

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

Precious SEED

INTERNATIONAL



MAY 2016

VOLUME 71 / NUMBER 2

**'And they that
conducted Paul
brought him
unto Athens',
Acts 17. 15**

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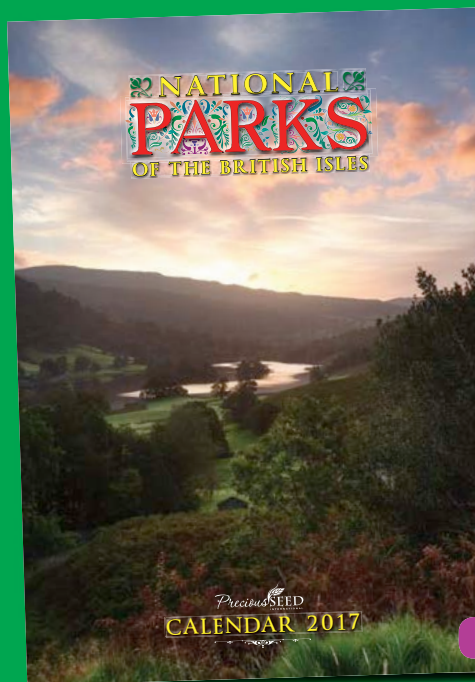
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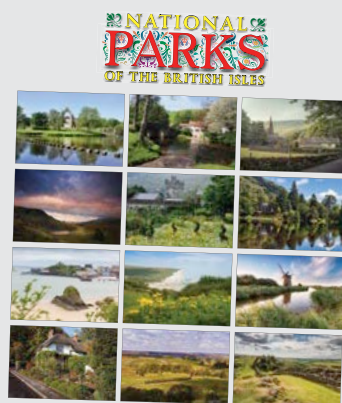


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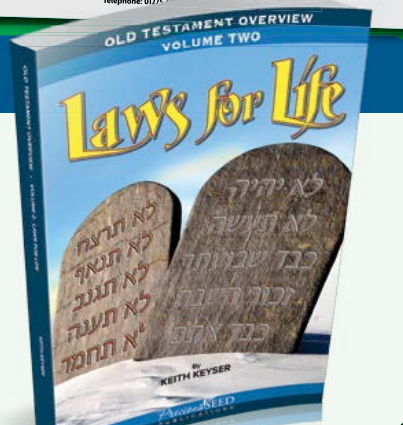
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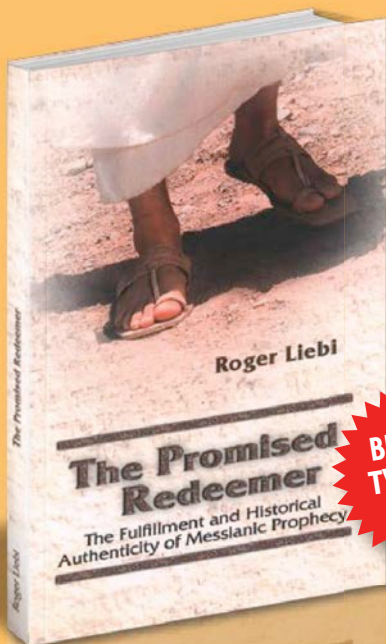
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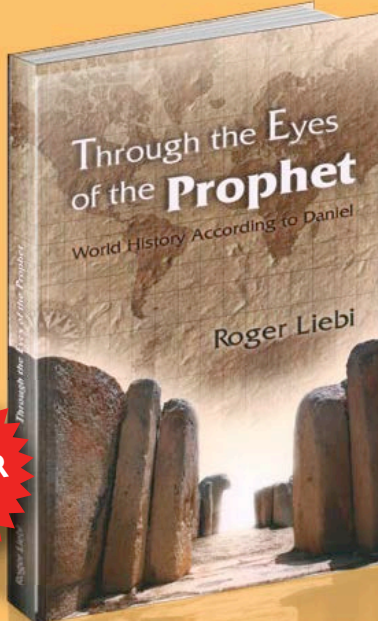


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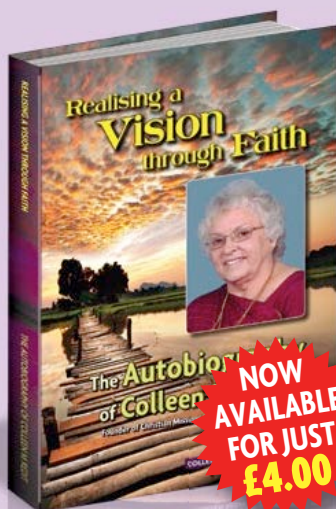


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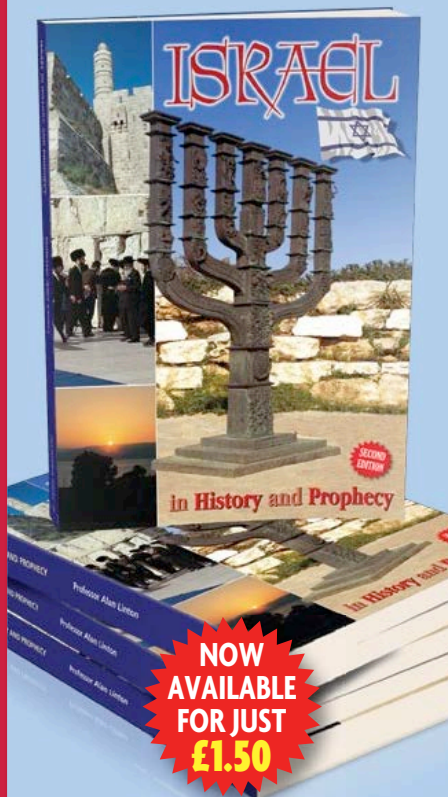


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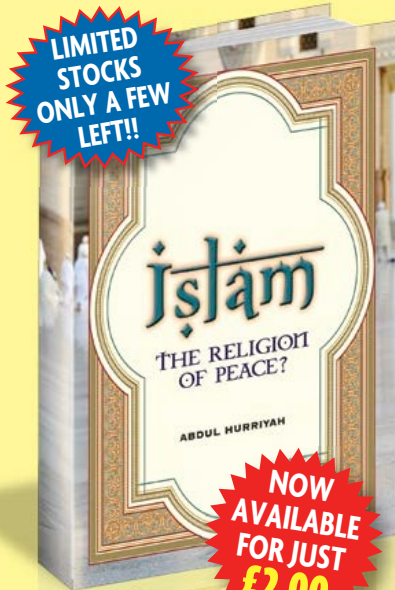
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Editorial

'Who is Apollos?' 1 Cor. 3. 6.

It was not that Paul was unaware of who Apollos was and what his contribution to the work at Corinth had been; the question was asked for a far greater reason than that. Perhaps the question is just as important in 2016 as it was then, although we might need to replace the name with one that is current.

Apollos was an Alexandrian described as being 'mighty in the scriptures'.¹ He was also an eloquent man, possibly an orator, in the way that Paul was not.² His gift had been recognized by others, as Luke tells us he was commended by the brethren to the assembly at Achaia.³ Equally, Luke tells us that his ministry there was of blessing.

In verse 6, Paul indicates the part that he had played in the work at Corinth. He had planted, that is, he had been used of God in the establishment of the church through the preaching of the gospel and the early teaching of the saints. Apollos 'watered' signifying that he had brought that which should have facilitated growth; he reinforced the message already given.

However, above all the effort of the Lord's servants, Paul reminds his readers that 'God gave the increase'. Neither servant could accomplish anything by himself; he relied wholly upon God. What Paul stressed was the fact that the vessel was unimportant. The nature of the service does not elevate the servant. There are no grounds for rivalry for neither form of service is greater than the other; both are wholly reliant upon God for the blessing.

It is worth noting that in the Greek the phrase 'but God that giveth the increase' has the word 'God' at the end of the sentence to give emphasis. Only the ministry of God can effect anything in the process of planting and watering!

How important to avoid the error of following men! However great the speaker, they are only men at best. Some might have followed Apollos because of his ability as an orator and rejected Paul for his lack of 'platform presence'. Whilst we may all know of individuals whose ministry has had an impact upon our own spiritual life, we should never place individuals upon pedestals. That position and status belongs to God alone!

In this magazine there is an interesting mix of articles. We are grateful to brethren for their expository material. Equally, we have others to thank for ministry which is both practical and timely. There are articles dealing with lessons that can be learned from the lives of individual characters. There is also material of a doctrinal nature, reminding us of truth which is essential in understanding the work of the Lord. As always, it is our prayerful desire that there might be ample food for all the people of God.

Endnotes

- 1 Acts 18. 24
- 2 2 Cor. 10. 10.
- 3 Acts 18. 27.



The purpose of His coming

What glorious announcements surrounded the coming into the world of the Saviour! To Mary, Gabriel indicated that His name would be called Jesus, Luke 1. 31, meaning Jehovah the Saviour, as did the angel to Joseph, with the added information that 'he shall save his people from their sins', Matt. 1. 21. To amazed shepherds, as the glory of the Lord shone round about them, there was announced by the angel of the Lord who came upon them the tidings of great joy, as in the city of David a Saviour, Christ the Lord, had been born, Luke 2. 9-11. Yet no angelic announcements, great as they were, could encompass the depth of truth unfolded by the Saviour Himself as He told of the purpose of His coming.

Here is divine initiative at work in the matter of man's blessing, 'I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me', John 8. 42. Later, after His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus would send His own, just as He had been sent by the Father, and on the same mission, 20. 21. He came to the lost. 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' is what He said to Zacchaeus, who thought, no doubt, that on the day he met the Saviour that he was the one who was doing all the seeking, Luke 19. 1-10. He came to the spiritually dead. 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' is the wonderful statement He made regarding His sheep, for whom He would give His life, John 10. 10. He came to the blind. At the end of the section of John's Gospel in which His public ministry was recorded and in which it is emphasized that He was the light of the world, He said, 'I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness', 12. 46.



The GOSPEL preached the LORD JESUS (2)

What grace that He should come to the lost, the dead, and the blind. The helpless and hopeless, unable by any means to save themselves, found that they were the objects of divine mercy for whom God had purposes of blessing.

His identity

Our Lord was repeatedly concerned to speak of who He is eternally. Indeed, to 'believe on His name', 1. 12, is, among other things, to embrace all that is revealed of Him and by Him. We cannot be saved and deny who He is revealed to be.

'What think ye of Christ is the test, To try both your state and your scheme:

You cannot be right in the rest Unless you think rightly of Him',
[JOHN NEWTON]

His equality with the Father is an essential part of His teaching, just as it should be in the presentation of the gospel in our day. More than just a prophet, and greater than angels, the eternal Son came into the world to save sinners. He came forth from the Father, 16. 28. The significance of this teaching was not lost on the Jews. In that He said that God was His Father they recognized that He was making Himself equal with God, 5. 18. This He never denied and, indeed, He constantly affirmed it. Surrounded by enemies in John chapter 8 our Saviour, in words beautifully simple and devastatingly profound, declares, 'Before Abraham was, I am', v. 58. Here is the eternal One, co-eternal with the Father and co-equal with Him, though now in time, God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3. 16. 'I am' is the name of God revealed to Moses at the bush, the name of

the ever existing One, belonging to One on earth and speaking to those whose only answer to this great statement of truth was to pick up stones to stone Him. It is no wonder that in the very next chapter they cast out the blind man whose sight was restored at Siloam's pool, who gave testimony to the healing power of the Christ and who, afterwards, gladly acknowledged his belief on the Son of God, John 9. 35-38. 'If ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins', 8. 24.

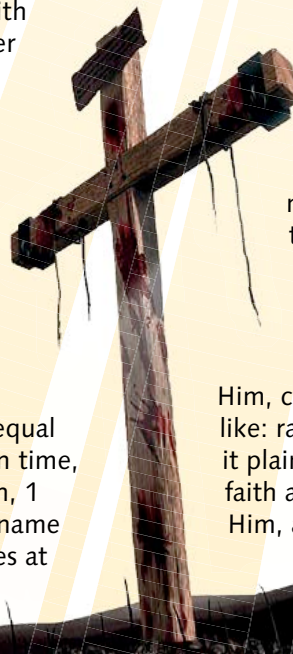
When Paul went to Corinth he 'determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified', 1 Cor. 2. 2. The preaching of the identity of the Saviour is a vital element of the whole message. In the face of the wholesale denial of His person by cults, false religions and even professing Christians, we do well to maintain the glory of His deity in the public proclamation of the gospel.

The necessity of faith in Him

Our Saviour made it plain that the possession of eternal life is something enjoyed only by those who believe on Him. He is the great object of faith now that He has been revealed.

Believing on Him is believing on God, for 'He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me', John 12. 44.

Here is such an important matter that it is surprising that it is often inappropriately stated in our day. He says nothing of opening one's heart to Him, giving one's life to Him, coming through for Him, confessing sins to Him or the like: rather, He is concerned to make it plain that He is to be the object of faith and when a person believes on Him, and through that means alone, that person is brought into divine blessing.¹



ched by



Believing in Christ is more than mere mental or emotional acceptance of all that is revealed. It involves simple, unconditional, childlike reliance upon Him. And it is through faith that all divine blessing flows to the sinner.

The inevitability of the cross

Our Saviour made it plain to His own that His path here led inexorably to Jerusalem. 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again', Matt. 20. 18-19. These sentiments are repeated in Mark chapter 10 and Luke chapter 18. With great anguish of soul He anticipates all that Calvary would mean. 'Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name', John 12. 27-28. There could be no going back. After all, in John chapter 6 He had made it plain that 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world', 6. 51. In addition, He makes it plain that except they ate 'the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood', they would have no life in them, 6. 53. His sacrificial work in the giving of Himself at the cross is, therefore, fundamental to the enjoyment of salvation. Accordingly, blessing from

the accomplishment of His mission depended, and depends, on both His person and work.

It is still the same. Many admire His life but despise the truth of His sacrificial death. Paul, at Corinth, did not preach Jesus Christ even though He was crucified; His cross was integral to the message Paul preached. We simply cannot err, either in relation to the person or work of Christ. This goes to the very heart of the gospel. If Christ is less than God we have no Saviour. If he did not die for sinners we have no salvation.

The glory of His resurrection and ascension

In John chapter 6, the chapter where we read of His giving His flesh for the life of the world, He also speaks of His ascension and, implicit in this, His resurrection: 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' 6. 62. This causes us to remember that salvation is now found in a risen man exalted at the right hand of God and that Christ Himself spoke of it.

All of this was new truth for the Jews who heard Him. Their expectation was Messiah reigning in Zion, the Redeemer of their nation and restorer of the kingdom to Israel. However, while asserting His identity as the Christ, He makes it plain that He must first be rejected and slain, and rise again and ascend to where He was before. For many this was repugnant, but He said, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out', 6. 37. 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name',

1. 12. What glorious soul-saving, life-changing power there was, and is, in Him. May each reader check again that his or her faith is truly in Him.

Thou hast no tongue, O Christ,
as once of old,
To tell the story of Thy love Divine,
The story still as strange,
as sweet, as true;
But there's no tongue to tell
it out *but mine*.

Thou hast no hands, O Christ,
as once of old,
To feed the multitudes
with bread Divine;
Thou hast the Living Bread,
enough for all;
But there's no hand to give it
out *but mine*.

Thou hast no feet, O Christ,
as once of old,
To go where Thy lost sheep
in desert pine;
Thy love is still as deep,
as strong, as kind;
But now Thou hast no feet
to go *but mine*.

And shall I use these ransomed
powers of mine
For things that only minister to me?
Lord! Take my tongue,
my hands, my feet, *my all*;
And let them live, and give
and go *for Thee!*

[Anonymous].

Endnotes

- 1 For example: 'He that believeth on me shall never thirst', 6. 35. 'He that believeth on me hath everlasting life', 6. 47. 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water', 7. 38. 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live', 11. 25. 'Whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness', 12. 46.





This important period in the history of the kingdom makes for disturbing reading. The outcomes of issues of great importance for nations often hinge on seemingly small events, and so it was here for the children of Israel. A brief meeting at Shechem and three days' consideration of a request from the people by the king were destined to shape Israel's future for years to come. Sadly, no one, except 'Shemaiah the man of God', 1 Kgs. 12. 22; 2 Chr. 12. 5, and possibly the 'old men', 1 Kgs. 12. 6-7, come out of the record with any credit.

Beware – men at work!

First, 'Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king', 1 Kgs. 12. 1; 2 Chr. 10. 1. The will of man was to the fore and the Lord's name was strangely absent. By meeting him at Shechem to make him king, the northern tribes of Israel were acknowledging that he was the heir to the throne, although they laid down conditions as to whether they would accept him as such, 1 Kgs. 12. 4; 2 Chr. 10. 4. Their message was clear: 'Lighten the burdens your father, Solomon, placed on us and we will serve you'.

Second, 'And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it . . . they sent and called him', 1 Kgs. 12. 2-3; 2 Chr. 10. 2. Clearly, the northern tribes had not forgotten the immense talent Jeroboam had displayed in the past, and they had no hesitation in sending for him to be their spokesperson. The message that had been given to him by the prophet Ahijah would undoubtedly have been well known by this time, 1 Kgs. 11. 30-32.

Third, Rehoboam decided on the pathway of a three-day consultation: 'Depart yet for three days, then come again to me', 1 Kgs. 12. 5; 2 Chr. 10. 5. Initially, he consulted with the old men. It was evident that he was only going to accept the advice of his seniors if it coincided with his own; however, as it did not, he sought the counsel of the

SHEMAIAH THE

1 KINGS 12, 2 CHRONICLES 10-12

young men, who had grown up with him. When Jeroboam and the people returned to Rehoboam on the third day, the decision had been made that would shatter the peace of the kingdom for years to come, i.e., that the burdens placed on the people would not be lightened, but increased, 1 Kgs. 12. 12; 2 Chr. 10. 12.

Fear not – God is in control!

At this point, when all appears lost, with one simple statement the historian adjusts the reader's vision to see what was really happening: 'For the cause was from the Lord', 1 Kgs. 12. 15; 2 Chr. 10. 15. 'The cause' could be translated, 'the turn of events' NKJV. The Lord was in control of the turn of events and used it to accomplish the promise He had made to Jeroboam through the prophet, Ahijah, 1 Kgs. 11. 30-31.

Beware – men at work!

First, Rehoboam's harsh words gave the northern tribes the excuse they were looking for to reject him as king, 1 Kgs. 12. 16; 2 Chr. 10. 16. They not only rejected Rehoboam as king, but, by making Jeroboam king, they contemptuously rejected God's chosen Davidic line. Nevertheless, the faithfulness and sovereignty of God were seen in that the line was preserved. Neither

Rehoboam's folly, nor Jeroboam's ambition, were able to thwart the purposes of God. However, although Rehoboam could not destroy God's covenant with David, he certainly cast a shadow upon it.

By
COLIN LACEY
Bath, England

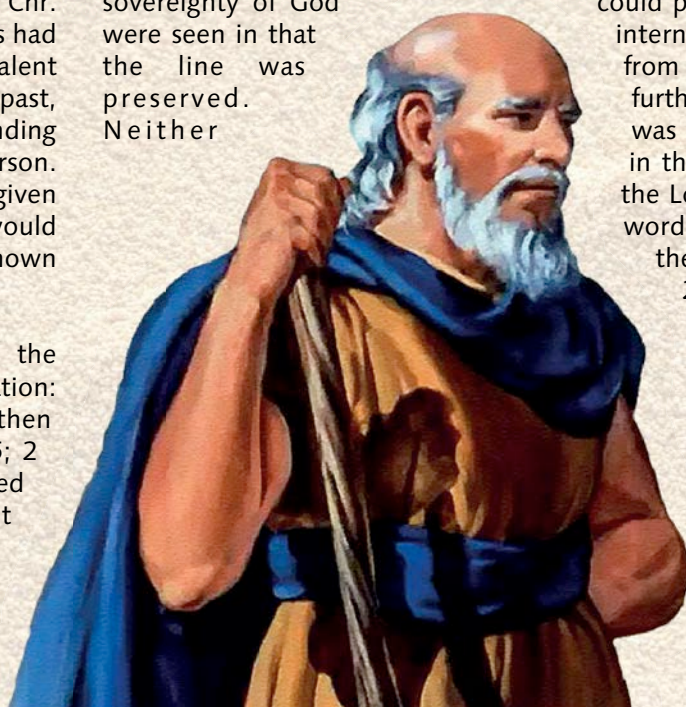
Second, Rehoboam continued to show a singular lack of wisdom in the way in which he handled the fall-out from the decision of the northern tribes. His first response was to send Adoram to them, who was in charge of the tribute tax, 1 Kgs. 12. 18; 2 Chr. 10. 18. Any thoughts of success he might have had for this unwise move were soon dissipated. Adoram was the last person that they would have wanted to see so soon after the rebuttal of their requests. It weakened, rather than strengthened, Rehoboam's position, and it also cost Adoram his life.

Third, Rehoboam's immediate response was to seek revenge against the house of Israel: 1 Kgs. 12. 21; 2 Chr. 11. 1. He decided that if they would not accept his authority willingly, he had no other option than to force them to do so.

Fear not – God is in control!

Just when it seemed as if nothing could prevent a costly and damaging internal battle between brethren from tearing the country apart still further, the Lord stepped in. It was as well that there were those in the land who were sensitive to the Lord's voice. We read, 'But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God', 1 Kgs. 12. 22; 2 Chr. 11. 2. It must have been a lonely path for the prophet to tread in days when very few appeared to be interested in the word of the Lord. Nevertheless, the Lord knew that Shemaiah was one through whom He could speak at a moment's notice.

Shemaiah, previously unheralded and unknown,





THE MAN OF GOD

delivered a vital message to Rehoboam and the people at precisely the right moment in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed: 'Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me', 1 Kgs. 12. 24; 2 Chr. 11. 4.

In the light of all that has gone before, the reader may be taken by surprise at the next statement: 'They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the word of the Lord', 1 Kgs. 12.24; 2 Chr. 11. 4. The familiar pathway up to this time had been a total lack of desire to hear the Lord's voice, let alone to obey it. However, at long last there was a positive response to His word.

Beware – men at work!

Following the brief chink of light in the dark surroundings, the narrative moves back swiftly to the familiar territory of men's disobedience to, and disregard for, God's word. Jeroboam was about to take the northern tribes to new depths of departure from the Lord.

Jeroboam stands as a challenge to believers not to seek to embellish God's promises and plans with their own, but to exercise the faith that simply takes Him at His word. Although nothing excuses his evil ways, it has to be acknowledged that the context in which Rehoboam reigned was far more conducive to right spiritual practices than the one in which he, Jeroboam, lived. Rehoboam had a rich family heritage in that his grandfather was David and his father, Solomon. He must have known well the secrets of success and the pitfalls to avoid when ruling over the kingdom. He had the privilege of reigning for seventeen years in Jerusalem, 1 Kgs. 14. 21; 2 Chr. 12. 13. The temple, the priesthood and the sacrifices were there; therefore, it is distressing to see how quickly things went wrong in such a favourable setting, 1 Kgs. 14. 22.

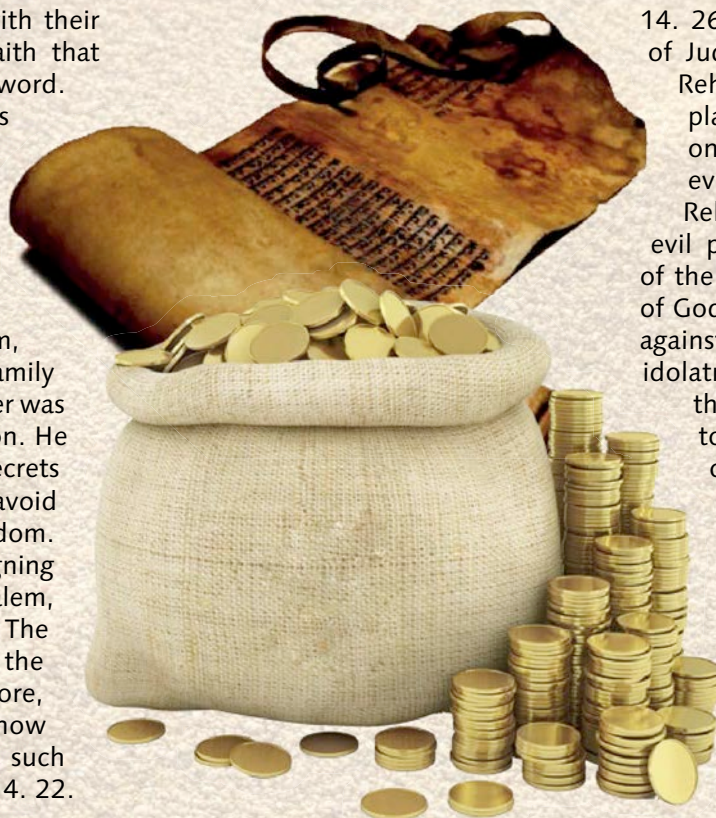
Sadly, Rehoboam forsook God's law, 1 Kgs. 14. 22-24; 2 Chr. 12. 1. Such departure did not go unnoticed by the Lord. Under His hand, Shishak, king of Egypt, brought a mighty army up against Judah and Jerusalem, 1 Kgs. 14. 25; 2 Chr. 12. 2-4. It was at this point that Shemaiah, the prophet, appeared on the scene once again and spoke to the king and the princes that had gathered at Jerusalem, 2 Chr. 12. 5. His message was simple and to the point, 'Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak', 2 Chr. 12. 5. A servant with spiritual insight will always look behind the immediate circumstances facing the Lord's people and see His hand at work. The message of judgement for sinners and discipline for disobedient saints is never an easy one to deliver but, like Shemaiah, we should not hold back from declaring it. Paul's words to the Ephesian elders are apposite: 'For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God', Acts 20. 27.

Fear not – God is in control!

Whenever the word of the Lord is proclaimed it calls for a response from the hearers. On this occasion

the people responded positively. They accepted the message in a spirit of humility and acknowledged that the Lord is righteous, 2 Chr. 12. 6. A truly penitent people will discover that the God who exercises discipline is also the God of compassion, cp. Micah 7. 18-19. Unlike Jonah, Shemaiah had no difficulty with this concept, cp. Jonah 4. 2. Clearly, he accepted that the God of judgement is also the God of infinite compassion and mercy, who is always ready to forgive and to restore. He had no hesitation in declaring that the hand of the Lord that had moved to chastise Rehoboam and the people of Judah would now move in restoration and preservation of them, 2 Chr. 12. 7. However, the Lord was not deceived by the nature of the people's repentance. He knew how shallow it was and the waywardness of their hearts; therefore, He declared, through the mouth of Shemaiah, 'I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance [i.e., for a little while]; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless, they shall be his servants', 2 Chr. 12. 7-8.

Perhaps the saddest of sights would have been to witness Shishak taking away the treasures of the house of God, as well as the shields of gold that Solomon had made, 1 Kgs. 14. 26; 2 Chr. 12. 9. It is recorded of Judah that, during the reign of Rehoboam, they 'built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree', 1 Kgs. 14. 23. Rehoboam even permitted the evil practice of sodomy. The need of the day was for men and women of God, who were prepared to stand against the tide of immorality and idolatry that was sweeping through the land. There were only a few to be found, but Shemaiah was one of them. He justifiably bears the description, 'Shemaiah, the man of God', 1 Kgs. 12. 22. As the tide of spiritual and moral corruption sweeps through our land today, let us determine to be men and women of God, who are prepared to bear fearlessly and unashamedly the torch of divine truth.





'About two in three adults have depression at some time in their life. Sometimes it is mild or lasts just a few weeks. However, an episode of depression serious enough to require treatment occurs in about one in four women and one in ten men at some point in their lives. Some people have two or more episodes of depression at various times in their life'.¹ Is this information only relevant in respect to men and women of the world, or does depression afflict believers?

If that seems a strange question to ask, it is asked because some Christians still feel that fellow saints should not get depressed. Indeed, that reflects a view within society as a whole. Another organization states, 'Depression is a loaded word in our culture. Many associate it, however wrongly, with a sign of weakness and excessive emotion. This is especially true with men. Depressed men . . . tend to complain about fatigue, irritability, sleep problems, and loss of interest in work and hobbies. Other signs and symptoms of depression in men include anger, aggression, violence, reckless behaviour, and substance abuse'.²

Was Jonah a spiritual weakling? Was he demonstrating what a useless prophet he was when, in his anger and frustration, he cried to God to 'take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live', Jonah 4. 3.

As we read the early verses of Jonah we might be persuaded that he was, at best, a reluctant messenger, or, at worst, a very weak prophet. Did Jonah really believe that he could 'flee . . . from the presence of the Lord'? I suggest the reality is rather different. As MALCOLM HORLOCK wrote, 'A prophet who acknowledged the Lord as "the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land", v. 9, would not have been so naive as to believe that he could elude God's omnipresence'.³ Indeed, as we come to chapter 4 of Jonah we see something of his knowledge of his God. He can say, 'I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful,

DEPRESSION

A BIBLICAL CASE STUDY

slow to anger, and of great kindness', 4. 2. Why, then, does Jonah react in the way that he does?

Whilst his actions were primarily to get away from the nation and the land specifically associated with the presence of God, there was a deeper problem at work. The spiritual state of Israel may well have burdened Jonah, but the fact that God could act in mercy with their enemy seems to have become too much for Jonah to bear. Although Jonah's symptoms may not have been as severe as those of Elijah, there is evidence of the reality of his feelings:

- Jonah was angry and irritable, 4. 1, 9.⁴

Jonah's prayer in verse 2 demonstrates a man who is in a poor frame of mind. Throughout, we see Jonah arguing with God with respect to His actions

- As a consequence of that anger he displays a degree of irrational thought in respect of the gourd.⁵

'In the final analysis Jonah was not angry with himself, or with men, but with the holy, righteous, perfect God. Jonah's anger was so intense that he would rather die than live'.⁶ Is this the rational thought of a prophet who, from other verses, clearly knew his God?

- He expresses a degree of helplessness,⁷ 'O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country?' v. 2.

Essentially, Jonah's problem was that he 'became aware . . . that the repentance of Nineveh had prevailed with God and that Israel's most dangerous potential enemy was to be spared . . . Jonah had suspected all along that this had been God's design'.⁸ Although he had tried to rebel against God's mission, he was helpless to counteract that which was the clear purpose of the Almighty.

- Jonah isolates himself, v. 5.⁹

How, then does God treat Jonah, and what might we learn from this study?

'It is good to talk'

'Doest thou well to be angry?' v. 4. God asks the question of Jonah and, in so doing, invites the prophet to talk. Initially, Jonah is unresponsive, reluctant to discuss his feelings. Indeed, it might be suggested that Jonah still entertained some false hope that God might yet visit judgement upon the Ninevites, v. 5. But God will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, Rom. 9. 15.

Yet God does not desert Jonah because of the prophet's intransigence. God moves, behind the scenes, to provide for his disgruntled servant. We might have written him off, but God does not! Indeed, He returns and asks the question again, albeit this time in reference to the gourd. God shows that He cares, by listening, and encouraging Jonah to talk.

If we are to offer any help to those in 'hard places' we too must be prepared to listen, to talk when appropriate, but above all to care. We need to recognize that depression is as much a medical problem as a broken limb. In that sense, we must encourage and support the sufferer in seeking appropriate medical advice and treatment. It must not be confused with a lack of faith, or even weak faith, for, if success were to be measured by the number affected by the preaching, Jonah must be ranked amongst the most successful of all prophets and preachers!

'Just being there'

'Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd', v. 6.

Jonah, in his high dudgeon, did not want to talk. God's actions toward his prophet demonstrate His willingness to care for him even though much of that care seems to be rebuffed. If we are seeking to work with people who are suffering depression, some of our actions may be misjudged, despised, or ignored. Just as God in His handling of Jonah, we must be prepared to work with a person, expressing our affection in what we feel able to do, often, perhaps, secretly.¹⁰



ONAH

'Positive results take time'

In Jonah's case the actions of God in providing the gourd brought an element of joy back into the life of the depressed prophet. However, the underlying anger is not far below the surface and, as the gourd withers and dies, Jonah's mood takes a turn for the worse.

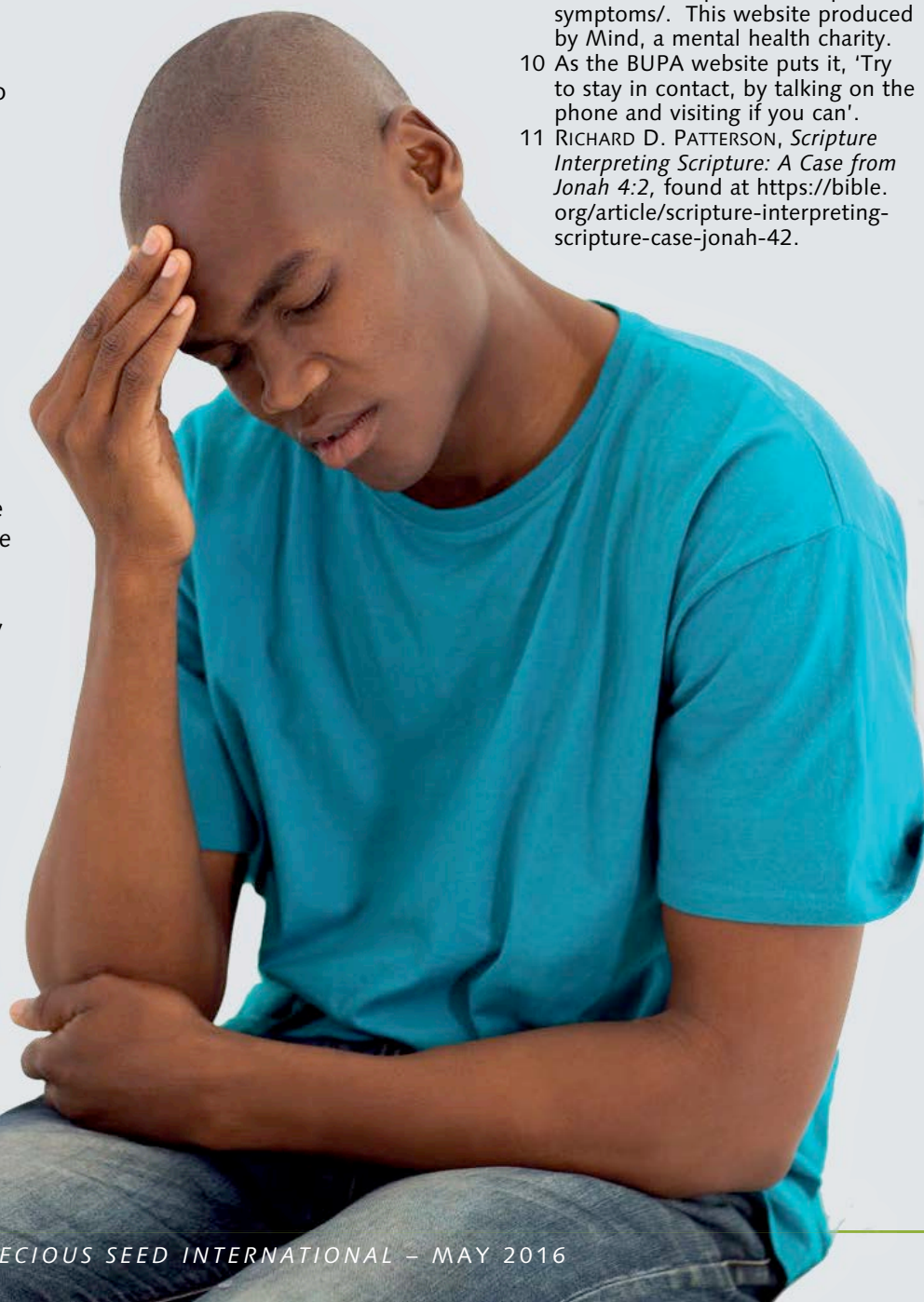
Unfortunately, as the book of Jonah comes to its close we are left wondering what the eventual outcome of this account was. Did Jonah respond positively to God's patient correction of His prophet? We do not know. We hope that as Jonah was the author of the book that bears his name, he wrote this full account of his spiritual journey to underline the need for compassion for the spiritual needs of all people.

Some suggest that there is a positive indication in the historic account of Jeroboam II: 'He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher', 2 Kgs. 14. 25.¹¹ Perhaps Jonah was restored to active service for the Lord once more. There is a sense in which Jonah needed to be brought to an end of himself and to an appreciation of the sovereignty of God. Equally, there was a deep lesson for the nation of Israel in the example of Nineveh. In the repentance of that great city there was salvation from the judgement of God. If only Israel could have taken the lesson to heart!

As we look out upon an increasingly secular society, there might be much to depress the Christian. However, as with Jonah, God is still at work, sometimes in areas that we might least expect. Similarly, depression is not irreversible! May we be exercised to offer what help we can to those in this situation.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.patient.co.uk/health/depression-leaflet#>. Accessed at 07-12-13. This website produced by Egton Medical Information Systems Limited, Leeds.
- 2 http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_signs_types_diagnosis_treatment.htm. Accessed at 07-12-13. This website produced in collaboration with the Harvard Medical School.
- 3 MALCOLM HORLOCK, *Jonah in The Minor Prophets*, edited by Ivan Steeds, Precious Seed Publications, 1992, pg. 104.
- 4 'Other signs and symptoms of depression in men include anger, aggression, violence', http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_signs_types_diagnosis_treatment.htm. 'In some cases some people call depression 'frozen anger'. You may have experienced something which left you feeling angry and helpless', KATHERINE DARTON, *Understanding Depression*, Mind, pg. 7.
- 5 God asks Jonah, 'Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd?' 4. 9. 'Someone with depression may . . . be more liable to misunderstand others, or feel misunderstood, than usual', DARTON, pg. 21.
- 6 ROBERT L. DEFFINBAUGH, *Nineveh's Repentance and Jonah's Wrath*, found at: <https://bible.org/seriespage/nineveh's-repentance-and-jonah's-wrath-jonah-3-4>.
- 7 'When people are depressed, they often feel helpless, hopeless and alone', <http://www.bupa.co.uk/individuals/health-information/directory/d/hi-depression#textBlock202676>. The website produced by BUPA, a private medical services provider.
- 8 HORLOCK, pg. 112.
- 9 'People with depression often isolate themselves from others', <http://www.bupa.co.uk/individuals/health-information/directory/d/hi-depression#textBlock202676>. 'Depression is . . . dark, lonely and very selfish', <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression/symptoms/>. This website produced by Mind, a mental health charity.
- 10 As the BUPA website puts it, 'Try to stay in contact, by talking on the phone and visiting if you can'.
- 11 RICHARD D. PATTERSON, *Scripture Interpreting Scripture: A Case from Jonah 4:2*, found at <https://bible.org/article/scripture-interpreting-scripture-case-jonah-42>.





The life of Jacob reads like a history of the nation of Israel. He spans more of Genesis than any other individual. Despite our perception of Jacob's character, God appeared to Jacob just as often as He appeared to Abraham! Though he displayed certain unpleasant natural traits, yet he was the subject of God's sovereign electing grace as Paul reminds us, Rom. 9. 11. The psalmist reports, 'The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself', Ps. 135. 4. In the New Testament, Stephen speaks of Jacob in Acts chapter 7, his faith is mentioned by the writer of Hebrews in chapter 11, and Paul refers to him in his dispensational section of Romans. Elsewhere, he is usually bracketed with the patriarchs, e.g., 'the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob'.

John speaks of Jacob's ladder, 1. 51, and Jacob's well, 4. 6. We might contrast the two. (See *Jacob's Ladder and Jacob's Well Table*).

The Pharisees raised the query as to Abraham and Christ, now the woman of Samaria asks querulously, 'Art **thou** greater than our father Jacob which gave us the well?' The Samaritans claimed Jacob as their father and once built a temple on Mount Gerizim, their holy mount; Jacob's well was treasured by them. Also, Joseph's bones were buried there, hence, the name Sychar, 'town of the sepulchre'. Sychar is probably the village of Askar where the disciples might have gone for food. A report of the well from 1869 describes it as being 7.5 feet in diameter, 105 feet deep and walled for the first 10 feet below which it was cut through rock. It held 15 feet of water.

Wells figure quite prominently in the Old Testament:

- Beerlahairoi was where the angel of Jehovah found Hagar after her expulsion from Abraham's household. The pregnant woman was promised great seed from her baby boy Ishmael, Gen. 16.14.
- Eliezer of Damascus, Abraham's servant, was commissioned to find a wife for Isaac. 'I being in the way, the Lord led me', Gen. 24. 27. He found Rebekah at the well.

A Greater than

By **JOHN GRIFFITHS** Port Talbot, Wales

- Moses met his wife-to-be at a well in Midian, after fleeing from Egypt, namely, Zipporah, Exod. 2. 15.
- David's whispered wish was overheard by three of his mighty men . . . a cup of water from the well of Bethlehem. They broke through the ranks of the Philistine forces to oblige their leader.

Here, the woman of Samaria meets with Jesus and her spiritual thirst is slaked. 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation', Isa. 12. 3, 4. 'Art **thou** greater than our father Jacob which gave us the well?' Yes, a thousand times, yes! (See *Jacob's Well and Jesus' Well Table*).

Jacob is better known for his greed than for his giving, i.e. the birthright of Esau and the blessing of Isaac. Yet, he gives a parcel of ground for Joseph's burial and a well for posterity. Contrast that with the words of the Lord, 'If thou knewest the gift of God', John 4. 10. John did. He records eight gifts in his gospel as opposed to Jacob's two:

- (i) 'The water that I shall **give** him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life', John 4. 14.
- (ii) 'The good shepherd **giveth** his life for his sheep', John 10. 11.
- (iii) 'For I have **given** you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you', John 13. 15.
- (iv) 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall **give** you another Comforter'. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost whom my Father will send in my name', John 14. 16, 26.
- (v) 'My peace I **give** unto you: not as the world giveth, **give** I unto you', John 14. 27.
- (vi) 'For I have **given** unto them the words (*rhema*) which thou gavest me', John 17. 8.
- (vii) 'I have **given** them thy word (*logos*)', John 17. 14.



Jacob

(viii) 'And the glory which thou gavest me, I have **given** them', John 17. 22.

What a munificent God we have! Truly, a greater than Jacob! To summarize, Paul says, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also **freely give us all things**', Rom. 8. 32. With David we can rejoice and praise the Lord, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits', Ps. 103. 2.

'The **gift** of God'. The Greek *dorean* used here is rare in the gospel records. It is a grace gift, a gratuity, given without cause. John uses it again, 'And whosoever will, let him take the water of life **freely**', Rev. 22. 17.

Jacob was 77 years in Beersheba, 'tied to his mother's apron strings'. He was unconverted for nearly half of his life. This may help us to understand his grasping, guileful ways in taking the birthright from his brother and the blessing of his father. It took Esau's threat on Jacob's life to cause Jacob to leave home for Padan-Aram.

That first night at Bethel, Jacob experienced God's grace and became a believer. For the next 20 years he learned that Uncle Laban was as big a twister as he, himself. He learned something of the guidance of God as he leaves Laban and makes his way to Hebron. At Hebron he lost Rachel, his father and, ostensibly, Joseph, too. These experiences teach him lessons concerning God's government. His attitude to life is summed up in his own words, 'All these things are against me'. However, the pinnacle of this period of his life was Peniel; the place where Jacob became Israel, a prince with God.

Finally, he spends 17 years in Egypt. Here we see a more mature believer and glimpses of his godliness are apparent. He is singled out for his faith, in blessing his sons and prophesying regarding his family. He is the only hero of faith singled out

for his worship in the great gallery of faith. Clearly, Jacob's latter end was better than his beginning. 'Art **thou** greater than our father Jacob?' Consider the following comparisons and contrasts. (See *Jacob and Jesus Table*).

The supplanter is eclipsed in every respect by the Saviour of the world. Christ outshines, outranks and outmatches the most respected figures of biblical history, even the man of whom it is written, 'Jacob have I loved'.

JACOB'S LADDER	JACOB'S WELL
A man.	A woman.
A Jew.	A Samaritan.
A moral person.	An immoral person.
Nathaniel . . . 'gift of God'.	The gift of God . . . living water.
Millennial blessing.	Eternal blessing.
Jesus, the Son of Man.	Jesus, the Saviour of the World.
Intercommunication between heaven/earth.	Inner quenching of spiritual thirst.
Jacob, the guileful . . . 'an Israelite'	Jacob, the giver . . . the burial plot for Joseph.
indeed in whom there is no guile , lit. 'Jacob'.	and the well for his descendants.

JACOB'S WELL	JESUS' WELL
A natural substance, water.	A spiritual substance, the water of life.
Temporal satisfaction . . . constant coming.	Eternal satisfaction . . . only drink once.
An external source . . . the earth.	Eternal satisfaction . . . only drink once.
A local supply – Jacob, his family and livestock.	A universal supply – available to all.
Obtained by bucket.	Obtained by believing.
Provided by Jacob, the supplanter.	Provided by Jesus, the Saviour.
Jacob bored through the rock to release water.	Jesus became the 'smitten Rock' to release the water of life.

JACOB	JESUS
Jacob was guileful: a deceiver, for example, of his father.	Jesus was guileless, 'neither was guile found in his mouth', 1 Peter 2. 22.
Jacob was grasping, i.e., the birthright and the blessing.	Jesus was gracious: 'thought it not robbery (<i>a thing to be grasped after</i>) to be equal with God', Phil. 2. 6.
Jacob was hated by his brother, Gen. 27. 41.	Jesus was rejected by His brethren, John 1. 11.
Jacob was hated with good cause, i.e., because of his guile and deceitfulness.	Jesus was hated 'without a cause', John 15. 25.
Jacob was threatened with death by his brother, Gen. 27. 41.	Jesus was sentenced to death by His brethren, John 19. 7.
Jacob was met by angels at Mahanain when about to face Esau, Gen. 32. 2.	Jesus was ministered to by an angel at Gethsemane when about to face Calvary, Luke 22. 43.
Jacob dreamt of a ladder.	Jesus is that ladder.
Jacob gave his descendants a well and its water.	Jesus offers the 'water of life' to the 'whosoever', Rev. 22. 17.
Jacob's faith is only highlighted at the close of his life, Heb. 11. 21.	Jesus' faith was in evidence from his mother's womb, Ps. 22. 9, 10.
Jacob's prophecy was tribal, at best, national, Gen. 49.	Jesus' prophecy was global, universal, Matt. 24, 25.
Jacob's blessing was limited to his sons.	Jesus' blessing incorporates both Jew and Gentile, Rom. 10. 12.
Jacob's worshipping on his staff is noted in Hebrews 11.	Jesus did not render worship but received it, for He is God.



We have before us a parenthetic chapter which is in keeping with the age in which we are found. This chapter could easily be removed and the reading from chapter 2 verse 22 would continue in chapter 4 verse 1 and still make sense. We are living in the age that God has inserted into His dealings with the world that, as we shall see, which was not made known in other ages.

PART 5

Ephesians

Chapter 3 verses 1-13

By **NORMAN MELLISH** Stoke-on-Trent, England

The chapter has two main sections, in verses 1-13 we have Paul's stewardship and in verses 14-21 we find Paul's supplications.

Writing from prison, he is not there for crime but for Christ. The reading is 'for Christ Jesus', v. 1, that is, a man who has been exalted in glory. The church, which is the theme of this chapter, only came into being as a result of being linked to the man in the glory.

In verse 2 he recalls the stewardship that had been given to him. In chapter 1 the stewardship of the future kingdom is put into the hand of the Lord Jesus. The word 'dispensation' speaks of administrative responsibilities and Paul recognizes that the grace of God chose him to make the truth of this age known through his writings. No gift, whatever that might be, is ever for personal use, but, as Paul speaks here, it is for you, that is, for your benefit.

In verses 3-9, three thoughts are set forth: in verses 3-6 the truth of the **mystery** is recorded, then we see the **minister** in verses 7-8, and, finally, the **ministry** in verse 9.

The church is not the subject of prophecy but of revelation. This revelation is for all blood-bought saints to enter into and this is the reason for it being recorded for us here in Ephesians. God desires that we become intelligent in His thoughts toward us. The truth of the mystery was given to Paul, unfolded in chapter 2, and expanded upon here in chapter 3. This mystery was given to Paul by revelation, and was the fulfilment of 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 10 when the perfect revelation

of God was to remove the partial gifts of the Spirit. Believers were now able to read what was not known before, and would become as intelligent as Paul in the truth revealed by him. In our day, all God's thoughts toward us have been revealed and we need to apply ourselves by reading to come into the good of them.

The fact that the church is something unique in the purpose of God is unfolded now as that which previously he had not made known to men. Unlike the mysteries of the pagan world that are only for the initiated (like freemasonry today) this mystery is for all believers to apprehend. Though kept secret in former days, it is now revealed; every child of God should enter into the truth of it. Though this mystery cannot be grasped by the world, for the things of God are foolishness unto them, nevertheless this is something for every believer to appreciate.

The mystery is seen as that which brings the Gentiles into blessings that were not known before. These blessings are threefold: the prospect, the position, and the promise. The prospect is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs; no Jew would accept such a thought, as they alone had received the promises in the Old Testament, but now are of the same body. With this there is a definite promise; the purpose of God for the church is fully made known. Again, something unique has been formed and the position we now have is that we are of the same body. With that, a promise is made sure to us, that we are partakers of this promise in Christ by the gospel. The word 'partakers' only

occurs here and in chapter 5 verse 7, where we are instructed not to be partakers of the evil deeds of the wicked. If we are partakers of the promise we should not be linked with the sordidness of ungodly men.

In verse 7 Paul identifies his writing as that of a minister; the word is *diakonos* from which we get the word 'deacon'. A deacon is a servant in relation to the work given to him, whereas *doulos* (slave) has the thought of a servant in relation to his master. Paul sees this as the impartation of gift from God, and that his gift is by the grace of God. There was no particular merit in Paul, but he is a chosen vessel unto the Lord, Acts 9. 15. Such is any gift that is given; it is according to the working of God's mighty power. Let no man boast in a gift he has received, but recognize that it comes from the power of God and he must use it for the glory of God and the blessing of saints.

The wonder of being given the privilege of making known the mystery impresses itself upon Paul's mind. '**Unto me**', v. 8. He knows the promise regarding the land was given to Abraham, and that of the throne was communicated to David. To Moses was given the law and the ordinances, and also the honour of bringing Israel out of Egypt. Great prophecies were given to the prophets of old, but the honour of making known God's greatest work was not committed to any but to Paul. Paul's former life, when he persecuted the saints, is a constant cause of pain to him, and, perhaps, causes him to write that he is less than the least of all saints, yet the Lord imparts great truth to him.



If verses 7-8 reveal the minister, when we come to verse 9 we see his ministry. This is by the instruction he gives to make the saints intelligent, to be able to appreciate, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery. The word 'see' is 'to give light upon or shed rays upon'. In John chapter 1 verse 9 it is used of the Lord Jesus who 'lighteneth every man that cometh into the world'. This is the object of Paul's ministry. What Paul revealed was something that was indiscernible to any in the world, as it has been hid in God. In Colossians

chapter 1 verse 18, it is 'hid from ages (time) and from generations (men)'. None before knew of the ways of God with the church, but it is now revealed to His saints.

Not only can the saints come into the wonder of God's present dealings with the church but also the principalities and powers in heaven are called upon to witness what they have never known before. Even the highest created beings knew nothing of what God was to do in this present dispensation, and one of the purposes of the church is for

angelic beings to see the wonder of God's dealings at this time.

We know that angels who had much to do with Israel in a former day are presently in 'the school room' and watching events as they come to pass in our day. In 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 12 they are ardent listeners to the gospel when it is preached and desire to look into it, that is to strain their necks as to take in what is said. It is little wonder that they rejoice when a soul is saved, according to Luke chapter 15 verse 7. According to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 10, they observe the assembly when it is gathered, and delight to see a divine order restored that was lost on creation ground when Eve took the headship and brought the world into transgression, 1 Tim. 3. 14. Presently, in a divinely ordered company of God's children when the sister has a covered head and the man an uncovered head, a sign that the will of God is now being observed, the angels recognize at last – they see recovered on redemption ground what was lost on creation ground. Here in Ephesians there is a display 'through' the church, for that is the strength of the word 'by', of the manifold wisdom of God. This wisdom is that which has brought opposing nations together in one body, forming a unity that only God could bring about. So from all walks of life, from every nation under the sun, there are those who compose the church which is His body, and angelic beings can only gaze and learn from us God's great wisdom.

All is according to the eternal purpose which he hath purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, v. 11. The church was no mere afterthought. We were all in the mind of God from eternity and all that the Lord desired for the saints of this period of God's workings with us is from before the worlds began. We were chosen before the worlds began in chapter 1. We were destined to share in the inheritance with Christ before the worlds began, and now the unity that ought to mark us as members of the one body - all was in the eternal councils of God.





In 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9 we have the maintenance and movement, succour and support of the churches. These are paragraphs of powerful appeal in a very sensitive letter. We gather from the apostle's letter to the Roman Christians, Rom. 15. 25-27, and now to the church at Corinth, that he told the believers in Macedonia, Northern Greece, and Achaia, Southern Greece, about the dire straits of the saints in Jerusalem and Judea. The situation was a result of persecution and famine, but their reaction, particularly that of the three Macedonian churches, Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi, was notable.

The chapters before us give a detailed account of the events, reactions and results of that visit. They can be conveniently discussed under four headings.

The plea to be involved

When the apostle saw their 'affliction' and 'deep poverty', 8. 2, he might have argued that it wouldn't be reasonable to inflict on them the great need of the practical assistance required. He would wait until he went south to the prosperous church in Corinth and get what was needed there. But it is clear that he told them the situation as it was. Why? Because he saw 'giving' as a priestly ministry and part of the church's worship; he would not deny these believers, impoverished as they were, a share in this ministry. So they 'beseeched' the apostle to be involved, and we learn that the result of that involvement was described as 'abounding unto the riches of their liberality', first 'giving their own selves to the Lord', v. 5. It is quite clear that the apostle is referring to financial gifts yet in the whole narrative the word money does not appear. Instead he expresses its necessity by the use of the following words: 'this grace', 8. 7; 'a cheerful giver', 9. 7; 'this bounty', 8. 20; 'this service', 9. 12; 'your contribution', 9. 13. Equally, we are given no clue

THE MINISTR

as to the monetary amount that was collected. That is not the point. It was the heart, beating with love to their Lord and their brethren, that motivated them to give 'beyond their power or ability', v. 3.

As I consider these verses I have in my mind the situation in May 1984

in Sibiu, Romania. Four hundred believers, in boiling temperatures, crushed into an old factory building were listening to an account of the extreme famine conditions in Ethiopia. First, there were tears, then sobs, and, finally, audible cries of 'What can we do to help?' We had come from the 'West' with financial help for the suffering and impoverished Romanians, now we were privileged to see the Macedonian plea in action. Before we left an offering was taken for Ethiopia!

We cannot leave these paragraphs without reference to the greatest act of self-sacrifice ever made. All human sacrifice fades and disappears at the profound words, 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich', v. 9. There can be no doubt that it was this sacrifice that inspired them, the Romanians, and saints down the centuries, to give to those in need. This should be the basis of our giving to the Lord for His people.

The principle of involvement

The next section, chapters 8 verses 12-15 and 9 verses 6-9, can be summarized under the words 'according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not', 8. 12. The emphasis is on equality and readiness.

The Apostle almost shows a little impatience as he addresses the Corinthians. They had made a start a year ago. Now, he says, 'perform the doing of it', v. 11.

It is not the readiness of the will that will complete the transaction. We may think about it and even pray about it but fail to actually **do** it. The message about equality

seems to be that there are times when there is opportunity but not the ability. At such a time, the Lord will exercise others who have the ability to make up the deficit so that the work will not suffer. We must not, however, use this principle as an excuse to do nothing. Surely, the previous teaching will avoid such a dereliction of our Christian duty. It has often been said that what we put in we get out, but in the Lord's work there can be no thought of returns other than the Lord's glory and the building up of His people.

In concluding this section, this principle illustrates the transferable teaching of the Old Testament to the New. Exodus chapter 35 verse 5 states, 'Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord'. The gifts ranged from gold to wood. This underlines the principles of willingness and ability. In the New Testament there is no reference to a tithe or a tenth. Indeed, it has been said, 'We should be prepared to give more under grace than what was demanded of them under law'.

A practical example of involvement

The end paragraph of chapter 8, verses 16-24, is a parenthesis. It concerns Titus, the Apostle's companion and co-worker. He is beside his mentor and knows the intensity and urgency

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Y OF GIVING

with which he writes. Titus, wondering how he can help, decides that he will make the journey to Corinth to make sure that the gift the apostle requires is ready when he arrives. Chapter 9 verses 1-5 is an interesting insight into Paul's

We do not know what age Titus was when he made this decision to make this journey with all the hardships that it entailed, but it is a stimulant to those of us who have the time, the ability,

perhaps a missionary in loneliness and hardship, and, not least, for the praise of the name of Him who called us into His service.

The purpose of the involvement

The climax of the apostle Paul's exhortation comes in the remaining verses of chapter 9, verses 10-15, where he refers to God four times:

'thanksgiving to God', v. 11, see also verses 12 and 15, and, in verse 13, 'glorify God'. The apostle has been speaking in very plain language about the practicalities involved in God's work. But the purpose is not for any human advancement or glorification. If it is, it will surely fail!

In this final paragraph there is three-way communication. First, there is a West to East communication, the love-gift going to the saints in Jerusalem and Judea. Then, there is an East to West one, supplications made by the Jewish believers for their Gentile brothers – a miracle in itself. Then, there is the most important communication, the vertical one, between heaven and earth. This is the ultimate!

In conclusion, I mention another visit to a very remote Romanian village assembly in 1987. At the end of a meeting, one of the leaders asked me if I was an American! 'No', I replied, 'I am from Northern Ireland'. He said, 'I didn't know there were any Christians there!' After a brief conversation, by translation, I had convinced him that there were many Christians and many assemblies like the one we had just attended and preached at. I saw tears in his eyes and a smile on his face. He said, 'today you have brought us much help (West to East) for which we are very grateful. Now that we know there are Christians in Ireland we will pray for you every day' (East to West). As we drove off into the night, we thanked God for the third and all important dimension, 'His unspeakable gift'.

thinking. He has evidently told the Macedonians about the liberality of the Corinthians and, having committed himself in this way, has now a latent fear that the Corinthians might not rise to the occasion. It is possible that he expressed this fear to Titus and recorded it in his letter. Perhaps we could learn something from this very down-to-earth servant of God in relation to our financial and practical exercises in the advancement of the work of the Lord!

Titus willingly gets involved 'of his own accord went unto' them. There are three steps leading to this action:

- he heard the need and became concerned, v. 16;
- he listened to exhortation, v. 17;
- he had the Lord's glory in view, v. 23.

and the means to travel in the advancement of the Lord's work. Titus paid his own way, he did not seek subsistence. It would be reward enough to see all in place at Corinth for the arrival of his master. Can or should we have any less of a motive, even in middle or late life, to put ourselves about for the encouragement of others,





GOOD NEWS FOR BAKEWELL SHOW

The market town of Bakewell lies in the heart of the Peak District National Park in Derbyshire, England. Being the first part of the country to be classified as a National Park it has attracted tourists and visitors for many years. Bakewell Show is one of the oldest agricultural shows in England having been founded in 1819. Over the years it has evolved from being mainly agricultural to the diverse event it is today.

In 1980 the assemblies of Christians in Bakewell and Chesterfield were exercised to have a Christian witness at the Show. Consequently on 6th and 7th August in that year the annual witness began. For the first two years the 'Good News' caravan with its Bible exhibition was kindly borrowed from the 'Counties Evangelistic Work' organization. During the second year, the Postal Bible School was promoted and this has continued ever since.

The Beighton assembly joined the outreach in 1982 and, in the following year, a small marquee was hired in which a Bible Exhibition was erected. It included Hebrew manuscripts and other scriptural exhibits that were loaned by Professor F. F. Bruce. It proved difficult to get people to go into the tent as access was through a relatively small opening with a restricted view of what was inside. However, those who did come in found the display interesting. After four years' experience with this format it was realized that a change was needed. This happened in 1986 after the Matlock assembly had joined

By **RAY MATHER** and
RICHARD TOMLINSON
Bakewell, England

the witness. The whole frontage of the marquee was opened up and refreshments were offered free of charge. This proved successful in encouraging people into the tent and enabled witnessing to take place to people sitting at tables. The amount of Christian literature given out increased and more contact was made with neighbouring exhibitors. A man selling double-glazing became interested in the witness and that led to him and his wife becoming Christians.



There was much to encourage and in 1988 a 40 ft x 20 ft marquee was hired, double the size of the previous one. This enabled a bookstall to be displayed, kindly provided by a Christian from Wallasey. The Postal Bible School publicity continued and in that year forty children enrolled. Competitions and games for children have been regularly featured at the front of the tent linked to the promotion of the Postal Bible School.

Having extra space meant other exhibitions could be featured. One year a 'Noah's Ark' display was loaned by Liverpool City Mission. On following years an 'Air' feature that had been used at Air Displays was mounted; the director of Emmaus

promoted Bible Courses and, in 2014, 'Farming Christian Link' had a display.

To celebrate the millennium in 2000 a new banner sign 'Good News for the 21st Century' was displayed on the marquee and tracts distributed to celebrate the occasion. In 2012 the sign was changed again to 'Good News for Today'.

An important element of the testimony has been to create an attractive setting in which to witness. This has included floral displays at the front of the tent; uniform white patio chairs (hired), tables and table cloths; floral table decorations and attractive tract holders, as well as appropriate scripture text posters hanging from the marquee sides. With the whole length of the frontage being open this all helps to create a friendly welcome to visitors.

The nature of the witness has developed over the years. Serving refreshments brings hundreds of people into the marquee over the two days. This gives a great opportunity to get alongside people sitting at the tables to share the gospel. People take the leaflets and this year it was noticeable that more were being read at the table than previously.

Over the years, grateful help has been given by many Christians from near and far who have been willing to give their time, gifts and expertise in enabling the witness to continue. The aim has always been to share the gospel with people who might never hear about the Saviour, and our prayer is that some will come to a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.





EXODUS

By **RICHARD CATCHPOLE** South Norwood, England

1. Introduction

The book of Exodus is a sequel to Genesis as well as being a fitting introduction to the teaching of the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

The opening word 'Now', could equally be translated 'And', indicating a connection and continuity with that which has preceded it. The opening six verses of Exodus chapter 1 give a summary of the last five chapters of Genesis, from Jacob's entrance into Egypt to the death of Joseph. Reference is made to the six days in which God created the heaven and earth, 20. 11; 31. 17. There are several mentions of the covenant God made with the patriarchs.¹

Thinking of the concluding verses of Exodus, and their connection with Leviticus and Numbers, the book ends with the completion of the tabernacle, a cloud covering it, and the tabernacle filled with the glory of the Lord. While Exodus ends with the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle, Leviticus begins with the Lord calling to Moses from 'out of the tabernacle'.

2. The subject of Exodus

The Hebrew title to the book *ve'eleh shemoth*, as with Genesis, is taken from part of the opening verse of Exodus: 'These are the names of', while the title 'Exodus' is taken from the Septuagint LXX and Vulgate versions, meaning 'the way out' or 'going out'. This title reflects the basic theme of the book, the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. While the book of Genesis ends with a coffin in Egypt, Exodus refers to the day when Israel 'went out from the land of Egypt', 12. 41. While Genesis is the book of creation, Exodus is the book of redemption.

3. The purpose of the book

1. To trace the next stage in the history of the descendants of Abraham. The transition of the family, and its various tribes that went down into Egypt, into the

united multitude, or nation, that were brought out.

2. In Exodus, we are introduced to Moses, and the principles of redemption, and to Aaron, and the principles of priesthood.
3. The book records the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.
4. Some ten chapters are given over to the description, construction, and consecration of the tabernacle.

All these subjects permeate much of the later teaching of the Bible.

4. The plan of the book

The book readily divides into three major sections.

1. Chapters 1 to 12 – the children of Israel in Egypt; salvation and the grace of God. The redemption:
 - The perversity of Pharaoh
 - The piety of a husband and wife
 - The progression of time
 - The pessimism of the servant
 - The plagues on Egypt
 - The Passover night
2. Chapters 13 to 18 – the children of Israel in the wilderness; sanctification and the guidance of God. The redeemed:
 - Succoth to Etham, precepts and a pillar
 - Etham to the Red Sea, salvation and a song
 - The Red Sea to Elim, water and wells
 - Elim to the wilderness of Sin, murmuring and manna
 - The wilderness of Sin to Sinai, conflict and counsel
3. Chapters 19 to 40 – the children of Israel at Sinai; service and the glory of God. The responsibilities:
 - The law given and the covenant ratified
 - The tabernacle, its coverings and furnishings and the appointment of the priests
 - The law broken and the tables of the covenant renewed
 - The tabernacle, the people's freewill offering for it, and its construction and erection

5. The author and date of the book

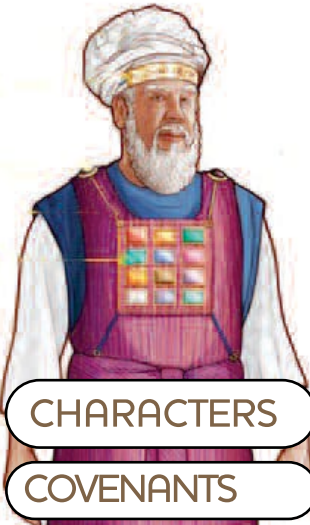
There are in Exodus two references to the Lord commanding Moses to record events in a book. Following the defeat of Amalek the Lord said 'write this for a memorial in a book', 17. 14. In connection with the covenant the Lord made with Moses and Israel, the Lord said to him 'Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel', 34. 27. Additional to these, we are told in Exodus chapter 24 verse 4 that Moses 'wrote all the words of the Lord', i.e., the words of the law, and this is referred to in verse 7 as 'the book of the covenant'. Some might object that these references simply inform us that Moses recorded the words of the Lord, but fail to conclusively attribute the actual authorship of the book of Exodus to him. However, we should observe that the Lord Jesus, when quoting Exodus chapter 3 verse 6, said, 'Have ye not read in the book of Moses', Mark. 12. 26?

An interesting aspect of Exodus, and one consistent with the Mosaic authorship, is some very 'personal asides' that suggest the writer was present at the events being described. So, before Moses slew the Egyptian, we are told he looked 'this way and that', Exod. 2. 12. Also how he 'fled from before the serpent' into which his rod had turned when he cast it on the ground, 4. 3. When he left Midian, we are told how he set his wife and sons 'upon an ass', 4. 20, and that Zipporah cut off her sons' foreskin with 'a stone' and 'cast it at his feet', 4. 25. When he saw the glory of God in the mount, we are told 'he made haste and bowed his head towards the earth and worshipped', and when he came down from the mount 'he wist not that the skin of his face shone', 34. 8, 29.²

It is impossible to give an exact date for the writing of Exodus. Scholars are divided upon the date of the children of Israel's departure from

CHARTING THE SCRIPTURES EXODUS by Jonathan Black

'HOLINESS TO THE LORD'
Exod. 28. 36



CHARACTERS

COVENANTS

DISPENSATIONS

The **tabernacle** of the congregation / **tabernacle** of the tent of the congregation / the tab



'And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among th

SHIPHRAH

PUAH

MIRIAM

MOSES

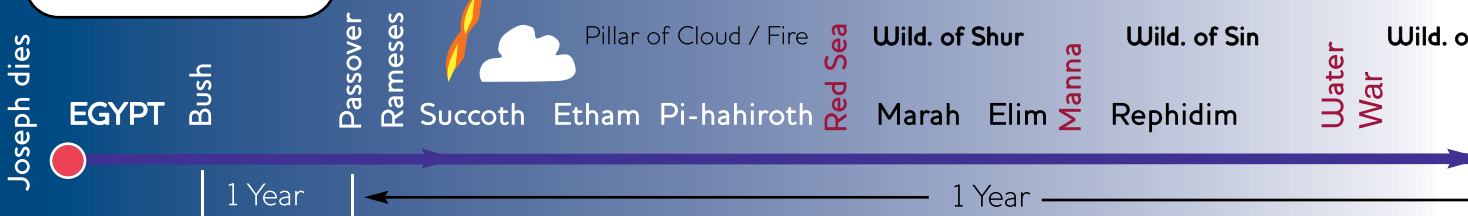
AARON

JETHRO

MOSAIC COVENANT

Law

The book of Genesis



EVENTS

TYPES

CHRIST

Egypt/Pharaoh

Moses' birth

Burning bush

Plagues

World / Devil

Christ as a Son

Eternal God

The Vial judg.

Out of Egypt
Hos. 11. 1 / Matt. 2. 15

Greater than
Moses Heb. 3. 3

The 'I am'
Mark 12. 26 / John 8. 58

Judge
Rev. 6. 10

Christ
10

GRIEF!

HOUSE OF BONDAGE Exod. 13. 3

HOREB

MOUNT OF GOD

FINGER OF GOD

Jesus Christ spoke

'Ye have heard that it was said to t
'Have ye not read in the book of Moses
'Now that the dead are raised, e
'Moses gave you not th

ANGEL OF GOD

EGYPT

REDEMPTION - GOD'S PLAN

- 1 Midwives stand for God
- 2 Moses saved in the ark
- 3 Moses sent from the bush
- 4 Moses spokesman - Aaron
- 5 Moses asks God why?
- 6 Moses asks God how?

REDEMPTION - GOD'S PROVISION

- 7 Plagued by rivers turned to blood
- 8 Plagued by frogs, lice and flies
- 9 Plagued by cattle, boils and hail
- 10 Plagued by locusts and darkness
- 11 Plagued by firstborn's death
- 12 The passover lamb

REDEMPTION - GOD'S PATHWAY

- 12 Brought out of Egypt
- 13 Led by the way of wilderness
- 14 Saved through the Red Sea
- 15 Singing redemption's song.
- 16 Bread from Heaven
- 17 Water from smitten rock
- 18 Advice from Jethro

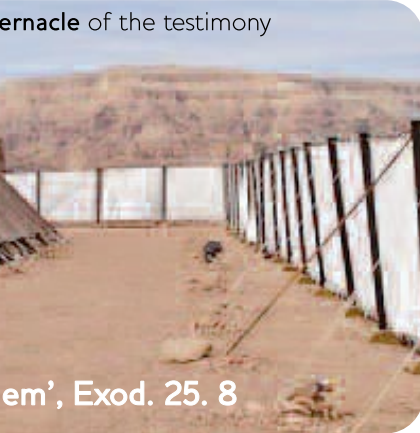
Redemption

Slavery - Salvation
Bondage - B

'I will redeem you with
'When I see the blood, I
'And in the morning, then ye shall

'Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the peo

Key words - Redeemed / delivered / glory / **Writer** - Moses



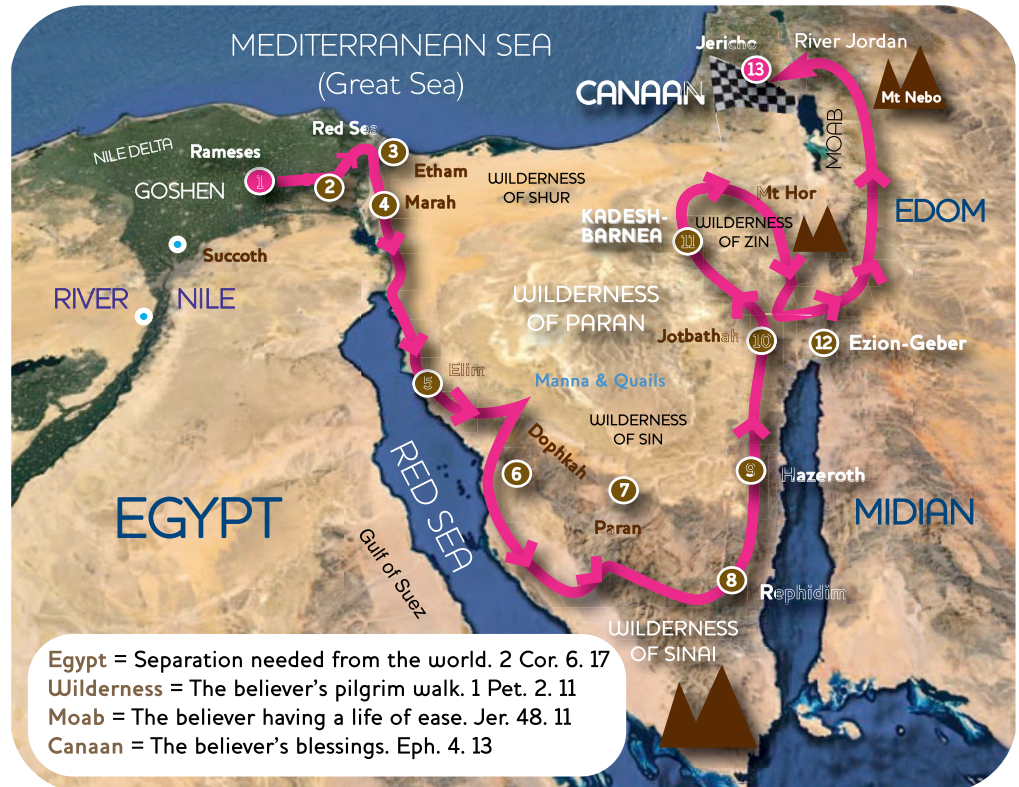
em', Exod. 25. 8

BEZALEEL AHOLIAB

f Sinai

Law
given

Tabernacle



Egypt = Separation needed from the world. 2 Cor. 6. 17
Wilderness = The believer's pilgrim walk. 1 Pet. 2. 11
Moab = The believer having a life of ease. Jer. 48. 11
Canaan = The believer's blessings. Eph. 4. 13

430 years

Gal. 3. 17

430 years from Gen. 15. 13 / 400 years from Gen. 22

1st Month 2nd Year

Passover

b of God

our passover

Cor. 5. 7

Exodus

Redemption

Our deliverer

Acts 7. 35

Red Sea

Baptism

Resurrection

1 Cor. 10. 2

Wilderness

Pilgrim saints

Manna / Rock

John 6. 35 / 1 Cor. 10. 4

Sinai

Pentecost

Law fulfilled

Matt. 5. 17

Tabernacle

Christ / Heaven

Heavenly things

Heb. 8. 5 / 9. 12

e of Exodus in the Gospels.

them of old time, thou shalt not kill', Matt. 5. 21
, how in the bush God spake unto him', Mark 12. 26
even Moses shewed at the bush', Luke 20. 37
that bread from heaven', John 6. 32

OF GOD

STATUTES OF GOD

n Ground

ion - Sanctification

lood - Blessing

a stretched out arm', Exod. 6. 6

will pass over you', Exod. 12. 13

ll see the glory of the LORD'; Exod. 16. 7

SINAI / HOREB

GLORY!
HOUSE OF THE LORD Exod. 34. 26

WORK OF GOD

WRITING OF GOD SPIRIT OF GOD

REDEMPTION - GOD'S PRECEPTS

- 19 Voice from Sinai
- 20 Law at Sinai
- 21 Employment law - the servant
- 22 Criminal law - the sentence
- 23 National law - the stranger
- 24 Written law - the scriptures

REDEMPTION - GOD'S PRESENCE

- 25 The ark and the mercy seat
- 26 The curtains and coverings
- 27 The court and the altar
- 28 The clothing for the High Priest
- 29 The consecration of the priests
- 30 Atonement money and anointing oil
- 31 The appointment of workers
- 32 Rebellion - The golden calf
- 33 The glory of the Lord
- 34 Moses goes up Sinai again
- 35 Moses gathers the people
- 36 Bezaleel and Aholiab work
- 37 From the ark to the anointing oil
- 38 The financial provision
- 39 Consecration of priest
- 40 The tabernacle reared.

SINAI

The book of Leviticus

people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;'



Egypt and the identity of the Pharaoh who ruled at that time. Generally speaking, conservative scholarship placed the exodus from Egypt as circa 1445-1425 BC, and the writing of the book of Exodus approximately 1400 BC. Some commentators and historians opt for a much later date for the exodus, circa 1290-1240 BC.

6. Some important themes in the book

1. God's self-revelation

- The significance of the name 'JEHOVAH', 6. 2-3; 3. 14. Although the title is frequently used in Genesis it is not until we come to Exodus that its full significance is revealed. Here the eternal, self-sufficient One is manifested in the character of redeemer.
- Distinct attributes of God are clearly revealed in specific sections of the book. Chapters 1 to 12 focus upon the sovereignty of God. Chapters 13 to 18 focus upon the faithfulness of God. In chapters 19 to 24 the focus is upon His righteousness expressed in the giving of the law. Moses would later say, 'What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law, which I set before you this day'?³ In chapters 25 to 40 His holiness is emphasized. He directs the people to make a sanctuary that He might dwell among them. The word 'holy' comes eight times between chapters 1 to 24, but forty-five times between chapters 25 to 40.

2. The doctrine of redemption

This is illustrated in the experience of the children of Israel and the progress of the main events in the book.

- The need for redemption: The people in servitude and bondage in Egypt, chapters 1 and 2.
- The source of redemption: God intervening in grace on their behalf, chapters 3 to 11.
- The means of redemption: By blood on the night of the Passover, and by power in the crossing of the Red Sea. A people saved, sanctified, and separated, chapters 12 to 14.
- The joy of redemption: the song of Moses, chapter 15.
- The fruit of redemption: A

people sustained by God in the wilderness, and responsible to obey Him in the keeping of the law. A people amongst whom the Lord can dwell, chapters 16 to 40.

3. The Mosaic Covenant and the dispensation of the Law

Exodus introduces the fifth of the seven dispensations of scripture that of 'Law'. This dispensation, like the preceding four, ended in failure on the part of men, and with divine intervention on the part of God. Men crucified the Lawgiver, but God raised Him from among the dead.

Contemporary with the commencement of the dispensation of the law was the introduction of the third of the five main covenants mentioned in the Bible, the Mosaic Covenant. Although our understanding of the Mosaic Covenant is governed by the teaching of the New Testament, we should, nevertheless, not lose sight of the privilege given to the nation of Israel in being made recipients of that covenant, nor the glory associated with it.

4. The tabernacle

As the book of Exodus opens, the children of Israel are building treasure cities for Pharaoh. In the concluding chapters, they make a tabernacle, a dwelling place for God, 25. 8.

The importance of the tabernacle is demonstrated in the amount of space given to it in the word of God, as well as the breadth of teaching associated with it.

The tabernacle is described in the New Testament as being 'the example and shadow of heavenly things'; and a 'figure for the time then [J. N. DARBY 'now'] present'⁴ a parabolic presentation of spiritual realities. It also conveys to believers today lessons regarding the greatness of God, the glory of Christ and the greater privileges of the Day of Grace.

5. The Aaronic Priesthood

Perhaps the simplest definition of a priest is one who approaches God, or acts on behalf of God in the performance of spiritual responsibilities.

In Exodus 19 verse 6 God promised the children of Israel that if they

obeyed Him and kept His covenant they would be unto Him as a 'kingdom of priests'. But, even before the chapter concluded, it is demonstrated that such is the holiness of God, under the economy of the law there could be no such priesthood. Ultimately, Aaron and his family were divinely selected to function in the priestly office on the nation's behalf.

While Melchisedec is a type of Christ in His person, as King-priest, Aaron is a type of Christ in the pattern of His priesthood, and Aaron's sons are a type of the believer's priesthood.

6. Further examples of typical teaching

- Together, Moses and Aaron are instructive types of Christ as the 'Apostle and High Priest of our profession'.⁵
- The Pascal Lamb in chapter 12 is a type of Christ our Passover.⁶
- The Manna in chapter 16 is typical of Christ, the true bread from heaven.⁷
- The rock of Horeb in chapter 17 is typical of Christ the Rock.⁸
- The three great enemies of the people of God are portrayed in type in Exodus. In Egypt, a type of 'the world', in Pharaoh, a type of 'Satan', and, in Amalek, a type of 'the flesh'.
- There is a sense in which the whole history of the book can be viewed typically, the experiences of the children of Israel being 'ensamples . . . written for our admonition'.⁹

Extracted from the book *Beginnings* by RICHARD CATCHPOLE. It is volume 1 of the Old Testament Overview series and is to be published by Precious Seed Publications later in 2016 DV.

Endnotes

- 1 See Exod. 2. 24; 6. 3-4, 8; 13. 5, 11; 32. 13; 33. 1.
- 2 For a more extensive list see G. RAWLINSON, *Exodus*, part of *A Bible Commentary for English readers*, edited by C. J. Ellicott, Cassell and Company, 1900, pp. 188-189.
- 3 Deut. 4. 8.
- 4 Heb. 8. 5; 9. 9.
- 5 Heb. 3. 1.
- 6 1 Cor. 5. 7.
- 7 John 6. 31-35.
- 8 1 Cor. 10. 4.
- 9 1 Cor. 10. 6-11.



MORIAH MINISTRIES TENTH ANNIVERSARY



By **JOHN JEYANANDAM** Arumbakkan, Chennai, India

'For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone', Ps. 86. 10. The Psalmist's words ring true, as Moriah Ministries gratefully recognizes ten years of God's faithfulness.

Moriah Ministries is a religious charitable trust which was started in November 2005 as the fruit of the long-term vision of a few earnest brethren from Christian assemblies across Tamil Nadu, South India. In accordance with its simple motto, 'Good Books for Better Christian Living', biblically-sound, affordable and high-quality publications are being released in a few Indian languages. The ministry aims to fulfil its vision of developing a desire for Bible study, promoting interest in preaching, and propagating the gospel, as well as inspiring the practice of New Testament principles. By God's abundant grace, over seventy publications, in two Indian languages have been produced to-date, and Indian evangelists have been provided with Tamil gospel tracts for distribution, free of charge. Besides this, evangelistic and missionary programmes are also supported. These publications have impacted and blessed Christian assemblies across India, especially the large Tamil-speaking Christian populace, from different social strata – a staggering 67.86 million (2012) in south India!

Due to the paucity of original writers in Indian languages, works by English authors have been translated. Tamil translations of ten books by William MacDonald, including his acclaimed *Believer's Bible Commentary* (New Testament), have been released as a 2,000-page, hard-cover, three-volume set, and the first of its kind to meet this colossal need. We have been privileged to encourage our brethren to translate many such good English publications into Hindi and another major south Indian language, Telugu.

Tamil literature is also being sent out to Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia and Germany, besides a few other European countries. Three titles are available in Telugu. We have also released books authored by Indian writers in English, and some from a New Zealand missionary to south India. Through these efforts some have trusted Christ as Saviour, while others have understood scriptural truths better. Evangelists too have been encouraged as readers' responses continue to strengthen and spur us on.

Blessed with a skilled and committed team of translators and editors, the scriptural soundness of the publications and high standards of production are faithfully maintained. Typesetting and cover design too are all done in-house and printed by established printers. Indian editions are also being published, after securing copyright permission, making foreign editions more affordable to the Indian readers. However, the distribution of such publications is limited to India and a few Far East countries – currently twelve titles are available. Printing of a few more titles is in progress.

Moriah Ministries has been privileged to print the Indian edition of the magazine *Precious Seed International* for three years now. Completely supported by Indian brethren, the current distribution of 1,200 copies across India continues to generate tremendous blessing, as the responses testify. There is also a growing demand for Precious Seed publications and John Ritchie's commentary series, *What the Bible Teaches*. The publications are mostly Bible study materials on the 'Christian life'. A few *Family Series* booklets have been released in Tamil. Selected Bible Study Charts and aids are available in two Indian languages and also in English. This has awakened great interest from a wide range of Christians. To the best of our knowledge, no other sources

currently supply biblical charts in India.

India has been blessed by missionaries like William Carey, Anthony Norris Groves, and C. Frederick Schwarz, in particular, who translated the New Testament into Tamil. Besides preaching the gospel, they produced highly accurate texts, dictionaries, and concordances for many Indian languages, as well as improving the social fabric. Today, over 2,500 New Testament pattern-based assemblies are flourishing, with more than 2,000 full-time evangelists. To honour a few missionaries, particularly those to south India, reprints of some out-of-print books have been completed. *Pen Pictures of the Early Church Leaders* by ARCHIBALD NAISMITH (who also compiled a Telugu Bible Concordance) is now available and Moriah Ministries initiated *The collected writings of J. M. Davies* volumes 1 and 2 of the Indian edition of the three-volume set, edited by Mervyn Wishart of Northern Ireland and published by Scripture Teaching Library (UK). The final third volume is in the pipeline.

Due to the huge lack of reasonably priced Bibles, gospel literature and Bible study books, there is a burden to publish well-illustrated children's books and illustrated Bible study materials, more titles on missions and evangelization, as well as a burden to bring out a study Bible in Tamil. However, the critical requirement is for responsible brethren to direct the everyday operations of this valuable ministry. Dedicated Christian writers, translators and editors, as well as volunteers for literature distribution, are needed, as the present trustees seek to pass on the vision to the next generation.

We would encourage you to pray with us that *Moriah Ministries* will continue to reach and teach many more in the years ahead.



Introduction

In the last article we looked at the first three of the five tribulation earthquakes.¹ This article will consider the next two earthquakes recorded in Revelation, before studying the earthquake associated with the coming of the King in power and great glory.

The earthquake associated with the seventh trumpet, Rev. 11. 19

The storm clouds are now gathering and the ultimate storm is about to break, yet John is permitted to see the temple of God opened in heaven, and within was 'the ark of his testament (covenant)'. What a reassurance to John in the dark scene before him! God is in absolute control, and still with His people in all their changing circumstances, and about to manifest Himself on their behalf!

Perhaps it would be a good thing for us, as the people of God today, to remember that despite the circumstances in our lives, circumstances which will never bear comparison to events in this tribulation period, that God is still on the throne and still *for us*. We, like John, should look up!

Great hail

The three phenomena, lightning, voices, and thundering, associated with the seventh seal earthquake, Rev. 8. 5, are also experienced at this seventh trumpet earthquake, but with the addition here of great hail. Exodus chapter 9 verses 22-35 speak of the judgement of hail on the land

of Egypt, with the word 'hail' being used twelve times.

Utter devastation was the outcome there, vv. 24-25, yet here we read of *great* hail. The intensity of events increases by the time the next earthquake occurs,² for there we read of great hail 'every stone about the weight of a talent'. A talent is about the weight that a man can hold, or approximately 250kg. The largest hailstone ever recorded on Earth was about 55kg, larger than a tennis ball! This plague of hail is now termed 'exceeding great'.³

EARTHQUAKE OF SCRIPTURE

By **JEFF BROWN** Cardiff, Wales

The greatest earthquake experienced on Earth – the seventh bowl, Rev. 16. 18-21

This earthquake is unprecedented in its greatness; no earthquake event in human history can be remotely compared to it. Today we measure earthquakes in two ways: the Mercalli scale measures the observed effects on a relative scale of 1 to 12, 12 being 'extreme catastrophe – total damage'; the Richter scale measures the magnitude of the earthquake, and the energy released. The observable effects of this earthquake will be as never seen before, and the measured effects will go off the scales of human instruments.⁴

Atmospheric and terrestrial effects of divine judgement on a rebellious humanity will now intensify.⁵ Verse 19 describes

The earthquake caused by the coming of the King to the Mount of Olives, Zech. 14. 4-5

Chronologically, this earthquake appears to the present writer to be the last one mentioned in scripture. In its context, the scene is set right at the very end of the tribulation period. The nations will be drawn by God against Israel,⁷ infected through the centuries with the virus of hatred for the 'people of God'. The opening verses of Zechariah chapter 14 give a picture of defeat. Surely, there is no reprieve from this situation: property is confiscated; womanhood violated; and the population scattered and demoralized. Yet everything is under divine control, and, in God's time, there is divine intervention. All nations may be against the

people of God, v. 2, but, at the last moment, the Lord intervenes to fight against those nations, v. 3.

The Mount of Olives

The Mount of Olives is 'split in two' by this earthquake, as the King Himself descends from heaven. The words of verse 4 clearly indicate the personal, visible, and bodily return of Christ to Earth. Here the very last place His feet trod in His first coming,⁸ will be the first place He will touch at this second phase of His second coming.

The cleaving of the mountain will initially create an escape route for the people of God in that day; they will fear for their lives because of the presence of the Beast, the signs of the great battle looming, and also because of the earthquake. This newly created valley will remain a witness to divine deliverance and power.

widespread urban devastation, 'the cities of the nations fell'. Further proof of this increasing intensity of judgement is seen in verse 20, continuing and almost completing the process begun in Revelation chapter 6 verses 12-14. There, in the first tribulation earthquake, 'every mountain and island were moved out of their places', here 'every island fled away, and the mountains were not found'. The closing verse of the chapter seems to indicate a recognition that God is behind all these happenings, yet we read of men blaspheming God. No mention is made of repentance, just absolute and utter defiance!⁶

AKES TURE (4)



The cleaving of the Red Sea⁹ was another witness of divine deliverance and power to the people of God when under great duress. That cleaving, or dividing, lasted less than twenty-four hours,¹⁰ but the cleaving of Olivet will be permanent. The reference in verse 5 to the historical earthquake in the days of Uzziah, Amos 1. 1, and to the fear it produced, again gives evidence that this earthquake, and everything associated with it in the passage, must be taken literally.

Great changes

This earthquake and the coming of the King to Olivet will be associated with great tectonic, natural, and topographical/physical changes.

Tectonic, vv. 4-5.

A great east-west fault and a massive north-south displacement of the mountain will occur. Recent geological studies have confirmed an enormous east-west fault line in the region, which runs right through the Mount of Olives. Yet the God who created the existing world from nothing in six days, hardly needs a pre-existing fault line to move a mountain! God can use nature, but He needs no help from nature to achieve His purposes. Nature itself depends on God!

Natural, vv. 6-7.

That day will be marked by a distinctive character, and the presence of the Lord. It seems there will be an evening-like twilight, 'not day and not night', which will then brighten at evening. These disturbances of the laws of nature will be a forerunner of coming days of national restoration, and an end to the nation's mourning.¹¹

Topographical/physical, vv. 8-10.

Living waters will flow continually out of Jerusalem, v. 8, and a fountain will flow out of the house of the Lord, Joel 3. 18. Verse 10 speaks of great physical changes to the immediate landscape, creating a vast

plain, and elevating the city itself above all the land around.¹² There are some interesting comparisons and contrasts between the Lord's ascent from Olivet and His descent to the same mountain. We have listed some in the Table below.

Conclusion and Spiritual Significance

What can we learn for our present spiritual benefit?

Generally

Earthquakes are all demonstrations of divine power and sovereignty, while some specifically relate to judgement, deliverance, and the immediate presence of God. These natural phenomena cause great fear to those affected by them in our day, as they will in the tribulation period, but with greater intensity. But will this draw men to God and lead men to repentance? The lessons from past earthquakes, and the biblical record of future tribulation earthquakes would suggest not. It is easy to acknowledge the 'hand of God' in a vague sort of way in a natural event and to view God from a distance, rather than acknowledge Him as near in a personal and intimate relationship.

These great forces that rock the Earth put man into perspective, and show his utter weakness and helplessness. In days of uncertainty and constant change, the God of heaven is in absolute and final control, and soon will fully manifest the eternal victory over human power and evil. Ultimately world-dominating powers and confederacies will be overthrown. All levels of society will be affected, whether great or small – none can evade God's judgements. Reality will begin to set in and men will eventually realize that there is a God in heaven. Atheism, humanism,

agnosticism – indeed any 'ism', will have no answer; neither will religion! What ensues from the Olivet earthquake shows that Israel has, and always will have, a special place in the heart of God and in the furtherance of His purposes on Earth. God's name will be vindicated, His glory served, and His Son manifested. When divine grace and mercy are spurned, man will soon feel divine justice and retribution.

Specifically

Take heart, fellow believer; the wicked will not triumph for ever, even though present-day events seem to point that way. The persecution, despising and hatred for the people of God in that day, as in our present day, will only last for a limited time. God's definite prophetic programme on Earth has finality in view. As believers, when part of this programme is being worked out on Earth, we shall have already been raptured. God's programme also encompasses an eternal home in heaven for us. Let us live our daily lives now in the glorious anticipation of that coming day!

Endnotes

- 1 Rev. 6. 12-15; 8. 5; 11. 13.
- 2 Rev. 16. 18.
- 3 Rev. 16. 21.
- 4 Seismometers measure earthquake amplitude/magnitude.
- 5 Hag. 2. 6; Isa. 24. 17-21; Joel. 3. 16.
- 6 The reader might want to make a further study of Revelation chapter 16 by noticing the occurrence of the word 'great'. It occurs eleven times in the chapter, describing eight separate subjects. The references are vv. 1, 9, 12, 14, 17, 18 (x2), 19 (x2), 21 (x2). These certainly will be 'great' and memorable times!
- 7 Zech. 14. 2.
- 8 Acts 1. 8-12.
- 9 Exod. 14. 21; Ps. 136. 13-15.
- 10 Exod. 14. 21; cf. 14. 27.
- 11 Isa. 60. 18-22; Joel 3. 12-16.
- 12 Micah 4. 1-2.

Acts 1. 8-12	Zech. 14. 4-6
Historical: 2,000 years ago	Prophetic: at least seven years from now
The Lord's last time on Earth in the first advent	The Lord's first time on Earth in the second advent
The Lord was taken up; ascended	The Lord came down; descended
A cloud received Him out of their sight	He will come <i>on</i> and <i>with</i> clouds
He went into heaven	He came from heaven
A few of His own saw Him go up	Every eye shall see Him
He ascended to heaven alone	He will return with a great company of saints and angels



Most of the characters we encounter around the cross of our Lord were unbelievers; Peter stands out as an exception. He is a very popular character because he is so spontaneous and so honest, often opening his mouth and putting his foot in it. Yet Peter loved his Lord intensely and had such a profound insight into our Lord's deity. He was the disciple who said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God', Matt. 16. 16. It was Peter who replied to the Lord's question, 'Will ye also go away?' with 'to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life', John 6. 68. And he it was who voiced strong objections to the Lord washing his feet in the upper room, being acutely embarrassed at the incongruity of the Christ kneeling at His disciple's feet: 'Lord, dost thou wash my feet?' 13. 6. We are touched to hear his deep yearning to be associated with his Lord so that, in response to our Lord's 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me', he bursts out, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head', vv. 8-9. How was it possible, then, that he, of all the disciples, could deny knowing his Lord and that with oaths and cursings? How could he have let down his Lord at a time when he was most needed? There were several steps in his downfall which we need to observe.

Peter ignored a warning

Our Lord warned Peter pointedly in the upper room that he was going to deny Him. Matthew records our Lord as saying to the whole band of disciples, 'All ye shall be offended because of me this night', Matt. 26. 31. Then, specifically to Peter, He warns, 'I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me', Luke 22. 34. Our Lord also warned Peter from whom that temptation would come, 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, [all the disciples] that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee [Peter] that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, [turned to

CHARACTERS AROUND THE PETER who denied

me again] strengthen thy brethren', vv. 31-32. Yet Peter refused to listen to such clear warnings. He was deaf to his Shepherd, because:

He trusted in himself

Peter's responses to our Lord's direct warnings show he was full of self-confidence. 'Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death', Luke 22. 33; 'Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee', Matt. 26. 35; 'Although all shall be offended, yet will not I', Mark 14. 29. In fact, the implication is that our Lord gave Peter his first warning in the upper room, and repeated it on the way to Gethsemane. Peter left the upper room and continued protesting his loyalty to the Lord all the way to the garden, vv. 27-31. 'If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise', v. 31. Here was one who was too full of himself.

He pandered to the flesh

Our Lord graciously issued yet another warning to His disciples. 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak', Matt. 26. 41. Three times our Lord left them to watch with Him, and on each occasion He returned to find them asleep. When, eventually, the temptation to flee to save their own skins came with the men who arrived to arrest their Lord, none of the disciples had either the spiritual strength or the moral courage to resist that temptation. The result was that 'they all forsook him, and fled', Mark 14. 50. Admittedly, Peter raised a sword to defend our Lord, but his courage did not last and he, too, fled. We often quote the phrase 'the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak' when referring to our own feebleness to resist temptation in general, but surely our Lord was warning His disciples, and Peter in particular, about the temptation to leave Him that they would face that night. When the soldiers came to arrest Him, our Lord, who had spent time in the garden in prayer with His Father, and was thus strengthened,

was the one who stepped forward and said, 'I am . . . let these go their way', John 18. 8.

He followed afar off

Three of the gospels record that 'Peter followed afar off'. Although John, too, had fled from Gethsemane leaving our Lord alone, we discover him going in to the high priest's palace to which our Lord had been taken; so, evidently, he thought the better of it quickly. Being known to the high priest, he was allowed in, vv. 15-16. It would appear that he was already in the palace with our Lord when Peter arrived at the door. It was John who came down and spoke to the doorkeeper so that Peter was allowed in.

He took his eyes off the Lord

Having arrived before Peter, John evidently went 'in *with* Jesus into the palace of the high priest', v. 15. This was probably the inner chamber where the trial was to take place. He must then have returned inside having let Peter in. Yet Peter did not go in there, but stood outside in the courtyard. We may say it was courageous of Peter to return to be near the Lord, but the fact is that not only did he follow 'afar off', but he also kept afar off. John was the one who went in with the Lord and was witness to much of His sufferings there. Peter did not witness the wicked interrogation of our Lord by the high priest. He did not see the soldiers of the high priest mock his Lord, blindfold Him, strike Him, taunt Him and revile Him, nor did he see Caiaphas' refusal to rebuke them for mistreating the accused. Peter's eyes were no longer on the Lord and His troubles; they were soon to be on his own.

He kept the wrong company

Says the scripture, graphically, 'it was cold'. Peter sees a fire kindled in the courtyard and approaches it to warm himself and his hands, then sits down among them, Mark 14. 54. Suddenly, he is accosted by one of the serving company. If we follow Luke's record,





CRUCIFIXION 3

him

By **IAN REES**
Tenby, Wales

thinking that his source was Peter many years after the crucifixion, 'A certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire and earnestly looked upon him and said, This man was also with him'. Peter's response was 'Woman, I know him not'. 'After a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what

out of the inner chambers of the high priest, through the courtyard where Peter stood. I have little doubt in my mind that, when Peter heard the cock crow and remembered the warnings of his Lord, he desperately hoped the Lord had not heard him. But when Peter saw the face of his Lord, no doubt full of love and forgiveness, he broke his heart. How had it come to this? How are the mighty fallen! Observe again the steps in Peter's downfall, for we must learn from them ourselves. If you and I ignore the warnings of scripture, trust in our own strength to follow the Lord, pander to the flesh instead of watching and praying, follow the Lord afar off, take our eyes off Him and keep the wrong company, who knows where we might end up, or what we might do or say? The warnings of scripture

standeth take heed lest he fall', 1 Cor. 10. 12. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit in us and through the strengthening of Christ that we can walk worthy. Let us be careful to be spiritually-minded, not carnally-minded, pandering to the flesh. We must learn what it is to watch and pray, so that when temptation comes we have the spiritual strength to withstand it. And, as we follow our Lord, let us do our utmost to follow Him as closely as we can. The moment He becomes distant we need to be alarmed. Let us keep our eyes on Him, not on ourselves and not on others either. It is so easy for us to be wrapped up with ourselves, or anxious about what others think of us. Our Lord says, 'follow me', not follow them. And let us be careful what company we keep. It is part of our



thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew', Luke 22. 55-60. Mark adds, 'He began to curse and to swear', Mark 14. 71. Where did a godly fisherman find such words? Surely he heard them from the company of soldiers and servants with whom he had spent the last few hours, and desperately wanted to appear to be one of them.

How did this disciple, who loved the Lord so much, end up weeping bitterly? It would seem as though, just as the cock crew, our Lord was led

are for all believers, not just some: do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; keep yourself from idols; deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; let all bitterness, and wrath and anger be put away from you with all malice; lie not one to another; grieve not the Holy Spirit of God; neglect not the assembling of yourselves together. We ignore these and other clear warnings from the scripture at our own spiritual peril. Let us be vigilant that we do not follow the Lord in our own strength, for if we do so we shall certainly fall. 'Let him that thinketh he

human nature to want to blend in, to be part of a group, to be accepted, to be popular. When we are at home with the wrong company, we are in a dangerous position and we can so easily be compromised.

Are you following the Lord? That is good. So am I, by the grace of God. There are many that you and I know who once followed Him but do so no more. Let us not be proud of ourselves if we are following. The question is, how close are we, and in whose strength?



This article is part of an ongoing study. The writer's intention is to look at each phrase and statement in the letter and to glean a simple understanding of what Paul was writing to Titus about. There will not be a lengthy introduction to each article so it would be advantageous to read the previous articles either in the printed edition of the magazine or online via www.preciousseed.org.

'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting', v. 5

Paul had left Titus in Crete to complete some unfinished business. He had been on the island at some stage with Titus and had moved on leaving him behind. It is not really clear from scripture when Paul had visited the island; the only record is in Acts chapter 27 but it seems unlikely that this is the occasion that he is referring to as he was on his way to Rome. What we do know is that he was there and Titus had work to complete on Paul's behalf. As we work our way through the rest of the letter we will come across the different loose ends that had to be tied up. Titus was instructed to ensure that the new believers understood the truth that would enable them to be healthy Christians. Teaching and good practice are emphasized in this epistle; one is not promoted at the expense of the other. Paul addresses social issues, relationship issues, truth about God and His character, church government and leadership. The apostle also focuses on problems of wrong doctrine and seemingly impressive preachers, the dangers and pitfalls of cultural and ethnic norms, family structures and order. As the letter progresses, Paul considers Christian behaviour in the workplace, doctrine about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Christian's civic obligations, the doctrine of salvation, the testimony of a believer and their influence on society. There seems to be very little that he does not cover in this short letter. All this truth and information was for passing on to new believers yet, in our generation, many believers have a very basic diet compared to the one we see outlined in 'Titus'.



By **STEPHEN G. BAKER** Liverpool, England

'and ordain elders in every city, as I appointed thee', v. 5.

The second reason for writing was the appointment of elders in every city. Reading this letter in isolation without any other New Testament letters may lead us to ask 'should there be elders "per city" as opposed to "per church"?' However, when referring to the other passages in scripture that deal with elders, we always find that they are linked to a local church and not a city.

Therefore, it is safe to assume that each city had an assembly. As we follow the progress of the gospel in Acts chapters 14 and 15, we see cities being visited, souls being saved and churches being established in each of these towns and cities. In Acts chapter 15 verse 36 Paul and Barnabas decide to go back and visit every city (these could be small towns) to see how the brethren were getting on.

The second thing we notice here is that Titus was to appoint elders *in* every city not *over* every city. The ecclesiastical system of 'bishops' over cities is not biblical; the elder was a man of maturity who cared for the flock of God but did not dominate it. The word used for a 'bishop' was adopted long ago by the 'church' world to serve its ends in building an ecclesiastical hierarchy. In the New Testament, the word simply means an overseer, one who has responsibility to watch over the people of God and to lead and direct them in the fear of God. We will see more of this as we go through the features of an elder in this passage. The word 'appoint' is sometimes replaced with the word 'ordain'. Strictly speaking, this only means 'to point the finger', i.e., to identify.

Identifying and recognizing elders in a local assembly can be problematic. Human nature being what it is, there will always be a tendency for

individuals to see the work of an elder in terms of power and position. Individuals may seek this position and relatives, friends and families may be keen to see someone from their group take this role. It is very clear from the teaching of the New Testament that being an overseer is a work and not a position of power. The significance of how the writers of the New Testament define the work of an overseer, outline the qualities that must be found in one who is called to this work, and describe how they are called and/or identified must not be lost on us.

Let us have a look at how different parties in the New Testament played their role in identifying elders:

Evangelists and Teachers – in Acts chapter 14 verse 23 we see Paul and Barnabas returning to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. While they are there they strengthen the souls of the disciples and encourage them to go on for God, despite the impending persecution that they will face. Before they leave, they chose elders 'in every church', praying and fasting as they commend them to the Lord.

The local believers – In two different verses in Hebrews chapter 13 we are taught that believers in the local assembly should know who the elders are. Chapter 13 verse 7 says, 'Remember them which have the rule over you', and verse 17 states, 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls'. In both instances you cannot follow or obey if you do not know who the elders are. So the believers in a local assembly should be able to identify who the elders are.¹

Other existing elders – When addressing the honour and material provision that the local assembly should make for an elder, 1 Tim. 5. 17-25, Paul also addresses a couple of other issues. One of these is that a man should not be brought into the number of elders suddenly but carefully, v. 22.



f rom Titus

(3)

The Holy Spirit of God – When Paul meets the elders from Ephesus, as recorded in Acts chapter 20, he gives them a warning about future difficulties that they will face. It would be easy to give up and be disheartened when things got tough. Paul reminds them that the work of the overseer was given to them by the Holy Spirit of God. He says 'over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers'. The work of the elder

the fact that the path they are on will be hard. Before leaving these towns and the individual churches in each of them, we are informed that they 'appointed elders in every church'. The idea in this expression is that they chose them; they pointed them out; they identified them. On what basis would they be chosen? On the preference of the visiting preachers or by a more independent standard? The criteria are set out in our passage



is a divinely appointed work. It is also the work of feeding God's people and there is a great necessity to remember that the church (the people of God) was personally purchased by the blood of Christ and is therefore precious to Him.

How are they called and identified and what are they called to do?

In Acts chapter 14 verse 23, Paul and Barnabas are on a return visit to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. They are spending time establishing the new believers in their faith and encouraging them to 'continue in the faith', despite

in Titus chapter 1 and in 1 Timothy chapter 3, which we will come back to.²

When we come to the record in Acts chapter 20 verse 28 where Paul meets the elders from the church in Ephesus, he makes this statement: 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood'. This passage is teaching us that men are 'made overseers' by the Holy Spirit. It is a work that God calls men to and fits them for; it is a spiritual

work. It is not an administrative role or a management role but it is a role involving spiritual leadership. The terms used to describe the work are significant. In Acts chapter 14 the men are called 'elders', indicating that they are spiritually mature, see also 1 Tim. 3. 6. In addition to this, in Acts chapter 20 they are called 'overseers' which describes what they do – they care for God's people, they watch over and oversee the condition of the church of God. They rule, guide and lead appropriately to meet the needs of the saints. In this passage the local elders are also reminded that their responsibility is to 'shepherd the church of God'.

First Timothy chapter 5 deals with the responsibility of the local church to provide for and respect, give double honour to, elders who 'labour in the word and doctrine'. That is, there will be among the overseers men who are teachers of the word and their hard work in this respect may, at times, deprive them of other means of income. There is no precedent in the New Testament for one man to be employed by a local assembly to preach and teach. There is, however, a responsibility on a local church to meet the financial and material needs of those who have made sacrifices to feed the church of God.

In the next article we will discover the character of the men whom God will raise up to be elders.

Endnotes

- 1 The same point is made in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 12, 13.
- 2 It is clear from reading the accounts in the book of Acts, 11. 30, 20.17, and the epistles, Phil. 1. 1; Jas. 5. 14, that 'the elders' were a clearly identifiable group of men. It should not need to be stated, as it is obvious from an honest reading of the New Testament, that elders were always men. Leadership has been placed in the hands of men which is not a popular concept in the modern world.

References to Elders and local Churches

'The church of God', 1 Tim. 3. 5; 'in every church', Acts 14. 23; 'with the whole church', Acts 15. 22; 'called the elders of the church', Acts 20. 17; 'the elders of the church', Jas. 5. 14.



The complexity of man's need demanded a divine plan to meet it. The Bible declares man a sinner: a sinner by nature, practice and choice. On account of sins, man needed remission, the forgiveness of sins. Man by his sin and wicked works was constituted an enemy of God and was at enmity with God. To meet his need as the enemy of God he required reconciliation. Man not only had sins and was at enmity with God, he was also guilty. In Romans, Paul proves the guilt of all mankind, whether viewed as a pagan living in the gutter of sin, chapter 1, or an enlightened Gentile, living on the pavement and judging the man in the gutter, chapter 2, or a Jew in the synagogue, chapter 3. Paul writes, 'we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin', Rom. 3. 9, and 'all have sinned', 3. 23, so that all the world is guilty before God. Guilty man needed something more than remission and reconciliation; as a guilty sinner, he needed justification to clear him of every charge against him, and to be pronounced righteous. The foundation of forgiveness, reconciliation, and justification is the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. Man as a guilty sinner, alienated from God, merited the wrath of God, but Christ, having endured the wrath of God upon sin, provided the basis for man to be forgiven, reconciled, and justified in His sacrificial death at Calvary.

Propitiation and atonement

Propitiation is a New Testament word and is not found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament equivalent is the word 'atonement', which is found once in the KJV in Romans chapter 5 verse 11, 'through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the atonement'; but Greek scholars have pointed out that the word should be translated reconciliation.

Some have seen an immense distinction between atonement and propitiation; the present writer would not go so far as that. Rather, atonement is the Old Testament equivalent to

THE DOCTRINE OF

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propitiation in the New Testament. A careful study of the usage of the Hebrew word translated 'atonement' will help to see the importance of the word. It is used in connection with the offerings in the early chapters of Leviticus. When an Israelite brought his burnt offering, presented it at the door of the tabernacle, and killed it, it was then offered on the brazen altar and it was 'accepted for him to make atonement for him', Lev. 1. 4. When a sin or trespass offering was brought, it was to make atonement for him, and, in virtue of his sin offering, his sin was forgiven him.

On Israel's Day of Atonement, Lev. 16, the blood of the sin offering was brought by the high priest into the holiest and sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat. In that act, God's claims were met and atonement, or, in New Testament language, propitiation, was made in respect of the nation's sin and uncleanness. God could now continue dwelling among them, albeit only for a year when the procedure would be repeated. The evidence that the blood sprinkled mercy-seat had met the claims of God was when Aaron laid both his hands on the head of the scapegoat, confessing all the iniquities and transgression of all their sins; the sin-laden scapegoat was then led away into an uninhabited land never to be seen again. Against this background, the publican, smiting his breast, cried, 'God be merciful [propitious] to me a sinner', Luke 18. 13.

Propitiation - its meaning established

First, it is important to observe the New Testament references to the word 'propitiation'. We have already drawn attention to the prayer of the Publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner' and observed that the word 'merciful' can be translated, 'propitious'. Paul declares, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood', Rom. 3. 25, or, as it could be rendered, 'through faith in the virtue of his blood'. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, explaining the reasons that

necessitated the humanity of Christ the Son of God, writes, 'Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people', Heb. 2. 17 JND. The word 'reconcile' in the KJV is misleading. Sins can never be reconciled unto God; it is persons that are reconciled to God, not sins.

The word 'propitiation' occurs twice in John's First Epistle. In chapter 2 verse 2 it is used in connection with the case of any one of God's children committing a sin. Christ, now upon the throne, is 'the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world'. Against the background of God's love for us, we read, 'God . . . sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins', 4. 10. Putting together the statements in the epistles regarding propitiation, we have three important truths set before us:

- The work of propitiation, Heb. 2. 17;
- The place of propitiation, Rom. 3. 25;
- The person who is the propitiation, 1 John 2. 2; 4. 10.

The work of propitiation explained

The Lord Jesus accomplished the work of propitiation when on the cross He offered Himself to God a propitiatory sacrifice on account of sin. This is confirmed in the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 9. We read, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience', v. 14; 'but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself', v. 26; and, 'So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many', v. 28. The writer also draws attention to the fact that it was Christ as high priest who made propitiation for the sins of the people, Heb. 2. 17. This takes our minds back to the Day of Atonement, Lev. 16, indicating that the work was a





PROPITIATION

priestly work, for it was Aaron, Israel's high priest, who alone officiated on the Day of Atonement. The biblical teaching concerning propitiation is not appeasement but satisfaction. The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ has given to God the satisfaction His holiness demanded.

The place of propitiation identified

The word the apostle uses for propitiation in Romans chapter 3 verse 25 can equally be rendered mercy-seat. The word God gave to

because what Christ is always gives character to what He does. In this passage, it is propitiation accomplished. The apostle states one reason for writing this epistle, 'these things write I unto you, that ye sin not', 2. 1. The apostle takes account of the possibility that a believer may fail and commit sin, in which case 'we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous'. On the basis of His perfect righteousness, and being Himself the propitiation for our sins, the Lord Jesus is fully qualified to be our advocate with the Father.



Moses concerning the mercy-seat was, 'there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat', Exod. 25. 22. In selecting this word, Paul indicates that with the work of propitiation accomplished by Christ in His sacrificial death on the cross, God's holiness has been eternally satisfied.

We cannot overstate the importance of God's complete satisfaction in Christ and His propitiatory sacrifice accomplished at Calvary. On that basis alone, there is provided a meeting place for man to meet with God.

The person who is the propitiation

The apostle John in his First Epistle establishes that Christ is Himself the propitiation, 2. 2. This is important

Perhaps we ought to mark the difference in the offices the Lord has taken upon Him. As mediator, the man Christ Jesus comes between God and man and, by His work on the cross, guarantees reconciliation to God. As High Priest in heaven, He intercedes for, and sympathizes with, His people. His sympathy is the result of His experiences on earth during the days of His flesh. His advocacy is linked with His presence in heaven with the Father.

He is always our advocate whether we fail or not. The apostle having before him the possibility of a believer falling into a sin wrote, 'If we sin'. It is worth noting that failure on the part of the believer does not break off our relationship

with the Father; He is still our Father. The eternal efficacy of the Lord's propitiatory death is ever before the eye of God and, on this ground, Christ acts as our advocate to effect restoration to communion with the Father. The meaning of the word advocate is to 'come alongside of'; there is that element involved in the work of advocacy. In times of failure, our advocate 'comes alongside of' us to help, and, if necessary, to bring an awareness that a sin has been committed, then to bring us to confession: 'if we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins [what we have done] and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'.

The word advocate is also a legal term, one that is used in a court. As our advocate, He is not engaged in a continual ministry of appeasement, nor is it the idea that in heaven He is pleading our case before His Father. As He is the propitiation, the propitiatory sacrifice having been accomplished, that is sufficient as far as the Father is concerned for putting into effect what is required for restoration to communion with Him.

The motivating power in propitiation

The subject is taken up again by the apostle John in chapter 4 verse 10, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins'. What a climax to this glorious doctrine of propitiation! God loved us, and, in His love, sent His Son as the propitiation for our sins. In this verse, the emphasis is on the Lord Jesus Himself being the propitiatory sacrifice through which God can now show mercy and grant forgiveness. It brings us back into communion and, when necessary through some failure, restores us to the joy of communion with Himself on the ground of our confession.

The practical application

'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another', 4. 11. Nothing should be allowed to change or diminish this exhortation to God's children; all in the family of God are to 'love one another'. The Lord Jesus said, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another', John 13. 35.



Having been called and sent forth by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul (Paul) were commended to the grace of God by the Antioch assembly in Syria. They sailed from Seleucia to Cyprus, where they preached the word in Salamis and Paphos. Then, they moved on to Perga and Antioch in Pisidia. Later, they preached in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Through these intensive labours, lasting a 'long time', Acts 14. 3, assemblies known as the 'Galatian assemblies' came into existence. It was in Lystra that Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead.

At the conclusion of his first missionary journey, Paul retraced his steps, 'confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith', v. 22. This was done by means of timely counsel, teaching, and encouragement from the preachers.

Following this work of God, the believers soon came under the influence of teaching that was calculated to bring them into religious bondage. In verse 1, a bold caption could be written over the entire chapter, urging them to shun every kind of bondage, 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage', Gal. 5. 1.

CONTRASTS

Liberty and bondage, v. 2

Here, Paul warns them that, by accepting the Law as an added means of salvation, the Lord Jesus will be of no advantage to them. He therefore urges them to reject such bondage.

Liberty and licence, v. 13

He then reminds them that whilst they were called to freedom, they should not use it as an opportunity for the flesh. He makes it perfectly clear that the believer has liberty from sin, not liberty to sin.

Liberty and life, v. 25

Now, he indicates that the believer lives by the Spirit and should walk by the Spirit. He (the Spirit) is

A LIFE OF VICTORY I

mentioned no less than seven times. Four particular references to the Holy Spirit are worth considering: walking by the Spirit, v. 16, led by the Spirit, v. 18, live by the Spirit, v. 25, and walk (orderly, in line) by the Spirit, v. 25.

● Walking by the Spirit, v. 16

'This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh', NEWBERRY. 'But I say [this is what I mean] walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh', ESV. 'Walking by the Spirit' is the rule and the power by which behaviour is to be regulated. It could equally be read 'in the Spirit'. In this case, the Holy Spirit is regarded as the sphere within which, and the path along which, the life of freedom is to be lived.

● Led by the Spirit, v. 18

'But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law'. In this verse, Paul is not referring to the Spirit's leading in assembly meetings. He is, however, referring to personal living. References to the leading of the Spirit in collective testimony are found in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14. Here, in Galatians chapter 5, the Spirit of God is seen working in the believer, rather than through the believer. This has to do with the development of one's character. Subjection to the directives of the Holy Spirit will produce fruitfulness, which is the fragrance redolent of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. To enjoy life by the Spirit, we must repudiate the Law, and law-keeping, as a means of justification, and as a way of life. Both the Law and the flesh are

incapable of producing such a spiritual condition. The Law and the flesh are opposed to the Spirit of God, and the spiritual progress of the believer. Whereas, 'To walk by the Spirit' and to 'be led by the Spirit', indicate a purpose of heart and a determination to be under His control in every sphere and phase of life.

By

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CONFLICT

In verse 17, the Spirit and the flesh are opposed to each other. If a full life 'in the Spirit' is to be enjoyed, it is imperative that both the flesh and the Law be rejected. 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: for these are contrary [opposed] the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would'. Some believers seem to overlook the fact of the Christian's conflict with the flesh. They look upon regeneration as a total change, or renewal of the old sinful nature.

If this were true, then the believer would have nothing with which to struggle. The world, also, would have no charms for those whose sinful flesh had been changed; and Satan would have nothing by which to act.

The place that Amalek occupied in the history of the nation of Israel provides typical and vital lessons for every believer in the Lord Jesus. C. H. MACKINTOSH observes, 'Had Israel conceived the idea that, when Pharaoh's hosts were gone, their conflict was at an end, they would have been sadly put about when Amalek came upon them. The fact is, their conflict only then began. Thus it is with the believer, for "all these things happened unto Israel for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition." (1 Cor. 10. 11)'.

Perpetual conflict

From the moment of conversion,





IN THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT I

a perpetual conflict begins in the life of the believer, and remains to the end of their days. But this does not necessarily mean spiritual defeat. Is it our deepest longing to exclude fulfilling the desires of the flesh – the fallen nature or the sin principle? Then, this verse provides the answer. To deal with this conflict, we need a greater power than ourselves. 'It is not a matter of hearing mysterious inner voices or irrational promptings; rather, it is a diligent desire to live according to the Word of God. After all, the Holy Spirit will not lead contrary to the Scriptures which He inspired', DAVID NEWELL.

Decisive conflict

It is extremely important to understand what is meant in the closing statement of verse 17, 'so that ye cannot do the things that ye would', or 'to keep [prevent] you from doing the things you want to do' ESV. Clearly, this refers to those things that you desire, the things toward which fallen nature naturally turns. These are enumerated in verse 19 as 'the works of the flesh'. But the believer has come into liberty from such bondage. Since the believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it is no longer inevitable that she/he must yield to the evil desires of the flesh. If the condition of verses 16 and 18 – walking by the Spirit and led by the Spirit – is fulfilled, the believer can enjoy happy liberty from such bondage. By yielding to the guidance and strengthening of the Spirit, the believer is empowered to refuse such promptings, and to yield the 'fruit of the Spirit', v. 22. 'Walking by the Spirit' will prevent us from fulfilling the desires of the flesh. This is the precious outcome of the restraining action of the Spirit on the constraining attitudes and actions of the flesh, giving victory to the believer.

Romans chapter 8 verse 2 helps us understand this better: 'For the law [principle] of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death'. The characteristic principle of the Holy Spirit is to empower believers for holy living, whereas, the characteristic principle

of indwelling sin is to drag a person down to death. It is like the law of gravity. When you throw a ball into the air, it comes back down to earth, because it is heavier than the air it displaces. Similarly, a living bird is also heavier than the air it displaces. But if you were to throw a living bird up in the air, the bird would flap its wings and fly away. Why? The law of life in the bird overcomes the law of gravity. The Spirit is the power of the risen life, the power in which that life is enjoyed.

Resultant conflict

In verses 19-25, Paul describes the characteristics of the two kinds of life; 'life in the flesh', vv. 19-21, and 'life in the Spirit', vv. 22-23.

The works of the flesh, vv. 19-21a

This catalogue of evil may be considered in four groups:

- 1 Sensual sins, v. 19 – fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness. These involve unlawful sexual indulgence, followed by impurity of mind as well as actions, then an insolent disregard for decency.
- 2 Religious 'pagan' sins, v. 20a – idolatry, witchcraft, worshipping objects rather than God, sacrificing to demons. These are followed by witchcraft or sorcery, which originally meant trafficking in drugs and spiritism.
- 3 Social sins, v. 20b – including hatred or hostility. These manifest themselves in 'hatefulness and hating one another', as well as enmity against God. 'Variance' means discord and rivalry, resulting in strife and fighting.
- 4 Personal sins, v. 21 – demonstrated in drunkenness. This means excessive drinking of alcohol, and revelling or wild parties and orgies, resulting from drunkenness and ending in debauchery.

Paul follows with this warning: 'They which do [practise] such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God', v. 21.

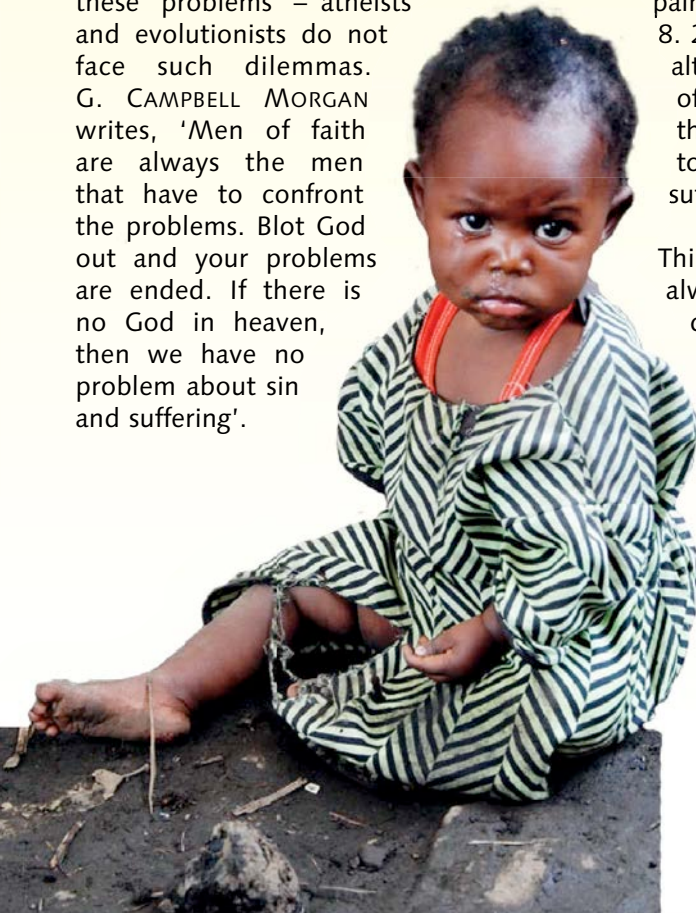




The subject matter of this article is not an easy one; however, there are challenges that we must face in relation to it and, above all, avoid superficial answers. Glib 'one-liners' are insensitive and of little comfort to a person who is in great anguish of soul. We must handle the issues that confront us with sensitivity and compassion.

The challenges that we cannot avoid

Clearly, the presence of pain and suffering in the world tests our belief in God's love and power. We have to face the charge from unbelievers that He is indifferent to human suffering and/or powerless to do anything about it. The fact that righteous people suffer and the wicked appear to prosper has troubled many a believer down the centuries of time, including some of the psalmists, e.g., Ps. 73. 2-5. Why some believers are called upon to face more pain and suffering than others can also lead us to question divine justice. It is, of course, our faith that presents us with these 'problems' – atheists and evolutionists do not face such dilemmas. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN writes, 'Men of faith are always the men that have to confront the problems. Blot God out and your problems are ended. If there is no God in heaven, then we have no problem about sin and suffering'.



THE 'PROBLEM'

Foundation stones upon which to build

If we are to arrive at a helpful understanding of the 'problems' confronting us, there are a number of foundation stones upon which we need to build. First, whatever God allows must be right. We must base our thinking on the fact that He is sovereign. Abraham's question is apposite: 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Gen. 18. 25. Paul's question is equally fitting: 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?' Rom. 9. 20.

Second, it must be remembered that creation is under God's curse as a result of man's sin. God said to Adam, 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life', Gen 3. 17. Paul writes, 'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now', Rom. 8. 22. Our salvation does not alter the fact that we are part of this fallen creation and, therefore, we cannot expect to be spared the pain and suffering that accompanies it.

Third, pain and suffering must always be viewed in the context of eternity. Peter put it in this context when he wrote to believers who were about to pass through the fires of persecution: 'But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you', 1 Pet. 5. 10. JONI EARECKSON TADA, who was confined to a wheelchair following a diving accident, writes, 'Scripture is constantly telling us to view life

from an eternal perspective. What is transitory, such as physical pain, will not endure, but what is lasting, such as the eternal weight of glory accrued from that pain, will remain forever'.

By

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Fourth, pain and suffering must be viewed in the context of the fact that 'all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose', Rom. 8. 28.

Suffering does not alter this truth; indeed, it is the forerunner of coming glory.

Fifth, in seeking to understand pain and suffering, we must ask the right question. We tend to ask, 'Why?' in the belief that it would make life easier and the pain more bearable if we knew the reason why. However, a more vital and helpful question is, 'What?'; i.e., What is God seeking to teach me and produce in me through my suffering?

Sixth, pain and suffering can be our master or our servant. HERBERT CARSON's comments challenge us: 'There are many whose tragic reaction to suffering is bitterness and hatred to God. There are others who in the darkness of their tears see a light . . . the light is God's mercy'.

The seventh, but by no means least, foundation stone upon which we need to build is to read the scriptures carefully, prayerfully and extensively if we wish to hear God's voice through our suffering. We can only claim His promises in times of suffering if we know what they are!

Facing up to 'the problem' with the scriptures

The scriptures teach us that God has a special hand in our suffering. Naomi said, 'I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty', Ruth 1. 21. Job declared, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;



OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

blessed be the name of the Lord', Job. 1. 21. The psalmist writes, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes', Ps. 119. 71. Joseph confronted his brothers with their wrong doing towards him with the words, 'But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good', Gen. 50. 20. The words of the Lord Jesus concerning the death of Lazarus are particularly relevant in this context: 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby', John 11. 4.

Although, naturally speaking, we might find it hard to accept that our sufferings work together for good, the scriptures confirm that this is the case, Rom. 8. 28. They deepen our knowledge of God as Father and also teach us more about ourselves. Contrary to expectations, the scriptures teach that suffering brings joy, rather than unhappiness, Job 5. 17; 1 Pet. 4. 14. G. MATHESON writes, 'The sweetest of all the uses of adversity is to show me the joy which it cannot take away'. Certainly, if we are exercised about our suffering, it will draw us away from the world. When earthly comforts are removed from us, we get things into the correct perspective, whereas in times of prosperity our hearts are often divided in their affections. Our suffering can be a powerful instrument to silence wicked men, 1 Pet. 3. 14-16, and, most importantly, it prepares the way for coming glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

Images that help us to understand suffering and pain

The inspired writers of the scriptures employed a number of images for suffering and pain that help us to understand their nature and purpose, e.g. a furnace, a storm, a war, birth

pains, and trial.¹ Although, at first sight, these pictures might appear to be negative, we learn the very positive lessons from them that God takes us through the fires of affliction to purify and cleanse us, and He keeps us through the storms of life and delivers us out of them. He also uses suffering to test us, to prove what is genuine in our faith. It is important to note that He does not save us from our trials and tribulations, but delivers us out of them, 2 Tim. 3. 10-11.

Learning from the examples

Paul prayed three times for the removal of a 'thorn in the flesh', but his request was not granted, 2 Cor. 12. 7-10. Sometimes, the Lord delivers us out of suffering, but He may not. Ultimately, Paul viewed his affliction as a gift from God to keep him humble; indeed, He accepted it, even glorying in it. The Lord's words, 'My grace is sufficient for thee', teach us that there is no need for suffering to be removed. We often think that this is the real need and the only ideal outcome. His further words, 'for my strength is made perfect in (your) weakness', teach us that our afflictions can be of real benefit to us if they remain – they can be an asset rather than a problem!

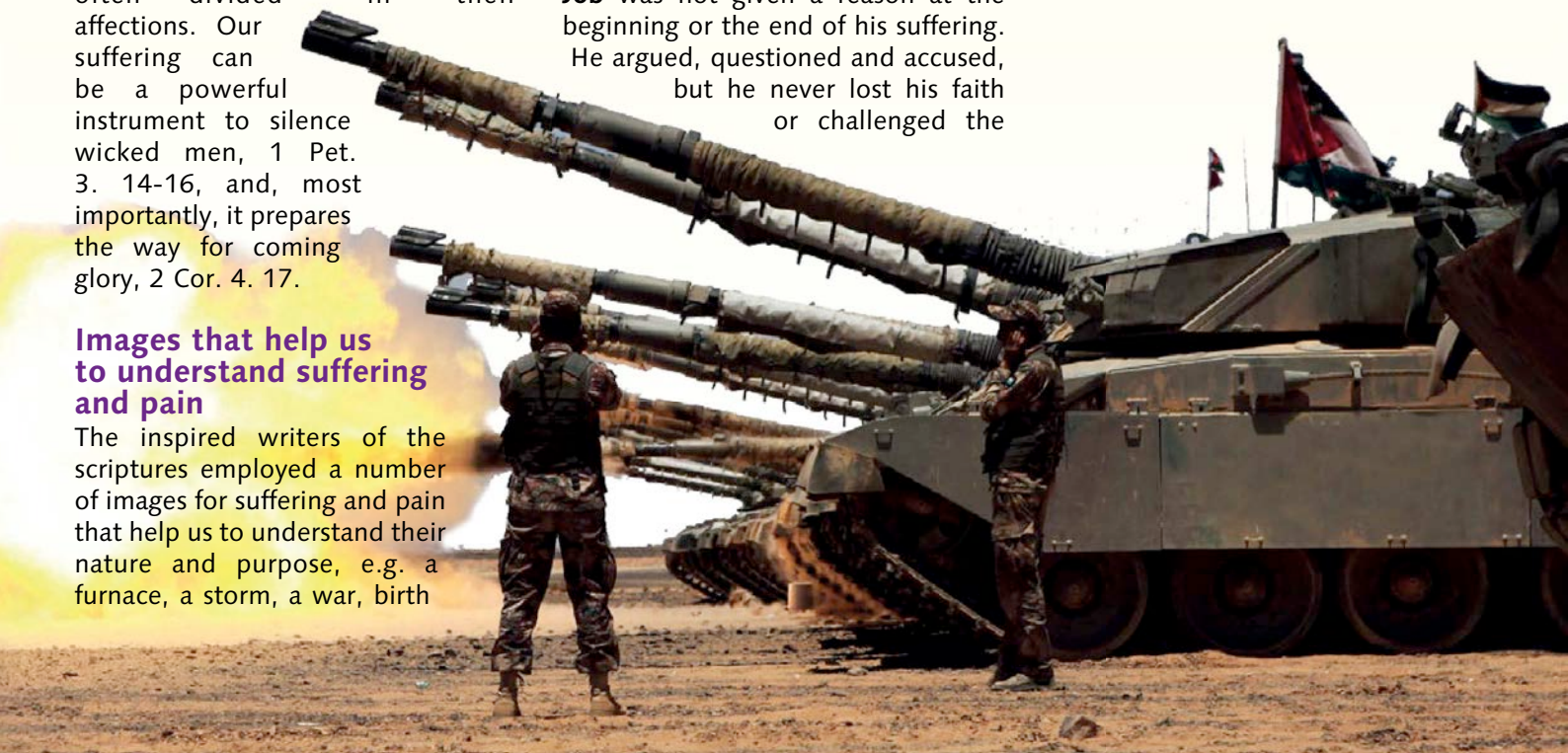
Job was not given a reason at the beginning or the end of his suffering. He argued, questioned and accused, but he never lost his faith or challenged the

sovereignty of God. He teaches us that when we are suffering, we do not need answers and explanations, but an appreciation of the greatness of God. God simply tells him that He has a right to do what He does and he, ultimately, rests in that. His great statements of faith in the midst of his trials ought to be an inspiration to us: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him', 13. 15; 'But he knoweth the way I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold', 23. 10.

The Lord Jesus is, of course, the supreme example, 1 Pet. 2. 21-25. He suffered to leave us an example. He identified Himself with our suffering; therefore, He can sympathize and meet our needs, Heb 2. 18; 4. 15-16. He displayed no bitterness, resentment or desire to be vindicated; indeed, He committed everything to God. His enemies cried, 'He trusted in God, let him deliver him now (from the cross)', Matt 27. 43. God did not do so, but He did something better! He raised him out from among the dead and gave Him glory, 1 Pet. 1. 20. His suffering did not last forever. It led Him to glory and brought blessing to others.

Endnotes

- 1 See Isa. 48. 10; Job 9. 17; 19. 12; Matt. 24. 8; 1 Pet. 4. 12.





The Lord's Upper Room Ministry (2)

In the previous article we looked at our Lord's relationship to His Father, and learned a lesson on humility. We will now consider:

Jesus' relationship to Peter – holiness, vv. 6-11

Although this section is quite short, it is rich in spiritual truth. It is all about water, washing, and cleansing – a clear reference to purity and holiness!

The Twelve watched in amazement as the Master took the towel and girded Himself. One can imagine the sudden hush of shame as they realized that one of them ought to have done that. What embarrassment and shame as He knelt before them. But think of Judas Iscariot, the traitor. What grace, what love, what tender compassion as the Lord condescended to wash *his* feet. As He took them into His hands He would know that those very feet had walked 'in the counsel of the ungodly', Ps. 1. 1. He had already been to the rulers to make the deal, and soon those feet would steal away again to carry out the plan. Not all the water in the world could wash away his guilt, nor remove the stain of his sin!

1. Peter's Question, v 6.

'Lord dost thou wash my feet?' This was a natural reaction by Peter, and is made meaningful by his use of the pronouns 'thou' and 'my'. Both are emphatic. Peter was taken aback, surprised, perhaps even hurt, to think that His Lord should do this menial work for him.

From the Lord's reply, v. 7, it is clear that Peter did not understand at that time. This is found in the Lord's use of the word 'know' – used twice, but not with the same meaning. The first was quite distinct from the second. Jesus said: 'What I do thou *knowest* not now; but thou shalt *know* hereafter', v. 7 [my italics]. The force of the Lord's words is this: 'Peter you can't *understand* my action with your mind now – but, one day, you will *understand* it by experience'. When the Holy Spirit would be given, Peter, and the rest, would then see, and know, the real meaning and purpose of this work by their Lord. What was a mystery now, would become meaningful later.

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2. Peter's Protest, v. 8.

Peter said unto Him, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet'. Peter was always impetuous; his words here are, literally: 'You shall never, ever wash my feet, not while the world lasts'. Although Peter said these words in his haste, he did eventually let the Lord wash his feet, and he did bow to the Lord's will. They were the natural response of a heart that loved Christ. He did not know that behind the physical washing lay great spiritual meaning.

However, in the Lord's reply, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me', Peter knew what the Lord meant. He meant, 'you cannot enjoy communion and fellowship with me'.



3. Peter's Response, v. 9.

This clearly indicates that he knew the meaning and significance of what Jesus said. He certainly did not want a breakdown of fellowship with his blessed Lord, so he swings to the other extreme. Oh that we were as eager to cling to that sacred fellowship and communion with the Lord as this man was! Do we appreciate, or attach much importance to, fellowship with the Lord? Do we treat it lightly and esteem it of little value?

4. The Lord Explains, vv. 10-11

In verse 10, the Lord used the word

'wash' twice but they do not have the same meaning. When the Lord said, 'He that is washed', *louo*, he meant 'he that is bathed', i.e., has had an 'all over' bath. Such a person, only needs to 'wash his feet', *nipto*. The word implies washing a part of the body, because he is already perfectly clean.

The first word 'bathe' refers to that moment when, as sinners, we trusted Christ for our salvation. At that moment God 'bathed us all over'. He cleansed us fully and completely, and brought us into union with Himself eternally. We entered into a relationship with God as our Father, and that has been settled forever, perfect tense, and cannot be changed. The awful defilement of our sin has been removed once and for all.

The second word, 'wash', is an ongoing, daily experience of the believer; it is the cleansing of the life by reading and obeying the word of God. We must all do this, because we all need daily cleansing from the defilement contracted by the things of the world. The work of Christ on the cross cleanses once and for all. The word of God, as applied by the Holy Spirit day by day, will keep the life clean, Ps. 119. 9.

All this is beautifully illustrated in the priesthood of the Old Testament. Before a priest could enter the tabernacle to serve the Lord, he had to be 'bathed' in water, Exod. 29. 4; Lev. 8. 6. This is known as his consecration. This cleansing was never repeated. It was done once, and it set him apart and sanctified him for the service of the tabernacle.

Then, day-by-day, before he went into the tabernacle, he was commanded to wash his hands and feet at the laver. Whilst doing his daily work, the priest would become dusty and soiled with the sand of the desert, and he had to wash before going in to serve God, Exod. 30. 19.

By constant communion with the Lord through the word of God, we can keep ourselves 'unspotted from the world', Jas. 1. 27. Are we prepared to rise to the challenge?



A WORD FOR TODAY

hay (life, living, alive)

'Or (Light, bring or give light)

baraq (lightning)

Light plays an important part in how we perceive the world around us, Ps. 36. 9. In fact, without visible light, there would be no life at all. And our appreciation of the importance of light is often enhanced when we find ourselves searching blindly in the dark for some object, especially when the batteries of our torch have just run out! So it comes as no surprise to us to find that light (Hebrew 'Or) was the first thing that God created, as recorded in Genesis chapter 1 verse 3. As STADELMANN writes, 'Light manifests most adequately the divine operation in a world which, without it, is darkness and chaos'.¹ Since the source of our light, the sun and moon, was not created until the fourth day of creation, Gen. 1. 14-19, it is suggested by scholars that the primordial or undifferentiated created light of the first three days gives way to 'light and darkness alternated at God's behest'.² This, of course, is an outline of the constant spiritual conflict between light and darkness that is evident throughout the Bible. It is God's ultimate design, however, to abolish darkness completely, as well as to displace the sun and the moon by the everlasting light of His glorious presence, Rev. 22. 5, cp. Isa. 60. 19; Ezek. 32. 7. This is foreshadowed in the prophecy of Zechariah where the prophet refers to the event as a continuous day, Zech. 14. 7.

The Hebrew word 'Or is used over 100 times in the Old Testament, both literally of natural or physical light, as well as man-made light. In a secondary sense, 'Or is used figuratively of light that enlightens individuals who are spiritually blind. We read in Exodus chapter 10 verses 21-24 that the ninth plague brought by God against Egypt was a thick darkness, so thick that it could be touched. Yet God provided physical light for the Israelites during that period of darkness. This conveys the idea that light has a protective quality about it or, as one writer puts it, 'light denotes safety'.³ Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 2 refers literally to the two main heavenly luminaries that are indispensable to human

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY**
Newton Abbot, England

life, the sun and the moon, but then uses them as images to highlight the contrast between youthful vigour (light) and old age (darkness). The pillar of fire that led the Israelites in the wilderness in the night-time was a physical light, yet it could also be viewed as indicative of God's glorious presence with His people, Exod. 13. 21; 14. 20. The Psalms often use the word light to express the way in which God's countenance guides the psalmist in the right pathways, Ps. 89. 15, as well as exposing hidden sins, 90. 8. The psalmist also suggests that it was partly due to the light of God's countenance that victory was gained for Israel against its enemies, 44. 3, and that salvation is linked directly to God's effulgence, 27. 1; 56. 13. 'Indeed, the Psalms frequently cast theophany in terms of a heliophany bursting with divine effulgence that reestablishes justice in the world (Ps. 50. 1-4; cp. 80. 1-2)'.⁴ On the other hand, the psalmist understands that darkness only leads to distress, 88. 6, and ultimately death, 107. 10. But, significantly, whilst God knows what is in the darkness and, therefore, by extension can reveal hidden matters, the phrase 'light dwells with him' in Daniel chapter 2 verse 22b, confirms to us that light is an essential attribute of God. It is part of His self-revelation, which is very much reflected in the Aaronic blessing of Numbers chapter 6 verses 24 to 25. Whilst the leaders of this world 'grope in darkness with no light', Job 12. 25, John reminds us that the God whom we serve 'is light and in him is no darkness at all', 1 John 1. 5, 9 RSV, cp. 1 Tim. 6. 16.

In the Septuagint (LXX), the Hebrew word 'Or is regularly translated by the Greek word *phos*, which is then carried over into the New Testament where it is used over seventy times. Simply, it often indicates natural or physical light, as in Luke chapter 8 verse 16 of someone lighting a candle, or, as in Acts chapter 16 verse 29, of the Philippian jailer who used a light to enter the cell where Paul and Silas were imprisoned. We see Peter in a very dark place warming himself at the fireside following the betrayal and capture of the Lord, Mark 14. 54, and the later use by him of the word *phos* to show that, like prophecy, light dispels darkness, 2 Pet. 1. 19. The word is used to express supernatural

or effulgent light that reflects the presence or glory of God as at the transfiguration, Matt. 17. 2, and in the personal revelation of the risen Christ to Saul on the Damascus road, Acts 9. 3. But it is the metaphorical use of the word *phos* that is important in the New Testament, especially as it is used to compare and contrast light with goodness, and darkness with evil. This dualism is a major feature in the prologue of John's Gospel and throughout his whole narrative. As DON CARSON observes, 'The "darkness" in John is not only absence of light, but positive evil (cp. 3. 19; 8. 12; 12. 35, 46; 1 John 1. 5, 6; 2. 8, 9, 11); the light is not only revelation bound up with creation, but with salvation'.⁵ The Lord describes Himself as 'the light of the world', John 8. 12, and encourages individuals to follow Him, mirroring the imagery of the pillar of cloud in the Old Testament. Paul uses *phos* in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 6 to show that the light of the new creation is as much the creation of God as was the light called into existence in the beginning. This is the light that illuminates the Christian's pathway, cp. Ps. 119. 105, and provides the knowledge of the glory of God. Such is the nature of light that it underpins all God's dealings with men. 'Light in its varied meanings is at the heart of such central biblical themes as creation, providence, judgement, redemption and sanctification'.⁶ Our lives were once controlled by the kingdom of darkness, Col. 1. 13; 1 Pet. 2. 9, but now, we are 'light in the Lord; let us therefore 'walk as children of light', Eph. 5. 8.

For further reading/study

Introductory

W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 'Light'.

Endnotes

- ¹ Hebrew Conception of the World, pg. 49.
- ² GORDON J. WENHAM, *Genesis*, Word, pg. 22.
- ³ LELAND RYKEN, JAMES C. WILHOIT, and TREMPER LONGMAN III (Eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP Academic, pg. 509.
- ⁴ WILLIAM P. BROWN, *Seeing the Psalms – A Theology of Metaphor*, Westminster John Knox, pg. 198.
- ⁵ DON CARSON, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentaries, Eerdmans, pg. 119.
- ⁶ *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pg. 512.

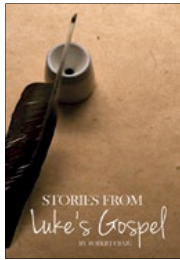
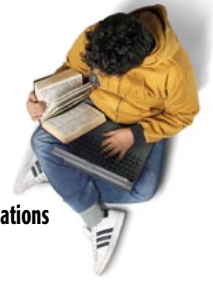
Advanced

WILLEM A. VAN GEMEREN, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis – 'Or*, Zondervan, pp. 324 et seq.

Book Reviews

Compiled by JOHN SCARBROOK

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



Stories from Luke's Gospel Robert Craig

Paperback, 160 pages, Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St West, Port Colborne, Ontario, L3K 6A6. ISBN 97-81927521-63-2

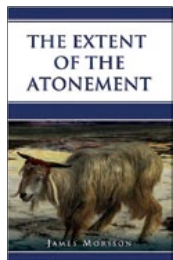
Although this book is just a brief summary of selected accounts in Luke's Gospel, there are gems on each page; it is well worth reading, and definitely holds the attention. The book is pithy in its structure with lots of well-mined gems for us to contemplate and some helpful references from the Amplified version. Of the eleven accounts selected, seven are exclusive to Luke, whilst the remaining four, although shared with other gospel writers, have comments which are exclusive to Luke.

Describing Luke as somewhat obscure, by comparison with other evangelists, the writer quickly sets Luke's characteristics before us: meekness, love, endurance and loyalty. For our encouragement, he also points out that God can, and will, use personal talents and skills, developed through hard work in whatever secular occupation we may follow, for His honour and glory. The Gospel of Luke treats the plight of the poor, the downtrodden and the despised with sympathy and understanding; the stories which the writer has selected reflect that very well. The book is written around eleven stories beginning with the nativity. The reader is then taken through the Gospel to the Emmaus Road and on to the Mount of Olives to witness the ascension. He does point out that the stories listed are just 'the tip of the iceberg', and the aim is that believers will simply catch a fresh glimpse of the Lord Jesus. It is by no means critical to say that there is nothing new in the book, but, rather, these are lessons and gems to be found in 'those things which are most surely believed amongst us'.

Having arrived at Calvary, the writer deals with the detail in a devotional manner and summarizes the events by saying, 'it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend such love and compassion'. From Calvary, he progresses to the Emmaus Road, where the Lord could say to His loved ones, 'ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory!'

In summary, the book is a brief account of Luke's Gospel and is recommended.

Thanks to Bill Brady, Killamarsh, England for this review



The Extent of the Atonement James Morison

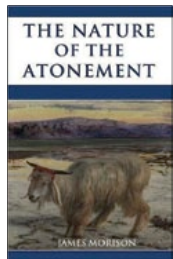
Paperback, 167 pages, Published by Scripture Teaching Library, Cookstown, Northern Ireland. ISBN 978-1-909789-23-4.

JAMES MORISON (1816-1893) was ordained in the Scottish United Secession Church, but was suspended from his ministry because he did not hold the doctrine of limited atonement. He continued to preach the gospel, and saw many souls saved. This treatise, and his companion work *The Nature of the Atonement*, went through many editions, and is here reprinted attractively by the Scripture Teaching Library.

The book addresses the vital question, 'For whom did Christ die?' MORISON outlines a clear and scriptural case against the erroneous doctrine of limited atonement. He first examines the scriptural evidence in support of the truth of the universality of the atonement, especially verses which state that Christ died for all and for the whole world, so that whoever believes will be saved. Then he examines the indirect evidence in support of this truth, from a number of other verses and considerations. He also answers the objections which are often made against the universality of the atonement fairly convincingly. Finally, the last third of the book contains additional relevant observations based on the writings of many past theologians.

The treatise breathes a warm evangelical fervour and a love for souls which is very uplifting, and MORISON exalts Christ throughout. However, while the reviewer thoroughly agrees with the main thesis of the book, he feels that what is effectively said could have been said much more concisely. Also, a few points which support his thesis have not been clearly stated. First, for instance, the eternal God needed to be satisfied by an infinite sacrifice for sin to solve the whole problem of sin in His universe; it was not simply the problem of our particular sins. Second, there are valuable sermons in the difference between the two prepositions *hyper*, 'on behalf of' all, representatively, and *anti*, 'in the place of' the many who believe, substitutionally. Finally, insufficient note is taken of the tension and juxtaposition throughout scripture between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility and freewill, which is never logically explained, but required to be believed and acted upon. In practice, they work together. However, serious Bible students will enjoy the book.

Our thanks to Malcolm Davis, Leeds, England, for this review.



The Nature of the Atonement James Morison

Paperback, 99 pages, Published by Scripture Teaching Library, Cookstown, Northern Ireland. ISBN 978-1-909789-19-7.

JAMES MORISON (1816-1893) was a Scottish minister of the Gospel who was greatly used by God to bring many souls to Christ. Both this small treatise and his companion work *The Extent of the Atonement* went through many editions during the author's lifetime, and is here reprinted in a new edition by the Scripture Teaching Library.

The paperback is well-designed with an attractive cover depicting Holman Hunt's painting 'The Scapegoat', which is based on the ritual of the Levitical Day of Atonement. Strictly speaking, the doctrine of the atonement is really an Old Testament concept. The one reference to 'the atonement' in the New Testament of the KJV, namely, Romans chapter 5 verse 11, should be translated 'the reconciliation'. The Old Testament concept of atonement probably has more of the idea of covering sin

than finally removing it. However, Bible scholars often use the word to refer to the final removal of sin as an offence to God by means of Christ's vicarious sacrifice on the cross. In other words, 'atonement' is often used to describe Christ's work of 'propitiation', which is found several times in the New Testament.

JAMES MORISON first distinguishes what he calls 'the atonement' from other related doctrines, such as, pardon, justification, redemption, reconciliation, and payment of debt, before he defines what he means by the word in chapter 7. He does so as follows: 'It is an expedient introduced into the Divine moral government, consisting of the obedience unto death of Jesus Christ, which has completely removed all legal obstacles standing between man and the attainability of salvation'. This is really what the word 'propitiation' means. He points out that the only remaining obstacle to man's reception of salvation is his culpable unbelief. The other aspects of our salvation mentioned above flow from this basic truth of propitiation.

JAMES MORISON's argument is logical, close-knit, and characterized by a certain Victorian style of writing. This may make it difficult for some interested readers to follow easily, but the little book is a seminal explanation of a vital truth of our faith, and should be studied carefully. It is recommended for serious Bible study.

Our thanks to Malcolm Davis, Leeds, England, for this review.

QUESTION

Does the New Testament stipulate what meetings an assembly should convene?

ANSWER

Whilst there may not be specific scriptures stating in precise terms what meetings an assembly should convene, there is no question that the New Testament contains definite guidance on the subject. After all, our only 'chart and compass' for the functioning of a local church is the word of God, and it is to this alone that we must look to answer the above question.

Before proceeding, and without contradicting what I have just written, it must be recognized that there are certain issues that God has left to our discretion. These are not matters of doctrine or principle but of practice. Issues such as the timing and duration of meetings, seating arrangements, what hymn books should be used (if any), and the frequency of some services are not covered within the word of God, and these things will vary from place to place. Many factors will impact on how these issues are dealt with, and it is for each assembly to determine what is most suitable for them within the circumstances that prevail.

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul states, 'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death **till he come**', 1 Cor. 11. 26. Clearly, this verse indicates that the perpetuation of the Lord's Supper should be maintained until our Saviour returns to take us to be with himself. The only scripture that gives any indicator as to the frequency with which we are to hold this meeting is Acts chapter 20 verse 7, i.e., on the first day of the week.

A commendable feature that characterized the church at Jerusalem was their steadfast continuation in prayer. Furthermore, the vital nature of this meeting is emphasized by the apostle Paul in his first Letter to Timothy: 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made', 1 Tim. 2. 1. In almost every epistle the apostle wrote to churches, he exhorts them to pray and, accordingly, we can be sure that it is the mind of God that assemblies hold regular prayer meetings.

One of the gifts given by the Lord to his people is that of the teacher, a gift that would be superfluous unless His people met for teaching. Although we are not informed as to how often Paul and Barnabas met with the church at Antioch, we are told 'that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people', Acts 11. 26. This marathon effort

was surpassed at Ephesus where Paul spent three years teaching the word of God. Within many assemblies the teaching meeting takes a variety of formats, for further thoughts in relation to this please see the Question & Answer page of the May 2015 edition of *Precious Seed International*.

Probably the three meetings described above will be the most frequently held in many assemblies but, as we look into the scriptures, we discover that other services were also convened. When Paul and Barnabas completed their first missionary journey, we read that they gathered the church together and 'rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles', Acts 14. 27. Although it is not called a 'missionary report meeting', that is what it was and it sets a precedent that we can legitimately follow.

Sadly, there is another church gathering referred to in the New Testament. If the Lord's Supper presents one of our highest privileges, this meeting sets out the saddest, although both are equally important. We read of this meeting in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus', 1 Cor. 5. 4-5.

It appears that this meeting was not an appendage to the Lord's Supper but a meeting specifically convened to deal with the excommunication of someone who has been guilty of a sin that warrants this most severe form of discipline. The dual purpose of this process is given for us in the chapter. As to the guilty party, its aim is to bring about repentance and recovery. As for the assembly, the purpose of this discipline is to preserve its purity.

Being in assembly fellowship brings with it the responsibility of being present at the meetings. However, there is more to it than that. In John chapter 20 some of the disciples were in a locked room and the Lord appeared, but Thomas was an absentee. When the disciples next met him they said, 'we have seen the Lord'. What a blessing it would be if all our meetings were like that. Not just us meeting together but, consciously, meeting with the Lord.

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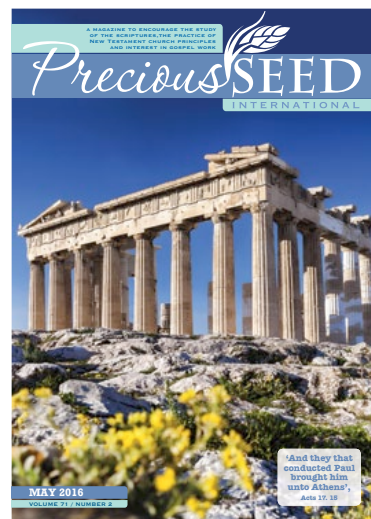


Precious Seed International

Front Cover Illustration

'And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens', Acts 17. 15

The city of Athens in Greece is located some five miles from the Aegean Sea near the peninsula of Attica. Athens dominates the province of Attica, which, historically, has been famous for its rich fertile farming land, and natural mineral resources. It quickly became the richest and largest city in Greece, with a naval fleet situated at the nearby port of Piraeus. The city's most prominent feature is the Acropolis, a large rocky hill upon which the Athenians built the temple known as the Parthenon in honour of the goddess Athena. Athens has been described as the cradle of western civilization for it was here that democracy was born, and where students came to study at the various schools of philosophy, which included Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Even during the period of Roman occupation, the golden age of Athenian intellectual glory continued until the reign of the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century AD. It was during an unscheduled visit to Athens that the message of the gospel was first brought to the city by the apostle Paul. Following his premature exit from Thessalonica, Acts 17. 10, and then Berea, Acts 17. 15, Paul re-located to Athens. One can gauge Paul's frustration at his treatment at the hands of a riotous mob at Thessalonica from his comments in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 2 and 15. On arrival at Athens, Paul was exasperated to find this centre of intellectual learning, 'wholly given to idolatry'. Paul, therefore, adapts his message to his audience, and as WILLIAM RAMSAY puts it, 'in the city of Socrates he discussed moral questions in the market-place'. His preaching of 'Jesus and the resurrection', Acts 17. 18, led him into contact with two established groups of philosophers, viz the Epicureans and the Stoics. Initially, they regarded Paul as a worthless individual who had simply acquired scraps of learning. Eager though, to hear more, Paul stands on Mars Hill, and unfolds his message. He skillfully uses a wayside altar inscription ('to the unknown God') that he had observed in the city to reveal to the Athenians that the God whom they ignorantly worshipped was, in fact, the God that he now proclaimed. There is a real sense of irony here in that the world had failed to find the living God by its wisdom, 1 Cor. 1. 21. No wonder Paul could write, 'Where is your wise man now, your man of learning, or your subtle debater – limited all of them to this passing age?' 1 Cor. 1. 20 (NEB). The reaction to Paul's preaching was mixed. When they heard of the resurrection of Christ as confirmation that the world would one day be judged in righteousness, some scoffed, whilst others procrastinated, but, praise God, some were converted, Acts 17. 32-34. It has ever been thus!



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