

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

FEBRUARY 2019

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Precious SEED



'Ye are the salt of the
earth: but if the salt
have lost his savour?'
Matt. 5. 13

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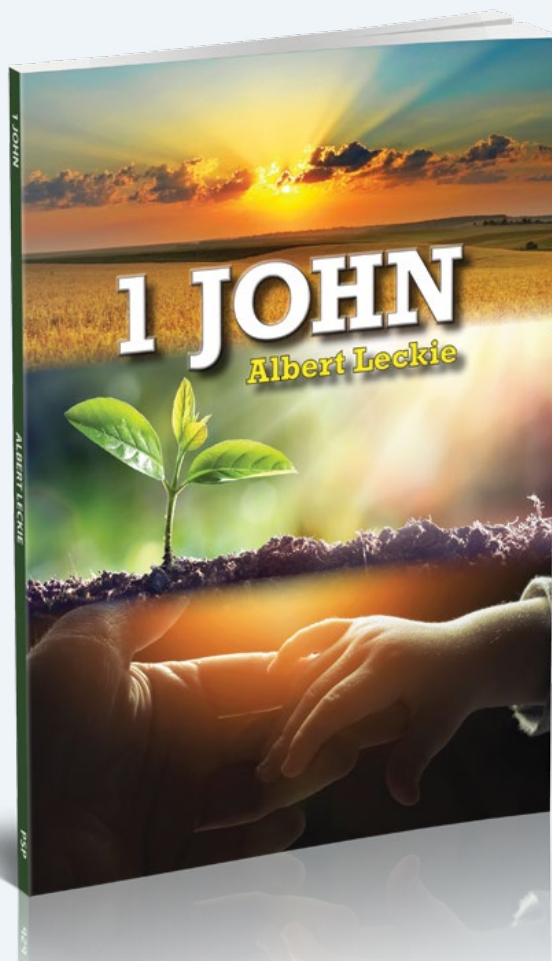
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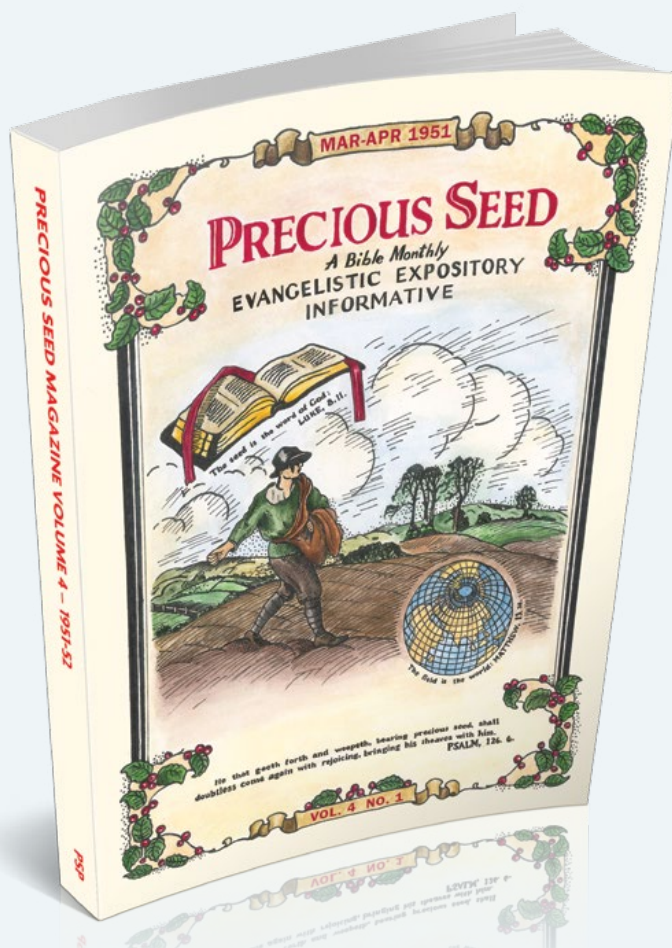
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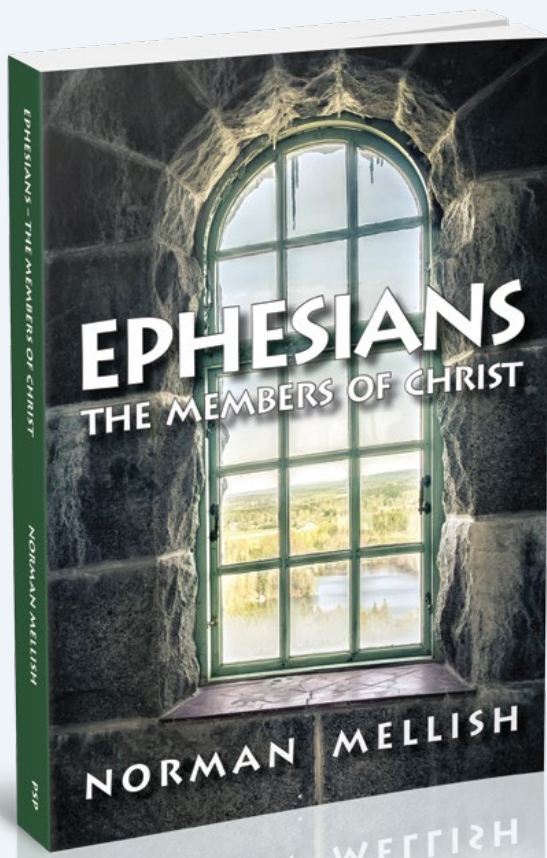


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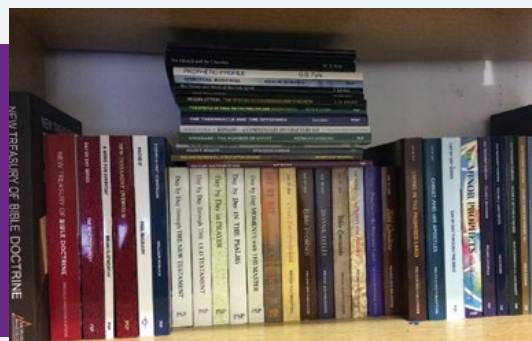
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Editorial

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‘Jesus standing’, John 20. 14.

Dead men don’t stand! How energizing it is to rejoice in the certain truth of the message of the angel to visitors to the tomb, ‘he is not here: for he is risen’, Matt. 28. 6! He is alive and that forevermore!

On four occasions in the last two chapters of John’s Gospel, the Saviour is presented as ‘standing’. On each of these occasions, the vitality of the risen One meets the need of the saints.

To a weeping mourner, who was distraught and weary, He appears ‘**standing**’, John 20. 14. The hopelessness and disappointment of her soul is met in one word from the standing Saviour. He stood before her in the evident power of resurrection. As we seek to exercise devoted service to God, have we lost hope? That hope will be rekindled as we remember that our Saviour stands unique, in that today He lives! In this is demonstrated the power that is behind all the purposes of God – He cannot fail; He is not dead, He is alive!

To a gathering of His disciples, fearful of the world outside, a standing Saviour brings peace, v. 19. Are we, as the Lord’s people, seeing the hostility of the world

grow towards us and experiencing fear? Perhaps we can draw some help from this incident. Despite the seeming power against us, the power that is in us is beyond any other, and has been demonstrated to be so in that our Saviour rose again! I note what He did as He strengthened them, ‘he shewed them his hands and his side’, v. 20. How important for any assembly to keep close to such truths. In my humble experience, I truly believe that the weekly shewing of ‘the Lord’s death’ is part of the divine plan for keeping His people encouraged in a hostile world, 1 Cor. 11. 26. I appreciate that it is not a gathering primarily intended for us to be blessed, but which of us has ever come to bless God and gone away without Him blessing us? How sad it is when such a gathering is missed.

The third occasion is to address the doubts of Thomas, v. 26. How gracious! Do you have doubts today? The Saviour was not obliged to respond to Thomas’ statement in verse 25. But with shepherd care, the ever-listening Saviour not only heard what escaped Thomas’ lips, but sees fit to personally address his needs, cp. Matt. 18. 12-14. What recovery ensued, ‘My Lord and my God’, v. 28.

The fourth occasion is to be found in chapter 21 verse 4. This time it is to a band of weary, and perhaps wayward workers. To a Mary, it was His word; to the gathered company, it was His wounds; to the doubter it was the warmth of His presence; but to those who had ‘caught nothing’, it was the reminder that He alone can provide the power for fruitfulness. They, expert fishermen though they were, had fished all night and caught nothing. Yet, He knows exactly where the fish are! They had allowed their wisdom and expertise to displace His, and as the Lord Jesus stands on the shore, He reminds them that to do His service, we must rely on Him alone! God preserve us from losing sight of a risen Saviour whom we serve.

As we enter another year in the will of the Lord, we hope that the efforts of those who have written for this issue will encourage the readers to keep close to our risen Saviour. We thank them for their kindness in contributing.

SANDY JACK
Ministry Articles Editor

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The Messianic Psalms

PSALM 110

By **STEPHEN FELLOWES** Skibbereen, Ireland

There is a difference of opinion as to the definition of a Messianic psalm, but the status of Psalm 110 is undisputed, being quoted and alluded to in the New Testament and full of the person of the Messiah. Many Messianic psalms have an historic reference to the experience of the psalmist who wrote it, but here we are occupied alone with Christ. It has been beautifully termed by FLANIGAN as 'pure prophetic poetry'.¹

The New Testament, of course, confirms this. It is suggested that there are around fourteen references to this psalm; sometimes they take the form of a direct quotation, which could consist of a full verse, or part of a verse, while at other times the psalm is alluded to rather than quoted directly.

As we study the main New Testament references to this psalm, we suggest that they can be divided according to their different emphases. I have grouped them as follows:

The **greatness of His person** in contrast to David.²

The Pharisees are left speechless as the Lord Jesus asks them to reconcile these two things: how is Christ David's son and yet David's Lord? We, who know the glory of the One who speaks, rejoice in Him who is both 'root and offspring of David', Rev. 22. 16.

Hebrews chapter 1 verse 13 develops the same theme, this time majoring on His supremacy above angels. This glorious fact is the perfect starting point in the book of the supreme Christ. Before Moses, Aaron and many others are introduced, the writer will discuss those angelic beings held in such reverential awe by the Hebrew people. Angels appeared to the patriarchs; they accompanied the giving of the law, etc., yet, here is One who 'has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they'.

The **greatness of His position**, Acts 2. 34, 35.

We rejoice in what God has done

to Him in contrast to how He was treated by the nation. Great though David was, **he** is not seated in power at God's right hand, but Christ is! This sums up the great point of the early chapters of the book of Acts, namely, God has given the throne of glory to Him to whom Israel gave the cross of shame.

The **greatness of His prospect**, 1 Cor. 15. 25.

In this majestic chapter on resurrection, the apostle traces the implications of denying the resurrection. If there is no resurrection of the dead, the programme of God lies in tatters, but, says Paul, Christ **has** risen and, in fact, it is a divine imperative that He reigns in triumph over all His enemies.

The **greatness of His priesthood**³

Who would have realized the full import of the character of Melchizedek, who comes upon the page of scripture fleetingly in the book of Genesis? God's intention was that he would serve to be a type of the superior glory of Christ's priesthood over that of the Aaronic order. How wonderful are His ways!

This is exactly what happens in the letter to the Hebrews (as we hope to see shortly).

The psalm

We don't purport to give a full exposition of the psalm but just some thoughts that we hope will encourage a deeper study of this blessed portion of scripture.

Message

The essential message of the psalm is the establishing of the Messianic kingdom in the hand of one who is the sovereign priest. Only our Lord Jesus could combine both kingship and priesthood together in one person; King Uzziah would find out to his detriment that this was reserved for one alone, 2 Chr. 26.

It is interesting that in other Messianic psalms which focus upon the establishing of the kingdom, there are a number of other beautiful combinations in relation to the king. Psalm 2 views Him as the **sovereign Son**; He who came into time will one day be set as God's King upon His holy hill of Zion. In Psalm 24, He is the **sovereign creator**; if the earth in its fullness belongs to Him, then He has the right to claim His place in it. This place will be in the midst of the redeemed nation who willingly open the gates of Jerusalem to welcome 'the king of glory'. In Psalm 45, it is the **sovereign warrior** we see coming with His sword upon His thigh to execute judgement upon every form of opposition to the setting up of His righteous kingdom. And, in Psalm 72, we rejoice in viewing the **sovereign judge**, who alone will implement justice in this world of unrighteousness, at last 'a king shall reign in righteousness', Isa. 32. 1.

Division

The patient throne sitter, v. 1.
The power and the people, vv. 2, 3.
The priest forever, v. 4.
The putting down of every enemy, vv. 5-7.

The **patient throne sitter**, v. 1

We are always conscious that we

are on holy ground when we hear two divine persons addressing each other. Consider Psalm 22, where we witness the expressions of the suffering Saviour in His darkest hour pouring out His grief to His God. Likewise, in John chapter 17, we are allowed to listen to the great high-priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, spoken in spirit beyond the cross in the full consciousness of His finished work.

In this verse *Jehovah* is speaking to *Adon*. David's sovereign Lord and Master is being addressed by God, but more than simply being addressed, because the idea seems to be that of a solemn declaration made with divine authority – an oracle if you will. God has spoken and when God speaks we do well to listen. He has spoken **to** and **of** His Son: 'sit thou' – seated in person; 'at my right hand' – seated in power; 'until I make thine enemies thy footstool' – seated in patience.

Here we have in the Old Testament a verse that covers the whole of the present period of grace and beyond. Of course, it is only as we see the complete dispensational picture of scripture that every part falls into its proper place. In this statement is one of the great '**untils**' of the divine programme.⁴

The power and the people, vv. 2, 3

Here we have the establishing of divine rule and the associates of the king.

The place is Zion; the name that is synonymous with earthly rule – the place that David conquered and made his capital, Ps. 2. 6; 1 Chr. 11. 5. Now, David's greater Son sits upon the throne of regal glory in fulfilment of 'the sure mercies of David', and from thence He subdues every enemy, Acts 13. 34. Paul says, 'he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power', 1 Cor. 15. 24. This is illustrated in the early chapters of 1 Kings, when Solomon had to subdue every opposing element in order to establish the kingdom. Think of Adonijah – governmental

authority; Abiathar – religious power, and Joab – military might. For the first time ever in the world's history, there will be a man entirely competent to rule, and in those nail-pierced hands will be the 'rod of . . . strength' executing perfect justice.

However, He will not do it alone; there will be associated with Him a people, an earthly people, a restored people, a people who have been cleansed from the filthiness of their sin and are likened unto voluntary offerings – no conscripts there! They will be characterized by youthful vigour and linked with the King in the day of His power. Priestly, holy, enthusiastic warriors, all with devoted hearts moving in willing subjection to their rightful King. In their service, they will rejoice to see the long-anticipated millennial day dawn upon this sad and weary earth, as it is brought forth 'from the womb of the morning'.

The priest forever, v. 4

The briefness of this verse is reminiscent of the historical account of Melchizedek. It seems to come into our psalm out of the blue. However, as in Genesis, the mention of this remarkable individual is in perfect harmony with the context. The king who will reign will also be a priest, 'a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek'. Uniquely, He will combine both offices. Zechariah tells us, 'he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne', Zech. 6. 13. Governmentally and spiritually, He will meet every divine standard and under Him all who bow in subjection will be blessed abundantly, even as Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek.

Take note, the Melchizedek order of Christ's priesthood is distinct from that 'after the order of Aaron', Heb. 7. 11. Hebrews chapter 7 will develop the superiority of Christ's priesthood in contrast to that of Aaron. It is true that our Lord's priesthood does bear similarities to Aaron's in its

pattern and exercise, inasmuch as it involved a man feeling for other men in sympathy and succour. However, the Melchizedek priesthood involves his likeness to the Son of God, deathlessness, greatness, and his blessing of others. No wonder, then, that the writer calls us to consider how great this man is, Heb. 7. 4!

The putting down of every enemy, vv. 5-7

The remainder of the psalm amplifies how the rule of verse 2 will be established. The sovereign Lord will unsparingly judge four parties: 'kings' – likely the confederation of kings linked with the beast, Rev. 17-19; 'nations' – the living nations judged before the setting up of the kingdom, Matt. 25; 'dead bodies' – the awful devastation of Revelation chapter 19 verses 17 to 21; 'the head' – this could be the antichrist himself.

The last verse pictures the king in hot pursuit of His enemies, zealous in battle, taking refreshment 'in the way'. He does not linger but strives to see righteousness established, and, because of this holy zeal, He shall 'lift up the head' in certain and glorious victory. The Head that once bowed with a crown of thorns at Calvary in apparent weakness and defeat, will one day be lifted up in power and triumph.

'Hail to the Lord's anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun;
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free;
To take away transgression
And rule in equity'.

MONTGOMERY

Endnotes

- 1 J. FLANIGAN, *Psalms, What the Bible Teaches*, John Ritchie Ltd, 2001.
- 2 Matt. 22. 44; Mark 12. 36; Luke 20. 42, 43.
- 3 Heb. 5. 6, 10; 6. 20; 7. 17, 21.
- 4 cp. Dan. 7. 22, 25; Rom. 11. 25.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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

Part 5

The magnitude of need, vv. 29-34

The ceaseless energy of the perfect Servant is seen, for as soon as He has come out of the synagogue the next needy case is brought before Him.

The specific need, vv. 29-31

It is Mark that records that the house into which the Saviour entered belonged to Simon and that his brother Andrew lived with him. This is our first introduction to a home that was to become a place for the Lord to stay when He was in this area of the country. It is called 'the house' and was clearly seen as the place that the Lord met with His disciples and discussed matters with them.¹ It might not be named as the same house, but there is sufficient evidence to support the fact that it was indeed Simon's home.

It is Mark too that tells us of the presence of James and John. As the second of the Saviour's miracles recorded by Mark is about to be performed, Mark tells us of those that witnessed it and can verify its certainty. These events were to be clearly established in the mouth of two or three witnesses.

The person in need was Simon's mother-in-law. The nature and severity of the condition are clearly reported by all gospel writers. Luke speaks of a great fever and Mark's words suggest a burning fever that held her in its grip and that had done so for some time. She was now prostrate, her energy gone and her condition seemingly worsening.

In the Saviour's treatment we see:

- His compassion: 'he came and took her by the hand', v. 31. The touch was a symbol of the

Saviour's care, His interest, and a prerequisite of her healing, for in the lifting up there was the impartation of the energy that had been missing. It also demonstrated the Lord's interest in women as well as the demoniac man in the synagogue.

- The cure: 'immediately the fever left her', v. 31. Although some suggest that the word immediately is not in the text yet the instantaneous nature of the cure is clear from the events that follow. This was no gradual improvement with a period of convalescence that would have accompanied any cure by medicine.
- The confirmation: 'she ministered unto them', v. 31. As if to confirm the completeness of the cure, she got up and became involved in ministering to the needs of the Lord and His disciples. Here is testimony to the power of the Saviour and the gratitude of the woman. As HIEBERT comments, 'There was no lingering weakness of lassitude, such as accompanies a normal convalescence'.²

The scope of need, vv. 32-34

There is in this procession from the city to the door of Peter's home a sad picture of the need that existed in this part of the country. H. V. MORTON tells us of the existence of so-called healing springs in the nearby city of Tiberius.³ What a contrast with the One who brings healing and deliverance which no other person or material could do.

- The scene – 'when the sun did set', v. 32. As the Sabbath ended with the setting of the sun then the people were free to carry their

loved ones to meet the Saviour. It is clear that they were keen to be seen to obey the Law and not to contravene the Sabbath day's prohibitions.

- The size of problem – 'all that were diseased and them that were possessed with demons', v. 32. There were the two types of problem mentioned – physical and mental problems. Within the physical problems there was the expected variety of afflictions and ailments – 'divers diseases', v. 34.
- The summary of the problem – 'all the city was gathered together', v. 33. All were affected in some way. They were either sick physically or mentally or had someone within their family afflicted in this way. But there is also the added aspect of witnesses, as the mass of people could testify to what they would see. Whilst testimony could be borne by those present, the Lord silenced the demons. COLE comments, 'All such testimony of demons is non-voluntary, an unwilling recognition of an empirical fact, and thus corresponds to no moral or spiritual transforming discovery'.⁴
- The sufficiency of the Saviour – 'He healed many . . . and cast out many devils', v. 34. It is clear from other Gospel writers that Mark's use of the word 'many' reflects his appreciation of the numbers – too many to count – whereas the other Gospels indicate that the Lord healed them all. He was sufficient to the task, however varied and however great. It is Luke that tells us that the Saviour had time in ministering to the need, for His touch was evident in His dealings with the needy.

The morning in prayer, vv. 35-39

Looking at the verses that precede this section and the extent of the activity of the Servant, we might wonder that He should desire to spend such a time in prayer. We would look to recharge the physical with prolonged rest and sleep whereas the Saviour sought the fellowship of heaven.

The solitude, v. 35

Luke tells us that the Saviour went into the desert but Mark, alone, tells us it was ‘a solitary place’, v. 35. Luke may well emphasize the inhospitable nature of the scene, but Mark would have us realize the importance of solitude in prayer. He was away from the distraction of a busy scene and able, over the period of the early hours of the morning, to take time in prayer. It was most probably the third watch of the night, still dark, when the Saviour left the house to seek a place for prayer.

This is in keeping with the Lord’s own words to His own. In the Sermon on the Mount, He bid His disciples to seek the place of solitude in prayer, ‘thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret’, Matt. 6. 6. Mark shows us that the Lord is wholly consistent in His own practices and that which He bids others to do.

The supplication, v. 35

We might highlight a number of things in relation to the prayer life of the Saviour as it is recorded here.

- The period of prayer – ‘and there prayed’, v. 35. The imperfect tense of the verb indicates not just a single prayer but a period of continuous prayer. From the time indication, it may well be that the

Saviour spent up to three hours in prayer at such an early hour of the morning.

- The purpose of prayer – ‘and there prayed’, v. 35. The word indicates communion. The purpose of the time in prayer would seem to be a desire to bring spiritual refreshment through fellowship and personal communion with the Father. In relation to this prayer, HIEBERT comments, ‘The verb does not denote intercession for others, but rather the conscious outgoing of the soul toward God in desire for Him. After a busy day of service Jesus felt the need for inner refreshment through renewed fellowship with the Father’.⁵

The Saviour had been in conflict with spiritual forces opposed to His purpose. He had been busy in the service of God. How important, then, that He should spend time in prayer fellowship with the Father and prepare Himself, once more, for the demands of service. The practical application of this is not lost upon BARNHOUSE, ‘If Jesus in His great power and oneness with God could feel the urgent necessity of communion with the Father, how much more you and I need to go to the Father for the strength that fills our weakness and the knowledge that fills our ignorance’.⁶

The search, vv. 36, 37

Finding the Saviour was not present in the house, Simon, and others with him, start a search. There was a desire to find the one who had brought such healing and deliverance that they had witnessed for themselves. The blessing that the Saviour had brought distinguished Him as a teacher but, more importantly for the crowds, met their physical needs as none other could. It was these factors that added zeal to their search.

Simon, and perhaps the other disciples, had caught the mood of the crowd. They said to the Saviour, ‘All men seek for thee’, v. 37. The words suggest that, for the disciples, this must dictate the movements of the Saviour. He must move to meet the desires of the crowd. Capernaum must be satisfied! He must capitalize on such popularity.

The service, vv. 38, 39

But the Lord is not guided by popularity or the clamour of the crowd. His purpose is not to fulfil the will of the people but the will of God. Hence, the Lord says, ‘Let us go into the next towns’, v. 38. It is not that Capernaum did not have need but that the need of the other towns was greater. Capernaum should not seek to monopolize the Saviour’s time at the expense of others who were equally deserving.

The Lord also emphasizes the true purpose of His service, ‘that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth’, v. 38. He had not come to heal, although He did that. He had come to preach and this must be the focus of His activity. The miracles that He performed were to authenticate the message rather than to replace it. Thus, what the Saviour said, He did, ‘And He preached in their synagogues’, v. 39. The scope of that preaching? ‘Throughout all Galilee’.

Endnotes

- 1 See 2. 1; 9. 33; and 10. 10, for other references to the house.
- 2 HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 54.
- 3 WUEST, *op. cit.*, pg. 37.
- 4 COLE, *op. cit.*, pg. 62.
- 5 HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 56.
- 6 D. G. BARNHOUSE, *Mark: The Servant Gospel*, Victor Books, 1988, pg. 32.



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Part 4

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

The Majesty of Christ 1. 15-23

Recall that the assembly at Colossae appears to have been subjected to false teaching. It has been appropriately called Judaistic Gnosticism – a mixture of Greek philosophy, 2. 8; Oriental mysticism, 2. 18, 23; and Jewish ritual, 2. 11, 16. It detracted from the person of Christ making Him one of many ‘*aeons*’, powers (the totality of powers were called ‘*pleroma*’) between God and man, detracting from His essential deity and true humanity. It was the occupation of intellectuals.

Paul’s approach in dealing with the false teaching is to stress the all-sufficiency of Christ – His pre-eminence, 1. 18, and His fullness, *pleroma*, v. 19. In Colossians, the word *pleroma* is ‘removed from the precarious foundation of philosophy and mythology and set upon the impregnable rock of inspiration’.¹ The word is also used in chapter 2 verse 9, where the meaning is ‘in the Son there dwells all the fullness of absolute Godhead, essentially, perfectly, the very Personality of God’.²

The section from chapter 1 verses 15 to 23 is the central Christological passage in the whole of the book. An understanding of these verses would prevent the Colossians (and us) from having wrong thoughts about Christ and avoid the Colossian heresy. They deal with two majesties of His person in beautiful balance and symmetry.

The majesty of Christ in creation, vv. 15-18 – ends with His pre-eminence

- His relation to God, v. 15a – the Image;
- His relation to the universe, vv. 15b-17 – the Firstborn – note the prepositions ‘in’, ‘through’ and ‘unto’ in verse 16 RV;

- His relation to the church, v. 18 – the Head.

The majesty of Christ in new creation, vv. 19-23 – evidence of His pre-eminence

- His relation to God, v. 19 – the Fullness (*pleroma*);
- His relation to the universe, v. 20 – the Reconciler – note the prepositions, ‘through’ (three times – see the RV) and ‘unto’;
- His relation to the church, vv. 21-23 – the Reconciler – ‘and you . . . hath he reconciled’, v. 21.

This article deals with the former of these.

The majesty of Christ in creation, vv. 15-18

This paragraph is the death blow to evolutionary hypotheses. The Bible gives no leeway whatsoever to the evolutionary ‘process whereby natural selection turns one fully formed animal into another’.³ While developments have evidently taken place within particular created species (note e.g., different skin colours), the theories for natural selection developments as indicated above are without reliable scientific foundation, in spite of elaborate claims made by the scientific community.

His relation to God, v. 15a

The title used in this case is that of ‘**the image of the invisible God**’. It has within it the idea of representation and manifestation. Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God. The title should be contrasted with ‘likeness’, ‘likeness of sinful flesh’, Rom. 8. 3, and ‘likeness of men’, Phil. 2. 7, where the idea of resemblance and reality is to the fore. In the case of ‘image’, the title is indicative of equality with the Father in respect of His substance, nature and eternity. It is

an affirmation of His essential deity and parallels the statement, ‘the express image of his person (God’s substance)’, Heb. 1. 3.

In this presentation of His person, the Lord makes the invisible visible, 1 Tim. 1. 17; Heb. 11. 27; the unapproachable approachable, 1 Tim. 6. 16; the inconceivable conceivable, John 14. 9, and, in addition, as ‘the Word’, John 1. 1, He makes the silent expressive and audible.

His relation to creation, vv. 15b-17

The title used in this case is ‘**the firstborn of all creation**’ JND. While the word ‘firstborn’ can have chronological significance, e.g., Luke 2. 7, when used of the Lord Jesus in the present context it has to do with pre-eminence rather than chronology. This unique title indicates both priority in time and superiority in dignity. The fact that chronology is not to the fore is indicated by its use in relation to the nation of Israel, Exod. 4. 22, Jer. 31. 9. There are three other connections in which it is used of the Lord, indicating His superiority in a further threefold sphere:

- The Firstborn from the dead, Col. 1. 18; Rev. 1. 5 – in resurrection;
- The Firstborn among many brethren, Rom. 8. 29 – in redemption;
- The Firstborn at His second advent, Heb. 1. 6 – in regeneration.

Three important prepositions, v. 16

There are three important prepositions in verse 16. In the KJV they are ‘by’, *en*, ‘by’, *dia*, and ‘for’, *eis*. The Revised Version translates them respectively ‘in’, ‘through’ and ‘unto’, which gives a more accurate picture of the truths being addressed.

‘In him were all things created’

RV emphasizes that Christ is **the Architect** – the One in whom all creative forces reside – see also John 1. 4. Note, also, that the phrase ‘all things’ is repeated five times in verses 16 to 18. The verb ‘created’ is in the aorist tense, indicating a historic act, while the repetition of ‘all things’ indicates both the

whole sum and the unity of the final product. This includes heaven and earth. Note the important order – God always starts with heaven, cp. Gen. 1. 1 – and both what is visible and invisible, incorporating a fourfold hierarchy of angelic beings, cp. Eph. 1. 21. Since Christ created the angels, He is, by definition, greater than them! This meets one of the doctrinal errors of the Gnostics head on. Christ is not just one of many ‘*aeons*’! He is the creator of ‘all’!

‘All things have been created through him’ RV indicates that Christ was **the Agent** – the medium of the divine energy in the creation process, Ps. 33. 6-9; John 1. 3. The verb ‘created’ is now in the perfect tense indicating permanence, progress and purpose. The same thought is found in Hebrews, ‘through whom also he made the worlds’, 1. 2 RV.

‘All things have been created... unto him’ RV indicates that Christ is **the Aim** or final objective of creation. ‘All things’ were brought into being to serve His ends and His Kingdom as the Alpha and Omega, Rev. 22. 13. The same idea is found in Romans, ‘for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen’, 11. 36, and in Revelation, ‘for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created’, 4. 11. The glad day is yet to dawn when, ‘in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him’, Eph. 1. 10. Note, again, the reference to ‘all things’!

The inherent power, v. 17

Two truths with respect to the Lord Jesus in His relation to creation are emphasized in verse 17, viz. His eternality, v. 17a, and His energy, v. 17b. **His eternality** is emphasized by the present tense, ‘he **is** (not “was”) before all things’. The present tense is most enlightening. It is a reminder of the Lord’s claim, ‘Before Abraham was, I am’, John 8. 58; cp. Exod. 3. 14. Here, in unambiguous language, is a definite

statement of our Lord’s eternality. It parallels also the statement in John chapter 1 verse 2.

His energy is emphasized in the second half of the verse, v. 17b – ‘**in** [en] him all things consist [hold together]’ RV. This is why there is cosmos instead of chaos – ‘Christ is the personal means by which all the parts of the universe are maintained in cohesion’.⁴ Again, the idea is paralleled in Hebrews, ‘upholding all things by the word of his power’, 1. 3. The meticulous movements of the heavenly bodies, and their relative positions in the astronomical spheres, are all under the control of the spoken word of Christ, expressing the appropriate divine energy for their motion and subsistence.

His relation to the church, v. 18

The important title in this case is, **‘the head of the body, the church’**, v. 18a, see also chapter 2 verse 19. The title indicates that the Lord Jesus is the source of all the church’s spiritual life, cp. John 15. 1-11. As such, He controls all its movements and ministry and is the source of its entire authority. Indeed, the language of 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 12 is most instructive, where the dispensational church is called ‘the Christ’ – ‘so also is the Christ’ JND. The emphasis is on the mystical union between Christ as the head in heaven and the church under His control on earth. There are several other headships in the New Testament:

- His headship of a new race, Rom. 5. 12-21;
- His headship ‘of man’, 1 Cor. 11. 3 (universal);
- His headship of ‘all things’, Eph. 1. 10 JND;
- His headship ‘over all things’, Eph. 1. 22 (fulfilment of divine purpose);
- His headship ‘of all principality and power’, Col. 2. 10; 1 Pet. 3. 22;
- His headship of ‘the corner’, 1 Pet. 2. 7.

The intrinsic features associated with headship of the body, v. 18

There are two titles given to the Lord Jesus in the balance of verse 18 which make Him fully qualified

to be the head of the body. In the first case, He is the originator, v. 18b – **‘the beginning’**, cp. Rev. 3. 14; Heb. 1. 10. Inherent power and initiative resides with (in) Him. He is the One who brought it into being by the baptism in the Spirit, Acts 2. 1-3. This is affirmed categorically by Peter, ‘Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear’, v. 33. As John the Baptist had promised in the four Gospel records,⁵ the exalted Christ inaugurated the church by the baptism in the Spirit.⁶ In addition, having established the church He builds what He inaugurated, Matt. 16. 18.

The authoritative basis upon which He can be ‘the beginning’ is given in the second title, viz. **‘the firstborn from (ek, ‘out from among’) the dead’**, v. 18c. The foundation was laid in His death and resurrection. He was thereby the source of life for the maintenance of the church and, as ‘the firstfruits of them that slept’, 1 Cor. 15. 20, gives unqualified assurance that He will raise every believer to share in His supreme victory over death.

It is surely fitting that a paragraph detailing the majesty of Christ in creation should indicate the purpose for such an unfolding – ‘that in all things’ – relative to God, the universe, the church, He (emphatic) **‘might become preeminent’**, v. 18d NEWBERRY. Hence, surely the church (we!) should live **in and through and for Him!**

Endnotes

- 1 J. M. DAVIES, *Prison Letters. The Epistles to Colossians and Philemon*, Precious Seed Publications, 2008.
- 2 W. E. VINE, *Colossians*, in *The Collected Writings of W. E. Vine*, Gospel Tract Publications, 1985. See also chapter 3 verse 11, ‘Christ is all, and in all’ (note ‘all’ in both verses).
- 3 R. SLANE, *The God reality. A critique of Richard Dawkins’ the God Delusion*, Day One Publications, 2008.
- 4 W. E. VINE, *Colossians*, in *The Collected Writings of W. E. Vine*, Gospel Tract Publications, 1985.
- 5 See Matt. 3. 11 and parallel passages.
- 6 Doctrinal affirmation is given in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 13.

Public Preaching and Personal Evangelism, Acts 8

By **HUW REES** Carmarthen, Wales,
and **JEREMY GIBSON** Derby, England

Stephen's martyrdom triggered mass persecution against the early church in Jerusalem, vv. 1-4. Chaos descended, few avoiding the havoc wrought by Saul and others. A church that had been richly blessed now experienced severe oppression. Nevertheless, under God's unassailable sovereignty, 'they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word', v. 4,¹ ultimately each believer being carefully planted in the place where God wanted them to be. Thus, the Lord used their suffering to further His purpose and to spread His word. Later, after Saul's salvation, the Lord used conditions of peace to bless His word, 'then had the churches rest . . . and . . . multiplied', 9. 31. If we can hold on to the truth of God's sovereignty, not only regarding our salvation, 1 Pet. 1. 2, but also our circumstances, we will be motivated to evangelize, like those early saints, regardless of our location and conditions.

Public preaching, vv. 5-25

The spread of the gospel is often a corporate effort, v. 4. Although many of these saints may not have been evangelists *per se*, Eph. 4. 11, they fulfilled the great commission, Matt. 28. 19, 20, 'announcing the glad tidings (*euaggelizō*) of the word', v. 4 JND. Philip, who was a gifted evangelist, 'preached (*kēryssō*, announced authoritatively) the Christ' to the whole city of Samaria, v. 5 JND. He did not rely on social enterprise, worldly innovation, images, or even charitable works. But, because 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God', Rom. 10. 17, Philip obeyed Christ's command, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel', Mark 16. 15. The gospel is a message that is meant to be communicated primarily through words. Even though public preaching is currently out of vogue, we must continue to follow the example of those first-century Christians and the mandate of Christ Himself.

The Lord Jesus is the Chief Sower and He desires His people to share

in the work of sowing and reaping, John 4. 35-38. He said, 'Look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest', v. 35. Sowing God's word is a hard and long-term work that requires diligence. But if we never sow, we will never reap. Furthermore, we may sow and others may water, but it is God who gives the increase, 1 Cor. 3. 6. The Samaritan woman had previously 'left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?' John 4. 28, 29. Philip was now another link in the chain at Samaria, each individual having their part to play.

The spread of the gospel inevitably encounters opposition, vv. 9-13, 18-23, the root cause being Satan himself, the god of this world blinding unbelieving minds, 2 Cor. 4. 4. Just as there was demonic activity in Samaria, v. 7, Christians still 'wrestle not against flesh and blood . . . but against spiritual wickedness in high places', Eph. 6. 12; cp. 2 Cor. 10. 3, 4. When spreading the gospel, we

can encounter people who profess salvation, without being truly saved. Simon the sorcerer was such an individual. Whereas the Samaritans believed in the name of Jesus Christ, v. 12, Simon was more interested in Philip's miracles. KENNETH WUEST translates verse 13 as follows: 'Simon himself also believed and . . . continuing as an adherent of Philip, viewing with an interested and critical eye . . . the attesting miracles . . . which excited wonder as they were being performed, was being rendered beside himself with amazement'.² Sadly, as with so many, Simon's profession of faith was based merely on externals; he was not truly resting on Christ.³

The fact that Simon never received the Holy Spirit and was strongly rebuked by Peter, vv. 18-23, shows that he did not have saving faith. If there is no fruit of the Spirit, there was never new birth by the Spirit. If there is no change in the life, there is no salvation. 'Faith without works is dead', Jas. 2. 20, 26. Unless a person continues to make their 'calling and election sure', 2 Pet. 1. 10, the likelihood is they were never saved.

Since this was a new work at the dawn of a new dispensation, it was important for it to have apostolic confirmation, vv. 14-17. Philip humbly accepted Peter and John as they joined, and endorsed, his labours. Because jealousy spoils God's work, we must constantly remember we are only slaves in the Master's service – there is no room for self.

The visible manifestation of the Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit proved that they were now part of the church, 'where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision . . . but Christ is all, and in all', Col. 3. 11. They were not inferior to their Jewish brethren. This is the ultimate goal in all our evangelism: Christ glorified and pre-eminent.

D. L. MOODY once said to a critic, 'Frankly, I sometimes do not like my way of doing evangelism. But I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it'. The lesson is simple – go out and preach the word, v. 25.

Personal evangelism, vv. 26-40

Personal evangelism is an important, though often neglected, aspect of gospel outreach. This brief account of Philip's rendezvous with an Ethiopian eunuch models how it should work, God's sovereignty acting in perfect harmony with our efforts to bring sinners to Christ.

During a fruitful gospel campaign in the city of Samaria, 'the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert', vv. 5, 6, 26. Having been 'destroyed by Alexander the Great in the fourth century . . . (and then) in 96 BC, completely overthrown by the Maccabean prince Alexander . . . (Gaza) was literally desert'.⁴ It made no sense. Why would an evangelist move from a city, with many people, to a desert, with none? Nevertheless, Philip 'arose and went', v. 27.

It is only after he recorded Philip's obedience that Luke pointed out, 'Behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come (more than 200 miles) to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet', vv. 27, 28. This man was spiritually disadvantaged in at least three ways. First, as a Gentile, he was alien 'from the commonwealth of Israel, and . . . (a stranger) from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world', Eph. 2. 12. Second, being a eunuch, he was barred from entering the congregation of Israel, Deut. 23. 1. Third, his high-ranking

office in the Ethiopian court, and probable great personal wealth, made it harder for him to receive Christ. 'For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God', Luke 18. 25.

But God had awakened in this Ethiopian eunuch a true desire for Himself, cp. Rom. 3. 11. In Isaiah's prophecy, Jehovah promised godly Gentiles, 'Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people', Isa. 56. 7. He assured faithful eunuchs, 'Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters', v. 5. In relation to how difficult it is for rich men to enter the kingdom, Christ explained, 'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God', Luke 18. 27. In the Sermon on the Mount He taught, 'Seek, and ye shall find', Matt. 7. 7. This eunuch sought God. He did not find the solution to his quest at Jerusalem. But God answered his seeking by giving him Isaiah's prophecy, which speaks about Christ, and Philip the evangelist, who knew Christ!

Of course, God's timing was perfect. 'Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot', v. 29. Still obedient, and not wishing to miss any opportunity to evangelize, 'Philip ran thither to him', v. 30. Far from being forceful, he courteously 'heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?' v. 30. The eunuch, who was humbly searching for the

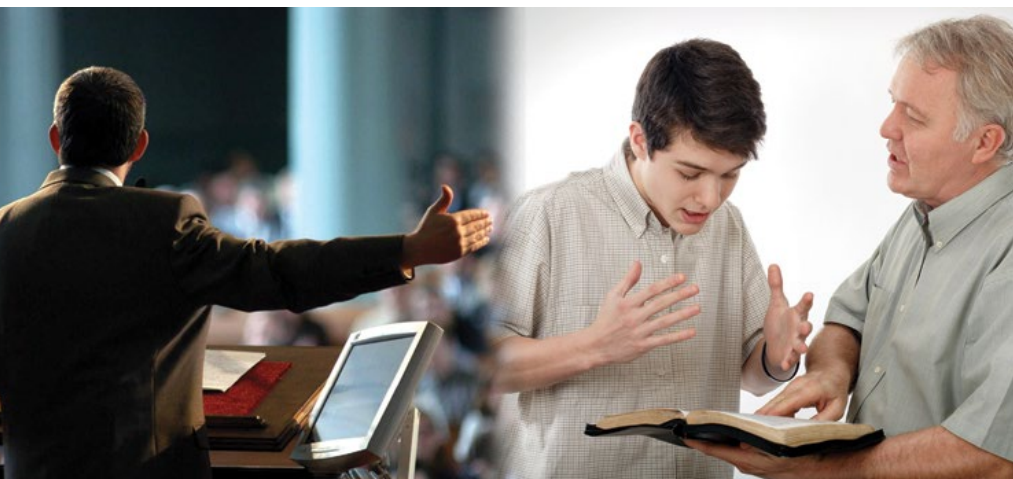
truth, replied, 'How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him', v. 31. He had been reading Isaiah chapter 53, which so graphically foresaw Christ's submissive suffering. The Septuagint's reversal of the phrases 'led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth', v. 32, emphasized the barbaric character of the cross, as well as the Saviour's perfect self-control. 'When he was reviled, (He) reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not', 1 Pet. 2. 23; cp. Prov. 19. 11. With an excellent knowledge of the Bible, 'Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus', v. 35.

When the eunuch believed with all his heart 'that Jesus Christ is the Son of God', Philip baptized him, vv. 36-38. 'And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more', v. 39. Rather than a supernatural zapping, the Spirit likely compelled Philip to move on. The evangelist had gone, but the eunuch had Christ and 'went on his way rejoicing', v. 39.

In our personal evangelism, we must also be led by the Holy Spirit, being sensitive and obedient to God's guidance, Rom. 8. 14. 'A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps', Prov. 16. 9. We should ask the Lord to bring us into contact with people who are genuinely seeking Him. We ought to grasp every opportunity to tell others about the Saviour, always being tactful and courteous, and basing our discussions on the scriptures. If individuals profess faith in Christ, encourage them to be baptized. And remember, we are meant to disappear from view. Anyone we speak to should be impressed with Christ, not us, Hag. 1. 13.

Endnotes

- 1 Acts 14. 22.
- 2 K. S. WUEST, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 4 vols., Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970, Vol. 4, pg. 291.
- 3 John 2. 23-25; 4. 45.
- 4 A. C. GABELEIN, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1961, pg. 156.



What does the Bible tell us about the future? Part 2

‘I will come again’

By **RICHARD COLLINGS** Caerphilly, Wales

Introduction

Of the many events that occurred on the night in which our Saviour partook of His final Passover, there were two that occurred within the space of an hour or so. The first was a promise Jesus made to His disciples and the second was a prayer He made to His Father. The promise was made in an upper room somewhere within Jerusalem, whilst the prayer was made just prior to Jesus crossing over the brook Cedron and entering into the Garden of Gethsemane.

Although two millennia have elapsed since that memorable night, these two events remain unfulfilled, and the Bible does not specify how long it will be before they are. However, both will be accomplished simultaneously, for the answered prayer will be the direct consequence of the fulfilled promise. The promise that Jesus made was, ‘I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also’, John 14. 3. The prayer that He made is also recorded by John, ‘Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am’, 17. 24.

These two issues will dovetail when the Lord descends from heaven with a shout to rendezvous with the church ‘in the air’, 1 Thess. 4. 17. This meeting is often referred to as the ‘rapture of the church’, the word rapture being the English translation of the Latin for the phrase ‘caught up’ in the above verse.

A New Testament revelation

Whilst the rapture may be seen illustratively in the Old Testament, when Enoch was translated to heaven, it is exclusively a New Testament revelation. None of the patriarchs, priests, or prophets had any inkling of the rapture; in fact, they knew nothing about the church at all. Within the New Testament, the truth concerning

the rapture is primarily set out by just two writers, John and Paul.

As we examine their writings, it becomes evident that their presentation of this event is very different from each other. John’s principal objective is to focus on the **promises** made by Jesus concerning His coming, whereas Paul’s particular focus is on the **procedure** of the event. In chapter 14 of his Gospel and in Revelation chapter 22, John presents the promises Jesus made to come again and that His coming would be soon. It is left to the Apostle Paul to convey to us the finer detail of the events linked to the Lord’s coming, which he does in his letters to the Corinthians, the Philippians and the church in Thessalonica.

The Lord’s second coming

As we peruse the scriptures, we discover that the events surrounding the **rapture**, when our Lord comes to the air, and the events relating to the **revelation** of Christ as King, when He comes to earth, have very little in common. They are so distinct that we can say that the second coming of Christ will be in **two stages**.

There are several places in the New Testament that deal with these two stages, but a study of Matthew chapters 24 and 25, which deal with

the **revelation** of the Son of Man to earth, and 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, which treats of His coming to the air as Saviour at the rapture, highlights many contrasts and no comparisons. Space does not enable us to record the details so I leave the reader to pursue this if so inclined.

In addition to these contrasts, if we bring in other passages, such as Zechariah chapter 14, we can summarize these two stages of the Lord’s Second Advent as follows: the rapture of the church, and the revelation of Christ as King, take place at two different **periods**, in two different **places**, for two different **purposes**. They are neither simultaneous nor synonymous but are distinct and should not be confused.

The rapture can take place at any moment

There are two words in the English language that are similar but not identical; they are the words ‘imminent’ and ‘immediate’. Something that is ‘immediate’ is going to happen without delay. Something ‘imminent’ may not take place straight away but it overhangs and thus can happen at **any time**. In the main, the rapture is presented in the New Testament as something that is imminent. There is nothing that requires prior fulfilment; the Lord’s coming for His church is approaching and can happen at any time, but we don’t know when.

There are several key passages in the New Testament that focus on the rapture, of which we shall consider just two, John chapter 14 and 1 Corinthians chapter 15. It is interesting to compare and contrast these with Paul’s teaching on the same subject in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. In summary, we learn in Corinthians that the saints are still on **the earth**; there is no reference to being ‘caught up’. In Thessalonians, the saints are meeting the Lord in **the air**, and, in John 14, they are taken to **the Father’s house**.

In Thessalonians, the focus is on **the dead** not missing out; in Corinthians, it is on the **living** not missing out, and in John it is on **the Lord** not missing out, for, He says, He would ‘receive

you unto myself'. In Corinthians, we read of **resurrection**; in Thessalonians, of the **rapture**, and in John, of our **reception** to the Father's house.

John 14

In the upper room, the Lord says to the disciples, 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also', vv. 2, 3. These words were given in response to a question Peter had asked at the end of chapter 13, 'Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?' In reply, Jesus refers to His Father's house having many abiding places, but what came as a shock to the disciples is that Jesus informs them that although it is His Father's house, there is a place there for them, 'I go to prepare a place for you'.

The disciples were looking for a kingdom on earth; they anticipated a place in that earthly kingdom and did not know that they were destined for heaven. This is a new revelation. When the Lord said, 'I go to prepare a place for you', He is not referring to the cross, for Calvary prepared the people, not the place. He prepared the place by entering into heaven in a body, as the forerunner of those who would likewise enter heaven in a body.

1 Corinthians 15

This chapter deals with the resurrection of the body, and Paul concludes his subject by highlighting two matters relating to the **change** that will occur in the believer's body at the 'last trump'. He informs us, in verse 49, that the change is a **certainty**, and, in verses 51 to 54, that the change is a **necessity**. This change is a necessity because currently we have bodies that are suited to a temporary life on earth. What we require at the Lord's coming will be bodies suited to a permanent life in God's presence.

In verse 51, the apostle states, 'Behold, I shew you a mystery', indicating that what was about to follow would be a new revelation. In verses 42 to 44,

the apostle states that the resurrected body of a believer who had died would be different in character and quality to the body that was buried. In verses 51 to 53, he is teaching that living believers would experience a physical change resulting in them having the same kind of body as the resurrected saints even though they had not died. This was the mystery, this was something hitherto not revealed.

The dead shall be raised

Before we look at the change to living believers, let's consider what is said about those who have died. It says, 'and the dead shall be raised incorruptible'. On three occasions while the Lord was here, He raised the dead, but the day is coming when He will once more raise the dead, but on a scale that we cannot imagine. We need to appreciate that the body that is raised is the same one that died. If it were a different body, then it wouldn't be a resurrection. However, it will be different in character to what was buried. The resurrected body of those who have died will be incorruptible; they will be raised never to die again.

When will the change take place?

The change that takes place for those who will never die will occur at the 'last trump'. This is the same trumpet that Paul calls the 'trumpet of God' in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4; therefore, the change takes place when the Lord descends from heaven to meet His people in the air at the rapture.

How glad we ought to be that we are going to be changed! Imagine living forever in a body passing through a perpetual state of decay and constant decline. Thankfully, that will not happen, for we shall all be changed. The speed in which this change occurs is presented in a twofold way, 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye'. The word translated 'moment' is that from which we get our word 'atom'. To the ancients it indicated time that is too brief to be divided. The speed of the change that will take place in the bodies of the Lord's people will be so rapid that it can't be measured. Imagine shutting your eyes momentarily and then opening them again as quickly as possible. By the time they opened it will be over, the change will have happened.

The totality of the change

There are two reasons why the bodies of living saints need to be changed. First, these bodies of ours are corruptible, and second, they are mortal. A corruptible body is one that is susceptible to disease and weakness; a mortal body is one that succumbs to death. What a glorious prospect – there will be a generation of Christians who will never die but will experience a change that results in their bodies being impervious to disease, degeneration or death!

The day cannot be far hence when death will be swallowed up in victory, to which we can all affirm, 'Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'!



An Assembly of the Lord's people
will be a people among whom . . .

FELLOWSHIP IS ENJOYED

By **JOHN SCARSBROOK** Killamarsh, England

Part 2

There are two topics under consideration in this subject. First, we need to establish who the 'people' are. Then, we must seek to understand what is meant by and involved in 'fellowship'.

According to the latest statistics provided by *Wikipedia*, approximately one third of the world's population would identify as 'Christian'. A further 25%, and rising, are adherents to Islam, followed by those who claim 'no religion' 16%, Hinduism, also 16%, and Buddhism 7%. The balance is made up of traditional and ethnic religions in varying lesser numbers.

The term 'Christian' is a very broad expression. Those who profess allegiance to Christianity include Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox churches, together with a variety of persuasions loosely based on some form of biblical interpretation. All would claim the Bible, to some degree, as their foundational guide and handbook, finding in its pages some means of justifying their beliefs and practices, even though other scriptures would clearly contradict their theology.

Although the Bible, preserved through the centuries to our present day, is the book of Christianity, the word 'Christian' only occurs three times and each of those in the context of possible ridicule and opposition.¹ In those first-century days, the message of the gospel was being preached – a message of personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus. The megalithic structure of Christendom which developed over the centuries, with its vast, ornate buildings, iconic statues, sacerdotal liturgy and ceremonials was

never envisaged in those early days.

When the Lord Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 16 verse 18, 'I will build my church', His reference was not to a solid structure of stone, neither did it anticipate any organization controlled by a hierarchy of ecclesiastical appointees. The church to which the Lord Jesus referred is composed of people, those who have heeded the gospel message, repented of their sin and trusted the One who died and rose again for their salvation. The doctrine concerning the church is explained and developed through the writings of the apostles. In picture language, the church in its entirety is variously spoken of: in its composition, as a body, of which Christ in heaven is the head, Col. 1. 18; in its construction, as a building, of 'living stones', not bricks and mortar, 1 Pet. 2. 5; and in its consummation, as a bride, Eph. 5. 25-27.

The New Testament uses a number of expressions to indicate those, and only those, who are part of, and belong to, the church which the Lord Jesus undertook to build. They are called disciples, saints, brethren and sisters, believers, and Christians. Again, the scripture uses appropriate words to identify those who can claim to be part of or members of the church. They are saved, converted, born again. From the day of Pentecost, Acts chapter 2, to this present moment, irrespective of age, social standing or ethnicity, all,

both male and female, saved by the grace of God, cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, have a place in that great company, the church, and the assurance of a home in heaven for eternity.

The book of Acts describes the progress and development of the work of the apostles and early believers in spreading the gospel through preaching and teaching. From Jerusalem the message was carried by those saved at Pentecost to the far reaches around the Mediterranean and North Africa. This was followed by the missionary exploits of Paul, his companions and other of the apostles. The result was that companies of Christians were brought together in many geographical locations, identifiable by their faith in the Lord Jesus. A number of these received letters from the apostle Paul and others, teaching and encouraging them; letters which the Spirit of God has preserved to form the larger part of our New Testament.

Over the years there has, sadly, been a fragmentation of Christian witness which has resulted in denominational titles based on national identity, the life and teaching of a particular individual, or association with a specific doctrine or practice. Yet, from those early days, the gospel has continued to spread and, today, worldwide, groups of Christians are found meeting together, rejecting titles which would identify them as a denomination, seeking only to maintain the doctrines and practices as given through the apostles. These autonomous companies are portrayed in scripture as 'local churches', each being a microcosm of that great company of believers who make up the church of which the Lord Jesus spoke.

One fundamental feature which marked the early disciples is found in Acts chapter 2 verse 42, which tells us 'they continued steadfastly in . . . fellowship'; so, what does this mean?

Fellowship is a word we often use with a measure of understanding, but seldom appreciate as we should. We speak of being 'in fellowship' in a certain place; also of 'having fellowship' with other people. Some

speak of 'belonging to the fellowship', and we may refer to the matter of 'receiving into fellowship'. We need to understand, however, that true fellowship in the context of a New Testament church or assembly is not formed by association, or by identification, or even by participation. The reality of being 'in fellowship' essentially involves my whole manner of life. It includes what I am, what I do, what I say, what I think and what I give. Fellowship is not a position I seek to attain, but a spiritual condition that I should enjoy. We have seen that fellowship for those early Christians was not something haphazard, temporary or casual; but they 'continued steadfastly'. There was earnest perseverance and diligence; it was an integral part of their life. The word most often translated 'fellowship' in our New Testament has to do with partnership or sharing in common with others. On other occasions it is translated 'communion', 1 Cor. 10. 16; 2 Cor. 6. 14, or 'contribution', Rom. 15. 26. The essential foundation for fellowship is new birth. Without the salvation taught and explained in the scriptures there can be no basis or indeed desire for fellowship. The apostle Paul makes it clear, in his second letter to the Christians at Corinth, that, in the purposes of God, there cannot be any fellowship, communion, concord, part or agreement of believers with unbelievers, 2 Cor. 6. 14-17. This does not mean that the Christian is to take a monastic approach and avoid contact with those of the world; on the contrary, there should be a genuine concern and care which reaches out with the gospel to those not saved. However, fellowship implies single-mindedness, a desire to move in the same direction with similar aspirations, ambitions and hopes; all of which would be diametrically opposed to the wants and ways of the world.

The apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians of the great dignity associated with salvation. Writing to those whom he says are 'sanctified in Christ Jesus', he assures them that, because 'God is faithful', they have been 'called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord', 1 Cor. 1. 2, 9. The apostle John later expressed a desire that believers should enjoy

fellowship one with another, in the knowledge that 'our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ', 1 John 1. 3.

The heading of this article speaks of 'enjoying' fellowship and that should be the experience of all the people of God. It is unfortunate, however, that it is not always possible to fulfil that



desire even with true, born again believers, in view of the position they adopt regarding certain doctrines or the practices they allow within their own circles. It can, nevertheless, be a worthwhile occupation to engage with them to discuss and enjoy 'common ground', while also applying the scriptures to determine the mind of the Lord where opinions differ.

Most New Testament assemblies are made up of individuals from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. There are differences of age, education, culture and spiritual development. On a basic human level, any friendship between many of these individuals would be unlikely, even impossible, let alone the close ties of fellowship. However, that is exactly what the new birth achieves, 'old things are passed away . . . all things are become new', 2 Cor. 5. 17. By salvation we are brought into a family relationship with all the potential to enjoy 'the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him', 1 Cor. 2. 9.

The enjoyment of fellowship is within the reach of all who are privileged to be associated with like-minded believers. The starting point is acceptance of the word of God and obedience to it. Regular attendance at all the arranged meetings and a prayerful involvement in all the activities of the local church will go with this.

It is the responsibility of all those associated with the assembly, to 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace', Eph. 4. 3. For those who have a duty to watch over and 'feed the flock of God' there is the day-to-day care and general ordering of the assembly. Furthermore, there is a need for a ministry of encouragement. There should be concern that no member should feel marginalized or undervalued. In order that all might enjoy fellowship, there is a need to nurture every spark of spiritual progress, to encourage every evidence of initiative and well-directed ambition, and to be constantly building for the future wellbeing of the people of God.

Endnote

1 Acts 11. 26; 26. 28; 1 Pet. 4. 16.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel

LEVI

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

An unpromising start

We saw in our previous study that Levi and Simeon are jointly addressed by Jacob as he calls to mind their cruelty in the brutal murder of the men of Shechem. It is difficult to see how the future of the tribe would recover from his strong words, 'I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel', Gen. 49. 7.

However, a redemptive transformation will take place 400 years later, to find them front-and-centre in God's purposes. We will need to be light on detail here – it may be helpful to outline things briefly first, before expanding a little, where possible.

- Levi slays the uncircumcised men of Shechem.
- God begins to work with the tribe through Moses' parents.
- Moses slays an Egyptian.
- God perseveres with the tribe, schooling Moses for forty years before calling him to lead.
- God slays the firstborn of the Egyptians.
- God selects Aaron and his sons from the tribe to minister as priests.
- Levi slays his fellow Israelites in devotion to God.
- God exempts the tribe from involvement in national combat.
- Amongst other things, Levites are tasked with putting to death any contravener of the rules of God's house.

An unlikely transformation

Our outline is deliberately crafted to emphasize the transformation of the tribe. From the beginning, they seem a people intent on violence. Their cause is their family, and they take matters into their own hands to safeguard themselves – all very 'Jacob'. However, when God moves out to them in sovereign grace, the

transformation begins. The Exodus will teach them that the only sword Jehovah needed was His own, Exod. 13. 15. Applying the shed blood of the lamb guaranteed their safety and deliverance. So it is with us; no human force will do. How glad we can be for God's sovereign grace in moving first to provide for us His Lamb, by who's death we might be freed, Heb. 2. 15.

Next, at Sinai, God establishes the family of Aaron as the priestly tribe, Exod. 28. 1. Gradually, the family is being oriented away from the horizontal to the vertical, from earth to heaven, from family to God.

An unpleasant turning point

Shortly after this, we are presented with the most absurd scene of a calf-worshipping people. Levi was the only tribe who stood in solidarity with God's honour when the call came. In Genesis chapter 34, it had been a question of family honour, but now it was a question of God's. As the family looked on, Levi raised the sword on their uncircumcised siblings, cp. Gen. 34. 14, with Acts 7. 51. On account of their devotion, God ultimately devoted them to His service, in place of the redemption of first-born males.¹

The absurdity of the Israelites' actions can be matched only by our own failure to live in the good of our redemption. We are not our own, but are 'bought with a price: therefore (we



should) glorify God in (our bodies)', 1 Cor. 6. 20.

Thus, came about the **Levites**, a name distinguishing the men of this tribe, as those that would support the priesthood, Num. 8. 19. Their labour was distributed between Levi's sons, Gershon, Kohat, and Merari.²

A unique exemption

When the children of Israel come to the promised land, it is Joshua, from the tribe of Ephraim, who will lead in combat. Levi is exempted from the register of Israel's warriors in Numbers chapter 1. Their energies will not be occupied with war, but with worship. Still, their business was not to be trifled with. If any outsider came near to the tabernacle, they were to put him to death, vv. 51-53.

What a glorious transformation! Who would have thought? God takes the most improbable candidates, and elevates them through sovereign purpose to undertake what He wills. We are fairly safe in suggesting that Ephesians chapter 2 corresponds very closely with all this. Paul writes that 'in time past ye walked according to the course of this world . . . in the lusts of our flesh . . . and were by nature the children of wrath, . . . But God, who is rich in mercy . . . hath quickened us together with Christ . . . and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus', vv. 2-5.

An unusual outcome

Jacob's words were, of course, still fulfilled, but in an unusual way. The families of the Levites were dispersed throughout forty-eight cities within the territories of their brethren. God, not land, would be their inheritance. So it is with us, Eph. 1. 11. God's grace prevails in this tribe even through their later failure, Ezek. 44. 15.

Let us be careful not to underestimate God's grace. Like Jacob, we may not be able to foresee change in people. Faith's eye, however, will always hold out on God's grace. You cannot change them, but God just might.

Endnotes

- 1 Num. 3. 12-13, 8. 16; Deut. 10. 8.
- 2 See Numbers for the tabernacle, and 1 Chronicles for the temple.

Herod the Great

By **JEREMY GIBSON** Derby, England

When confronted with an article like this you may feel in agreement with the German philosopher, GEORGE WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL, who cynically said, 'We learn from history that we do not learn from history'. And if we do not learn from history, what is the point in reading it? But wait a minute. More than half the Bible is divinely-inspired history. And Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope', Rom. 15. 4. In his last inspired letter, Paul wrote to Timothy, 'All scripture (including the historical books) **is** given by inspiration of God, and **is** profitable', 2 Tim. 3. 16. So we can learn from Bible history!

But what about extra-biblical history? The thing about biblical history is that it has a very narrow focus, and rightly so. It charts the outworking of God's redemptive purpose, primarily shining the light on Abraham and his descendants. But Bible events did not occur in a vacuum. Just as we live in a secular society, and are affected by world events, the characters we meet in the Bible interacted with the world about them. Daniel was carried to Babylon under the direction of Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful man of his day, Dan. 1. 1-6. It was at the decree of Caesar Augustus that Mary and Joseph travelled southward to Bethlehem, Luke 2. 1-5.

Christians have nothing to fear from secular historians. Not only does secular history verify the Bible accounts but it shows their context and enhances our appreciation of them. Herod the Great, the cruel and ruthless ruler of Judaea, is a case in point. His and his forefathers' political wrangling and interactions with key players on the world stage significantly influenced the land of

Palestine leading up to the birth of the Lord. Herod's craving to build (including the Jerusalem temple) and his slaughter of the innocents, Matt. 2. 16, were consistent with his Edomite roots (as outlined in the Old Testament) and the extra-biblical records of his life.

Ambitious and savvy, Herod skilfully manoeuvred his way through the constantly changing political landscape to attain, and then at all costs to retain, the Judean throne. It has been said that he stole the throne like a fox, ruled like a tiger, and died like a dog.¹ Although Herod was exceptionally brutal, his Roman overlords saw him as an efficient administrator who ensured taxes were paid on time and peace was maintained in this strategically important land bridge between Asia and Africa. With tyrannical efficiency, any suspected threat to his reign, even from his family, was immediately extinguished.² This vicious paranoia, combined with his religious observance of Jewish dietary restrictions, see Lev. 11, famously prompted Caesar to say, 'It is better to be Herod's pig than his son'.³

But Herod was a complex character. If there was no immediate threat to his rule, he could be kind. In hard times, Herod reduced taxes, using his own vast wealth to make up the payments demanded by Rome. He even rescued the Olympic Games from financial ruin. And running in tandem with his need for control was an insatiable desire to build up his kingdom 'into a glittering modern state in which he could glow in the reflected glory'.⁴ Through irrigation systems he optimized the agricultural potential of the land. By increasing Judaea's exports he enriched his kingdom. He built new cities, revived existing ones, constructed a palace at Masada, rebuilt the Jewish temple, and, using newly invented concrete, constructed a harbour at

Caesarea, the city which he named in honour of Augustus Caesar.

Being of Edomite (from Esau) descent, Herod was never truly accepted by the Jews as their king. As well as self-aggrandisement (one of the many Edomite traits displayed by Herod and his son, Antipas), his temple project may have been an attempt at winning the hearts and minds of the Jewish people. Its ruin in AD 70 at the hands of Roman legions was a small foreshadowing of Edom's eventual destruction in the end times, when God will overthrow all of that nation's building projects.⁵

Herod stole the throne like a fox

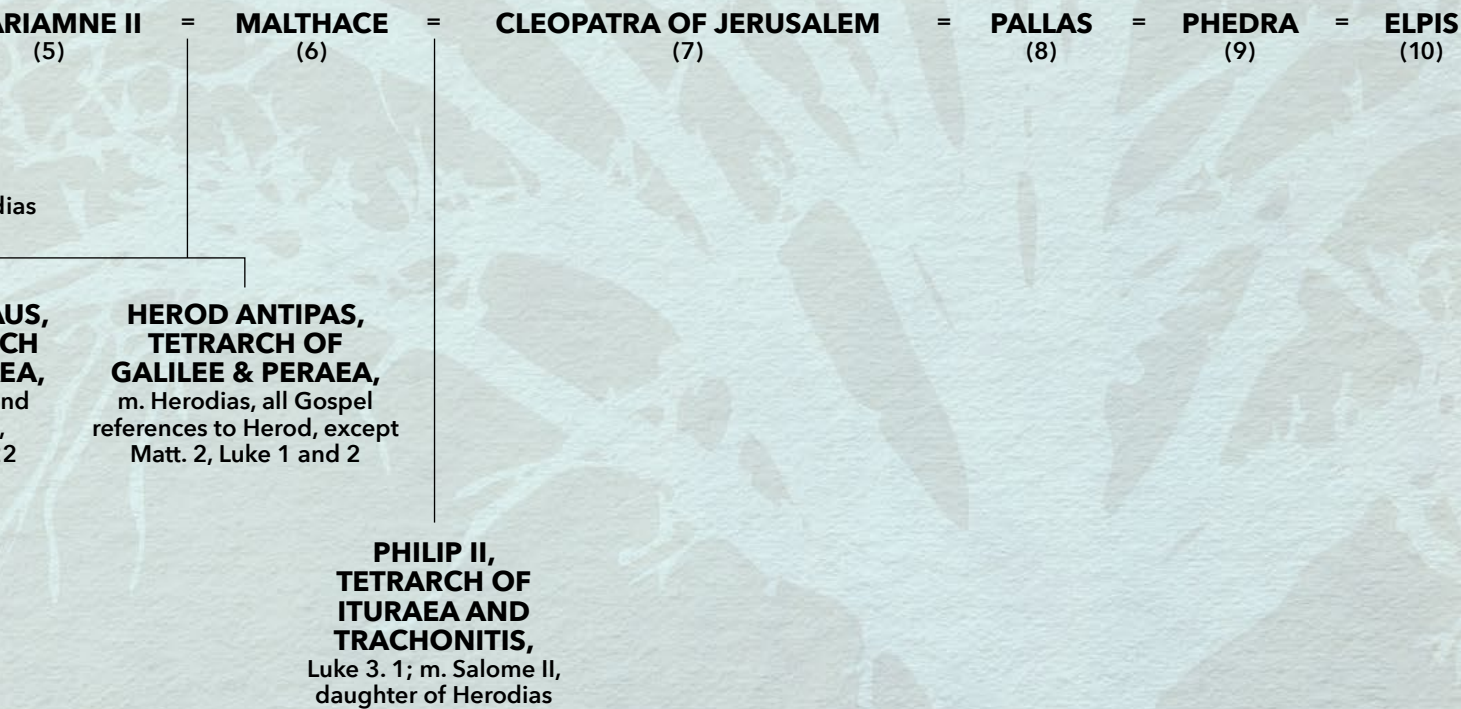
Following the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC), Ptolemy Soter, ancestor of Cleopatra, seized Egypt, while Seleucus Nicator took Babylon and most of Alexander's near-eastern territories, assimilating the land of Judaea into the Seleucid Empire. The prophet Daniel accurately predicted the struggle between these two kingdoms, Dan. 11. When the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes (215-164 BC) reacted sharply to Jewish protests against enforced Hellenization, which involved outlawing circumcision and other Jewish religious observances, and even re-dedicating the Jerusalem temple to Zeus, he provoked a massive revolt led by Judas Maccabeus (167-160 BC). These renegade Jews took Jerusalem from the Seleucids and extended their conquests to include Edom (Idumea), whose wealthy ruler was Antipas, Herod the Great's grandfather.

In 134 BC, John Hyrcanus I (164-104 BC), who was the nephew of Judas Maccabeus, became high priest and leader of the Jews. When he died, Aristobulus, his son, declared himself king of the Jews, establishing the influential Hasmonean dynasty. About one year after Aristobulus' death, Alexandra Salome, his widow, married his brother, Alexander Jannaeus. After Alexander's death, Alexandra Salome reigned as sole

HEROD'S FAMILY



TREE



Killed by Herod the Great (names in red)

d.	Divorced
m. or =	Married
re-m.	Remarried

regent (76-67 BC), one of only two women to rule Judaea, the other being Athaliah, 2 Chr. 22. 10-12. Although she appointed her son John Hyrcanus II to succeed her, when Salome died, her younger son, Aristobulus II, took the crown forcibly.

Antipater, Herod's father, now governor of Idumea, befriended John Hyrcanus II and encouraged him to take the throne from his younger brother. At this time, the Roman General Pompey took Jerusalem from Aristobulus (63 BC), marking the end of Jewish independence. Aristobulus II was arrested and John Hyrcanus II remained high priest, but not king. In effect, Antipater, Herod the Great's father, and John Hyrcanus II functioned as administrators of Judaea, remaining loyal to Pompey. When Alexander Maccabeus, the son of imprisoned Aristobulus II, revolted against Rome, Antipater, whose prime loyalty was now to the Romans, helped crush the uprising. At this time, he befriended a young Roman officer named Mark Antony. When Julius Caesar defeated Pompey at the battle of Pharsalus (48 BC), Antipater, who had been a loyal supporter of Pompey, knew he was in trouble. But he quickly saw an opportunity to win Julius Caesar's trust. At Alexandria, Julius Caesar had become embroiled in a civil war between Cleopatra and her brother Ptolemy. Having only a small army, Caesar found himself in grave danger. Antipater reacted immediately, arranging supplies for Caesar's troops and facilitating the movement of reinforcements. Suitably impressed, Caesar appointed Antipater procurator of Judaea (48 BC). Antipater, in turn, made Phaesal, his oldest son, governor of Jerusalem, and Herod, at the age of 25, governor of Galilee (47 BC).

Herod ruled like a tiger

Herod immediately antagonized the Jews by hunting down and killing a Jewish rebel named Hezekiah (47 BC). When called to appear before the Jewish Sanhedrin, Herod intimidated them with his armed bodyguards.

After the assassination of Julius Caesar (44 BC), Rome moved from republican rule to the days of empire. Octavian, Julius Caesar's 18-year-old great nephew and main beneficiary of his will, quickly outwitted his political opponents. He adopted the name of Caesar, took control of several Roman legions, and demanded that Julius Caesar's assassins be executed. When Octavian and Mark Antony defeated Cassius and Brutus (two of Caesar's assassins) at the battle of Philippi, they emerged as the undisputed rulers of the Roman world (42 BC). Herod travelled quickly to Bithynia, now Turkey, to congratulate Mark Antony, to pledge his allegiance to his new master and, with a large money gift, to secure his own ruling position in Judaea. Mark Antony responded by confirming Herod and Phaesal, his brother, as tetrarchs of Jerusalem. That same year Herod was betrothed to Miriamne, the Hasmonean granddaughter of John Hyrcanus II. But although such a link with the Hasmonean aristocracy would make any future claim that Herod made to the Judean throne more legitimate, Jerusalem was soon attacked by the Parthians. Phaesal was captured and subsequently committed suicide. Herod fled to the impregnable rocky citadel of Masada. Leaving Miriamne and the rest of his family there, Herod travelled to Rome, where, at the age of 33, the senate declared him king of Judaea (40 BC).

Having re-taken Jerusalem, with the help of Antony's legions, Herod killed all who had publically opposed him, strengthened a Hasmonean fortress, renaming it Antonia, after Mark Antony, and further fortified Masada, a nearly impenetrable refuge on top of a 1,300-foot rock on the verge of the Dead Sea. When he felt that Aristobulus IV, whom he had appointed high priest, threatened his power, Herod had him drowned.

When things turned sour between Octavian and Mark Antony, further civil war ensued. Herod

again switched allegiances. Before leaving for his critical meeting with Octavian in Rhodes, to ensure his period of Judaeian rule was extended, Herod executed John Hyrcanus II. He also ordered that Miriamne be killed if he did not return. Afterwards, family quarrels spiralled out of control until Herod killed Miriamne, her mother Alexandra, and Costobarus, his sister Salome's second husband, of whom she had tired.

Herod died like a dog

Herod seems to have constantly mourned for Miriamne, although in later life he remarried Doris, his first wife, whom he had previously divorced. Always afraid of losing control, Herod spied on his citizens, ruthlessly crushed any potential threats to his powerbase, modernized existing fortresses and built new ones. When Salome, Herod's cruel sister, spread poisonous rumours about Alexander and Aristobolus, Miriamne's sons, Herod had them executed by strangling (7 BC). When a group of Jews removed a golden eagle Herod had placed on the temple's main gate in honour of Caesar Augustus, they too were executed. Only five days before his own death Herod had his son Antipater put to death. Herod finally died at the age of 69 (4 BC). His feet had become swollen, his groins grew worms and he was in great pain; compare with the fate of his grandson, Acts 12. 23.

Endnotes

- 1 Attributed to 'a contemporary Jewish historian', see NORMAN KOTKER, *When Rome ruled Palestine*, Horizon Books.
- 2 Most historical details taken from N. GELB, *Herod the Great*, Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013.
- 3 MACROBIUS, SATURNALIA, 2.4.11. cited by N. GELB, *Herod the Great*, Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013, pg. 96.
- 4 N. GELB, *Herod the Great*, Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013, pg. 99.
- 5 See Isa. 34. 5-15; 63. 1-6; Jer. 49. 7-22; Ezek. 25. 12-14; 35. 1-15; Joel 3. 4; Obad. 17-21; Mal. 1. 3, 4.

Major-General Sir Charles H. Scott, KCB, RA 1848-1919

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

For those living in 21st-century Britain, this article must be read against the background of the nation's colonial history, particularly its involvement in India. It was to that country that the young Charles Scott was posted in the early days of his military career, but it was, in the grace of God, also the place where Scott was converted and where he served the Lord as well as his country for much of his adult life.



Major-General Sir Charles H. Scott was born at Portsmouth in 1848, the son of Dr. Edward John Scott and Helen Robertson. He was baptized as an infant on 26 October 1848 at St. John's, Portsea, Hampshire. He was privately educated before entering the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, London.¹ From there he joined the Royal Artillery as an officer in 1868 although but nineteen years of age. This was the commencement of an illustrious military career.

His first posting was to a battery in India, serving in several campaigns on the north-west frontier of that sub-continent. He was made a Colonel in 1892 and served in the Tirah Expedition, 1897-98. His main responsibilities were in the supervision of ordnance, crucial to the work of any armed force. His roles included: Superintendent, Gunpowder Factory, Bengal, 1881-92; Ordnance Consulting Officer for India, 1892-

95; Inspector-General of Ordnance, Punjab, 1895-1900; Director-General of Ordnance, India, 1902-05 before he was made a Military Supply Member of the Council of the Governor-General of India from 1905-09. This latter position was abolished by Lord Morley and Lord Kitchener, leading up to Scott's retirement in 1910.

It is interesting that during his early years Scott had not felt any spiritual need. His training at Woolwich passed without his being conscious of any sense of conviction: he thought little of what so soon was to become the focus of his life. Although few details are given, it was not long after his arrival in India that he became aware of his need of a Saviour. It was at this point he became an earnest seeker and student of the Bible to find the truth. His search was not in vain!

Soon after his conversion he came under the influence of Mr. Henry Dyer, a Trustee of Echoes of Service, and came into fellowship with a local assembly. Scott was a man of conviction. He took a very decided stand for Christ, and was prepared to suffer any reproach associated with that stand. He was also fastidious about the use of any spare time he may have had from his official duties. This was given unreservedly to the work for his heavenly Master. Apart from his untiring work amongst the believers at Ishapore, near Calcutta, he also immersed himself in the work of missionaries, work among soldiers, seamen, ships' apprentices, the Young Men's Christian Association, and other agencies. All of this work

he conducted with the full support of his wife.

Upon his retirement and return to England in 1910, Sir Charles was awarded the honour of Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath. His wife, the daughter of the late General J. G. Halliday, who was long associated with him in Christian work, had predeceased him. Settling in a south-eastern suburb of London, Scott became involved in many different aspects of gospel outreach, including: The Shrubbery Road Mission, Lewisham, the Gray's Yard Mission, the Victoria Homes for Working Men, Miss Perks' Soldiers' Homes, and the Soldiers' Christian Association.² Although a man of some social standing and honour, he was not distant or detached from those of a lower rank in society. Indeed, one wrote of him, "The influence of his wonderful Christ-like spirit was felt everywhere. One who served under him writes: "I do not know another such perfect specimen of a noble-hearted gentleman in every sense of the word. He spent his life in doing good and helping others, and none who knew him ever spoke of him but in terms of the deepest affection and love".³ He was generous in giving his time and energy to further any cause, or to cheer and help any of the very many who came to him for advice or assistance.

On 30th August, 1919, Scott became ill with influenza. Whether this was part of the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-20 is not documented, but the outcome was that Scott passed into the presence of the Lord in his seventy-second year. It is said that the hope of Christ's coming was very real to him, and at his funeral, at Wadhurst, 10th October, the congregation sang Francis Ridley Havergal's hymn, 'Thou art Coming, O my Saviour'. This devoted servant was with the Saviour that he had longed to see.

Endnotes

- 1 C. HAYAVADANA RAO, *The Indian Biographical Dictionary*, 1915.
- 2 Source: HENRY PICKERING, *Chief Men among the Brethren*, Pickering and Inglis, pg. 199. The author acknowledges the help of this book in the compilation of this article.
- 3 Quoted from: HENRY PICKERING, *Chief Men among the Brethren*, Pickering and Inglis, pg. 199.

ADOPTION

By **KEN TOTTON** Cambridge, England

In biblical thought, adoption means the acceptance into the family of someone who does not by nature belong there. Whilst the New Testament often describes believers' incorporation into God's family by the new birth (or regeneration), and subsequent spiritual growth, adoption points to a distinct truth. Both lines of teaching emphasize the grace of God, but adoption has in view the entry of sons into the full status, dignity, privilege, and inheritance conferred by the Father.

As we review the teaching associated with this important term, we discover the wonder of God's gracious eternal purposes in elevating us into an utterly undeserved position and condition of blessing and honour to enable us to express His character, and one day to share His glory.

First, we will note the national adoption of Israel as taught in the Old Testament. We will then consider Paul's teaching in his epistles.

Israel: national adoption

When Paul enumerates the distinctive privileges of Israel, prominent in his list stands 'adoption', Rom. 9. 4. When Moses approached Pharaoh, he was directed to declare, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn", Exod. 4. 22, 23. Much later in Israel's history God testified, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt", Hos. 11. 1. In calling Abraham, and establishing His covenant with him and his posterity, He entered into an irrevocable covenant relationship with Israel. He reminded Israel through Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities", Amos 3. 2. One consequence of God's special revelations and covenant commitment to Israel was the higher ethical standards expected of them, and therefore the rod of God's chastisement.

God's establishment of Israel as His special people was a matter of pure

grace; there were no attainments on their part meriting such an amazing commitment, Deut. 7. 7, 8. In view of this His gifts and calling are irrevocable, Rom. 11. 29. After centuries of failure and idolatry, God could yet affirm, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn", Jer. 31. 9.

Thus we see that God's adoption of His people Israel was corporate and national, all of grace, and irrevocable. It did not guarantee individual salvation, but it certainly established an environment of unique spiritual privilege, Rom. 9. 4-5.

Individual adoption

In addition to the Old Testament background of Israel's national adoption, we must consider the individual adoption practices and ceremonies current in Paul's day. In contrast to Jewish law, adoption was a common practice under Roman law. Among the ruling classes, there were instances where emperors adopted men not related to them by blood with the intention that they should succeed them as rulers. Crucially, once adopted into the new family,

the son was in all legal respects on a level with those born into that family. It was also possible for a testator to adopt someone into his will. Moreover the Roman process of adoption required the presence of seven witnesses. If after the father's death the natural heirs contested the legal validity of the adoption, the witnesses had to testify that a valid adoption had taken place in their presence.¹ According to Francis Lyall, "The adoptee is taken out of his previous state and is placed in a new relationship with his new *paterfamilias* [master of the house]. All his old debts are cancelled, and in effect he starts a new life. From that time the *paterfamilias* owns all the property and acquisitions of the adoptee, controls his personal relationships, and has rights of discipline. On the other hand, he is involved in liability by the actions of the adoptee and owes reciprocal duties of support and maintenance".²

To simplify our consideration of Paul's use of adoption in relation to Christians, we will consider the term in relation to the past, the present, and the future.

The past: Ephesians 1. 4, 5

'In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will', Eph. 1. 4, 5 ESV.

In this majestic introduction to the letter, Paul shows that the believer is eternally blessed in accordance with the will of God, through the sacrificial work of the Son, and enjoys the witness of the Holy Spirit, Eph. 1. 1-14. The loving predestination of the Father results in adoption 'to himself'. God marked believers out in advance as those who were to receive a most honourable status as His sons. This purpose goes beyond the new birth and admits the one adopted to all the rights and responsibilities of mature sonship. This glorious status is brought about 'through Jesus Christ', v. 5; through the unique and eternal Son of God the believer has been foreordained to become a son of God. "To himself" intimates the personal interest and glory God purposes in so doing, operating in sovereign grace alone, v. 5b.

A monument of grace,
a sinner saved by blood,
The streams of love I trace
up to the fountain, God,
And in His sovereign counsels
see eternal thoughts of love to me.
JOHN KENT

The present: Galatians 4. 1-7

Adoption is realized in the experience of the believer through faith in Christ, Gal. 4. 6. The context in Galatians stresses 'by faith' as opposed to the works of the law of Moses, for Galatian believers were in danger of succumbing to false teaching that would result in spiritual bondage. The law demanded obedience, but was powerless to enable its demands to be met, 3. 21. The provisional nature of the law is seen in three analogies: the jailor, 3. 22-23, the child supervisor (or pedagogue), 3. 24, and the child's guardian, 4. 1-3. By contrast the gospel leads to freedom, mature sonship, and heirship, 3. 25-29; 4. 4-7. This is as a result of the blessings of justification and adoption, and the gift of the Spirit of God's Son. Now that 'faith had come', 3. 25, to re-engage with the law would be to hark back to an era of bondage and spiritual minority.

In this passage we learn that:

- The adoption of believers was a specific objective of the redeeming work of Christ, 4. 5.
- In the marvellous logic of grace, God animates His adopted sons with the very Spirit of His own Son, 'whereby we cry, Abba, Father'. This gracious and radical work in our hearts far transcends what was possible in any human process of legal adoption. 'Abba, Father' is the cry of believers conscious of their new-found dignity, status, and intimacy with their loving Father, Mark 14. 36; Rom. 8. 15. Abba is the Aramaic word for 'father', cp. Rom. 8. 14-17; father is *pater*, a Greek word added for emphasis, and perhaps further suggesting the uniting of Jew and Gentile in Christ.
- Because Christians are already sons and 'of age', they are in a position to receive the Father's



inheritance, beginning with the promised Spirit of God's Son, v. 6, cp. Luke 15. 31.

- Since redemption means that the enslaved are set free, God's adopted sons must be wary of anything that would entangle them in bondage, Gal. 5. 1.

The present: Romans 8. 14-17

This passage forms a transition from the believer's present, 8. 1-13, to his or her future, vv. 18-30. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are already God's sons. In echoes of the Galatians passage considered above, they have received the Spirit of adoption whereby they cry 'Abba, Father'. In so designating the Holy Spirit, Paul is pointing to the Spirit as the One who brings about our adoption by uniting us with Christ, setting us free from anxious fear, irrespective of whether one's past was in Judaism or paganism. Verse 16 confirms the fact that we are God's children; this knowledge is conveyed to us by His Spirit.

As adopted sons and therefore heirs of God we are destined to attain the glory of God, and in verse 17 our union with Christ is most emphatic. On the other hand, we do not yet enjoy all that God's gracious adoption has purposed for us. Because we are one with Him, we must follow His pathway to glory through suffering – sufferings which under God can be formative in rounding out our characters as those redeemed by blood, Rom. 5. 3-5.

The future: Romans 8. 23

The ultimate goal of adoption is the restoration of human beings to perfect freedom and harmony with

God their Father. It is fitting that the final reference to our adoption should be seen against the broad background of the coming cosmic emancipation, Rom. 8. 18-30. The believer experiences the groans and yearnings for full liberation that are reflected across the entire burdened creation.

F. F. BRUCE comments, "The 'adoption' here is the full manifestation of the status of believers when they are invested as sons and daughters of God (cp. verses 14-17) and enter on the inheritance which is theirs by virtue of that status. 'The redemption of our bodies' is the resurrection, a theme on which Paul had recently enlarged in 2 Corinthians 4. 7 – 5. 10'.³

Summary

Adoption takes believers out of their former state, and places them in a new relationship with God. They are made part of God's family forever, with corresponding duties and rights. All their time, property, and energy should from that time forth be brought under God's control. All the Father's wealth is theirs to inherit. This is a surpassing honour, and should lead to a deep sense of personal obligation, 1 Pet 1. 17-19.

Endnotes

- 1 F. F. BRUCE, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, pp. 197, 198.
- 2 F. LYALL, *Roman Law in the Writings of Paul: Adoption*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 88, No. 4, Dec. 1969, pp. 458-466.
- 3 F. F. BRUCE, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary series. Revised ed., IVP, 1985, pp. 164, 165.

Character Studies in the Book of Proverbs

The Proud Man

By **JOHN SCARSBROOK** Killamarsh, England

Part 5

All sin is abhorrent to the mind of God, and totally foreign to the divine nature. In view of this, it would seem perfectly reasonable to ask why is it that the sin of pride in particular calls forth such censure on a number of occasions in the word of God?

For example, in Proverbs chapter 6 verses 16 to 19, the wise man highlights a number of sinful actions, which we are assured 'the Lord hates'. The expression 'six things . . . yea seven' would suggest that the list is not exhaustive, but in prominent first place is 'a proud look'. In chapter 16 verse 5, the proud man is condemned as 'an abomination to the Lord' and in the New Testament both James, in chapter 4 verse 6, and Peter, in his first Epistle chapter 5 verse 5, quoting from the Septuagint rendering of Proverbs chapter 3 verse 34, remind us that 'God resisteth (stands against, to oppose) the proud'.

Could it be that each manifestation of pride recalls that occasion when Lucifer, son of the morning, declared, 'I will ascend into heaven . . . I will be like the most High', Isa. 14. 12-15? Or when sin entered the world through the desire of our first parents to 'be as God'? If that is so, we can readily understand why a holy God is so opposed to every manifestation of pride in the heart of man; pride is a direct challenge to the sovereignty of God.

It was pride in Cain's heart, when he saw that Abel's offering was accepted and his own rejected, that led to the first murder, Gen. 4. 8. Pride was behind the rebellion of Korah, Num. 16. 3; the reason for the rejection of Saul, 1 Sam. 15. 17, and the psychotic behaviour of Haman, Esther 5-6. Pride brought Nebuchadnezzar low, Dan. 4.

30, and Herod even lower, Acts 12. 23! It was the proud leaders of the Israel who despised 'the carpenter's son', who looked down on 'the Nazarene', who, in their hearts, were saying like the men in the parable, 'we will not have this man to reign over us', Luke 19. 14.

If we are honest, we would all have to admit to owning some element of pride. It is an endemic trait of the old nature. The book of Proverbs, however, leaves us in no doubt that pride is not something to be treated lightly, or dismissed as irrelevant. The man with a proud look is closely linked with a number of actions, all of which are designed to hurt others, Prov. 6. 17-19. His look is one of disdain; he considers himself superior. He has no intention of 'looking on the things of others', save only to compare them unfavourably with his own things. He is the Pharisee of Luke chapter 18 verse 11. His prayer will not be heard. God will resist him.

The principle of sowing and reaping is woven throughout the book of Proverbs. If we follow the man with a proud look in chapter 6, he travels no further than chapter 11 verse 2, before coming to shame (lit. to be held in contempt). What he thought of others is now visited upon his own head! In chapter 13 verse 10, the wise man traces the background of strife or contention. He finds that it has its roots in pride. This can easily be illustrated by a number of scriptures,

e.g., Judg. 12. 1-4; Luke 22. 24. Remember also those disagreements between brethren and sisters which we considered to be just a clash of personalities; the underlying problem is invariably pride!

By the time we come to chapter 15 verse 25, we have followed the proud man to his house. On the way, we passed by the house of the righteous man in verse 6, an altogether different place. The 'houses' in the book of Proverbs are a fruitful study for the interested believer; they reflect the character of the occupants and have lessons for us of practical value. The proud man is no exception. We notice, however, that whatever he has managed to make of his house, and doubtless he is proud of it, he is not content. We see him casting a covetous eye toward his neighbour's property. She is a widow and he considers her an easy target, not unlike the scribes in Luke's Gospel 'which devour widows' houses'. However, he reckons without the One whose eye is on the widow: He will protect her borders, He will not allow the proud man's ambitions to trouble her. At the same time, He 'will destroy the house of the proud', 15. 25.

We are reminded in the prophecy of Obadiah of the pride of Edom. They thought themselves invulnerable. They felt secure in their own strength. How foolish! A perfect illustration of Proverbs chapter 16 verse 18 that 'pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall'. Their folly was that they looked down upon the Lord's people, and even stretched out their hand against them, Obad. vv. 12, 13. It is well to remember that none can touch the believer, or lay hands with malicious intent on anything that belongs to the Lord's people, without leaving themselves open to dreadful retribution.

Another important lesson that we learn from this character is that pride is a disease of the heart, e.g., 16. 5; 28. 25. It is not always evident to others that we may be harbouring pride. Eventually, however, it will manifest itself, possibly just in a look, e.g., 6. 17; 21. 4. An expression on the face which speaks volumes without a word being spoken. An attitude, a gesture

that clearly says, 'I consider myself to be better than you'; there is nothing Christ-like about such behaviour. The Lord Jesus is the complete antithesis of all aspects of pride. The words of Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 to 11, which we love so much, show us One who voluntarily humbled Himself, something totally foreign to the natural heart of man. How clearly we see that He was never a partaker in Adam's fall. He was not, as the hymnwriter would have us believe, 'a second Adam', Cain was that! The Lord Jesus was 'the second man, the Lord from heaven', 1 Cor. 15. 47, a man of a different order.

How beautiful it is to follow the steps of the Lord Jesus through the Gospels. To see a true man in whom was no vestige of pride. He was never ashamed of His lowly upbringing in Nazareth, He was content with homespun garments and with the company of those whom others considered unlearned and ignorant. He appreciated the suppers at Bethany; He was grateful for those unnamed ones who would lend Him a donkey or a room prepared for the Passover. He delighted to receive sinners and eat with them; He would take a basin of water and a towel to wash the disciples' feet in true humility (unlike the annual Romish charade at Canterbury designed to exploit publicity to the full).

Another evidence of pride in the heart is any form of boasting. On a number of occasions, we hear the proud man, as he insists on telling us just how much better he is than others, or what he can do that we cannot, e.g., 25. 14; 27. 1. Few things are more offensive to the ear than a diatribe of boastful claims. How much more acceptable to 'let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth', 27. 2, if, indeed, any praise is due!

As believers, we should ever remember the question posed to the proud Corinthians, 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?', 1 Cor. 4. 7. Everything we have, anything we have achieved, all our hopes for the future, we owe to Him! Paul, the once proud Pharisee, grasped the truth of this in Philippians chapter 3 verses 4 to 7. Those things that he once held dear and in which he boasted, he now

counted as worthless when compared with the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. Again, in Galatians chapter 6 verse 14, his only glorying was in the cross, that which separated him from a proud and boastful world.

As we leave the proud man, we cannot but notice that as he began in chapter 6 verse 17, so he ends in chapter 30 verse 13. The intervening warnings and instruction have been ignored. The proud look is still there, but now it has affected a whole generation! Sadly, we see all around us a spirit of independence, rejection of the word

of God, promotion of man and his 'achievements'. May we make it our ambition to always render due thanks and appreciation for all things to our God and Saviour, and to make it our prayer that we may be preserved from a proud spirit.

'Naught have I gotten
but what I received,
Grace hath bestowed it
since I have believed.
Boasting excluded, pride I abase,
I'm only a sinner saved by grace'.

JAMES M. GRAY



Paul the Priest

By **STEPHEN FELLOWES** Skibbereen, Ireland

Part 1

In these few articles we purpose to trace some of the references and allusions to the Old Testament priesthood throughout the writings of the apostle Paul.

Under the old economy of law, priesthood was restricted to those who were not only of the tribe of Levi but also of the house of Aaron, Lev. 8. 2. In contrast, in the present dispensation of grace, priesthood is the common privilege of every child of God, it is their birthright. Peter tells us that we are 'a holy priesthood' and 'a royal priesthood', 1 Pet. 2. 5, 9. As a holy priest we have complete freedom to enter into the presence of God and 'offer up spiritual sacrifices'; indeed our place by divine grace is that of a purged worshipper within the veil, Heb. 10. 19-22. Then, as a royal priest, we bear responsibility to tell forth God's praises in keeping with the dignity and honour conferred upon us, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

Our thoughts are often occupied with active service, whether in the preaching of the gospel, exposition of the scriptures, or whatever service we feel the Lord has fitted us to perform. It is essential to understand that all service for God needs to be carried out in a spirit of worship, and it must be accompanied by a priestly touch. The language of Paul is pregnant with this thought when he says in Romans chapter 1 verse 9, 'whom I serve with (in) my spirit in the gospel of his Son'. He served worshipfully, not seeing it as a mere act of duty but with an inward devotion prompted by love for his Master. We do well to challenge our own hearts – do we do the same? Is our service for the Lord merely mechanical; going through the motions or does it stem from a worshipping spirit?

Further, notice that the two ideas of worship and service go hand in

hand, they are not to be divorced. Sometimes we speak of worship fitting a person for service, and while this is a safe principle in itself, it does nevertheless need some qualification. It is not that, having worshipped, we then leave worship behind and go forth to serve as if they are separate entities. The two must be synchronous; we should endeavour to serve in the attitude of worship, as DARBY helpfully puts it, 'All true service must flow from communion with the source of service'.

Presentation at the altar

'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service', Rom. 12. 1.

The imagery and language here is borrowed from the sacrificial work of the Aaronic priesthood, the service of which is summed up as 'daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices', Heb. 10. 11. Paul speaks of the priests as 'they which wait at the altar', 1 Cor. 9. 13. He was a man whose whole life and service was connected with the altar.

Here, at the commencement of Romans chapter 12, Paul brings us to the altar and appeals to every believer that his life should be on that altar for God; our lives should be marked by total consecration. This is not something for a select company of supposed 'super-Christians', an exclusive circle that most of us will never be part of, rather this is the normal requirement for all the saved. If every saint has been a recipient of God's mercies, then every saint should be a living sacrifice to God.

The **basis of the appeal** is the 'mercies of God'. These mercies are the tender compassions of God that have been shown towards us in sovereign grace. Exactly what the 'therefore' of our verse connects with is a question that has often been raised. In the immediate context there is an obvious link with the end of chapter 11, where God's providential dealings have opened up the way for Him to show mercy to all, Rom. 11. 30-32. This is doubtless a cause for gratitude towards God.

However, because chapters 9 to 11 of Romans are somewhat parenthetical, some see the link with the end of chapter 8, Rom. 8. 35-39, where the apostle rejoices in our inseparable union with divine love. Both the love of Christ expressed at Calvary and the love of God, the great fountain-head of divine love, are eternally binding and nothing in the universe is able to sever us from them.

These two suggestions are equally valid but rather than choose one of them and reject the other, why can we not include them both with the whole of the Epistle from chapter 1 to chapter 12 and see that 'the mercies of God' are wide and most comprehensive; they embrace every blessing that has flowed to us through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such blessings include justification, forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, salvation, sonship, heirship, glorification, and more; the list of divine bestowments goes on and on, and as the believer consciously stands as the unworthy recipient of all of this he can only do one thing, that is, present himself to God.

The **substance of the appeal** is mentioned next, namely 'that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice'. The Old Testament priest put many things upon the altar, including bullocks, birds, sheep, and flour, but of course it would be unthinkable to put himself upon it. Paul now appeals to the saints to give themselves and nothing less. The Macedonian saints 'first gave their own selves to the Lord', 2 Cor. 8. 5.

The subject of the body features large in the Roman Epistle, from its dishonour in chapter 1 to its dedication in chapter 12; indeed it is one of the great themes of the book. In chapter 6 verses 12 to 23, we are reminded that in our unconverted days we served sin with the members of our bodies. We need only look at the list in chapter 3 verses 10 to 18, to see how accurate the word of God is, demonstrating that our tongues, our feet, our eyes, have all been fully committed to serving sin. Now, having been converted, says Paul, we are to present that same body in the service of God and 'yield (our) members servants to righteousness unto holiness', Rom. 6. 19.

It is a sad indictment on us that all too often we don't put into spiritual things the effort, commitment and dedication that we happily applied in our unconverted days to the pursuits of the natural man. But let us come even closer and ask ourselves, do we apply ourselves as much to spiritual things as the legitimate, natural things of life? Do I consider my house, my car, my clothes, my hobbies to be more important to me than the things of God? We can all too easily hide behind the 'legitimate' things of life to the neglect of the things which really matter.

The sacrifice is described as 'living', an obvious contrast to the sacrifices that were killed under law. Those animals were killed once and for all, but the nature of the Christian sacrifice is that it is living, it is a continuous, ongoing thing. Ideally God desires that this presentation be done once and for all, but many saints who seek to live for God often feel the need to renew their commitment to spiritual things.

It must be 'holy' because only then will it be 'acceptable unto God'. All that is offered to God must bear this fundamental characteristic. 'God is light', 1 John 1. 5, His holiness is unsullied. He cannot overlook sin or compromise with it. As we move through an increasingly defiling world may God keep and preserve

us in purity because only then will we be of any use in His service. 'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire', Heb. 12. 28, 29.

Yet for all the distinctiveness of New Testament priesthood compared with the Old Testament, there is a certain parallel with the consecration of the priests as recorded in Exodus chapter 29 verses 19 to 21. When the blood of the ram of consecration was slain it was taken and applied to the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand and the great toe of the right foot. The application is all too obvious but let it speak to us again! The blood of Christ has claimed us for Himself, the ear reminds me of the claims upon what I hear; my ear should be open to the word of God, and it alone should be my guiding principle. The blood also has claims upon what I do, as indicated in the hand, and upon my pathway as seen in the foot. Remember the words to the carnal Corinthians, 'What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's', 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.

The reasonableness of the appeal

It is called our 'reasonable service' or 'intelligent service' JND, because it is the reasoned judgement of the child of God as a new creature in Christ, conscious of the fullness of divine mercies received. The only spiritually reasonable thing to do in light of these mercies is to present himself.

This he does as an act of worship, for the word for 'service' is basically akin to the word mentioned in chapter 1 verse 9, where Paul serves 'with (his) spirit', worshipfully.

The sense of it is captured succinctly in the words of John Douglas from Scotland, 'I am on the altar for God in Romans 12, because Christ is on the cross for me in Romans 3'.



The Street Life Foodbank

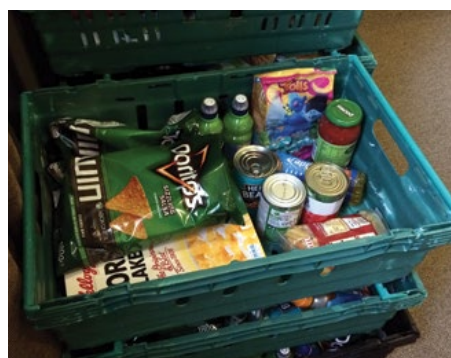
By **ANDREW SHANKS** Newcastle West, Ireland

On 22nd September 2017, the Street Life Food Bank opened in the assembly building at Newcastle West, County Limerick, Ireland. We look back after six months and can truly say that this gospel outreach has brought ourselves and the local Christians into contact with more unsaved people on a regular basis than we have seen for a long time at the assembly.

The idea of the food bank commenced around Easter 2017 when we started praying, along with another couple, to really seek the Lord's guidance on how to effectively reach people in our local town and surrounding rural areas. We realized that very few people were attending our weekly gospel/family service and we asked ourselves the question, were the local community even aware of the assembly and who we are and what we believe? For many years, through the faithful efforts of some in the local assembly, street work has been done, door-to-door work has also been done, along with literature distribution and calendars. As we continue some of these methods, we believed the Lord was asking us to get out into the community and become connected with and relevant to the local people.

Over a period of time we considered various options that we brought before the Lord. These included a Charity Shop and an Honesty Café, as well as others, but the Lord clearly closed the doors on those ideas.

In July 2017, we became aware of an



Irish-based organization called Food Cloud (in the UK this is called Fair Share) who connect with supermarket stores like Tesco, Aldi and Lidl and, in trying to reduce food waste, pass food from the stores to local charitable organizations. We attended a meeting to find out about how Food Cloud operated and we started to explore how to run a food bank as an outreach. There are many food banks run by non-Christian organizations and so we prayed that if we were to move forward with this idea that we would be different in order to be able to use it as a gospel outreach.

After doing more research, and a lot of prayer, the idea of the food bank was mentioned to the other elders at the assembly, and subsequently to the whole assembly. After addressing some initial concerns, we proceeded to take the first steps to start a food bank in the assembly building in Newcastle West. However, it was decided to set up a separate charitable trust called 'Street Life' for both this work and a subsequent trailer gospel work.

In preparation for opening the doors of the food bank, we had visits from the food safety office of Food Cloud and also the local Environmental Health Office to confirm that we complied with Food Safety Standards. This resulted in us purchasing a commercial fridge, freezer and washing machine, as well as using the storage capacity in the building to the maximum potential.

We registered with the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) program, which is a European-funded initiative which provides an allocation of dried ambient food to organizations to help feed the poor. We also receive donations of food through Tesco, Aldi and Lidl. This food would be near its use-by date but is still usable and would generally consist of fruit and vegetables, bakery items and chilled food. We are also able to purchase food at a reduced cost through the Food Cloud organization to help supplement what we are given from the above sources. We have also been blessed with receiving food donations from various local churches and other establishments at various times.

We decided that each week we would make up food parcels with ambient/dried goods. One type of box was suitable for an individual or couple and the other box for a family. The person is then able to choose from the items of fruit and vegetables, bakery and frozen meats and the quantities they can pick depends on the amount of food we have available.

At the same time, we also have a small coffee shop style area where we offer free tea and coffee, and fresh soup is made each week. This provides an opportunity for people to stay and sit down and chat and this has provided us with opportunities to get to know people and to reach out to them with the love of Christ. After six months, we now have an average of thirty people staying and sitting for up to an hour.

As we got nearer to opening on 22nd September, we really had no idea if people would come and, if so, who would come. We distributed leaflets





into the offices of the local police station, doctors' surgeries, local government agencies as well as shops and libraries and set up a specific Facebook page for this outreach.

Upon opening, we quickly saw the great need in our town and the surrounding areas. Many people are affected by food poverty caused by many circumstances and reasons. We also learned very quickly that a lot of people are lonely and long for company and someone to talk to. Over the six months since we opened, we have had direct contact with the lonely, hurting, addicts, single parents, people with psychological illness, ex-convicts, people who believe they are seeing spirits in their homes, homosexual's and middle-class people who have now fallen on hard times. This has been a real eye-opener to many of us at the assembly and a reminder to us of how much people need the Lord, and to hear the gospel. One constant prayer we have as we run the food bank is that the Lord would help us to love the unsaved around us.

We have been very careful to try to exhibit Christ-likeness in our approach to running the Food Bank and Café area. From the moment someone steps in the building and until they leave, we want them to feel welcome and of value. For some people it takes everything in their capability to come over the doorstep. We have a good team of helpers

from the assembly who work hard behind the scenes and also to try to share the gospel with people as they spend time in the building. We have learned many things since we started, including the wonderful opportunities the food bank has brought to share the message of the gospel to many in the local community, local business owners and users of the food bank. We have also been blessed by a good team of extra volunteers from the local community, many of whom are not saved. This has also provided us with another mission field as we witness to the volunteers in different ways. We are blessed to have some close neighbours of ours who come along

to help, as well as foreign nationals, young mums, and retired school teachers. Many have commented that this is 'more than a food bank'.

We have been blessed to see how the Lord has and is continuing to use the food bank as a means to get the gospel into our local community. Since we started, we have had 189 different individuals come to the food bank. This equates to 1183 family members being impacted by the food with an average of forty-six people per week. The maximum we have had is fifty-seven in one week. The Lord Jesus looked upon the multitude with compassion but was also accused of receiving sinners and eating with them. It is a joy and privilege to get to know many in our local community whom the Lord loves and yet they just don't know. Through consistently showing kindness and compassion, people on the receiving end often ask, 'Why?' This gives us an opportunity to explain the grace of God.

There are many long hours involved in the running of the food bank. This could be in the sorting of food, the organizing of volunteers, calling in with stores, or simply visiting someone in need. It has brought a new focus to the work and it has also brought us into contact with many people in need of the Saviour.

Thank you for praying for us and with us in this exciting work for the Lord.



Seed Sowing in the Marketplace and the Shows

By **STEVE CHAPMAN** Innisfail, North Queensland, Australia

'Serve the Lord with gladness', Ps. 100. 2.

I count it an honour to share with you something of the Lord's work of sowing the good seed of the word of God in the marketplaces and shows of Australia. I do so humbly, emphasizing that all the glory belongs to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

It was my late father, Donald Chapman of the Cooroy Assembly, who was instrumental in inspiring me to move into and share in this ministry. My father took on this work when my brother Paul went to Colombia/Venezuela to serve the Lord there. Don used left-over calendars from Trinitarian Bible Society and Bible Truth Publishers. Cutting the picture with the scripture verse off, he would then laminate and glue them to boards that he prepared, cut especially to size, routed and with a painted border to make a nice edge. Strings were then attached to the back for wall hanging, or a small stand glued to smaller ones for a desk-top or sideboard display.

Don also went into another area of making place mats and coaster sets. Heather, his wife, was also involved with this as she would cut out pictures and verses from various

old calendars and set them up as a 'master copy'. They would then copy as many as needed on a colour printer purchased for the work. They developed many different picture groups, such as animals, birds, horses, cats, dogs, etc., plus scenes, flowers and many more. For these a 3mm board was used, cut to size, corners rounded, edges painted and then cork was glued to the back side of the mat. In those early days, Don would go to the local Agricultural Show and distribute these texts and place mats with coasters free of charge, along with Bibles, tracts and a good variety of booklets.

For almost twenty years I lived approximately six hours' drive north of Cooroy at Rockhampton in Central Queensland. In 1997, along with another brother, John Shields of the Kent Street Assembly in Rockhampton, I commenced a work at our local Agricultural Show, which was a three-day show commencing at 9am and going through to 10.30pm each day. My father, Don, would make the six-hour drive north to be with us in the work and also provide most of the supply of texts for the show. These he would prepare throughout the year to have enough stock. At that time, I was still in full-time employment in the motor industry. This work carried on until 2007, when I moved with my young family to the far north of Queensland, where we continue unto this day by the will of God.

The local brethren at Innisfail had already been doing the local show each year, and from that it was

recognized that the local market held each month was another more regular opportunity to reach out with the word of God to the community and within the local witness area of the assembly. After this, I researched the number of markets within a reasonable distance of home and discovered that there were markets happening each Saturday and Sunday, and some also on a Friday evening. Each of these was on a set rota, meaning that they were always on the same weekend each month, so that our local market is always the third Saturday of the month, providing an opportunity to establish a regular witness for Christ in each public place.

Serving the Lord was not a new desire for us, and was demonstrated to us by our parents as an essential part of the Christian pathway. I also believed the Lord had called me to serve Him and this was always in our thoughts, my wife at the time (now with the Lord) had also been serving in Bethlehem at the time we were married. God graciously provided another help-meet in Coralie, who had served in Zambia for five years prior to our marriage; so together we served the Lord. In 2011, we were commended to this work, in particular in the far north of Queensland, to sow the good seed of the word of God throughout the various marketplaces and also at some shows.

Being a motor mechanic by trade and having learned many life skills, I have been able to channel this into the work of manufacturing scripture texts for the glory of God. With modern technology, we are able to use quality photography as a base, then adding a variety of scripture texts to them. There is a brother and his wife at Gosford, New South Wales, Noel and Jenny Kerslake, whose daughter,





being a graphic designer, designs the picture, then Noel gets them printed at a printing works after which he distributes to a number of the Lord's servants throughout Australia, who then use them as I do for the production of scripture texts.

Brother John Shields of Rockhampton purchased a high quality printer and does prints for this work also. From these two brethren I am well supplied in prints for the work, apart from doing a small variety myself.

The preparation of the texts today is by using a 6mm MDF board which we cut on a large table saw such as cabinet makers use. These are cut to suit A4 and A5 size prints and routed on the edge to give a nice appearance. The edges are primed, sanded and then painted with a gloss top coat to give a well presented wall or desk plaque with scripture text. Once the paint preparation is complete, we glue the print onto the board and leave them stacked with heavy weights to press them while the glue dries. This ensures no air bubbles are left and edges stay nice and flat. Once this part



is done we cut strings and staple them onto the back of the A4 plaque for wall hanging, and a small stand is applied to the back of the A5 plaques suitable for a desk-top display.

At the markets, first we used a small gazebo, set up tables and carried everything in containers, loading them in and out of the vehicle each time. After a few years of this, I felt it would be good to set up a trailer as a permanent display and the Lord provided in a remarkable way. The exact cost of all the materials was given and I was able to do all the work of building the trailer myself. Through the years there has been much to encourage. Although it is very much the kind of work that we may not see the full result of until we get to glory. There have been some we have witnessed to coming to know the Saviour. There



is also encouragement in knowing that many souls are made aware of God, and their accountability to Him, which, in turn, often causes a response, whether good or bad. It has been a wonderful opportunity to encourage other Christians; some have expressed how refreshing it is to see a witness for Christ in a world that is fast departing from God and the acknowledgement of Him.

The nearest market I attend is just fifteen minutes away, so very handy in the home town of the assembly. The most distant is a two-hour drive, so, on that morning, I am up at 3.30am to leave by 4am to set up by 7am. At the local market at Innisfail, a local brother usually helps, but all the others I go to alone, except for occasional help. As I have four children, aged twelve years down to four years, Coralie is busy looking after the children.

Finally, may I encourage the Lord's people. If you have an exercise to serve Him, may you consider this wonderful way of reaching souls on a personal level and seek to bring them to Christ through the living word. Everything is given away free. That provides the first opportunity to speak to people, because that generates the question, 'Why is it free?' From that first opportunity, we go on to tell of the free gift of God!

Then, the question of cost follows. This, again, gives opportunity to tell of the great cost to our Lord Jesus Christ to be able to provide the free gift of eternal life to all who will believe!

The Wise Men from the East

‘We are come to worship him’

By **COLIN LACEY** Bath, England

There is a real danger that we can become so familiar with the various characters surrounding the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ that we fail to be challenged by them any longer. There are few statements that ought to challenge us more, when we meet together in local assembly capacity, than those of the wise men from the east, ‘We . . . are come to worship him’, Matt. 2. 2. Worship ought to underpin our words and actions; however, it is often only a word that is upon our lips and genuine worship is absent from our gatherings.

The exercise of the wise men presents us, both individually and collectively, with some challenging questions as to the nature of our worship. True worship often comes from the most unlikely of sources; in this case, Gentiles from the East. It is worthy of note that the first teaching concerning worship in the New Testament was directed by the Saviour to a Samaritan woman! Genuine worship, when we meet together, does not necessarily come from those who are most prominent. The silent worship of women and the sincere, if hesitant, prayer of a young believer are heard in heaven and they make a significant contribution to collective worship.

How far are we prepared to ‘travel’ to worship?

It is interesting to observe in the scriptures that worship involves a journey, not simply in terms of measurable distance, but spiritually. The first mention of the word ‘**worship**’ is linked to the three-day journey that Abram undertook from Canaan to the land of Moriah; indeed, on reaching the location, he climbed a mountain **before** he worshipped, ‘I and the lad will go yonder and worship’, Gen. 22. 5. The second mention of the word appears in the account of the journey of Abram’s servant from Canaan to Mesopotamia to find a bride for

Isaac. On receiving the approval of Laban and Bethuel that he could take Rebekah back with him to become Isaac’s bride, it is recorded that, ‘he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth’, 24. 52.

In all likelihood, the wise men travelled from Persia, or Babylon, to visit the Lord Jesus, a journey that took Ezra four months in Old Testament days. Each of these journeys was arduous and must have made great physical demands upon the travellers; however, they carried with them a deep spiritual burden that outweighed the physical demands. The spiritual, not the physical, journey was the motivation for the participants and thus they were rewarded. The outcome was sincere worship to God, who had led them all the way. The psalmist encourages us to make a similar journey, ‘Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and **worship thou him**’, Ps. 45. 11. Abram, Isaac, Abram’s servant and the wise men left their homes behind in order to worship; indeed, it has often been observed that the nearer they got to the place of worship, the farther they were from home! How far from the cares of home are we when we meet for worship?

Whom do we come to worship?

Sadly, we often need to be reminded that worship should be about a person, not people, nor a place. It is easy for us to be distracted by lesser things and driven by unworthy motives. Such a charge could not be levelled against the wise men. As they approached the end of their journey, they asked, ‘Where is **he** that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen **his** star in the east, and are come to worship **him**’, Matt. 2. 2. On arrival, Matthew records of them, ‘And when they were come into the house, **they saw the young child** with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worshipped him**’, v. 11. Above anything and everyone else, it was ‘the young child’ who captured their attention and it was Him alone, not His mother, whom they worshipped. Luke tells us that the disciples, following the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, ‘worshipped **him**, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy’, Luke 24. 52. Does the Lord Jesus occupy the first place in our hearts when we come to worship?

Where do we come to worship?

The journey of the wise men was not aimless. They knew where they were heading, ‘they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was’, Matt. 2. 9. It was here that they worshipped and offered their gifts, i.e., where the Lord was in the midst. God gave them specific guidance by means of the special star that He had placed in the sky to lead them. Do we have a desire to gather together for worship in the place where God has chosen to set His name and where the Lord Jesus is in the midst? He has not left us without guidance in His word as to where and how we should meet. In Old Testament days, it was one thing (the temple) in one place (Jerusalem), John 4. 20; however, it is now one thing (the local church/assembly, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus) in many places. Do we appreciate, when we gather, that the Lord is present in the midst?

How do we come to worship?

It is possible to come together as local

believers out of habit or custom. We can lose the freshness of the early days of our Christian experience. The wise men travelled with expectancy to meet the Lord Jesus. They spoke enthusiastically about what they had seen and enjoyed, 'We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him', Matt. 2. 2. It was real to their experience and they could not rest until they worshipped the One to whom the star pointed. Do we share CHARLES WESLEY'S experience? 'My heart is full of Christ, and longs Its glorious matter to declare; Of Him I make my loftier songs, And cannot from His praise forbear'.

How do we worship?

Firstly, the wise men worshipped **with overflowing joy**, 'they rejoiced with exceeding great joy', v. 10. In order to avoid the misguided excesses of other Christian groups in this direction, we can be guilty of robbing our worship of rightful joy. As a result, it can sound dull and repetitive. Secondly, they approached the Lord **with deep reverence**. Joyful worship must not, of course, lead to a lack of reverence. The wise men approached with reverential fear; they 'fell down, and worshipped him', v. 11. Although there is no set position for worship laid down in the New Testament, our bodily posture ought always to reflect the majesty of the One we are approaching. Casual language and

appearance must be avoided. Thirdly, they came **with their treasures**, 'and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh', v. 11.

Their preparation, timing, actions and gifts were entirely fitting for the occasion. Their hearts were prepared for worship before they set out on their journey. Their timing was impeccable, which reflected the fact that they were led by God. They not only brought personal treasures, but they also opened and presented them. Not to have done so would have led to disappointment and a sense of failure at allowing the opportunity to worship pass them by. No one else in the house mattered to them or distracted them from their prime desire to worship the Lord. Their gifts revealed their deep appreciation of Him. Gold spoke of His deity, frankincense pointed to the fragrance of His holy life and myrrh proclaimed His suffering and death. We would do well to examine whether our worship reflects these same aspects of the Lord's person and work. We should always come to the various meetings in the local assembly prepared to share, at the appropriate moment, the treasures that we have gleaned about the Lord Jesus.

It is of interest to note that Babylon's merchandise in a future day will include, 'gold . . . odours . . . and

frankincense', Rev. 18. 12, 13; however, it will come to nothing and its merchants will mourn the loss of them. Isaiah predicted the day when Gentiles will come to the Messiah with their gifts of gold, and incense; indeed, they will praise the Lord, Isa. 60. 6; however, there will be an absence of myrrh, since His sufferings will be a thing of the past when He reigns.

What do we do after we have worshipped?

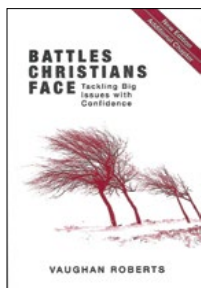
As far as the wise men were concerned, their one desire was to be obedient to the word of God, 'And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way', Matt. 2. 12. True worship will always 'take you home another way', spiritually speaking, from the way you came. The journey will not always be easy. For the wise men, it meant crossing the inhospitable and mountainous territory east of Bethlehem.

What impact does our worship have on others?

Once the wise men had made it known that they had come to worship Christ, Matthew records that Herod was 'troubled, and all Jerusalem with him', v. 3. Are those who live around where we gather aware that there is a worshipping community in their midst?



Book Reviews



Battles Christians Face – Tackling big issues with confidence

Vaughan Roberts

Paperback. 162 pages. Published by Authentic Media Ltd, 52 Presley Way, Crownhill, Milton Keynes, MK8 0ES. ISBN 978-1-78078-115-0.

This book was first published in 2007 and has undergone a number of reprints, the latest in 2017. This may well be an indication of its popularity, as the issues it deals with are undoubtedly the challenges facing young, and not so young, believers in 2019.

The author, who has written other very practical books, is the rector of St. Ebbes Church in Oxford and Director of the *Proclamation Trust*. He has worked extensively with students, a work which has given him a clear understanding of the need for such a book as this.

Taking time to record relevant scriptures at the commencement of each chapter, the author then

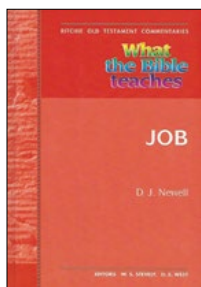
develops his subject based upon these and other scriptures. The reader is left in no doubt that the guidance, instruction and warnings given are not just the opinions of the author, but the clear teaching of the word of God.

Commencing with a chapter on 'Image', something which has become an obsession for many in today's world, the writer continues with chapters on 'Lust', 'Guilt', 'Doubt' and 'Depression', among others. All of which find a responsive echo in the life of many who genuinely seek to follow their Lord, yet find their footsteps dogged by these unwanted companions.

In a chapter entitled 'Keeping

spirituality fresh', ROBERTS ventures the suggestion that we all have an 'Achilles' heel'; a vulnerable point of weakness through which the adversary can cause us to fall and become ensnared by one, or more of the negative emotions dealt with in other chapters. There is no suggestion in the book that the writer is providing a 'quick fix' for the various afflictions facing the believer; rather, there is a constant need to maintain a closeness to the Lord Jesus, an awareness that we are indwelt by the Spirit of God, the need for prayer, and for regular reading, and studying of scripture.

This is a book which the reviewer found very helpful and would not hesitate to recommend to others.



Job, part of *What the Bible Teaches* series of Old Testament Commentaries

David Newell

Hardback, Published by John Ritchie Ltd. 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland, KA3 1RH. ISBN 978-1-912522-25-5

This commentary by DAVID NEWELL in the *What the Bible Teaches* series is a detailed and learned exegesis, dealing thoroughly with the difficulties and profundities of this ancient book, yet at the same time managing to be highly readable.

The author achieves this by a straightforward, friendly manner of writing, avoiding pomposity and platitudes, while the sprinkling of literary references helps to keep things from ever going dry. I laughed out loud at the use of the story of Pooh, Piglet and the Woozles as a simile for the looping arguments encountered in Job, most of the humour coming in such an unexpected way, yet expressing precisely my own feelings. Reference to the writings of Swift, Shakespeare, Shelley and Milton are all imaginatively brought to bear to illustrate points being made. The broad sweep from Handel's *Messiah* to *The House at Pooh Corner* is done

unpretentiously, and to good effect.

In the main, the author compares scripture with scripture, connecting each verse with the wider biblical context and wrestling out a clear meaning.

There is no slithering over tricky passages; the author highlights where there are difficulties in translation or interpretation, but always says what he thinks is the answer, and why.

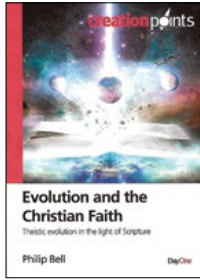
Throughout, pointed practical lessons apply what is taught to everyday life. These are pithily expressed in proverbial style, e.g., 'Inherited traditions need constantly to be measured against the infallible Word'; 'The better we know the scriptures, the better we are equipped to apply their healing balm to those in need'; 'Sympathy and support are best offered when most required'; certainly, if heeded,

this is teaching that would change things for the better.

There is constant reference to the Lord Jesus, from the foreword, right through to the final page which contains the FANNY CROSBY quote, 'For I know whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well', providing a worshipful backdrop to each progressing argument. In this way the book highlights that all scripture is about the Lord Jesus, the Beginning and the End of all things.

I have always loved the book of Job, but after reading this commentary I understood it more deeply than I ever had before. It is a given that the scripture is inexhaustible, nevertheless this book does its subject justice and the readers' heads, hearts and hands are well catered for.

Thanks to John Stewart, Chesterfield, England, for this review.



Evolution and the Christian Faith – Theistic evolution in the light of Scripture

Philip Bell

Paperback. 320 pages. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ, ISBN 978-1-84625-607-3.

There is no shortage of good books written under the broad heading of 'apologetics', dealing with the subject of evolutionary theories as compared with the scriptures. In this book, however, BELL challenges those who seek to find a compromise between the Genesis record, and indeed the whole teaching of scripture, while still holding on to, and arguing for, a form of evolution.

BELL trained as a biomedical scientist and then undertook research which developed into a teaching career. He is now the CEO of *Creation Ministries International UK and Europe*, and travels widely to speak at conferences and seminars promoting the truth of scripture in relation to creation.

Many of the available books on this subject are written from an academic standpoint,

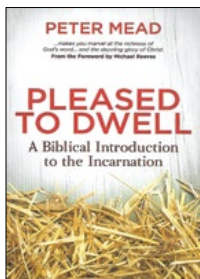
requiring the reader to have an intellectual understanding of scientific terminology and processes. This book, while making no concessions to accuracy and technical detail, is written in a very readable style, developing the arguments of each chapter to show that the scripture totally refutes any suggestion of an evolutionary process, and maintaining that the six days of creation were periods of twenty-four hours each.

The main thrust of the book, as the sub-title indicates, is to invalidate the doctrine, held by many, that God allowed evolution to develop and form the created world over a vast period of time. Those who hold this view see the first eleven chapters of Genesis as simply allegorical myths. Bell, however, stands firmly upon the historical accuracy of those chapters, no less than any other part of

the word of God.

Taking each of the major points of contention in turn, the author fearlessly challenges the writings and pronouncements of those theologians who dispute the creatorial power of the God they allegedly follow. He systematically dismantles the deceptive and unstable framework upon which their false theology is constructed, while at the same time showing clearly the truth of scripture which undermines their fallacious arguments.

Throughout the book, the writer shows, at every point, that there is no dispute between true science and the word of God. However, in the final analysis, when all the arguments are exhausted, it comes back to the simple statement of scripture, 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God', Heb. 11. 3.



Pleased to Dwell – A Biblical Introduction to the Incarnation

Peter Mead

Paperback, 207 pages. Published by Christian Focus Ltd. Geanies House, Fearn, IV20 1TW.

The aim of this book as noted in the introduction is to provide 'a biblical introduction to Christmas'.

Reaching beyond all the commercialism and gratuitous materialism associated with the season, the author seeks to focus the mind of the reader on the great plan of God throughout the scriptures leading up to the moment in time when, 'God sent forth His Son'.

Peter Mead is a director of Cor Deo, which provides Christian training programmes, linked to the Evangelical Alliance. He has written a number of other books on basic doctrine and Christian living.

Commencing with the promise of 'the seed of the woman' in Genesis chapter 3, the purpose of God throughout history is traced in a 'whistle stop tour' of Old Testament scriptures to show how in

spite of man's repeated disobedience, the promises given to the patriarchs would not be frustrated. In fact with each succeeding act of faithlessness, God added to the promise!

Coming to the New Testament, the writer spends time on the incarnation narrative as recorded by Matthew and Luke. He considers the historical and social background at the time and makes a number of suggestions which challenge some traditionally accepted impressions. For example, he considers that, the inn being full, rather than in an outside place, the Lord was born in the living room of a house provided by Middle-Eastern hospitality. A room where domesticated animals would be housed for the night, hence the manger. The angel's message to the shepherds is paraphrased as, 'Go to visit Him, He's in a manger, you know, the kind of place you'd

put your own baby in your house' . . . Hmmm?

And why do so many writers on this subject have to find planetary alignments or comets to explain the star followed by the wise men? Surely in this narrative above all others we can perceive and accept the God of the supernatural!

The narrative of this book is suited more to a young, or young in the faith, believer, but the underlying message is sound. The later chapters carry through the truth and doctrine of the incarnation as seen in the Epistles, thus emphasizing the way in which the great plan of redemption has been weaved through the whole of scripture.

Without being too critical, there are times when this reviewer found some colloquial expressions a little irritating, but that of course is a subjective observation.

WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newton Abbot, England

ἁγιασμός (*consecration*)

ἅγιος (*holy, sacred, dedicated*)

ἁγιότης (*holiness*)

Our understanding of the word 'holy' is sometimes coloured by the way in which the word has been used in various Christian traditions down through church history. Yet, often, these traditions have completely failed to grasp the simple meaning of the word as it is used in the Bible. This is why it is so important to be guided by context when looking at how words are used, so that we arrive at a correct interpretation. As PACKER states, 'It is to be feared that our unbalanced preoccupation with this one theme, taken out of context, has tended to produce an unbecoming lopsidedness of character and outlook'.¹

In the Septuagint (LXX), *hagios* usually translates the Hebrew word *qadosh*, which designates those places and people that are set aside by God for His good pleasure. These include not only places of worship, such as the tabernacle and the temple, but the priests who officiate in these places.² Israel itself was declared by God to be a 'holy' nation and encouraged to become holy as God was holy, Deut. 7. 6; Lev. 11. 44. But it was Israel's failure to sustain this separateness to God that brought about its downfall. Yet, as one commentator has pointed out, 'Divine holiness allows God the freedom to act in unexpected ways'.³ God's love for Israel is reflected in His forgiveness of that nation despite their unfaithfulness, Hos. 11.

In the Old Testament generally, we find God being referred to as 'the Holy One' in keeping with His revealed nature, Isa. 40. 25. This characteristic is clearly identified from the expression of the seraphim in Isaiah chapter 6 verse 3, and underpins His authority, Amos 4. 2. God's holiness, i.e.,

His separateness, is in marked contrast to our fallen humanity; hence the great difference between our ways and His ways, Isa. 55. 8. This is plainly evident in the necessity of God judging sin in the demonstration of His holiness and the fact that nothing that is unholy will be able to access the city of God, Isa. 5. 16; Rev. 21. 27. As BEALE writes, 'Just as the physically unclean could not enter the temple of the Old Testament, the spiritually unclean will not be allowed to enter the eternal temple'.⁴

The Greek adjective *hagios* occurs more than 200 times in the New Testament, and usually refers to things or persons that have been set apart or aside for, or better still, separated to, God for His redemptive purposes. Thus, we find in the New Testament references to places that are sacred to God, such as: Jerusalem, 'the holy city'; the temple, 'the holy place'; and the tabernacle in the wilderness, 'an earthly place of holiness'.⁵ The places themselves were not intrinsically 'holy', but they are designated 'holy', or 'sanctified', through the intervention of God.⁶ In other words, they were imbued with the purity of God's holy character, and it is important to understand that this is emphasized throughout the whole of the Bible, thus making the Bible itself a 'holy' book. It is not without significance, therefore, that biblical inspiration comes as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, 2 Pet. 1. 21.

So, God's holiness is all-pervasive in everything that He is and everything that He does. And this characteristic of holiness must therefore be seen in all those who seek to serve God, as was so evident in the life of our Lord Jesus. Even unclean spirits acknowledged that He was uniquely 'the Holy One of God', Mark 1. 24. Similarly, Simon Peter asserts that our Lord was 'the Holy One of God', John 6. 69 ESV.

Just as Israel was chosen by God to be a holy nation, so we as Christians have been separated by God through the death of Christ to serve Him and to live sanctified lives, Heb. 10. 14. Notice the correlation with Israel in this context throughout Peter's first letter.^{7,8} The word *hagios* is frequently translated in the New Testament by the English word 'saint'. Paul uses this term in many of his New Testament letters, but in none of these instances does the word 'saint' involve the notion of canonization, Rom. 1. 7; 1 Cor. 1. 2. Neither does he use the term to promote sinless perfection or any form of holiness movement. The term is simply applied by him to all those who were justified by faith in Christ irrespective of their previous backgrounds, cp. 1 Cor. 6. 9-11. Whilst none of us will reach sinless perfection in this life, that should not deter us from seeking to fulfil our calling to live lives of holiness and moral purity, and, importantly, to reflect the character of the God that we serve, Rom. 9. 23, 24; 1 Cor. 1. 2.

For further reading/study

Introductory

J. I. PACKER, *18 Words*, Christian Focus Publications.

Advanced

hagios – BAUER, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

ENDNOTES

- 1 J. I. PACKER, *18 Words – The Most important Words You will ever Know*, pg. 164.
- 2 Lev. 6. 16; Eccles. 8. 10; Lev. 21. 7.
- 3 RYKEN, WILHOIT AND LONGMAN (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP, pg. 389.
- 4 G. K. BEALE, *The Book Of Revelation*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., pg. 1101.
- 5 Matt. 4. 5; 24. 15; Heb. 9. 1 ESV.
- 6 Note the narrative concerning the death of Uzzah in 2 Samuel chapter 6 verses 6-8. His desire to steady the ark brought retribution from God because it was a threat to the holiness of the ark where God resided.
- 7 e.g., 1. 15, 16; 2. 5.
- 8 The appropriation of the language of Israel for the church by New Testament writers is not, in our view, by way of replacement theology, which is an all too common assumption made by many today, but simply used by the writer to parallel and contrast their experiences under the hand of God in different eras.

QUESTION

Why have the Jewish people been so hated and persecuted through the centuries, e.g., in the time of Esther, and the Holocaust?

ANSWER

God chose a special nation in order that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Notwithstanding their general rejection of Christ, they remain special, for God's commitments are irrevocable, Rom. 11. 1, 2, 29.

One consequence of being God's special people is that He may discipline them using other nations. However, His chosen instruments have had a tendency to overstep their remit in their zeal and gratuitous cruelties, Amos 3. 2; Isa. 10. 5-18. Yet God will never allow the nation to be exterminated, Jer. 31. 35-37.

To be central to the purposes of God is an enormous privilege, but it also attracts satanic opposition. Satan is always seeking to thwart the purposes of God, and we can trace his cruel and unrelenting opposition throughout Jewish history, whether we think of Pharaoh's Egypt, Queen Athaliah's murder of the royal princes, Nebuchadnezzar's idolatrous image and fiery furnace, Haman's empire-wide edict of genocide, Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his desecration of the Temple, 167 BC, or indeed the Holocaust. Today the scourge of anti-Semitism remains a live issue in Europe and far beyond.

At the same time, one of the wonders of history has been the way that Jewry has maintained its unique witness to the one true God. The Jewish people have shown remarkable resilience in the face of the disasters that have befallen them, not only surviving, but in fact prospering and flourishing. Jews in their dispersion have attained disproportionately to positions of great leadership, power, wealth, and influence across diverse fields of human endeavour. This has attracted widespread jealousy and hatred, especially since 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel. In a fallen world, to be successful, to be different, to be distinctive, can result in being blamed unjustly for all manner of evils, especially when unscrupulous rulers seek convenient scapegoats. Adolf Hitler's vilification of Jews in Nazi Germany leading to the systematic genocide of the Holocaust is a dreadful case in point.

Given that Israel's crowning glory was the

coming of Messiah, Rom. 9. 5, and that untold numbers of Gentiles have come to trust in Him - 'salvation is of the Jews', John 4. 22 - one might think that Christians would owe a major debt of gratitude towards the Jewish people. Yet it is in the Christian era especially, that the Jews have come to be persecuted more widely and systematically than at any other time. Is it not a tragic irony that from the days of Emperor Constantine, when Christianity came to be in the ascendant, they have been hated and persecuted, whereas under pagan Rome they had enjoyed protected status? All too often the guilt of the crucifixion of Christ has been laid at the door of the Jewish people in general, rather than its 1st-century leaders. If, as happened, the nation reaped the bitter consequences of its rejection of their Messiah, Rom. 11. 8-10, that in no way legitimizes general hatred of Jewish people, least of all on the part of Gentiles whose sins Messiah bore. All who persecute Jewish people should beware that 'he who touches you touches the apple of God's eye', Zech. 2. 8.

This pattern continued through the Middle Ages and beyond. Only in recent decades has the Roman Catholic Church publicly revoked its longstanding antagonism towards the Jewish people. Sadly also, in spite of the recovery of much biblical truth at the Reformation, Jews continued to be discriminated against and persecuted even at the hands of Protestants. Failure to understand the nuanced usage of the term 'Jew' in the New Testament has led to many texts (including John's Gospel!) being wrongly construed as anti-Jewish. Not infrequently when John uses the term Jew, he is denoting the ruling elite of Judaea who plotted to destroy Jesus. Bad biblical interpretation quite literally has cost many innocent lives.

Consequently, Christendom has much to live down in order to witness credibly to Jewish people today. Praise God, there is still a 'remnant according to the election of grace', and we should keep in mind that the gospel of salvation was to 'the Jew first, and also to the Greek', Rom. 11. 5; 1. 16.

Our thanks to Ken Totton for this article.

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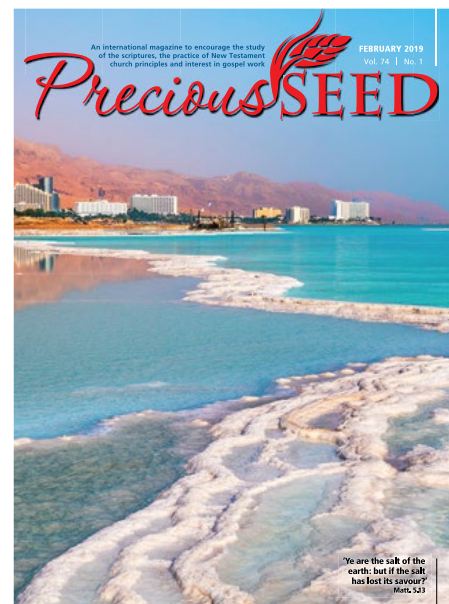
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'Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour?' Matt. 5. 13

One of the strangest sights in the Middle East is the salt lake that is located between Jordan and Israel. This lake was first named the 'Dead Sea' by the Romans because the area around it was generally arid and denuded of vegetation, and no fish or plant life existed within the lake. The Romans placed great value on salt and paid their soldiers wages in salt rather than hard currency – interestingly, the English word for 'salary' is derived partly from the Latin word *sal* for salt. In the Bible, this lake is also referred to as the Sea of Arabah, Deut. 4. 49, and the Eastern Sea, Ezek. 47. 18. It is probably more accurate to use the term 'Sea of Salt', as in Genesis chapter 14 verse 3, where it is identified with the Valley of Siddim, although the writer here may simply be referencing the valley to this area. Israel's claimed territory began at the southern tip of the Salt Sea so it was an important location in the original setting of the nation's land boundaries, Num. 34. 6, see also 2 Chronicles chapter 20 where this stretch of water acted as a buffer between opposing forces. The actual surface of the water has been estimated at over 400 metres below sea level, and it is eight times saltier than the ocean. Technically the Sea is a combination of various elements including salt, potash, magnesium, bromide and calcium chlorides. These all combine to give the Sea its unique environment, and as the water is so dense it provides considerable buoyancy to any would-be swimmer. The area around the Dead Sea has become famous in modern times as a result of the discovery in 1947 of various biblical, as well as non-biblical manuscripts. These are collectively known as the 'Dead Sea Scrolls', and have not only helped scholars to confirm the validity of the later Masoretic text of the Old Testament, but provide us with an illuminating insight into the literature of Second Temple Judaism, i.e., that period of time in Jewish history between 597 BC and AD 70, when the Second Temple existed in Jerusalem.

Our Lord spoke on a number of occasions about salt as a metaphor for the life of the believer. Set in the context of Matthew chapter 5 where our Lord indicates the essential characteristics required of His disciples, the salt metaphor indicates their influence for good in the world. Notice the emphasis of our Lord's words, 'You are the salt of the earth', or, better, 'You are salt to the earth'. By this statement He sets down the area of their influence and how far reaching it would be. Our Lord highlights two distinct communities in verse 13. There are those who belong to Christ – 'ye are the salt of the earth', and; 'the earth itself'; i.e., the world. These two communities are related to each other, but their relationship depends on their distinctiveness. And it is important to maintain this distinctiveness, because the disciples of Christ are set in the world as salt to arrest or at least hinder the process of social decay. But there is a rider, a condition attached on which the affirmation that 'Ye are the salt of the earth' depends, and that is that the salt must retain its saltiness or effectiveness. So, salt is good for nothing if its saltiness is lost, and this challenge comes to us on a daily basis as we recognize that our influence in the world lies in our difference from it.

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