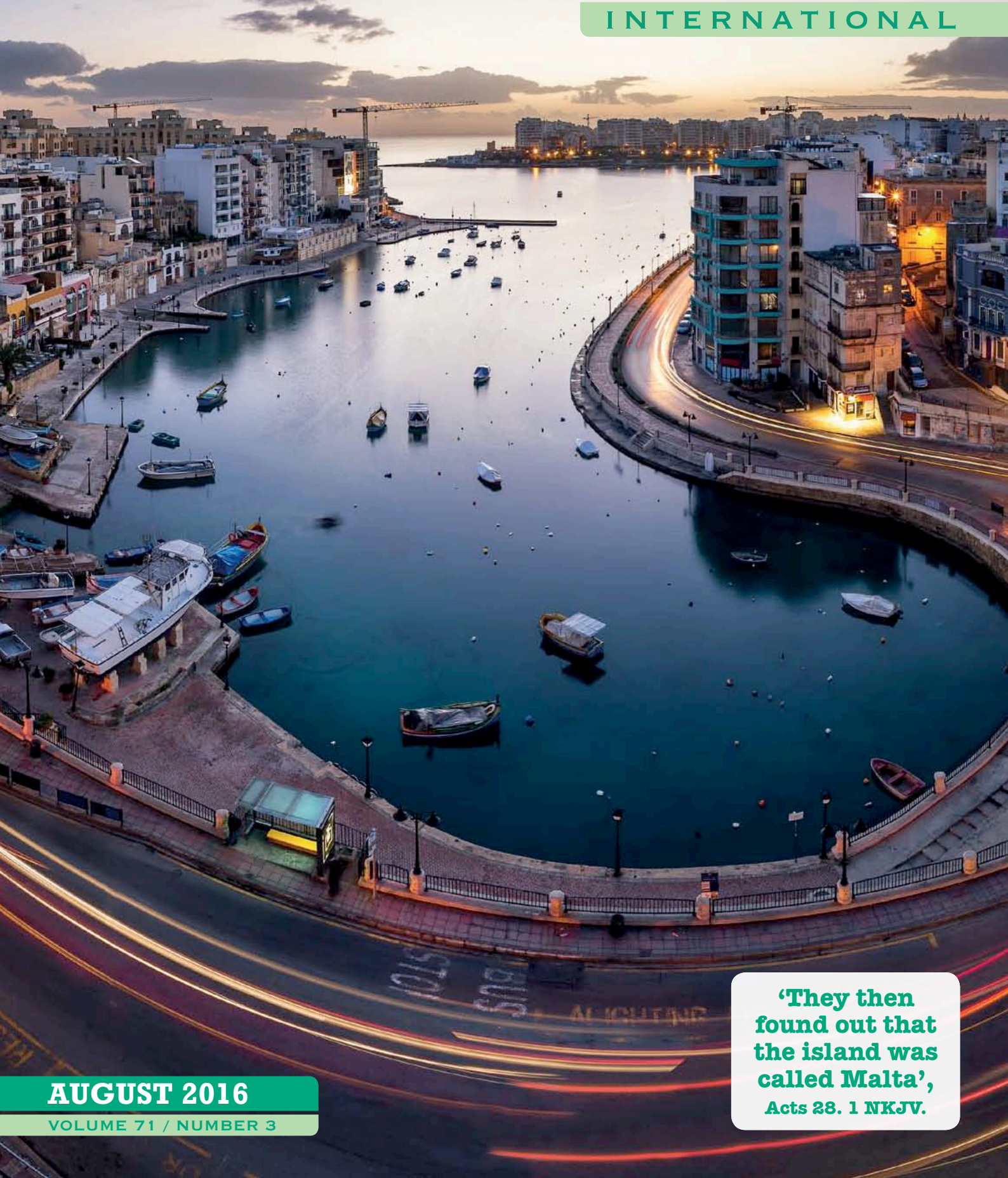


A MAGAZINE TO ENCOURAGE THE STUDY
OF THE SCRIPTURES, THE PRACTICE OF
NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH PRINCIPLES
AND INTEREST IN GOSPEL WORK

Precious SEED

INTERNATIONAL



AUGUST 2016

VOLUME 71 / NUMBER 3

**‘They then
found out that
the island was
called Malta’,
Acts 28. 1 NKJV.**

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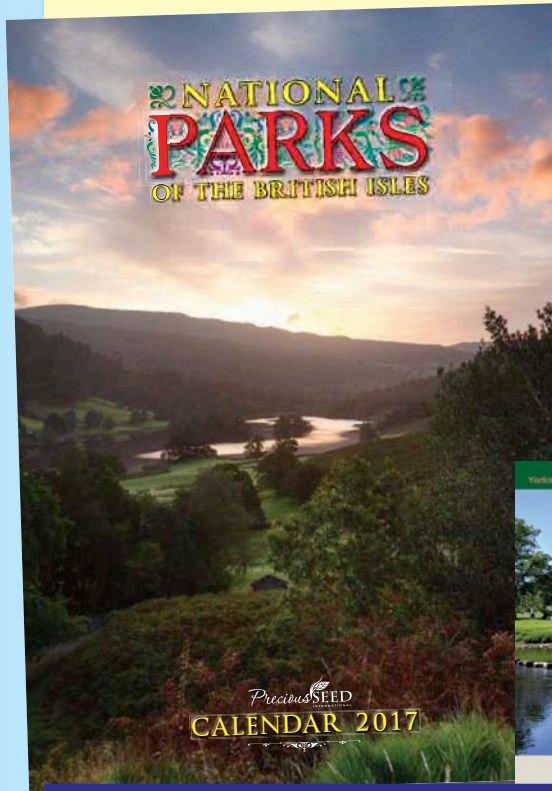
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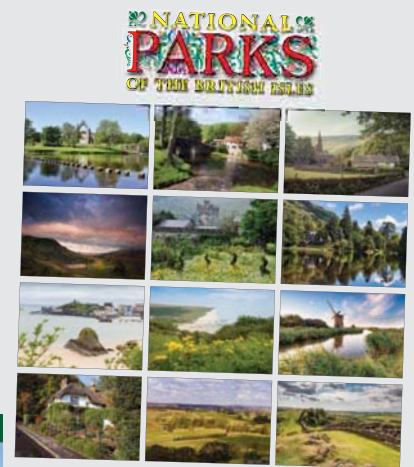
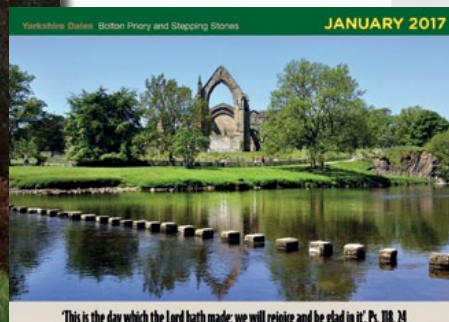
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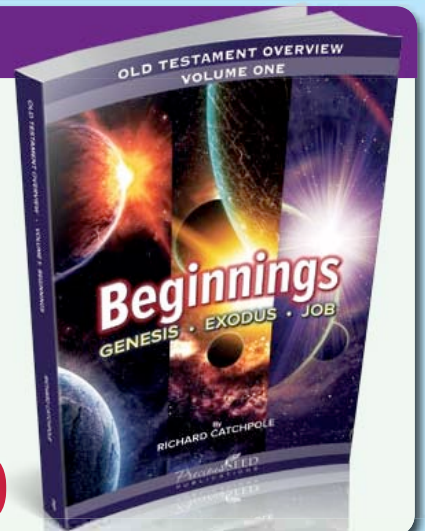
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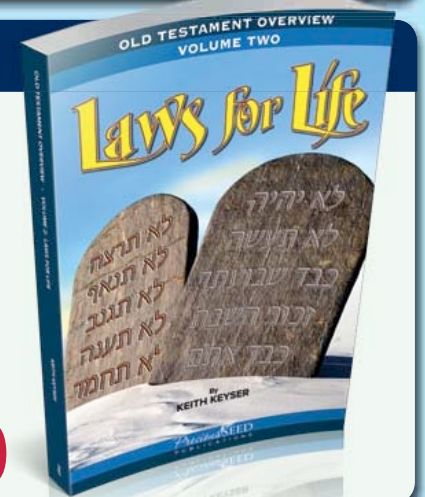
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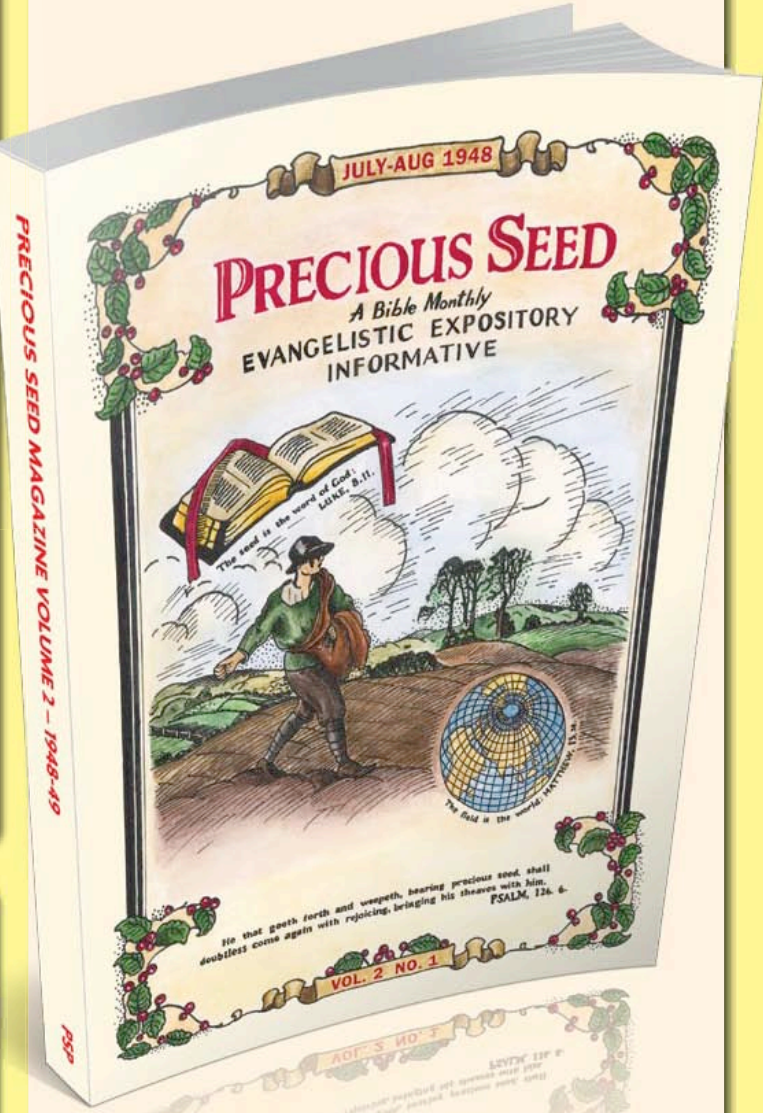
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Editorial

‘Apollos . . . mighty in the scriptures’, Acts 18. 24.

In the consideration of Apollos in our last editorial, we wrote that the position and status of pre-eminence belongs to God alone!

However, rather than put someone like Apollos on a pedestal, it is also possible to malign him. Though this passage tells us that he was ‘mighty in the scriptures’ and ‘instructed in the way of the Lord’, v. 25, it also informs us that he knew ‘only the baptism of John’, v. 25. What an omission! One of the fundamental ordinances commanded by the Lord and practiced by the apostles had not been obeyed! How could a man teach ‘diligently the things of the Lord’ without such an important step of obedience being taken? Would it not be wrong to sit under the ministry of such a man in that condition? No amount of eloquence or fervency can compensate for disobedience!

The explanation to this seeming dilemma is found in verse 26 of the chapter. Was Apollos being disobedient or was this an aspect of truth of which he was ignorant or not fully cognisant? He may have thought that his baptism under the ministry of John Baptist was all that he needed. Why be baptized again? Although he was ‘mighty in the scriptures’, the truth of baptism is not clearly taught in the Old Testament as it is in the New. Should he be expected to know? To suggest that Apollos was disobedient is to ascribe to him a motivation which it is beyond us to determine without careful examination. Thus, Aquila and Priscilla take him into their home and expound ‘unto him the way of God more perfectly’, v. 26. This is the key. If Apollos now fails to act he will be guilty of disobedience to the known will of God. Although the text doesn’t tell us, the fact that he carried the commendation of the brethren, v. 27, suggests Apollos was baptized and continued to be a help to the Lord’s people.

The real challenge to all of our hearts is to remain balanced in our handling of the word of God and in our relationships with fellow believers. It is all too easy to set up one as a favourite and criticize another without justification for either action. What Aquila and Priscilla did teaches us how to handle the people we may want to criticize because of what we perceive to be their disregard of scripture. Equally, in Apollos’ gracious acceptance of the exhortation of others we see the true calibre of the man and the way in which God was using him for His glory!

In this magazine we continue to present an interesting mix of articles with the prayerful desire that there might be ample food for all the people of God! May each of us search ‘the scriptures daily’ to see whether these things are so!

Endnotes

- 1 See Matt. 28. 19; Mark 16. 16; Acts 2. 38, 41.
- 2 One of the figures that Paul refers to is given us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 2.
- 3 Acts 17. 11.



On three separate occasions the apostle Paul referred to 'my gospel', Rom. 2. 16; 16. 25; 2 Tim. 2. 8. This does not, of course, mean that what he preached was different from what was preached by the apostles of the Lamb on and after the day of Pentecost but that Paul, an apostle of the risen and exalted Christ, was at one with the gospel he preached in a remarkable way.

THE GOSPEL

By **IAN JACKSON** Eastbourne, England

However, it should be remembered that just as he was, in a unique way, a minister of the church, so he also was a minister of the gospel, Col. 1. 23-25. In this connection it is not without significance that outside of the pastorals Paul associates himself with others in the writing of all his epistles, except Romans and Ephesians. In Romans, as a minister of the gospel, he explains the truth of the gospel; in Ephesians, as a minister of the church, he expounds the truth of the assembly which is His body, as no other epistles do. To Paul, first of all the apostles, had been revealed the truths of both the gospel and the church. Thus, he alone speaks of both 'the mystery of the gospel', Eph. 6. 19, and 'the mystery of (the) Christ', Eph. 3. 4.

The descriptions given to the gospel signify its content. It is seven times called 'the gospel of God', ten times 'the gospel of Christ' and once 'the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ'. It is described as 'the gospel of his Son', Rom. 1. 9; 'the gospel of the grace of God', Acts 20. 24; 'the gospel of peace', Rom. 10. 15; Eph. 6. 15; and 'the gospel of your salvation', Eph. 1. 13. The exclusive nature of this message is illustrated by the use of such expressions as 'the testimony of God', 1 Cor. 2. 1, and 'the word of the truth of the gospel', Col. 1. 5. It brooks no rival.

We live in an increasingly man-centred age. It is the product of increasingly atheistic and secular philosophies which govern the thinking of so many. Closely

connected to this is humanism, where human needs and interests govern thinking and action. Sadly, there is a rising tendency to think that the gospel, too, is concerned primarily with human need. If we fail to recognize that it is, in fact, rather to do with God acting for His own glory, our apprehension of what the gospel is will be awry, with serious consequences for evangelism and the evangelistic method.

We do well, therefore, to remember at all times that it is God's gospel, not only because it originates in Him but He is its object. His great delight is that His Son will be honoured by the redeemed of this age, being conformed to His image, Rom. 8. 29. Accordingly, God has a purpose which will be accomplished; every single person who is foreknown by Him shall be glorified. And, in the meantime, those who are saved by grace, through faith, have an acceptance before Him in all the acceptability of Christ Himself. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 6 speaks of our having been made 'accepted in the beloved', taken into favour in the beloved One. This is positional, but is more than merely judicial, for the very heart of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is involved. It is no wonder that the apostle speaks of the fact that what God has done in all of this is to 'the praise of the glory of His grace', Eph. 1. 6.

This is all the more remarkable when it is remembered where, in 'the riches of his grace', Eph. 1. 7, God found those who are now to the praise of the glory of His grace. Our view of the gospel will go seriously wrong if we have a view of man's lostness that does not fully reflect what scripture says about him. Intellectually,

emotionally and volitionally man is as badly off as it is possible for him to be. This is reflected in the statement and question, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?' Jer. 17.

9. This mirrors fairly Pauline teaching regarding the state of the children of Adam's fallen race. Without salvation people are dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2. 1. This is saying far more than some opine when they say that it means, merely, that man is separated from God. Surely, if 'dead' means 'separated' the remedy would be reconciliation, but it is, in fact, 'quickenings'. The thought is that the sinner has no principle of life toward God, so that it takes God to work if ever he is going to be saved. In that condition, he lives life according to the course of this world, that which works in the children of disobedience and is dominated by the prince of the power of the air. In this state the sinner behaves according to the lusts of the flesh, for he is 'in the flesh', Rom. 8. 8, and in that condition he cannot please God. And, as he fulfils the desire of the flesh and the mind, he spends his time as a child of wrath, along with all others in that condition.

The sinner is an enemy of God, 5. 10. This does not mean that God regards the sinner as His enemy but that there is enmity from the sinner towards God. And so sinners are 'alienated and enemies' in their minds by wicked works, Col. 1. 21, having free choice in the matter of that salvation which is offered to them but without the desire or will to receive it. This is imparted by the Spirit of God dealing with them: scripture speaks of the 'sanctification of the Spirit', 2 Thess. 2. 13; 1 Pet. 1. 2, without



PREACHED BY THE APOSTLES

which no one will ever be saved. Could a person with no principle of life toward God have a desire after God in any other way?

The apostles urged on sinners the need for 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ', Acts 20. 21. Do we preach repentance as we should? Repentance is a complete turn around, a forsaking of sin in acknowledgement that it is wrong; and a new disposition towards God, who is now acknowledged to be right. There is no true faith without repentance for 'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts', Gal. 5. 24. Do we preach faith as it should be preached? Many euphemisms are used, such as 'open your heart to Christ', 'give your life to Christ', 'invite Him in' or 'confess your sins and you will be saved'. This is dangerous language for it does not address the core issue of the necessity of heart faith in Christ, Rom. 10. 10, in which a person ventures their all on Him, placing simple, uncomplicated, childlike trust in Christ personally to save him.

In the gospel preached by the apostles we discover that every demand of God and every need of man has been met in the work of Christ. There has been nothing left outstanding. Accordingly, in Romans chapter 5 verses 9 and 10, three great statements are made. We are justified by His blood, reconciled by his death, and saved by His life.

The blood of Christ, which

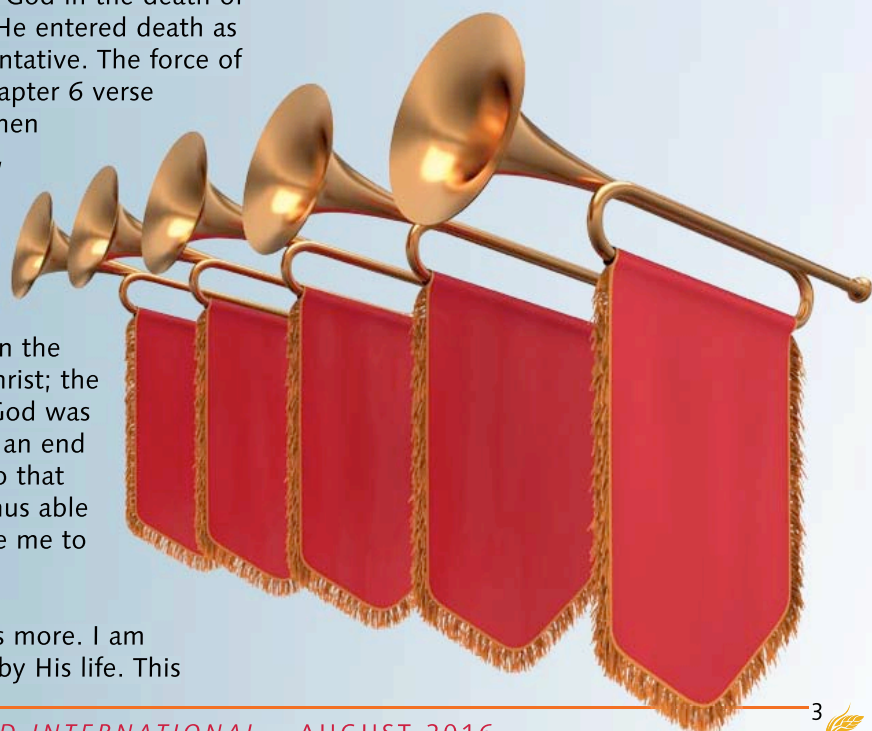
He shed on the cross (no act of man is involved), has met every demand of divine righteousness. The blood of sacrifice was always first for the eye of God, as is demonstrated on both the night of the passover and the day of atonement. It is the basis upon which the believing sinner is justified. A just God is in a position to justify the guilty person who believes in Jesus because the sacrifice He offered to God at Calvary has satisfied infinite justice. It is on this basis that we preach the gospel to all and sundry, for in the blood of Christ there is a sufficiency to meet the need of the whole world. Here, then, is the truth of propitiation.

There is, however, more to my need before God as a sinner than the fact that I am guilty. What I have done to occasion my guilt springs out of a nature which I have by birth, as connected to man in Adam. But in the death of Christ (His entering actually into death) there is a full and perfect answer for all that I am in Adam. Vital reconciliation is always connected to His death, and involves not only substitution but representation. The man that I was in Adam was brought to an end before God in the death of Christ, for He entered death as my representative. The force of Romans chapter 6 verse 8 is that when Christ died, I died. My Adam-standing was brought to an end in the death of Christ; the enemy of God was brought to an end in death, so that God was thus able to reconcile me to Himself.

But there is more. I am also saved by His life. This

has no reference to His life lived on earth: it is without Biblical warrant – indeed, it is contrary to scripture – to say that Christ in His life kept the law on our behalf. Justification does not involve the imputation to us of His righteous law-keeping. Reformed teaching constantly speaks of the 'righteousness of Christ' but the Bible always speaks of the 'righteousness of God'. The thought is, rather, that in my close union with Christ, the risen man at God's right hand, my salvation is secure: as long as Christ lives I cannot perish. The Lord Jesus said, 'Because I live, ye shall live also', John 14. 19. There is such triumph and assurance in the words of Romans chapter 8 verse 34. 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us'.

One day soon His people shall all be there with Him, and like Him, evidence of the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards them. In the meanwhile, let us be reinvigorated in our efforts to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ and see others brought in salvation to our blessed Lord.





Little that happened in the first ten chapters of 1 Kings prepares the reader for the distressing contents of chapters 11-14. Following Solomon's request to the Lord for 'an understanding heart to judge thy people', 1 Kgs. 3. 9, the historian records, 'And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing', v. 10. From that point onwards his name, fame, wisdom and wealth resounded far and wide throughout the surrounding area. Tragically, however, the Lord's pleasure was now replaced by His anger: 'the Lord was angry with Solomon', 11. 9.

Solomon's desires, disobedience, and departure from the truth of God's word provided a dark backdrop for events that followed. God's holy and righteous anger emanated from His desire to have the first place in His people's hearts and lives. He is, indeed, 'the Lord, whose name is Jealous', Exod. 34. 14. Solomon knew the scriptures and yet his behaviour flew in the face of such truth. Perhaps one of the greatest surprises was that this departure came when he was old, 1 Kgs. 11. 4.

The Lord's sovereignty, 1 Kgs. 11. 11-43

It might have appeared reasonable to the casual onlooker that since Solomon had reached a pinnacle of power and influence he was free to act as he pleased. However, nothing could have been further from the truth. Solomon was about to feel the chastening hand of the sovereign God, and learn that he did not have the authority to act as he pleased.

First, the Lord spoke to Solomon and informed him that He would rend the kingdom from him and give it

AHIJAH THE SHILONITE

THE LORD'S ANGER 1 KGS 14. 1-10

to another, v. 11. The Lord, who had ensured that 'his kingdom was established greatly', 2. 12, had the sovereign right to take it from him. However, He also made a promise to Solomon: 'Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen', 11. 13. Even in the midst of the most severe chastisement, the grace and mercy of a faithful God were in evidence.

Second, the Lord stirred up an adversary against Solomon, namely, Hadad the Edomite, v. 14. Hadad had fled, as a young child to Paran, and subsequently to Egypt, when Joab had murdered his family, vv. 15-17. He remained in Egypt until the deaths of David and Joab, v. 21, but, at precisely the right moment, the Lord overruled and led him back to Edom.

Third, the Lord stirred up yet another adversary, namely Rezon, the son of Eliadah, v. 23. He had fled with a band of followers when David had attacked his master. He became captain of his fellow escapees and eventually ruled over them in Damascus, vv. 23-24. He proved to be a formidable adversary. Once again, the Lord demonstrated that He was in control of the events of history and used the nations at His will to chasten a rebellious people.

Fourth, 'Jeroboam lifted up his hand against the king', v. 26. He was a young man who had caught Solomon's eye as an industrious worker, when building Millo and repairing the breaches in the wall

around Jerusalem. His industry led to him being put in charge of the house of Joseph, v. 28.

Prophets had not been in evidence in Solomon's kingdom up to this point, but from now on they appeared at regular intervals. They served to heighten awareness of the word of the Lord

during these dark days, and the consequences of rejecting it. Ahijah the Shilonite met Jeroboam in a field, vv. 29-30. He appears suddenly and we know nothing about him. However, the Lord's word, not the prophet's biography, is crucial. At this private meeting, Jeroboam received a startling message from the Lord through Ahijah: 'And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: and he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel)', vv. 30-32. The 'new garment' suggests the comparative newness of the kingdom.

Ahijah did not seek a public platform for this important message. He had the discernment to know when a message from the Lord needed to be delivered in private, rather than in public. He teaches us never to seek personal power or position when delivering the word of the Lord to others. Preachers ought never to get more important than the message,

By
COLIN LACEY
Bath, England



ILONITE

or the One of whom they speak. The Lord, through Ahijah, unfolded the reason for His action, i.e., the rising tide of idolatry in the land, v. 33. Perhaps to bridle any unfettered ambition on Jeroboam's part, He informed him that He would 'not take the whole kingdom out of his (Solomon's) hand . . . unto his son will I give one tribe', vv. 34-36. He also emphasized the need for Jeroboam to be patient, as He would act in His own time: 'But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee', v. 35. The Lord's promise to Jeroboam was also accompanied by a solemn warning that He would be with him and make him strong, only if he were obedient to His commandments, v. 38. Sadly, however, he was driven by personal ambition and he was not prepared to be patient.

The final words of the sovereign Lord through Ahijah are touching and lift the gloom: 'And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever', v. 39. His gracious promises to David will be fulfilled when Christ returns to reign.

Fifth, God's sovereignty was displayed in bringing Solomon's reign to a close. A reign that had reached such heights ended in the depths of disappointment, vv. 42-43. There was a deep fault-line running through it that began with a wayward heart and ended with the tolerance of idolatry. Solomon's thirst for wealth placed an immense burden on the nation, 12. 4, and after his death it led to the division of the kingdom.

The death of Abijah, 1 Kgs. 14. 17-18

Such was the depth of Jeroboam's

departure from the Lord that he felt unable to approach Ahijah directly. No doubt, Ahijah had followed developments in the kingdom with growing dismay, as Jeroboam led the people deeper and deeper into idolatry. The only way Jeroboam could see to avoid confrontation with Ahijah was to resort to deception. The plan was simple: 'And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people. And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child', 14. 2-3. The present was that of a poor person, not a king, and therefore was part of the deception to throw the prophet off the scent as to her true identity. The prophet's word had already proved to be reliable in his life and therefore he had no reason to doubt that it would not be so again. However, there was no possibility of Jeroboam succeeding with his deception. Indeed, he and his wife soon discovered that her disguise was totally unnecessary in the first place. They were unaware of the fact that Ahijah 'could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age', v. 4.

Clearly, Jeroboam had turned his back upon Ahijah since their first meeting; indeed, he had shown no concern for his welfare and was totally unaware of his current physical condition. Nevertheless, if he had deserted the aged prophet, the Lord had not: 'And the Lord said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick', v. 5. Her deception was uncovered before she even entered the door of his house in Shiloh. If his sight was impaired, there was

nothing wrong with his hearing! His ear was open to God's voice.

Significantly, Jeroboam's wife did not speak once throughout her visit. It was the Lord's voice that was heard through Ahijah. The section begins with, 'And the Lord said', and closes with, 'the word of the Lord', vv. 5, 18. Once again, no matter how much he sought to escape from it, it was God's word that confronted, challenged, and condemned Jeroboam. His wife must have been taken aback by Ahijah's initial greeting, 'Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings', v. 6. Her son's health, the reason why she came to the prophet, was not even mentioned to begin with. She was instructed to convey a message to Jeroboam that must have shaken her to the core. As soon as she reached the threshold of her home following the visit to Ahijah, her son died, v. 17. One can only begin to imagine what impact burying his son must have had upon Jeroboam, with the weight of impending judgement also hanging over him. However, whatever he felt, it did not lead him to repentance towards God. His sin in setting up a counterfeit religion based on idolatry is a recurring theme throughout the remainder of the book.

Ahijah's behaviour was impeccable throughout his exchanges with Jeroboam. It was a dangerous time to be a faithful servant of the Lord. Jeroboam was a powerful man, but Ahijah did not flinch from declaring to him 'all the counsel of God', cp. Acts 20. 27. It is a touching picture to see him sitting poor, blind, and alone in his house. It was a costly business to be loyal to the Lord; however, in a very real sense, he was not alone. It was in these humble circumstances that the Lord spoke to him, 1 Kgs. 14. 4-5.





What does it mean when someone says they are depressed or have depression? The answer can be varied. Some people have had a problem or a hard day at work, home, or college and say they are depressed. For others it can mean a lot more and a lot deeper than that. It can last a few weeks, months, and even years. There are many different forms in which it comes. For instance, many mothers have gone through post-natal depression, not knowing what is happening to them. This causes great stress for the mother, husband, and family life in general. We do not understand how they feel, but we can see something of the hurt and distress it causes. We can all support them in prayer and help where we can.

DEPRESSION

My experience is different again. In 1986/7 we had been married three years with two sons. As a supermarket manager, I was working long hours, yet remained active in the assembly, but not spending much time with the family. We could not keep going at that pace!

We live even busier lives today, and we need to rest. Above all, we need time alone with God. I carried a New Testament with me and read whenever I had a break. Family life is very important too: to pray with our children and to play with our children.

One day I left home to go to work but went to a small seaside town called Saltburn-by-the-Sea. I had happy

times there as a child. I sat all day, speaking to no one, and eventually went home at night. No one knew where I had been, and Pauline, my wife, was worried about me. I had little desire for anything and could not get motivated. Pauline took me to the doctor, and he sent a psychiatrist to our home. He took one look at my Bible on my armchair, Christian books in my bookcase, and texts on the walls, and announced that this was my problem. He told me I had 'religious mania'. We had a strong conversation as I told him, 'if you take Christ out of my life I have nothing'. I asked him to leave. Maybe some dear saint is finding life a struggle, or feeling lonely. No one seems to understand and it is often hard to pray and read the scriptures. How wonderful to know that our Saviour knows and understands. The scripture says, 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you', 1 Peter 5. 7.

'Does Jesus care when my heart
is pained too deeply for mirth or
song;
As the burdens press, and the cares
distress, and the way grows
weary and long?
O, yes He cares; I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long
nights dreary, I know my Saviour
cares',

FRANK E. GRAEFF

Our situation got worse. I was taking more and more time off work. I could not cope in my job, and I couldn't cope at home with a young family. I was admitted to hospital many times, and this affected us all. The boys and Pauline were struggling too, and found it very hard while I was in hospital because they had to leave me, and I was pleading with Pauline to let me go home. When I did come home it was also difficult. When the boys came in from school I went to bed, and when the boys went to bed I got up again. They thought that I didn't love them anymore. Through all this I still managed to get to most meetings of the assembly, although Pauline did not always find it easy to get me there. This taught me a





A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

valuable lesson. That just because we are at the meeting, it doesn't mean we are okay, spiritually, mentally, or physically. I looked fine, so I was fine. But that wasn't really the case. If I had worn a sticker on my head saying 'I am ill' it may have helped. We greet each other and expect to hear 'I am well, thank you'. We do this all the time, never expecting someone to say, 'I feel dreadful', or 'Please pray for me'. We can all be faced with problems, involving marriage, bereavement, unemployment, illness, etc., and we can find it all too much. We need to show compassion, care, and support, and be a good listener. It can be very difficult and scary for anyone to admit that they have a problem with any mental illness, especially when it is possible to be told 'Pull yourself together', or 'What have you got to be depressed about'. Such things do hurt and cause believers to keep quiet, and continue to burden themselves with it. We have had great support from many believers over the years. Some cared for the children when they were younger, others took me into their home to give Pauline a rest, and some have visited, prayed, and read the scriptures to me. We thank the Lord for them.

A reading that has been a great strength is from Isaiah chapter 40 verses 28-31: 'Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint'.

Eventually, I gave up my employment as I could not cope, even though the company had, at first, been sympathetic. I struggled every day and became very tearful. I could not sleep and found it hard to talk to others. The decision was a hard one

to take and, for a while, I got worse. Daily meditation on the scriptures is absolutely necessary as a believer. WILLIAM MACDONALD wrote on the Psalms, 'Occupation with self brings distress; occupation with others brings discouragement; occupation with Christ brings delight'. It is possible that believers with depression can be occupied with self-pity. It is so easy to be dwelling on ourselves always, in our thinking and actions. Even when some Christians want to support and understand, if all we do is talk about ourselves, again and again, we may be pushing people away unintentionally.

Philippians chapter 4 verses 6-8 has helped in this situation: 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things'.

We knew a number of Christians who had similar problems to ourselves, and they did not seem to improve, and some had suffered for many years. It was easy for me to think that I would be like this until the Lord comes, or takes me home. We all need to learn to trust the Lord daily and completely. In our family reading and prayer before the boys went to school we had to take each day and commit it to the Lord. Psalm 37 tells us, 'Trust in the Lord', v. 3; 'commit thy way unto the Lord', v. 5; 'rest in the Lord', v. 7; 'wait on the Lord', v. 34.

I was out of work for some time, but I did get out tracting, distributing literature, and visiting agricultural shows to witness. One day I was reading the scriptures at Isaiah chapter 41 and when I came to verse 10 I read those lovely words, 'Fear

thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness'. The words 'I will strengthen thee' stood out to me, also the previous verse, 'I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away'. These words to Israel really gripped my heart. Sometime later, I was preaching in the village of Wylam, and, as we went into the side room for a prayer meeting, the text on the wall said, 'I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away'. I believed it with all my heart. My health did improve over time. Finally, I got a job in a smaller supermarket as a manager again, with less pressure. I continued tracting and, eventually, I was asked if I would go into a secondary school to speak to the pupils: 500 on one day, and another 500 another day. I had taken Sunday school classes, but I was not really a first choice to speak to young people. The Lord gave help, and I had much peace, and calm as I talked about my wonderful Saviour. That was in 1992 and, from that first visit, many doors into schools opened up, and we continue to this day by the grace of God.

It would be wrong for me to write this article without acknowledging the strength and support of my dear wife Pauline, who has been by my side over thirty-two years. Our vow included being together in sickness and in health, and we have had a lot of sickness, including some very dark and trying times. Only the Lord knows what Pauline has gone through. It is right that we should pray for those who go through illness, but never forget those who have the responsibility to care and support. They may need a break, or someone to listen to them. How important it is!

I was commended to the Lord's work in 2001. I still get cast down at times, but the Lord is with me and has opened doors and given me the needed strength to speak to thousands of children and to teach the good word of God.

We fail, but 'he faileth not', Zeph. 3. 5.



CHRIST in ZECHA

If a scriptural reason is needed for studying the person of Christ in the book of Zechariah, we might refer to Peter, 'To him give all the prophets witness', Acts 10. 43. Christ Himself endorsed such a consideration. He expounded to the two on the Emmaus road 'the things concerning himself' 'in all the scriptures', 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets', Luke 24. 27. Zechariah reveals more of Christ than all the other Minor Prophets combined!

By **JOHN GRIFFITHS** Port Talbot, Wales

The Lord appears three times in verses 8 to 11 as 'among the myrtle trees', i.e., amongst His chosen earthly people.

Not only is He the proprietor of earth, keeping up-to-date with all that goes on amongst the nations, but He is still amidst His people. He is ready to act against the Gentile nations and for His beloved remnant both in the days of Zechariah and at the close of the Tribulation.

in chapter 1, since no other detail is given to qualify this.

Zechariah speaks directly to this Man. The measuring of Jerusalem is indicative of ownership and possession. It is to be the place of the Lord's presence, protection, and pre-eminence, v. 5.¹ In each case the measurement is of the Lord's property, where His presence is to be experienced. The Lord stamps His seal on these places.

(I) THE ANGEL OF THE LORD, or Angel of Jehovah, is a title of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is first used in Genesis chapter 16 verse 7 in connection with Hagar, who attributed deity to the Angel and declared, 'Thou God seest me'.

(i) The proprietor of Earth, 1. 11

The Angel of the Lord and the 'man riding upon a red horse', v. 8, are clearly one and the same person. 'A man' describes one of the pre-incarnate revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul describes Christ as 'the image of the invisible God', Col. 1. 15. This refers not only to His incarnation, but to the truth that the invisible God, even prior to the birth of Christ, has always revealed Himself to man in the person of Christ, i.e., Christophanies.

As the Angel of the Lord, Christ is seen in His deity. In the context, He is pre-eminent over the other angel-horsemen, who are reported to be 'behind him' and who are debriefed by Him in verse 11. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews goes to great lengths to show that angels are but ministering spirits whereas Christ is the Son of God.

The remnant of Israel, who have been restored to their land, wonder if God is still with them, as they suffer from the oppression of the Gentile nations. They are symbolized in the myrtle trees. Esther was called Hadassah, a myrtle. The myrtle tree was an evergreen of great beauty, lowly and fragrant. Does this not adequately represent a recently returned remnant in God's eyes?

(ii) The intercessor on behalf of Jerusalem/Zion, 1. 12

Christ intercedes on behalf of His people with the 'Lord of hosts'. This title of God occurs fifty-two times in the prophecy; Jehovah Sabaoth. Its first occurrence, 1 Sam. 1. 3, indicates that the Lord of hosts accepts the worship and sacrifices of His people. Hannah uses it in verse 11, where the Lord of hosts is seen as the prayer-answering God. Its last use, Jas. 5. 4, indicates a God who hears and sees all that is going on and will respond appropriately. God is displeased with the Gentile nations, who are at rest while His people suffer. He will punish the nations and bring prosperity to Jerusalem.

Here, two persons of the Godhead are in contact. Christ's intercessory prayer will be heard and answered. Christ's prayers are almost like royal commands; there is no possibility of His requests being turned down. Jerusalem, despite its many military defeats over the centuries of time, will emerge triumphant at last. Christ has prayed for it, God has promised it, so be it!

Blessed be God, it is the same Lord who intercedes for us.

(iii) The surveyor and scrutinizer of His people, 2. 1, 3

'A man', verse 1, though distinct from the two angels of verse 3, can be identified by the combination of 'a man' and 'the angel of the Lord'

The Lord's scrutiny of His people is illustrated in His presence amidst the lampstands, Rev. 2-3. To each of His churches He says, 'I know', and, usually, 'I know thy works'. The churches are His; they know His presence, protection, and pre-eminence. He, in turn, knows His assemblies through and through.

(iv) The mediator on behalf of Joshua, 3. 1, 6.

Joshua, the high priest, is seen here as representative of the nation of Israel in her unclean condition. His filthy garments are symbolic of her moral and spiritual condition both then and in the future. The Angel of the Lord is about to propose a change of raiment, signifying the removal of the nation's iniquity. Satan is present as the adversary to hinder this process. The Angel intervenes, calling on the Lord to rebuke Satan.

Two reasons are given for this advocacy on behalf of Joshua and, hence, the nation: (1) the sovereign grace of God in choosing Jerusalem, and (2) the saving grace of God in delivering the nation from Babylon, i.e., 'a brand plucked out of the fire'. Satan is silenced. Sin is removed, and the saints are addressed about their responsibilities and recompense.

Thank God for the role of Christ in advocacy on His people's behalf. The work of Christ has effectively silenced Satan's accusations. We are clean every whit!



ARIAH'S PROPHECY (1)

'Reach my blest Saviour first;
Take Him from God's esteem.
Show Jesus bears one spot of sin,
Then tell me I'm unclean',

W. NOEL TOMKINS

(v) The director and leader of His people, 12. 8

In the day of the Lord, with Jerusalem flanked on all sides by invading forces, and totally under siege, the Lord will give His people supernatural strength to resist their foes, until Messiah intervenes at His

'My strength is made perfect in weakness', 2 Cor. 12. 9, is as true now as it was then.

(II) THE APOSTLE OF THE LORD, i.e., 'Sent One', 2. 8, 9, 11; 4. 9; 6. 15.

On four occasions we read of one being 'sent' by God. In each case the result is that those to whom the delegate is sent will 'know' that God is active.

There are direct references to Christ and one is symbolic, 4. 9.

(i) Sent unto the nations for their devastation, 2. 8, 9

When is Christ sent? 'After the glory'! At His second coming to earth, our Lord will deal with the Gentile nations that are oppressing Israel.

Why is Christ sent? 'For he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye'. What a delightful way to describe God's valuation of His earthly people! How exceedingly precious they are to Him, the treasure hid in the field for which Christ paid the ultimate price at Calvary; 'he . . . selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field', in order that the treasure should be His, i.e., the nation of Israel, Matt, 13. 44.

How will He succeed? 'I will shake mine hand upon them'. It is almost as if God is treating the nations of the world like naughty children. They are but a drop which splashes over the side of a bucket full of water. A great reversal accompanies His advent. Israel has always been the serf of the nations but now the nations become Israel's servant.

'And ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me'.

(ii) Sent unto Israel for their habitation, 2. 11

In captivity they queried, 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' Ps. 137. 4. God exhorts them in light of Christ's return to sing and rejoice. The song of Moses and of the Lamb will be on their

lips. Despite the nations joining themselves to the Lord and being called 'my people' by the Lord, His promised presence is with Israel, 'I will dwell in the midst of thee'!

The parallel for the church today is, 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them', Matt. 18. 20.

(iii) Sent unto Israel for the completion of the temple, 4. 9

The 'sent' one in the context is plainly Zerubbabel. He has returned from captivity and been commissioned to build the temple. Despite delays, the work he has started God confirms; he will complete.

Zerubbabel and Joshua are said to be 'men wondered at' or 'men for a sign'. They are types. Zerubbabel the prince typifies Christ, and hence in our passage what is said of Zerubbabel at the time of writing will be true of Christ when He builds the millennial temple, Ezek. 40-48.

Our blessed Lord always completes what He commences - a practical and pointed lesson for believers today. It is no good putting your hand to the plough and then turning back. It is the hallmark of a steward that he is found faithful. God expects no less in our loyalty to Himself and to His service.

(iv) Sent unto Israel for the consecration of the temple, 6. 15

The Lord has already been described as the builder of the temple. He also occupies it and serves there. As the builder, He oversees the work, but Gentiles volunteer their services to carry out the actual labouring that is required. Inasmuch as verses 12 and 13 describe the Lord's presence in His millennial temple, I suggest we have the consecration of the house before us not simply its construction.

'And ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you'.

Endnotes

- 1 Other instances of the Lord measuring what uniquely belongs to Himself are to be found in: Ezek. 40. 3; Rev. 11. 1; 21. 15.

coming. The Angel of the Lord goes before them as their Leader and Director, just as He had done in the days of their wilderness journeyings and occupation of Canaan, 'and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them', John 10. 4.

Even today, we can appreciate the sentiment of the hymn writer:

'Jesus lives and Jesus leads,
Tho' the way be dreary;
Morn to darkest night succeeds,
Courage then ye weary:
Still the faithful Shepherd feeds;
Jesus lives and Jesus leads',

E. PAXTON HOOD



EVANGELISM

Evangelism is engaging with people in an attempt to explain the gospel and show them that they need Christ as their Saviour. Conversing with people in their own homes can be a relaxed and informal way of sharing the good news of the gospel. Such home visitation is a wonderful privilege, but carries great responsibility.

Door to door evangelism, where cold calling takes place, is not always easy and may not be welcomed by many people today. Often, stickers are put on doors to announce that cold callers are unwelcome. In some blocks of flats where I have called some people are too frightened to open their doors, even in daytime! The Jehovah's Witnesses movement has grown substantially and this method has, until recently, been their main form of evangelism. Door-to-door salespeople with anything from cheaper fuel costs, double glazing and home insulation to charity donations can seem to plague many areas of the country. The result is that suspicion and unease is felt by many householders when unknown people come knocking on their door.

However, there are many lonely, sad, sick, inadequate, and troubled people in our society who would welcome a home visit from someone who offers friendship, kindness, and a sympathetic approach. Sadly, these are very often the people Jehovah's Witnesses draw into their organization and this should

challenge us deeply about our own approach to evangelism.

Some people are clearly and obviously gifted at being able to knock on someone's door and engage the occupants in conversation about the gospel. Yet it may be that most of us are too shy, too sensitive, or too embarrassed and, lacking the confidence to do this sort of work. We need a great deal of encouragement and help before we can engage in it.

By
PAUL YOUNG
Maesteg, Wales

In considering such work we need to be prepared by having a good understanding of the gospel message, and have absolute assurance that the Bible is God's word. We must hold the deep conviction that the gospel is the only answer that meets everyone's deepest spiritual need, and have a sincere desire to make this message known.

A second need is to be prayerful. This indicates the complete dependence we must have upon the Lord for this work to succeed, and it helps us to develop the correct motive. We pray that we might say the right words and be in contact with people who are ready for the message of hope found in Jesus Christ. We 'bathe' our work with prayer. It is so important to speak to God about the people before we speak to the people about God.

There are various approaches that can be used. I have a very simple approach. I introduce myself by name and as a representative of our church, though experience has shown that it might need a little explanation of where it is located. Then, I say that if we can do anything to help at any time then do let us know and I leave them with a booklet about the gospel, with contact details on it. That might take just one or two minutes, but it can sometimes engender a much fuller conversation.

Interestingly, one man said that I could do something for him and he drew my attention to the back wall of his council house, which had a problem with damp. I thought for one moment he wanted me to do some plastering! However, he had written and spoken with councillors, the Member of Parliament, and the officers of the Local Authority and yet nothing had been done. So I said that I would write to the council and within four days workers came to fix the problem! It was all about timing, and I am sure that my letter made little difference. However, that family were grateful and have, over the years, come to services; the children have attended the children's meetings and come on camp. They are now grown up, but I still meet with the family, though they have not yet trusted the Lord.

Another man wanted to talk through his sadness of losing his wife and bringing up the youngest son on his own. The result was that he came regularly for many years to our services and made a profession of faith in Christ. When he died his family asked me to take his funeral and I still have strong contact with them.

A second approach is to go out with a survey form of say twelve questions and explain 'we are doing a survey of religious views in the area'. The first few questions will be factual, such as how many books in the Bible, name a disciple, or an Old Testament king. The final two or three are more opinion type questions which can engender good conversation, such as, 'Is the Bible relevant today?', and 'Does life cease at death?' Always





- VISITATION

leave a booklet and encourage people to come to the church and view the survey results.

However, there are a number of factors that need to be remembered in this kind of work

- 1 First impressions are very important and the initial few seconds can make or break the contact. Therefore, we need to give some consideration to our appearance, demeanour, and the first few words we say.
- 2 Don't be overtly religious by carrying an enormous Bible. I know we are not ashamed of the Bible, but for non-Christians, it can be embarrassing.
- 3 Never engage in argument as this will always produce more heat than light. Simply sowing a few seeds of the gospel, and maybe just one fresh idea into someone's mind, can be used by the Lord. People rarely become Christians during their first contact with the gospel, but seeds sown in the heart and mind need time to germinate and take root.
- 4 The aim is to leave a good impression and, whatever happens, we must always be polite and show sensitivity towards people.
- 5 Find any areas of common concern or interest, as evangelism is all about relationship building and getting to know people. People need to develop a realization that they can trust our integrity.
- 6 Find any opportunity to make a return visit, but this needs to be done sensitively by not leaving it too long, as they might forget or, returning too soon, we might be perceived as a nuisance.
- 7 If you have opportunity to pray with people take it and always leave with the promise that you will pray for them. Remember to fulfil your promise.

A further type of visitation is to go to the homes of people in our community whom we know are going through difficult times. I have to visit families when I am due to take a funeral, and so often neither the deceased nor the family know the Lord. We need to be natural with them, supportive and

sensitive and, as I gain information for the funeral, I always try to end my time with the family in prayer. Prayer reminds people that we are visiting them in our capacity as Christians who believe in a God who hears and answers prayer.

One family gathered thirteen members together the day after the death of a lady I had visited. They wanted me to speak to them with some words of comfort. There was no warning, but it gave me ten minutes to share John chapter 3 verse 16 and pray with them. Since the funeral, which was some years ago, that family has been many times to our services, including the lady's husband, children and grandchildren.

There are always opportunities to visit and show kindness to people in our community who have problems and difficulties, such as sickness, burglary, redundancy, marriage breakdown, accident, or bereavement. We should make a point of enquiring about them and promising to pray for them. Compassion can be expressed with a card, chocolates, flowers, a cake, or a meal. When people are in need and feel alone, helpless or vulnerable, such tokens of kindness are really appreciated.

A Christian lady, now with the Lord, was having her quiet time one New Year's Day. As she read her Bible and

prayed she felt a compulsion from the Spirit of God to go next door and wish her neighbours a Happy New Year. She had never done such a thing before and on mentioning it to her husband he could not understand why she was doing it. She knocked next door and the gentleman answered and she wished him and his wife a Happy New Year and said that she was praying for them. He opened the door wide and welcomed her in and said, 'How did you know?' It turned out that they had just been discussing his wife's imminent surgery and had asked the question, 'Who can we turn to?' That faithful Christian had turned up and promised to pray, and then had the great opportunity of sharing her faith and pointing them to the Saviour. The old saying is still true: 'People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care'. The New Testament says, that without love it profits nothing. We must show genuine love toward people, because unless we love them it is a waste of time.

Ultimately, salvation is the work of the Spirit of God, but He uses human speech from the mouths of His people to make the gospel message known. Let us take up the challenge of being serious about evangelism, especially in our society that sadly turns its back upon the Lord by rejecting the wonderful love He has shown at Calvary.

PAUL YOUNG is in full-time service for the Lord and fellowships with the assembly in Maesteg, South Wales





Ephesians

Chapter 3 verses 14-21

As we come to Paul's supplications we find that there is intimacy with the throne of heaven. All is achieved through the person of the Lord Jesus, for it is both in Him and through Him that we can approach directly to God. How different from the old system of Judaism when the people had to stand outside when the priest went into the presence of God, and even he could not move within the veil. Only Aaron on the Day of Atonement had that privilege, and that but once a year. We can now approach with confidence, though not with rashness or presumption; the way into the holiest has now been opened for us by the Lord Jesus.

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

the Lord Jesus, for here love and the divine presence is the prime thought expressed, so he uses the more intimate expression of Father. It is good to have intelligence in prayer.

chapter 4 verse 24, or, as 1 Peter 3 verse 4 brings before us, 'the hidden man of the heart'.

He now prays for an appreciation of the **presence of Christ, v. 17**. If the Spirit strengthens the inner man, how blessed is it to have the Lord Jesus dwelling within us! The idea of Christ dwelling is that of Him being at home, of the Lord being in the place that belongs to Him, and feeling comfortable there. What a transformation this would make to our lives if we could only value the constant presence of the Lord Jesus within.

Paul knew the love these believers had for him. This was seen on the shore at Miletus as recorded in Acts chapter 20 verses 36-38, when they wept sore and fell on his neck and embraced him. He would encourage the saints that though the imprisonment was very sore to Paul, he sees it as if it was the tribulation that is to come upon the world. However, he realizes that it is for the blessing of the saints as they receive the vital truths that are in his writings.

The prayer begins by introducing the **progeny of God** of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, v. 15. God gives life and breath to all; be they heavenly or earthly, all owe their existence to Him, who is the originator of all life. Hence, all takes its name from Him.

We now enter into the depth of this prayer, and see the wonder of Paul's thoughts as he desires great blessedness for those who are redeemed.

This is an act of faith; faith honours God and God honours faith. We must have a life of faith to bring pleasure to God and this is the means of knowing the presence of the Lord Jesus within. We remember the promise of the Lord Jesus when in the Upper Room ministry He said, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you', John 14. 18, and, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him', 14. 23. This also forms part of the mystery, as he writes in Colossians chapter 1 verse 27, 'To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory'.

The parenthesis of verses 1-11 is now closed and he takes up the petition he began in verse 1, 'for this cause'. The second prayer of the letter now begins, yet how different to the prayer of chapter 1 where he desires that the believers will enter into the knowledge of what God has brought them into, and to realize the power that is available to them. He now desires that there will be an understanding of the love and blessedness of the fellowship in the one body, and the implications of God's thoughts toward us.

The **power of the Spirit** in the life of the saints is the first thought as he approaches the throne of the Father. He prays, 'That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory', v. 16. IRONSIDE has put it well when he writes on this section, 'not "out of", for then God's glory would be diminished, but "according to",¹ and by this we are enriched. God loses nothing by blessing us, but we gain everything. The content of Paul's prayer rises very high so that he desires that we have an intimacy with the whole of the Godhead. He desires that we might know the power of the Spirit, the indwelling Christ, and the fullness of God.

The presence of the Lord Jesus will give us **permanent stability**. We notice 'that' follows the thought of the Lord taking up residence in our heart. This word can be rendered 'in order that'; it is used when a positive result is required – this is to be rooted

It is good to see the posture he takes, and the person to whom he addresses his prayer, v. 14. In bowing the knee he appreciates the glory and honour that is God's, and his own dependence upon Him. It is to the Father of

Strength within is asked for, as he seeks to further the work of God in the saints; this can only be accomplished by the Spirit, and it is for the inner man. Perhaps he is looking to the new man of



and grounded in love. Using the figures of fertility and stability, he desires that we are deeply rooted and have a firm basis. The former taking its sustenance from, and the latter making it an immovable ground on which we act in love.

This will lead us to be able to comprehend what and where we have been brought to in the purpose of God, v. 18; it will give us a **perception of God's blessings**. The desire is that we may be able to comprehend with all saints the truth before us. The word 'comprehend' is a compound word signifying to lay hold on for oneself, to seize upon. It would appear that what God seeks for us is to realize what we have come into in Christ. All that has been set forth in the chapter is within this verse. Its breadth is boundless, as it brings in the despised Gentiles wherever they are found. Its length is endless and eternal, as it reveals the church will enjoy all we have unto all ages. As we consider the depth we cannot help but recall the place that God found us in and saved us when we were in the depth of sin and

with honour and glory in this world?

All would demonstrate a **passion that has been bestowed upon us,**

v. 19. As he continues in prayer, he desires that we might come to know, by experience, the love of Christ. It is not surprising that he uses the word *ginosko* when bringing before us the love of

in the world He loved them to the end'. He completed the work that was needed for our salvation, and when we think of the depth of suffering the Lord passed through it can only demonstrate the vileness of our sin that cost Him so much to redeem us. Such is His love that the words of Romans chapter 8 verses 35-39 alone can set forth the position we now enjoy because of it. There we find that things physical, mental, spiritual, natural, material, personal, and terminal, whether they are seen or unseen, cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All was with a view that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. How can one express the inexpressible? The condition of the heart in verses 17-18 enables us to comprehend this wondrous revelation made to us.

The thoughts of Paul are expressed by the twofold term he uses to make us appreciate God's ability to answer anything we bring before Him in word or thought. God can go above and beyond whatever we desire and to do it superabundantly.

It is only possible because of the power that is within us; the power of chapter 1 that raised and glorified Christ is the power that God will use to answer the prayers of His children.

The prayer closes with the beautiful doxology that again exhibits the reason why the church has been brought into being, v. 21. The dealings of God with us in this present age are that glory might be brought to Him throughout all ages. Amen.



under Satan's power as seen in chapter 2. As far as the height is concerned are we not now in heavenly places in Christ, linked to God's beloved Son, and to share the glories that will be His in the day when He is manifested

Christ, for this love goes beyond knowledge. Much can be said about the love of Christ. Christ says that there is no greater love than a man lay down his life for his friends, John 15. 13. Or, 'having loved His own which were

Endnotes

- 1 H. A. IRONSIDE, *In the Heavenlies - Practical Expository Addresses on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Loizeaux, 1971.



A LIFE OF VICTORY IN THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT [2]

By **JAMES D. McCOLL**
Brisbane, Australia

The fruit of the Spirit, vv. 22-23

When considering the fruit of the Spirit, two questions may be asked:

- a) What is meant by the fruit of the Spirit?
- b) How is this fruit produced?

Fruit in scripture refers to the development of Christian character. It is the moral beauty of the Lord Jesus displayed in the life and character of the believer. The fruit of the Spirit is the direct result of the believer walking by, or in, the Spirit, as the rule and power by which behaviour is ordered.

The nine-fold fruit of the Spirit divides easily into three groups:

- a) Qualities which are God-ward: love, joy, peace;
- b) Graces when relating to others: longsuffering, gentleness, goodness;
- c) Qualities relating to self: faith or faithfulness, meekness, temperance or self-control, 'against such there is no law'.

These are but samples and signs of life in the Spirit. Remember that the Law can only restrain, whereas the Spirit of God constrains. The fruit of the Spirit is seen through the life imparted by the Holy Spirit. The life in the Spirit yields the fruit of the Spirit. Fruit, in its natural sense, is produced by the inherent energy of a living organism, as seen in the words of the parable of the sower – 'Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold', Matt. 13. 8 ESV. Fruit, in its spiritual sense, is produced by the energy of the Holy Spirit, operating within

those who, through faith, are brought into living union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Such fruit is a necessary product of the justified life – the very hallmark of its reality. These graces and qualities form a cluster, reflecting the moral beauty displayed in the character and life of the believer.

(C) Conclusion and summary, vv. 24-26

Verse 24: 'And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections (passions) and lusts'. This work is done at conversion. It is not an exhortation. Rather, it is the believer's position

place. JOHN RITCHIE wrote: 'They have accepted God's verdict and condemnation (Rom 8. 3) as expressed in the cross and come to reckon of them as He does. (Rom 6. 1-11) This is not a slow, painful process, attained by self-denial and mortification, as Romanism would make it, but faith's acceptance of what God has accomplished by Christ's death, and faith agrees with it'.

It is now our responsibility to live by the Spirit of God:

3. Live in or by the Spirit, v. 25.

'If we live [or since we live] in the Spirit'. Not only have we been born again by the Spirit, but we are sustained and empowered by Him in every aspect of our daily life.

4. Walk by the Spirit.

'Let us also walk in the Spirit'. Since we live by the Spirit, we

must allow Him to guide our every step until the journey's end.

Finally, it is important to observe that the word 'walk' in verse 25 is quite different from the word in verse 16. This 'walk' has to do with individual conduct, whereas in verse 25, the word 'walk' has to do with our life and conduct in relation to others. The literal meaning here is to 'walk in line' or to 'keep in rank'. One who walks by the Spirit in his/her personal life is the one who, by the same Spirit, will walk in harmony with others. Such a circumspect walk will ensure practical oneness and unity in assembly life. Let us do so, for His name's sake.



in Christ. When believers exercised faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, they became His property – they belong to Him.

'Have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts'. Here, the verb group 'have crucified' is in the aorist tense, meaning it was a decisive change, complete in itself. This act was at the moment of their conversion to God. Scripture does not ask us to 'crucify the old man' nor 'crucify the flesh'. This happened when we were saved, and the believer is asked to acquiesce (accept the fact without objection) with this act that took



LEVITICUS

By **KEITH KEYSER** Gilbertsville, USA

1. Introduction

The Name of the Book: Like the other books of the Pentateuch, the English Bible follows the ancient Greek translation the Septuagint – as transliterated in Latin by the Vulgate – in titling it 'Leviticus'. Some have objected that this is something of a misnomer because Leviticus is mostly about the priests; in contrast, Numbers deals more with the subject of the Levites. But this complaint is based on a misunderstanding of ancient people's use of the term. The priesthood is levitical; hence they used the term Leviticus.¹ In keeping with its standard practice of using early words in the book, the Hebrew Bible calls it *vayiqra*, meaning 'And He called' after the opening statement: 'And the Lord called unto Moses', Lev. 1. 1. The place of this calling is interesting: in Exodus chapter 19 God called from Mount Sinai with dramatic signs that said 'stay away' to the Israelites, cp. Heb. 12. 18-29. But Leviticus chapter 1 verse 1 opens with Him calling Moses from the tabernacle – the dwelling place that He pitched in the midst of His people. It is a book of grace that inspires the believer with the confidence that the Lord wants a relationship with His people.²

Some prefer the rabbinic Talmudic title of the book, 'the priests' law'.³ All of these are good descriptions of the contents of the book; it is God who speaks in Leviticus regarding the priestly offerings and the law that they taught concerning His holiness. He calls people to know, worship, and serve Him in a holy manner.

2. The Purpose of the Book

Historically, the book of Leviticus provided teaching to Israel regarding the divinely ordained Aaronic priesthood and the proper way of approaching the holy God. In this postmodern age, these lessons are also important for contemporary people to learn. People think that there are many ways to God, and that it does not matter how one approaches Him. Nor is one's lifestyle of much consequence in the grand scheme of the universe, they assert. Nevertheless, Leviticus declares that there is only one God, who is perfectly holy and demands holiness in His human creation. Holiness is not only negative – separation from what is common or impure – it is also positive – being devoted to the Lord for His purposes and glory. It entails both separation and consecration. This book teaches God's people in every age the importance of holiness in all of its aspects.⁴

R. LAIRD HARRIS recounts the context of the book in Israel's history, putting it alongside Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy:

'The Israelites thus encamped before Mount Sinai just short of a year. During

that time Moses spent eighty days on the mountain with God. Then the people of Israel, at Moses' instruction, built the wilderness tabernacle. During this year Moses organized the nation, built up the army, established courts and laws, and ordered formal worship. It was a busy year. Although most of the laws – both secular and profane – that Moses drew up at that time are found in Exodus and Numbers, Leviticus is the law book par excellence. Its laws, however, mainly emphasize Israel's worship of God and the instructions for the priests. For this reason, doubtless, the LXX called the book *Levitikon* ("pertaining to the Levites"). Leviticus therefore does not include numerous prescriptions for secular court procedures and penalties. Such laws are concentrated more in Exodus 20-23. Deuteronomy, being a summary of both history and law, repeats some of the laws of both Exodus and Leviticus and gives other details'.⁵

Teaching His people ethical behaviour and holiness

Israel was a people who were called to be the Lord's possession – a direct theocracy meant to be a light to the surrounding pagan nations. As COATES remarks: 'The Book of Leviticus has in view a people in covenant relations with God, in whose midst God dwells, and who have movements of heart Godward . . . Here we see the manner and order of that service – the service of a free and willing people; and we learn that every outgoing of heart in the service of God is concerning Christ. Blessed service!⁶ In a sense, therefore, Leviticus has missionary intentions, for it provides a roadmap for the theocracy of Israel to live differently in this world and thereby draw the Gentiles to faith in Him. One of the ablest commentators on Leviticus, S. H. KELLOGG points this out:

'[Leviticus] was given to direct them how they might live as a holy nation in fellowship with God. The keynote of the book is "Holiness to Jehovah". More particularly, the object of the book was to furnish for the theocracy set up in Israel a code of law which should secure their physical, moral, and spiritual well being. But the establishment of the theocracy in Israel was itself only a means to an end; namely, to make Israel a blessing to all nations, in mediating to the Gentiles the redemption of God. Hence: the Levitical laws were all intended and adapted to train and prepare the nation for this special historic mission to which God had chosen them'.⁷

Although they never achieved this in the Old Testament era, in a future day Christ will reign over them and draw many peoples to Himself, Zech. 2. 10-12; Isa. 2. 2-4.

Why should one study an ancient book of rituals and laws?

With its seemingly arcane sacrificial and legal details, Leviticus is admittedly difficult for the modern reader. Nevertheless, it is part of the inspired word of God and is 'profitable', 2 Tim. 3. 16-17. A classic nineteenth-century commentary reminds one of this truth: 'There is no book, in the whole compass of that inspired Volume which the Holy Ghost has given us, that contains more of the very words of God than Leviticus. It is God that is the direct speaker in almost every page; his gracious words are recorded in the form wherein they were uttered. This consideration cannot fail to send us to the study of it with singular interest and attention'.⁸ Studying Leviticus is recommended for the following reasons:

1. It is a tremendously theological book, discussing God's essential being and His requirements for humanity. More than any other book it teaches the concept of holiness. WIERSBE deploys impressive statistics to make this point: 'The word holy is used 91 times in Leviticus, and words connected with cleansing are used 71 times. References to uncleanness number 128. There's no question what this book is all about':⁹ God's uniqueness and separation from anything evil, dark, or defiling. He is the exact opposite of anything base or impure. Moreover, He is supremely beautiful and is to be worshipped in 'the beauty of holiness', Ps. 29. 2. Thus, in Leviticus He demonstrates that He wants to commune with His people, but in order to do this He must deal with their sin and make them holy.¹⁰

Contrary to popular belief, the Almighty's holiness is a reflection of His love, because sin mars and destroys His creation. His love is jealous in the purest sense of that word. He wants to preserve His beloved creatures from the impurity, pain, and separation from Himself that sin causes. Thus, even though Leviticus only uses the actual word 'love' twice – both times horizontally, Lev. 19. 18, 34 – the concept of God's love is the foundation of the sacrificial system that provides people access to His presence.¹¹ Commenting on the burnt offering, ANDREW BONAR exclaims: 'What love is here! The heart of our God, in the midst of all his own joy, yearning to pour itself out to man!'¹²

2. The holy life of the redeemed is depicted in the historical injunctions given to the Israelites; these have value as examples for modern believers. R. V. COURT speaks of this emphasis on holy living:



CHARTING THE SCRIPTURES LEVITICUS by Jonathan Black

Fulfilled at Christ's 1st Coming ←

7 FEASTS OF JEHO

1. Passover - 14th day Nisan - 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us' - Sinner delivered, 1 Cor. 5: 7
2. Unleavened bread - 15th - 21st day Nisan - Put away sin - Christian holiness, 1 Cor. 5: 8
3. Firstfruits - 17th day Nisan - Christ risen - firstfruits of them that slept - God satisfied, 1 Cor. 15: 20
4. Pentecost - 6th day Sivan - Descent of the Holy Spirit as Christ had promised - Church born, Acts 2

Tebeth Month 10

Kislev
Month 9

December

Early
Rains

THE LEVIT

(קרבן *Korban* - offering - t

Sweet S

- Ch. 1 - The burnt offering - a sacrifice to God for a sweetsm
- Ch. 2 - The meal offering - He was made in the likeness
- Ch. 3 - The peace offering - He made peace by the

Non Sweet

- Ch. 4 - The sin offering - 'For he hath m
- Ch. 5 - The trespass offering - 'If we confess o

'Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood h

Cheshvan
Month 8

November

15th - 22nd

feast of **TABERNACLES**
or booths

October

10th

day of **ATONEMENT**
Yom Kippur

Tishri
Month 7

1st

feast of **TRUMPETS**

The altar of burnt offering Ch. 4: 7

September

August

Elul
Month 6

Ab
Month 5

The book of Exodus



'Ye shall be holy, for I am holy',

Lev. 11: 44 / 1 Peter 1: 15 The word holy is mentioned 92 times in Leviticus - more than any other book in the Bible. Holy means 'to set apart'.

The Levitical Offerings

- 1 The burnt offering
- 2 The meal offering
- 3 The peace offering
- 4 The sin offering
- 5 The trespass offering

The Law of the Offerings

- 6 The law of the offerings
- 7 The law of the offerings

Living with the Offerings

- 8 The consecration of the Priesthood
- 9 The glory of the Lord appears
- 10 Sin of Nadab and Abihu

Laws for cleanliness

- 11 Law of the beast
- 12 Law of the birth
- 13 Law of the Lepre
- 14 Law for Leprosy
- 15 Law of issues in

1491 BC

→ 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present you

VAH - LEVITICUS 23

Future, to be fulfilled at Christ's 2nd Coming

- 5. Trumpets - 1st Tishri - Israel gathered to the land, Matt. 24. 31
- 6. Day of Atonement - 10th Tishri - Israel recognise their Messiah, Zech. 12. 9
- 7. Tabernacles - 15th Tishri - Millennial reign of Christ & National rest, Ezek. 36/37

Shebat Month 11

Wet season

January

February

Adar
Month 12

LEGAL OFFERINGS CH. 1-5

(from root meaning to approach or come near)

Savour offerings - Voluntary

Offering savour, Eph. 5. 2 - Believer to offer body as a living sacrifice, Rom. 12. 1 | Fire!
Offering of men, Phil. 2. 5-9 - Believer to offer the sacrifice of praise, Heb. 13. 15 | Flour!
Offering of blood of His cross, Col. 1. 20 - Believer enjoys fellowship, 1 John 1. 3, 7 | Fat!

Savour offerings - Mandatory

Offering made him to be sin for us who knew no sin', 2 Cor. 5. 21 | Blood!
Offering for our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins', 1 John 1. 9 | Silver!

... entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us', Heb. 9. 12

March

Latter
Rains

Nisan
Month 1

14th - 21st

feast of **PASSOVER**
inc unleavened bread

17th

feast of **FIRSTFRUITS**
first sheaf of barley

Iyyar
Month 2

50 DAYS

May

Barley Harvest

Ruth 2. 23

Wheat Harvest

'PENTECOST'
Acts 2. 1
Πεντηκοστή
the fiftieth day

6th

feast of **PENTECOST**
feast of weeks

Sivan
Month 3

July

June

Tammuz
Month 4

Dry season

Holy Ground

... and the fowl
... mother
... in the human
... in the home
... men or women

Ch. 16 The Day of atonement

'it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul', Lev. 17. 11

Lessons in holiness

- 17 Laws relating to sacrificial behaviour
- 18 Laws relating to moral behaviour
- 19 Laws relating to holy behaviour
- 20 Laws relating to witchcraft
- 21 Holiness of the priesthood
- 22 Holiness excludes the stranger

Learning from the feasts

- 23 Feasts of the Lord
- 24 Laws for the stranger
- 25 Year of Jubilee - rest and redemption
- 26 The captivity predicted
- 27 The vows valued



'For Israel, God's requirements were obedience and faith, and a reflection of God's own holy character in their daily life. The standard of the New Testament is the same, 1 Pet. 1. 16'.¹³ Leviticus reminds Christians that our lives should be theocentric, revolving around God and His word.

3. The nature of sin is minutely described and the divine remedy through redemption is explicitly explored. As MORGAN cogently explains: 'There are two supreme values. First, a recognition of sin, and a revelation of its nature; and second, a recognition of redemption, and a revelation of its nature. Or, more briefly, sin and redemption, the fundamental matters concerning man and his need, and God and His provision'.¹⁴
4. A basic knowledge of the book is absolutely necessary to understand the teaching of many New Testament books, such as Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, Romans, 1 Peter, and the four Gospels.
5. It is filled with types and shadows of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. A careful reading of the book will repay one with beautiful pictures of Christ, as well as many principles stemming from God's holy character. The five principal offerings and the Feasts of Jehovah are particularly rich sources of truth regarding the Lord's redemptive work and plan for this world.¹⁵
6. Leviticus affirms the exclusivity of Jehovah as the true and living God in contrast to the idols of the nations. HOUSE unpacks this teaching well:

'Throughout Leviticus the one God continues to command fidelity to himself. Israel must avoid idols at all cost and must reject the worship practices of the Egyptians and Canaanites. Only one God can save. Only one God makes a covenant with human beings. Only one God reveals concrete, understandable, holy standards to the people. Only one God lifts Israel out of harmful and shameful activities to make them a holy people. Only one God forgives unreservedly and judges fairly. Only one God stands ready to give Israel a land of its own'.¹⁶

3. The Plan of the Book

Like other books of the Bible, Leviticus may be divided in several ways. Whichever approach one chooses, the book begins with the Lord speaking and inviting His people to approach Him, Lev. 1. 1. The sacrifices and priesthood explain that this is not a lightly undertaken invitation. Something must be done to permit human beings to come into their Creator's presence without holy wrath consuming them. Therefore, the book opens with redemption (sacrifice) and mediatorship (priesthood).

4. Content Outlines of the Book

- a) Chapters 1-7: Sacrifices.

- b) Chapters 8-10: Priesthood.
- c) Chapters 11-15: Personal purity and impurity.
- d) Chapter 16: The Day of Atonement.
- e) Chapters 17-22: Laws concerning individual holiness.
- f) Chapter 23: Feasts of the Lord.
- g) Chapter 24: Tabernacle function (lampstand and shewbread) and the penalty for blasphemy.
- h) Chapter 25: The effects of the Year of Jubilee.
- i) Chapter 26: Blessings and cursings pertaining to performance.
- j) Chapter 27: Vows and dedication of things to the Lord.¹⁷

5. The Author and Date of the Book

Moses' authorship of Leviticus does not appear to have been seriously challenged until the rise of the nineteenth-century sceptical critics. Nonetheless, we prefer to side with the remainder of the Old and New Testaments that clearly view him as the author of Leviticus. The other Old Testament books frequently refer to the Torah or Pentateuch as 'the law of Moses'.¹⁸

The infallible Son of God implied Mosaic authorship when He gave instructions based on the commands delivered through Moses, as one sees when He quotes from Leviticus chapter 14 in Matthew chapter 8 verse 4: 'And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them'. Elsewhere, the Lord referred to part of the Pentateuch as 'the book of Moses', Mark 12. 26. He recognized the well-known Jewish division of the Old Testament as '... Moses and all the prophets', Luke 24. 27, and in verse 44 describing it as: 'the law of Moses ... the prophets ... and the psalms'. Other instances of His verification of Mosaic authorship abound in the Gospels, e.g., John 5. 46; 7. 19; and Matt. 19. 7-8. His apostles also believed this truth. On one occasion even Abraham spoke from beyond the grave to authenticate the Pentateuch as genuinely Mosaic, Luke 16. 29!

Clearly, the Bible attests that Moses wrote the book of Leviticus and the other four books of the Pentateuch. To borrow the poet WILLIAM COWPER's lines: 'Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan His work in vain; God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain'. As for its date, it was written in approximately 1445 B.C. WENHAM explains the chronology of the book this way:

'God revealed some of the laws in Leviticus by speaking to Moses from the tent of meeting, or tabernacle, Lev. 1. 1. Other laws were revealed on Mount Sinai, 26. 46. Such statements show that Moses learned the contents of Leviticus after the tabernacle had been built, but before the Israelites left Mount Sinai. This fits in with Exodus chapter 40 verse 17, which says

that the tabernacle was erected exactly a year after the Israelites left Egypt. They then spent another month at Sinai, during which time the laws in Leviticus were given to Moses. Then, one month later, Num. 1. 1, Moses was commanded to prepare the people to leave Sinai to conquer the Promised Land of Canaan'.

6. Important Themes in the Book

- A) God's holiness.
- B) Personal holiness.
- C) Christ's redemptive work – His multifaceted sacrifice.
- D) Priesthood/mediatorship.
- E) Israel as God's special people, separated to Himself.
- F) The nature of sin and defilement.
- G) The danger of bringing God what He does not ask for/the proper approach to God.
- H) The uniqueness of Jehovah against the pluralism of the ancient near east (i.e., against idols).
- I) Sexual morality based on divine teaching.
- J) Freedom from indebtedness (Jubilee).

Endnotes

- 1 W. H. GISPEN, 'Leviticus, Book of', ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary*, InterVarsity Press, 1996, pg. 683.
- 2 For the way in which two gifted brothers of the past tease out the implications of this setting, see: C. H. MACKINTOSH, *Genesis to Deuteronomy: Notes on the Pentateuch*, Loizeaux Brothers, 1972, pg. 281; S. H. KELLOGG, *The Expositor's Bible: Leviticus*, A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1903, pg. 29.
- 3 A. T. CHAPMAN, *An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Cambridge University Press, 1911, pp. 4-5.
- 4 'Leviticus speaks forevermore: Of the awfulness of sin in the light of the holiness of God, Of the plenteous redemption springing from the love of God, and Of the possibility of holiness of life, created by communion with God'. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, Baker, 1982, pg. 14.
- 5 R. LAIRD HARRIS, 'Leviticus', in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin, Zondervan, 1990, electronic edition, no pagination.
- 6 C. A. COATES, *An Outline of the Book of Leviticus*, Stow Hill Bible & Tract Depot, n.d., pg. 1.
- 7 KELLOGG, pg. 20 [brackets mine].
- 8 ANDREW A. BONAR, *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus, Expository and Practical*, Robert Carter & Brothers, 1851, pg. vii [italics original]. See also: Gleason Archer Jr., 'Leviticus', in *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed., Moody Press, 1994, pg. 258 [italics original].
- 9 WARREN W. WIERSBE, *Be Holy, 'Be' Commentary Series*, Victor Books, 1996, pg. 9 [italics original].
- 10 On God's distinct holiness this may be said: 'Paradoxically, the near, revealing, holy God is also the separate, distinct, other-than-human deity as well. God may come near to Israel, but God never shares Israel's need to repent of sins committed against self or others', PAUL R. HOUSE, *Old Testament Theology*, InterVarsity Press, 1998, pg. 128.
- 11 Contrary to what you may hear today in some sermons and popular religious songs, the emphasis in the Bible is on the *holiness of God* and not on the love of God. 'Love is central in God', wrote American theologian AUGUSTUS H. STRONG, 'but holiness is central in love'.
- 12 A. BONAR, pg. 18.
- 13 R. V. COURT, 'Introducing Leviticus', in *Day by Day through the Old Testament*, ed. C. E. HOCKING and M. HORLOCK, Day by Day Series, Precious Seed, 1982, pg. 64.
- 14 C. MORGAN, pp. 10-11.
- 15 For the typical purpose of Leviticus see KELLOGG, pp. 27-28.
- 16 W. HOUSE, pg. 152.
- 17 Further suggested outlines of this book can be found in the author's book *Laws for Life*, published by Precious Seed Publications.
- 18 See 2 Chr. 23. 18; 30. 16; 35. 12; Josh. 8. 31; Judg. 4. 11; 1 Kgs. 2. 3; 2 Kgs. 14. 6; Ezra 3. 2; 7. 6; Neh. 8. 1; Dan. 9. 11, 13; Mal. 4. 4, etc.



A WORD FOR TODAY

χάριν (In favour, for the pleasure of)
 χάρις, ιτος (Grace, gracefulness,
 loveliness)
 χάρισμα (A gift of grace, a free gift)

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY**
 Newton Abbot, England

The hymn writer John Newton published his first edition of the *Olney Hymns* in 1779, which he arranged into three books. He states in the preface that, 'In the first I have classed those which are formed upon select passages of scripture, and placed them in the order of the books of the Old and New Testament'.¹ His most famous hymn, 'Amazing grace' is, surprisingly, placed by him under 1 Chronicles chapter 17 verses 16 and 17, with the title, 'Faith's review and expectation'.² In his earlier sermon notes for this hymn for New Year's day 1773, Newton explains the significance of this Biblical text in relationship to his hymn by stating that these verses, 'lead us to a consideration of past mercies and future hopes and intimate the frame of mind which becomes us when we contemplate what the Lord has done for us'. This is precisely how we should respond when we think of the grace of God so exemplified in the Greek word *charis*, which can be viewed as a state of delight that either causes or accompanies joy. The word is, in fact, multifarious, hence its widespread use in Greek philosophy, especially the writings of Plato, where 'it has the meanings "good pleasure", "goodwill", "favour", "pleasure", "what pleases" and "thanks"'.³

In the Septuagint (LXX), *charis* usually translates the Hebrew word *chen*,⁴ which was used by writers to speak of the blessing that a superior conferred on an inferior who had no claim to any right from the superior. For example, in Genesis chapter 6 verse 8, God extends His favour, or His unconditional goodwill, toward Noah. Interesting to note in passing, that the name Noah in Hebrew is the Hebrew word for 'favour' spelt backwards! Similarly, men can exercise such favour as in Genesis chapter 33, which records the reconciliation of Jacob with his brother Esau. Although Jacob seeks to placate Esau's wrath, how he prevails is not on the basis of his flattery, but Esau's gracious forbearance towards him. Ruth expresses her deep gratitude towards Boaz, who had singled her out and extended his favour towards her even though she was an outsider, Ruth 2. 10. The word can also be used in a negative way, where a wife fails or ceases to please her husband, Deut. 24. 1. Generally, in the Old Testament most of the references to grace relate directly to the intervention of God on men's behalf, e.g., Exod. 11. 3; Jer. 31. 2.

Turning then to the New Testament, we find that the word *charis* occurs around 150 times, and predominantly it is a Pauline word. It rarely occurs in the Synoptics, being limited to Luke both in his gospel narrative and then later in the book of Acts. The nature, of course, of Luke's narrative emphasizes a gospel that is freely dispensed to an undeserving world; hence, he highlights the grace, or the graciousness of God, in various situations, e.g., to Mary, 1. 30. It is used of our Lord Himself in chapter 2 verse 40, where the phrase means literally, 'God caused His favour to rest upon Him' (my translation), see also 2. 52, and compare with 1 Sam. 2. 26. John uses the word sparingly in his narrative, but to great effect when he reveals to us that the incarnate Christ was not only full of *charis*, but it is this *charis* (and truth) in Jesus Christ that displaces all previous forms of revelation, e.g., the Mosaic law, John 1. 14ff.⁵ In the book of Acts, *charis* is used to describe the favour bestowed upon Joseph by God, 'which so commended him to Pharaoh king of Egypt', Acts 7. 10 NEB. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch after their first missionary journey, we read that it was from this city that they had 'been commended to the grace of God', Acts 14. 26 ESV. This *charis* enabled them to successfully complete the first part of the work that they had been earlier set apart for by the Holy Spirit, 13. 2-4. So *charis* here reflects what can be achieved for God when His favour is bestowed upon us.

But by far the emphasis placed upon *charis* in the New Testament from Acts chapter 13 onwards belongs, as J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON rightly observes, 'to the narratives which deal with the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles: see especially xv 11. The surprising mercy of God, by which those who have been wholly outside the privileged circle were now the recipients of the Divine favour, seems to have called for a new and impressive name which might be the watchword of the larger dispensation'.⁶ It is the apostle Paul who takes up this challenge and makes the word *charis* the hallmark of Christianity. It becomes so embedded in his mindset that it ultimately drives his theology, and makes the grace of God universally attractive, 2 Thess. 1. 12. To Paul, whose Apostolic credentials were confirmed to a Gentile world, Gal. 2. 7; Titus 2. 11, it must have been a truly remarkable experience as a converted Jew to constantly stress that free, unmerited *charis* alone through faith, the antithesis of works (boasting definitely excluded

by him! Rom. 3. 27), was sufficient to save individuals, Eph. 2. 8,⁷ and justify them freely by grace, Rom. 3. 24. But if it was sufficient to save then it would also be sufficient for everyday situations, irrespective of the prevailing circumstances, 2 Cor. 12. 9. In fact, the grace of God was accentuated in Paul's life through weakness. Grace also gave him confidence to live for Christ knowing that he was strengthened to accomplish God's will, 9. 8. This encouraged him to counsel others to place their dependence in the grace of God, 2 Tim. 2. 1. If grace had abounded to the chief of sinners, Rom. 5. 20; 1 Tim. 1. 15, then the whole world was now Paul's parish, Rom. 15. 15-16; Phil. 1. 7. Almost, without exception, when Paul put pen to paper he thought of the grace of God, e.g., Rom. 1. 7; Gal. 1. 3 *et al*, directly linking the word *charis* to the word 'peace'. So, for Paul, grace became the basis of peace with God, and peace with God became the result of grace in his life. No wonder he eulogized about the grace of God, especially when he thought about the greatest gift of grace, even our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 9. 15. When we reflect upon grace today may our desire be to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ', 2 Pet. 3. 18.

'Wonderful grace
 that gives what I don't deserve,
 pays me what Christ has earned,
 then lets me go free'.

JOHN PANTRY

For further reading/study

Introductory

J. I. PACKER, *18 Words The Most Important Words You Will Ever Know*, Christian Focus Publications – Grace, pp. 91-104.

Advanced

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, *Commentary on Ephesians – Exposition of the Greek Text* Kregel Limited Edition Library – 'χάρις', pp. 221-226.

Endnotes

- Olney Hymns in Three Books* – Facsimile of the First Edition, The Cowper and Newton Museum, pg. xi.
- Ibid.* pg. 53
- H. CONZELMANN in *TDNT* (Abridged), pg. 1301.
- There is only one occasion in the LXX where *χάρις* translates the Hebrew word *hesed*, and that is in Esther chapter 2 verse 9.
- For a comprehensive survey of the difficult Greek expression 'και χάριν ἀντι χάριτος' ('and grace for grace') in John chapter 1 verse 16 see: D A CARSON, *The Gospel According to John*, IVP, pp. 131-134.
- J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, *Commentary on Ephesians – Exposition of the Greek Text*, Kregel Limited Edition Library, pg. 224.
- I take the gift of God in this context to be salvation by grace since it is the subject of the clause.



THEIR FINEST HOUR

By **ANDREW MELLISH** Vancouver, Canada

When it comes to the study of women in the Bible, there are those who find it easy to select Mary as the most prominent of all due to her role as the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we were to count her receiving a visit from the angel Gabriel, being acknowledged as highly favoured, and blessed among women, Luke 1. 1, together with the import of the message she was given, we would have grounds to present her as the most important in a long line of women used by God to carry out His sovereign will. Whilst Mary had a unique place in the divine plan of God, the message from Gabriel does not place her as 'the most' blessed amongst women, and so, for the purpose of this short study, it is important to keep the right perspective, neither with understatement or overstatement. With regard to her place in history, Mary has to be viewed as a recipient of grace, which must be emphasized, and can be supported by the use of the word 'favour'. It was God who chose Mary to be the virgin of which the prophets wrote, and through whom our Lord would be born.

When we begin to think of her finest hour therefore, it would be hard to argue against the view that the visit of Gabriel was exactly that – her finest hour. Might I suggest, though, that this is indeed the record of her 'first hour', as presented in scripture, but, as we consider the life of Mary, her finest hour comes much later in her experience!

There are a number of ways which we could view Mary: we could consider what she said, what she sang, or try and understand what the message is for us in her often silent actions. By tracing the expression used in scripture that refers to Mary as the mother of Jesus, in this article we will embrace her whole life, and thereby gain profit from a most godly lady who enjoyed a multifaceted life, its features bringing us lessons and encouragement.

Confirmation

'When as his mother was espoused to Joseph', Matt. 1. 18; Luke 1. 27. Mary speaks twice to the angel, and her first question is thought-provoking. Zacharias, when faced with similar circumstances, has the same thought in his mind, and yet we have two opposite results, Luke 1. 18-20. In both cases the message concerned the birth of a son, and in both cases, naturally speaking, there appears a conundrum. Of Zacharias, naturally speaking, we might say it is too late in life, with Mary too early, but sovereignty always works out its purposes, and where a lack of faith marks his question, with Mary there is a genuineness of heart for which she is given further understanding by her question. Gabriel knew the difference, and the man of prayer had a faith that was not consistent with his prayers, whereas Mary, only a young girl, was willing to subject herself to the will of God immediately, despite what, to her, was quite outside the

norm. The second time she speaks to Gabriel confirms her heart: 'be it unto me according to thy word'. Her interaction with Elizabeth, and songs following, display her spiritual character, and confirm to us her grasp of Old Testament truth, a worthy study in itself.

Consideration

'They saw the young child with Mary his mother', Matt. 2. 11 Wise men arrive, bringing their treasures to the little one. Do we appreciate the distance travelled, the rivers and deserts crossed, to acknowledge the greatness of the infant? It is doubtful that they gave a second thought, or considered that we, two millennia later, would see these gifts, and appreciate their typical and symbolic importance and preciousness to Christ. This is the first reference to worship, and Mary, His mother, saw the gifts presented, and, as when the shepherds came and stood by the manger so on this occasion, Mary stands in silent wonder, considering the person of Christ. While we enjoy the expressions of worship when the saints are gathered on a Lord's Day morning, there is, in one sense, a beauty and a glory to the silence as we meditate upon the glories of Christ.

Consternation

'And his mother knew not of it', Luke 2. 43. Mary is speaking again, and, after realizing the Lord is not with them,





MARY

they go back to the temple and, finding Him, she says, 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?' We see sadness, a concern from Mary as she is perplexed at Christ's decision to stay behind. What is important to note is that her question is not said angrily. We can learn from this that it is okay to ask God why when the circumstances of life give us concern, as long as it is said with the right motive and tone. Consistent with her question to the angel, she is seeking further information, and trying to reason out the answers, and so she asks reverently, as she knows who Christ is. 'Why?' May we have the same attitude of heart when we come to the throne of grace with 'why?' upon our lips!

Comprehension

'The mother of Jesus saith unto him. They have no wine', John 2. 3.

Behind her question, the Lord can see her motive, and it has others in mind. She is, at it were, asking on behalf of, and for the benefit of, others. This suggests the true way to pray. It is not prayer when we tell God what to do. She simply stated the fact, and trusted Christ to act. So should we! By contrast, when she speaks to those tasked with filling the water pots, it is with a sense of urgency, as she recognizes that this is the moment when Christ is not only going to reveal Himself, but that He will work out the circumstances they faced. Behind this sense of purpose is a woman who has lived for thirty years with the Lord, and, knowing Him the way she did, had given her this comprehension as to the person and work of Christ. Christ, in speaking to her, had called her 'Woman', tenderly. In this situation she manifested again the spiritual depth of character as she knows how, and when to speak to the Master.

Commitment

At the end of the Lord's life, it should come as no surprise to see

Mary 'stood by the cross', John 19. 25. As she had stood in silence by the manger, and in the house, so too at the cross, looking upon her son. There is a poignant expressiveness in her silence this time; it stands in stark contrast to the 'bulls', and 'dogs' and roaring lions of Psalm 22, as in quiet contemplation yet within speaking distance to Christ, she stands. Some have seen their mothers die, and it is very sad. Much more in the case of Mary, who, as a mother, has to look upon her firstborn as He suffers at the hands of men, and she says nothing. She would have been quite justified to stay at home, and not be a witness to the horrors of Calvary. Like Mary, there are times when it behoves us to stand in silence and wonder as we contemplate the death of Christ.

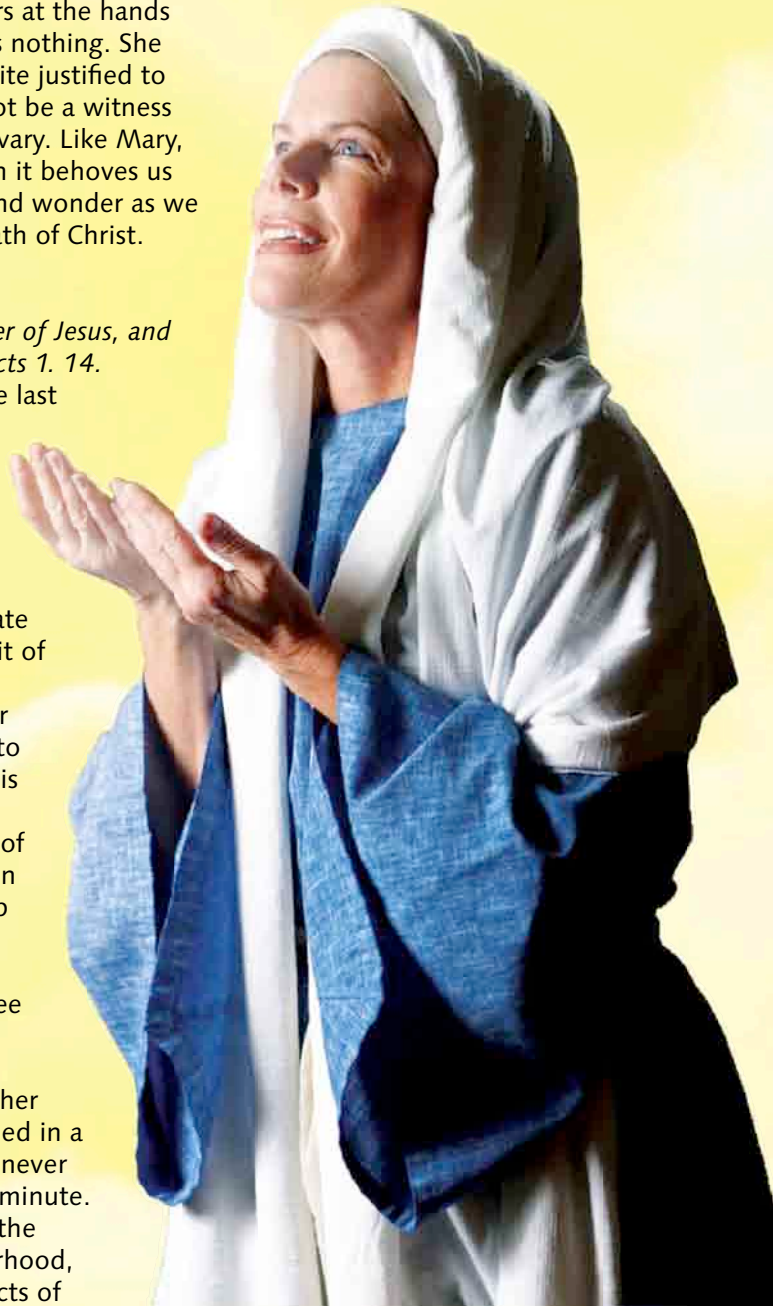
Continuation

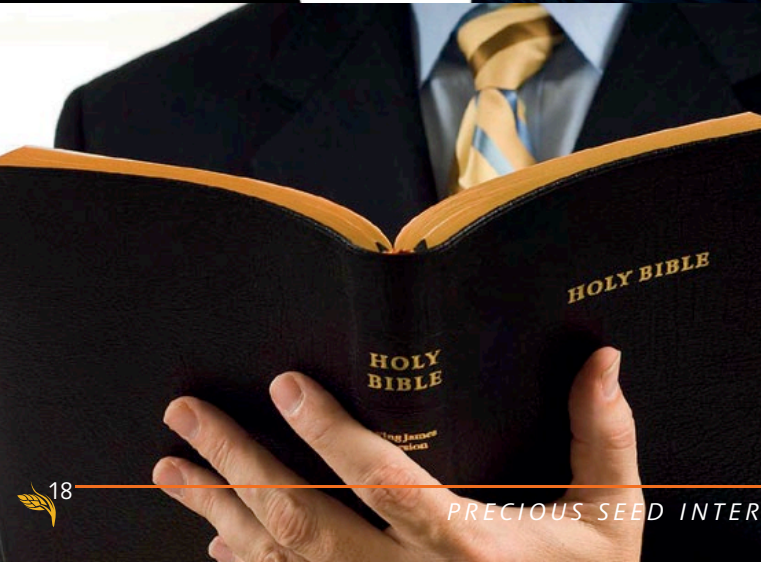
'And Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren', Acts 1. 14.

We now arrive at the last mention of 'Mary the mother of Jesus'. We reach what, in the writer's view, is 'her finest hour'. When we contemplate her life, from the visit of Gabriel, to what she had to witness of her firstborn at Calvary, to see her 'continuing' is astounding. Her life had seen, like many of us, times of mountain peaks, and very deep valleys, great highs and equally great lows. Yet, here we see her still going on!

As a young maiden, her world had been turned in a direction she would never have expected for a minute. She had carried out the initial acts of motherhood, witnessed the first acts of

worship, and marvelled at the things spoken by Simeon, Luke 2. 33, and instructed workers at the first miracle. She would have witnessed the unbelief towards Christ in the family, John 7. 5, no doubt being well aware of the many times men sought to trip up the Lord, and catch him in His words. When we think of the depth of the valley she trod at Calvary as a mother, to see her sitting in the upper room, in full fellowship 'with his brethren' is a testament in itself to her character, spirituality, and steadfastness. We do well to imitate Mary in her devotion to the Saviour, and, in a day when many are turning away from simplicity, to imitate her in her desire to continue, with her brethren in assembly fellowship until we see our Saviour face to face.





THE EXERCISES IN THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY

By **ALAN MAUNDER** Cardiff, Wales

The Holy Spirit has gifted believers in order that those who constitute a local assembly may be built up spiritually and numerically. This will only happen as each individual believer recognizes their gift and uses it for the profit of all. Like Paul in his epistles, we would like to instruct but also to challenge saints as to the use of their gifts. He writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 1, 'Now concerning spiritual gifts brethren I would not have you to be ignorant'. Elsewhere, he is concerned about individual believers exercising their gifts. He writes to Timothy, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee', 1 Tim. 4. 14. Again he challenges Timothy, 'Stir up the gift of God', 2 Tim. 1. 6. As he closes the Epistle to the Colossians he challenges another brother, 'And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry [service] which thou hast received in the Lord that thou fulfil it', 4. 17. Paul is deeply concerned about individual believers exercising their gift in the local assembly and this article seeks to echo that concern.

The dignity attached to spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. 12. 4-6

It is important to note from these verses that the three persons of the Godhead are each involved in the spiritual gifts that believers have. This adds a great dignity to the subject and should cause us to exercise the gifts diligently and with godly fear.

Verse 4 informs us that it is the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts.

Verse 5 informs us that it is in the service of the Lord Jesus that gifts are used.

Verse 6 informs us that it is the Father who works out His will and accomplishes His purpose as these gifts are exercised in the local assembly.

Each of the three main passages of scripture that teach us about spiritual gifts place emphasis on a different person of the Godhead. Romans chapter 12 deals with gifts in relation to the Father, 'According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith', v. 3. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 deals with gifts in relation to the Holy Spirit, 'But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal', v. 7. Ephesians chapter 4 deals with the gifts in relation to the person of the Lord Jesus, 'But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ', v. 7. We should never think lightly of, or handle carelessly, the gifts that God has given to us. We should value them and make every effort to use them as God intended.



E OF GIFT L ASSEMBLY [1]

The design of spiritual gifts, Eph. 4. 11, 12

Why has God given gifts to men? What is their purpose? In three phrases in these verses we are told the answer to these questions. The risen Lord gave gifts to men:

- 1 'for the perfecting of the saints'. 'Perfecting' means full preparation, to make fully ready – 'that the saints might be fully equipped'.
- 2 'for the work of the ministry' – with a view to occupation in service.
- 3 'for the edifying of the body of Christ' – with a view to building up the saints, promoting in them growth in wisdom, godliness, holiness, joy, etc..

Thus, through the bestowal of spiritual gifts we are fully equipped to be occupied in the service of God and, in doing so, promote growth and spiritual enrichment in the lives of God's people. God's design is accomplished when, through the exercise of the spiritual gifts, He sees growth and development in His people. As each one of us exercises our gift we benefit the rest. 'But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [to profit the rest]'. We may each ask the question, how are God's people being helped by the exercise of my gift in the local assembly? How much am I using my gift in the service of the Lord?

The diversity of spiritual gifts, Rom. 12. 3-5; 1 Cor. 12. 12-26

In both of these passages Paul uses the illustration of the human body in order to demonstrate that just as the human body is one united whole, but made up of many different parts, so the local assembly is one entity, but it functions by use of a variety of spiritual gifts all of which are absolutely essential to the functioning of the whole. The illustration of the human body is introduced in Romans chapter 12 in order to emphasize that each man is not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Believers must act humbly in the use of their gift. The Amplified Version says, 'not to have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance'.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul introduces the illustration of the human body in order to show that there is diversity of gifts in the local assembly, but they all work together in unity. There is a link with this teaching in Ephesians chapter 4. In verses 1 to 6, Paul writes of the unity of the body of Christ, '**one** body, **one** Spirit, **one** hope of your calling, **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all'

[my emphasis]. Then, in verses 7 to 16, he shows us that, together with that unity, a variety of gifts has been given, so there is diversity. There is harmony (unity) produced by diversity. In the local assembly there is a variety of gifts, but as they all function and play their part they are used by God to produce a united whole.

Clearly, as we read verse 15 of 1 Corinthians 12, there were some in the assembly at Corinth who were considering the gift God had given them and, because in their opinion it was not as important as the gifts imparted to others, they had decided there was no point in using it. So Paul turns to the illustration of the human body in order to show the folly of such an approach. He takes the foot as considering itself to be an unimportant member of the body. 'Look at me', it says. 'Here I am at the base of the body in a position where I am hardly noticed. I am unable to do the variety of functions the hand does. So, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body'. Does such a statement make it any less part of the body? It certainly does not!

As I sit in my study typing this article into my computer, I realize that I need my Bible, so that I can look up a reference for my article. Try as my hand might it cannot reach into the lounge and pick up my Bible. It needs my feet to take me into the lounge so that my hand can pick up my Bible. Although the foot may be hardly noticed and unable to function as the hand does, it is, nevertheless, a necessary and essential part of the body. Just as all the members of the human body are all essential and totally interdependent, so it is with spiritual gifts. Each is vitally necessary to the proper functioning of the whole. If you are not exercising your gift as God intended, then the local assembly to which you belong is not functioning as it should.

It is clear from verse 21 that there were those in the assembly at Corinth who were regarding the gift they had been given as so important that they could do without some of the others whose gifts they considered to be far inferior to their own. So, Paul, continuing the illustration of the human body writes, 'And the eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee'. Nobody would question the fact that the eye is a vitally important member of the human body. However, it needs all the other members, like the hand, if the body is to function properly.

If I now have my Bible on my desk in my study but my computer keyboard stops me from having it directly in front of me, I cannot focus properly on the words. Try as it might, there is no way in which my eye can bring my Bible closer to it for it to be in focus. It requires my hand to reach across and hold it in a position where my eyes can focus and read the text. Every member is necessary and every gift is necessary! Equally, all the gifts are not vested in one person.

In the next article we will explore the distribution and discharge of spiritual gifts.



This article is part of an on-going 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 on-line via www.preciousseed.org.



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

Definition and checklist for an elder, vv. 6-9

Family Life, v. 6.

'if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly'.

The elder must be blameless and free from any charges against him. He is to have a good report of the world outside and be held in high regard by the believers in fellowship in the local church. This is an extremely high standard. I take it that there are two reasons why the standard is so high.

First, the elder represents God to His people; he is acting in the capacity of a junior shepherd working for the great Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, Heb. 13. 20, 1 Pet. 5. 4.

Second, he is an example to the people of God, 1 Pet. 5. 3; they have to follow his faith, Heb. 13. 7. How can an elder teach things he does not practice himself; how can he apply discipline if he is failing in the same matters? How onerous and demanding it is for elders to be blameless. It can only

be done in the power of the Spirit of God.

The next two specifications teach us that the elder needs to be a man of high moral values. He is operating in a domestic environment where he should have earned respect and maintained order. For an elder to lead and rule in the context of the local church he must have a lifestyle that is consistent with the standards that God expects of his people. It is not that the Lord demands a different standard from elders than He does from the rest of His people. Rather, for the elder to be a worthy example to follow, Heb. 13. 7, he must be living out the very principles that God expects of all of His people.

Marital purity and moral faithfulness is expected of the elder. He has to be the husband of one wife. When the elder is confronted with difficult situations in this area of Christian life, his personal morality must be above criticism, as this same standard will also apply to the rest of the Lord's people. This verse is not teaching that he cannot be married more than once, as this would be in conflict with other scriptures which teach that the marriage contract ends at death,¹ but that he should be married to one woman at a time and live a morally pure life. One modern translation says that he should be 'faithful to his one wife' NEB.

The second domestic item is about the elder's family. A look at what some of the other New Testament epistles say about elders in this respect is helpful. First Timothy chapter 3 verses 4 and 5 says 'one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection

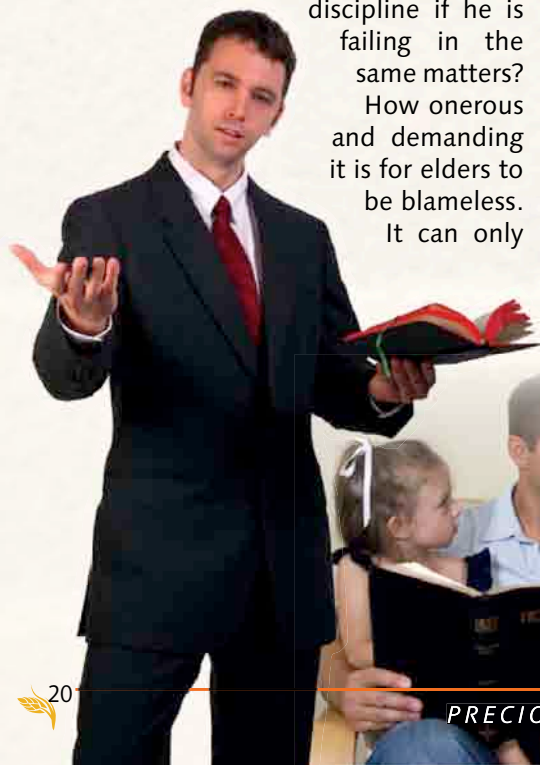
with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)' The idea is that the elder should run a house where respect and order is seen and, as a result, it is obvious that he is fitted to take leadership of the church of God.

The verse is not teaching that a man cannot be an elder if his children are not saved, as he has no control over the response that his children have to the gospel. The word 'believing' or 'faithful' is not about saving faith but about the trust and respect that his children have for him, having been brought up in a God-fearing home. The elder's children should be managed and cared for in such a way that there is no room to accuse them of riotous and loose living or rebellious and disobedient behaviour. The elder's ability to manage things at home is a clear indicator of his ability to rule, lead and care for the people of God.

Personal life, v. 7.

'For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre'.

This is the second time that the word 'blameless' has been used. Now, it is used specifically in respect of the overseer (the word 'bishop' is misleading, as it carries with it a meaning that is not fair to the text of scripture) not just in relation to the character of the person but in relation to his responsibility. The overseer is in a position of trust. God has entrusted him with feeding and caring for His people. He represents God as a





(4)



from Titus

steward and looks after what belongs to Him.

Overseers would be wise to remember this as they serve God in this capacity. They are responsible to do the will of God and not to be driven by their own interests. As far as their temperament is concerned they should be self-controlled and not easily aggravated or made angry. Self-control should be a strong feature in their lives; they should not be under the influence of alcohol. Drinking wine is a dangerous habit and the scripture clearly warns against its influence and dangers. An elder should not ever be out of control because of alcohol and would be wise to abstain from drinking as the word of God makes it clear that men and women who want to serve God should not drink.²

Violence is a no-go area for the overseer. Self-control covers every aspect of his life, including financial matters. The desire for money or personal gain does not feature (or should not) in the mind of the elder. There should be no financial benefit in doing the work of the elder, apart from the assembly providing for their needs if they are in a position where they need help, 1 Tim. 5.

Life in respect of others, v. 8.

'but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate'.

This is a very interesting facet of the life of an elder. He should have a home where everyone is welcome. In the privacy of his home, the saints will have fellowship with the elder and his wife; they will begin to learn from his example and from his teaching. As they get to know the elder, they

will begin to trust him and confide in him. Problems that possibly would never have been discussed in public meetings can be handled sensitively and carefully at home. The spiritual progress of the believer can be watched and tender care and love can be applied as all true shepherds should do. A study of the beneficial use of the home in scripture is not the topic of this article but it would be a very worthwhile and helpful study.

The second point in this verse is that the elder should be known for his love of good men, this would be better translated 'good things'. This does not mean he likes to have 'the very best that money can buy' but that things that are pleasing to God are very close to his heart. He loves the good things of God. Romans chapter 15 verse 2 says, 'Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification', and 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 17 teaches that the man of God has been given the word of God so that he will be 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works'. The good things of God and the goodness of God should be something that interests and delights the heart of the elder.

Third, this man will be wise concerning what he thinks about. His mind-set is that of a discreet man; he can be trusted and he is careful what he thinks about. You cannot police this kind of activity, but it will be obvious by the lifestyle of the elder if he is matching this criteria. Philippians chapter 4 verse 8 exhorts the believer to think on beneficial things. It is essential advice, as it is easy for our minds to wander and to focus on things that are not good for us or pleasing to the Lord. It needs to be a conscious decision on the part of the believer (and in this case the

elder), as this way of thinking will not happen without a choice being made on the individual's part and without the help of the Spirit of God.

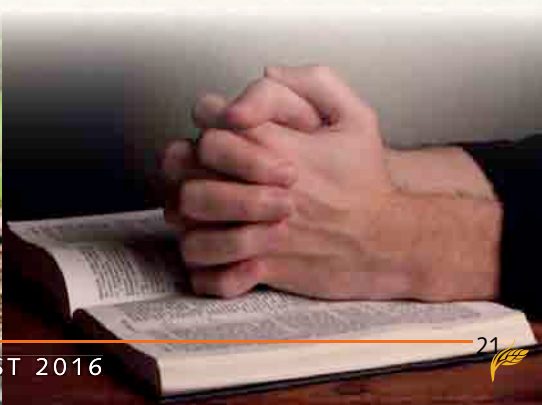
The fourth thing in the list is that the elder should be a just man. This is the description that is given to Joseph, the husband of Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus. He was a just man. It also defines the way the Lord Jesus will assess things on the day of judgement, John 5. 30, and the word the Lord Jesus uses to describe His Father when praying to him, 17. 25. The elder will be a person who seeks to assess things fairly and must reflect the character of God in this respect.

As we consider the next word, 'holy', we must not be influenced by how the world in general sees this quality. To be holy speaks of both purity and a devoted life. The word is used regularly about God and about the Lord Jesus Christ. We seem to be building a picture here as we go through these qualities that the elder should be a man who strongly reflects the character and personality of God Himself.

The final word is 'temperate' or self-controlled. This means, literally, to have power over yourself. This is possibly one of the greatest problems we all have. To be in control of ourselves is extremely difficult, but the saved person has surrendered their lives to God and allows the Spirit of God to give them strength to live a God-honouring life. It can be relatively easy to control others using various methods but how many powerful people have fallen when it came to self-control? The elder must be known for his self-control.

Endnotes

- 1 For example, Rom. 7. 1-3.
- 2 Strong drink and the word of God: For more information see the following passages of scripture: Prov. 4. 17; 20. 1; 21. 17; 23. 20-21, 29, 30-33, and those relating to priests, prophets, and the Nazarite, etc.





It is important to remember in reading the New Testament that the name 'Herod' belonged to several people of the same family, much as there were many kings of England named Edward, or George. The first Herod we encounter in the New Testament was the one who ruled in Judea at the time of the birth of our Lord. History refers to him as Herod the Great.

CHARACTERS AROUND THE HEROD who mock

It was he who was both alarmed and mystified when the magi from the east arrived at his palace in Jerusalem, seeking 'he that is born King of the Jews'.¹ Herod promptly sought the advice of the religious authorities of the day, who told him the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. He directed the wise men there, but asked them to return to him to tell him what, or whom, they had found. His stated motive was that he could then go and worship the child. The angel of God, however, warned the wise men to return to their homelands a different way. He also warned Mary and Joseph to flee into

Egypt because Herod intended to kill the young child, whereupon Herod infamously ordered the slaughter of all baby boys born in Bethlehem who were under the age of two. This 'slaughter of the innocents' showed the cruelty to which the Herod dynasty was to be no stranger. This Herod, who tried to kill our Lord in His infancy, died shortly after the slaughter of the children, and one of his sons, Archelaus, ruled briefly in his place.² These Herods were not purely Jewish; though descendants of Abraham, their line was through Esau, not Isaac, and, as such, they were not entirely acceptable to the Jews, neither were they God-fearing. They paid lip service to the Jewish way of worship, but were desperately immoral and wicked. They 'ruled' in various parts of Judea and Galilee, however, with Roman authority.

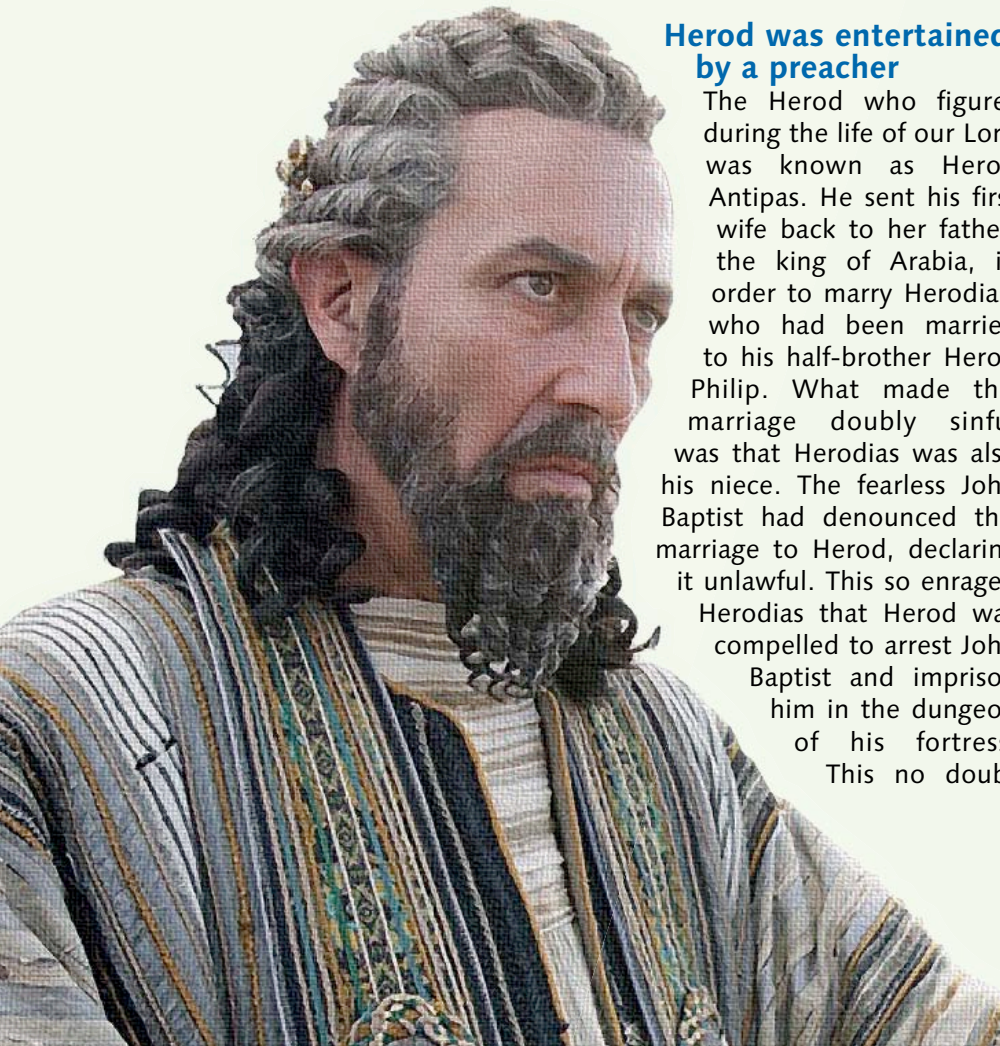
pleased Herodias, for John could not now travel the countryside denouncing her publicly. Yet she was disturbed by something she had not foreseen – that John Baptist at close hand was worse than John Baptist at a distance. Her 'husband' began to respect the preacher. Mark's Gospel tells us 'Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him [kept him safe]' because he knew Herodias wanted to kill John. Mark goes on to be even more explicit: 'and [Herod] heard him gladly', Mark 6. 17-20. Do we read too much into this story to see Herod summoning John up from the dungeon from time to time, despite Herodias' objections, to listen to the prophet one more time? Here was entertainment indeed for a dull winter evening. John Baptist was, after all, a powerful preacher and Herod was drawn to him as the months went by.

Herod was entertained by a preacher

The Herod who figures during the life of our Lord was known as Herod Antipas. He sent his first wife back to her father, the king of Arabia, in order to marry Herodias, who had been married to his half-brother Herod Philip. What made this marriage doubly sinful was that Herodias was also his niece. The fearless John Baptist had denounced this marriage to Herod, declaring it unlawful. This so enraged Herodias that Herod was compelled to arrest John Baptist and imprison him in the dungeon of his fortress. This no doubt

Herod was disturbed by a preacher

Despite respecting and, perhaps, even liking John, Herod was disturbed by what John had to say. Again Mark tells us, 'when he [Herod] had heard him [John] he did many things'.³ The KJV margin says Herod 'was much perplexed'. Herod's conscience was being pricked. Perhaps he began to change aspects of his behaviour as he listened to this preacher. It maybe that in certain respects he began to turn over a new leaf. Herodias was troubled. She had not anticipated her husband being disturbed by a preacher of righteousness. Was she the next one to be 'turned over', to be sent home? Was her marriage in even greater peril? Herod was reforming! Sadly for Herod, and for John, Herodias won the day. In making a rash promise to his seductive daughter to give her anything she asked for up to half of his kingdom, Herod gave Herodias the opportunity to insist that his daughter ask for the head of John Baptist on a plate. Despite realizing it was wrong to fulfil his promise





CRUCIFIXION 4

ed him

By **IAN REES**
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in such a wicked way, Herod 'was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake . . . he would not reject her'.⁴ The king sent an executioner to dispatch John Baptist and gave to his daughter the head of the prophet on a plate, and she promptly gave it to her mother.

Herod was troubled by a preacher

A while after John Baptist's disciples had come to Herod's fortress and taken away the body of their teacher to be buried, Herod began to hear news of a powerful preacher who was also able to do miracles. This preacher also had disciples who went out and taught in His name and with His authority; they were able to cast out demons and heal the sick. Herod heard this preacher was called Jesus of Nazareth. A great many questions were being asked about this new preacher. Was He a prophet, following on in the line of the Hebrew prophets of old? Was He even Elijah, who had never died and was expected to return to the Jewish nation one day? Speculation was rife, but Herod's troubled conscience was working overtime. This, to him, was no new prophet. This was John Baptist, whom he had wrongly executed, risen again from the dead and empowered to do miracles because of the injustice of his death. Is it not typical of a guilty conscience that we fear our wrongs return to punish us, sometimes years after we have done them? Herod was troubled by a preacher even after he had killed him. 'He being dead yet speaketh'.⁵

Herod was ignored by a preacher

Several years passed by and this preacher, Jesus of Nazareth, became more and more prominent, though Herod had still not met Him. Then, one day, sitting in his court in Jerusalem at a feast of the Passover, a messenger from the Roman governor, Pilate, comes in to see him. Standing outside in his palace is

a prisoner, Jesus of Nazareth, with an armed guard and a deputation from the chief priests and Pharisees. The message from Pilate is a simple one: the prisoner had been handed over to Pilate by the Jewish Sanhedrim. They accuse the prisoner, who is a Galilean, of stirring up trouble in Galilee and further afield. Pilate wishes to hand the prisoner over to Herod for trial, as Herod was king over Galilee. Herod was delighted. Here was his chance to see this Jesus, to see whether He was, indeed, the risen-again John, and to watch Him perform miracles, Luke 23. 8-9.

Herod summons Jesus of Nazareth in to his throne room and begins to question Him. The prisoner remains silent. Herod turns to the chief priests and Pharisees and talks with them. They accuse our Lord 'vehemently' before Pilate, laying down the charge of sedition. The prisoner remains silent. Herod talks to Him again, perhaps even asking Him to prove who He is by performing some miracle in front of Herod. It may very well be that this was the first prisoner who had ever stood before King Herod on his judgement seat who made no plea for mercy, who put up no defence, who did not plead for his life. In fact, this was a prisoner who pointedly ignored Herod.

Herod made up his mind. The claims of this preacher to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews, were false. So Herod began to mock our Lord, and to give permission to his soldiers to mock Him. 'Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves', Luke 23. 11-12.

Why did our Lord ignore Herod? After all, He answered the high priest, and He answered Pilate. Could it be that, in ignoring Herod, our Lord was judging him for what he had done to His prophet? Who can say? It is certain that He had no time for Herod, whom He once called 'that fox'.⁶ However, in a day to come the roles played out that day will be reversed, and that Herod will be the one who will stand

before the Lord on His judgement throne. On that day, every mouth shall be stopped. Herod, though he dismissed our Lord from his presence with scorn, will meet Him again one day and answer to Him for all that he did.

We grieve once again for our Lord that He had to stand so patiently in front of one wicked, upstart judge after another in His sufferings here on earth. But what of ourselves? Are we anything like Herod? How often have we been entertained by preachers? Oh, we can all take them off; we know their pet phrases and mannerisms and we are entertained by their idiosyncrasies. We need to be careful that, in doing this, we do not also ignore what they teach from the word. We have all been troubled by preachers, as the Spirit has convicted us through their ministry; perhaps we have even been disturbed by them, and gone away determined to 'do many things'.

Let us be careful that our attendance at the meetings and conferences of the Lord's people goes deeper than just entertainment. Let us be careful that we don't just rely on tinkering with our bad habits and behaviour, our sinful attitudes, our gossiping tongues, putting things right here and there but never truly repenting of them. We should remember that, for any unbeliever reading this, all mankind will one day stand before God in the day of judgement and answer to Him for their sins, their attitudes and their flippancy with the things of God. And for those that are believers, let us never forget that we will one day stand before the judgement seat of Christ to answer to Him for what we have done in our Christian lives. Let us be careful so that we will not suffer a loss of reward for the flippant attitude we sometimes show to God, to Christ, to His word and His things, as Herod once did. Entertained by preachers to no eternal blessing? How dreadful!

Endnotes

- 1 Matt. 2. 2.
- 2 Matt. 2. 22-23.
- 3 Mark 6. 20.
- 4 Mark 6. 26.
- 5 Heb. 11. 4.
- 6 Luke 13. 32.



In previous articles we have looked at our Lord's relationship to His Father, and learned a lesson on humility, and the Lord's relationship to Peter, learning the lesson of holiness. In this article we will consider:

Jesus' relationship to other disciples – happiness, vv. 12-17

After giving His disciples a remarkable demonstration of humility, Jesus took His garments and sat down again. This action is very significant, and, again, symbolic. He is no longer functioning in 'the form of a servant'. By sitting down, He has now assumed the posture, the position, of 'a teacher'.¹ As such, He began to instruct His disciples. It was customary for scholars to address their teachers as 'Master and Lord' and so He was.

Jesus began with a question: 'Know ye what I have done to you?' v. 12, and from that commenced His message. The Lord's change in words is important. He said, 'If I then, your *Lord and Master*, have washed your feet', v. 14 [my italics]. He did not want them to think that the feet washing was merely something to teach others to do – on the contrary it was an example to follow. They had not witnessed an action of a teacher, but of their Lord! Whilst a teacher's example could eventually come to mean very little, the example and demonstration of their Lord was binding.

One day these men would be 'important'. They would have some position in the early Church. They were apostles, but, however great they may be, they would always be servants. Jesus had given them an example to follow, v. 15, and said they would never be greater than He, v. 16. These disciples had witnessed the exposition of true greatness – the Lord girding Himself with a towel. They had witnessed the supreme example of humility – the Lord washing feet. They were challenged by it all, and realized that the Lord expected from them the same sort of behaviour. If they did respond, then they would know true spiritual blessing and happiness – 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them', v. 17.

The Lord's Upper Room

By **DAVID J. WILLIAMS** Penycraig, Wales

There is no greater happiness, or blessing, than that which comes from serving others. Jesus spent His life serving others, and He died to save others. The world measures greatness by 'how many people serve us'. The Lord measures it by, 'how many do we serve'. He taught His disciples to be great by teaching them to serve. However, it is not enough just to know these truths, we must put them into practice – it is not just knowing it is doing it! Equally, we must be sure to keep these lessons in their proper sequence: humility – holiness – happiness.

Jesus' relationship to Judas Iscariot – his hypocrisy, vv. 18-30

The Lord's words to the whole company had been, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them', v. 17. That did not apply to all, because there was one for whom there was never to be any happiness. Jesus immediately said, 'I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen', v. 18.

The Lord, knowing all about Judas, said three things of him:

1. The traitor existed

The Lord Jesus wanted His disciples to know that it was written in their scriptures that such a man did exist. The full quote is: 'Yea mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,

which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me', Ps. 41. 9. It is significant, that this psalm is of 'the conspiracy', the psalm of the betrayal, a psalm well known to the disciples. Whilst the psalm refers to Ahithophel, David's counsellor, Bathsheba's grandfather, he was a fore-shadowing of Judas Iscariot.

The similarities between these two men are significant. They:

- both had eaten at the King's table, a sign of fellowship
- both used their position to gain their own ends
- both turned traitor against 'God's King'
- both committed suicide by hanging themselves.²

But what is equally important is the Lord's concern that Judas' treachery should not affect, or weaken His disciples' faith. We see something of the harm when the Lord said, 'one of you shall betray me', v. 21. Immediately, doubt arose in each disciple as to whom it was. Each one thought he was capable of so doing, Matt. 26. 22-25.

2. The traitor exposed

The Lord made it clear He knew exactly who the traitor was, 'I know whom I have chosen', v. 18.

a) *Chosen by the Lord as an apostle*





m Ministry³

Jesus called them to be with Him, and sent them out to preach. He is always last in the lists of the disciples and always called the traitor, or the one who became traitor, and the Lord knew this. So in the upper-room that night, Jesus was not taken by surprise.

b) Treasurer of the apostolic band, but a thief

John chapter 12 verse 6 tells us, 'he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein'. During His earthly ministry, the Lord lived by faith, trusting God to meet His needs. He never performed a miracle to do that. Daily, He was provided for in all His material needs by loving souls. Those who were touched by healing power saw to it that He wanted for nothing, Luke 8. 1-3. When He sent out the twelve, He taught them to do the same, Matt. 10. 9-10. However, it seems that from time to time money was needed, so Judas was trusted with the 'the bag', i.e., he was the treasurer.

In the incident in Bethany, when Mary anointed the Saviour's feet with ointment and wiped them with her hair, Judas was there. Sadly, it was in his reaction that we perceive his true attitude:

His attitude to the Lord

This is summed up in very stark words, 'why was this waste?' The expression of this woman's worship of God's Son was to him nothing but a waste.

His attitude to the woman

He exhibits indignation, and murmuring. He had a sordid idea of what this woman did.

His attitude to money

'He was a thief'. What the Spirit of God called 'very precious' to Judas was 300 pence.

This was the final straw; both Matthew and Mark link this incident with him going immediately to the chief priests to sell the Saviour. Judas Iscariot's attitude to money was the acid test of His character!

When Judas witnessed the incident of the anointing in the house of Simon the leper, and realized that there was no material gain for him, he sought opportunity to betray Christ. Like all men, Judas Iscariot was capable of choosing for himself, and, at this point in Judas' life, he deliberately chose his own way, and that in spite of all the love and privileges conferred upon him.

3. The traitor expelled

The morsel, a piece of unleavened bread and flesh of the Passover lamb dipped in bitter herbs, was our Lord's final appeal to Judas' heart. He knew eternity swung in the balance for this man. Whether it meant anything to him we do not know. However, what wretched words follow: 'and after the sop Satan entered into him', v. 27. Judas had crossed the final frontier from which there was no return.

In these closing verses 27-30, I want us to note three points:

a) The dismissal

Jesus had only one more thing to say to this man, and when it was said, Judas knew that Jesus knew. He abruptly dismissed him from the fellowship of His people, 'That thou doest, do quickly', v. 27. The exit, the expulsion of Judas, is simply stated: 'He . . . went immediately out', v. 30. Now, Satan had complete control of the man. The 'Prince of darkness' had gained entrance into a life that rejected the 'Prince of light'!

b) The disciples

They didn't know why Jesus had sent Judas out. What they thought is stated in verse 29. So closely had this man guarded his secret, that none of the others, except John, suspected anything. They simply thought he was sent on an errand – after all he was treasurer. The reference to the feast means for the whole of the week of unleavened bread. Clearly, and, perhaps, deliberately, the excommunication by Jesus did not arouse one anxious thought in the hearts of the other disciples; only the man to whom they were spoken knew their real meaning.

c) The darkness

We have already considered the awful words of verse 30, 'it was night'. The darkness of the hour was but an indication of the darkness of Judas' heart and soul. He dwelt for three years in the full blaze of 'the light of the world', then he went out to dwell forever in darkness. He sat in the sacred fellowship of saints, then went out to 'sit in the seat of the scornful', Ps. 1. 1. He walked with, and listened to, the godliest of all men for three years, then went out to walk 'in the counsel of the ungodly', 1. 1. Henceforth his name was, is, and always will be, synonymous with treachery – the most abhorred name in the world!

Endnotes

- 1 See Luke 4. 20; Matt. 5. 1; 13. 2.
- 2 See, for example, 2 Sam. 17. 23; Matt. 27. 3-10; Acts 1. 18.

Editor's Note:

This will be the last article from our brother. We give thanks for his faithful ministry. He was called home to glory on the 12th May.





HENRY CRAIK

Few, if any, readers of Church history, or secular history in relation to the care of the poor, would be unfamiliar with the name of George Muller of Bristol. What he accomplished on the basis of faith alone was remarkable, and a testimony to the God in whom Muller trusted. Yet, during that period, Muller wrote of his friend and fellow servant, 'When it pleased the Lord from the beginning of 1839, and thenceforth, to condescend to bestow such abundant honour upon me, as He did in connection with the Orphan Houses . . . the temptation was the other way, especially when this work was more and more extended, and the blessing of God resting thereon greater and greater. Then my beloved friend, on his part, speaking after the manner of men, had cause for envy. But how was it in reality? There are few, if any, who more truly rejoiced in all the honour which the Lord condescended to put on me, than my friend did'.¹ That friend, of course, was Henry Craik.

Henry Craik was born at Prestonpans, East Lothian, on the 8th August, 1805, although his early childhood was spent in Kennoway, Fife, where his father was a schoolmaster. Indeed, his early education was in the Parochial School of Kennoway. From there he entered St. Andrews University at the beginning of the session 1820-21 and studied under Professor Alexander and Dr. Hunter, gaining distinction for his proficiency in Greek.² However, although his own diary gives evidence of the extensive literary labours to which he devoted his great mental powers,³ Craik wrote, 'though I read the scriptures, and kept up a kind of formal praying . . . my happiness consisted principally in companionship . . . I did not delight in the things of God'.⁴

His ministry

It was not until 1826 that Craik was saved through 'the conversation and society of his college companion, John Urquhart'.⁵ At this point he consecrated his great abilities to the service of his Lord and Saviour.⁶ As COAD comments, 'he set himself an

exacting and meticulous programme of Bible study',⁷ which involved a daily reading of the Psalms, the regular reading of the Old Testament, the historical portion of the New Testament, the study of the didactic parts of scripture, the inquiry into prophecy, a reading of the Epistles, and finishing with 'exact knowledge and improvement in the Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament'.⁸

It was around this time that Craik moved to Edinburgh. Whilst he continued to enjoy the ministry of Dr. Chalmers, he became disenchanted with the Church of Scotland, after attending the General Assembly. As ROWDON comments, 'In such a frame of mind, he became uncertain whether he should enter the ministry, and turned to thoughts of tutorial work'.⁹ Thus, in July of that same year Craik received and accepted a proposal to become tutor in the family of Anthony Norris Groves, then residing in Exeter. He took up his abode with the Groves family and remained there for two years. The time Craik spent with Groves was significant. Still at a relatively impressionable age, Craik's admiration of Groves was very great. He wrote of him as 'a most noble character' whose chief features were 'generosity, heavenly-mindedness, great talent, persuasive eloquence, gentleness, humility, learning'.¹⁰ Almost immediately upon his arrival in Exeter, Craik began to expound the scriptures in meetings held in school rooms in Heavitree and Poltimore.

It was Groves' decision to go overseas as a missionary, and to take his family with him, that compelled Craik to seek alternative employment in 1828. Although Craik was invited to join the group accompanying Groves to Baghdad, his father was not in good health and he felt obliged to decline. Thus, in the summer of that year and through the spiritual connections of Groves, he was engaged by Mr John Synge of Buckridge House, Teignmouth, as a tutor for his two sons. This period in Craik's life was equally productive,

as he was enabled to continue his research into the Hebrew language and had his work privately published by Synge.¹¹

Craik continued to preach and, through the influence of Synge, gravitated towards the Baptist denomination. This brought about the next step in Craik's journey when, in April 1831, he took up his abode in Shaldon, Devon, and became pastor of the Baptist Church there. Of that responsibility he wrote: 'My intention . . . is to

remain for some little time quietly at home, giving my morning, till dinner, to prayer and study, and my afternoons and evenings to visiting, letter-writing, and preaching. If it please the Lord, after my health is restored, a wider field may open up for me'.¹²

It had been two years earlier, in July, 1829, that Craik first met George Müller in Teignmouth.¹³ Muller, who had been advised to go into the country to convalesce, came to Teignmouth, and, a few days after his arrival, attended the re-opening of Ebenezer Chapel. He met Craik and thus began the friendship which led on to their association in ministry, and which remained unbroken till death. Although Muller returned to London in September 1829, his studies had led to significant changes in his thinking. He had come to accept the supreme authority of scripture, the doctrine of election, particular redemption, the idea of a pre-millennial return of Christ, and the necessity for a higher standard of devotedness. Similarly, Craik had repudiated the practice of infant baptism and the concept of an established church when he took up his pastorate at Shaldon. But it was not just the similarities of their spiritual journeys that brought the two men together.

In the summer of 1831 Craik was married to Miss Mary Anderson, the sister of a fellow worker in Devon. Craik wrote of his happiness, and his 'unfeigned gratitude [for] the mercies

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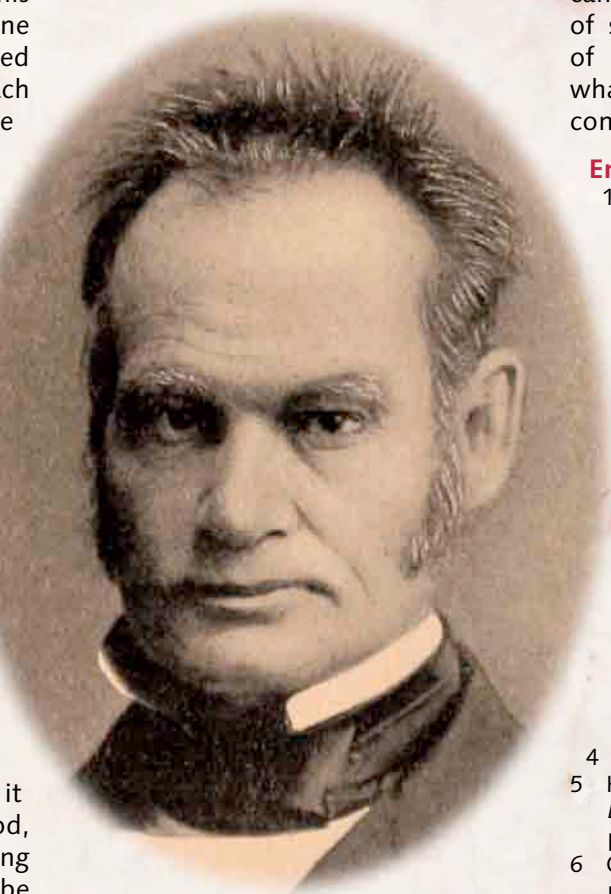
1805-1866

of my dear Lord'. Amongst those mercies, he listed, 'a loving, praying wife – dear, gentle, frugal, diligent'.¹⁴ Sadly, but a short time after their marriage, Craik's wife began to show signs of the onset of tuberculosis, known then as consumption. Muller joined his friend in fervent prayer but, seemingly, to no avail as Mary died on the 1st February 1832.

Although Craik felt the loss of his wife most keenly, it was only one month later that he finally accepted a pressing invitation to preach in Gideon Chapel, Bristol. He stipulated that he would visit the church for a month, but his coming caused considerable interest. Crowds flocked to hear him, and on the following Sundays the chapel was packed. However, Craik had already decided that he would not accept a call to Bristol unless Muller agreed to join him – this arising from the pair's conviction that a one-man ministry was unscriptural. COAD mentions the stipulations that Craik and Muller put in their letter to the company at Bristol: 'consider us only as ministering among them, but not in any fixed pastoral relationship, so that we preach as we consider it to be according to the mind of God, without reference to any rules among them: that the pew rents should be done away with; and that we should go on, respecting the supply of our temporal wants as in Devonshire'.¹⁵

Thus began a work that the Lord summarily blessed. The ministry began at Gideon but was afterwards transferred to Bethesda Chapel, and a little later Salem Chapel was also rented. It should be noted that the early stages of the work in Bethesda took place against the background of a cholera outbreak that struck the city, lasting three months and taking many lives. Starting with a small company of seven, Muller recorded in his diary that one year later the congregation numbered sixty. At the Gideon Chapel there had been added forty-nine. Equally remarkable is to

read of Craik's personal visitation during the plague. He wrote: 'At breakfast, called for to visit a brother in Union place, dying from cholera. Found him near his end, but resting on the Lord . . . After being with him, called to a poor woman ill; then to Sister Bright's mother; then got home, and thence to Brother Rampler, with whom spent some time. Then to Brother Chapman, then to Sister Weston, and then to Brother Downs, who was attacked by something resembling cholera, but not as yet cholera. So that since 6



o'clock this morning we had not had twenty minutes alone . . . Hitherto hath the Lord kept us'.¹⁶

In these buildings, over many years, the assemblies continued to multiply, and others become drawn into the work.

The man

Clearly, as Pickering notes, 'Craik was a man of true humility, self-forgetful to a fault, and exceedingly affectionate and approachable'.¹⁷ One of the features that marked his pastoral ministry was his readiness to enter into the difficulties of the saints, whether they were physical, as in the cholera epidemic, or spiritual, as he exchanged correspondence with any

seeking help in the understanding of the word of God.

Though rugged and what some would describe as 'careless in appearance', he spoke with eloquence and the glowing fervour. But he was a man not unfamiliar with illness and tragedy. After coming to Bristol, Craik was married a second time, to a Miss Sarah Howland. Although a longer marriage than his first, Craik lost four children below the age of five. Finally, cared for by his wife and daughter, Craik died from stomach cancer, at the comparatively early age of sixty-one years. The significance of his death was evidenced by what Pickering calls 'the immense concourse at his funeral'.¹⁸

Endnotes

- 1 W. ELFE TAYLER, *Passages from the diary and letters of Henry Craik of Bristol*, J. F. Shaw, 1866, pg. xiv. Foreword written by George Muller.
- 2 Craik's friend Urquhart wrote of one such occasion: 'Then amidst the breathless silence of the assembly, he opened the sealed paper containing the name of the successful competitor, and read out the name of Henry Craik. The fortunate student was then called upon to receive the prize, and, walking up through the crowd of spectators, bore away the silver medal'; *ibid.*, pg. 11.
- 3 *Ibid.* Pages 17, and 80-81 are good examples of such extensive reading and study.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pg. 9.
- 5 HENRY PICKERING, *Chief men among the Brethren*, Pickering and Inglis, 1968, pg. 33.
- 6 Craik wrote in his diary: 'I henceforth resolved to devote myself more earnestly to the duty of examining the Scriptures, and endeavouring, by earnest prayer and diligent study to become "mighty in the Word of God"', W. ELFE TAYLER, pg. 83.
- 7 F. ROY COAD, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster Press, 1968, pg. 39.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pg. 40.
- 9 H. H. ROWDON, *The Origins of the Brethren 1825-1850*, Pickering and Inglis, 1967, pg. 112.
- 10 W. ELFE TAYLER, pg. 81.
- 11 The title of the work was *Principia Hebraica; or an easy introduction to the Hebrew language*.
- 12 W. ELFE TAYLER, pg. 125.
- 13 Teignmouth is just across the river from Shaldon.
- 14 F. ROY COAD, pg. 39, insertion mine.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pg. 42.
- 16 W. ELFE TAYLER, pg. 156.
- 17 HENRY PICKERING, pg. 35.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pg. 35.



Caveat

There are two obvious dangers to be avoided when we seek to explain the nature of any of the blessed persons within the Godhead. The first is reluctance on our part to state how the separate, yet connected, persons of the Godhead are revealed to us in scripture. The second is an excessive curiosity into the nature and activity of any person within the Godhead where scripture is deliberately silent on the matter. We need therefore to be circumspect in what we write and be conscious of biblical teaching, otherwise it will simply be idle (and dangerous) speculation on our part.¹

Trinitarian connections

One of the major issues that faced the early church was not so much why they professed belief in God as a Trinity, but how could they express this doctrine and still maintain belief in the unity of God? As ARTHUR WAINWRIGHT points out, 'if the Word had not been made flesh then there would have been no stumbling block for Jewish monotheism'.² The fact, however, that the Word did enter into human experience, John 1. 14, meant that the church needed to explain the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, i.e., they had to explain initially a binitarian concept. That would prove to be a huge challenge for them, especially as it then spoke of a third person within the Godhead, namely the Holy Spirit. Whether the early church actively sought to explain this unique relationship within the Godhead is a moot point. They might have been conscious of the inherent danger of being associated with polytheism and so positively refrained from emphasizing that God was three in order to avoid confusion and conflict. Clearly, though, the early church did regard the Godhead as a Trinity of equals, hence Tertullian's later term 'trinity', which expressed the unity of the Godhead. Tertullian was, in fact, the first person to use the words 'person', 'substance' and 'Trinity' in explaining the relationship within the Godhead. So recognizing that the early church found *support in scripture* for Trinitarianism, our series of studies in respect

THE DEITY AND PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

of the Holy Spirit must start with establishing precisely *why* we believe in the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit.

Old Testament background

The Hebrew word for 'spirit' in the Old Testament is *ruach*, which is also the same word for breathe or wind. This means that it is often very difficult in many passages to determine whether the reference is in fact to the Holy Spirit, or whether to an impersonal force, e.g., Genesis chapter 8 verse 1. The title 'Holy Spirit' only occurs in Psalm 51 verse 11 and Isaiah chapter 63 verses 10-11 and, on the face of it, these references apply generically to God. Other passages, in the main, refer to the Spirit of God, for example, Genesis chapter 1 verse 2. However, what is clear from the Old Testament is that the Holy Spirit is extremely active, and His presence is noted in the following activities:

- In the act of Creation – Gen. 1. 2;
- In bestowing extraordinary ability on Bezaleel for the work of the tabernacle – Exod. 31. 3;
- In an endowment of power to Othniel to become a judge – Judg. 3. 10;
- In giving the breath of life – Eccles. 12. 7;
- In the commissioning of Ezekiel to serve as a prophet – Ezek. 2. 2.

The Holy Spirit came upon individuals in the Old Testament, e.g., Judges chapter 3 verse 10, but there are few instances of the Spirit actually indwelling them. It is also very difficult to piece together any coherent doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit, because of the lack of biblical material. Nonetheless, the Old Testament does not detract from the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but His personality is very much shrouded in mystery. This mystery needed New Testament revelation, and particularly the ascension of the risen Christ, to formally effect the

truth that not only would the Holy Spirit come upon God's people, as in the past, but that he would *now* indwell them, John 14. 17.³

The Deity of the Holy Spirit

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was little debated in the first few centuries of the early church as the majority of controversies centred around the person of Christ. It was only the Arian controversy in the fourth century that moved the church to formulate and formally recognize the distinctness of the Holy Spirit. Part of the Athanasian Creed states, 'so the Father is God: and the Son is God: and the Holy Spirit is God'. Later, GREGORY of Nazianzus is credited with advancing this view to a *neo-Nicene* position where he demanded that the *homoousian*⁴ of the Holy Spirit (with the Father) should also be recognized. He, thus, became the primary architect of the classical doctrine of the coequal *Trinity*, i.e., how the divine unity coexists in three coequal hypostases.⁵

We consider, then, the deity of the Holy Spirit by asking ourselves a simple question. What constitutes deity? The English word 'deity' comes from a Latin word *Deus* which means 'God', or someone who has 'divine nature'. So when we speak about the 'deity' of the Holy Spirit we are in fact stating that the Holy Spirit is God without any reservation or qualification. Put another way, we believe that the Holy Spirit has all the essential attributes of God without which He would cease to be God. But this, then, begs a second question. If the Holy Spirit is God, how is this demonstrated in scripture? Perhaps a supplementary question should also be raised at this juncture, what are the essential characteristics or attributes of God? Taking the supplementary question first, most scholars suggest that the attributes of God include, among others things, holiness, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience,



SONALITY

[1] By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY**
Newton Abbot, England

immutability. Other attributes, such as impeccability, transcendence, and eternity are closely linked with these other attributes. Let's therefore examine scripture 'to see if these things (are) so', Acts 17. 11.

Holiness

The Bible constantly refers to the Spirit of God as the 'Holy Spirit', which means that the Spirit is intrinsically holy, or holy in essence. This is contrasted with an assigned or dedicated holiness such as the tabernacle, which was made holy by God's presence, Exod. 29. 43. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is so serious an offence that it cannot be forgiven, Mark 3. 28, which clearly suggests that the inherent holiness of the Spirit is unparalleled. Similarly, lying to the Holy Spirit is regarded as an unholy act, Acts 5. 3, as is profanity, Heb.10. 29. In Romans chapter 1 verse 4, Paul states that it was in the power of the spirit of holiness that Christ was declared to be the Son of God. Most commentators assume that the expression 'spirit of holiness' is a reference to the Holy Spirit. CHARLES CRANFIELD suggests that it simply reflects the Hebrew expression *ruah hakkodes* (the spirit of holiness) found in Rabbinic literature, which can be compared with Psalm 51 verse 11(MT) and Isaiah chapter 63 verses 10f.⁶ Interestingly, the Septuagint (LXX) version of Isaiah chapter 63 verse 10 uses an almost identical expression to that of Paul in Romans chapter 1 verse 4.

Omnipotence

This attribute reflects the fact that the Holy Spirit has absolute and unlimited power in the way in which He acts. Earthly potentates might often consider themselves to be omnipotent, but ultimately their power is shown to be finite, and fleeting, e.g., Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4. 29-33. But the Holy Spirit is all powerful continually, as not only did He bring creation into being, Job 33. 4, but He continues

to maintain His providential control over the created world, Ps. 104. 30. By parallel reasoning in John chapter 3, our Lord indicates that to be born of (or through the power of) the Holy Spirit is equivalent to being born of (or through the power of) God. The Holy Spirit gives eternal life, which only God can do, John. 6. 63.⁷ It was in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ effected His work upon the cross, Heb. 9.13-14, and later signs and miracles were effected by Him through Paul's instrumentality.⁸ GRANT OSBORNE states, in this context, that 'the Spirit both undergirds everything Paul does, including his miracles, and brings the Gentiles into the sanctifying presence of God (v.16)'.⁹

Endnotes

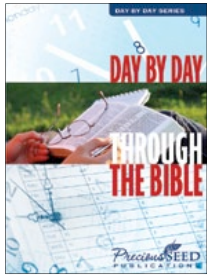
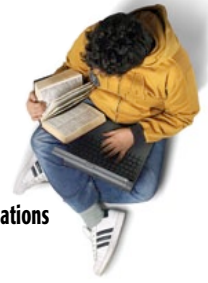
- 1 JOHN CALVIN took a similar view with regard to the emotive subject of 'predestination', see chapter 21 of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
- 2 ARTHUR WAINWRIGHT, *The Trinity in the New Testament*, SPCK, pg. 3.
- 3 We do not disagree with WAYNE GRUDEM's comments at page 637 *per se* (*Systematic Theology*), i.e., that the Old Testament does frequently speak of people who had the Holy Spirit in them or who were filled with the Holy Spirit, e.g., Joshua, Num. 27. 18, but these are fairly exceptional cases, and, in our view, the interpretation of John chapter 14 verse 17 as suggested above is a legitimate option.
- 4 The term '*homoousian*' (ὁμοούσιον) was initially used in the Nicene Creed to express the view that Jesus was equally God. It helps to explain the unique relationship between the Father and the Son, and then later it was also applied to the Holy Spirit. Essentially, it confirmed that all three persons are consubstantial and co-eternal.
- 5 *The A-Z of Patristic Theology*, SCM Press, pp. 151-152.
- 6 CHARLES CRANFIELD, *Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, T&T Clark, pg. 64/n. 2.
- 7 Note also Hebrews chapter 9 verse 14.
- 8 See , Rom. 15. 18-19; Gal. 3. 5, e.g., Acts 14. 3; 15. 12. In 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 12, Paul indicates that these 'signs, and wonders and mighty deeds' confirmed his apostolic credentials. The expression 'signs and wonders' has textual echoes of similar expressions found in the Old Testament, which relate directly to the exercise of God of His divine power, e.g., Exod. 7. 3; Deut. 34. 11; Neh. 9. 10.
- 9 GRANT OSBORNE, *Romans*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, pg. 390, my underlining.



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



Day by Day – Through the Bible

Edited by Ken Totton

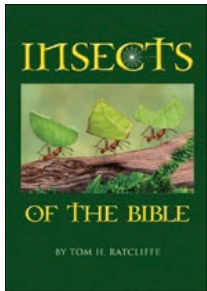
Paperback, 381 pages, Published by Precious Seed Publications, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, UK. ISBN 978 1 871642 80 3.

The latest publication in the tried and tested Day by Day series does exactly as stated in the title. The scriptures are divided into three readings for each day through the year, two from the Old Testament and one from the New. The daily portions are taken from 'The Yearly Bible Calendar' devised by Henry Groves and published by John Ritchie some years ago.

It would be inadvisable and virtually impossible to stipulate for others the time and process undertaken in their approach to the word of God, but it is a commendable discipline to make the reading of scripture an essential part of every believer's day. This publication, if followed as intended, gives the reader the satisfaction of having read every verse each year.

Twenty-four writers have each taken a portion of the readings and have chosen to comment on one of the three passages for the day. The verses expanded on are shown in bold text and given a suitable title. The writers have been given freedom to enlarge upon the verses in their own way, with many being of a devotional and practical nature, while others are more expository.

If the present portion were to raise one caveat, it would be that any consecutive comment is obscured by the choice of enlarging on a different portion within the readings each day. So, for instance, the reader will be directed to, say, Deuteronomy on Monday, Ecclesiastes on Tuesday and Luke on Wednesday. For a comprehensive and consecutive brief commentary on the whole of the New Testament, the companion publication Day by Day – Christ and His Apostles follows the same reading plan and would no doubt complement this latest book.



Insects of the Bible

Tom H. Ratcliffe

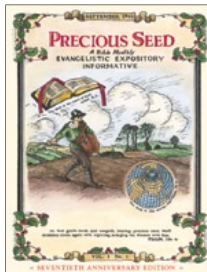
Paperback, 81 pages, Published by Bell and Bain Ltd, Glasgow. [Available from John Ritchie Limited]. ISBN: 978 1 871642 810.

It may be that if you have never had an interest in entomology then you may not naturally pick this book up. However, the book does live up to its promise in the foreword that it is reader friendly; it is written in a very easy style and can be read in one sitting, despite the potential for its subject matter to seem uninspiring. The lessons drawn from the book could actually be very useful to young believers who are trying to understand some aspects of 'how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God', 1 Tim. 3. 15. Setting out the nine insects in the introduction the writer commences with the ant, applying the most obvious scripture verse, 'go to the ant thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise', Prov. 6. 6-8. Working from the idea

that 'the social life of an ant's nest is an excellent example of how a company of Christians should function', the writer then draws interesting parallels with the various ant types and church life and responsibility.

There are similar instructive parallels drawn from the drone and worker bee, although the author would be advised not to over spiritualize, as, for example, in the case of the queen bee where he suggests that she is the source of the hive's prosperity, as the Lord is the divine source of all blessings in the church. But even though we 'offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually', Heb. 13. 15, which He appreciates, He is not dependent on us, as the queen is dependent on the workers for nutrition. The lesson from the 'flies in the ointment of the apothecary', Eccles. 10. 1, is used to signify those who are 'dead in trespasses and sins' who, if given the opportunity to be amongst the company of God's people, mask the fragrance of true worship. Then, toward the end of the book, there are a number of practical and challenging lessons from the activity and nature of the locust which the writer applies to believers. The writer's love and affection for the Saviour and His people is evident, and because of that the present reviewer found the book a surprising joy to read.

Our thanks to Bill Brady, Killamarsh, England for this review



Precious Seed 70th Anniversary Edition

Paperback, 212 pages, Published by Precious Seed Publications, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, UK. ISBN 978 1 871642 77 3.

This well presented book incorporates scanned copies of the Precious Seed Magazines from their inception in September 1945 to the May-June 1948 issue. It is attractively bound and the front cover is a copy of the 1945 original, meticulously reproduced in colour by artist Katie Piper (nee Smith).

The names of committee members and contributors will no doubt stir many memories for older readers who remember the ministry of men such as W. E. Vine, W. Trew and J. M. Davies. The Readers' Questions in each issue are answered by E. W. Rogers, with many most appropriate to the present day. The reports of Gospel Work are particularly interesting. The numbers attending tent meetings and other outreach work are at times quite staggering, when compared with the relatively few who show any interest in the gospel in our day, despite genuine effort and prayerful concern on the part of many believers. A further point of interest to note is the number of assemblies mentioned, and apparently thriving, just seventy years ago, but which are now no longer in existence or greatly reduced numerically.

The March-April 1947 issue highlights the decline of sound biblical teaching in schools. To seek in some way to address this problem, a magazine page was dedicated to teaching for children. The trustees enlisted the help of two public school teachers to undertake this responsibility. With teaching for younger children and those through teenage years, this has developed into the Young Precious Seed published in the current magazines.

The articles reproduced cover a wide range of teaching from both Old and New Testaments, remaining consistently faithful to the stated purpose of Precious Seed as being to encourage the study of the scriptures, the practice of New Testament church principles and interest in gospel work.

Whether reading through or just 'dipping in', this book is far more than a window on a bygone age, more an encouragement to all believers that we have before us in our day an open door.

QUESTION

What is meant by the phrase ‘the autonomy of an assembly’?

ANSWER

I am sure the questioner is well aware that the word ‘autonomy’ does not occur in the scriptures; although that, of itself, does not necessarily mean that the concept is not scriptural. However, in this particular instance what is meant by the phrase ‘the autonomy of an assembly’ might vary from one person to the next depending on their understanding of what ‘autonomy’ means.

The Cambridge Dictionary definition of the word is ‘the right of an organization, country, or region to be independent and govern itself’. On the basis of that explanation, we would need to be very guarded, for no assembly can exist independent of God, nor has it the right to govern itself in the sense of establishing its own doctrines.

In general terms, when believers refer to an assembly being autonomous they mean that it has no formal affiliations with other churches. In addition, each assembly is accountable to no one other than God and the Lord Jesus, and, therefore, they are not answerable to any type of centralized oversight. Used in this way, I believe it accords fully with the New Testament teaching to think of local churches as being autonomous, but I will add some qualifying comments to that belief.

To function scripturally in an autonomous way does not afford any church the right to do whatever it wishes. Each one needs to be led and fed by men that are overseers and one of the principle duties of these brethren is to teach God’s word. Although there is no code of instructions formulated by a committee of men that has to be adhered to, there should be a uniformity of teaching in every assembly, no matter where they are located. This harmony of doctrine derives from the acceptance of and submission to the teaching of the scriptures and the overseers should give the lead in carrying this out.

Whilst there are no formal affiliations with other churches, we need to guard against taking this situation to an extreme. Being ‘independent’ does not mean that assemblies should be isolationist. Within the book of

Acts, and in the epistles, there are several examples of the fellowship that existed between various churches. Timothy was ‘well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium’, Acts 16. 2. These two churches were about eighteen miles apart yet it is quite evident that Timothy was well known in both, thereby indicating that there must have been a degree of inter-church fellowship between them.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 8 Paul writes to exhort the church at Corinth to fulfil their intention of sending relief to the saints at Jerusalem. Thus, we see that there was a link between the church at Corinth and church at Jerusalem. He also refers to the churches of Macedonia; this was a region that included at least three churches, Berea, Philippi and Thessalonica. Some, or all, of these must have agreed amongst themselves to arrange a collection of aid for the deprived saints in Jerusalem; therefore, there was spiritual unity that existed, even though there was no central governance imposed on them.

In these days of fast communication there is a real danger that the autonomy of an assembly can be undermined. The establishment of assembly magazines, an assembly address book, various forums on the internet, etc., must not be allowed to erode autonomy or independence. However, on a more positive level, as many assemblies get smaller and congregations get older, what a joy it is to go to a meeting and see the place filled with likeminded saints, who have come from a number of assemblies to share in the fellowship of the teaching or preaching.

One way we can express inter-church fellowship is by supporting one another and avoiding unnecessary clashes of meetings. How many times have two small assemblies in the same area held simultaneous meetings? It should not be difficult to liaise with others and, with a little bit of forethought, we could avoid these ‘clashes’ more than what we do. If we know of an assembly nearby conducting a series of meetings, there is no reason why we shouldn’t curtail or cancel our own meetings in order to support the neighbouring work.

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Front Cover Illustration

'They then found out that the island was called Malta',
Acts 28. 1 NKJV.

The modern Republic of Malta consists of three main islands, Malta, Gozo and Comino, but in the Greco/Roman world of the first century AD the island of Malta itself was known by its Phoenician name Melita. The Phoenicians had invaded the island of Malta in the 7th century BC as they recognized its strategic importance as a naval base, being situated in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea. Later, other military powers conquered the island including Carthage, Rome, and latterly Britain, to name but a few. Its many invaders have left their mark on the island, as is evident by the discovery of different kinds of ancient artefacts and buildings including a number of first century AD Roman villas. The Romans, in fact, recaptured the island again in 218 BC during the Second Punic War. The island was later given the Roman status of 'civitas', which meant that the inhabitants were exempt from paying taxes, and generally not subject to the rule of Roman law. In Paul's day, Malta was on the direct sea route for ships sailing from Myra in Lycia to Rome, Acts 27. 5. Malta is only mentioned once in the Bible, in Acts chapter 28, where Luke recounts the safe arrival of the Apostle Paul after an horrendous sea voyage, which resulted in the loss of his ship, but, providentially, and in accordance with Paul's prediction, 27. 21-25, none of the ships company, v. 44. Interestingly, the Phoenician name for the island (Melita) literally means 'refuge' or 'escape', and as J RENDALL

HARRIS suggests, the survivors probably, 'recognized that the island deserved its name'. The local inhabitants of the island showed extraordinary kindness to Paul and his companions by extending hospitality to them – extraordinary in the sense that normally they would have been hostile to strangers. The same word used here for 'kindness' appears elsewhere in the New Testament to describe the love of God extended towards humanity, Titus 3. 4. Whilst on the island, Paul was bitten by a venomous snake, but without any affect. Since Paul was expected to die from the snake bite, the local people immediately decided that he must be nothing short of a god. Paul had encountered this sort of false reasoning before, e.g., Acts 14. 11-15, yet this incident sparks off a chain reaction that ultimately reveals that the power of physical healing comes from the living God, and Paul is simply an earthen vessel through whom He works, 28. 7-9. The whole narrative from Luke reflects a medical missionary approach to the work of God on the island. Paul and his companions are eventually honoured in some way by the local community – the word for 'honour' in this context might possibly refer to payments to Luke for professional services rendered as a physician – and they also provided them with provisions for their onward journey to Rome, 28. 10. There is no mention in the text of Paul preaching in Malta, although the presumption must be that this was his first priority, but, at the same time, he did not neglect the physical welfare of those who were sick, and this must surely be our approach as well. Similarly, the example of this local community extending hospitality to strangers is again a timely reminder to us that we should not neglect this important ministry, Heb. 13. 2, cp. Matt. 25. 35.



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