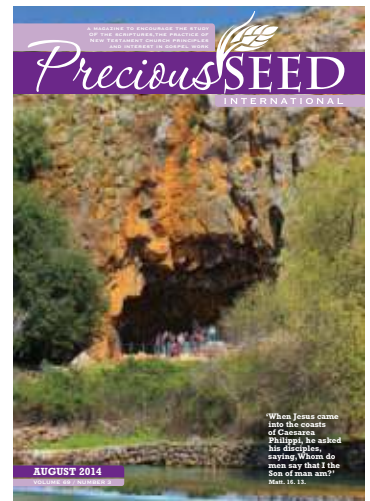
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Precious Seed International

Front Cover Illustration

Our cover picture shows the beautiful Baniyas National Park, close to the ruins of the ancient city of Caesarea Philippi located at the foot of Mount Hermon, which is part of the Golan Heights. Some archaeologists identify this site with the Old Testament location Baal-gad that formed the northern limit of Joshua's conquest of Canaan, Josh. 13. 5. According to Numbers chapter 34 verses 7-9, the decreed northern limit was beyond Baal-gad, so Israel in effect fell short of a complete conquest. Caesarea Philippi lay adjacent to a spring of water that flowed from the Jordan River known as Baniyas, or, as it was previously called Panias, in honour of the Greek god Pan. In Romans times, Herod the Great built a white marble shrine in honour of his patron the Emperor Augustus Caesar at Baniyas. Philip the Tetrarch later further honoured Augustus by renaming the place Caesarea, and then added the additional description 'Philippi' or 'of Philip' to distinguish the site from the maritime port of Caesarea mentioned in Acts chapter 8 verse 40. This was the place where our Lord asked His disciples the searching question, 'Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?', Matt. 16. 13. In Mark's parallel account of this incident, the question is posed less periphrastically in that our Lord identifies Himself as the true Son of Man, Mark 8. 27, thus making clear to His disciples that He was the heavenly Messiah who would one day fulfil the prophecy of Daniel chapter 7 verses 13-14. Peter's response, however, takes us beyond the simple honorific titles conferred by men on other men as he declares Jesus not only to be the Messiah, but the Son of the living God. Of all the divine titles used about or by our Lord, the title 'Son of God' fully explains His interaction, and unique relationship with God. His claim to deity is the very bedrock upon which the whole foundation and fabric of Christianity is built. We have no hesitation therefore in fully endorsing Peter's confession that Jesus is the Son of the living God!



Photograph by John Chesney

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