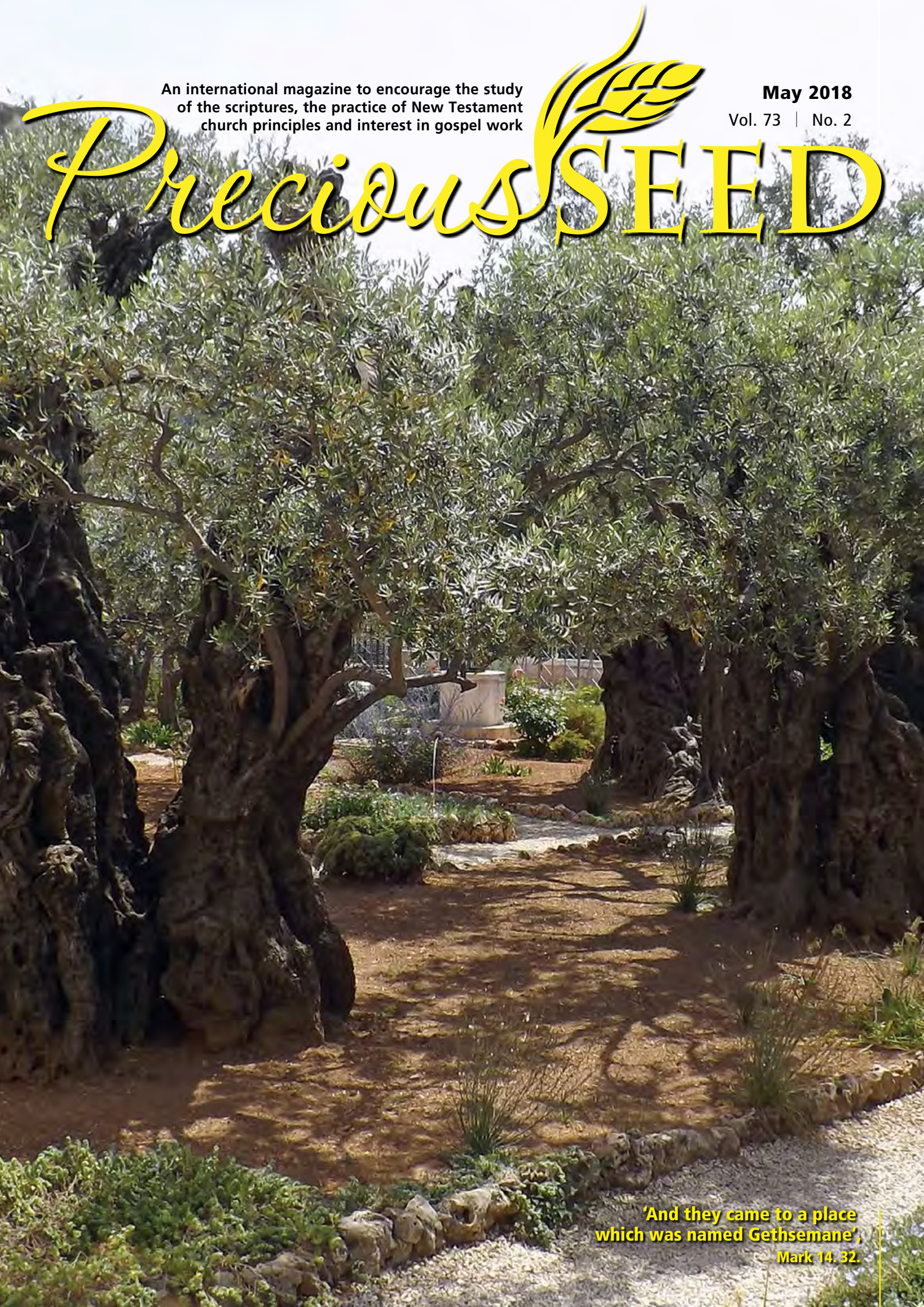


An international magazine to encourage the study
of the scriptures, the practice of New Testament
church principles and interest in gospel work

May 2018

Vol. 73 | No. 2

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which was named Gethsemane',
Mark 14: 32.

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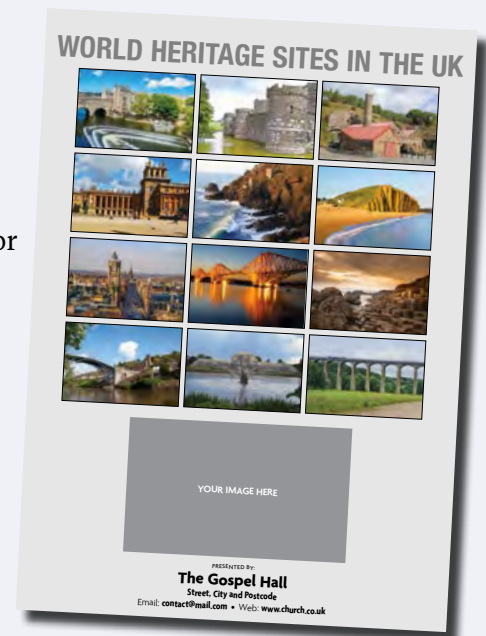


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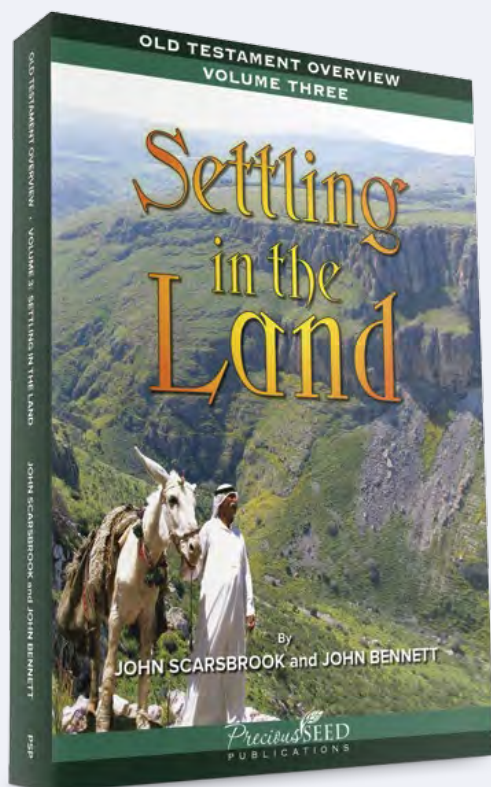
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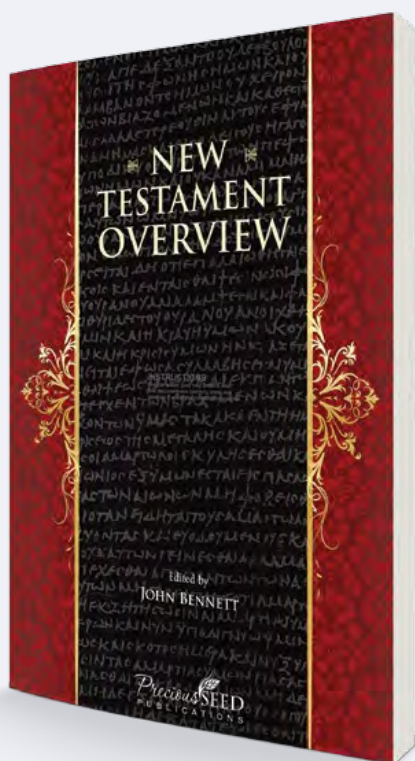
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‘They found fault ... in vain do they worship me’, Mark 7. 2, 7.

How sad it is to note that some only came among the disciples to find fault. What was it that led them to be so motivated? Are there lessons for us as we consider their error and the Saviour’s response?

The nation had sunk to its nadir. Such was the darkness that enveloped it, its so called leaders had promoted the traditions of men above the commandment of God. Their desire to protect their views and ‘rules’ had overtaken the need to obey God’s word, and in doing so it had turned them into hypocrites and vessels that were utterly empty of what God desired chiefly from them – worship, John 4. 23, 24.

The Lord Jesus, with an incisive use of the Holy Scriptures, exposes them for what they are, and in doing so reminds us of the danger of finding fault with others on the basis of ‘our rules’. He exposed the root of the problem. It wasn’t the lack of obedience on the part of His disciples, but rather the attitude of heart which was displayed in the actions

of those who came to find fault – ‘the things that come out of a man, those are they that defile a man’, v. 15. In other words, their inappropriate fault-finding displayed their true heart, vv. 21-23.

Sadly, I fear that there are those who still come to find fault with His disciples – they are always on the look-out for what they can pick the saints up on. Indeed, maybe it is something that we all can be prone to. God forbid! Let’s heed the lesson to be drawn from this incident in the life of our Saviour and ensure that we are never motivated by a love for the tradition of men above the commandment of God. Let us be diligent in ensuring our practice is drawn from scripture alone and let all else be in its right place.

How sad that the nation which was redeemed from the bondage of Egypt to serve in worship of God, was, in all their fussiness about their rules, found ‘empty’ in God’s sight.

Let the divine light search us

individually as to any hint of it in our own attitudes. Where it is found, it disallows and devalues our highest and most wondrous exercise – worship. Let us not retreat, as the Pharisees and scribes did that day, in indignation, with a determination to show that we are right and scheme to return and destroy. Repentance would have been far more appropriate than angry pride.

We would wish to place on record our appreciation of the hard work of all those who have written for the magazine with the purpose of bringing the wonderful truth of God’s word to us. The series on Ephesians, Titus and personalities around the Crucifixion have now come to a close and we would thank the brethren who have undertaken these so helpfully. New series on Colossians, Mark and the twelve tribes of Israel have commenced and we hope that these, along with the other articles, will be a blessing to the Lord’s people.

SANDY JACK

Ministry Articles Editor

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The Messianic Psalms

PSALM 40

Trust based on sacrifice

By **KEITH R. KEYSER** Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania, USA

The Psalms express the human experience in all of its multifaceted heights and depths – some, like the fortieth, even detail certain aspects of the life of God's ideal man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Like bookends, its opening and closing sections focus on David's struggles, Ps. 40. 1-5, 11-17. But in between, Messiah Himself steps forward in His character as the burnt offering, declaring His full consecration to His Father and the uniqueness of His personal sacrifice, vv. 6-10. It begins and ends with dependence on God. In His life on earth, Christ exemplified this perfect trust better than anyone in history.¹

Outlining the Psalm

Various students outline this psalm differently, as these three excellent examples demonstrate:

1. David's desolating experience and deliverance, vv. 1-5.
2. The Incarnation of the Messiah, vv. 6-10.
3. David's prayer for help and comfort, vv. 11-17.²

'Psalm 40 has three clear sections: an opening joyful testimony of God's past deliverance, vv. 1-3; a present reflection on God's goodness, vv. 4-10; and a prayer for God's deliverance in the future, vv. 11-17. The tone is established in the last verse, which is presented to us as a poor man's cry to God for God's help'.³

'The structure of the psalm reflects a remarkable unity, in spite of the change in mood from thanksgiving to lament. The expository schematization is as follows:

- A. Personal Experience of Salvation, vv. 1-3
- B. Blessedness of God's Protection, vv. 4-5

- C. Expression of Commitment, vv. 6-8
- D. Proclamation of God's Perfections, vv. 9-10
- D'. Prayer for God's Perfections, v. 11
- C'. Confession of Sin, v. 12
- B'. Prayer for God's Protection, vv. 13-16
- A'. Personal Need of Salvation, v. 17'.⁴

Trust in the Lord is never misplaced

The psalm begins with a retrospective of David's earnest entreaty to the Lord. The expression is emphatic, 'In waiting, I waited', v. 1 KJVmg, showing his persistent seeking for God's help. One explains, 'It is earnest, persevering prayer that is referred to; it is continued supplication and hope when there seemed to be no answer to prayer, and no prospect that it would be answered'.⁵ Yet He bent His ears to David's supplication, and responded. The Lord always hears and answers His people's prayers, 1 John 5. 14, 15.

David was delivered out of a terrible experience – graphically called 'a pit of noise', 'a pit of destruction', or 'a slimy pit', and 'the miry clay', v. 2.⁶ This phrase depicts unsteady footing.

Consequently, the Lord offers a secure place to stand, 'a rock', v. 2. God is often described as the rock, Deut. 32. 4; Isa. 17. 10; Matt. 16. 18; such great salvation elicits a divinely-inspired 'new song' in the sweet psalmist's mouth. This is fitting, for singing is the spiritual and logical response to redemption, Exod. 15; Judg. 5; Rev. 5. 8-10. As SPURGEON says, 'A rejoicing heart soon makes a praising tongue'.⁷ Not only did he sing, but others were led to trust in the Lord based on his example, Ps. 40. 3. One day the Saviour Himself will sing praise to His Father after bringing His redeemed people to glory, Heb. 2. 12.

The Saviour's obedience and blood

Verses 6 to 8 reveal that Messiah's redemptive work is the greatest of God's deeds. The myriad of Levitical offerings never satisfied the Almighty's heart; they merely foretold Christ as the future propitiation, Rom. 3. 21-26. Commenting on the quotation of these verses in Hebrews chapter 10, GOODING remarks, 'He saw the evil and horror of human sin as no other man has ever seen it. And being God incarnate in a human body he understood how God in his holiness felt about sin as no other human being could possibly understand it, and understood perfectly what God willed him to do about it. It was God's will that he should sanctify us by the offering of his sinless body. He did the will of God. He offered his body. We were sanctified. And his one act of offering has so completely satisfied God that he has never needed, nor will ever need, to offer his body again. God has what he always wanted; animal sacrifices are obsolete and irrelevant'.⁸ Even in the Old Testament, the ceremonies were valueless apart from obedient faith, 1 Sam. 15. 22, 23. But Christ's ears were dug open, Ps. 40. 6, to hear and do His Father's will – or, according to others, His ear was marked like the perpetual servant, Exod. 21. 6.⁹ The righteousness-loving and law-keeping Messiah, Ps. 40. 8-10, presented Himself in perfect obedience at the cross, Heb. 9. 14, and fulfilled the Father's plan of salvation.

Hide all my transgressions from view

Having established the messianic

sacrificial basis of the believer's righteous standing before God, the final seven verses turn to David's renewed lament in the face of trials and attacks. Since our Lord has settled our sin debt – our indisputably greatest problem – we may surely trust Him to resolve all subsequent challenges. The believer possesses full security in Christ and may safely rest in His just retribution against His foes. Imprecatory psalms may seem inconsistent in this age when Christ calls His people to love their enemies, but we must remember that the righteous Judge will visit punishment on all the impenitent. The poor and needy saint confides in the unfailing lovingkindness and truth of their God, vv. 11, 13, and looks

to Him to execute justice against the wicked in due time, vv. 14, 15. Psalm 40 pronounces a beatitude over those who trust in the Lord and eschew dependence on 'the proud' and those who love falsehood, v. 4.¹⁰ Instead, David focuses on God's innumerable works and thoughts towards His people, which appropriately meet the seemingly endless troubles that assail the saints, vv. 5 and 12.¹¹ His thoughts are toward us, showing that God is for us. As BROWN notes, 'In this Psalm you have *my* thought, and then you have *his* thought – but the psalmist does not say, "How precious unto me are my thoughts": it is, "How precious are your thoughts unto me". The reason why we are not happier Christians is this, we so brood over and

contemplate our own thoughts, and we shall never get any good out of them. The true attitude is for my thought, like a bee, to find out the flower of God's thought, and then dive down into the flower and get the honey there. Oh, poor self-introspective man, you who are always looking in your own heart, thinking about your own thoughts and analyzing them. Yet the object for meditation and contemplation, according to Scripture, is this, Jehovah's thoughts'.¹²



Endnotes

- 1 As two older commentators note: 'Here, as in several other psalms, some parts of the psalm are more applicable to David, and others to the Messiah'. CHARLES SIMEON, *Horae Homileticae: Psalms, I–LXXII*, Vol. 5. London, Holdsworth, 1836, pg. 317. 'This psalm, like the sixteenth, twenty-second, and some others, seems to be so constructed that it may be applied generically to the whole class of pious sufferers, but specifically to its head and representative, the Messiah'. J. A. ALEXANDER, *The Psalms Translated & Explained*. Edinburgh, Elliot & Thin, 1864, pg. 178.
- 2 T. E. WILSON, *The Messianic Psalms*. Neptune, NJ, Loizeaux Bros., 1978, pp. 22, 23.
- 3 J. M. BOICE, *Psalms: An Expositional Commentary, Vol. 1*. Grand Rapids, Baker, 1994, pg. 347.
- 4 W. A. VANGEMEREN, *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*. Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 1981, electronic ed.
- 5 ALBERT BARNES, *Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms, Vol. 1*. London, Blackie & Son, 1870-1872, pg. 356.
- 6 KJV margin, JND, NAS, ESV, NIV.
- 7 C. H. SPURGEON, 'Howling Changed to Singing', *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 39. London, Passmore & Alabaster, 1893, pg. 258.
- 8 DAVID GOODING, *An Unshakeable Kingdom: The Letter to the Hebrews for Today*. Coleraine, Myrtlefield House, 2013, pg. 190.
- 9 The Hebrew text supports either meaning.
- 10 These categories likely allude to idolaters. 'The proud' literally is 'Rahab', an ancient sea monster in some near eastern cultures, and is sometimes associated with Egypt's arrogance. See WILLIAM MOUNCE, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2006, pg. 1039.
- 11 'Trouble impoverishes the children of this world, but enriches the children of God'. G. RAWLINSON, *Psalms*, Vol. 1. New York, Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909, pg. 314.
- 12 ARCHIBALD BROWN, 'God Thinks', *This God Our God*. Carlisle, PA, Banner of Truth, 2013, pp. 29, 30. [Italics original].

Truth and Training from Titus – No. 11

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

This article is the final part of these studies. The writer's intention has been to look at each phrase and statement in the letter, and to glean a simple understanding of what Paul was writing to Titus about. It might be helpful to read the previous articles either in the printed edition of the magazine or on-line via www.preciousseed.org.

This article considers the remainder of the chapter, which covers Paul's concluding comments and a benediction.

It might be helpful, at this stage, to give a summary of each topic in the chapter:

- Good citizenship, v. 1;
- The delegated power of politicians, v. 1;
- Radical Christianity in the community, vv. 1, 2;
- What we were by nature, v. 3;
- The reason for the change at conversion, v. 4;
- Saved by grace, v. 5a;
- New life and new power, v. 5b;
- The Holy Spirit in conversion, v. 6;
- Heirs with Christ, v. 7;
- Rock solid truth, v. 8a;
- Christians should do good works, v. 8b;
- Focus on truth, v. 9;
- Helping and disciplining habitually disobedient people, vv. 10, 11;
- We all need each other, v. 12;
- The lawyer and the preacher, v. 13;
- A course in kindness, v. 14;
- No one is excluded, v. 15.

Concluding comments and a benediction, vv. 12-15

Here Paul makes some personal requests which he would like Titus to carry out, vv. 12, 13; he gives him some final words of advice, v. 14; and exchanges final words of

greeting, v. 15. It is touching to see the care that the apostle has for those who serve God with him, and his desire to see Titus. In the midst of these comments he cannot resist reminding Titus of the ultimate proof of faith – practical acts of kindness. WIERSBE states that in this verse Paul was reminding Titus 'of the main theme of the letter'.¹

We all need each other, v. 12

Paul is no different to any of us; he needed the fellowship and company of others. He must have spent many a long hour on his own, travelling, studying, writing, praying, and in isolation in prison, and so he longs for the company of those he loves and trusts.

Artemas is unknown to us, but we have come across Tychicus before. He was a travelling companion of the apostle, Acts 20. 4. On previous occasions, he had been sent to bring news of the apostle to the church in Ephesus, Eph. 6. 21, 22; Col. 4. 7, 8. Tychicus appears to have been very dear to the apostle, and someone whom he could really trust. Paul calls him a 'beloved brother' and a 'faithful servant' in the aforementioned passages. He could be trusted to pass on information truthfully and he had the ability to encourage the Lord's people. These are outstanding qualities that bring great benefit to the Lord's people. We would be wise to cultivate them. Paul was going to send one of

these two brothers, which I assume means that he would be left with at least one of them for company. However, he is most concerned that Titus would join him at Nicopolis, Macedonia. Presumably, Titus needs to get there before winter. Journeying would not be easy at that time of the year and Paul had decided to remain in Macedonia and wanted Titus to be there as well. Who would you want to spend the cold nights of winter with? It is quite a compliment to Titus that Paul was so keen to have his company.

It wouldn't be easy to get to Nicopolis, nor were there any guarantees that Titus would arrive, so Paul encourages Titus to make every effort to come. James writes in chapter 4 verse 15 that we should say, 'if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that'. Life is uncertain and making plans is normal and biblical, but we need to make them in light of the will of God. In Romans chapter 1 verse 10, Paul plans to have a prosperous journey to Rome by the will of God. This theme of planning and yet deferring to the will of God recurs regularly in Paul's writings.² Paul did eventually arrive in Rome but not in the way he had envisaged. So is life and the will of God.

The lawyer and the preacher, v. 13

It has been suggested that Zenas and Apollos acted as postmen to carry this letter to Titus. Once again, we have two men, one of whom we know nothing, the other who has appeared on the page of scripture before. Often God harnesses together men with different backgrounds. Zenas is a lawyer, yet unknown. Apollos is a preacher with great eloquence who is well versed in the scriptures. We are told that 'variety is the spice of life', and it is clear that our God is a God of variety and uses men and women from all backgrounds, with differing intellects and levels of ability in His service. This is a wonderful truth which is illustrated very effectively in local assembly life. The truth of the body is the most vivid expression of this truth. Titus is instructed to bring them on

their journey diligently. The idea is simply that he was to assist them in whatever they needed. He was to help them, to make every possible effort to assist them, and to go beyond the normal call of duty in how he went about this task. They were to have everything they needed, and to lack nothing. We are not given any more details, but in our day that could mean providing things such as help with visas, providing money, arranging accommodation, the provision of food and clothing. The list is endless. What lengths do we go to help our fellow believers when the need arises? John writes that it is the proof of divine life, 1 John 3. 17-19. As you examine the closing passages of many of Paul's Epistles you will see that there were many saints in his day who did exactly what he is exhorting Titus to do. I thank the Lord that the present-day believers I know still have the same mindset.

A course in kindness, v. 14

Good things and good works are a recurring theme in this short book, so it comes as no surprise that the penultimate verse of the letter stresses, once again, this important truth.

I am also challenged to note that Paul doesn't hesitate to remind the believers in Crete that they need to learn to devote themselves to good works. Please note that he calls them 'our people', or 'our's', because he has an ongoing personal interest in the spiritual development of these saints. In chapter 2 verse 7, Titus has been told that he has to be a pattern to the young men in this very matter. He needs to model this truth so that those who are watching him will mould their lifestyles to match his. The power of the role model is as real today as it was in the days when the New Testament was being written. Learning to do something can be a long and painstaking process, so Paul says that they need to be focused, disciplined, and apply themselves to the task.

When we want to learn a new skill, we need to think about what is required, set aside time to practise, revisit what we have done and check how we are doing. It's a 'work in progress' we say!

And so it is in this aspect of Christian life. It won't just happen. It's learned behaviour motivated by our love for the Lord and inspired by our desire to please Him.

These good works are to meet pressing needs. They are to provide assistance in urgent situations. They are for specific cases where help is essential. A Christian should be known for acts of kindness. We should not be known for ignoring needs when they become apparent. To do this effectively we need to know what is going on in our communities, to be aware and to care. Inward-looking Christians who never see the needs of the people in their cities and towns will become detached, irrelevant, and ineffective in reaching out with the gospel. James writes 'to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin', Jas. 4. 17. The author of the Hebrew letter writes, 'But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased', Heb. 13. 16. Paul writes to Timothy, 'That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate', 1 Tim. 6. 18. And, finally, Paul writes



to the churches of Galatia, 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith', Gal. 6. 10. It seems pretty clear to me that we should be known for devotion to good works.

The ultimate reality is that good works are good for the recipients and they are good for the believers who do them. Without them, Paul says we will be unfruitful. We shall be unproductive in developing spiritual qualities if we do not live out what we believe. The statement in James chapter 2 verse 22, 'Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?' is to be put into practice in the lives of these believers.

No one excluded, v. 15

Paul ends his letter by passing on the warm regards of all the believers who are with him. He then sends his regards to those in Crete who are faithful.

Sadly, there will be, from time to time, those among the Lord's people who are false. They need to be identified and dealt with. Paul starts his letter thinking along those lines, 1. 9-16. He ends his letter sending greetings to those who love him in the faith. This is a wonderful group of people who value and obey the word of God, who love the Lord that bought them and who love all those who love the Lord. Paul is delighted to send his greetings to them.

His final words are – 'Grace be with you all. Amen'. This is the theme that dominated the life of the apostle Paul. Sometimes he writes, 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all'; on other occasions, it is as we have here. Grace started the journey when conversion took place, and grace will bring us to the end of the journey when we enter the presence of our Lord and Saviour.

May 'grace be with you all. Amen'.

Endnotes

- 1 W. WIERSBE, *BE Faithful*, David C. Cook, 2008.
- 2 Rom. 1. 11, 13, 15; 15. 22, 23, 24, 25, 28.

THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

By **LLOYD STOCK** Bury St. Edmunds, England

The greater portion of our Old Testament, and a significant portion of events yet future, hinge on matters that have to do with the twelve tribes of Israel. Spanning a period over two millennia means that these matters are not insignificant, and we stand to learn a good deal about who God is and what He is like, as well as the history of the tribes themselves.

As with everything in God's purposes, we find the foundations for our study in the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis. Jacob's closing address to his sons in Genesis chapter 49 is not a simple case of a man's last words. It is a staggering prophecy to which the history of the twelve tribes of Israel conforms. The significance of the words would certainly not have been lost on the brothers. For example, they would have quickly noticed that their father was not rigidly following birth order. Leah's sons all come first, so that Zebulun, and Issachar, displace Dan's fifth place in the birth order.

As seminal as Genesis chapter 49 is, we would be left hanging a little if it wasn't for chapter 48. After all, two of the tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, are not even mentioned in chapter 49. As an introduction to this series of short surveys of each tribe, a consideration of chapter 48, will be important before exploring chapter 49 in more detail.

Two questions will help us get started, 'Why Israel' and 'Why twelve tribes'?

Why Israel?

We might well ask why they became known as the twelve tribes of 'Israel', rather than of 'Jacob', Gen. 49. 28. Is this significant? Jacob means, 'he cheats, supplants'. Israel means, 'God prevails', though the context of its original mention allows for Jacob's prevailing over men with God's help too. On purely these grounds the name 'Israel' is preferable. However, its designation to Jacob at Jabbok is important, Gen. 32. 22, 28. Jabbok was a watershed moment for Jacob. He was in the middle of a self-made crisis, at a loss to secure adequate

means of his own to appease his brother Esau – classic Jacob. As a result, God met him and wrestled with him. Physically, he was overcome and sustained a permanent injury. Spiritually, by faith, he prevailed, receiving God's covenant blessing in the process, and the new name 'Israel'. The impression we are left with is that, notwithstanding Jacob's flawed nature, he was serious about having dealings with God, and God was serious about having dealings with him. Above all, come what may, Jacob – and more to the point – God, would prevail.

This provides our first lesson. We might wonder today, what has become of the twelve tribes? Are they not flawed beyond hope? Far be the thought. We are talking about Israel. Whatever has happened; wherever they are; whichever state they may be in; we can surely say that God has not finished with them. His purposes will be fulfilled, He will prevail.

Why Twelve Tribes?

To answer this question we should

consider the fact that in Genesis chapter 48, Joseph's sons – Ephraim and Manasseh – were both formally adopted into Jacob's family. Joseph would keep successive sons to himself, but Ephraim and Manasseh became Jacob's – sons of Israel – giving a total of fourteen sons of Israel. Why then are 'twelve' tribes referred to?

It is to be noted that 'Joseph' can be used interchangeably with 'Ephraim and Manasseh', so that they are one and the same, Deut. 27. 12. Then again, perhaps we can also discount Levi? He is omitted in the census in Numbers chapter 1, and excluded from having inheritance in the land, Deut. 10. 9. If only it was that simple. Levi appears in many of the other later listings depriving us of such a simplistic explanation.

Trying to solve the number conundrum is partly missing the point. The specific tribes enumerated throughout scripture vary, and not without significance. However, 'twelve tribes' it is – that is how God would have it. So, in lieu of resolving the puzzle, we can at least observe the significance of God's design. It is, after all, not the only group of twelve in His purposes. There were twelve apostles, who are to sit on twelve thrones. Twelve 'gates' in Revelation chapter 21. These all give a sense of 'governance' to the number. We learn this, then, that through the designation of twelve tribes God is stamping His elective purposes on the thing, as a vehicle through which His rule will be administered.

The Birthright

Before we leave Genesis chapter 48 we should note that Jacob's private meeting with Joseph was not just about Ephraim and Manasseh's adoption. It was about birthright. Normally held by the firstborn, birthright conferred special privilege and responsibility, along with a double portion of blessing. In this case, however, the birthright would not sit with Jacob's firstborn. 1 Chronicles chapter 5 verse 1 tells us why. '[Reuben] was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son

of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's' NKJV. This verse drives home two major details which would have shaped the thinking of the nation in a dramatic way, and should orient our entire thinking for the remainder of this study. One concerns Joseph, the other Judah.

Regarding Joseph, birthright lay with him as a result of Reuben's moral failure. In an act which echoed Jacob's singling out of Joseph with the coat in chapter 37 verse 3, Jacob now singles out Joseph's sons to receive the birthright blessings. He conveys the substance of the blessings to Ephraim, yet another case of passing over the firstborn. In fact, by this point, the birthright has already passed over several firstborns including Ishmael, Esau, Zerah and Reuben. Why all these breaks from the normal order of things? What is God teaching us? At a simple level, it is a lesson in His sovereignty. If only the nation had learnt it – if only we would – it took Jacob a lifetime. Proverbs chapter 16 verse 9, comes to mind, 'A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps'. Others see a more typical picture of God working through the

second man. It's a very compelling possibility.

Ephraim's birthright privilege gradually becomes evident as the Old Testament unfolds. So much so that 'Ephraim' becomes synonymous with the northern kingdom, 'Israel'; a key consideration when reading books like Isaiah for instance. Yet despite the honour conferred on them, with all the promise that should have emanated from someone like Joseph, Ephraim ultimately failed to live up to it.

Which brings us to our second point regarding Judah. As the chronicler recorded, 'Judah prevailed over his brothers'. Accordingly, Asaph wrote, 'He rejected the tent of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves', Ps. 78. 67. We will return to explore this more fully when we look at Judah. Suffice to say, it's all a glorious insight into the gracious heart of God, who works all things together for good not because of us but in spite of us.

A Future Anticipated

Keeping all this in view, we return now to Jacob's last words in chapter 49. Predictably, Judah and Joseph

dominate the discourse. He addresses each son and, by extension, each tribe. As we noted earlier, the order here is only loosely based on birth. In keeping perhaps with common courtesy (cf. Deut. 21. 15-17), Jacob addresses the sons of Leah first, then of the handmaids, and lastly of Rachel. As one family, they would become one nation. Yet, born from two mothers, they would ultimately split into two kingdoms. This is just one of the implications we can draw, in hindsight, from Jacob's foresight. How much did he appreciate we wonder? As is true of the book of Genesis as a whole, God is just laying the groundwork and setting the scene. It is truly marvellous to see the whole of God's programme anticipated in it all, not least the coming of a King. This is the seed of the woman, the one who will prevail, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the one who will administer God's will on earth.

Having laid out some background for this series, we are ready to consider each tribe more closely in order that we can learn some practical lessons to challenge and encourage us as God's heavenly people. Similarly, His purposes for us will prevail, and by God's grace, we too can be vehicles through which they can be realized.

REUBEN

ISSACHAR

GAD

SIMEON

ZEBULUN

ASHER

LEVI

DAN

JOSEPH

JUDAH

NAPHTALI

BENJAMIN

EPHESIANS

Chapter 6 verses 18-24

PART 13

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

Praying saints, vv. 18-20

Our dependability – praying always, v. 18

The section begins with our need to be strong in the Lord; it now ends with our dependence upon the Lord. As the soldier would be dependent upon his centurion in the battle, this verse teaches how we should always look to God in the face of the conflict in which we are engaged. In the verse we have the prayer, the power in prayer, the perseverance needed, and the people for whom we pray.

1 The prayer

We must pray always. The preposition would indicate the channel of an act.¹ It would carry the thought of prayer on all occasions, at all seasons. There must always be a looking to God and the bending of the knee to Him. Paul urged, 'Pray without ceasing', 1 Thess. 5. 17. If we are in close combat with the enemy we need to be in close contact with the Lord. Prayer has to do with worship and honour, and supplication with our need. The former is God-ward; the latter brings in man.

2 The power

We are to pray in the Spirit. Once again, this is spiritual warfare and we need the Spirit's help in bringing our petitions to God. The order of prayer in the New Testament is – to God; through the Lord Jesus; and in the Spirit.

In this dispensation we are not told to pray **for** the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been given to each believer at the moment of our conversion.² For any to be like Simon and desire and seek to do what was an apostolic act, in this day, is a gross misunderstanding of scripture.³ Jude verse 20 would express that we pray in the Holy Ghost.

3 The perseverance

As a Christian soldier, I must wear the

armour at all times, for we know not when the enemy will come, and, in the same way, there has to be persistency in prayer, never letting our guard down, always dependent on our God.

4 The people

We are encouraged to pray 'for all saints'. As we are all in the battle, we need the support of each other that we might have the ability to overcome.

The ministry – intercessory prayer, v. 19

The ministry is twofold: the prayers of the saints for the apostle, and that ability might be given to Paul to fulfil in a bold way the service that God had given him. This servant of God appreciated the value of the supplications of saints on his behalf. Prayers are never forgotten in heaven, Rev. 8. 3. We recall the angel's words to Cornelius, 'Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God', Acts 10. 4. Oftentimes we may wonder if there is any value in praying because the answer is not always instant, but how often we look back to see the hand of God working, though unseen to us at the time!

Paul's concern was for him to have ability to speak well of the gospel. The 'mystery of the gospel' must be made known and Paul wanted prayer in regard to how to speak it, 'utterance', and the power to preach it, 'boldly'.

It is evident that this mystery of the gospel is more than the gospel that the Lord commissioned His disciples to preach, Matt. 28. 18-20, for there is no mystery associated with that. As we have seen, New Testament mysteries were hid from ages and from generations and were something only revealed in this present church age, and then only to faith. It would seem that Paul has in mind in this verse the great dignity of what the gospel brings us into, the church comprised of Jew and Gentile.

Perhaps there is a court appearance to be faced by this captive preacher, and that he is thinking of standing before the dignitaries of Rome, for, at this moment, he is in the confines of a prison cell.

The dignity of the ambassador, v. 20

If thoughts of an impending trial are in his mind, it is little wonder that he places himself among the aristocracy, being a divine representative, an ambassador of God. What dignity marks the service of Paul and his bonds cannot detract from the honour he feels as being able to make known the blessings of the gospel.

When speaking the gospel we must remember that there is a definite manner in which we ought to speak. What we are handling are divine words! Peter's First Epistle has emphasized the manner of speaking for God, and would remind us that we are stewards of the manifold grace of God. We are speaking divine oracles which can only be ministered aright when given divine ability, 1 Pet. 4. 10-12. Perhaps these thoughts were in Paul's mind. Would that we all felt the same convictions when handling divine truth!

Personal salutations, vv. 21-24

The messenger of Paul, vv. 21, 22

It must have been an encouragement to Paul to have those around him who had given valuable service to the Lord along with Paul. Tychicus was one of these, called here a beloved brother and a faithful minister. As a beloved brother we see what he is, and as a faithful minister, what he does. The word minister is *diakonos* and is used in the Epistles of those who preach and teach the word of God. In Colossians chapter 4 verse 7, the fact that he is a fellow-servant is added. He was evidently esteemed and respected by Paul. The desires of Paul to inform Timothy, and with him the saints at Ephesus, how he fared in prison, was carried by Tychicus, and in all probability he carried these letters which have been a blessing to the household of faith.

The visit of Tychicus was not only to inform Timothy along with the church of Paul's affairs, his state of mind and his health, but that such news would be a comfort to them. The last time the Ephesian elders had seen Paul was as they kneeled and prayed with him and wept sore for they knew they would see his face no more, Acts 20. 36-38.

His mutual blessings, vv. 23, 24

This letter, being a letter that speaks of the wonder of the union of all believers, does not carry individual greetings, but, as he closes his Epistle, he cannot help but have in mind the wider congregation at Ephesus and desires the riches of God's blessing upon them.

These blessings, as in all his letters, are seen to be from both the Father and the Son, proving the equality that is known in the Godhead. If the Lord Jesus is inferior to the Father, they would not be linked together as joint dispensers of all we require during this present age.

The features that Paul brings before us as needful are: peace, love with faith, and grace. What blessedness is felt when we have peace, both with God and among ourselves. Paul desires it particularly for the brethren. Does he reflect upon his word to the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20 when he could foresee the dangers that would assail the assembly and disturb the peace among them?

As it begins, so the Epistle ends, with grace. This is an Epistle of grace; grace is found on twelve occasions through it. All is of God as chapter 1 verse 6 unfolds, every blessing we have is 'to the glory of His grace'. The redemption we have is 'according to the riches of His grace', 1. 7. The apostolic calling and spiritual gift of Paul was by the grace of God, 3. 2, 7, 8. Our conversation should 'minister grace to the hearers', 4. 29. We can do no better than Paul as we close the Epistle and say, 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen'.

Endnotes

- 1 JAMES STRONG, *Exhaustive Concordance*.
- 2 See: Gal. 3. 2; 4. 6; Rom. 8. 9.
- 3 Acts 8. 13-24.



DIVORCE – VICTIMS

Editor's Note: It is not the intention of the writer of the article to review the doctrinal stand-points on the matter of divorce, but to shed a light on the needs of saints and shepherds, who are often forgotten in such 'awful' situations. As with a previous article on suicide, I am sure that it will be understood by our readership why this article is anonymous. We do pray that as it is read there will be an increased awareness of such difficult issues, and a deepening exercise amongst believers to prayerfully support the work of true shepherds amongst the Lord's people.

Author's Note: It is accepted that before any marriage it might be advisable and helpful to seek the guidance of the elders of the assembly in which one or both of the couple fellowship. The writer is conscious that when the couple considering marriage do not have believing parents, some spiritual input and perspective on the union should be regarded as essential. See the short *Precious Seed* series: https://www.preciousseed.org/article_detail.cfm?articleID=2776.

The Daily Telegraph recently reported, 'Overall 111,169 couples in England and Wales divorced in 2014'.¹ The sad reality is that many of us in local churches are beginning to see the effects of the numbers, although the trend may appear to be downwards – the break-up of marriages in society has begun to filter into Christian marriages. With the possibility that people of the world often 'live-together' rather than marry, it could be argued that the impact of divorce upon Christians may be greater than elsewhere.

Whilst elders may have discussed and decided on what their policy may be in relation to couples who have divorced and remarried, the polarization of views has meant that the victims of divorce may be neglected. In this short article, I want to raise the needs of those who are caught up in this awful situation and who need the pastoral care of the people of God.

The forsaken partner

When one of the partners in a marriage leaves the family home permanently, the impact upon those that are left is huge. Whether, in the sight of the law, it is a 'no fault' divorce, or a situation where one partner has reneged on their marriage vows, the consequences impact upon the individuals both financially, practically, and spiritually. To whom should the affected believers turn?

The simple teaching of Paul was that if 'one member suffer, all the members suffer with it', 1 Cor. 12. 26. Similarly, in Galatians chapter 6 verse 2, Paul encourages the believers, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ'. The real difficulty is, as ROBERTSON states, this scripture means 'Keep on bearing'.² We may not feel able to offer advice and guidance of a technical and legal nature, but there is practical and prayerful support we can offer in

such stressful times. Perhaps all we need to do is just listen. However, let us beware of human inquisitiveness which is often drawn towards the matter of 'who is to blame?' It is so easy to focus upon the cause of the break-up without realizing that such discussion is often unhelpful and potentially destructive, especially when it is the presentation of only one side of the issue.

In a case where one member has been betrayed by their partner the real danger in supporting is that of bitterness. Coming to terms with what has been done, and how long the individual has been deceived, can breed anger which quickly develops into bitterness. Divorce and its background can eat away at the individual and mar their spiritual life and testimony. Although the context of the verse is one of Jewish apostasy, the writer of Hebrews states the need to beware, 'lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled', Heb. 12. 15. Whatever the source of the root of bitterness, it is the task of fellow believers to ensure that it does not spring up. To fail in this respect is to put at risk 'many'. Says the Apostle Paul, 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice', Eph. 4. 31. This is an area where fellow believers can help and advise, encouraging the individual not to look back and dwell upon what has happened in a way that would engender resentment and acrimony.



Equally, there is the issue of guilt. Whilst others may look on with sympathy at the fact that an individual has been forsaken by their marriage partner, it is possible for the individual to become consumed by a sense of guilt, feeling that in some way they contributed to the breakdown of their marriage. Such feelings of guilt can also become a destructive spiral into self-pity and ought to be tempered by the need to cope with the immediate effects of the new situation.

The psalmist recognized the importance of self-examination but called upon the Lord to accomplish a far more productive process, 'Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart', Ps. 26. 2. A consideration of what the Lord sees and knows might preserve all of us from self-righteousness, self-pity, or self-destruction.

Children

It is interesting that in the context of the Lord's teaching on divorce in Mark chapter 10, 'they brought young children to him', v. 13. The psalmist wrote, 'Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth', Ps. 127. 3, 4. The family is a divine concept and the context in which children are to be raised for God. This is one of the reasons that the devil has attacked and continues to attack Christian marriages.

Where a marriage that has been blessed with children breaks down and ends in divorce there is a need for believers to support the parent, and, as appropriate, support the children. Custody battles, access rights, housing issues, and school bullying could all impact upon the children, who are caught up in a situation not of their making. Rationalizing the new relationship that exists between their parents, and their own position, is difficult for a child of any age. Although we may argue that children are resilient and cope with things better than adults, there is a real danger that it can impact upon them spiritually. Failure in the spiritual lives of their parents needs to be set in perspective. Through the care and support of others within the assembly, it is possible to demonstrate love and respect within a Christian home and marriage. This may help to show such children that our failure to live as God would have us should not detract from the fact that God's will is best. Where human love and affection may change, God's love does not and any spark of spiritual interest or faith within the child or children should be the focus of fellow saints.

Family

A marriage in the Lord brings together two individuals and also two families. We are aware of the preciousness of Christian fellowship, and that fellowship can be developed through the marriage of their children. When that marriage that once brought such joy fails, the ripple effect can be

catastrophic. The issue of guilt and blame is destructive. Although the scripture clearly teaches, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife', Mark 10. 7, often parents are somehow held responsible for the behaviour of their child.

The same bitterness that might afflict the betrayed partner can afflict his/her parents. Relationships between individuals can also spill over to affect relationships between assemblies. There is a need for wisdom, grace, and patience in handling such complex and distressing situations. What we must not do is ignore the problem in the hope that it will somehow resolve itself.

In the compass of such a short article it is impossible to do justice to every aspect of this sad issue. What the writer hopes is that thought might be given to the care of those who are, or who might be, caught up in the situation, and that saints might pray the more earnestly for Christian marriages, and the couples and families within their fellowship.

Endnotes

- 1 *Daily Telegraph*, 5th December 2016, found here: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/05/117-year-itch-marriage-lasting-longer-divorce-rates-plunge>.
- 2 A. T. ROBERTSON, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. E-sword resource.



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

PART 1

By **WILLIAM M. BANKS** Hamilton, Scotland

Introduction

Colossians was one of four letters written from the prison in Rome, Acts 28. 16.¹ It was delivered to Colossae, together with the letter to Philemon, by the hand of Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus, Col. 4. 7-9. Epaphras, who had apparently been instrumental in establishing the assembly at Colossae, 1. 7, and possibly those at Laodicea and Hierapolis, 4. 12, 13, and now a fellow-prisoner, Philem. 23, had reported conditions in the assembly to Paul. It seems that Paul had never visited the assembly at Colossae, 2. 1. Colossians, and possibly Ephesians, was to be read in the church at Laodicea, 4. 16. These letters are complementary. In Colossians the emphasis is on Christ as the Head of the church which is His body, 1. 18; 2. 19, while in Ephesians the emphasis is on the church which is His body with Christ as the Head, Eph. 1. 23. Of the 155 verses in Ephesians, seventy-eight are repeated with some variation in Colossians.² Both Epistles are peculiarly relevant for the present time 'when the compromising of truth with error is regarded by many as a Christian grace. They are bastions against the cults, the "damnable heresies", and the pseudo-scientific evolutionary theories . . . as well as the present trend towards the occult'.³

The assembly at Colossae appears to have been subject to false teaching in relation to the person of Christ. It was 'Judaistic Gnosticism' – a mixture of Greek philosophy, 2. 8; oriental mysticism, 2. 18, 23, with its associated idolatry, 2. 18, and immorality, 3. 5; and Jewish ritual, 2. 11, 16. It detracted from the person of Christ, making Him one of many *aeons* – powers, (totality of powers were called *pleroma*) between God and man. It denied both His essential deity and true humanity. It was the occupation of intellectuals.

The theme of Colossians is the all-sufficiency of Christ – His pre-eminence, 1. 18, and His fullness, *pleroma*, 1. 19. Here the word is 'removed from the precarious foundation of philosophy and mythology and set upon the impregnable rock of inspiration'.⁴ The same word is also used of Christ in chapter 2 verse 9, 'In him dwelleth

all the fullness of the Godhead bodily'. In chapter 1 verse 19 the idea is that of intrinsic excellence in the greatness of His person, while in chapter 2 verse 9 the fullness is found in a body to give expression to it in the realm of revelation. This idea of 'fullness' is also applied to the believer, 2. 10; to Paul, 1. 24, 25 and to others, 1. 9; 4. 12, 17.

Generally speaking, the Epistle follows the same structure as some of Paul's other Epistles, e.g., Romans and Ephesians. A doctrinal section is followed by practical exhortations. Here the doctrine is covered in the first two chapters, with the balance of the Epistle applying the doctrine to the Christian's life, 3. 3; interests, 'put off', v. 9, 'put on', v. 12; movements, 'do', v. 17; relationships, 'wives', v. 18, 'husbands', v. 19; and assembly interpersonal responsibilities – twelve names are mentioned in chapter 4 verses 7 to 18. Essentially, chapters 3

and 4 are asking for the Christ-centred doctrine of chapters 1 and 2 to be seen in its outworking in the believer's experience.

Outline of chapter 1

– note couplets throughout the chapter

The prescript, vv. 1, 2.

The two servants, v. 1,
Paul and Timothy, cp. Philemon
and Philippians
The two descriptors, v. 2a, b,
saints and faithful brethren
The two salutations, v. 2c,
grace and peace
The two sources, v. 2d,
God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ

The two prayers, vv. 3-14.

Thanksgiving, vv. 3-8.

'Since we [may be indicating joint
authorship] heard', vv. 3-5a, 'faith . . .
love . . . hope'.
'Since . . . ye heard', vv. 5b-8.

Petition, vv. 9-14.

There are two requests.
'That ye might be', v. 9.
'That ye might walk', vv. 10-14.

The two majesties, vv. 15-23a.

The majesty of Christ in creation, vv.
15-18.
The majesty of Christ in new creation,
vv. 19-23a.

The two ministries, vv. 23b-29.

The minister of the gospel, v. 23b.
The minister of the church which is
His body, vv. 24-29.

The prescript, vv. 1, 2.

Paul links himself with Timothy in the writing of this letter. 'That Timothy alone is named along with him in the prescript is due to Timothy's sharing his ministry on a permanent basis'.⁵ Paul links Timothy with himself uniquely in four letters in the New Testament, viz. 2 Corinthians, Philippians and Philemon, as well as Colossians. There was a special bond between them which was forged during Paul's second missionary journey, Acts 16. 1. Timothy may have been converted during his first missionary journey, 14. 8-20. He 'was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium', 16.2 and

was held in the highest esteem by Paul, Phil. 2. 20-22. It is always encouraging when older brethren see such lovely features in a younger brother and embrace them fully in the development of their ministry.

While there is a close connection between the two, there are also vital differences. Paul can describe himself as an apostle, while Timothy is referred to as ‘the brother’.⁶ As an apostle, Paul reminds the Colossian believers of the exalted Christ he serves – ‘Christ Jesus’, RV, JND; cp. Acts 9. 6, and the special call he received ‘by the will of God’, cp. Gal. 1. 15, 16. The experience on the Damascus road was indelibly impressed on his mind. While he never forgot the exalted honour into which he was initiated, on the other hand the fundamental brotherhood that existed as a result was something he cherished – ‘Timothy the brother’. It immediately introduced a link with the believers at Colossae.

Indeed, Paul’s relationship God-ward and Timothy’s relationship saint-ward is immediately replicated in the believers at Colossae. They are described as ‘saints and faithful brethren in Christ’. They are saints God-ward, and faithful brethren man-ward. They, and we, are saints by divine calling, 1 Cor. 1. 2. The word for saint is cognate with the word for holiness, and what we are by calling ought to be replicated in what we are practically. God anticipates that His people will be ‘holy; for I am holy’, 1 Pet. 1. 16. Paul refers to ‘saints’ several times in this first chapter, 1. 2, 4, 12, 26. Those whose lives are thus regulated God-ward are most likely to be faithful man-ward. There are several ‘faithful’ brethren mentioned in the letter – Epaphras, 1. 7; Tychicus, 4. 7 and Onesimus, 4. 9. It is a lovely trait, but utter reliability of this nature is sadly lacking in our day.

The sphere of their faithful fellowship is said to be ‘in Christ’. This is an interesting term with clear dispensational significance. It is the current sphere of all our spiritual blessings, Eph. 1. 3, and the sphere for the consummation of divine purpose for the ages, ‘both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him’, Eph. 1. 10. At the rapture, ‘the dead in Christ shall rise first’, 1 Thess. 4. 16.



These are they of the present dispensation who have died since the inception of the church at Pentecost.

The double salutation ‘grace . . . and peace’, which is common to nine of Paul’s Epistles, follows. They are characteristically Christian in their atmosphere and diametrically opposite to conditions pertaining in the world. ‘Grace is God’s unconditioned goodwill toward men and women which is decisively expressed in the saving work of Christ, cf. 1. 6; peace is the state of life—peace with God, cf. 1. 20, and peace with one another, cp. Eph. 2. 14-18,—enjoyed by those who have effectively experienced the divine grace’.⁷ The order, of course, is significant – the peace comes as a result of experiencing the grace.

The two sources of the above blessings are then affirmed, ‘God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’. Although the reference to the Lord Jesus Christ is omitted in the Revised Version, it is retained in many other versions.⁸ The double source is at once an affirmation of the equality of these two persons of the Godhead, and, at the same time, a statement of the essential deity of the Lord Jesus. The reference to

God as ‘our Father’ is also a term of dispensational significance. Language like this could not have been used in the Old Testament. There, God was the ‘Father’ of the nation of Israel who was called ‘My son’, Hos. 11. 1, but God was never addressed by individuals as their Father. In His Upper Room ministry the Lord Jesus introduced this unique relationship to ‘His own’, John 13. 1, and encouraged them to address God as their Father, John 16. 23, 24. There are fifty-two references in forty-five verses to the ‘Father’ in the Upper Room ministry. We little appreciate the tremendous blessings into which we have been introduced in this day of grace.

Endnotes

- 1 The others were Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians.
- 2 J. M. DAVIES, *Prison Letters – Colossians and Philemon*, Precious Seed Publications, 2008.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 F. F. BRUCE, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- 6 J. N. DARBY, *New Translation*.
- 7 F. F. BRUCE, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- 8 JND, YLT, Bishops, NKJV, LITV.

The scene at the cross of Calvary

By **JOHN TINKLER** Red Row, England

Part 2

The sufferings on the cross

In chapter 53, Isaiah points out: in verses 1 to 3, who suffered; in verses 4 to 6, why He suffered; in verses 7 to 9 how He suffered; and, in verses 10 to 12, after He suffered. It is interesting that John never mentions suffering. Luke, as a medical man, gives no details of His actual crucifixion.

One cannot help but wonder what went through Isaiah's mind when he was led to write of the sufferings of the Messiah. This was even something the Eunuch in Acts chapter 8 verse 34 thought unusual, by asking 'of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?' Philip opened his mouth and spoke from the same scripture, of the Lord. Surely the hymn writer has summed it up in lovely language, 'what He endured no tongue can tell, to save our souls from death and hell'.¹

The soldiers and their conduct

At the crucifixion, the soldiers were permitted to share the personal effects of the crucified. Psalm 22 verse 18 was to be fulfilled, 'They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture'. It is John, in chapter 19 verse 23, who states, 'Now the coat . . .'. The soldiers were unaware that they

were fulfilling scripture. The garment became the property of four unnamed soldiers.

We also have recorded for us the confession of the centurion, 'Certainly this was a righteous man', Luke 23. 47. A hardened soldier making such a statement does not make him a believer, but that he saw and heard things that day that were unlike other crucifixions where he heard oaths and swearing. He 'glorified God' – an expression so often used in Luke's Gospel. However, from Acts chapter 10, let us remember that God can save centurions!

The spear-pierced side and its cause

It is John alone in chapter 19 and verse 34 who records this event. The soldiers did not do what they were commanded to do – break the legs – but one did something he was not supposed to do – pierce the Saviour's side. Was it frustration? It was fulfilling scripture, Zech. 12. 10. Pilate too in his actions fulfilled three prophecies, Zech. 3. 8; 6. 12; 9. 9. By the act of this soldier 'blood and water' came out of the Lord's side, being a true manifestation that the Lord had died.

The Saviour dismisses His spirit

The Lord had said in His life, 'No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself', speaking of His death, John 10. 18. Mark chapter 15 verse 37 is the reality – He 'gave up the ghost'. The Lord cried with a loud voice. He, being in complete control of His faculties, yielded up His spirit, showing that He was different from all men.

Salvation's work completed

Hebrews chapter 10 verse 12 informs us, 'But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever'. The work of Christ never needs to be repeated. If we take away the death of

Christ from our preaching we are not revealing the truth of God. As Paul confirms to us in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 18, 'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God'. And again in the same chapter and verse 23, 'we preach Christ crucified'. The finished work of Calvary is central to the gospel message!

The Sabbath and 'their concern'

John tells us 'that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day', 19. 31. The place of crucifixion must be cleared quickly. We note Deuteronomy chapter 21 verses 22 and 23 in this respect, 'His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in wise bury him that day'. The gospel writers present to us the 'day of preparation' and the Jews' request that the victim's death be hastened by breaking their legs.

Whilst it was the day of preparation, two men had made preparations that the Lord's body should be given the burial in accordance with Isaiah chapter 53 verse 9, 'with the rich in his death'. Nicodemus is told in John chapter 7 verse 52, 'Search, and look'. Did he search the Old Testament scriptures? He, and Joseph of Arimathea, had to work quickly regarding the precious body of the Lord. Therefore, did not Joseph and Nicodemus make preparation for this day? The women made preparation, but God made preparation that the Lord would not be given a pauper's grave, but would be with the rich in His death. This is the only act that Joseph did, but what an act!

As believers may we bow in worship at the scene of Calvary and all its wonderful blessings given to us!

Out there amongst the hills,
my Saviour died,
Pierced by those cruel nails
was crucified.
Lord Jesus, thus has done all this
for me;
Hence forward I would live,
only for thee.

Endnote

1 S. STENNETT, quoted in *Gadsby's Hymnal*.



Second Samuel

By **JOHN BENNETT** Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

Introduction

‘Observe that just as Joshua begins with “After the death of Moses” and Judges begins with “After the death of Joshua,” so also 2 Samuel begins with “After the death of Saul”’.¹

Some have described the two books of Samuel as the transition from anarchy to monarchy. Within the first book we can see that transition begin. However, as the reign of Saul progresses, the failure of the king of man’s choice becomes all the more evident. Although David emerges as the king of God’s choice, he does not take up the throne completely until chapter 5 of this second book.

The second book of Samuel details the triumphs of David’s reign. In the early chapters he unifies the nation, bringing together the warring factions of Judah, and the other tribes. He obtains for the unified nation a capital, taking the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites, the ground upon which so much was to be built under the reign of his son Solomon. He establishes peace for the nation by defeating its enemies and subduing them. He extends the boundaries of the nation, ‘from the Red Sea to the river Orontes, and from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates’.² This was an unparalleled achievement and one that prefigures the achievements of great David’s greater Son.

In David, God raised a standard. The life and record of the kings of Judah are measured by that standard. Of Abijam it is said, ‘his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father’, 1 Kgs. 15. 3. From the establishing of the Davidic dynasty, the future kings of the nation would be taken and that which David had set up and left on record would be the guide to those that succeeded him. Politically, the systems that David put in place are also an indication of the rule of the King of kings, who will perfect those things of which David was only a foretaste.

Spiritually, the nation reaches a high point under the reign of David.

It is David who brings the ark up to Jerusalem. It is David that has the exercise to build a house for God, chapter 7. Although this is only realized in the reign of Solomon, David makes the preparations from which Solomon can plan and build.

The Purpose of the Book

Although there is much that is positive in the chapters of this book, there is also a faithful record of the failures of David. Aspects of his life sowed the seeds for this failure. The multiplying of wives brought him heartache and trouble. His moral weakness, exemplified in his sin with Bathsheba, leads to the death of Uriah the Hittite, the murder of Amnon, and the rebellion of Absalom. The man who never fled from before his enemies becomes the man who flees from before his own son who has plotted his overthrow. The way of the transgressor is hard!

Apart from the substantial record of David’s life and achievements there is also a record of the lives of those who played their part alongside him. Men such as Nathan and Gad, prophets; the sons of Zeruiah, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, soldiers; and Zadok the priest were all instrumental in the maintenance or development of David’s kingdom. Others, who help us to see something of the character of David are Mephibosheth, Barzillai, and Hushai, whilst, in a negative sense, there is Ahithophel, and Shimei.

SCOTT details ‘three historical circumstances’ that are mentioned in the book. These are: ‘*first*, the sovereign choice of David, the king; *second*, the sovereign choice of Zion as seat of government on the earth . . . and *third*, the ark, the basis and centre of God’s moral dealings and relationships with His people’.³

MACARTHUR suggests that there are four predominant themes in 1 and 2 Samuel: ‘The first is the Davidic Covenant. The books are literarily framed by two references to the

“anointed” king in the prayer of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:10) and the song of David (2 Sam. 22:51) . . . A second theme is the sovereignty of God . . . Third, the work of the Holy Spirit in empowering men for divinely appointed tasks is evident . . . Fourth, the books of Samuel demonstrate the personal and national effects of sin’.⁴

The Plan of the Book

This is a book that commences with the lament of David over the death of Saul and Jonathan and ends with the ‘song in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies’, 22. 1. It is a testimony to the grace and sustaining strength of God.

ANDERSON offers this broad outline: ‘The narrative of 2 Samuel moves in historical order from David’s ascent to power (1:1–5:5), to his consolidation of power (5:6–12:31), to challenges to his power (13:1–21:14), to the concluding events of his reign (21:15–24:25)’.⁵

MERRILL offers his expanded outline as:

- ‘David at Hebron (chaps. 1–4)
- A. Lament for Saul and Jonathan (chap. 1)
 - B. Battle between David and Abner (chap. 2)
 - C. Conflict between Joab and Abner (chap. 3)
 - D. Death of Ish-bosheth (chap. 4)
- David’s Prosperity (chaps. 5–10)
- A. The capital at Jerusalem (chap. 5)
 - B. The return of the ark (chap. 6)
 - C. The Davidic Covenant (chap. 7)
 - D. David’s campaigns (chap. 8)
 - E. David’s kindness to Saul’s family (chap. 9)
 - F. David’s ambassadors to Ammon abused (chap. 10)

David’s Sin and Domestic Problems (chaps. 11–21)

- A. David’s adultery (chap. 11)
- B. Nathan’s rebuke and David’s punishment (chap. 12)
- C. Sin and murder of Amnon (chap. 13)
- D. Absalom’s estrangement from David (chap. 14)
- E. Absalom’s revolution (chaps. 15–18)
- F. David’s return to power (chaps. 19–20)

CHARTING THE SCRIPTURES 2 SAMUEL by Jonathan Black



1 and 2 Samuel were all one volume until the Greek Septuagint. 2 Samuel. 1 Chronicles concentrates on the preservation of the Davidic line.

The life of King David { beloved } DAVID

Timeline of events

1040BC 1020BC

Anointed by Samuel 1 Sam. 16. 1-3
Serving Saul 1 Sam. 16. 14-23
Defeats Goliath 1 Sam. 17

'And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee.'

The SON | The SHEPHERD | The SOLDIER | The SERVANT

1 Sam. 16. 11

There remaineth yet the youngest.

2 Sam. 7. 14

I will be his father, and he shall be my son.

1 Sam. 16. 11

And behold, he keepeth the sheep.

1 Chr. 21. 17

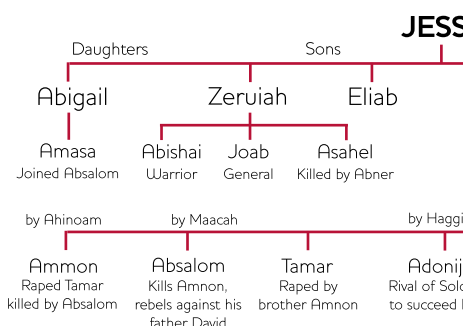
But as for these sheep, what have they done?

Psalms 23. 1

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

I have made a covenant with my chosen. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne.

THE HOUSE OF DAVID



Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Jerusalem.

The house of Abinadab

The house of Obed-Edom

JERUSALEM

Noahic Covenant > Abrahamic Covenant > Mosaic Covenant > < Davidic Covenant >

David's seed to reign forever

- 1 David laments the mighty fallen
- 2 David anointed King over Judah
- 3 Ishbosheth King over Israel - Abner rebels
- 4 Abner's death by Joab
- 5 Ishbosheth killed - David's revenge on men
- 6 Kingdom is united by David - captures Jerusalem
- 7 David puts the ark on a new cart
- 8 Davidic covenant - an eternal throne
- 9 David subdues Philistines and Canaanites
- 10 David's kindness to Mephibosheth
- 11 David defeats the Syrians

David's sin revealed and forgiven

- 11 David's sin with Bathsheba
- 12 David's son dies - Solomon is born

David's son rebels in failure

- 13 David's family failure - Absalom rebels
- 14 Joab and the wise woman of Tekoah
- 15 Absalom's rebellion - David on the run
- 16 The council of Ahithophel to Absalom
- 17 The council of Hushai is of God
- 18 The death of Absalom

David's song of praise for the future

- 19 Strife in the tribes
- 20 Sheba's rebellion
- 21 Gibeonites, Philistines & Goliath's sons killed
- 22 David's great song
- 23 David's last words & mighty men
- 24 David's sin and purchase of threshing floor.

The Eternal
...a united people

New Testament

'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ'
'Have ye never read what David did, who was called
'the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God said unto him,
'Hath not the scripture said, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;
and out of the town of Bethlehem thou shalt be called, saying,
'For David is not ascended into heaven, but he saith unto the Lord,
The LORD said unto me, My Son art thou.
Until I make thy foes thy footstool.'

'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.'

Key words Jerusalem / mighty / fallen / before the Lord / house / kingdom / throne **Writer** Nathan & Gad

Magist separated them. David's reign is recorded in 1 Chronicles as well as of the Davidic line and doesn't mention David's sin or Solomon's idolatry.

1010BC

1000BC

979BC

970BC

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT
2 Sam. 7. 12-16

Runs from Saul
1 Sam. 21. 10-15

Spares Saul
1 Sam. 24. 26

Crowned King of Judah
2 Sam. 2. 1-5

Sin with Bathsheba
2 Sam. 7

Absalom rebels
2 Sam. 15. 17-24; 19. 8

David dies
1 Kgs 2. 10, 11

...shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever'. 2 Sam. 7. 16

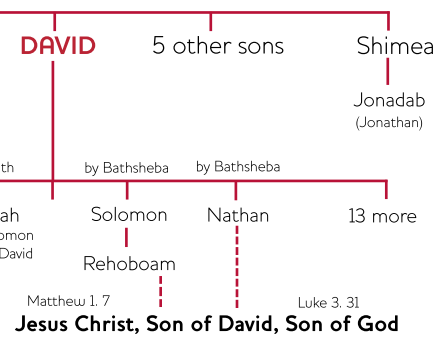
The SOVEREIGN

The SINNER

The SONGWRITER

...n, I have sworn unto David **my servant**,
...ild up **thy throne** to all generations. Selah.

HOUSE OF DAVID



...of Zion: the same is the city of David.

...ALEM → Solomon's Temple → Heaven



...ent references to David

...Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham', **Matt. 1. 1**
...when he had need, and was an hungered', **Mark 2. 25**
...all give unto him the throne of his father David', **Luke 1. 32**
...That Christ cometh of the seed of David,
...thlehem, where David was?' **John 7. 42**
...into the heavens: but he saith himself,
...y Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
...es thy footstool', **Acts 2. 34, 35**

David is the first and last name mentioned in the New Testament apart from Jesus Christ

2 Sam 12. 1-14; Psalm 51

*Have mercy upon me,
O God, according to thy
lovingkindness: according unto the
multitude of thy tender mercies blot
out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from mine
iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

2 Sam. 22. 1; Psalm 18

*And David spake unto the Lord the
words of this song in the day that the
Lord had delivered him out of the hand
of all his enemies, and out of the hand
of Saul: And he said, The Lord is my
rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
The God of my rock; in him will I trust:*



...of the Lord for ever'.

- G. Slaughter and burial of Saul's sons (chap. 21)
David's Final Years (chaps. 22-24)
A. David's song (chap. 22)
B. David's heroes (chap. 23)
C. David's sin in taking the census (chap. 24'.⁶

A detailed outline is as follows:

Reigning in Hebron – Chapters 1-4

- Chapter 1
The lives lost, vv. 1-16
The lamentation of David, vv. 17-27

- Chapter 2
The crowning of kings, vv. 1-11
The conflict of kinsmen vv. 12-32

- Chapter 3
The children of David, vv. 1-5
The concubine of Saul, vv. 6-11
The communication with David, vv. 12-21
The conspiracy of Joab, vv. 22-30
The curse upon Joab, vv. 31-39

- Chapter 4
The cowardice of the sons of Rimmon, vv. 1-7
The consequences, vv. 8-12

Reigning over Israel, chapters 5-12

- Chapter 5
The crowning of David, vv. 1-5
The conquest of Zion, vv. 6-12
The concubines of David, vv. 13-16
The conflict with the Philistines, vv. 17-25

- Chapter 6
The Ark brought up, vv. 1-5
The anger of the Lord, vv. 6-11
The Ark brought in, vv. 12-19
The answer of David, vv. 20-23

- Chapter 7
The king's mind, vv. 1-3
The Lord's message, vv. 3-17
The king's meditation, vv. 18-29

- Chapter 8
The king's conquests, vv. 1-8
The king's capital, vv. 9-13
The king's court, vv. 14-18

- Chapter 9
The king's inquiry, vv. 1-4
The king's invitation, vv. 5-8
The king's instruction, vv. 9-13

- Chapter 10
The affront to David, vv. 1-5
The array of forces, vv. 6-14
The attack and victory, vv. 15-19

- Chapter 11
The adultery of David, vv. 1-5
The actions of Uriah, vv. 6-13
The authorization of murder, vv. 14-21
The arrogance of David, vv. 22-27

- Chapter 12
The parable of Nathan, vv. 1-6
The punishment of David, vv. 7-14
The prayer of David, vv. 15-25
The progress of the conflict, vv. 26-31

Rebellion and its consequences, chapters 13-24

- Chapter 13
The rape of Tamar, vv. 1-14
The repercussions, vv. 15-22
The revenge of Absalom, vv. 23-29
The reaction to the news, vv. 30-39

- Chapter 14
The record of the story, vv. 1-20
The return of Absalom, vv. 21-27
The restoration of Absalom, vv. 28-33

- Chapter 15
The rebellion of Absalom, vv. 1-12
The risk to David and the city, vv. 13-18
The refugees and returners, vv. 19-37

- Chapter 16
The journey into hiding, vv. 1-14
The Jerusalem Council, vv. 15-23

- Chapter 17
The counsel of Ahithophel, vv. 1-14
The communication with David, vv. 15-22
The camp at Mahanaim, vv. 23-29

- Chapter 18
The conflict, vv. 1-8
The capture of Absalom, vv. 9-18
The communication with David, vv. 19-33

- Chapter 19
The mourning of the king, vv. 1-8
The movement of David, vv. 9-15
The meetings with the king, vv. 16-43

- Chapter 20
Sheba, the son of Bichri, vv. 1-3
The sword of Joab, vv. 4-13
The siege of Abel, vv. 14-26

- Chapter 21
The blight of the Gibeonites, vv. 1-11
The bones of Saul and Jonathan, vv. 12-14
The battle with the Philistines, vv. 15-22

- Chapter 22
The intensity of praise, vv. 1-16
The importance of righteousness, vv. 17-31
The invincibility of God, vv. 32-51

- Chapter 23
The last words of David, vv. 1-7
The legacy of the mighty men, vv. 8-23
The list of other mighty men, vv. 24-39

- Chapter 24
The anger of the Lord, vv. 1-9
The acknowledgement of David, vv. 10-17
The altar in the threshingfloor of Araunah, vv. 18-25

The Author and Date of the Book

As in the case of 1 Samuel, the author of 2 Samuel is not named and therefore we do not know who God chose to be His penman. We have noted that the book of 2 Samuel begins with the rule of David over Judah and concludes with the latter days of his reign over the united monarchy. Thus, as the history covers a period of about forty years, it is seen as covering 1010 to 970 BC.

Endnotes

- 1 RONALD YOUNGBLOOD, *1 and 2 Samuel in The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Eds.), Harper Collins.
- 2 W. GRAHAM SCROGGIE, *Know your Bible Vol. 1*, Pickering and Inglis, pg. 65.
- 3 WALTER SCOTT, *Handbook to the Old Testament*, Morrish, 1991, pp. 110, 111 [italics original].
- 4 J. MACARTHUR, JR. (Ed.), *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Word, 1997, pg. 375.
- 5 STEPHEN ANDERSON, *Interpretive Guide to the Bible*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014, pg. 66.
- 6 E. H. MERRILL, *2 Samuel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures Vol. 1*, Victor Books, pp. 456, 457. [my summary]

WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newton Abbot, England

Melechah (barren land, barrenness)

Melek (king)

Meleketh (queen)

The overwhelming majority of British monarchs have been kings and very few of these have been constitutional monarchs. Most have been able to exercise supreme and absolute authority over their subjects without limitation. And this is how the basic Hebrew word for king or counsellor, *melec*, which occurs over 2,000 times in the Old Testament, is to be understood, subject, however, to the periodic intervention of God. For example, when Elihu seeks to glorify God, he does so in terms of God's supremacy over the natural world, including His oversight of reigning kings, Job 36. 7b. From a human point of view, earthly kings appear to be totally in control of their own destinies, yet as Daniel forcibly reminds us about God's power, 'he removeth kings, and setteth up kings', Dan. 2. 21b.

The office of a king was common in the Middle East, and in places such as Egypt, kings were regarded as supreme or divine beings rather than simply viewed as God's representatives on earth. The first mention of a king is in Genesis chapter 14, where four Canaanite kings engage in battle against five other kings, including the kings of Sodom (Bera) and Gomorrah (Birsha), vv. 8, 9. The symbolism of these two names: Bera meaning 'in evil'; and Birsha meaning 'in wickedness', is in sharp contrast with Melchizedec the king of Salem, who appears in this chapter through the intervention of God, v. 18, and whose name is interpreted for us by the writer to the Hebrews as 'King of righteousness', 7. 2. Whilst Abram declines any share of the spoils of war offered to him by the king of Sodom, he readily accepts a blessing from Melchizedec and subsequently pays him tithes, Gen. 14. 20, 23. Thus confirming Melchizedec's superiority over him, Heb. 7. 7.

Throughout Israel's early history, the patriarchal role characterized their method of leadership before God, and the office of a king was usually confined to that of pagan tribal communities living around them, e.g. Gen. 20. What this emphasized was that Israel, unlike these other nations, was essentially a theocracy, i.e. God ruling over His people as a king, 1 Sam. 8. 7; Ps. 74. 12. However, Israel's disillusionment with Samuel's corrupt sons, and its desire to mimic the world around them, became the basis of their request for a king to be appointed to judge over them, 1 Sam. 8. 5. Although Saul, the first king appointed by God, did well at the outset of his reign, it soon became apparent that he feared men more than God. In appointing Saul as their king, Israel had rejected God as their king, v. 7. Now God rejects Saul as their king, 15. 23, and brings in 'David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart', Acts 13. 22. David would form a unique and everlasting dynasty that will find its true fulfilment in his greater Son, who one day will be acknowledged as 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS'.¹

In the Septuagint (LXX) the Hebrew word *melek* is translated by the Greek word *basileus*, which is the word that occurs in the Greek New Testament to describe both secular kings and Christ's office as king. During the intertestamental period the Maccabean high priests were often referred to as kings, but it is only when we move into the New Testament that the Davidic dynasty is fully revived, and prophecy is seen to be fulfilled in Jesus being identified as Israel's rightful king, Zech. 9. 9; Matt. 21. 5. Even Pilate asks Jesus, 'Art thou the king of the Jews?', and Jesus confirms that the reason why He was born was to be a king, Matt. 27. 11; John 18. 37. Throughout his interrogation of Jesus, Pilate tries to establish whether the charge of the Sanhedrin against Jesus was well founded. They were of the view that His claims were capital offences, hence their desire for Him to be judicially sentenced to death.

Notice that even at the moment of crucifixion the chief priests still try to change what Pilate had written that Jesus was the king of the Jews, 19. 21. As F. F. BRUCE states, 'The Crucified One is the true king, the kingliest king of all; because it is he who is stretched on the cross, he turns an obscene instrument of torture into a throne of glory and "reigns from the tree"'.² The terms 'king' and 'kingdom' are closely related words in both the Old and New Testaments, but limited space prevents us from developing this correlation. Nevertheless, we should be in no doubt as to the importance that God places on the subject of kingship. As STEPHEN RENN explains, 'At the heart of this phenomenon lies the theme of Yahweh as king. His rule over the earth and its peoples is symbolised through the theocratic kingship in Israel and consummated on earth through the person of his son, Jesus Christ, who perfectly mirrors the kingly rule of God in human form'.³ May the Saviour always be King of our hearts, as we anticipate that day when 'he shall reign for ever and ever', Rev. 11. 15.

For further reading/study

Introductory

King, Kingship in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, General Editors LELAND RYKEN *et al*, pp. 476-481.

Advanced

God as King and Judge in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Editors GERALD F. HAWTHORNE *et al*, pp. 358, 359.

Endnotes

- 1 2 Sam. 7. 11-16; Heb. 1. 5b; Rev. 19. 16.
- 2 *The Gospel of John; Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, pg. 369.
- 3 *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts*, STEPHEN D. RENN, (Ed.), HENDRICKSON, 2005.

CHARACTERS AROUND THE CROSS

THE FATHER

WHO SENT HIM

Part 11

By **IAN REES** Tenby, Wales

We have seen the involvement of different men and women at the cross of our Lord Jesus, both those who believed in Him and those who didn't. We have seen wickedness and kindness, betrayal and loyalty, viciousness and tenderness, all that men did unto Him in their desperate desire to do away with Him. Peter was right when he said of our Lord that they, 'by the hand of lawless men, did crucify and slay', Acts 2. 23 RV. Yet we cannot close our thoughts on characters around the crucifixion without considering the One who surely was invisibly there.

The death of our Lord was planned

It beggars belief that, before the world was ever made, before mankind was formed, the trinity of divine beings knew that sin would enter the world and that the Son of God would have to enter His sinful creation to redeem it. Our Lord, 'verily was foreordained **before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you', 1 Pet. 1. 20; the Father brought this about, 'according to **the eternal purpose** [purpose of the ages, RV] which he purposed [carried out] in Christ Jesus our Lord', Eph. 3. 11. In addition, we read of a plan concerning sinners that God made before the world was. Of believers we read, 'He hath chosen us in him **before the foundation of the world**', Eph. 1. 4; and that we have, 'hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie,

promised **before the world began**'; Titus 1. 2. 'All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world', Rev. 13. 8. Even if we take revised readings here, such as, 'everyone whose name has not been written **before the foundation of the world** in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain', ESV, it is clear that something was determined before the world was made. It is beyond our understanding to think that God would plan the death of His Son before He had ever formed man, but it would appear to be so. After all, all that was done at the cross was done, 'according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God'.

The death of our Lord was prophesied

Even in Eden, God promised a Messiah who would come to save mankind, Gen. 3. 15. Jewish interpretations led them to believe the Messiah would come in triumph, but they seem to have missed the many prophecies that spoke of Him as a suffering Messiah. Yet our Lord showed, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, that the scriptures clearly said Christ was to suffer, Luke 24. 25, 26. With the help of the Spirit of God, the apostles saw in these prophecies direct references to the death of our Lord. Peter claims Psalm 16 refers to the Messiah when he preached, 'He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption', Acts 2. 31. John sees Psalm 22 fulfilled when he quotes, 'They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did

cast lots', John 19. 24. Isaiah's words 'I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting', 50. 6; 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth', 53. 7; 'he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors', 53. 12; were all fulfilled at our Lord's death. The book of Psalms told the Jews, 'Dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me', Psa. 22. 16, 17. Zechariah spoke of the Messiah upon whom the nation would look as One, 'whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him', Zech. 12. 10.

The death of our Lord was prefigured

From the moment the sacrifice of animals was commanded by God, we see the sacrifice of our Lord represented in the offerings. Some see this first shown in the animal sacrifices that must have been made when God clothed Adam and Eve in the skins of animals. Abel brought a sacrifice from his flock; the principle being established that an innocent victim had to give its life for the sinner to be accepted before God. Since Christ is our Passover, we see Him prefigured in the passover lamb that was examined by men and then killed, the lamb then roasted and eaten with bitter herbs, Exod. 12. That the apostles understood this to refer to Christ is also clear when, 'neither shall ye break a bone thereof', is seen to be fulfilled at the cross – 'they break not [our Lord's] legs'; Exod. 12. 46, John 19. 32-37. His death is also seen in the offerings of the Jewish ritual law. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the tabernacle and all that was done in it was a 'figure for the time then present', Heb. 9. 8, 9, and that it was all a picture of the perfect sacrifice, our Lord Himself. 'For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge

your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' Heb. 9. 13. Our Lord, also, said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up', John 3. 14.

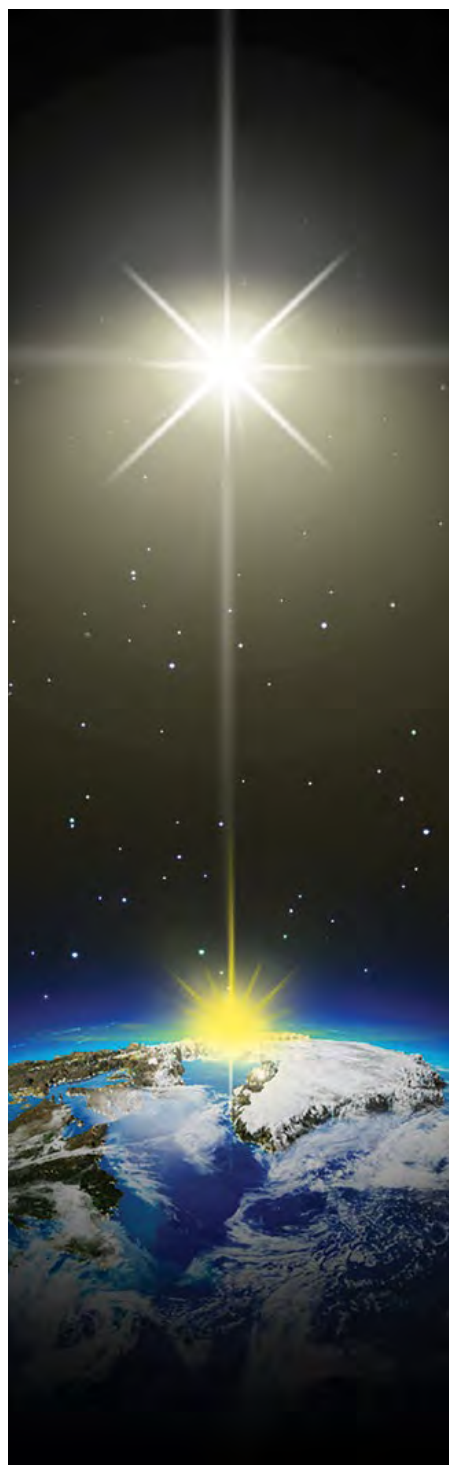
The death of our Lord was preferred

New Testament writers refer to our Lord's coming as willing and voluntary. 'When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and **sacrifices** for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God', Heb. 10. 5-7. Yes, the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, but He was no reluctantly obedient Son. 'I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me', John 6. 38. If this was true before ever He left heaven, how much more was it true down here. He resisted all temptations from the devil to seek glory without suffering first. When Peter tried to deter Him from the path of suffering that lay ahead, our Lord detected in Peter's words the influence of Satan, Mark 8. 33. For our Lord, the path of suffering was of God. 'Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour', John 12. 27. Even in the garden of Gethsemane, being in an agony as He contemplated the day that lay ahead of Him, He would say, 'Let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done'. And as He put His hand on the handle of the door of the upper room, as they were about to pass out into the darkness of Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha, these were His sublime words, 'that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence', 14. 31. The path of obedience, though it led to the bitterness of the cross, was one He preferred.

The death of our Lord was perfected

When Moses and Elijah stood with our Lord upon the Mount of Transfiguration, as we call it, they spoke of 'his decease [death] which he should accomplish at Jerusalem', Luke 9. 31. And what an accomplishment

it was! He offered no sacrifice for Himself, for He had no sin, unlike all the previous high priests. And He was once offered, once for all. 'Christ was once offered', Heb. 9. 28. 'We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once **for all**. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified',



Heb. 10. 10-14. And in His death, not only was salvation accomplished and God's wrath propitiated, but death was defeated, Satan weakened and a people purchased for Himself. We hear, too, His exultant cry from the cross, 'Finished!' All the work that had been planned from before the foundation of the world to be done, that was prophesied and prefigured, the work He had come to do and He had preferred to do above all else, was finally and fully accomplished. Was God there at the cross with His Son? Surely He was. Our Lord had confidently said, 'Ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me'. How He rejoiced in that! Yet let us never forget there was a time in the darkness alone, when our Lord was forsaken of His God. 'My God, my God, why didst thou forsake me?' There seems to have been a time when justice caused a holy God to forsake His sin-bearing Son, sending Him, like that scapegoat of old, to a 'land not inhabited', Lev. 16. 22. Why the cross? Why the fearful agony? His Son had to become a curse for us, that we might no longer be under a curse; He had to be forsaken of His God that we might no longer be forsaken; He had to become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him; He had to be judged for our sins that we might never be judged for them; His blood had to be shed publicly for all to see, for 'without shedding of blood [there] is no remission', Heb. 9. 22. And though we have seen the wickedness of man at that cross, the 'contradiction of sinners against himself', yet let us never forget what God did at that cross. 'It pleased . . . [Jehovah] to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear iniquities', Isa. 53. 10, 11.

Jehovah lifted up His rod;
O Christ, it fell on Thee!
Thou wast sore stricken of Thy God;
There's not one stroke for me.
Thy tears, Thy blood,
beneath it flowed;
Thy bruising healeth me.

Character Studies in the Book of Proverbs

The wise man and his companions

Part 2

By **JOHN SCARSBROOK** Killamarsh, England

Wisdom is a fathomless ocean, an eternal fountain which has its source in God alone, 8. 22, 23. It was divine wisdom that brought creation into being, 3. 19. The same wisdom orders and maintains it, 8. 28, 29.

It is a clear evidence of the love and grace of God that He has made available to man the abundant fruits and blessings of His wisdom, 9. 1-6. Furthermore, an invitation is extended to those in need of guidance, 9. 4, and all is unstintingly given, cp. Jas. 1. 5.

The world has its own standards by which wisdom is assessed, but even at its best and most noble it is still 'the wisdom of this world', 1 Cor. 2. 6. When the Lord Jesus was here, the men of his own country placed the measuring line upon Him, the carpenter's son, and asked in astonishment, 'Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?' Matt. 13. 54. The Jews in similar vein and with furrowed brow said, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' John 7. 15. The application of their own wisdom only left question marks hanging in the air. The reality was that before them stood the one 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge', Col. 2. 3. The one who embodied and lived out those 'seven pillars of wisdom' which James speaks of as belonging to 'the wisdom that is from above', Jas. 3. 17; lovely features seen in all their perfection in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Wisdom is, of course, the prevailing

subject in the book of Proverbs. Mention is made at least once in every chapter.

The wise man is seen as the epitome of all that is good, honest and upright. He is sometimes introduced to us alongside his complementary companion, the man of understanding, 1. 5, to add weight and clarity to the instruction given. Then from chapter 12, we are joined by the third character to make up this 'three-fold cord', the prudent man. Together they represent a formidable body of teaching, instruction, sound advice and common sense. We do well to linger for a while in their presence.

There are few greater privileges granted to a young believer than to be able to spend time in the company of godly older saints as they discuss the scriptures, just to be there and to listen to their conversation. To discover that wisdom, understanding and prudence do not come as a result of 'much learning' in 'many books', but are only achieved and developed in a lifetime of experience!

We notice that these three companions each have their own particular strength of personality.

If we consider first of all the man who is deemed to be wise, he is one who is intelligent, well taught, experienced, a man of good judgement and skilful in the application of his knowledge. We would expect to receive from him a whole range of instruction and teaching which would quickly fill up our notebooks! Yet, at our first introduction, 1. 5, he is sitting quietly alongside his friend, not speaking at all, but listening. He has learned that great wisdom is often expressed in silence. In Ecclesiastes chapter 3

verse 7, we read that there is 'a time to keep silence, and a time to speak'. It is the wise man who can recognize each appropriate time, 29. 11; take time to examine the occasions when the Lord Jesus was silent, they are very instructive.

As we become more familiar with the wise man we discover that he is as keen to receive instruction which will be of value to himself, rather than to be constantly instructing others; 8. 33; 9. 9; 10. 8; 12. 15; 21. 11; etc. He does not seek a place of prominence. In fact, he would rather take his place in the company than be always on the platform. In contrast to this we will later consider another character, very familiar to us. He doesn't often listen, he has an opinion on everything and everybody and he is not reticent in making it known. He is considered a fool; 10. 8, 18; 12. 15; 14. 16; 29. 11.

When the voice of wisdom is eventually heard in public, 1. 20, we hear not the condescending tone of an intellectual superior, nor yet the formal presentation of a lecturer. What we hear is the passionate appeal as from the tender heart of a woman, pleading with the hearers to turn from their folly and heed the sound advice before it is too late, 1. 21-25. It is worth noting that, throughout the book, 'wisdom' is invariably in the feminine gender! Can we, however, fail to hear the gracious tones of the Lord Jesus as He spoke to those around Him, or the words of His servants to saint and sinner in succeeding generations? And, of course, 'he that winneth souls is wise', 11. 30.

As we trace the steps of the wise man we notice that he will never use his knowledge and understanding as a cloak of complacency. He is aware of the constant dangers along the pathway, 14. 16. He avoids those things that will dull his senses and affect his walk, 20. 1. In so doing he makes himself stronger, 24. 5, and able to launch an offensive against the strongholds of man's wisdom, that intellectual superiority in which they trust, 21. 22.

Perhaps today if we were not so content with just a little knowledge,

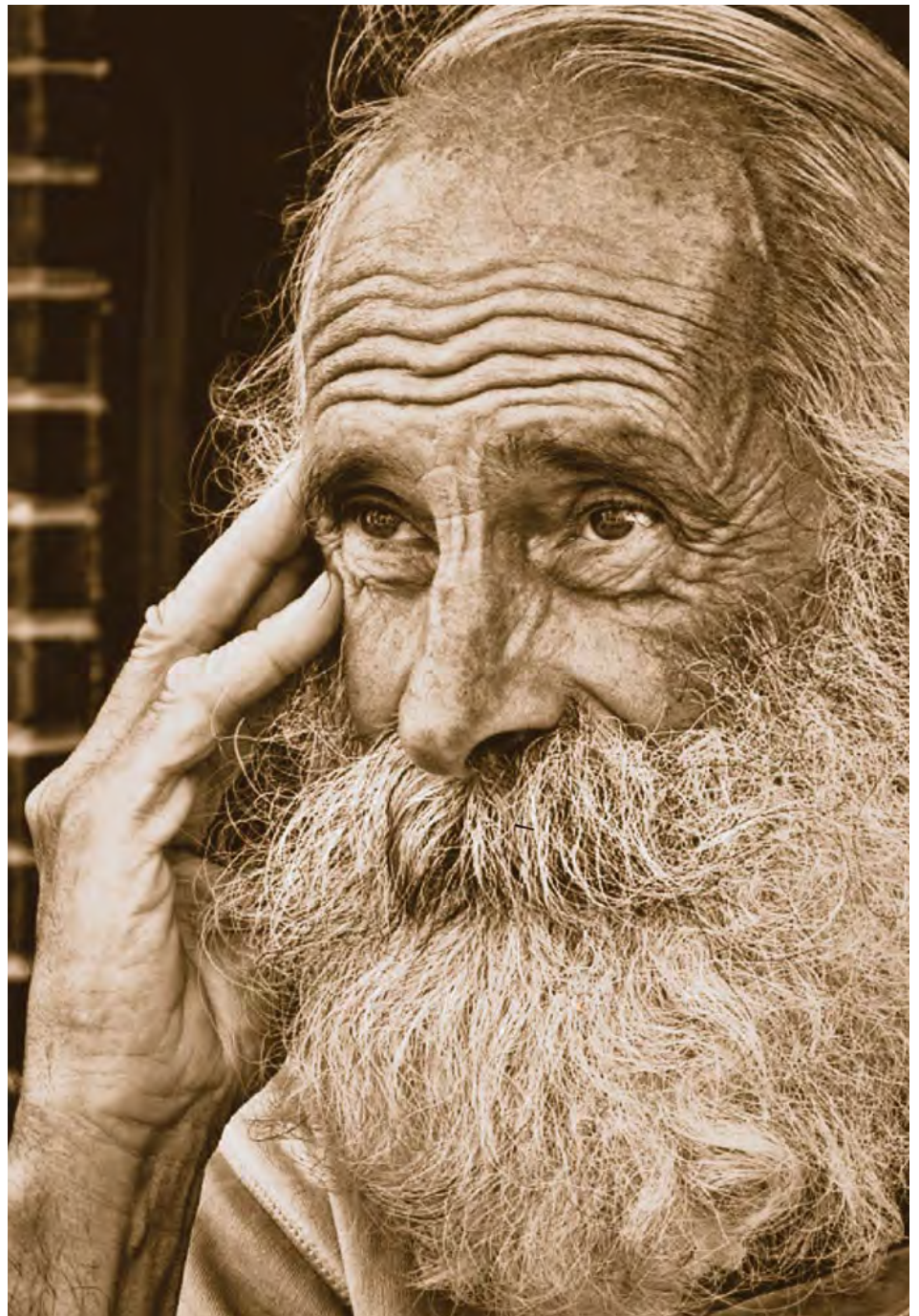
just a superficial grasp of the word of God, if maybe we followed more closely the example and instruction of the wise man, then our lives would show more of the character of the Saviour, our witness would be more effective and assemblies would be encouraged and built up!

The wise man is one to whom we can turn time and again to receive instruction. Equally helpful is his close friend, the man of understanding. The strength of this man is his ability to discern; to apply spiritual wisdom to any circumstance and distinguish the correct path. When King Solomon was given opportunity to make request from God, he asked for, 'an understanding heart . . . that I may discern between good and bad', 1 Kgs. 3. 9.

In the first five chapters of Proverbs, the character of this man is being formed. It is a process that involves diligence and application. It involves his will, 1. 5; his heart, 2. 2; his speech, 2. 6; his emotions, 3. 13 and his hearing, 4. 1. Chapter 4 gives clear instruction for the pathway that he must tread through life, and in chapter 5 his wisdom and understanding are put to the test with decisions to be made in a moral sphere. In chapter 6 he calls to mind those things he has been taught, 6. 20-31, and with sound discernment he makes a clear statement in verses 32 and 33 which assures us that the temptation to sin in chapter 5 was overcome.

Throughout the remaining chapters he is seen as a mature man, able to show discernment and good judgement in a number of circumstances. Refusing to enter into hasty judgement against another, 11. 12; exercising self-control, 14. 29; showing integrity, 15. 21. In chapter 20 verse 5, he is sitting alongside another, patiently extracting a confession from the heart. Little wonder that we see him exhibiting statesman-like qualities before the book closes, 28. 2.

Another individual closely associated with the wise man is the prudent man. His name gives the key to understanding his character. The



word translated 'prudent' has the thought of skilfulness, even cunning or craftiness applied in a good sense, as the context dictates. This man is nobody's fool. He is adept at grasping the important details of a situation and acts accordingly, 22. 3; 27. 12. He will avoid confrontation, even when suffering insults, 12. 16, RSV. He is a man who can be trusted not to betray a confidence, 12. 23. How much damage has been done by those who cannot 'conceal knowledge'? When, however, the prudent man is made aware of things, he knows the best way to deal with them and will act in a responsible manner, 13. 16.

We see an example of this in chapter 14 verse 15. The prudent

man is listening carefully as some information is imparted. Alongside him is another man. He sits with mouth wide open, taking everything in before rushing off and igniting that most efficient of media, 'the assembly grapevine'. The prudent man meanwhile will wait. He will weigh up what he has heard, and only then, with due consideration, will he decide if it would be beneficial to act further. He 'looketh well to his going'; he gives careful thought to his actions.

There are many further lessons which the interested reader can learn from these excellent men of wisdom. May we take them to heart and live them out day by day.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

By **JOHN BENNETT** Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

Part 2

We come now to our study of the book.

Chapter 1

We might divide the chapter into seven main sections:

The ministry of John Baptist, vv. 1-8;
The manifestation of the Son,
vv. 9-13;
The ministry of the Lord begins,
vv. 14-20;
The man with the unclean spirit,
vv. 21-28;
The magnitude of human need,
vv. 29-34;
The morning in prayer, vv. 35-39;
The man with leprosy, vv. 40-45.

In this article we will cover the first section, vv. 1-8.

In this section there is a fivefold testimony to the Saviour. In verse 1, Mark begins his gospel with a testimony to the deity of the Lord – ‘the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God’. In verses 2 and 3 we have the testimony of the Old Testament, with a quotation from both Malachi and Isaiah. Their united testimony is concerning ‘the way of the Lord’, v. 3. The ministry of the Baptist is also one that testifies to the greatness of the Lord. He speaks of, ‘one mightier than I’, and of One ‘whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose’, v. 7. Finally, the testimony of heaven is given, ‘Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’, v. 11.

The ministry of John Baptist, vv. 1-8

The Gospel’s opening verse serves as a title for the book as a whole. It is a clear statement by Mark of his belief in the deity of Christ, for He was the Son of God by nature and character. WUEST comments, ‘The word Son is

without the article in the Greek text. Emphasis is therefore upon character or nature. Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature’.¹ Such a statement is essential for, as PAISLEY puts it, ‘Only the Son of God could render perfect service’.² There could be no better message, described as the gospel, for He alone could be described as good news.

The ministry in prophecy, vv. 2, 3

As Mark only quotes from the Old Testament on two occasions in the whole of his gospel, these quotations from Isaiah and Malachi must be of great significance.³ They teach that the Old Testament is prophetic as well as historic. The verses also tell us that John Baptist was the prophesied forerunner of the Christ and that his ministry was to prepare the way for the coming One.

The features of John’s ministry were:

He was to be God’s messenger – ‘my messenger’, v. 2;

His ministry was divinely commissioned and planned. He was God’s envoy and what John did and fulfilled was in keeping with that task.

He was to be the mouthpiece of God – ‘the voice’, v. 3;

His words were those given him of God. He was not ‘the’ voice, but a voice.⁴ The words were not his but what John said expressed the heart of God for His people.

His ministry was to be passionate – ‘one crying’, v. 3;

The thought of crying is to shout, uttering the message with power, and passion. His desire was to arrest the attention of those that came to him to hear the message.

His ministry was to be separated – ‘in the wilderness’, v. 3;

He did not preach in the towns and cities but in the wilderness. His life was characterized by separation from those elements that formed the basis of John’s ministry of repentance.

His ministry was to be moral – ‘make his paths straight’, v. 3;

His message was issued in the form of short commands. HIEBERT comments, ‘The aorist imperative, *prepare*, has the force of a curt military command’.⁵ To prepare and to straighten meant that John was asking the people to remove the barriers and obstacles to the message of the coming Messiah.

The ministry in practice, vv. 4-6

In fulfilment of those things that were prophesied concerning John, his ministry was:

To baptize – ‘John did baptize’, v. 4;

This was baptism by immersion as in keeping with that practised by the early saints, but it differed in that the confession was not of faith but of sins – a public act of repentance. As John’s ministry was to prepare the way, so his methods were in keeping with that ministry. GRASSMICK comments, ‘This baptism is described as one relating to or expressive of repentance for, eis, the forgiveness of sins’.⁶

It is also to be noted that John’s baptism was ‘the baptism of repentance’, and that this is the only occurrence of repentance in the Gospel. On repentance, GRASSMICK comments further, ‘It means a turn about, a deliberate change of mind resulting in a change of direction in thought and behavior’.⁷

To preach – ‘and preach’, v. 4; ‘and preached’, v. 7;

His message was linked to his baptism – the baptism of repentance. To receive the coming Messiah there was a need of national and individual repentance, a genuine acknowledgement of need. This was the thrust of John’s message.

The word 'preach', *kerusso*, means, literally, to be a herald or to proclaim after the manner of a herald. THAYER states that such preaching was 'always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and authority which must be listened to and obeyed'.⁸

His ministry also had a very moral message. His baptism was 'of repentance for the remission of sins', v. 4. Those that were baptized were actively 'confessing their sins', v. 5. John was true to his call and to the ministry that he had been given of God.

To all – 'all the land of Judea', v. 5;

John's message was truly to all. It was for all kinds of people from every walk of life and every strata of society. WUEST comments, "There kept on constantly going out to John in a steady stream, all the people of the surrounding inhabited places in Judaea and from Jerusalem".⁹

John's ministry was one of separation and his clothing and food were appropriate to that ministry, v. 6. His was not the finery and colour of the linen cloth. His was not the portion

of the sacrifice of meat. HAROLD ST. JOHN wrote, 'He sustained his strength by feeding on the symbols of God's judgement (Ex. 10; Joel 2 and Rev. 9), and of the sweetness of doing God's will (Ps. 19. 10)'.¹⁰

The ministry in perspective – preparatory, vv. 7, 8

Although John was described by the Lord as the greatest of prophets yet his ministry was but preparatory for One who was far superior in every respect and John was ever conscious of that fact. John testified to the greatness of the Lord in respect to:

Person – 'one', v. 7;

It is to be noted that the definite article is used, literally 'the One'. John points out the distinctive, unique nature of the one who is coming after him. There was not, is not, and cannot ever be one as great as the coming One. In the word 'cometh' he also points out the immediacy of His coming.¹¹

Power – 'mightier than I', v. 7;

He possesses the strength and might of God. It is inherent in Him and will be manifest in His actions. It was

Isaiah who described Him as 'the Mighty God', Isa. 9. 6.

Position – 'whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose', v. 7;

What a contrast John draws between his ministry and that of the Saviour. He says here that he is not sufficient to even perform the task of a menial slave. He might be described by the Lord as the greatest of prophets but, for John, he was nothing in comparison to the Saviour. HIEBERT comments, 'The words to stoop down, found only in Mark, add to John's picture of self-depreciation and humility . . . John's attitude enhanced the dignity of the coming Lord'.¹²

Practice – 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost', v. 8;

There was an acknowledgement in John's words of the fact that his ministry was almost over.¹³ The coming One would baptize with the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit baptism would be a transforming experience – power expressed in salvation and in giving the believer new power to live for the Saviour.



Endnotes

- 1 K. WUEST, *Mark in the Greek New Testament*, Eerdmans, 1978, pg. 11.
- 2 H. PAISLEY, *Mark*, in *What the Bible Teaches* series, John Ritchie, online Bible resource.
- 3 These two quotations are the first, and the second is in chapter 15 and verse 28.
- 4 See: M. R. VINCENT, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, e-sword resource.
- 5 D. EDMOND HIEBERT, *The Gospel of Mark, An Expository Commentary*, Bob Jones University Press, 1994, pg. 25.
- 6 JOHN D. GRASSMICK, *Mark*, in J. Walvoord and R. Zuck (eds.), *Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Logos Bible Software resource.
- 7 *Op. cit.*
- 8 JOSEPH H. THAYER, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, e-sword resource.
- 9 KENNETH WUEST, pg. 19.
- 10 H. ST. JOHN, pg. 25.
- 11 REINECKER and ROGERS comment, 'erchomai, present middle, to come. The present sounds the note of immediacy'. FRITZ REINECKER and CLEON ROGERS, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1980, pg. 88.
- 12 D. EDMOND HIEBERT, pp. 29, 30.
- 13 'The aorist represents John's course as already fulfilled in view of the coming of Messiah', FRITZ REINECKER and CLEON ROGERS, pg. 89.

What evidence is there that the Bible is inspired?

By **ALASTAIR SINCLAIR** Crosshouse, Scotland

Scripture writers claim over 4,000 times to be recording the word of God. This is summed up in one verse, where 'all scripture' is deemed to be inspired, literally 'God-breathed', 2 Tim. 3. 16. To make such a claim is either an outrageous fraud of deluded men, OR confirmation that the Bible must be taken very seriously as God's direct communication to mankind. While ultimately for the child of God, it is 'by faith we understand', nevertheless this brief article considers some of the evidence to back up the claims of inspiration.

Primarily consider the **preservation** of scripture. Few if any contest that the Bible is the most influential book ever written. It is both the most loved and hated of books. It is copied and corrupted in other religious writings and attacked, suppressed, distorted and vilified by many. For three centuries imperial Rome sought to destroy it, culminating in the Roman Emperor Diocletian issuing an edict to destroy all Bibles. Over a burnt Bible he raised a monument to proclaim the name Christian extinguished, yet within twenty-five years he was dead and the emperor Constantine commissioned fifty copies of the Bible to be prepared at government expense. For over a millennium ecclesiastical Rome sought to restrict it to clergy and a language it was never written in, Latin. Yet God raised up reformers who championed a return to 'scripture alone'. For the English language, these included Wycliffe, who translated it from Latin, and most notably William

Tyndale, whose life's work was to translate the New Testament and the Pentateuch from the original Greek and Hebrew. His work was the greatest contribution to the King James Version of 1611, the translators of which sadly never acknowledged the debt owed to this greatest of all Britons who was strangled and burned for his desire that the 'boy that driveth the plough' would know more of God's word than clerics like Thomas More and others who conspired to have Tyndale killed. His final words were, 'May God open the eyes of the King of England'. Remarkably that despotic king, Henry VIII, allowed some distribution of scripture, and his brief successor Edward, had 80,000 English Bibles published in 1547. His successor, Mary, once more sought to burn Bibles and believers. Over the succeeding centuries it has continued to be discredited and attacked, but has flourished.

Like all ancient texts no originals could be preserved, but both the age and volume of copies is unparalleled. For example, there are over 5,000 ancient manuscripts of New Testament material and over 20,000 sources. When these copies of manuscripts and fragments are compared, remarkably – I would suggest miraculously – they result in an unprecedented degree of agreement, above 98%. By comparison, the best authenticated ancient secular writing is Homer's *Iliad* with only 647 sources and none nearly as old as New Testament ones, some of which are within less than a century of the original writing. The oldest preserved complete New Testament manuscript is the Codex Vaticanus, which is held in Rome and dates to c. AD. 350. However, in 1859 a second complete Codex, almost as old, was found in St Catherine's Monastery for the Russian Czar. After

the rise of communism, another world power which sought to destroy the Bible, this Codex was purchased by the United Kingdom in 1933 for £100,000, half of which was raised by public subscription, as a gift to the nation. An ironic comparison is that the first edition of Voltaire, the French sceptic, was sold in Paris around this time for less than three pence. He had predicted in 1776 that, 'One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible on earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity-seeker'. How tragic that our country, which once so valued this book, now disregards it. As God's people, it should drive us to our knees in repentance and supplication! Despite all the efforts of rebellious mankind, God has wondrously preserved His word.

Next, consider the **prophecies** or **predictions** of scripture. STRONG's concordance lists 115 Old Testament prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus fulfilled in the New Testament account of His first coming. These include the place, time, and manner of His birth. Similar details are true of His death. Yet these prophecies were made in books written by fifteen different writers between 400 and 1800 years in advance. Isaiah challenges false idols to do similar, 41. 21-24. The coming of a king called Josiah is foretold 327 years in advance, 1 Kgs. 13. 2, and nearly five centuries of Jewish history culminating in the exact moment of the death of Christ, Dan. 9. 24-26. A salutary warning is required at this point as there are almost three times as many prophecies regarding Christ's second coming in judgement, not salvation, which will also be fulfilled in detail. Again, the critics challenged this, claiming many of these books were not as old as Jewish scholars claimed. But then a young Muslim Arab went into a cave near Qumran and discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls, many of which, including Daniel, were dated much older than the critics claimed, once again substantiating the word of God.

Now consider the overall **plan** of scripture. In total there are around forty writers. They wrote mainly in two languages; they were in many countries across two continents over

nearly two millennia. Yet, as A.W. PINK states, there is ‘One system of doctrine, one code of ethics, one plan of salvation and one rule of faith’.¹ This is what proves that other writings, like the Apocrypha, are not inspired as they contain contradictions. Additionally, the Apocrypha never claims to be the word of God; is not in Hebrew like all scripture at that point; is never quoted by the Lord, or elsewhere in the New Testament, and was never recognized by the Hebrew scholars or even Jerome, who produced the Latin Bible. The Bible is utterly consistent on sin, righteousness, faith, salvation, eternal punishment, and one true God. There is only one sinless, perfect man presented, the Lord Jesus. Even the writers, who make great claims about their writings, make no such claims about themselves. Many, like Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah and others, protest their inadequacy. They also constantly reveal their own failings, those of their nation and even heroes of the Bible like Moses, David, Peter, and Samson. Yet they constantly claim it is ‘the word of the Lord’, as Jeremiah does in chapter 1 verse 2, and as the opening verses of many Minor Prophets record. No other book is so honest and all-revealing, even to the shame of the writers, because they could only record what God decreed, 2 Pet. 1. 21. Often they did not even understand what they wrote, because it is God’s word and not theirs; 1 Pet. 1. 10-12, Dan. 12. 8, 9, 13.

Consider further the amazing **patterns** of scripture. Seven sayings across three Gospels; seven pre-incarnation appearances of the Lord Jesus across the Old Testament, and many others; the **parallelism** found in many of the sevens, and also in books like Judges and Romans, all pointing to an overriding hand beyond men, and not countless coincidences or conspiracies. Most of all, look at the boundless **pictures** of Christ, the one overriding subject of the Book. He is seen in the tabernacle, the temple, the sacrifices, the feasts, characters and objects. Think of Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Zechariah and others; ‘every whit speaks’ of Him. The Bible is a complete revelation of God. It contains God’s entire **plan** of salvation. It does not need to be supplemented by churches, cults or so-called latter-day prophets. The Lord Jesus Himself predicted that the Holy Spirit would complete the New Testament, bringing ‘all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you’ – the Gospels; guiding us ‘into all truth’ – the Epistles; and shewing us ‘things to come’ – the prophetic scriptures, John 14. 26; 16. 13. Indeed, the closing verses warn that it must not be added to, or taken away from, Rev. 22. 18, 19. Peter confirms that scripture comes from God not man, 2 Pet. 1. 20, 21, and outlines its **parts** as ‘the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and

Saviour’, 2 Pet. 3. 2, thus summarizing both Old and New Testaments. He further asserts that the writings of Paul are part of the ‘scriptures’ in verses 15 and 16. This is scripture once more authenticating itself, as Paul’s writings would come under particular attack as they reconfirm divine truth regarding the distinction of the sexes, marriage, divorce, and sexual practices. Some might try to question Paul’s writings as he was not an original apostle, but one ‘born out of due time’, 1 Cor. 15. 8, 9, but Peter, the leader of the original apostles, authenticates Paul. This is doubly remarkable as Paul had to withstand Peter ‘to the face’, Gal. 2. 11, once more demonstrating that scripture is from God, not men, and they can only write as God moves them by His Spirit.

Finally, we must see the **power** of scripture as proof that it comes from God, Rom. 1. 16. It is the rock upon which the believer can rest in a time of crisis; Job 19. 25; Ps. 17. 15; 2 Tim. 4. 13; 2 Cor. 5. 1. It transforms lives, societies and nations. Since the King James Version of 1611, its influence for good was felt throughout the English-speaking world. United States presidents have said this of it: ‘That book is the rock on which this republic rests’, ANDREW JACKSON, 7th President; ‘I have always said, and will always say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better homes, better citizens, better fathers and better husbands’, THOMAS JEFFERSON, 3rd President. On his deathbed, SIR WALTER SCOTT, the author of many well-loved books, said, ‘Bring me the book’. When asked which book, he replied, ‘There is but one book!’. On 27th December 2008, MATHEW PARRIS, a confirmed atheist, wrote an article in *The Times* declaring that ‘what Africa needs is God’, where he admitted that as one who grew up in Africa the only thing he had ever witnessed which could truly transform these nations was Bible-based Christianity. Would that our world today would turn to this wonderful book given to us by God Himself and still warm with His breath!

Endnotes

- 1 *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, A. W. PINK, available at http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Inspiration/inspire_07.htm



The Person and work of the COMFORTER

By **DANIEL RUDGE** Bracknell, England.

John's Gospel abounds with references to the Holy Spirit. There are nineteen in all: eight to the 'Spirit'; four to the 'Holy Spirit'; four to the 'Comforter' and three to the 'Spirit of Truth'. John also employs four symbols. The Spirit descending from heaven 'like a dove' is a reminder of His heavenly nature and origin as well as a character of purity and peace, 1. 32. As the 'wind' He is sovereign and powerful in His activity, 3. 8. As 'living water' He imparts life and cleansing through the word, 7. 38, 39. Whilst probably referring primarily to John the Baptist, the 'porter' can also be taken as a symbol of the Spirit, 10. 13. As such, He witnesses faithfully to the Good Shepherd and presents Christ to the sheep, 10. 3. Whilst most instructive teaching can be found in relation to: water and the Spirit – John 3; worship in the Spirit – John 4; and witness with the Spirit – John 7, this article will focus on the person and work of the Spirit under the figure of the 'Comforter' in John chapters 14-16. The reader is strongly advised to carefully read the associated references in each section.

The Reason for the Comforter, 14. 12

The Lord Jesus was going to His Father, an action that would introduce a new order. As such, He would no longer be physically alongside His disciples. Nevertheless, they would continue the work He had begun as the miraculous 'works' of the Lord would also be performed by them.¹ Indeed 'greater works [things] than these shall he do'. WILLIAM McDONALD says: 'Doubtless it was to the world-wide proclamation of the gospel, the salvation of so many souls, and the building of the church (comprising both Jew and Gentile) that the Lord referred to by the expression greater works'.² How would these things be accomplished? Through the intercession of the Son, v. 13, and indwelling power of the Spirit of God, v. 16.

The Residence of the Comforter, 14. 16-17

The Spirit would be sent by the Father, at Pentecost, in response to the prayer [*erotao*, to pray as

an equal] of the Son. The word 'Comforter' translates the Greek *parakletos*, which literally means 'to call alongside'. Thus, the Spirit is a divine person who is called alongside the believer in order to help, encourage, strengthen and exhort. He is 'another' Comforter in the sense of the same kind [*allos*] as the Lord Jesus, thus emphasizing His divinity and equality with God. We must be clear in our minds that the Spirit is not another comforter instead of Christ, but another in addition to Him. Every believer has two Comforters! Using the same word, *parakletos*, John declares that whilst the Spirit is our Comforter on earth, Christ is our Advocate in heaven, 1 John 2. 1. The difference is just this. The Spirit 'helpeth our infirmities' to keep us from sin, Rom. 8. 26, but Jesus Christ is in heaven if we do sin. Then the work of Christ as Advocate is to make us conscious of such sin, convicting of it unto confession that communion might be restored. He is the heavenly

Advocate alongside the believer, but towards (pros) the Father.

The residence of the Spirit would be permanent – the Lord says He will 'abide with you for ever', v. 16. In the present age, the Spirit of God makes His home with every believer perpetually, unlike Old Testament days. Thank God, no believer today needs to pray as David, Ps. 51. 11. The Spirit's home would be 'in' every believer, v. 17 – what a blessed truth unique to the present age. The individual indwelling of the Spirit is mentioned in four New Testament scriptures. First, it is an evidence of divine life, Rom. 8. 9. Second, it demands a life of divine holiness, 1 Cor. 6. 19. Third, He enables the understanding and protection of divine truth, 2 Tim. 1. 14. Fourth, He is the means by which every believer experiences and enjoys the divine presence, John 14. 18-23.

The Reassurance of the Comforter, 14. 18-23

Even though the disciples would all forsake Christ and flee, He would never leave them 'comfortless' (abandoned as orphans). In fact, He was coming (present tense) to them. The context shows that this is not a reference to the resurrection or the rapture, but a spiritual coming through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual is about to replace the physical. When would this take place? 'At that day', v. 20, i.e. the day of Pentecost. Then the disciples would enter into the full consciousness of the spiritual relationships that govern the present age: 'I am in my Father' – intimacy; 'ye in me' – security; 'I in you' – vitality. Furthermore, they would enjoy a conditional manifestation (*emphanizo*, not a mere appearance) of the person of the Lord Jesus to their souls. As has been well stated, 'this manifestation to us now by the Spirit is far greater than His manifestation to the disciples when He was with them physically and personally. Having the Spirit would reveal to them many things about the person of Christ that they could not understand or perceive when He was here'.³ What is the condition of such glorious manifestation? Fully comprehending the Lord's

commandments and integrating them into one's life. Such living is plain evidence of love for the Saviour, which in turn will affect our own enjoyment of the Father's love for us.

The Revelation of the Comforter, 14. 25, 26

Any reader of the Upper Room ministry must bear in mind that the Lord was speaking to the eleven disciples and thus some statements are apostolic in character. Verse 26 is a good example. DON CARSON notes: 'This verse . . . explains to readers at the end of the first century how the first witnesses, the first disciples, came to an accurate and full understanding of the truth of Jesus Christ'.⁴ The greatest of all teachers was present with the disciples, but He was necessarily restricted in His teaching, for without the Spirit they had no capacity to receive it.⁵ But when the Comforter was come, He would complete, or fill-out, the revelation that had been given in seed form by the Lord Jesus. This is the basis for the inspiration of the Epistles. The Comforter would also work a miracle on the memories of the disciples and 'bring all things' that the Lord had said to their 'remembrance'. This is our assurance as to the inspiration of the Gospels. Matthew or John were not sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus with notebook and pen as He made His lengthy discourses, and yet we have them perfectly recorded, jot and tittle! What about Revelation? The Spirit of Truth would also 'shew' (announce) to them 'things to come', John 16. 13. Can the Spirit bring appropriate scriptures to our remembrance to help others in time of need, or speak a word in season to the lost sinner or gainsayer? Yes! But He cannot bring to our minds what isn't there. Instead, the word of Christ must dwell in us richly (abundantly).⁶

The Reproof of the Comforter, 16. 7-11

It was 'expedient' (profitable) for the disciples that the Lord Jesus was going to the Father otherwise the Comforter could not be sent.⁷ No longer would there be a divine person physically alongside them – Christ, but a divine person spiritually and permanently indwelling every

one of them – the Spirit. He would be the means by which Father and Son would make their abode with the believer, John 14. 23 – thus forging a permanent link with the risen Christ. This is profitable!

In verses which are often misunderstood, the Lord Jesus explains the objective, external witness of the Spirit to the world.⁸ 'Reproof', v. 8, carries the thought of 'affording proof to', or 'bringing demonstration'.⁹ The Lord Jesus used the same word when He said, 'which of you convinceth me of sin' – who could afford proof, or demonstrate the presence of sin in the Lord? Impossible! Thus, in simple terms, the residence of the Comforter on earth is an indictment of the world in three particular aspects:

1. 'Of sin, because they believe not on me', v. 9. The residence of the Spirit on earth declares that the world has refused the Son of God in unbelief. Their verdict of Him was a cross.
2. 'Of righteousness, because I go to my Father and ye see me no more', v. 10. The residence of the Spirit on earth testifies to the personal righteousness of the Lord Jesus. The last the world saw of Christ He was upon a cross, condemned as a common criminal. The Jews claimed that He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God. They thought He was worthy of such a shameful death and had been smitten of God for His sins.¹⁰ Far be the thought! The fact that the Spirit is resident on earth proves that God has highly exalted Him! His personal righteousness is vindicated. God has reversed the verdict of mankind.
3. 'Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged', v. 11. The residence of the Spirit on earth declares that Satan is a defeated foe.¹¹ Satan is already judged, the sentence is passed, and will be executed in a coming day.

In summary, it is our blessed privilege to be used by the Spirit to testify to the majesty of a glorified

Christ. As the word of God is preached by the servants of God, the Spirit of God speaks through it.¹²

The Resolve of the Comforter, 16. 13, 14

The great desire of the blessed Comforter is to elevate and glorify the person of the Lord Jesus. Our desire should be the same. Whilst verse 13 says, 'He shall not speak of Himself' the preposition employed is *apo*, thus 'He will not speak from Himself' is more the thought.¹³ Just as the Son did not speak independently of His Father, so the Spirit does not speak independently of the Son.¹⁴ After all, it was the risen Christ who dictated letters to seven churches, yet the Spirit who spoke those same words to each. In this way the Spirit of truth glorifies the Son, v. 14. This should render a clear challenge to us all. As the Spirit does not speak independently of the Son, so the saints should not speak independently of the Spirit. May we ever be guided by Him in our walk and words and thus bring glory to Christ.

Endnotes

- 1 See 2 Cor. 12. 12.
- 2 WILLIAM MACDONALD, *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- 3 ALBERT LECKIE, taken from an audio file of Bible Readings at Trimsaran, 1978. See also John 2. 22; 12. 16; 16. 12.
- 4 D. A. CARSON, *The Gospel According to John*. William B Eerdmans.
- 5 John 16. 12.
- 6 Col. 3. 16.
- 7 John 7. 39.
- 8 It is difficult to see how this could be a universal, internal and subjective conviction of **every** sinner. For example, how could it be said that every individual on the planet has been convicted of personal unbelief in Christ, when there are many who have never even heard the gospel?
- 9 WILLIAM KELLY, *An Exposition of the Gospel of John*; T. Weston; John 16. 8 JND.
- 10 Isa. 53. 4.
- 11 Heb. 2. 14.
- 12 Read Acts 2. 36, 37 to see this doctrine in practice.
- 13 John 16. 9, *Young's Literal Translation*
- 14 John 14. 10.

The Christian School Assembly Link Team

By **WYN WILLIAMS** Northampton, England

In 2005 we reported that over the previous six years the Lord had given us the opportunity to visit some 25 schools in Northamptonshire, although strictly speaking only two of the schools were outside the nominal boundary of Northampton town. We also described, briefly, what was involved in this outreach. This all began from the first visit of the Ayrshire (now Scottish) Bible Exhibition in 1999. The main factor in making contact with new schools was the fact that this exhibition was a regular biennial event which was enthusiastically received by them and its value as a teaching resource for Religious Education shared with other schools. As was also mentioned, there was confusion in some schools caused by using the 'Gospel Hall' as our title, and so we adopted the name 'CSALT' for the work so as not to be mistaken for Jehovah's Witnesses. As the title of the article suggests, the acronym stands for 'Christian School Assembly Link Team' and we are welcomed into state, Church of England and Catholic schools.

In 2004/5 the schools' system in Northampton was reorganized from three tiers to two and, after prayerful consideration, the decision was made to focus on the primary level as the material used was more suited to that younger age range. As a consequence of the change a number of staff moved between schools and, more importantly, to schools that weren't visited by us. This resulted in invitations to more schools being extended.

By 2008 the number of schools visited had increased to 36. All the assemblies/Religious Education lessons were conducted by one brother, although he was supported by his presence and prayers by another, Denis Morley, who from the very start of the work had asked if he could attend. He had stated, 'I don't want to do anything, boy, I just would love to be there'. With this number of schools it was proving difficult to fit in any more, as assembly timings would not allow this. In an answer to prayer brother Ian MacEwan came forward to declare his exercise to join the work. With Ian's availability we thought that it would be a good idea to plan to approach new schools to see if

we could visit them. This seemed an appropriate action, after all, to quote Benjamin Franklin, 'If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail'. A flyer-style brochure was prepared, which included some endorsements from senior staff in schools visited, and sent prayerfully to various schools with an accompanying letter to introduce CSALT. These were followed up by an email to the head. The response was disappointing, for whatever reason, and only a handful of schools invited us to attend.

God's provision

Although we were a little disappointed in this outcome, we were about to see God working in His own way to open doors. In the period 2009 to 2014 the number of schools visited increased to 64, not as a result of our brochure but due to a large number of teachers changing schools to ones we did not visit and arranging to have us visit their new location. In 2014 God used another change in the education system to open doors for us. A large number of Head Teachers were retiring, or opting to stand down from the position. It was proving difficult to recruit/appoint new heads so the role of 'Executive Head' became more

evident. This was where one person was head over two, or more, schools. The outcome for the schools' work was that we were invited to attend the other school/s linked to the executive head. Some of these were ones we had already contacted with our brochure to no effect. In one case this led to us adding three new schools to our 'list'. As we stand at the end of 2017 we visit 77 schools truly across the county now and, over recent years, only four schools have stopped our visits, for various reasons, but following a change of head, one of these has been in contact requesting that we visit them again.

Personnel

As already mentioned, Ian MacEwan joined the work in 2008, joining the writer and Denis Morley. Bill Culley joined in 2011 as the work was expanding. In 2013 dear brother Denis was called home and his presence in the work has left an indelible mark, one that is remembered emotionally by many staff who knew him, even today – a great testimony to his godliness and impact on the work, even though he 'just wanted to be there'. In 2015, sadly, Bill Culley suffered a serious accident at home which, up to now, has left him in a wheelchair. However, Brian Barton volunteered to fill the gap, saying that although he wasn't exercised about the work we shouldn't cancel any visits that Bill was due to make. He would fulfil them. As he has become involved Brian has 'warmed' to the work and is a frequent contributor. Recently, Pete Burditt from the Osborne Road Assembly, Northampton, retired and was exercised about the work and is now fully involved in it.

Presentations

The main visual aid for school assemblies remains the Betty Lukens flannel graph system, and it is used to simply tell Bible stories, informing the children of God's love for them, His hatred of sin and that Christ died because of our sin. As each member has joined, they have been encouraged to use whatever they feel comfortable with. However, they have nearly all adopted the same system, having seen the impact it makes on the children and its popularity with the staff.

At the same time, there was the desire to seek opportunities to present the gospel in a more complete and direct manner. In 2014 the centenary of World War 1 gave us that opening in the form of the account of William Coltman's life. He was the most highly decorated non-commissioned officer in the British Army in the conflict, being awarded the VC, among many other medals, serving as a stretcher bearer. When the first two schools requested the presentation, titled 'Two Crosses', using a 'Tales of Truth' PowerPoint presentation, Tim and John Coltman (William's great grandson and grandson respectively) came down to make the presentation. This proved very successful and many more schools requested it, so much so that the Coltmans couldn't possibly commit to the programme. Therefore, CSALT purchased a copy and adapted it for our own use. It has been used, particularly during November, over the last three years and will be offered even after the centenary is over.

Another desire was to present the Christmas story in full, detailing God's great plan of salvation, starting with God's eternal being, through the nativity, life, crucifixion, resurrection and return of our Lord. In 2015, after many hours of intense deliberation, the exhibition displays and worksheet were finally produced and schools

were offered it as an option for their year 5/6 pupils. The exhibition was accepted and valued by the nine schools where it was shown. This is now the main focus of our work in December, and not only to the senior pupils but to all ages.

A third presentation and opportunity to present the gospel came from a conversation with a head teacher involving the work done in supporting believers in Romania via 'Romania Outreach'. We were asked to talk to their year 5/6 pupils about what was done and this was developed further to offer to all schools as 'Opportunities to help others'. The message in this presentation being that anything we do in this regard pales into insignificance when we consider what Christ has done for us.

A recent development is our participation in a school's 'Big Question' sessions. One of the Church of England schools visited had started a Big Questions initiative whereby pupils could post questions which puzzled/concerned/worried them on a board and these would be dealt with by staff on a weekly basis. On a recent visit the progress made arose in conversation with the head who confessed that it was starting to fade away, one reason being that staff involved either didn't have the knowledge/experience or feel

equipped to answer some of them. As earlier, we repeated our willingness to support the head in these sessions and this will commence in 2018.

Plans

Bearing in mind the lesson learned earlier about expanding, we plan to contact schools again, offering our 'service'. We plan to start with schools we used to visit but no longer do, through to those where we know that staff are aware of what we do, and also to those schools we have had no contact with to-date. We are now a truly Northamptonshire outreach, visiting schools throughout the county and, as travelling time is becoming more of an issue, we will, initially, be concentrating on schools within the town.

In the future we would look to adapt elements of the Christmas exhibition to focus on the Easter events in a new presentation, and, as ever, in conversation with staff, be sensitive to areas/subjects where we could be involved and, especially, present the gospel.

As ever, in all these things we would value the prayer support of the saints. This, especially as issues which are contrary to scripture, such as sexuality, gender and even the place of assemblies in schools at all, are being pushed even at primary stages.



AT HIS FEET

John 12 – WORSHIPPING AT HIS FEET

By **JOHN BENNETT** Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

Part 3

‘Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus’, v. 3.

You will notice the word that introduces this chapter as well as Mary’s action in verse 3: ‘Then’. It is a word that would make us consider:

The circumstances, vv. 1, 2.

I would suggest that this action should be set against the background of chapter 11. Whilst it might be an act of thanksgiving at the raising of Lazarus, an acknowledgement of the restoration of a brother, I would suggest that it is more than that. It is a declaration of Mary’s appreciation of who the Lord is and what He is about to accomplish.

You will have noted that this event was ‘six days before the passover’, v. 1. It is deeply instructive that John spends eight chapters to cover the six days surrounding the events of Calvary. This is John’s priority. It is John’s key point and Mary’s act of devotion occupies part of one of those chapters. This is the importance John attaches to the action. The importance that the Lord attaches to the action is borne out in the verses.

But then we also have:

The cost, v. 3.

Worship is costly. It is clear that it had taken time and effort to amass this amount of spikenard in order to bestow it upon the Lord. If we are to bring something to the Lord in worship we will also have to expend time and effort in preparation and accumulation, not necessarily in a material sense but in a spiritual one.

Matthew and Mark, who record this event, call it ‘spikenard very precious’. John calls it, ‘spikenard, very costly’, v. 3. To tell us it was spikenard is to tell us of its purity and, hence, of its value. The added valuation is to tell us not only of its purity but of the volume of the material that was to be lavished

upon the Saviour. The price estimate that was placed upon it was ‘more than three hundred pence’, v. 5. This figure is the amount that would be paid to a simple working man for the best part of a year. How sad that Judas could give the price of the goods but had no valuation of the activity!

What should we learn from this example of Mary? It ought to be an encouragement to every sister. Mary said nothing. Her voice was not heard but her contribution remains as a testimony to her appreciation of Christ. Let us encourage all sisters, like Mary, to function in their God-given sphere and bring something of immense value to the assembly to which they belong!

The centre, v. 3.

Judas rounded upon Mary. The contrast is that Mary saw only the Lord. The Lord said, ‘me ye have not always’, v. 7. She could have bestowed time upon the disciples. She could have spent time with Lazarus, so recently raised from the dead. But Mary saw only the Lord. He was the centre of her affections and activity. How important!

She ‘anointed the feet of Jesus’, v. 3. John notes that she anointed His feet as well as His head. Considering the Lord was reclined at the table we judge this to be a separate act of devotion. To anoint His feet is to draw attention to His condescending grace as He traversed this scene. But to pour the contents of the box upon the head and feet is to encompass the whole. Apart



from the hands being used to partake of the food provided, these would be the only parts of the body visible. As the Lord said, ‘for the day of my burying hath she kept this’, v. 8. That is, the anointing of the head and the feet was symbolic of an anointing of the whole body. The Shunamite was able to say of her beloved, ‘Yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend’, Song of Solomon 5. 16. Similarly, we would have to acknowledge, whether we view the Lord in a particular facet of His person or ministry, or consider the whole, He is altogether lovely!

The calculations, v. 6.

We have commented upon the contrast of evaluations. For Judas the action was a waste, ‘Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor’, v. 5. I’m sure that the ungodly look on and see our gatherings and our acts of devotion in exactly the same light – a waste of time and energy. Shouldn’t our focus be upon the poor and needy in our communities? Let us remind ourselves of what the Lord thinks! What is His judgement on the matter? Surely, the touchstone for all our lives should be what is the mind of God in this matter. Mark records, ‘she [Mary] hath wrought a good work on me’, 14. 6.

Finally,

The challenge, v. 8.

The Lord said of Mary, ‘She hath done what she could’, v. 8. Surely, that is all that the Lord would ask of any of us – to do what we can.

It is worth remembering that this was the only anointing that the Lord received prior to His burial. It was anticipatory, ‘against the day of my burying hath she kept this’, v. 7. It was an appreciation of the fact that the Lord would rise from the dead in fulfilment of all that He had said. May we keep suffering in its true perspective! Peter wrote of the testimony of the Spirit of Christ testifying of, ‘the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow’, 1 Pet. 1. 11. The Lord is now in the glory, exalted and adored. He ‘endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God’, Heb. 12. 2.

General Data Protection Regulation – Article 29 of the EU

By **JOHN BENNETT** Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

'In May this year, Europe's data protection rules will undergo their biggest changes in two decades. Since they were created in the 90s, the amount of digital information we create, capture, and store has vastly increased... the old regime was no longer fit for purpose'.¹

Whilst many might see this as media exaggeration, and many Christians may think it irrelevant as far as their spiritual activity is concerned, those engaged in business will have some appreciation of the amount of time, energy, and expense that organizations are investing in the matter. Is this all hype? Can we ignore it?

The European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which will come into force on 25th May 2018, will change how businesses and public sector organizations can handle the information of customers. Whether we like it or not, local churches are regarded as 'public sector or charitable organizations' and are included in the scope of this new regulation. Equally, if, like *Precious Seed*, you have a database of subscribers to whom you mail out literature, or run a Christian youth camp that collects data on children's medical and dietary requirements, or just simply **hold data that enables an individual to be identified**² for other than household usage, your activity could come under scrutiny. It should be noted, too, that, 'The GDPR applies to both automated personal data and to manual filing systems where personal data are accessible according to specific criteria'.³

A summary of the six basic principles is that data should be:

- 1 'processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals';⁴
- 2 collected only for legitimate purposes and those purposes should be specified, and stated explicitly to the person from whom it is collected. No processing beyond this specified purpose should be undertaken;
- 3 adequate, relevant and limited – do not collect more than you

legitimately intend to use;

- 4 accurate and kept up-to-date. The regulation specifies that 'every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that are inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay';⁵
- 5 kept for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed, although the archiving of data may be allowed provided the appropriate technical and organizational measures of security required by the GDPR are applied; and
- 6 processed in a manner that ensures that personal data is secured 'against unauthorized or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organizational measures'.⁶

Whilst some, or all of these principles may be familiar to those who have worked with the Data Protection Act 1998, it is the last of these that will be applied with greater rigour and penalty for infringement in the future, particularly when the data may involve young or vulnerable people. Another area of significant change is in the area of 'consent'.⁷

The person whose data you hold must have consented to you holding it. That you have positively sought that consent – asking the individual to opt-in – and have expressed the way in which you intend to use their data, is essential. The clarity of the language at this stage is vitally important. Records of that consent should be kept and the individual must be clear that they have the right to withdraw consent as well as to check and, if necessary, amend any data that you hold. No charge can be made if an information request is made, and you have one month in which to comply with that request.

It should be appreciated that a single page article cannot cover all the issues that this far-reaching piece of legislation will affect. The purpose is to highlight its impending application and to point

the reader to areas where appropriate and up-to-date advice can be obtained.

The Information Commissioner's Office website contains an in-depth treatment of the regulation. It can be accessed at <https://ico.org.uk>

The section dealing specifically with charities is here: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/charity>

What are called 'the twelve steps' in preparation for the GDPR can be accessed here:

<https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1624219/preparing-for-the-gdpr-12-steps.pdf>

A complete data protection self-assessment section is available here: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/resources-and-support/data-protection-self-assessment>

This is particularly helpful in determining what you may need to do to make your organization or activity compliant.

Finally, there is a phone service aimed at providing guidance to people running charities. Known as the ICO helpline, it can be accessed from within the UK by dialling 0303 123 1113 and selecting option 4. The line is staffed by those who can offer appropriate support on preparing for the General Data Protection Regulation, current data protection rules and other legislation regulated by the ICO, including electronic marketing and Freedom of Information.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.wired.co.uk/article/what-is-gdpr-uk-eu-legislation-compliance-summary-fines-2018/>
- 2 This is the regulation's definition of 'personal data'. See <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/key-definitions/>
- 3 <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/key-definitions/>
- 4 <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/principles/>
- 5 <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/principles/>
- 6 <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/principles/>
- 7 <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/consent/>

Book Reviews



False Apocalypse, False Gospel, False Witnesses Donald C. B. Cameron.

Paperback, 390 pages, Published by John Ritchie Ltd, 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland. ISBN 978-1-910513-80-4.

No doubt most readers of this magazine will have encountered representatives of the Jehovah's Witness cult either on their doorsteps or, increasingly, with placards and literature in our town centres and shopping malls. Broadly speaking, these JW's, as they are widely known, obtain a response in one of three different ways. To the wholly secular mind they are an insignificant irritant to be ignored. To the Christian they are purveyors of a pernicious doctrine to be challenged. The third response is from those who are searching for some stability in life and who are taken in by the apparently earnest and friendly approach which appears to offer a solution to their problems.

The attitude of many Christians is to dismiss their approach with, 'I'm sorry, I'm not interested', or 'I haven't time to talk to you'. This often covers for a lack of confidence

in their ability to apply scripture to refute the false doctrines of the JW's. The apostle Peter exhorted his readers to 'be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you'. We should, in fact, be grateful for an opportunity to present the true gospel to those ensnared by the adversary and in need of light and salvation.

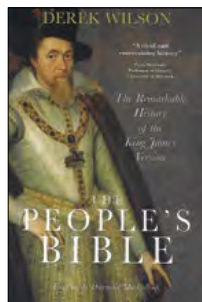
To this end, DONALD CAMERON's book is a welcome and valuable addition to the many which have tackled this subject. It is not a condensed overview of the subject, but a comprehensive study tracing the origins and history of the Watchtower movement, the development of doctrine propounded by Charles Taze Russell, and its adoption of the name 'Jehovah's Witnesses' in 1931.

Mr CAMERON tackles head on the many JW heresies, each containing

that veneer of credibility. He likens their approach to that of the adversary during the wilderness temptation of the Lord Jesus, 'using certain Bible verses with such an imbalance of truth, ignoring even more important truth, that the overall effect is lethally distorted'.

A major part of the book is taken up with an in-depth examination of JW teaching in relation to future events. Each subject is compared with the truth of scripture to expose the errors and heresy issuing from the Watchtower.

It is made clear throughout that the fundamental fault which lies at the foundation of JW teaching is an erroneous approach to the person of the Lord Jesus. This inevitably results in the propagation of 'another gospel', the exponents of which fall under the 'anathema' of God.



The People's Bible – The remarkable history of the King James Version Derek Wilson

Paperback, 222 pages; Published by Lion Hudson plc, Jordan Hill Rd. Oxford, OX2 8DR. Available from Amazon, also in Kindle, epub and PDF formats. ISBN 978-0-7459-5559-9 ISBN: 978-1-909789-31-9

DEREK WILSON is an acclaimed author and historian who transports the reader back to the fourteenth century when the vast majority of people were illiterate, and scripture was exclusively in the hands of the priesthood. At that time, it was only written and transcribed in Latin, with a threat of death for any who dared to try and translate any portion of scripture into the vernacular. It was a time when the population was held in thrall to relics and ritual; their only access to what the scriptures contained was engraved in stained glass windows and carved altar screens.

The vital contribution of John Wycliffe (1330-1384) is detailed, together with the important work done by the Lollards, much of it in secret, in making portions of scripture available in tract form. The author traces the developing awareness across Europe for the need of a wider accessibility to scripture, achieved largely through the work of the Dutch academic Erasmus (1466-1536), the monk and professor of theology, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and the English scholar William Tyndale

(1494-1536). The invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century opened the door for the production of a number of Bibles of varying quality, often with notes and commentary reflecting the theological bias of the translators.

The labours of William Tyndale are given due prominence as his translation work formed the basis of much which followed. Miles Coverdale and Thomas Matthew carried the work forward during the turbulent Tudor years, providing two versions of scripture in the English vernacular. Aided by the efforts of Thomas Cromwell, secretary to Henry VIII, the 'Great Bible' became more accessible and was, in effect, the first 'Authorized' English Bible in 1539. The Reformation years saw the production of the 'Geneva Bible', the 'Bishops' Bible' and the Catholic 'Douai-Rheims' version, each with their own doctrinal predisposition which added to the confusion surrounding a reliable interpretation of 'the Word of God'.

When James I ascended the throne of England in 1603 to commence the Stuart dynasty, he had already

been king of Scotland, at least in name, for thirty-six years. A man of dubious morality, he nevertheless promoted the Protestant cause. At the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 the seeds were sown for a complete revision and a 'root and branch' examination of the sources and translations in circulation. Although the King James Version bears the monarch's name and received his official authorization, his interest and input was only peripheral. DEREK WILSON gives details and qualifications, both ecclesiastical and academic, of the translators engaged in the work duly published in 1611; he then considers the developments and revisions which followed, down to the present day. He readily acknowledges the part played in extending the influence of the KJV both in the colonization of America and by the expanding British Empire.

In all, a book that will appeal both to lovers of history and to those who wish to know more of the background to a translation of the word of God which has become precious to so many for its doctrinal purity and its majestic and memorable style.

Question Time

Conducted by
Richard Collings

QUESTION

What should we do if someone says they have lost their faith?

ANSWER

The first thing we would need to do is establish what the person means by stating that they have 'lost their faith'. It might indicate that they have lost the assurance of salvation and they now doubt whether they were ever saved. On the other hand, they may be admitting that they no longer have any interest in spiritual things. These two issues are very distinct and therefore our response will be governed by whichever one reflects the condition of the informant.

The loss of the assurance of salvation might derive from several different causes including physical or mental illness. Many readers will be familiar with the hymn, 'O for a closer walk with God'; it was written by William Cowper. Cowper suffered severely from depression and in those dark moments he had many doubts about his salvation.

Another cause for doubting salvation can be the way the gospel message is presented. An imbalanced emphasis about holy living might cause the listener to think that if they have sinned they cannot be saved. Equally, the constant challenging of the audience as to whether they can recall with clarity the moment of conversion can contribute to a genuine believer feeling insecure if they are not able to remember an exact time when they trusted the Lord.

One group of people who often have anxiety about the reality of salvation are those who have been brought up in a Christian home. Many of these heard the gospel from their infancy and were converted whilst still quite young. As a result they were preserved from much sin and, consequently, conversion brought no significant change in their behaviour. Because they had no 'Damascus Road' kind of change, doubts often arise and much loss of peace is suffered even though the validity of their salvation could not be challenged.

Much wisdom and care needs to be shown by any who would seek to help believers who need reassurance of salvation. For some, the restoration of assurance might be quickly achieved but for others it may be far more protracted. Whilst verses that clearly teach the security of every believer should be

brought to their attention, it will also help to show them from the scriptures the features that mark every true believer. John's 1st Epistle is particularly relevant in this respect and it will encourage them if they can be assured that they are displaying those characteristics. In addition, a presentation of the all-sufficiency of the work of Christ as being the only ground by which anyone can be saved should help them realize that salvation is not based on feelings but on what He has done. Above all, we should pray with and for them and encourage them to ask the Lord to enable them to regain the joy of knowing that they have passed from death unto life.

An altogether different situation arises when someone admits that they no longer have any interest in spiritual things and, in that sense, they have 'lost their faith'. They have no desire to attend the assembly meetings, no interest in reading the word of God and their focus centres on things on the earth and not 'on things above'. Whilst expressing sadness at hearing of this condition our response then might be to challenge them as to whether they were genuinely converted, reminding them that the scriptures teach that 'the friendship of the world is enmity with God', Jas. 4. 4.

If they renounce their profession of salvation and admit that they no longer believe the Bible then we should regard them as being not saved and tell them that. However, this ought not to be done in an aggressive and vindictive manner nor should we treat them contemptuously. A far better response would be to maintain contact with them and assure them of our prayerful longing for their salvation.

For others this 'losing their faith' indicates a temporary loss of spiritual desires. Maybe the world has been allowed to sap them of their appreciation of the scriptures, but, whatever the reason, our God is ever willing to recover those who have failed. In these situations we ought to do all we can to help them regain their walk with the Lord. The words of COWPER are apposite, 'What peaceful hours I once enjoyed, how sweet the memory still! But they have left an aching void the world can **never** fill'.

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'And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane', Mark 14. 32

The traditional site of the garden of Gethsemane is located towards the east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley close to the Mount of Olives, Matt. 26. 30. It is dwarfed by the imposing temple mount that overshadows it. The name 'Gethsemane' is derived from the Aramaic meaning for 'oil press'. Josephus states that Titus destroyed all the trees around Jerusalem when he besieged the city in AD 70, and so the olive trees currently growing in the garden may only date back to medieval times. John records that the Lord and His disciples were frequent visitors to this garden, John 18. 1, 2, and it was here that the Lord prepared Himself for the ordeal that lay before Him, Matt. 26. 36-39. Prior to this preparation, the Lord had sung a hymn with His disciples as they made their way to the Mount of Olives, 26. 30. This hymn was, in all probability, part of the Jewish liturgy known as the Egyptian Hallel (meaning 'praise'), which incorporated Psalms 113 to 118, and was so named because of its reference to the Exodus in Psalm 114 verse 1. The poignancy of these psalms, especially Psalm 116 verses 1 to 4, would have been deeply felt by the Lord as He prayed in Gethsemane and contemplated the horrors of the cross. He would keep His vows to His Father, Ps. 116. 14; Matt. 26. 39, and, irrespective of what men might do to Him, He would ultimately triumph, Psalm 118. Little wonder, then, as He agonized in the garden, His soul was 'very sorrowful, even unto death', Matt. 26. 38, again taking up the refrain of the Psalmist in Psalms 42, 43 (LXX), cp. Ps. 22. 24. How little the three chosen disciples who went with Him that little further understood His predicament. They failed to obey His request, Mark 14. 37, 38, 40, 41, yet His request was honoured by His Father as He, the Son, 'learned obedience through what he suffered', Heb. 5. 8 ESV. Betrayal, arrest and a violent death would follow in the purposes of God so that His exodus might be achieved, Luke 9. 31.

We cannot leave such a scene though without realizing the great contrast that is being made between two gardens and two men. In the first garden all was pleasant and beautiful to the eye, but, through the assertion and disobedience of one man, havoc was reeked on the whole of the human race, Rom. 5. 12 *et seq.* But, in Gethsemane, we find a second man, the last Adam, 1 Cor. 15. 45, 47, who later humbles Himself, Phil. 2. 8, and, through this one act of obedience, restores all that the first man lost, Rom. 5. 19, finally to bring 'many sons unto glory', Heb. 2. 10.

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