

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

NOVEMBER 2020

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# Precious SEED



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Isa. 40. 11**



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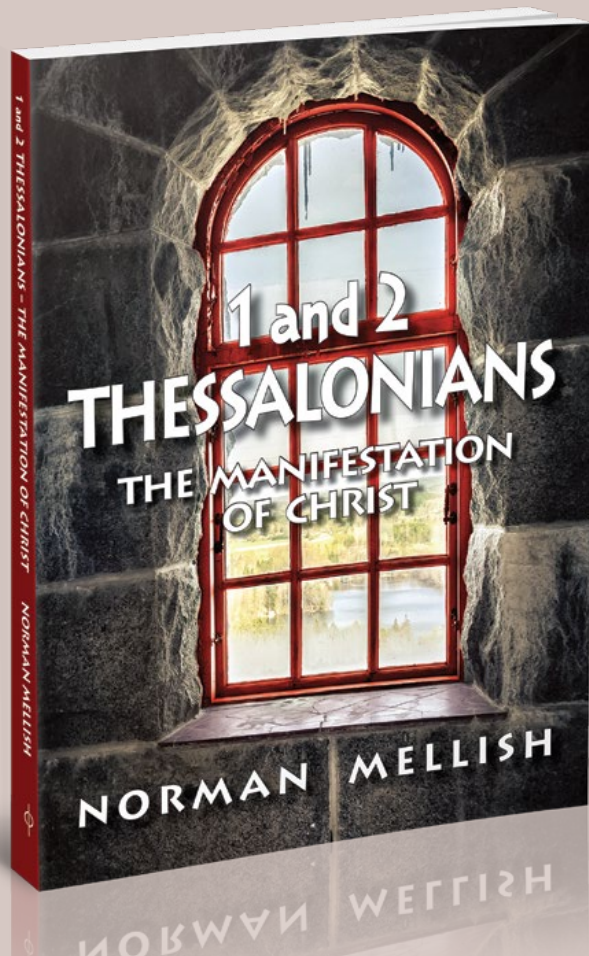
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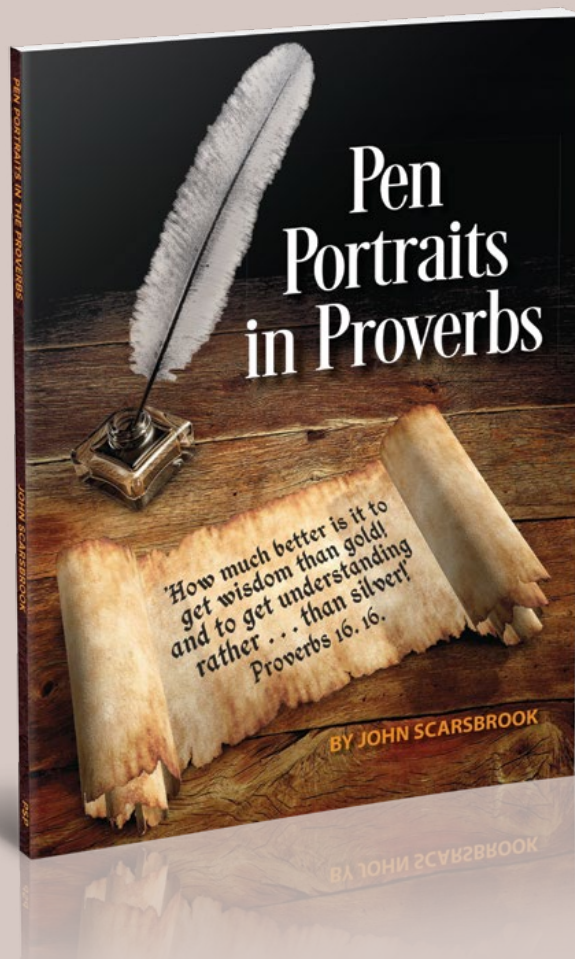
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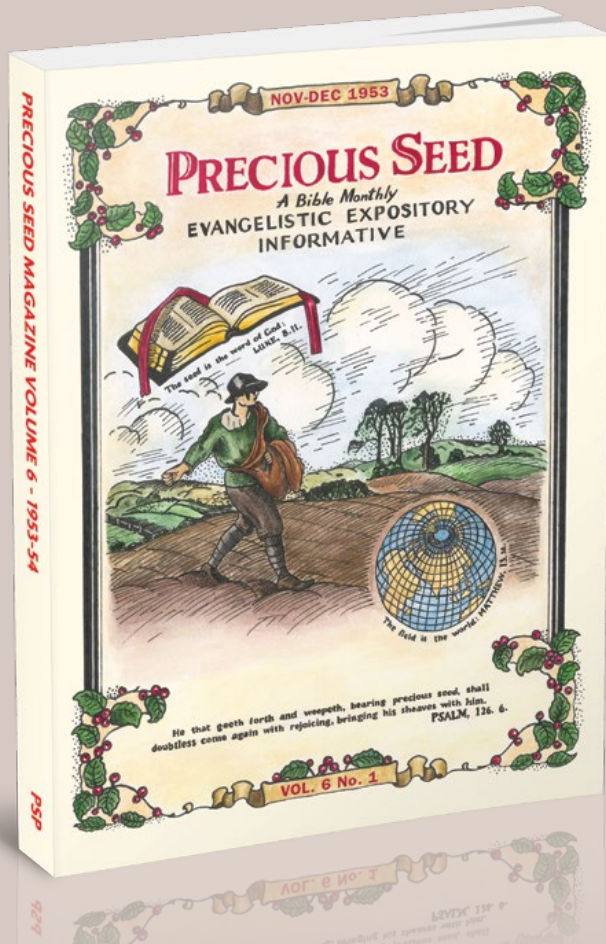
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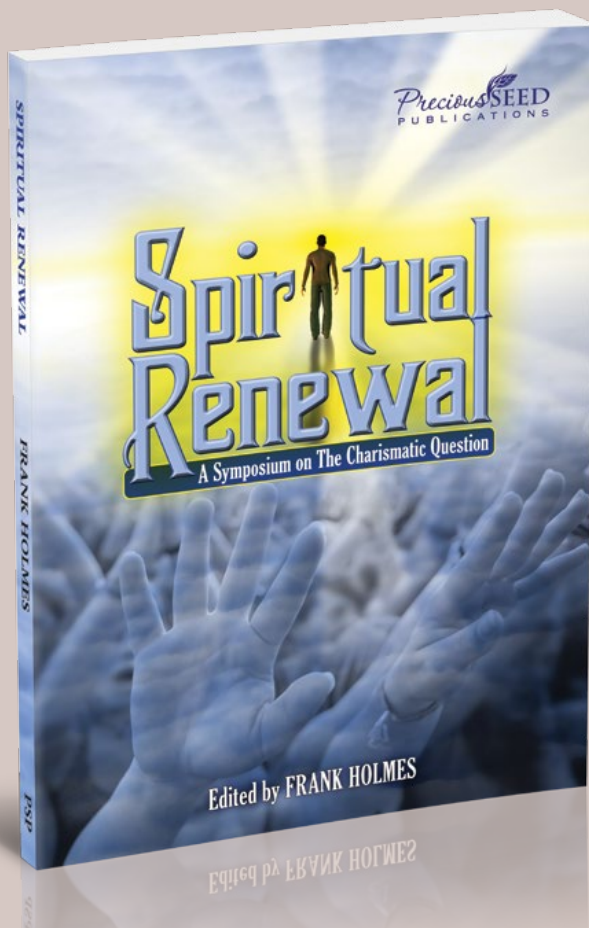


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## ‘Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light’, John 3.19.

At this time of the year in the United Kingdom, daylight hours are very short, and darkness seems to pervade most of our lives. Nature seems to be moving inexorably towards the winter solstice marking the actual start of winter. Some people enjoy this particular season while others dread the effect it might have upon their mental health. What this highlights, of course, is the marked difference in reaction to the conditions of light and darkness, and this stark contrast in sensitivities is used by John in his Gospel in relation to light and darkness. His prologue, 1. 1-18, is much more than simply an introduction. It is the fixed framework in which his diverse material is circulated and developed. John identifies for us the pre-existent Word with the light of divine revelation that shines into a dark world that cannot comprehend or grasp with the natural mind this light, let alone extinguish it, v. 5. Nothing would have existed in the world without the Word, as all

human existence depended upon His pre-existent life, v. 4. He came into the world, v. 9, and revealed Himself to be the Light of the World, John 8. 12, shining light into human darkness. Without this revelation the world, as we know it, would have remained permanently in spiritual darkness. The world, though, in the sense of humanity, continues to actively oppose the light, vv. 10, 11, but praise God those who embrace the light become sons of light, v. 12; 1 Thess. 5. 5. Just as in the physical creation there was a distinction made between light and darkness, Gen. 1. 4, so God has now shone into our benighted hearts to give ‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’, 2 Cor. 4. 6. Truly, we can say, from grateful hearts, that once we were blind, but now we see, John 9. 25!

For many of us, 2020 may have been the most harrowing year of our lives, certainly unprecedented. Many, including believers, have died

because of the Coronavirus, yet for all of us our times are in His hands, Ps. 31. 15. Nothing in our lives takes God by surprise, 1 Pet. 4. 12, 13, and as He has sustained us in the past, so we look to Him to sustain us in the coming year, 1 Thess. 5. 23, 24.

Once again, we want to thank all those who have contributed articles for the magazine in the year. It is always a great privilege to serve the Lord’s people as we seek to edify, exhort and comfort them.

**BRIAN CLATWORTHY**

Ministry Articles Editor

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# LOCKDOWN LESSONS

By **IAN JACKSON** Eastbourne, England

During our enforced sabbatical, my wife and I have been taking long walks in beautiful East Sussex. The heaths and woodlands of the Ashdown Forest, the verdant, rolling countryside around Bodiam and Brightling, and the picturesque Seven Sisters have been our companions. They have helped us to be leaner, fitter and thoroughly exhausted!

Being mere beginners at this we have not been following maps so much as detailed, downloaded directions. Purist hikers will, no doubt, look askance at us for this, but at least it has meant we have managed to find our way back to the places where we parked the car! During these hikes there have been many times when we have been struck by the ways in which they have reminded us of important things in the Christian life. Here are some of them.

## The accuracy of the guide

Our guides are detailed, clear, illustrated and easy to read, but successful negotiation of the routes demands care and attention to what they say; wrong turns are easy to make. The suppositions of the ignorant walker are no match for the knowledge and wisdom of the author.

The language of any good guide is precise, and failure to read carefully and obey exactly leads to error. We have taken some wrong turns simply because we did not read the instructions with due diligence. We have learnt the difference between 'bearing right', 'turning right' and 'forking right', and between a 'track', a 'footpath' and a 'bridleway'.

Should we be less careful with scripture? It is written for our learning, but how will we learn if we do not give it the careful attention it demands? We shall certainly be confused in our walk for the Lord if we don't distinguish things that differ, such as Israel and the church, or the body of Christ and the local church. What if we fail to distinguish omniscience and foreknowledge? What if every future judgement conflates into one

judgement; or the day of the Lord, the day of Christ and the day of God are confused? The list is endless; the need for care is paramount. Words have meanings and the significance of a particular word or, perhaps, a passage will be missed if we do not fully consider it.

We are to be diligent to shew ourselves 'approved unto God', workmen who do not need 'to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth', 2 Tim. 2. 15. We may only rightly divide the word of truth by careful attention to its accurate, God-breathed words.

## The importance of context

There have been times on our walks when a statement of direction has not made a lot of sense until we considered the next couple of sentences. It would have been so easy at these times either to go wrong or to go back, disappointed with the author and thinking that it was not worth following the guide. How wrong we would have been! In fact, on each such occasion, once the need for context has been recognized, we have seen the beauty of the accuracy of the statement we thought was nonsensical. The author knew all along!

In reading the Bible with the aim of understanding it, nothing is as important as context, whether the context is the whole book or chapter, or just the surrounding verses. In Bible study we quite properly look carefully at the meaning of words, with lexicons and concordances at the ready. However, especially in Bible Readings, people sometimes conclude that unless such detailed studies have been done, they have no hope of understanding the passage. This is not so. Nothing takes the place of contextual reading of the scriptures.

Here's an example. What does the expression 'the firstborn of every creature' signify in Colossians chapter 1 verse 15? Some cults suggest that it has the idea that the Son of God was the first created being, thereby depriving Him of deity and relegating Him to mere creaturehood. This is so evidently not true that it takes a particularly devilish influence to make anybody think it. In fact, the preceding phrase, 'Who is the image of the invisible God', precludes the possibility that He is less than God, whilst the next phrases fully explain the meaning. He is the firstborn of every creature and of all creation because He designed it, He made it, and He is the object of it.

Similarly, and by way of further example, what is 'the purchased possession' in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 14? A non-contextual reading might see us concluding that we are the purchased possession and that the redemption of our body is in view. The context makes it clear, however, that the apostle is thinking about the inheritance we shall share with Christ, when a unified system of administration in heaven and earth will be headed up in Him. At Calvary He purchased it and its redemption; its deliverance from its present subjection to vanity, will take place when He comes to reign, Rom. 8. 16-22.

## The need to retrace wrong steps

Even when taking care about the given directions it is possible to go wrong. On one occasion I was not completely happy when an already long walk became a whole lot longer because of my error! The only sure way to recover the right way, as set



out in the guide, is to go back to the place where you went wrong.

The principle for this is established by Abraham going up out of Egypt to the place where he had first built the altar, Gen. 13. 1-4. In going down into Egypt, he went without direction from the Lord to do so, being governed by expediency rather than faith. This was disastrous for a number of reasons, but especially because in Egypt he had no further revelation from the Lord and erected no altars with which to worship Him. Recovery was vital. It came in very difficult circumstances but we can each share the feelings of Abraham as he returned to where he went wrong and the place of the first altar. The principle is illustrated at other times in the Bible, not least with Simon Peter after his denial of his Lord.

Is this a major lesson to learn from lockdown? How barren and unfruitful is our testimony! How devoid of spiritual power we are, so often! Let us get back to the place where we might have gone wrong. Repentance is as big a subject for the saint as it is for the sinner.

### **The value of those who have gone before**

We are living in strange times. Modern man thinks that he can overthrow all that has gone before, as if the wisdom of earlier ages amounts to not much at all. The 'woke' culture demands so much destruction of the past with its antiquated, 'hateful' ideas, so many

of which are, in fact, Bible based. They come for statues today, but tomorrow they will come for believers who refuse to think or speak in the way they want us to, and who will not bow the knee to their ideological and philosophical gods.

In fact, in scripture we are told to value those who have gone before, whether they are found in the cloud of witnesses referred to in Hebrews chapter 12 or amongst those who in chapter 13 have spoken unto us the word of God. In our walks we have been grateful so often for those who have gone the way before us, making sure paths for our feet and marking the way through some difficult terrain.

Let us not overthrow what others have passed down to us. We have a great heritage of accurate Bible teaching, both in books and recorded ministry. We also have the example of many who have gone before us, negotiating some tricky situations and passing on to us their experience. We should not discard the accumulated wisdom of the past. I am glad that in my childhood and teenage years I took the time to listen in to conversations between my parents and older believers who so often visited our home. It taught me to value those with knowledge of the word, and varied experience of mature Christians who had known something of the heat of the battle and the burden of the day.

May the Lord help us in our own day and generation to stick to the old paths of obedience to the word. 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls', Jer. 6. 16.

### **Uphill paths reach an end**

The variety of topography and terrain means that some paths are easy and pleasant, whilst others are rough and tough. Toiling up a steep ascent with uneven ground under foot, one could be forgiven for thinking, at times, that the difficulty will never end! But, of course, it does. Trials are like this. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning', Ps. 30. 5. We take courage, therefore, that even the most severe trials will not last for ever and, indeed, they bring their

own blessings. The joy of enduring to the end and the new vistas that open up make the ascent worthwhile. Seeing things from a height gives a perspective unavailable to those who never climb. One of the great words of Hebrews is 'endure'.

'Had I my way to choose, how easy I  
Would make it: how free from chilling  
blast,  
How sheltered and secure. No piercing  
sorrow should invade  
The precincts of my life; no  
disappointment fall  
Across my eager spirit, but I should  
know  
The sweets of rest, the joy of comfort  
Undisturbed by any outer power.

Choose then thy way, O soul, but know  
The way thou chooseth. For thee no  
mountain heights,  
No rapturous delights in daylight  
breaking;  
No sense of victory gained, or evil  
driven. No, not for thee  
The strength that comes in conflict  
sore; the joy  
Of grand achievement, the gain that  
follows every loss,  
And most of all the glory of the Cross  
– these, these are not for thee.

Oh, better far, to let Him choose thy  
way  
Who never chose His own; to let Him  
lead thee  
Through the valley drear, and up the  
mountain steep;  
Through light and dark, through sun  
and snow, to where  
Eternal Love makes all things plain,  
and show us  
How severest loss was lasting gain. Oh,  
better far,  
To let him choose thy way: what wilt  
thou say?

Choose Thou my way, O Lord, I dare  
not  
Choose my own; the things I crave for  
most –  
A spirit pure, a heart at ease, a life from  
sin  
Set free; these Thou alone canst give:  
all else  
Is but a passing thought. Oh, may I not  
resent  
Thy chastening hand, but learn to  
understand  
That only Thou canst order me aright'



# Old Testament women who appear in the New Testament

# REBECCA

By **MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE** Grantham, England

The sovereign hand of God can be seen in all our lives and so it is helpful to look at those who have gone before to see how it worked and their response to it, both good and bad. While in one sense the sovereignty of God may not be any more outstanding in the life of Rebecca than others in scripture, it is interesting that the sole time she is mentioned in the New Testament, Rom. 9. 10-12, it is in the context of God's elective purpose in the history of the nation of Israel and especially in relation to the choice of Jacob over Esau. It seems fitting, therefore, to trace through her life a God who moves with authority and purpose in the affairs of this world, impacting the lives of every man and woman.

## **God's plans, Rom. 9. 10; Gen. 22. 23**

Even those of us who are tempted to skip through genealogies should be stopped in our tracks here, for it is unusual for a woman to be mentioned. In bringing the name of Rebecca into this genealogy, we are given a glimpse that this woman is going to play a significant part in the story to come; that God had already chosen her to be part of that history which also included Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, Rom. 9. 7-13.

While perhaps intimidating to the human mind, for the believer, the sovereign work of God in our lives from eternity, Eph. 1. 4; 1 Pet. 1. 2, and His intimate knowledge of us from conception, Ps. 139. 13-16, should bring immense delight and joy. Is it not as part of our blessings in Christ and as an encouragement to suffering believers that such subjects are introduced? Isaiah would remind us that, 'I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure', 46. 9, 10. Paul marvelled at 'the depth of the riches both of the

wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Rom. 11. 33. Both delighted in the sovereignty of God for they knew that it was governed by His wisdom and nature and is therefore good. Difficult as it may be at times to accept, we can be assured that, whatever the circumstances we are born into, the words of Mordecai to Esther, Esther 4. 14, and of Paul to the Athenians, Acts 17. 26, 27, hold true because our times are completely governed by the knowledge and wisdom of God.

## **God's call, Gen. 24**

Romans chapter 9 makes God's right to choose individuals to accomplish His purposes clear. The choice of Isaac over Abraham's other sons could have been put down to the natural reason of Sarah's relationship to Abraham, but there could be no such reason in the choice of Jacob over Esau, vv. 9-12. For Rebecca herself, the truth of God's right to alter the direction of her life must have hit home with breathtaking suddenness. We will never know at what point of the servant's narrative she realized the implications for her personally. Suffice it to say that, by the time it was

finished, she knew that she was, at some point, to head off with this stranger to marry a man she had never met.

This was a real test, for she had no choice in the matter – her father and brother had agreed that she should go. How she spent the intervening night before that question, 'Wilt thou go with this man?' 24. 58, we will never know, but the answer, 'I will go', displayed a heart of faith that was ready to submit immediately to God's call upon her life. The previous day she had been going about her usual daily tasks – did she wonder if things would ever change, or did she have plans and ambitions for herself? – the next day she was off to become a bride. 'God willing', is often tagged on to the expression of our plans, Jas. 4. 15, but how does our response to an unforeseen change reflect the reality of our submission to that will?

## **God's delays, Rom. 9. 10; Gen. 25. 19-28**

Do you ever think you know how God's plan is going to work out? If all we had read was, 'when Rebecca also had conceived by one', Rom. 9. 10, we could be forgiven for thinking that Rebecca had been called to follow a smoothly laid path. The reality was painfully different, a twenty-year wait.

That things happen differently to how we had thought or planned is nothing new. Joseph, with a clear revelation that he would be in a position of authority, probably never imagined the problems that would litter the intervening years.<sup>1</sup> Moses, having finally responded to God's call to return to Egypt to lead His people, was immediately faced with doubt from his own people and opposition from Pharaoh;<sup>2</sup> Mary and Martha expected the Lord to respond immediately to their call.<sup>3</sup> The lessons we learn from the delays and disappointments we encounter are all part of God's sovereign hand in our lives. The choices we make in response to them will shape us for good or ill.

Disappointment over the delay here led to a positive response. In recognition of God's hand in all things, first Isaac prays, and then, once pregnant and thinking that all would now be well but feeling the struggle within



her, Rebecca too turns to God. As Asaph found in Psalm 73, it is in the presence of God that perspective and clarity is found. Where do we turn in the disappointments and confusion of life?

### God's word, Rom. 9. 12, 13; Gen. 25. 23

In response to Rebecca's perplexity, God gives a direct explanation, including a prophecy regarding the relative position of the children in the purposes of God. Here again, God was acting sovereignly in decreeing that the elder would serve the younger. That Rebecca believed God seems to be evidenced by the following:

- a) 'But Rebekah loved Jacob', 25. 28. No reason is given as to why Isaac loved Esau, but possibly it was because she knew that Jacob was the one God had chosen. If so, we would commend the faith but condemn the favouritism, which would later lead to problems in the household.
- b) 'Upon me be thy curse, my son', 27. 13. Such was her confidence in the fact that Jacob would be the one blessed that she was willing to take the risk of any curse that might be uttered if her plan failed. We will look at the sadness of such an attitude in the next section, but, again, her utter confidence in God's word seems evident.

That the younger would be the most prominent was against the culture of the day and yet Rebecca had no

problem with believing God when He spoke. How willing are we to submit to the word of God in a culture that is generally against it? As men will scoff at the promises and warnings of God, e.g., 2 Pet. 3. 3, 4, let us have confidence as Abraham who was 'fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform', Rom. 4. 21.

### God's ways, Gen. 26-27

These two chapters mark a sad decline in the relationship between Isaac and Rebecca. First, they work together to deceive others and then, perhaps following her husband's lead in considering deception as a suitable means to accomplish her own ends, Rebecca deceives her husband. God is sovereign and we can respond to this in genuine submission – as Rebecca did in chapter 24 – or we can think that God needs a helping hand! We know, in principle, that God's ways are higher than our ways and yet sometimes we force things along or use worldly wisdom to sort out an issue. Isaac, out of fear, put Rebecca in a potentially difficult situation by denying she was his wife;<sup>4</sup> Rebecca, possibly using the word of God to justify her actions, thought that she would help God out of another awkward situation by weighing in with her own skilful and energetic planning. How sad that it ended in one case, in the rebuke of the Philistine leader, and, in the other, in hatred and the breakup of the family. We need

to learn that not just our ends, but also our means, need to fit in with the will of God. If we seek to accomplish good by means that are evil then we will be held accountable. Paul warns in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 10 that we need to be careful **how** we build, and in chapter 13 verses 2 and 3 of the fact that we can be the most gifted person in the assembly and yet do nothing that will profit us if we do not have love.

The fact that in chapter 26 Isaac receives a hundredfold blessing and in chapter 27 Jacob receives the blessing does not absolve the responsibility of Isaac and Rebecca's actions. Rather, it demonstrates the truth of this statement, 'God is working out his eternal purpose, not only in spite of human and satanic opposition, but by means of them', A. W. PINK.<sup>5</sup>

### Conclusion

Beyond Genesis chapter 27, Rebecca receives only fleeting mentions, in relation to Jacob's visit to her family and the death of her nurse. We could think that, due to her actions in chapter 27, she has been set aside. It is therefore good to see in chapter 49 verse 31 that she is mentioned as buried in the family tomb; she is honoured as one in the great family of God.

Praise God for His grace because it is not our mistakes that need define us, but rather His sovereign choice in bringing us into a relationship with Him, a relationship that, because it is all of Him, can never be broken. T. BROOKS says, 'The sovereignty of God is the golden sceptre in his hand by which he will make all bow, either by his word or by his works, by his mercies or by his judgements'.<sup>6</sup> May we be willing to submit to His word and be a willing part in His infinite purpose, knowing that to do so will bring Him glory and us a share of it!



### Endnotes

- 1 Gen. 37. 23-36; 39. 20; 40. 23.
- 2 Exod. 5.
- 3 John 11. 21, 32.
- 4 Cp. Abraham, Gen. 12. 10-20. Like Father like son!
- 5 A. W. PINK, *The Sovereignty of God*, <https://chapellibrary.org:8443/pdf/books/sogo.pdf>, pg. 167.
- 6 T. BROOKS, quoted by J. BLANCHARD, *Gathered Gold*, Evangelical Press, 1984, pg. 123, 124.

# THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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

Part 12

Continuing our studies into chapter 4, we remain in the Galilean ministry of the Lord. The continuing opposition and conflict from the religious authorities of the day, observed in chapter 3, leads the Lord to alter His method of teaching and to adopt teaching by parable. Such teaching was commenced in chapter 3 verse 23 and is continued here. In this chapter we also have the fourth and fifth seaside scenes recorded by Mark.

We can divide the chapter into four main sections:

The public teaching, vv. 1-9;  
The private explanation, vv. 10-20;  
The parables in private, vv. 21-34;  
The passage across the sea,  
vv. 35-41.

## The public teaching, vv. 1-9

Within the first section we have the public teaching of the parable of the sower.<sup>1</sup>

### The scene is set, vv. 1-3

Whilst the Lord had taught by the seaside before, Mark records what is a new departure in the ministry of the Lord, 'he began again to teach', v. 1. The Lord had taught in a similar location before. He had taught a multitude before. However, this is the first time He had specifically 'taught them many things by parables', v. 2. He had used parables in chapter 3 when addressing the Pharisees and scribes, but this is the first recorded use of parables in the teaching of the multitude.

The Lord is in the ship, separated from the multitude by a small stretch of water. In what is regarded as a natural amphitheatre setting, He begins to teach.<sup>2</sup> Some have suggested that this was also a natural setting for the work of a sower. Near to the natural irrigation afforded by the lake and the river that flowed from it, it might have

been possible to see a sower on the slopes around the lake. In this way, the Lord relates His teaching using a picture that would be familiar to His hearers.

It is only Mark who records the word of the Lord that commands the attention of His hearers, 'Hearken', v. 3. HIEBERT comments, 'The present imperative calls for the continuing attention of the hearers'.<sup>3</sup> From the commencement of this public declaration of the message through to its close in verse 9, the Lord is stressing the need for careful attention to the message delivered.

### The seed falls, vv. 4-8

Although 'there went out a sower to sow', v. 3, the real emphasis in this parable is not on the sower but upon the seed and where that seed falls. All these types of ground are introduced for us, in verse 4, by the words, 'And it came to pass'. This would indicate that it was not the purpose of the sower that the seed should fall into any of these areas other than the good ground. In this way the Lord directs our minds to the soil and its productivity. There are four basic situations into which the seed falls:

i. 'the way side', v. 4. This would most likely be a path or well-beaten track. As hardened ground, Luke tells us that the seed likewise became trodden under foot, 8. 5. From that point it was devoured by the fowls;

- ii. 'stony ground', v. 5. The ground here has but a thin layer of soil covering a slab of rock.<sup>4</sup> On this basis there is quick growth without real root or moisture. The tender shoot cannot bear the heat of the day.
- iii. 'among thorns', v. 7. This is ground that is infested with weeds. As such, the new seed is suffocated and has little, if any, light or moisture from which to grow and has no opportunity to yield fruit.
- iv. 'good ground', v. 8. This ground yields fruit 'that sprang up and increased'. What a difference between that which sprang up and withered, vv. 5, 6, and that which sprang up and increased, v. 8.

The picture demonstrates that there was no problem with the seed. In the good ground, it brought forth an amazing harvest, between three and ten times greater than that which would be expected naturally. It kept on yielding!

## The solemn responsibility, v. 9

As the Lord commences with the word 'Hearken', v. 34, so he closes his discourse with the words, 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear'. The Lord is stressing that it was not just a matter of listening to the parable. As COLE suggests, it is 'a warning lest we dismiss it lightly without searching our own hearts'.<sup>5</sup> They needed to heed what was taught and this was a continuing duty upon them all. Their responsibility is placed firmly upon them.

## The private explanation, vv. 10-20

The responsibility was placed upon all that heard the parable of the sower, but it was only those who were about the Lord, and remained with Him when the majority had left, that asked Him the meaning. There seems to have been a chronological gap here, possibly one of a few hours but one that did not distract the earnest seekers after truth.

## The intention, vv. 10-13

As the multitude, together with the scribes and Pharisees, had departed,



the Lord is left alone with His disciples and a small group.<sup>6</sup> At this point, those that remain enquire of the Lord the meaning of the parable.

First, the Lord explains His reasons for teaching in parables.

There was a two-fold purpose in the use of parables. The parable was to veil the truth from those who would not hear but also to unveil the truth to those who would hear. 'Unto you', says the Lord, v. 11. This small group of enquiring listeners would be given the key to understanding the parable. Whereas, 'them that are without', v. 11, would remain mystified as to its meaning and application.

The Lord is here confirming the chosen path of those who had rejected His teaching and message. The context of these verses shows the extent of the Lord's rejection, for in chapter 3 they had accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. As plain as the truth may be, it cannot be understood by those who have set their minds against it.

However, in verse 13 the Lord shows that to really know the meaning and significance of any parable, or portion of the word of God, requires divine intervention.

Second, the Lord explains the meaning of the parable itself.

### The explanation, vv. 14-20

To the small group of enquiring listeners, the Lord now explains the meaning of the parable. There are five parts to the explanation:

- i. The seed is 'the word', v. 14. Luke calls it 'the word of God', Luke 8. 11. The Lord was exemplifying what He had spoken about in the parable, and His hearers were, in their turn, examples of the different types of soil of which He spoke. Clearly, the seed is the same throughout and the causes of unfruitfulness cannot be attributed to the seed.
- ii. 'they by the way side', v. 15, are those who have hardened hearts and who are easy prey to the work of Satan, the evil one, Matt. 13. 19, in taking away the seed. It is to be noted the swiftness with which Satan works – 'Satan cometh immediately'!
- iii. 'these are they . . . on stony ground', v. 16, who, in the emotion of the moment and occasion, receive the word with gladness. These people seem to be marked by vigour and enthusiasm but 'have no root in themselves', v. 17. The absence of any real faith is seen by the fact that, later, they are offended. Examined by the searchlight of affliction, they are found to be wanting. What a contrast: 'immediately receive it with gladness', v. 16, and 'immediately they are offended', v 17!

- iv. 'these are they which are sown among thorns', v. 18. There seems to be a lack of singleness of eye with this group of people. They have an eye for other things and these distractions choke the word. The distractions are allowed in and, ultimately, the word of God is blocked out. The lack of results shows the emptiness of the people.
- v. 'these are they . . . sown on good ground', v. 20. The difference between the good soil and the other types is found in the middle of the verse, 'receive it, and bring forth fruit'. It is not that they brought forth fruit once but that they continue to bear fruit; the word of God continues to have an effect in their lives. As MACARTHUR puts it, 'three present participles mark continuing action'.<sup>7</sup> It is interesting that the rate of return should be so great, for it far exceeded the normal.

The parable shows the lasting power of the word of God. It can accomplish great things in the lives of those that will hear it and receive it into their hearts by faith. HIEBERT comments, 'The life that continually takes in God's Word, assimilates it, and is submissive to its demands, will be characterized by personal goodness and power for continued service'.<sup>8</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 On the subject of parables, WIERSBE comments, 'A parable begins innocently as a picture that arrests our attention and arouses our interest. But as we study the picture, it becomes a mirror in which we suddenly see ourselves. If we continue to look by faith, the mirror becomes a window through which we see God and His truth. How we respond to that truth will determine what further truth God will teach us', *op. cit.*
- 2 WUEST comments, 'The acoustics on a lake shore are excellent. One can hear and understand the human voice at quite a distance', *op. cit.*, pg. 81.
- 3 HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 106.
- 4 HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 107.
- 5 COLE, *op. cit.*, pg. 90.
- 6 A. T. ROBERTSON points out that it is only Mark that indicates there were others present and not just the disciples.
- 7 J. MACARTHUR, *MacArthur Study Bible*, Logos Bible software resource.
- 8 HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 114.



# What does the Bible tell us about the future?

## The 144,000 of Revelation chapter 7

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

Part 9

A question is asked in chapter 6 verse 17, where the subject has been the events that will take place during the time of the tribulation that is to come upon the whole world to try the earth dwellers, and particularly when the Lord Jesus shall descend out of heaven to take His rightful place once again upon the earth. The question is, 'who shall be able to stand'? There follows a parenthetical chapter in which the answer is given. Two companies are introduced, the first being the 144,000 who are linked with the Jewish nation, vv. 1-8. These are then followed by an innumerable company of people who will be saved out of the Gentile nations of earth, vv. 9-17. There is a vast difference between the two companies in that those who are among the 144,000 cannot come to any harm during the tribulation period and will be preserved throughout that time. The Gentile company, on the other hand, will know suffering and death but, ultimately, will stand before the throne of God clothed in white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. This speaks of their salvation, which will be no different to any other salvation; the blood of Christ alone can be effectual. The order is divine for it is to the Jew first, Rom. 1. 16. Clearly, God is going to reserve a people for Himself even in the world's darkest hour.

This study will concentrate on the 144,000; who they are and what their purpose is.

Distinction in judgement is brought before us in verse 1. We have a scene, just before the tribulation begins, where four angels are standing on the four corners of the earth, 'holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree'. This holding back the wind is for the sake of the sealing of the 144,000 before the tribulation begins. These angels are instructed not to hurt the earth or the sea until the sealing of the 144,000 is complete, v. 3. From the directions given to the angels, it appears that the 144,000 are from various parts of the earth where the Jews have been scattered. In the opening verse, the

judgements are restrained until, in verses 2 and 3, a people are reserved and, in verses 4 to 8, their names are recorded.

The existence of a period of time after the rapture and before the tribulation can begin is emphasized in various parts of the word of God. We are not told how long that time will be, but certainly the tribulation cannot begin immediately after the rapture of the church takes place. This is clearly taught in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 3, 6 and 7, for the 'man of sin' cannot rise to dominate the world whilst the church is still in the world. It is also clear from 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 10, that we will be removed from this scene by the Lord Jesus who is our deliverer away 'from', *apo*, the wrath

to come. Wrath is always associated with the outpouring of God's wrath upon living men and generally refers to tribulation judgements. Revelation chapter 3 verse 10 teaches the same thing, for the Lord promises to keep us from the hour of temptation (trial) that will try the earth-dwellers. In both passages we are assured that we cannot pass through the tribulation period at all. Further, Daniel chapter 9 verse 27 instructs us that the tribulation begins when the man of sin moves into Jerusalem to confirm the covenant – a peace treaty that obviously he had previously made with Israel, and this is when the tribulation begins for seven periods of time, a 'week' of years. Please note there is no word of him breaking a covenant.

It appears it is in this period of time that the sealing begins, for it must be after the rapture but before the tribulation begins.

The fact that all the judgements that are worldwide are held in check, indicates that the 144,000, who are sealed, are found scattered throughout the world and do not consist only of those who have returned to their homeland, Israel. There is a very strong influence of angelic ministry in the book of Revelation. Angels are seen as observers in the present dispensation of grace, the time of the non-intervention of God in world affairs apart from drawing out a people for the Lord Jesus. Having been completely rejected at Calvary, when the people cried 'Away with him' and 'We will not have this man to reign over us', God has left man to his own devices and we see the sorry mess that man is making of trying to control a world that is under the 'prince of the power of the air'.<sup>1</sup> But in the great tribulation, God is going to take direct dealings with the world again and at this time angelic ministry will be restored. The angel of verse 2 ascends from the east; the sphere from which all idolatry and rejection of the will of God has come. The Lord is going to deal with this now at last, and the world will be cleansed from its devilment. This angel has the seal of God in his hand and he is going to identify those



who are to be reserved during the tribulation as belonging to God. The seal in the forehead speaks of public and prominent acceptance by God. There will be no secret disciples during tribulation days!

The number of those who are sealed is specific: 144,000, and their origin is also specified so we do not have to speculate; they are stated to be from the twelve tribes of Israel. The word of God could not be plainer and no amount of speculation or distortion by the Jehovah Witness movement can refute the clear word of God. Let none be drawn aside by their nonsense and ignorance!

Whether the number is literal or symbolic matters little, though I would take it as being literal. Being 12,000 from each tribe indicates that these will have some place in the future government of the Kingdom, for twelve is the number of governmental perfection.

KELLY shows how they are linked together by their mothers and places according to their birth.<sup>2</sup> Leah gives us Judah and Reuben, but God takes away the first and puts Judah in that place, being, of course, the tribe from which the Lord Jesus comes. Her handmaid Zilpah gives us Gad and Asher. Bilhah produces Naphtali, and Manasseh, Joseph's firstborn, is substituted in place of her other son, Dan. Then, four sons of Leah: Simeon,

Levi, Issachar and Zebulun, and finally, the sons of Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin, make up the twelve. There are notable absentees from this list, such as Dan and Ephraim. Dan is the first tribe to go a-whoring as they take Micah's image and his man-made priest, Judg. 18. Dan is ever given to idolatry. Hosea unfolds Ephraim's follies, where God also said that they would be desolate in the day of rebuke, Hos. 5. 9. This is that day, and Ephraim will be bereft of 12,000 being preserved in the midst of tribulation days. Nevertheless, Ezekiel makes it clear that both tribes will enter the millennial kingdom.<sup>3</sup> The difference is that there are those who will not come to any harm during the tribulation for they are sealed of God, whereas others will suffer during that time, but still be brought into blessing finally. The fact that no harm will come to the 144,000 makes me wonder if these are the 'elect' of Matthew chapter 24 verse 22, where the true devastation that will mark the tribulation is unfolded: for 'except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened'. No harm can touch these even in such a day.

There are many who sadly add to the word, for they would tell us these are the preachers who will be the means of the Gentile multitude getting saved. I cannot see that the scriptures state this. This is speculation and

it is unwise to build doctrines on suppositions. All that is said of them is that they will be preserved during the tribulation but nothing else – nowhere do we find them preaching the gospel.

Chapter 14 looks to the future, where they are seen when the tribulation is over, and a glorious kingdom is now the sight that fills the eyes. The Lord is seen on mount Zion accompanied by the 144,000, walking together, indicating the fellowship that they will enjoy during the millennial period. SCOTT in his commentary tries to make a distinction between this 144,000 and those in chapter 7, saying these are from Judah whilst those from chapter 7 are from all Israel.<sup>4</sup> This is unsubstantiated and must be rejected. Others say this is the 'Sion' of Hebrews chapter 12 verses 22 and 23. Those of Hebrews chapter 12, however, are clearly believers of the present day, and it is describing the present spiritual experience of the saints of this dispensation; yet they say it is in heaven rather than at Jerusalem. Zion will be the capital of the world and the Lord will reign from there, Ps. 132. 13; 110. 2. It is the place where the Lord will be crowned, Ps. 2. 6.

The scene in chapter 14 is one of praise and delight, with 'the voice of harpers harping with their harps', and a new song being sung, vv. 2, 3. This is evidently a special song, for it can only be learned by the 144,000 who sing on redemption ground. These are 'the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb', v. 4. We see their purity (virgins); their pursuit – they 'follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth'; their privilege – 'redeemed from among men' and 'the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb'. The preservation of the 144,000 is the guarantee that others will be redeemed, even though they will pass through tribulation days with no immunity from the terrors that will be known in that day.

#### Endnotes

- 1 John 19. 15; Luke 19. 14; Eph. 2. 2.
- 2 WILLIAM KELLY, *Lectures on the Revelation*, G. Morrish.
- 3 Ezek. 48. 1, 5.
- 4 WALTER SCOTT, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Pickering and Inglis, pg. 291.



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

# THE SCRIPTURES ARE TAUGHT AND OBEYED

By **DANIEL RUDGE** Bracknell, England

**Part 9**

## **Why?**

Because all scripture is given by inspiration of God, 2 Tim. 3. 16. It is therefore the final authority in matters of doctrine and practice. Indeed, fellowship is founded upon it, and conduct derives from it. Hence, every local assembly should be comprised of believers who know, love and obey the word of God.

The priority of scripture was evident among the earliest Christian believers. Indeed, the 3,000 converts of the Day of Pentecost 'continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers', Acts 2. 42. After once for all receiving the preaching of Peter, being baptized and added to the apostolic fellowship in Jerusalem, they engaged in four continual actions. The way in which these actions are expressed in the Greek language, structures them into two groups of two. First, the 'apostles' doctrine' is connected with 'fellowship'. The doctrine of the apostles comprised verbal teachings which are now contained in the writings of the New Testament. These men were divinely enabled to recall the teaching of the Lord Jesus as well as being conduits of further revelation.<sup>1,2</sup> The adherence of these early Christians to the apostles' doctrine established their fellowship – the truth bound them together in theological and practical unity. Let us not be swept away with the common misconception that fellowship is founded upon a collective cup of tea and a biscuit!

True biblical fellowship derives from a firm adherence to apostolic truth contained in the scriptures. The second couplet describes the expression of this doctrinal fellowship in 'the breaking of bread', i.e., the Lord's Supper, and 'the prayers', i.e., the corporate assembly prayer meeting. In these four matters, they 'continued stedfastly', indicating devoted perseverance and busy engagement. Such plain, characteristic features of the first assembly in Jerusalem are a pattern which has never been retracted and to which we should cling. Many Christian gatherings these days, blaming the spirit of the age or attention span of the saints, are reducing the time given to the teaching of scripture and increasing the time given to congregational singing, 'worship bands' or entertainment. Perhaps they do not want to hear the voice of God. May we not be counted among them.

## **Where?**

In association with every local assembly. Indeed, the central verse of Paul's first letter to Timothy, which expounds the 'house of God', describes the local assembly as the 'pillar' and 'ground of the truth', 1 Tim. 3. 15. Pillars were a familiar sight to the inhabitants of Ephesus, the temple of Diana being supported by 127 pillars. Whilst pillars were columns supporting the weight of a building, they also acted as public noticeboards. The leading thought of the pillar is therefore that of **display**. Every local assembly should proclaim the truth of God

corporately, whilst each individual member manifests the same in godly conduct and living. The second word, 'ground', refers to a **support or bulwark**, akin to a physical structure that protects from external forces or pressure, like a sea wall. So, the local church **defends** the truth in the face of all opposition, including, in the context, the storms of heresy and unbelief. Thus, every local assembly should be a centre of biblical teaching and instruction – a veritable spiritual feast for every believer, young or old.

## **What?**

The whole counsel of God, namely 'the truth' of scripture. The outstanding aspect of truth concerns a divine person (see below), but the thought no doubt includes the entire revelation of God. We do well, as local churches, to prayerfully consider whether we seek to preach, promote and practise all the word of God. It is all too easy to avoid preaching parts of scripture which are unpopular or counter-cultural so as not to cause offence to the 'sophisticated' individuals of modern society.

In 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16, Paul gives a summary statement of the principal truth the church defends and displays. How beautiful to note that 'when we look at the top of the pillar to find out what it is that is held up by the local assembly, we find, not a series of rules and dogmas, but six sublime statements about Christ'.<sup>3</sup> These statements almost defy analysis, but it is perhaps best to view them as two sets of three lines. 'The first stanza sings of the historical Christ's earthly ministry, concluding with a word of triumph and glorification. Similarly, the second stanza sings of the exalted Christ's ongoing ministry in heaven through his church, concluding again with the theme of glorification'.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond question, 'great is the mystery of godliness'. That is, godliness has had a great and glorious manifestation in the person of Christ – as revealed in the New Testament scriptures. 'Godliness' is the New Testament equivalent of



the Old Testament ‘fear of the Lord’. It comprises an inner attitude of reverence that gives God His proper place in one’s life. This found perfect expression in the Lord Jesus. The slogan of the city of Ephesus was ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians’, but she was merely a lump of stone that allegedly fell from the sky, Acts 19. 28, 35. The revelation of true godliness came from heaven in the person of Christ – that was far greater!

Let us briefly consider these wonderful statements:

- ‘God was manifest in the flesh’ [or ‘manifested in flesh’]. This describes the period the Lord Jesus was visibly present as man on earth. The passive voice implies the pre-existence of the person who came to reveal God. What a truth! The uniting of fullness of **deity** with perfect, sinless **humanity** in one glorious person.
- ‘Justified in the Spirit’. Christ was vindicated or ‘proved morally righteous’ by the Spirit of God when He raised Him from the dead, 1 Pet. 3. 18. Men rejected and crucified Christ as a criminal, but, by the resurrection, God reversed the verdict of men.
- ‘Seen of angels’. This is probably not a reference to angelic ministry during the Lord’s activity on earth but the presentation of Christ to the angelic hosts upon His triumphant ascension to the throne of God, 1 Pet. 3. 22.
- ‘Preached unto the Gentiles’. Christ is presently heralded to the nations. The imperial herald was a spokesman of the emperor. He was to speak with dignity, clarity, and authority.
- ‘Believed on in [not “by”] the world’. The preaching of the gospel has resulted in the exercise of faith on the part of some.
- ‘Received up into [or “in”] glory’. This statement describes the accompanying circumstances of His ascension – it was attended by glory like that of a victorious Roman general, Mark 16. 19; Acts 1. 2.

The context of these verses suggests that godliness is the kind of

behaviour expected of the household of God. Scripture reveals the great pattern of godliness in the person of Christ. The imbibing of its truth therefore develops godliness in the life of every believer, 1 Tim. 6. 3. Paul is obviously placing responsibility upon the entire company to ‘pillar’ [display] the truth by godly living. Let us not be merely intellectual hearers of the word, but ‘doers’ also, Jas. 1. 22.<sup>5</sup>

### How?

Primarily, in **public** gatherings by gifted teachers. Whilst deacons may support them in this exercise, teaching is the primary function of the elders. Every overseer must be ‘apt to teach’, which does not necessarily imply a public platform, but describes one who is skilful in explaining truth and feeding the flock, 1 Tim. 3. 2. Some, ‘labour in the word and doctrine’, suggesting toil to the point of exhaustion in the preparation and delivery of public preaching [gospel] and teaching [instruction], 1 Tim. 5. 17. Paul elucidates the thought in Titus chapter 1 verse 9, ‘Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers’. It is imperative that the leadership of any assembly take active care to ensure that those who teach are brethren who have been fitted and equipped by the Spirit of God to do so. They will ‘reprove’ [expose sin], ‘rebuke’ [condemn sin] and ‘exhort’ [urge to put right] through plain instruction from the word of God, all in a spirit of patience. Sadly, the days have already come when Christendom at large no longer endures ‘sound [hygienic] doctrine’, 2 Tim. 4. 2-4. Such groups desire teaching which will please rather than ‘rebuke’. They gather teachers to tell them what they want to hear; those bursting with charisma and style rather than content and substance. All is wilfully calculated to avoid responsibility to the truth.

Paul will also remind us that the sphere of public teaching belongs to the male. He does not allow for ‘a woman to teach’, 1 Tim. 2. 12-14. The explanation for the prohibition

is not based on local, temporal or cultural considerations in Ephesus, but the order established by God in creation. For a woman to assume the role of a teacher would be to take a place of authority [dominion] over the man. But God ‘formed’ [moulded] Adam first, thus giving him priority in time and authority. This established Adam as head, and Eve, created second, as helper, Gen. 2. 18. They were created to complement, not compete (!) with one another. For a woman to take the role of a teacher would therefore subvert this order. The place of a teacher in the formal gatherings of the assembly is thus denied to a woman. However, in an informal or private sphere, like the home, older sisters are to teach younger sisters and instruct their children in the faith.<sup>6</sup>

Scripture may be taught in public gatherings in a variety of ways, including formal exposition and exhortation, conversational Bible readings, as well as the simple but careful reading of the word of God, 1 Tim. 4. 13. But, let us heed a note of warning. Too often assemblies fall into the lazy habit of filling mid-week ministry meetings with different brethren who give a few scattered and unrelated thoughts over the course of a year, or engage in tedious Bible readings that cover a verse or two of the same passage week after week. Such an approach leaves vast swathes of scripture untaught and unfamiliar to the people of God. Local assembly shepherds should plan to ensure the flock receives a varied, balanced and, oftentimes, consecutive diet of Bible teaching from Genesis to Revelation.

### Endnotes

- 1 John 14. 26.
- 2 John 15. 26; 16. 13; Eph. 3. 3, 4.
- 3 M. SWEETNAM, *Truth in the Pastoral Epistles, Truth & Tidings*. Accessed online at: <http://truthandtidings.com/2017/10/truth-in-the-pastoral-epistles-4-its-revelation-2/>.
- 4 GORDON D. FEE, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, Baker Books, 2011.
- 5 See the great examples of Ezra and the Lord Jesus, Ezra 7. 10; Acts 1. 1.
- 6 Titus 2. 3, 4; 2 Tim. 1. 5; 3. 15.

# THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

## Part 11

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

In part 10 of this series, we began to look at the paragraph dealing with the imperative to 'put off all these', 3. 8-11.

We saw that this paragraph, from verses 8 to 11, had two subsections: the features (or clothes) of the old man to be discarded, vv. 8, 9; and the features of the new (young and fresh as contrasted with old and worn out) man which have been embraced, vv. 10, 11. Just as there was a distinction between the 'old man' and the clothes to be 'put off' in verses 8 and 9, so there is a distinction between 'the new man' and the clothes he wears. In other words, the 'having put off' of verse 9 and the 'having put on' of verse 10, are events seen as having taken place in the past. In verses 8 to 11, the apostle is building on these two doctrinal affirmations and is using present imperatives, 'put off', v. 8, and 'put on', v. 12, to ensure that the clothes we put off and put on are consistent practically with what is true doctrinally. There is, thus, a distinction, though, of course, a very close correlation, between the 'man' and his clothes – in the one case 'filthy rags' and in the other beautiful garments. So, in a word 'having put off' and 'having put on', vv. 9, 10 JND, are events in the past; 'put off' and 'put on', vv. 8, 12, are imperatives in the present.

### **The features of the new (young and fresh as contrasted with old and worn out) man which have been embraced, vv. 10, 11**

The characteristic features of the new man which have been put on are given in these verses: young as opposed to old; fresh as opposed to worn out, cp. Eph. 4. 24. This leads to being continually 'renewed [*anakainoo*, new in quality in knowledge; *epignosis*, full knowledge] – the knowledge of God in Christ. This knowledge leads, in turn, to a transformed person, v. 10; 'after the image of him that created him', Gen. 1. 26, 27; 2 Cor. 3. 18; a new creation, 2 Cor. 5. 17, with Christ being formed in us, 1. 27; 1 Cor. 15. 45-49; and having 'put on Christ', Gal. 3. 27.

In addition, there are new relationships in the sphere in which the 'new man' operates, v. 11.<sup>1</sup> National barriers are gone – 'there is neither Greek nor Jew', including in

the religious sphere 'circumcision or uncircumcision', cp. Eph. 1-3; cultural barriers are removed – 'Barbarian, Scythian' (Scythians were regarded as uncultured); and social barriers are gone – slaves and freemen together.

The supremacy of Christ is the common basis for the new relations, 'Christ is all, and in all'; He permeates all, empowers all, controls all; not Christ plus as the Gnostics aver, He is simply preeminent, v. 11!

### **The clothes of the 'new man' which have to be 'put on', vv. 12-14**

The apostle begins this paragraph with a 'therefore'. Having embraced the features of the 'new man', vv. 10, 11, there must be a change of clothes. It is an imperative again to 'put on' the lovely clothes appropriate to the new relationship. He is essentially saying, 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ'; Rom. 13. 14, Gal. 3. 27 – 'reproduce the life He lived', THAYER.<sup>2</sup>

### **The people to whom such an appeal can be made, v. 12**

Paul addresses them as 'the elect of God, holy and beloved'. He assumes the transformation is wrought by the gospel; on the one hand, divine sovereignty and on the other human responsibility. The order is important: we are God's chosen people, 'God's elect', Rom. 8. 33; Titus 1. 1; chosen by God in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy [set apart]; as His beloved, Eph. 1. 4.

### **The clothes to be worn (put on), vv. 12-14**

The eight features mentioned here are all found in their fullness in the person of Christ, cp. Gal. 5. 22, 23.

- 'bowels of mercies', v. 12 – this is essentially a compassionate heart as seen in the Lord, Mark 1. 41; 6. 34.
- 'kindness', v. 12 – this feature of God is seen in Psalm 34 verse 8, 'O taste and see that the Lord is good [kind]'; in Romans chapter 2 verse 4, goodness (which should lead to repentance); in Galatians chapter 5 verse 22, 'gentleness'. It has in it the idea of not giving offence.
- 'humbleness of mind', v. 12 – this contrasts with the proud idolaters of chapter 2 verse 18 and is a feature of the Lord, Matt. 11. 29; Phil. 2. 5-11. Micah chapter 6 verse 8 summarizes it well, 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' 'The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity' dwells with people like this, Isa. 57. 15. The contrast is pride and self-assertiveness.
- 'meekness [gentleness]', v. 12 – this was one of the outstanding features of Moses, Num. 12. 3, and Psalm 37 verse 11 reminds us that 'the meek shall inherit the earth' (cp. Matt. 5. 5). Paul beseeched 'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ', 2 Cor. 10. 1. It has been defined as 'equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down'.<sup>3</sup>
- 'longsuffering [patience]', v. 12 – the apostle had already exhorted this, 1. 11.<sup>4</sup>
- 'Forbearing one another', v. 13 – this means to bear with, endure,



Matt. 17. 17. In Ephesians, it is linked with another four of the graces in the current list, 'With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love', 4. 2. It is an affirmation that we are all different personalities and can be thought of as not taking offence.

- 'forgiving one another', v. 13 – the example of Christ is seen in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32 and is incumbent upon us, Matt. 6. 12; 18. 21, 22. It can be thought of as not holding offence.
- 'charity', v. 14 – which is the bond of perfectness [completeness; this word is used only twice in the New Testament – here and Heb. 6. 1]. Love is the outer garment – 'above [upon] all these things'. It is the girdle that holds the various garments together. 'Love is the link of the perfect life', MOFFATT.<sup>5</sup>

### The 'Christ patterned life' which will implement the above, vv. 15-17

The above list is extremely demanding. Only a life patterned after the person of Christ could begin to implement the details. In this paragraph, the peace of God, the word of Christ and the name of the Lord Jesus are brought to bear as levers for putting on the above clothes.

### The control (the arbiter, umpire) of the peace of God, v. 15

The peace that Christ gives, has to control our movements, John 14. 27. The sphere of the rule is seen as being 'in your hearts'. In Philippians chapter 4 verse 7, the peace is personal but here it is communal. The reasonableness of the appeal is seen

in that it is that 'to the which also ye are called in one body', i.e., unity is anticipated, cp. 1 Cor. 12. 12, 13; Gal. 5. 22. If we are at peace with God, we should be at peace with one another. It is Christ who made peace at great cost to Himself, 1. 20. There is, however, the attitude necessary to effect it – 'be ye thankful [keep on being thankful]'.

### The control of the word of Christ, v. 16

If the word of Christ is going to control, then it is necessary to be aware of it. The question arises as to whether the phrase is subjective or objective or both? The phrase is used only here. Perhaps it is best to take it as both. The word speaks of Christ as its object, but the content should have a controlling effect in our lives. Indeed, the word has to 'dwell [be at home] in you richly'. Personally and/or communally? It is possibly the latter in the context, although if it is the case in the former it will be automatically in the latter. It is likely that the phrase 'in all wisdom' (cp. 2. 3 and contrast with the Gnostics) links with the dwelling of the word in the heart of the believer, producing appropriate control and the ability to adorn with the above clothing!

There has to be a mutual communication of this word – 'teaching and admonishing [cp. 1. 28] one another' (the phrase 'one another' occurs three times in these verses – twice in verse 13 and here in verse 16). This stresses the fundamental importance of teaching and it is certainly good to do it 'in all wisdom'. If done wisely it leads to an outburst of praise – the result of peace ruling and the word controlling, cp. Rev. 19. 5, 6.

The content of the singing is

interesting – 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs'<sup>6</sup> which give further elucidation of the teaching.<sup>7</sup> The content must therefore be intelligent if it is going to embellish the teaching and admonishing. The source of the singing is 'grace in your hearts'; thus, all an exercise of true worship with the object of the singing being 'the Lord [God JND, RV]'.

### The control of the name of the Lord Jesus, v. 17

'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus', i.e., the Lordship of Christ is the preeminent consideration. The question to be asked is not, 'is there anything wrong with this?', but, on the contrary, 'does it promote the Lordship of Christ and give a basis for thanksgiving to the Father through Him?' This should be the case in our speaking or acting, 'in word or deed'; 'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God', 1 Cor. 10. 31. All should be done in a spirit of thanksgiving 'to God and the Father by him'. Therefore, we speak to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. This concurs with Ephesians chapter 5 verse 20, 'Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ', and the words of the Lord Jesus in the upper room ministry, John 14. 13, 14; 16. 23, 24.

If this threefold control is seen in the believer, it will lead to a 'Christ-patterned life', giving the necessary spiritual ability to 'put on' the beautiful clothes to appropriately dress the 'new man'.



### Endnotes

- 1 Cp. 1 Cor. 12. 12, 13; Gal. 3. 27, 28.
- 2 J. H. THAYER, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Baker.
- 3 W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Volume 3, pg. 56.
- 4 See also Rom. 9. 22, where it postpones wrath; 1 Thess. 5. 14, where it indicates 'patience under provocation', and 2 Pet. 3. 15, where it is linked to salvation.
- 5 1 Cor. 13. 13, and, the summation of the commandments, Rom. 13. 9, 10 – see also Gal. 2. 20; Eph. 5. 25.
- 6 Psalms would be from the psalter. For hymns, see 1 Tim. 3. 16; Phil. 2. 5-11, and the Magnificat, Luke 1. 46-55. For spiritual songs, see, for example, 1 Cor. 14. 15.
- 7 For example, 1 Cor. 14. 26; Eph. 5. 19.

# The Twelve Tribes of Israel

## ZEBULUN

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

As we near the end of this series on the tribes of Israel, we notice an awakening in Jacob's home. Leah has put an end to relying on her handmaid, and God is back in her consciousness again – she clearly recognizes His hand in renewed fertility, Gen. 30. 18-20. At the same time, both boys' names are still more a reflection of her relationship to Jacob than to God. At Zebulun's birth she utters these heart-breaking words, 'now will my husband dwell with me'. Conveying all her wishful thinking on her last son, she names him, literally, 'habitation' or 'dwelling'. The reality is that Leah's need would never be met in her immediate offspring. Her need, and ours, can only be met by God; a thought we will come back to later.

### Labouring under God's blessing

As we noted with Issachar, the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar are linked in birth, camping order and land allocation, Josh. 19. 10-23, Ezek. 48. 25, 26. More than Simeon and Levi, they remain closely associated throughout. In their blessings, Jacob and Moses link them by contrasting their futures.

Jacob contrasts Zebulun's busy maritime business with Issachar's preference for mundane labour, Gen. 49. 13, 14. Moses contrasts Zebulun's business in the world, his 'going out', with Issachar's business at home, 'in thy tents', Deut. 33. 18.<sup>1</sup> Despite these contrasts, they would complement each other in calling people to

worship and offering 'sacrifices of righteousness', v. 19. This is a reminder that, though God's people are made with varying personalities, in spiritual service they are joined by the Spirit, gifted by God's grace and enabled to complement each other as a unified whole, cp. Eph. 4. 3-16.

Zebulun's land allocation meant that the tribe was landlocked.<sup>2</sup> So, how would Jacob's words regarding their maritime future come to pass? And what of Moses' reference to them sucking of the 'abundance of the seas'? Some commentators resolve this by pointing out that a major ancient trade route lay within his territory. This would have made the tribe's territory a haven of sorts for the 'abundance of the seas'. It is also interesting that Zebulun is connected with the Galilee region and the 'way of the sea' in Isaiah chapter 9 verse 1. Matthew would go on to make this connection when the Lord settled in Capernaum, and the historian JOSEPHUS also upholds the idea, Matt. 4. 13-15.<sup>3</sup>

### Dwelling under God's man

According to Judges chapter 1 verse 30, Zebulun settled for compromise with the inhabitants of the land. On the other hand, they risked their 'lives unto the death' when called up to serve Barak against Jabin, 5. 18. How like us this is – the battle against the enemy is rarely fought consistently! Some days we are walking by faith, other days by sight; one day we have our affections set in heaven, the next set on earth.

But the writer of the book of Judges is likely getting at something more salutary. God's people in Judges go in and out of a state of being under leadership. When God raises up a leader, they pull together and defeat the enemy. When the leader is removed, they fall apart, and the enemy defeats them. Zebulun's compromise is written in the context

of the vacuum of leadership that was left behind after Joshua's death, Judg. 1. 1. The lesson may be twofold: first, that all of God's people should be praying for Him to provide a succession of servant-leaders that can shepherd God's flock in spiritual conquest; and, second, that those whom God has placed as shepherds over the flock must not underestimate the crucial role they play in the wellbeing of God's people as a whole.

When God finally found a man after His own heart worthy of leading His people, Zebulun was there in droves to support his accession to the throne, 1 Chr. 12. 33-38. 50,000 seasoned troops were sent to Hebron from the tribe to make David king; the largest single battalion from any of the tribes west of Jordan, practically an army in its own right. It is wonderful to see the effect on God's people when they are drawn to God's man on the throne – read chapter 12 verses 38 to 40 – it's a rare picture of national unity that has millennial undertones.

Zebulun's dwelling will come. Our privilege is that ours already has. As J. DENHAM SMITH wrote:

'God now brings thee to His dwelling,  
Spreads for thee His feast divine,  
Bids thee welcome, ever telling,  
What a portion there is thine'.



### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Moses may have phrased it this way more for poetic effect than saying anything concrete about the tribes' individual destinies.
- <sup>2</sup> This is our best guess based on limited knowledge of the locations mentioned in Josh. 19. 10-16.
- <sup>3</sup> JOSEPHUS, Ant. 5.1.22.



# Psalms

By **WARREN HENDERSON** Chippewa Falls, USA

## Introduction

The book of Psalms was Israel's national hymnbook. The book title is from the Greek word *psalmos*, which was a poem normally sung with musical accompaniment. The Hebrew psalms, or songs, encouraged scriptural memorization and meditation, and enhanced the Jews' worship of Jehovah. Psalms that were to be sung by the entire congregation were called hymns. Accordingly, the book of Psalms contains the vibrant prayers and joyful praise of the Jewish people.

Though its poetry is ancient, its contents have been a timeless source of encouragement, wisdom, and inspiration for all of God's people down through the ages. In fact, no portion of scripture is more frequently cited by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament than Psalms, thus, affirming its inspiration. The book of Psalms contains one hundred and fifty individual psalms, covering a vast range of topics and personal experiences. This ensures that every child of God will benefit from reading and meditating on the Psalms. As you study the character, attributes, and feats of God as He interacts with His covenant people, you too will be motivated to praise and worship God along with the psalmists.

## Purpose

The wide variety of psalms naturally conveys a broad diversity of purpose. Some songs are a historical review, to remind the Jewish nation of their dependence on Jehovah. Others are prophetic in nature, or poems ascribing praise to God, or personal songs relating to specific events. For instance, fourteen of David's psalms relate to personal events, often distressing situations, which occurred in his own life, such as when he fled Jerusalem during his son Absalom's rebellion, Ps. 3. Although David often requested divine deliverance, his poetry expresses a resolute

confidence in God's character and faithfulness, despite his situation. David knew God's help would come, but in His best timing – this realization encourages us to trust God in the same way.

Some of David's writings are prophetic in nature, such as Psalm 22, which foretells the death of the Jewish Messiah by crucifixion. The majority of David's psalms are either fervent prayers, asking for the Lord's assistance, praising Him for His abiding presence, or acknowledging God's faithfulness and goodness to him and the Jewish nation. Other writers capture this same tenor, though the specific focus of each psalm is unique.

Leviticus was Israel's worship manual, but Psalms was their national hymnal. Psalms comprises a wide assortment of hymns, such as hymns of victory, Ps. 68, hymns of procession, Ps. 24, songs of Zion, Ps. 48, and hallelujah choruses, Ps. 146. Some psalms were to be sung congregationally, Ps. 75, but others were an individual's songs of lament, Ps. 4, or thanksgiving, Ps. 18. Some were temple liturgies sung during times of public worship, Ps. 15, and yet others, like Psalm 128, were spoken by a priest to pronounce a blessing on those listening. In summary, the application of the poems in Psalms is quite diverse. Perhaps the Hebrew title of the book, *Sepher Tehillim*, meaning 'Book of Praises', best describes the purpose of the entire book – praises to God!

## Divisions and Formation

Psalms is the longest book in our Bibles. Both the Hebrew and Protestant Canon contain one hundred and fifty psalms; the Orthodox Canon, includes one additional song, Ps. 151. The psalter is actually the combination of five separate books. It is unknown when these five books were arranged; perhaps the divisions were purely arbitrary for liturgical reasons, i.e.,

smaller scrolls would be more easily handled by worshippers than one large one. Each book concludes with a doxology, i.e., praise to God. While the psalms themselves are divinely inspired, the book divisions were humanly devised. The five separate books comprise the following individual psalms:

Book One: Psalms 1-41

Book Two: Psalms 42-72

Book Three: Psalms 73-89

Book Four: Psalms 90-106

Book Five: Psalms 107-150

After individual psalms were composed, many were gathered into small collections before being arranged in the five different books. For instance, Psalms 120-134 are known as the Psalms of Ascent or Psalms of Degrees which the Jews sang while *en route* to Jerusalem to keep the feasts of Jehovah. Psalms 146-150 were a collection referred to as Praise Psalms. The psalms authored by David were commonly referred to as David's Psalms. Some of this collection were clearly available in the days of King Hezekiah, who reigned three centuries after David, as he commanded the Levites to sing the psalms of David and Asaph to the Lord, 2 Chr. 29. 30.

It is not known who gathered the various smaller collections into separate books and then assembled the final book of Psalms. Some believe that this was accomplished by the post-exilic scribe Ezra in the 5th century BC. What is known is that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the original works, but also ensured what was to be collected, and preserved for our benefit.

## Date and Historical Setting

The oldest psalm, Ps. 90, was written by Moses in the 15th century BC. The contents of Psalm 137, which mentions the destruction of Jerusalem, pertain to the post-Babylonian exile experiences of the Jewish people. This means that Psalm 137 was most likely written a short time after 538 BC. Psalms 107 and 126 thank the Lord for rescuing and bringing the Jewish captives back into the land of Israel;

# CHARTING THE SCRIPTURES PSALMS by Jonathan Black

Hebrew title: 'Sepher Tehillim' – 'Book of Praises'. 'That all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophecies of the prophets.'

## Psalm 119

### 'THY WORD IS A LAMP INTO MY FEET'

The blessing of God's word, v. 1

Cleansed by Thy word, v. 9

Meditating on Thy word, v. 23

Strengthened by Thy word, v. 28

Stablish Thy word, v. 38

Salvation by Thy word, v. 41

Remembering the word, v. 49

Grace according to Thy word, v. 58

Keeping Thy word, v. 67

Comfort of Thy word, v. 76

I hope in Thy word, v. 81

**Hebrew poetry** does not follow rhyme but rather parallelism, where the second line of a couplet or phrase is repeating, Ps. 3. 1, contrasting, 90. 6, developing, 19. 7, or illustrating, 42. 1, the thought in the first line.

**Asaph** A priest and musical director under David. 1 Chr. 25. 1-7  
**Maschil** Means instruction that is specially for the times.

**Michtam** Contains articles worth 'engraving' on memory  
**Neginoth** Stringed instruments

**Song of Degrees** Psalms sung going up to the Temple  
**Chief Musician** The conductor leading the Temple choir

**BOOK 1 - Genesis** - The remedy in the Son, Ps. 8

**BOOK 2 - Exodus** - Redemption of the soul, Ps. 49

**BOOK 3 - Leviticus** - Rejoice in the Lord, Ps. 124

## BOOK 1: PSALM 1-41

Ps. 1 - Two roads, two destinies

**MD** Ps. 2 - My Son and My King (Acts 4. 25)

D Ps. 3 - Absalom my son, God my shield

D Ps. 4 - Praying at the end of the day

D Ps. 5 - Meditating at the start of the day

**PD** Ps. 6 - Crying all night – repentance

D Ps. 7 - God is angry with the wicked

**MD** Ps. 8 - The glory of God's man

**aD** Ps. 9 - Final justice and final judgement

a Ps. 10 - Pride cometh before a fall

D Ps. 11 - Trust don't run

D Ps. 12 - Poor flattery or the pure furnace

D Ps. 13 - How long . . . how long?

D Ps. 14 - The atheist is a fool

D Ps. 15 - Behaviour in God's house

**MD** Ps. 16 - Risen at God's right hand

D Ps. 17 - Saved and satisfied

**MD** Ps. 18 - Last words of the sweet Psalmist

D Ps. 19 - The glory of God declared

D Ps. 20 - The sanctuary not the saddle

D Ps. 21 - Crowned with glory

**MD** Ps. 22 - The Saviour forsaken

D Ps. 23 - The Shepherd followed

**MD** Ps. 24 - The Sovereign forever

**aD** Ps. 25 - A lesson in mercy

D Ps. 26 - Examination time

D Ps. 27 - Hide and seek

D Ps. 28 - Coping with bad neighbours

D Ps. 29 - The most beautiful voice

D Ps. 30 - Then came the morning

D Ps. 31 - My times are in Thy hand

**PD** Ps. 32 - Confess and progress

Ps. 33 - The word works

**aD** Ps. 34 - Not one of them is broken

D Ps. 35 - False witnesses but a fair trial

D Ps. 36 - Flattery or faithfulness

**aD** Ps. 37 - A righteous day to come

**PD** Ps. 38 - The weight and wounds of sin

D Ps. 39 - Vanity, vanity

**MD** Ps. 40 - 'Lo I come' – incarnation

**MD** Ps. 41 - Judas or justice

**Amen and Amen, Ps. 41. 13**

**A** Psalm of Asaph

**S** Concerning Solomon

## BOOK 2: PSALM 42-72

**K** Ps. 42 - A thirsty soul

Ps. 43 - A healthy hope

**K** Ps. 44 - A nation's cry

**MK** Ps. 45 - A Royal wedding

**K** Ps. 46 - Be still and know that I am God

**K** Ps. 47 - Millennial majesty and music

**K** Ps. 48 - The city of the great King

**K** Ps. 49 - The price of redemption

**A** Ps. 50 - Meeting the judge Himself

**PD** Ps. 51 - Deep cleaning

D Ps. 52 - A David or a Doeg

D Ps. 53 - Atheism's folly

D Ps. 54 - God is mine helper

D Ps. 55 - Cast don't carry

D Ps. 56 - Don't bottle it up

D Ps. 57 - My heart is fixed

D Ps. 58 - The unjust judgement

D Ps. 59 - Dangerous dogs

D Ps. 60 - A godless army

**M** Messianic Psalm

**m** Psalm of Moses

D Ps. 61 - A rock higher than I

D Ps. 62 - A rock stronger than I

D Ps. 63 - An early riser

D Ps. 64 - A war of words

D Ps. 65 - A good year, a good harvest

Ps. 66 - It is well with my soul

Ps. 67 - Millennial music

**MD** Ps. 68 - Ascended – captivity captive

**MD** Ps. 69 - Vinegar to drink

D Ps. 70 - I need help quickly

Ps. 71 - Old age

**MS** Ps. 72 - The millennial reign of peace

**Amen and Amen, Ps. 72. 19**

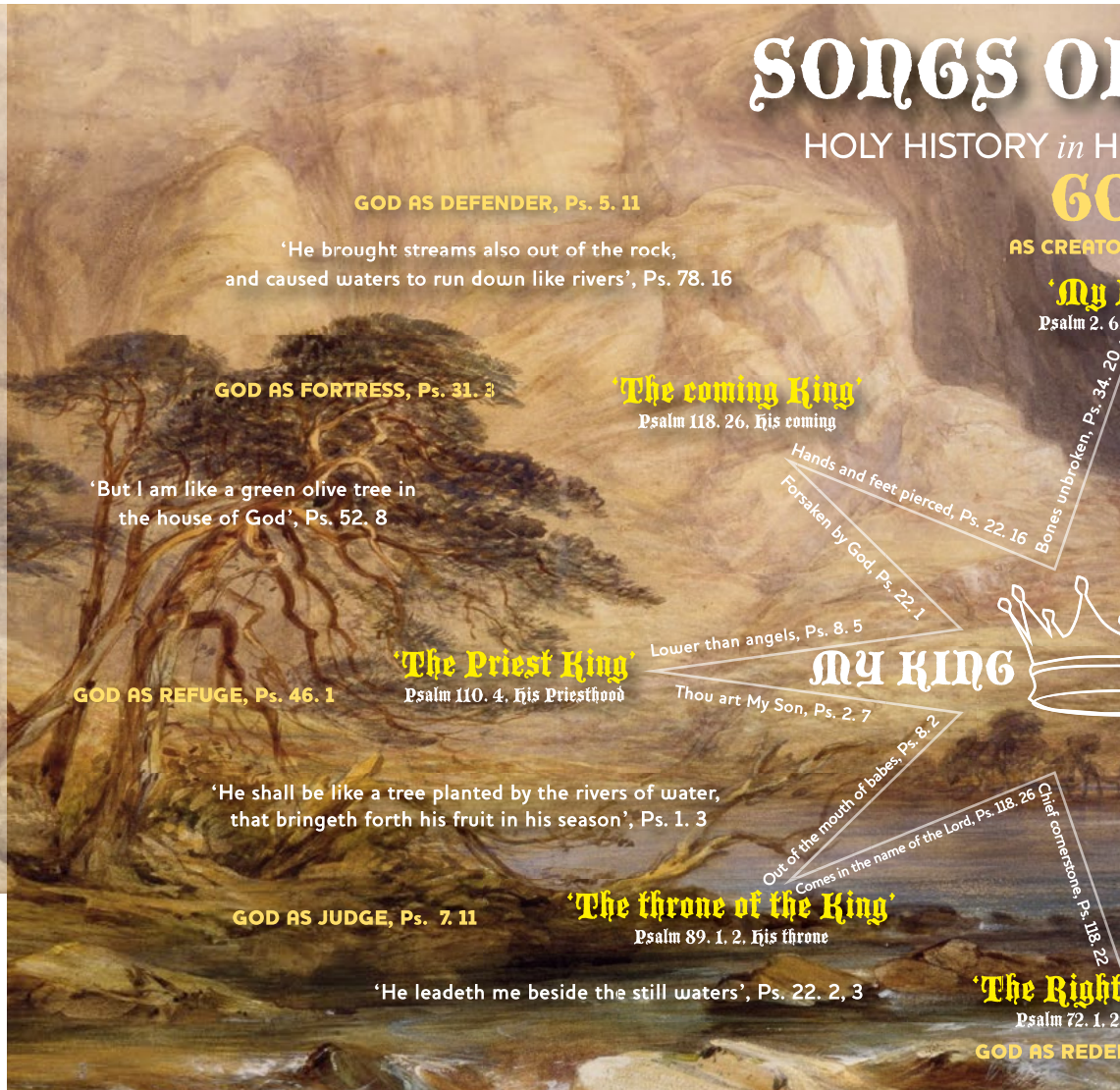
*The book of Psalms instructs us in the use of wings as well as words. It sets us both mounting and singing!*

*C.H. Spurgeon*

**E** Psalm of Ethan

**+ Song of Degrees**

**H** Hallelujah





**Key words:** praise, worship, trust, enemies, sanctuary, Zion, anointed, king **Writers:** David, Moses, Asaph, Solomon, Ethan, Sons of Korah

phets, and in the psalms, concerning me', Luke 24. 44

**Books of Wisdom:** Job / **Psalms** / Proverbs / Ecclesiastes / Song of Solomon

# THE PRAISE

HEAVENLY HARMONY

OD

R, Ps. 8. 1

King'

His Deity

Hated without a cause, Ps. 35. 1b



MY SON

A priest forever, Ps. 110. 4

eous King'

His dominion

EMER, Ps. 107. 2

**GOD AS SHIELD, Ps. 3. 3**

'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God', Ps. 90. 2

**'King of Glory'**

Psalm 24. 7. His glory

**GOD AS ROCK, Ps. 18. 2**

'Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south', Ps. 1. 3

**'Touching the King'**

Psalm 45. 3. His majesty

**GOD AS KING, Ps. 5. 2**

'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God', Ps. 42. 1

**"The great King"**

Psalm 48. 2. His city

**GOD AS SHEPHERD, Ps. 23. 1**

'Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it', Ps. 65.9

east  
temple choir

**Selah** From 'salah' to pause and consider what is before or change of music.  
**Hallelujah** Usually translated 'Praise ye the Lord'. (Jah –Jehovah)

**Alphabetical** Each successive line or group of lines begins with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalms 9 and 10 split the alphabet in two halves.

the sanctuary, Ps. 77

**BOOK 4 - Numbers** - Repentance in the wilderness, Ps. 106

**BOOK 5: Deuteronomy** - Remember Thy word, Ps. 119

## BOOK 3: PSALM 73-89

- A Ps. 73 - Fooled by the prosperity gospel
  - A Ps. 74 - Attacking the sanctuary
  - A Ps. 75 - The cup of God's wrath
  - A Ps. 76 - God moves in Judah
  - A Ps. 77 - God's voice in the sanctuary
  - A Ps. 78 - God's voice in history
  - A Ps. 79 - A voice from captivity
  - A Ps. 80 - Israel - A vine cut down
  - A Ps. 81 - Israel - A voice ignored
  - MA Ps. 82 - God of the gods
  - A Ps. 83 - Ten nations but one God
  - K Ps. 84 - Longing for a day in thy courts
  - K Ps. 85 - Revival begins with prayer
  - D Ps. 86 - Teach me thy way, O Lord
  - K Ps. 87 - We're marching to Zion
  - K Ps. 88 - Praying from a distance
  - ME Ps. 89 - The Davidic covenant
- Amen and Amen, Ps. 89. 52**

## BOOK 4: PSALM 90-106

- m Ps. 90 - Teach us to number our days
  - M Ps. 91 - The Saviour's secret place
  - Ps. 92 - A song for the Sabbath
  - Ps. 93 - Holiness of the house
  - Ps. 94 - God is designer and defender
  - D Ps. 95 - Learn from the past (Heb. 4. 7)
  - M Ps. 96 - The beauty of holiness
  - M Ps. 97 - Jesus shall reign
  - M Ps. 98 - The just judge of the world
  - M Ps. 99 - Worship at His footstool
  - Ps. 100 - Enter His courts with praise
  - D Ps. 101 - David 'will' behave wisely
  - PM Ps. 102 - The unchanging Christ
  - D Ps. 103 - Blessings of redemption
  - Ps. 104 - Canvas of the creator
  - Ps. 105 - Egypt to Canaan - provision
  - Ps. 106 - Egypt to Canaan - provoking
- Amen, Ps. 106. 48**

## BOOK 5: PSALM 107-150

- Ps. 107 - At your wits end
- D Ps. 108 - Vain is the help of man
- D Ps. 109 - Wounded by the wicked
- MD Ps. 110 - The order of Melchizedek
- Ps. 111 - The alphabet of God's works
- a Ps. 112 - The alphabet of blessings
- a Ps. 113 - Hallelujah, praise the Lord!
- H Ps. 114 - Power in God's presence
- Ps. 115 - Idols are for idols
- Ps. 116 - Death that is precious
- MH Ps. 117 - A global song
- M Ps. 118 - The stone the builders rejected
- a Ps. 119 - The wonder of the word
- + Ps. 120 - Call up - He will hear me
- + Ps. 121 - Look up - He will keep me
- +D Ps. 122 - Going up to the house
- + Ps. 123 - Looking to heaven
- +D Ps. 124 - The winning side
- + Ps. 125 - Safe as a row of mountains
- + Ps. 126 - Precious seed!
- +S Ps. 127 - Building the house and a home

- + Ps. 128 - A godly family
- + Ps. 129 - A nation afflicted
- +P Ps. 130 - Marking iniquity
- +D Ps. 131 - Behaving with humility
- + Ps. 132 - The Davidic covenant
- + Ps. 133 - Beauty of unity of the Spirit
- + Ps. 134 - A night in the sanctuary
- H Ps. 135 - Praise and blessing
- Ps. 136 - His mercy endureth
- Ps. 137 - Israel have lost their voice
- D Ps. 138 - Trouble and trust
- D Ps. 139 - Search me, O God
- D Ps. 140 - Deliver me, O Lord
- D Ps. 141 - The golden altar
- D Ps. 142 - Complaining the right way
- PD Ps. 143 - In lovingkindness Jesus came
- D Ps. 144 - God towers above all
- aD Ps. 145 - Great is the Lord
- Ps. 146 - Hallelujah, God cares
- Ps. 147 - Hallelujah, God keeps
- Ps. 148 - Hallelujah, God decrees
- Ps. 149 - Hallelujah, God saves
- Ps. 150 - Hallelujah, God dwells

**Hallelujah, Ps. 150. 6**

h Psalm  
K Psalm of the sons of Korah  
a Alphabetical/acrostic Psalm  
P Penitential Psalm  
D Psalm of David

hence, these too may have been written after the Babylonian exile. Because of its literary sophistication and unique scholarship, it is possible that Ezra wrote Psalm 119 as a teaching tool for post-exilic Jews; however, others believe that David penned this psalm. In any case, the great majority of the psalms were written during the glorious reigns of King David, and his son Solomon, about five centuries after Moses penned Psalm 90, and more than four centuries before the Babylonian captivity.

### Authorship

For many psalms, an ancient Hebrew superscript introduces us to the historical context, and also the writer, by such phrases as ‘A Psalm of David’, Ps. 15, or ‘A Psalm of Asaph’, Ps. 79. Asaph was David’s choirmaster in the temple, 1 Chr. 16. 4-7. In some cases, the superscript indicates the instrumental accompaniment for the psalm, Ps. 5, or an alternative tune that it might be sung to, Ps. 57. In our English Bibles, these introductions are usually printed in a smaller font to introduce the psalm, but in the Hebrew Bible the superscripts are the first line of text in the psalm.

Some have questioned whether these introductory superscripts can be trusted. However, their historicity is notably ancient, and sometimes the internal evidence within the psalms confirms their reliability. For instance, some superscripts refer to incidents in David’s lifetime which are not recorded in the books of Samuel or Chronicles. Psalm 60 serves as a good example; its superscript reads: ‘When he [David] fought against Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt’. It would be quite odd for some post-exilic scribe to add this type of detailed information to the Hebrew text centuries later, without any historical basis for doing so. It is also noted that the Lord Jesus and His apostles referred to the authorship information contained in the superscripts on several occasions, thus proving their trustworthiness. When a psalm does not have

a superscript, its authorship may be discerned through textual observations. For example, Psalm 10 has no superscript, but because it is surrounded by psalms that are accredited to David, and Psalm 10 continues the theme of Psalm 9, most scholars believe that David wrote both psalms. In fact, it is possible that the two were originally one psalm. Another way to identify authorship is to note a particular style, or a repetitive phrase that is peculiar to only one writer in those psalms for which the authorship is known. For instance, when the psalmist speaks directly to Jehovah the phrase ‘your servant’ is only asserted by David himself, the one exception being that Ethan refers to David as ‘your servant’, i.e., ‘the Lord’s Servant’, in Psalm 88. This is why the rabbis of the Talmud and Midrash contend that David wrote Psalm 119, as the phrase ‘your servant’ occurs thirteen times in that psalm. This type of evaluation is not conclusive, but does confirm valid candidates for authorship.

The most prolific author of the psalms was David, writing seventy-three of the one hundred and fifty psalms. Besides David, other known writers of Psalms include: Asaph, Ethan, Heman, the Korahites, Moses, and Solomon. As the Korahites were Levitical singers at the temple, they may not have actually composed the psalms, but rather these were dedicated to them, or were provided to them to publicly perform. The authorship breakdown is as follows:

Asaph: 50, 73-83 (for a total of 12).

David: 2-9,<sup>1</sup> 11-32, 34-41, 51-65, 68-69, 86, 101, 103, 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145 (for a total of 73).

Ethan: 89

Heman: 88 (joint authorship with Korahites)

Korahites: 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88 (for a total of 11)

Moses: 90

Solomon: 72, 127

Unknown: 1, 10, 33, 43, 66-67, 71, 91-100, 102, 104-107, 111-121, 123, 125-126, 128-130, 132, 134-137, 146-150 (for a total of 49).

In summary, the authorship of one third of the psalms is unknown. This fact did not prevent their canonization, as the authorship of other books in the Bible is also unknown. The inspired character of these psalms is obvious, and their proven historicity well-established. While it is more difficult to enter into the emotional nature of the poem without knowing the personal circumstances that provoked its composition, the messages contained within these psalms will bless the reader and exalt the Lord.

[Selected from *Lessons for Life*, Volume 6 of the Old Testament Overview series published by Precious Seed Publications].

### Endnote

- 1 Although Psalm 2 does not have a superscription dedicated to David, it is clear from Acts chapter 4 verse 25 that David was the author of this psalm.



# Charles Henry Mackintosh

By **HOWARD A. BARNES** Westhoughton, England

Charles Henry Mackintosh (better known as 'CHM') was born in 1820, at Glenmalure Barracks County Wicklow, Ireland, the son of a captain in a Scots Highland regiment. He was converted at the age of eighteen through reading letters sent to him by a devout Christian lady, and reading J. N. DARBY's 'Operations of the Spirit'.

In 1838, he went to work in a business in Limerick, and he said of those earlier days, 'I had not the honour of being among the first of those who planted their feet on the blessed ground occupied by Brethren. I left the [Established Church] about the year 1839, and took my place at the table in [Aungier Street] Dublin, where dear Bellett was ministering with great acceptance. . . As a young man I, of course, walked in retirement, having no thought of coming forward in public ministry of any kind'.

In 1843, Mackintosh wrote and published his first gospel tract, entitled *Peace with God*, showing his early interest both in evangelism and in writing. Interestingly, his last article – written in 1896 – was entitled *The God of Peace*.

When he was twenty-four, he opened a private boarding school at Westport, County Mayo, where he developed a special method of teaching classical languages. This was during the Irish potato famine of 1845 to 1850, and during his school holidays he went around County Mayo preaching the gospel to the poor. The time and effort involved in running a boarding school in such a poor and famine-hit district caused Mackintosh to give up the enterprise in 1853; he told John Nelson Darby that nothing could induce him to go on with a boarding school.

He tried farming for a while, but eventually wrote to Darby on 31 August 1853 that the Lord had called me into larger service than ever, and he soon concluded that he must give himself entirely to preaching, writing, and public speaking. Soon after this he established a periodical called *Things New and Old*, which he continued to edit from 1858 right up to 1890, and *Good News for the Little Ones*, which he edited from 1859 to 1876.

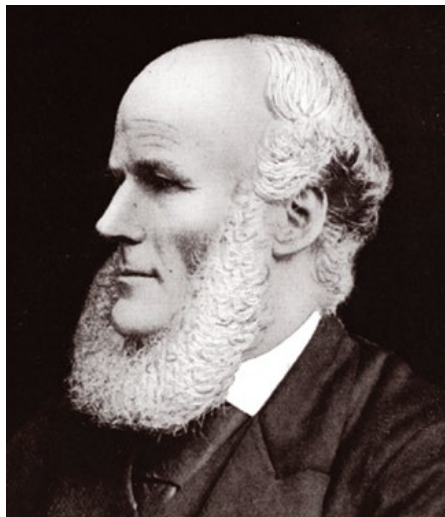
Having moved his family from near Dublin in the middle of Ireland to

Coleraine in the far north in 1857, Mackintosh took a great interest in, and actively participated in, the Irish Evangelical revival of 1859-60, which centred on that area.

Of course, Mackintosh's lasting influence results from his writings, particularly his *Notes on the Pentateuch*, beginning with a volume of 334 pages on Genesis, and concluding with a two-volume work on Deuteronomy extending to over 800 pages. Of this series, Andrew Miller wrote in the preface to the first volume of Genesis – 'Man's complete ruin in sin, and God's perfect remedy in Christ, are fully, clearly, and often strikingly presented'.<sup>1</sup>

Another series by Mackintosh, which has also been frequently reprinted, is *Miscellaneous Writings*, consisting of seven volumes, totalling over 2500 pages, and most of it is still definitely worth reading.

After many years living and serving in Ireland, Mackintosh and his family moved to England in 1863. He then travelled widely throughout the mainland, preaching the gospel and ministering the word. His written ministry continued, with a steady stream of publications on a variety of subjects. Though he never left the British Isles, the influence of his writings spread far and wide, with, for



instance, his *Notes on the Book of Genesis*, having its first American edition in 1863.

Although during the 1870s teaching about household baptism became increasingly prevalent among the 'Exclusive' assemblies he associated with, in his magazine CHM wrote, 'I can only say that I have for thirty-two years been asking in vain for a single line of Scripture for baptising any other than believers or those who profess to believe. Reasonings I have had, inferences, conclusions, and deductions; but of direct Scripture authority not one tittle'.<sup>2</sup> He felt cause to complain of those, who instead of preaching and teaching Jesus Christ, are disturbing the minds of God's people by pressing infant baptism upon them.

Mackintosh did not take part in the divisions and doctrinal turbulence among Exclusive assemblies in the last fifteen years of his life. It has been said that Mackintosh was a man of a much gentler spirit than his older friend the volatile John Nelson Darby, and he 'breathed an atmosphere of deep devotion'.

Mackintosh died on November 2, 1896, and is buried in Cheltenham Cemetery.

All CHM's books, articles, tracts, etc., are freely and fully accessible at the Stempublishing website or at <https://www.brethrenarchive.org/people/charles-henry-mackintosh/>.

DAVID BEATTIE wrote of Mackintosh that 'As a platform speaker C.H.M. was much sought after' but 'it is as a writer rather than a speaker that his name is remembered today, and in this connection it would be difficult to estimate the powerful influence of the pen of C.H.M. during the last fifty years'.<sup>3</sup> TIM GRASS later wrote about him that, 'He proved to be a lucid and popular writer, with a gift for the telling phrase: not an original thinker, he mediated Darbyite theology to the wider church'.<sup>4</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 Found here: <https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/mackintosh/Pent/GENESIS01.HTML>
- 2 C. H. MACKINTOSH, *Short papers, section 10 of 10*, found here: <https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/mackintosh>
- 3 DAVID J. BEATTIE, *Brethren The Story of A Great Recovery*, John Ritchie, 1939, pg. 143.
- 4 TIM GRASS, *Gathering to His Name*, BAHN, pg. 151.

# ASPECTS OF CALVARY

## The Cross of Christ in Galatians

By **STEPHEN FELLOWES** Skibbereen, Ireland

### PART 3

The subject of the cross of Christ is dealt with largely in the Epistle to the Galatians. Distinction is to be drawn between the term 'the death of Christ', which relates to my salvation, and the 'cross of Christ', which denotes my condemnation. In other words, His death fits me for heaven, but His cross finishes me with self and earth. The cross is a judicial concept. As far as Christ was concerned it was the judgement of man upon Him, and in relation to me it is the judgement of God upon all that I am in Adam.

And so, as we look at the cross, we will find that it is the most challenging subject in all the word of God. It searches me, it strips me of all my pride and vanity, and it speaks to me of one who paid the ultimate price to make me His own.

Paul, writing to the Galatians, places emphasis on the cross because there were those who refused to let go of Judaism; those who were seeking to bring the believers back under the law and erroneously teaching that Christ's work was insufficient in itself. The law was designed for man in the flesh, which is the very thing to which the cross has put an end. Thus, the law is superseded. STONEY said insightfully, that 'a Galatian is really a Roman who has gone back from Romans chapter eight'.<sup>1</sup> Having been delivered from the curse of the law, they were putting themselves back into bondage. Paul tersely sums up the gravity of this false teaching by saying, 'if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain', Gal. 2. 21.

I want to think of the cross as a barrier from four different standpoints.

### **1 The cross stands as a barrier between me and my sins – it saves**

When the Galatians heard the gospel, the message they heard was

unmistakably clear. Paul states, 'before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you', Gal. 3. 1. It was as if 'Jesus Christ crucified' was posted up for a public display right in front of them; they could not miss it. Why then were they turning away from this truth and going back to the legal system that gave them nothing but condemnation and bondage?

This is a timely reminder of the definition of true gospel preaching; it is a clear presentation of the cross-work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says to the Corinthians, 'we preach Christ crucified', 1 Cor. 1. 23. Do we? Of course, we should preach sin and the reality of eternity, but the essence of the gospel is a presentation of Christ and the infinite value of His sacrificial work. The Jews stumbled at the concept of a crucified Saviour and the Greeks counted it foolishness, but 'unto us which are saved it is the power of God', 1 Cor. 1. 18.

Paul poses the question, 'if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased', Gal. 5. 11. The very fact that he suffered bore testimony to his exclusive proclamation of the cross of Christ. He would never have suffered for preaching circumcision which brings in man and gives place to the flesh. HOLE put it nicely when

he said, 'the cross puts no honour upon man'!<sup>2</sup>

Thank God we can glory in the cross, knowing that it was there that the great question of our sins was forever answered!

'Blest cross! blest sepulchre! blest rather be  
The Man that there was put to shame for me!'

BUNYAN

### **2 The cross is a barrier between me and the law – it liberates**

This strikes at the core issue in the Galatian Epistle. Adherence to the law was being added to faith in Christ. It has been said that 'Christ supplemented is Christ supplanted'. How true this is; to add in any way to Christ is to say He is insufficient, and thus His unique glory is lost.

Christ's work on the cross has 'redeemed us from the curse of the law', Gal. 3. 13. It is important to note that this verse is referring to Jews, with Gentiles introduced in the following verse. We have been set free from the slave market of sin and placed upon the grounds of freedom, so let us 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage', Gal. 5. 1. We have, in fact, died to the law, this death having been accomplished by our crucifixion with Christ, Gal. 2. 19, 20.

The law applies to the natural man. That is why at the outset of this Epistle Paul states that Christ 'gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world [age]', 1. 4. The natural man is at home in the world and its systems and is thus bound by the law which governs his earthly existence. However, if Christ has delivered us from this age, then the law can no longer apply to us. How perfect are the scriptures – hanging the key at the door to unlock the message of the letter.

### **3 Thirdly, the cross is a barrier between me and my self – it subjugates**

We read, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ



liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me', Gal. 2. 20.

Note the five-fold use of the personal pronoun 'I' in the verse and the three truths that are to be learned in relation to my person:

**a) The condemned 'I'**

'I am crucified with Christ'; when He was crucified, I was identified with Him and all that I was in Adam in my natural state came under the sentence of the judgement of God. I have been judicially put out of sight. In Romans, Paul writes of the importance of 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him', Rom. 6. 6. We will never progress in the Christian life until we have a full and proper understanding of what happened to 'the old man' at Calvary; it is vital when it comes to living for God's glory, as Paul goes on to show in Romans chapter 6.

**b) The changed 'I'**

'I live; yet not I'. Physically, I am still

very much alive, but I am a different person; salvation has transformed me. The man who once lived according to the natural manner of the world is gone and, in my baptism, I have told everyone that my old self has gone; the 'big I' is no more! What a change salvation brings! Let us not be guilty of watering down the radical, life-changing power of the gospel. Doubtless every new convert needs time to grow and develop in divine things, but there must always be a clear and definite change in the life of all who profess Christ as Saviour.

**c) The consecrated 'I'**

And now, 'Christ liveth in me', and I live my life trusting in Him, conscious that He is no less than 'the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me'.

This should stir my heart to willingly and devotedly give myself for Him in a life consecrated to His honour. The very fact that He loved me and gave all to secure my eternal salvation should be enough motivation to live for His glory. A true realization of 'himself

for me', will always lead to 'myself for Him'!

**4 The cross is a barrier between me and the world – it separates**

We have already thought of the world as 'this present evil world', Gal. 1. 4. Its evil was manifested fully in the crucifixion of Christ where the heart of man was fully told out, and, as those delivered from it, we should consciously walk apart from it.

May our hearts concur with the apostle when he says, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world', Gal. 6. 14. JOHN DOUGLAS from Ashgill, Scotland used to say that 'Paul turned this world into a cemetery and moved through it as a corpse'.

As we gather together these teachings of the Galatian Epistle we discern that, as Paul looked at the cross, he saw three things upon it. He saw his Saviour who met all his need as a guilty sinner, he saw the world who crucified his Saviour and he saw himself under the sentence of death, judicially removed from before the face of God.

If I keep the first vision clearly before my soul, it will keep my heart bowed in worship and adoration for the one who paid so much to save an unworthy sinner like me. The second sight would keep my feet in a path of separation, walking far apart from this world which gave my Saviour a cross; and the third sight of my natural self upon the cross will keep my mind informed as to my true position before God, no longer in Adam but in Christ with all that such a glorious truth embraces.

'When I survey the wondrous cross  
on which the prince of glory died  
my richest gain I count but loss  
and pour contempt on all my pride'.  
WATTS



**Endnotes**

- 1 J. B. STONEY, *Readings on some of Paul's Epistles*, Vol. 2, pg. 138. Accessed at, <http://www.mcclean.me.uk/mse/jbs/jbs2.htm#1>
- 2 F. B. HOLE, *1 Corinthians 1*. Accessed at, <https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/hole/NT/1CORINTH.html>

# THINGS THAT CONCERN US PHILIPPIANS <sup>(1)</sup>

## ‘Your fellowship’, ‘your love’ and ‘your prayer’

By **FRED WHITELOCK** Warrington, England

### **Your fellowship: companionship, participation.**

‘For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now’, 1. 5.

In this opening chapter Paul speaks of their ‘fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now’. It was:

- a) A fellowship through salvation, v. 7;<sup>1</sup>
- b) A fellowship of, and in, service, v. 5; 4. 3;<sup>2</sup>
- c) A fellowship of the Spirit, 2. 1;
- d) A fellowship of suffering, 3. 10; 1. 29, 30;<sup>3</sup>
- e) A fellowship of substance, 4. 14-19.<sup>4</sup>

However, we may consider it in a simple way as follows:

- It is a privilege, 1 John 1. 3.
- It is a responsibility, Acts 2. 42.
- It is sacrificial, Phil. 4. 18.

Therefore:

### **Fellowship ‘with him’, 1 John 1. 6.**

When we were united by faith to Christ, we were brought into such complete fellowship with Him, that we were made one with Him, and His interests and ours became mutual and identical. We have fellowship with Christ in His **love**; what He loves, we love. He loves the saints – so should we. He loves sinners – so should we. He loves the poor perishing race of man, and longs to see earth’s deserts transformed into the garden of the Lord – so should we. We have fellowship with him in His **desires**. He desires the glory of God – we should also labour for the same. He desires that the saints may be with Him where He is – we should desire to be with Him there too. He

desires to drive out sin – we should fight under His banner. He desires that His Father’s name may be loved and adored by all His creatures – thus, we should pray daily, ‘Let thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven’. We have fellowship with Christ in His **sufferings**. We are not nailed to the cross, nor do we die a cruel death, but when He is reproached we are reproached; and a very sweet thing it is to be blamed for His sake, to be despised for following the Master, to have the world against us. The disciple should not be above his Lord. In our measure, we should commune with him in His **labours**, ministering to men by the word of truth and by deeds of love. Our meat and our drink, like His, is to do the will of Him who has sent us and to finish His work. We also have fellowship with Christ in his **joys**. We should be happy in His happiness and rejoice in His exaltation. Have you ever tasted that joy? There is no purer or more thrilling delight to be known this side of heaven than that of having Christ’s joy fulfilled in us, that our joy may be full.

Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 speaks of ‘the day of Jesus Christ’. The difficulties and experiences through which the Lord brings us here will all be fully realized and revealed at the Judgement Seat of Christ. His glory awaits us to complete our fellowship, for His church shall sit with Him upon His throne as His well-beloved bride.

### **Your love, 1. 9: care, passion.**

#### **‘that your love may abound yet more and more’, 1. 9.**

Love is the central theme throughout scripture, and this

challenges every believer who has come to faith in Christ. Consider the Lord’s prayer in John chapter 17 verse 23, ‘I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me’. Come a little closer and listen to verse 26, ‘that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them’. Did I hear that right? How little we show of that love! We are constantly fighting, finding fault and criticizing one another, and fail to see our own shortcomings. Just think of how the Lord Himself dealt with all His disciples, and was there ever such ‘a motley crew’ as them? He dealt with them in love. He never wrote them off, as we sometimes tend to do with our brothers and sisters. We ought to heed the command that He gave to them on that night in which He was being betrayed, John 15. 12, ‘This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you’. This love should characterize our lives, as John says in his Epistle, 1 John 5. 2, ‘By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments’.

This is practical as well, inasmuch that, if I see a brother or sister struggling with a need, I should be prepared to help them, 1 John 3. 17. Philippians chapter 1 verse 10 states, ‘without offence till the day of Christ’; we will all stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ and give account. Sadly, Christians can be, and are at times, very cruel to each other, because of pride or jealousy, or even sometimes because of feeling left out. I wonder, if the Lord was to say to each one of us, ‘Lovest thou me more than these?’, what would our reaction be? How sad to think of those words which the Lord spoke concerning the church of Ephesus in Revelation chapter 2, ‘thou hast left thy first love’. Oh, may He never say it about us today!

### **Your Prayer, v. 19: call, petition.**

‘For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ’, 1. 19.



There are four aspects to prayer, two of which are to be seen in this chapter.

### Personal Prayer

How lovely it is when you become aware that certain saints are praying for you, as indeed the apostle did; he emphasized this in his letter to them, 'Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy', v. 4. How it must have uplifted these saints to think that here was a dear brother, confined in a prison, earnestly supplicating for them. Do we do the same for all our brothers and sisters?

### Collective Prayer

It is also lovely when saints have a collective desire to come together to lay hold upon God for thanksgiving, requests and supplication. We should not miss the statement at the beginning of the Epistle, 'to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi', v. 1. Notice the 'all'! Collective prayer is what is referred to in verse 19, 'your prayer'. Note also Acts chapter 12 verse 12; the night that Peter was in prison, in the home of Mary the mother of Mark, 'many were gathered together praying'. Is it any

wonder that the Lord not only saw their exercise, but moved to answer their prayer, even though they found it incredible that the answer came so soon? It is in this context that the apostle is requesting that prayer be made for him, in order that he might be delivered from bondage. Nevertheless, he states that, whether by life or death, his desire is that Christ might be magnified by his testimony for Him.

### Earnest Prayer

Do we pray, or do we use vain repetitions? 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, Eph. 6. 18.<sup>5</sup>

**Without much speaking:** long prayers destroy prayer meetings. 'But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking', Matt. 6. 7; in other words, be specific.

**Boldly, but not brashly:** 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain

mercy, and find grace to help in time of need', Heb. 4. 16.

Humbly, not forgetting that we are only sinners saved by grace. 'And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted', Luke 18. 13, 14.

**Reverence:** God is still the God of eternity, even though we approach Him and have that privilege of calling Him our Father. 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him', Ps. 89. 7.6

Our blessed Lord knew what it was to give Himself to earnest prayer, Luke 22. 41, 44.

### Believing Prayer

This is that which lays hold upon God, that He will do what we request. However, there are often misunderstandings relative to this for the following reasons:

- It must be in accord with His will, 1 John 5. 14.
- My heart and attitude must be right, with all sin confessed, so that there is nothing between me and my God, Ps. 66. 18; Jas. 5. 16.
- It must not be for my own selfish interests but purely for His glory, Jas. 4. 3.

As the apostle writes, 'In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God', Phil. 4. 6.



### Endnotes

- 1 See also Titus 1. 4; Rom. 11. 17.
- 2 See also Philem. 17; 2 Cor. 8. 23.
- 3 See also Heb. 10. 33; Rev. 1. 9.
- 4 See also Heb. 13. 16; Rom. 12. 13; 15. 26, 27; 2 Cor. 8. 4; 9. 13; 1 Tim. 6. 18; Gal. 6. 6.
- 5 See Luke 18. 2-8; the unjust judge and the woman who cried for vengeance.
- 6 See also Job 40. 4; 42. 5, 6.

# BALAAAM

## Numbers 22. 36 to 23.12 Part 2

By **RICHARD CATCHPOLE** South Norwood, London, England

When Balak sent for Balaam to come and curse the children of Israel, God clearly stated, 'Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed', Num. 22. 12. Nothing could have been more definite, but Balaam coveted the rewards Balak promised to give him, and so, despite his earlier refusal, Balaam finally came. It seems that on the part of Balak there was a mixed feeling of relief that Balaam had come, and yet some annoyance that he had not come earlier. That Balak was relieved when Balaam arrived is suggested by the fact that he went out to meet him personally; that he was irritated by the delay is echoed in his words of reproof in verses 36 and 37.

In response, Balaam said, 'Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak', v. 38. The experience with the ass had certainly made an impact upon Balaam, and his words to Balak suggest that, as much as he might resent it, the lesson of the ass had in some measure been learned; he could but declare what God would give to him. In 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 21, the apostle, speaking of the divine inspiration of the scriptures, says, 'the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost'. Balaam was not numbered among that company of 'holy men of God' and yet his messages were certainly not of 'the will of man' but divinely inspired. Prior to Balaam taking up his third parable, we are specifically told, 'Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and **the spirit of God came upon him**', Num. 24. 2. While there is no earlier reference to the Holy Spirit coming upon Balaam, we have no room to doubt that the preceding two parables were no less divinely inspired and no less authoritative.

It seems likely that, following Balaam's arrival, Balak held a feast

in honour of his guest. Placing Balaam among his princes, Balak offered sacrifices of oxen and sheep, sending portions to Balaam and to the princes that were with him, 22. 40. But to whom were the sacrifices offered? In the next verse we have the first mention in scripture of 'the high places of Baal', the chief male deity of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites, and, though not specifically stated, one assumes (though some disagree!) that it was to Baal the sacrifices were devoted. But for what purpose? The very next day they are going to get down to the business in hand, and it seems that, in the evening before, Balak offers sacrifices to his god as a supplication for success in the venture before them. Behind the idol there is demonic activity; thus, an attempt to engage the power of Satan to curse the people of God.<sup>1</sup>

From this point, events move very quickly: 'it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people', 22. 41. The word 'utmost' has the idea of 'the extremity, the end' and we have reason to think that Balak was anxious to keep Balaam from seeing the whole camp, but instead only a part of it. After all, he didn't want Balaam to be too impressed

with the size and appearance of the people he had been called to curse! In his first parable, Balaam speaks of the '**fourth part** of Israel', perhaps suggesting that was all he could see of Israel's camp at that moment.<sup>2</sup>

Numbers chapter 23 opens with Balaam's request, 'Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams. And Balak did as Balaam had spoken'. But, again, we must ask to whom were the sacrifices offered? It appears not now to Baal but Jehovah, whom Balaam had earlier called, 'the Lord my God'.<sup>3</sup> It could be that the building of seven altars reflected heathen practice, but we suggested in the first article that Balaam had some knowledge of the God of Israel and, perhaps, some concept of the sacred significance attached to the number seven in the worship of Jehovah, and so this was an attempt to propitiate Jehovah. As the smoke ascends, Balak is directed to 'stand by' his offering in the position of a suppliant, while Balaam says, 'I will go: **peradventure** the Lord [*Jehovah*] will come to meet me'. In what way did he expect the Lord to meet him? Balaam practised divination; he was going forth not expecting to meet the Lord personally but to seek 'enchantments'. That is evident from the opening verse of chapter 24, where, prior to Balaam's third parable, we are told, 'he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments'. As chapter 23 opens, this is one of those 'other times'. From a high vantage point he sought to view, perhaps, the movement of the clouds, the flight of the birds, something he could view as a manifestation of Jehovah in the phenomena of nature that he could take as an omen of forthcoming events. The offerings were to Jehovah, but presented from what location? From 'the high places of Baal'. It was virtually an attempt to combine heathenism and monotheism and to eliminate the distance between them.<sup>4</sup>

In our day the attempts are more refined, so we hear of 'multi-faith services', associating the name of God and prayers to God with



systems and faiths that disregard God's word, and fail to give to the Lord Jesus Christ the pre-eminence that is His due. But surely, 'the high places of Baal' would be a favourable location if a person wanted to curse the people of God; certainly, Balak thought so. But whatever means might be sought, whether the wisdom of men or the wiles of the devil, whatever the location even, though a centre of demonic idol worship, nothing could frustrate the counsel or purpose of God. Every attempt Balak and Balaam made to curse the people only served to manifest further the love and grace of God for His people and His determination to bless them. The children of Israel had nothing to say or do in the matter. In fact, they were oblivious to what was being proposed. It was simply a question of whether their adversaries could prevail to curse those whom God had blessed.

Although Balaam set out to seek enchantments, God (*Elohim*) met

him, Num. 23. 4. But, in verse 5, the 'Lord' (*Jehovah*) put a word into his mouth, the word of the faithful covenant-keeping God respecting His people, and verses 7 to 10 record the first of Balaam's seven parables. The parable is in a familiar Hebrew poetic form, consisting of fourteen statements that divide into seven couplets, each key thought being embodied in two sentences.<sup>5</sup> The first couplet is: 'Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram'; 'out of the mountains of the east'. The second couplet is: 'come, curse me Jacob'; 'come, defy Israel'. The specific focus of the first parable is Israel's distinctive position in divine purpose amongst the nations.

### God has not cursed them

Balaam began by reiterating the commission given to him, 'Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel'. The word 'curse', as we previously noted, has the idea 'to bind', so as to immobilize them and render them powerless in face of attack. The word 'defy' denotes, literally, 'to foam at the mouth', in

the sense of 'to be enraged against, to angrily threaten'.

Responding directly to the commission, Balaam says two things. First, 'How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?' v. 8. Second, 'or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?' v. 8. However wayward Israel had been in the wilderness, no divine curse had been laid upon them. There was no foundation upon which Balaam could build. It is interesting that he says, 'whom God [Heb. *Elohim*, the mighty God, the God of power] hath not cursed', then, 'whom the Lord [Heb. *Jehovah*, the faithful covenant-keeping God, the God of promise] hath not defied'. They were a people protected on that two-fold basis – divine power and divine promise. The journey of Balaam had been futile, the objective of the journey impossible. The prophet Isaiah would later write, 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord', Isa. 54. 17. If that was so for Israel, it is no less true for believers today. Paul says, 'If God be for us who can be against us . . . Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us', Rom. 8. 31-37.

### Endnotes

- 1 1 Cor. 10. 19, 20.
- 2 Num. 23. 10.
- 3 Num. 22. 18.
- 4 F. A. TATFORD, *Prophet from the Euphrates*, Prophetic Witness Publishing House, pg. 30.
- 5 'Synonymous parallelism', where the second line repeats the thought of the first.



# 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5

## Readiness for His coming Part 2

By **PETER DAVIES** Swansea, Wales

This chapter clearly follows on from the previous chapter, 'But of the times and the seasons, brethren', v. 1. Paul has already been teaching them about the Lord's coming for His own, what we know as the rapture. Now he is going to speak of what follows that great event. He has already taught them concerning this Day of the Lord, for he says, 'ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night', vv. 1, 2. How thoroughly they had been equipped concerning future events in such a short space of time (three weeks' mission). This is a challenge to us preachers and teachers as to how much of the counsel of God we share in our preaching. Many Christians today know so little of future events; note how important these things are, and how relevant to our walk with the Lord.

### **Retribution, vv. 1-4 – The Day of wrath**

In these verses, Paul is speaking of times [ages] and seasons [events], and the need to know them and not confuse them, as many do. They are likened to **days** in this chapter. The first is the 'day of the Lord', vv. 2, 4. It is described as a day of 'destruction', 'travail [pain and sorrow]', and 'darkness [night]', from which there is no escape. Neither is there any warning, only that it will come suddenly, when they think that they have secured peace and safety at last. But, says Paul, 'ye . . . are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief', v. 4. What follows proves how ignorant so many believers are in relation to that 'day of the Lord'.

### **Revelation, vv. 5-11 – A Day of salvation**

Paul states, 'Ye are all the children of light . . . of the day', v. 5, and stresses the beauty of this by saying, 'we are not of the night, nor of darkness'. Light has come into the world; the Saviour has come, not to judge but to save. Jesus Himself said, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth

me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life', John 8. 12. This is the acceptable year of the Lord, of which He spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth, Luke 4. 19. On that occasion, Jesus closed the book without going on to read of the 'day of vengeance', Isa. 61. 2; it was not to be confused with the 'day of salvation'. Paul wrote, 'now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation', 2 Cor. 6. 2. For the second time in 1 Thessalonians, note 1. 10, Paul emphasizes that we are not going through that awful day of wrath; 'For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ', v. 9. Is this not plain enough language for us? We are not going through the tribulation! But, how should we live in the light of such deliverance and privilege? We have it before us in these verses, 'let us not sleep . . . but let us watch and be sober', v. 6. We are not to be dozy, indifferent, and inactive, but to be on our guard, and ready to serve. We are not to be hindered by the intoxicating things of this world, but alert to the guidance and ways of our Lord 'that . . . we should live together with him' who died for us, v. 10. How

can we experience this kind of living? Verse 8 holds the key – we are told there are two things that we are to put on in order that we shall be able to withstand the opposition, snares and attacks of Satan. It is the armour of God which has been provided for our use, so that we might be victorious in any and every circumstance of life.

### **'the breastplate of faith and love', v. 8**

It is of utmost importance that we guard our affections from all the allurements of the world; they are many. They are all around us, the idols, the little foxes that spoil the vines. But do not think you can turn from the idols until you turn to God. Paul commended these Thessalonian believers for that in the early part of the letter. As we look to Him in faith, we will experience the warmth of His love, and that will become a sure breastplate for the protection of our hearts.

But more, what about our minds? They play such tricks and cause us so many fears and distresses. So, we are exhorted to put on:

### **'an helmet, the hope of salvation', v. 8**

This is not salvation from our sins, nor our daily salvation from everything that besets us, but our ultimate salvation. When He will come for us, to take us to our heavenly home, to be with Him, and like Him for ever. Glory, Hallelujah!

He closes this section by encouraging them to make the most of their fellowship together, 'comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do', v. 11. There is nothing like the fellowship of the Lord's people! He uses two words here: 'comfort' and 'edify'. Comfort is to help and encourage one another and edify is to strengthen and build up one another. This is not just a public work but a personal work for all to do!

### **Recognition, vv. 12, 13 – Submission**

He pleads, beseeching them to recognize and know those who work among them, and esteem them. He knows what a difficult job they have



in caring for the flock, because their needs are so varied and different. These are not ‘elders’ in name only but those who ‘labour among you, and are over you in the Lord’, v. 12. They are working among the flock to help, and they watch over to protect it. Note also, ‘and admonish you’. There are times when they may have to caution, warn and reprove, all for your good. Such are to be ‘very highly esteemed ‘for their work’s sake’, v. 13. Lastly in this connection, he says, ‘be at peace among yourselves’. Happy is the church that enjoys such peace!

### Responsibility, vv. 14-24 – Service

From this blessed state of peace among them, he moves on to give specific guidance for their lives and service. For without this peace among ourselves in our fellowship with one another, we cannot expect the Lord’s help and blessing. But now he says, ‘we exhort you’, or, ‘I call you to observe and do what I say’. This is apostolic teaching to which we would do well to take heed. This teaching is very personal and covers every part of our lives:

1. ‘Have no part with evil, but pursue that which is good’, v. 15 – among yourselves as the children of God, and to those who are outside; **to all**.
2. ‘Rejoice evermore’, v. 16. This is a good testimony to all, that we have

found real satisfaction in Christ, and by it, God is glorified.

3. ‘Pray without ceasing’, v. 17.

Recognizing our own helplessness, and that the Lord is our helper and sufficiency in all things.

4. ‘In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you’, v. 18. Thanksgiving is the expression of our gratitude and appreciation for all that God has done, is doing and will do for us.
5. ‘Quench not the Spirit’, v. 19. The Holy Spirit is always working in us and through us. Do not frustrate His powerful work by our selfishness, and pride.

6. ‘Despise not prophesyings’, v. 20. That is the word that has come to us from God by His Holy Spirit, through the prophets of old as well as New Testament prophets. Ever beware of those whom the Lord has not sent, who claim to be prophets. John the apostle warned about these in his day, ‘Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world’, 1 John 4. 1.

7. ‘Prove all things; hold fast that which is good’, v. 21. How careful we need to be in these days, as to what we hear, see, and read. Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, ‘Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners [*ethos*, habits]’, 1 Cor. 15. 33.

8. ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil’, v. 22. Have no part with anything that is questionable or doubtful. If you are not sure whether something is right or wrong, better to have no part with it.

What a wonderful conclusion or summing up the apostle gives in verses 23 and 24. He turns our eyes upward and heavenward, and says, if you observe these words of exhortation, ‘the very God of peace sanctify you wholly [completely]’. We are sanctified, holy, set apart, positionally in Christ through the once-for-all cleansing of His precious blood. But God desires us to be sanctified experimentally, in practice daily, so that we might meet Him at His coming having been preserved free of any blame or evil accusation. He follows this by reminding them and us that God is faithful ‘that calleth you, who also will do it’, v. 24. In other words, we might not always be as faithful as we ought to be, but God is, and He will present us without blame, or faultless, ‘Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy’, Jude 24.

### Requests, vv. 25-28 – Salutations

In closing the letter, his first request is for their prayers for them as the Lord’s servants, ‘Brethren, pray for us’, v. 25. He wants them to know that, as the Lord’s servants, they too need and value their prayers for them as they continue in their ministry and work for the Lord. How we all need one another’s prayers! Then, he wants them to know how much they are loved, by telling them to greet one another ‘with an holy kiss’, v. 26, from them, and to each other. Show your affection and love for all the brethren. Across the world there are so many ways of greeting; what is important is that we do love one another and make each one feel that our love is genuine. Then he gives them a solemn charge that the letter is to be read to all the brethren, in order that all may benefit from the teaching given. Finally, he closes with the greatest blessing that could be given, ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen’, v. 28.



# THE WORK OF THE LORD IN CENTRAL BRAZIL

By **WILLIAM WATTERSON** Pirassununga, Brazil

'In Brazil, a land of religious liberty, all religions are represented and active. Most profess to be Roman Catholic but Spiritism in two distinct forms influences the thinking and practices of millions. Evangelicals, especially Pentecostals of every shade, have increased very much in latter times, but the results of their work are very unsatisfactory'.

The paragraph above is quoted from our dear brother Wilson's introduction to the article on Southern Brazil for the May 2020 edition of this magazine. Even though we live and serve the Lord in different regions of Brazil and are located over one thousand kilometres North from Porto Alegre, our circumstances in relation to religion are the same as what he presented in that introduction. We are located in the state of São Paulo, slightly south from the centre of Brazil. The state has an area slightly larger than the UK, but a smaller population. In what is the richest state in Brazil, we have excellent roads and infrastructure, and society around us is becoming increasingly indifferent to the gospel.

The region I wish to mention in this article is a small part of this state of São Paulo, located about 200 kilometres north from the state capital (also called São Paulo), and is roughly the size of Northern Ireland minus Tyrone and Fermanagh, but nowhere near as densely populated – there are only twelve towns or villages in this specific area.

The gospel arrived in this part of Brazil in the late 1960s, when my parents, Ronnie and Janeta Watterson, moved to Descalvado. During the next fifty years the Lord blessed the preaching of the gospel, and nine assemblies were planted. These assemblies have been

strengthened by Him to take the gospel to neighbouring towns also.

The first assembly in this region was planted in **Descalvado**, forty-five kilometres northwest of Pirassununga with a population of 31,000, in the early 1970s and from it the gospel was carried to various other towns round about. Over the years, two brethren have been commended from Descalvado and serve the Lord full-time in this region. Today, the assembly is weaker as many of the first generation have passed on, and there are not so many to take their place. My parents lived in Descalvado for most of these years except for a small spell in Pirassununga. Dad is buried there, and Mum carries on serving the Lord among the saints in that town.

The next two assemblies to be planted, also in the 1970s, were in **Pirassununga**, with a population of 70,000, and **Ibaté**, with a population of 30,000. Pirassununga, where we have lived for the past thirty years, has around thirty-five in fellowship in the assembly. Ibaté is slightly smaller in number. The assembly in Pirassununga was used by the Lord in establishing an assembly in the neighbouring town of **Aguaí** recently. In Ibaté, the mostly young assembly has suffered pressure from believers who do not value the simplicity of the New Testament pattern for an assembly; we pray the Lord may preserve them sound in doctrine.

In the 1980s, an assembly was planted in **S. C. das Palmeiras**, a town with a population of 29,000. A believer from Descalvado, who was called home last year, was a door-to-door salesman and he spoke about his faith as he sold his wares. His efforts were blessed by the Lord, and the believers from Descalvado held several series of gospel meetings, using a tent and a rented hall, until the Lord moved in salvation and an assembly was established. Some years later a brother from Descalvado was commended to the Lord's work there. Today, they number around twenty-five in fellowship and have been reaching out to the town of Guaxupé, about 120 kilometres from them. A young couple saved in Palmeiras moved to Guaxupé and the gospel is preached every week in their home.

Around the same time, an assembly was planted in **Leme**, twenty kilometres south from Pirassununga with a population of 91,000. A brother who had been commended from Descalvado and was living in Pirassununga moved there in the late 1980s. He started meetings in his home with the full support of the believers in Pirassununga. The Lord blessed his labours, and the assembly there continues strongly to this day with around twenty-five in fellowship. They have a weekly meeting in the neighbouring town of Araras, again in the home of a saved couple who are in fellowship in Leme.

In the 1990s a good work was commenced in **Casa Branca**, with a population of 28,000, by our dear brother Andrew Renshaw, commended from England to Pirassununga. After seeing an assembly established, he had to return to England for health reasons. Sadly, the work in Casa Branca is very weak today. There is only one brother, his wife, and an elderly sister. The brother, even though not gifted to teach or preach the gospel, faithfully carries on the work, helped, when possible, by believers from Pirassununga and S. C. das Palmeiras.

Moving into the 2000s, we were glad



to see the Lord moving in the small village of **S. C. da Conceição**, with a population of 4,000. The whole village had been covered with tracts many times over the years and we had held many series of gospel meetings in rented rooms and in the tent but had seen absolutely no fruit from all the seed sown. Then, when the season for reaping arrived, the Lord moved the heart of a young couple from Pirassununga assembly to live in Conceição. The brother travelled to Pirassununga to work every day. They began a weekly gospel meeting in their home, and blessing was seen very quickly. Souls were saved, and today a small assembly with over a dozen in fellowship continues there although the couple have since moved back to Pirassununga.

Also, in the early 2000s, we began visiting **Aguai**, a town with a population of 32,000 and situated fifty kilometres east from us. In 2004 a little room was rented, and a weekly gospel meeting held. Slowly, souls were saved, a plot was bought and a little hall built and in March 2015 the believers there gathered to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread for the first time. Today, they number around fifteen and are continuing well.

The most recently established assembly in this region is in **Porto Ferreira**, after almost fifty years of gospel preaching! In 1971, there was a good interest in the gospel there and some were saved. A little hall was built and since then two

weekly gospel meetings, Tuesday and Lord's Day, have been carried on without a break. A number have been saved during the decades, but various problems have prevented the establishing of an assembly. Believers from Descalvado and Pirassununga carried on the meetings, but Porto Ferreira was always 'hard ground'. Eventually, in October 2017, we had the joy of seeing a little group of twelve believers remember the Lord there in the breaking of bread.

Our state of São Paulo has over 600 towns and villages, most of them with no testimony according to the New Testament pattern. We value your prayers for these nine assemblies and other places further away where we try to help when possible.

Another aspect of the Lord's work in this part of Brazil which I would like to mention is the literature work, which began in the late 1980s. The Lord has blessed in the translation and publication of the whole New Testament series of Ritchie Commentaries, and the Old Testament commentaries are progressing well.<sup>1</sup> Of the expected nineteen volumes covering the Old Testament, eight have been published, one is ready to be printed, and various others are being translated or edited. Many believers in Brazil (also T. Blackman and S. Curran in the UK) help us in this important work. We also publish a quarterly magazine for believers, issued free of charge to assemblies

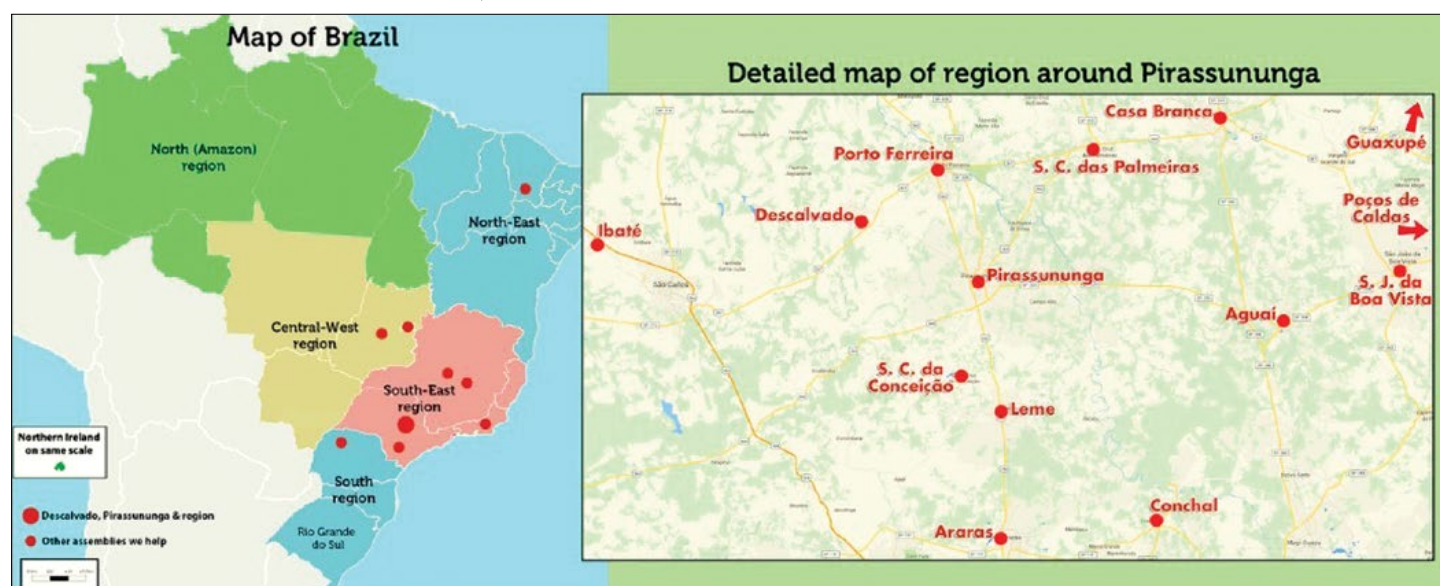
all over this vast land and further afield, and various other books and booklets.

To appreciate the importance of literature work in Brazil, it is necessary to take into account the size of the country and the small population densities in the North and North-East regions. For example, there is a little assembly in the state of Ceará (North-East region of Brazil), 3,000 kilometres from us. Two young men who came down to our region to work in the sugar-cane plantations some years ago were saved while here and through them the Lord has established a little assembly in that isolated and poverty-stricken area. There is no assembly even remotely close to them. We try to visit them when possible, but literature is tremendously useful in their specific circumstances and for other believers in similar situations. We value your prayers for this aspect of the work also.

'The coming of the Lord draweth nigh', Jas. 5. 8; 'therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord', 1 Cor. 15. 58.

### Endnotes

- 1 T. WILSON and K. STAPLEY (eds.), *What the Bible Teaches*, Ritchie New Testament Commentaries, John Ritchie Ltd.; W. STEVELEY and D. E. WEST (eds.), *What the Bible Teaches*, Ritchie Old Testament Commentaries, John Ritchie Ltd.



# The High Priestly Ministry of the Lord Jesus

By **PETER SCAMMELL** Cwmbran, Wales

Every child of God has a part in the priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus, and this is comforting to know, especially when trials cross our paths in the normal course of life. It is good to realize we have a High Priest above who knows, cares and understands because He has been here, a Man amongst men. So now He is perfectly qualified to represent us before the face of God. The Lord Jesus is seen as better, greater and higher than angels, the prophets, the sacrifices, and as we shall see, the priesthood.

## The necessity for priesthood – Heb. 2. 14-18

We learn from this section that the Son of God came into perfect manhood in order that He might go into death to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

This He did at Calvary and rose triumphantly from the dead. It was also necessary for Him to become like His brethren that He might be a faithful and merciful High Priest. While on earth, the Lord was not a priest. He was not of the priestly tribe of Levi, but of Judah. However, it is plain to see that the Saviour ever moved in priestly ways. It was upon His ascension that He embarked upon His High Priestly ministry in the sanctuary above.

The mighty work of redemption completed, He now possesses all the fitness to exercise His high priestly ministry for His people.

## The activity of His priesthood – Heb. 4. 14-16

Here we are told what our Great High Priest has done and where He is now. He has passed into the heavens. The writer, by use of a double negative, emphasizes that we certainly do have a High Priest who is able to sympathize with His people. The Lord, while here, was tested and tried, and so is fully acquainted with the heartaches and disappointments that the people of God

experience, but He was, of course, 'sin apart'.

So, we can draw near to a throne where grace is dispensed, confident that our Great High Priest knows every sorrow, and sympathetically enables us to obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need.

## The authority of His priesthood – Heb. 5. 1-6, 10

'Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest', Heb. 5. 5. His entry into this heavenly ministry was altogether of God. There is nothing of self-exaltation. His was a divine appointment, and was the result of divine satisfaction in the Son, which was long before prophesied in Psalm 110. The day will come when the Son will sit on the right hand of God with every enemy made His footstool, and to be a priest for ever; this thought should delight every believer.

## The perpetuity of His priesthood – Heb. 5. 5, 6

Israel's priests were many, and only death prevented them from continuing in this office. Our Great High Priest is now risen, ascended, glorified in heaven above, and lives in the power of an indissoluble life. He ever lives to make intercession for His people.

## The superiority of His priesthood – Hebrews chapter 7

The Lord Jesus is of a different

order of priesthood and presented as a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Here, the writer demonstrates the superiority of this order by referring us back to Genesis chapter 14 where Abraham, returning from the slaughter of the kings, offers to Melchizedek a tenth part of the spoils of battle. So, the priest of the Most High God receives tithes from Abraham and blesses him. 'The inferior is blessed by the superior', Heb. 7. 7 ESV, and so the Melchizedek priesthood is demonstrated to be superior to the Levitical order.

## The suitability of His priesthood – Heb. 7. 26

The writer points out that the High Priest of old had to offer sacrifices daily, firstly for himself and then for the sins of the people. By way of contrast, it is wonderful that our High Priest has no need to offer for His own sins because He is without sin.

The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was a once-for-all sacrifice, never needing to be repeated. The promise is, 'their sins and iniquities will I remember no more', Heb. 10. 17.

The lovely characteristics He bears are most fitting for the ministry He undertakes on our behalf. He is **holy** as to relationship with God, **harmless** concerning His relationship with man and **undefiled** in relation to Himself, and now is exalted above the heavens.

## The supremacy of His priesthood – Zech. 6. 13

We look forward to a day when the King-Priest shall sit upon His throne and 'he shall bear the glory', Zech. 6. 13. Every foe will be vanquished, and kings will fall before Him. There will be a universal acknowledgement of His supremacy, when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess His Lordship. Until then this gracious work continues, the Great High Priest has entered into heaven itself, and appears before the presence of God for us, Heb. 9. 24.



# INTRODUCING GOSPELWALES.COM

By **TOM MERRIMAN** Treorchy, Wales

In recent decades there has been a seismic shift in the way people obtain and share information. The home computer and the innovations of the smartphone and tablet have all been integral to this steady but sure revolution. Touchscreen devices have simplified interaction with technology, making it accessible to people of all ages. Commonly, children and great-grandparents alike are seen using these devices.

Such open and accessible forms of information and communication carry obvious risks, meaning caution is needed in this environment. However, the internet also presents an opportunity to propagate the gospel to a wide audience. As the early preachers obeyed our Lord's instruction and moved out with the gospel, they were careful to ensure that they adhered to its essence, whilst gaining the attention of their audience through relevant means. Acts chapter 17 illustrates this point.

With the arrival of the digital age, the High Street has suffered and, as the online marketplace continues to grow, stores are realizing the need to adjust. Although the reasons behind it may be different, 'church attendance' continues to decline and there is a need for us to adapt to these circumstances.

Since the famous revival in the early 20th century, servants of the gospel in Wales have faithfully sought to preach the message of salvation to many. It is now our responsibility of delivering this same message to the present generation. The Bible is commonly considered irrelevant and it is a sad fact that many children today are being raised in an environment that leaves them ignorant of the truth. However, the word of God remains unchanged and the message of the gospel is as relevant and powerful as ever.

We know that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God', Rom. 10. 17, and the parable of the sower reveals that the seed of the word is to be sown everywhere.

Whilst personal witness amongst family, colleagues and neighbours continues to be a crucial evangelistic work, the Lord's commission was for the gospel to reach 'every creature'.<sup>1</sup> An individual's response to the gospel is their own solemn responsibility, but, like Ezekiel, who was made a watchman to the house of Israel,<sup>2</sup> conveying the message to souls in peril is ours.

Gospelwales.com is an effort to keep up with current trends by presenting this life-giving message to today's generation on a platform with which many are comfortable. The opening statement of the website summarizes its main objective:

- 'Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, told his followers to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel".'



- As Christians, this is the message we want the people of Wales to hear'.

The website has a modern but distinctly 'heritage' look, intended to make visitors feel welcome. Today, many people are put off by reams of writing, and even moderate bodies of text are only lightly scanned or set aside altogether. Therefore 'The Gospel' web page is succinct, and scripture verses form a prominent part. An 'Audio' page has been collated, using material originally produced for radio by 'your542day'.<sup>3</sup>

As well as being informative, the website is intended to offer a point of contact to stimulate and assist in outreach work, especially where there is no Christian testimony. Many who distribute gospel leaflets will confirm that these are still read and remain a viable method of communicating the gospel. Gospelwales.com aims to complement such a ministry rather than replace it. Hopefully, individuals who may be uncomfortable entering a perceived 'religious building', or speaking with someone directly, will make contact at their own leisure to request a free Bible or seek answers to their questions.

Assemblies are encouraged to make use of Gospel Wales resources on their print media.<sup>4</sup> At present, this includes logos and stationery footers in a variety of colour formats and a QR code for a direct link to the website. Additionally, an 'Events' page displays leaflets and posters promoting upcoming gospel endeavours. Where an assembly has their own website, a link can be incorporated.

This venture is very much in its infancy and the prayers of the Lord's people would be a great encouragement. Other development potential is being explored for the furtherance of the gospel of God and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Mark 16. 15.
- <sup>2</sup> Ezek. 33. 1-9.
- <sup>3</sup> Your542day produces 5-minute messages for use on radio, telephone and internet. For further information, visit [www.your542day.com](http://www.your542day.com).
- <sup>4</sup> For further information, please contact [info@gospelwales.com](mailto:info@gospelwales.com) or visit the website.

# WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

**Qirba** (Approaching)

**Qorban** (Offering, gift)

**Qrh** (Happening)

The Hebrew noun *qorban* gives prominence in the Old Testament to the word 'sacrifice', and the nature of that sacrifice. It occurs some eighty times, and apart from two occurrences in Ezekiel, Ezek. 20. 28; 40. 43, the remainder are confined to the books of Leviticus and Numbers. Whilst most of the other words used in the Old Testament relating to the word 'offering' either mean to offer sacrifice or refer to the process of drawing near to God, *qorban* highlights the value of the sacrifice that is actually brought to enable access to God. Put simply, *qorban* emphasizes the value of the gift or sacrifice being made, rather than simply the process or the mechanics of approaching God.

The title of the book of Leviticus in Rabbinic times was '*torat kohanim*', meaning 'instruction of [or "for"] the priests'; hence its Greek name *Levitikon*, which roughly translated means, 'things relating to the Levities'. In Judaism, however, the book is traditionally known as *vayikra* meaning 'and He (the Lord) called', which is a straight lift from Leviticus chapter 1 verse 1. This helps us to understand why, when Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, its immediate need was no longer redemption, but atonement, Exod. 12. How could a sinful nation now approach an infinitely holy God? Hence the provision of the Levitical sacrifices by God, and His gracious invitation to draw near to Him with prescribed offerings. And it is the value of these offerings that is then mirrored in the various Levitical offerings, where the word *qorban* is used to describe the burnt offering, Lev. 1. 2, 3, 10, 14, the meal offering, 2. 13, and the peace offering, 3. 6, 7, 12, 14, etc. Interestingly, the same word *qorban* is also translated 'oblation' when it refers to the meal offering,

2. 4, 5, 7, 13, the first fruits, 2. 12, and the peace offering, 3. 1, highlighting again that the emphasis is on what is being offered to God.

In the first of the two occurrences of *qorban* in Ezekiel, in chapter 20 verse 28, we read that when God brought Israel into the Promised Land they saw any high hill or any leafy tree as giving them an opportunity to create pagan shrines where they presented offensive and idolatrous sacrifices, provoking God to anger. God's anger here is targeted at the sort of sacrifice offered, which in the context of the preceding verses may well have been child sacrifices making the offence even more heinous.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, in the second reference to *qorban* in Ezekiel, it is linked to the future temple where the sacrificial flesh is prepared on stone tables in the inner court, Ezek. 40. 43. In terms then, as AVERBECK states, 'Overall, *qorban* is one of the most important terms for understanding the gift aspect of the nature of offerings and sacrifices in the Old Testament'.<sup>2</sup>

In the Septuagint (LXX) the word *qorban* is usually translated by the Greek word *doron*, as in Genesis chapter 30 verse 20, where Leah attributes the birth of her son Zebulun as a choice gift from God. In Proverbs chapter 4 verse 2, the word is used of a son who receives good instruction from his father. It is this Greek word *doron* that is then carried over into the New Testament to generally translate the words for gifts or offerings, as in Luke chapter 21 verses 1 to 4, where the gifts to the temple are evaluated by the Lord. This is a salutary measure of our giving to the Lord – what we hold back from Him! There are many other references in the New Testament, but one important and exceptional text is found in Mark chapter 7 verses 11 to 13, where the Greek word *doron* is transliterated as *Corban*. Here our Lord is in dispute with the Pharisees and certain of the Scribes over the question of honouring the fifth commandment, Exod. 20. 12.

These men circumvented this legal requirement by gifting the money that should have been used to support their parents to the temple treasury and declaring it to be a sacred vow to the Lord or *Corban*. This vow could not be revoked, and so parents could simply be left destitute in their old age. Ironically, though, there were provisions whereby the donor could loan the money back from the temple during their lifetime to use as they pleased! It is little wonder then that our Lord condemned such a practice, declaring that it made the word of God null and void, Mark 7. 13. The value of the gift to God was clearly devalued by men. When we consider the value of God's gift to us in the person of His blessed Son, 2 Cor. 9. 15, what value do we place on our giving to Him? Are we like Abel, prepared to give our very best to God, or do we merely give a token offering, Heb. 11. 4?

## Further reading/study

### Introductory

Sacrifice and Offerings in T. DESMOND ALEXANDER and DAVID W. BAKER (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament – Pentateuch*, pp. 706-732.

### Advanced

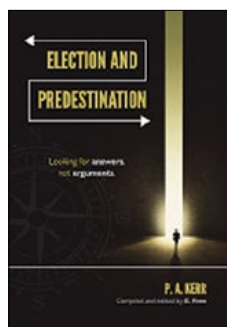
*Qorban* in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Vol. 3) pp. 979-982.

## Endnotes

- 1 Ezekiel chapter 20 verses 18 to 27 is a difficult section to interpret. CRAIGIE provides a very insightful interpretation when he writes, 'Ezekiel implies that one of the commandments of God was interpreted by Israel to establish the practice of child sacrifice. He is almost certainly referring to Exod. 22. 29: "You shall give the firstborn of your sons to me". Taken in context, of course, the verse does not command child sacrifice; animals were sacrificed in place of children. But to twisted minds, already warped by the powerful influences of the pagan religion which they so frequently espoused, the command could take on a completely different light. And so the horrifying picture emerges of worshippers devoutly sacrificing children, deceiving themselves in the belief that they were fulfilling the intent of the divine law', *Ezekiel*, PETER C. CRAIGIE, *The Daily Study Bible Series*, pg. 149.
- 2 NIDOTTE, pg. 980.



# Book Reviews



## **Election and Predestination** Peter A. Kerr

Paperback, 298 pages. Published by Everyday Publications Inc., 310 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, Ontario, L3K 6A6, Canada.  
ISBN-13: 978-0-88873-747-2.

The sub-title of this new publication dealing with a subject which over the years has generated more heat than light in Christian circles, is 'Looking for Answers – not Arguments'. The author explains at some length and at various stages through the book, that his studies are not based upon any viewpoint or school of thought. But rather upon his own conclusions drawn from a careful examination of scripture and its presentation of words like 'election', 'foreknowledge', 'called' and 'predestination'. Such is his determination to assure his readers that his findings have not been unduly influenced by prevalent opinions from any standpoint, that, at one point, I was reminded of

Shakespeare's character in Hamlet who 'doth protest too much, methinks'.

The author takes the reader on a personal journey from his background, steeped in Calvinistic doctrine, to, and through, a careful study of words and their contexts from which he presents his findings in a well-structured and orderly manner. His refutation of both Reformed and Arminian teaching is thorough, but not judgemental, and his considerations lead him to a conclusion which would be recognized as a 'corporate election' position among many Bible students.

The author's clear presentation of God's purposes for the nation of

Israel as seen throughout scripture and particularly in dealing with Romans chapters 9 to 11, shows how complete and welcome his move away from Reformed teaching has been.

A theme which runs throughout the book is that in every case where 'election' is in view, it is with a specific purpose in the plan of God. With that in mind, his statement in the summary at the end of the book is worth recording. 'The concepts of God's infinite, eternal foreknowledge and wisdom are far above and beyond our puny ability to grasp, therefore we must resist the urge to speculate and be dogmatic about things no created being can understand'. How very true!



## **Have you caught the 3:16? Have you gone down in the 8:36? Are you following the 2:42?** Robert Plant

Paperback, 34-60 pages. Published by John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland.  
ISBN-13: 978-1-910513-34-7; 978-1-912522-59-0; 978-1-910513-66-8.

These three 15cm x 10.5cm booklets have been written by Robert Plant with both gospel and teaching content, primarily for young and new believers, although the subjects are relevant and readable for all ages. For those who are acquainted with the author, it is easy to hear Robert's rich Yorkshire tones as the pages are turned.

The first booklet is built around John chapter 3 verse 16 and presents a clear gospel message from this timeless verse. *Have you gone down in the 8:36?* follows on with the truth of baptism, presented in ten brief but succinct chapters under the headings Pictures, Practice, Priority, Participants, Profession, Principle, Power, Purpose, Pattern and Privilege; that, I think, just about covers the

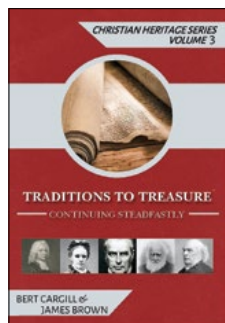
subject! The third booklet draws attention to Acts chapter 2 verses 41 and 42 as the basic model for New Testament assembly activities. Robert unpacks the verses and expands each phrase in order, explaining the occasions and teaching in the Acts and the Epistles where these principles are seen in practice.

These booklets are not designed to sit on a bookshelf but to be used to pass on as a means of helping and encouraging others. Apparently, more titles are planned and will no doubt be available through John Ritchie Ltd.

I would make one remedial comment. In normal magazine articles and Christian publications,

narrative can lose its flow by the over-enthusiastic use of scripture references scattered on the page. Robert's booklets need references to substantiate his teaching. However, maybe because of the font used, the references in the 8:36 booklet appear like something that would be recognizable to a Bletchley Park code breaker. A little more daylight between the figures would be preferable, especially for someone not familiar with handling scripture. Having raised this with Robert, he assures me that this will be amended in future print runs.





## Traditions to Treasure – Continuing Steadfastly

Bert Cargill and James Brown

Paperback, 242 pages. Published by John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland, KA3 1RH. ISBN-13: 978-1-912522-67-5.

I recall that, as a young boy, my father had a book called *Chief Men among the Brethren*. My memory is of grainy photographs of be-whiskered, gloomy faces, without a ghost of a smile. I did not feel encouraged to read any further in this austere looking tome. However, over the years I have learnt to understand and appreciate the debt owed to these men who were raised up by God to light a torch, and raise a standard against the largely sterile state religion of their day. One unfortunate legacy of this revival is the appellation 'Brethren', which, with the arrogant definite article, has, in the opinion of many, defined those who have sought to benefit from the godly lives and teaching of these men and others of like mind.

This book is the third and

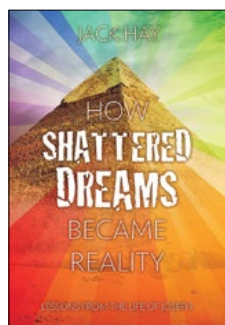
final volume of the '*Christian Heritage Series*' tracing the history of gospel witness from the 14th century. The present volume brings into focus the work from the late 18th century and on through Victorian days. I discovered from reading this book that behind the gallery of sombre faces of childhood memory lie the histories of men of God, who sacrificed much, travelled the world at great personal and family cost, and, from backgrounds of privilege and academia, reached out to the poor and the lost both materially and spiritually.

The greater part of this book recalls the legacy of hymns left on record during this period, many of which form the backbone of our 21st-century hymnbooks, and are unrivalled by more modern writers in their appreciation of the

Lord Jesus. They remain an essential aid to worship, full of doctrinal truth, memorable and uplifting.

There are also chapters given to the origin of books and printed matter to assist the study of the scriptures, and a brief history of some great Christian philanthropists whose life-work lives on.

In undertaking this series of books Bert Cargill and James Brown have provided a work of real benefit for the people of God.



## How shattered dreams became reality (Lessons from the life of Joseph)

Jack Hay

Paperback, 139 Pages. Published by John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland, KA3 1RH. ISBN-13: 978-1-912522-74-3.

The life and character of Joseph has attracted the attention of many writers over the years. No doubt it is because, in this narrative Genesis record, the sovereign and overruling hand of God is seen, practical lessons can be drawn, and pictures of the life and pathway of the Saviour shine through.

Some expositors would have us believe that because it is not specifically stated in the New Testament, Joseph does not qualify as a type of Christ. In my opinion, one would need to take a very myopic view of the details of Joseph's life to draw that conclusion!

The content of this new publication first appeared in the *Present Truth* magazine but has now been made available to a wider

readership in book form. The author, Jack Hay, is well known and appreciated by many for his oral and written ministry over a good number of years and in many parts of the world. This book will therefore be a welcome addition to any believer's library as the experiences of Joseph are traced in Jack's clear and concise style.

The well-loved story is told in eighteen chapters, each divided by sub-headings and developed in a similar pattern. First the narrative is explained, then comparisons, and on occasion contrasts, are made with the Lord Jesus. As each chapter is opened up, the many practical lessons relevant to all believers are made clear. A feature that marks the ministry of this author is his capacity to draw on

both Old and New Testament writings to support, explain and clarify the various points made, whether doctrinal, devotional or practical, an ability which demonstrates a lifelong devotion to the scriptures.

Scripture references are unobtrusive throughout, enabling the narrative to flow, and the pages are not littered with footnotes and endnotes which are often left unread!



# Question Time

Conducted by  
**Frank A. Proudlock**

## QUESTION

**Is the COVID-19 crisis the judgement or intervention of God?**

## ANSWER

'Unprecedented' is a word that has been used frequently to describe the current COVID-19 crisis. Yet both the Black Death of the 14th century and so-called 'Spanish' flu of 1918, were considerably more potent pandemics than COVID-19 killing tens if not hundreds of millions of people. The events caused by the current crisis are rightly described as 'unprecedented', however, in that this tiny virus has almost brought our globally connected world of technology and enterprise to a grinding halt. This has caused many to ask whether what we are seeing unfold before our eyes is God's judgement on today's society.

We cannot state definitively what God is doing through this crisis since we only have a short-term and limited view of events. It is easy to be over simplistic. When the disciples saw a man afflicted by blindness, they asked the Lord Jesus, 'Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?' John 9. 2. Their superficial perspective prevented them from seeing that God had a deeper and long-term purpose for this man's life. We also live in a world that is broken by sin. As a result, disease and death affect all our lives, to a lesser or greater degree. But is COVID-19 the general effects of sin on this world or is God working out a more specific purpose?

Is there any evidence from the scriptures that God directly intervenes in this world's history? As far as the Old Testament is concerned, there is plenty of evidence. In the times of the judges and kings of Israel and Judah, we often read that God brought national disasters against them, such as droughts or invading forces, to chasten them.<sup>1</sup> However, we need to remember that, under the law, Israel was in a conditional covenant relationship with God. The consequences of disobeying God had been laid out from the beginning of that covenant, Deut. 28. 15-68. The sad fact was that those consequences outlined in Deuteronomy were recorded like a prophecy of events taking place in the history of Israel as they continued through centuries of disobedience.

What about this New Testament period? Do we have any evidence that God intervenes in the life of nations today? Perhaps the clearest evidence comes from Romans chapter 11, where Paul provides the illustration of the olive tree. The removal of natural branches from

the tree is a sad picture of Israel nationally, rejecting the Lord Jesus and being set aside temporarily as a result. In their place, God is now able to graft in wild branches, in other words, Gentile nations, blessing them spiritually as they accept the gospel and the rule of God nationally, v. 17. But notice that the intervention of God on those Gentile nations was also possible because of their boasting, v. 19, and high mindedness, v. 20, leading to their removal. So, clearly, even today God can intervene in the life of nations. If, after being enlightened by the gospel and scriptures, nations turn away from God and resort to national pride and self-sufficiency, then we can expect God to intervene, based on the teaching of Romans chapter 11.

But the intervention of God can be for very different purposes. In Daniel chapter 4, we read of Nebuchadnezzar, a man full of pride. God stepped in and brought him low through mental illness with a 'beast's heart [being] . . . given to him', Dan. 4. 16. God in His mercy caused this man to appreciate his weakness so that he would come to the point where 'he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men', Dan. 5. 21. By contrast, God also intervened in the life of Belshazzar in the very next chapter for quite different reasons. Belshazzar, despite knowing the events which had afflicted Nebuchadnezzar, v. 22, refused to bow to God. God drew a line permitting the arrogance, irreverence and decadence of Belshazzar, and his empire, Babylon, to go no further.

In summary, we do not have the knowledge or insight to fully appreciate what God is doing through the COVID-19 crisis, but we can be confident that God is in absolute control of this world's events. Ultimately, we are heading for a crisis that will exceed all others, of which the Lord Jesus spoke, 'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be', Matt. 24. 21. God may be making the final preparations in setting the stage for these monumental events. Our responsibility is to be spiritually alert, to watch and be ready, as the Lord Jesus instructed us, 'And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch', Mark 13. 37.

### Endnote

- 1 For example, Judg. 6. 1; 2 Sam. 24. 11-15; 1 Kgs. 17. 1; 2 Kgs. 17. 5-18.

# The Precious SEED Committee

Chairman and General Editor:

**JOHN BENNETT**

19 Alfreton Road, Pinxton,  
Nottingham NG16 6JZ

Treasurer:

**MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE**

PO Box 10544, Grantham NG31 0HW

Secretary:

**JOHN SCARSBROOK**

34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh,  
Sheffield S21 1HW

Ministry Articles Editors:

**BRIAN CLATWORTHY,**

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*Editors can be contacted through the  
email address below or by post to the  
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Other Trust Members:

**Jonathan Black, Andrew Dutton,  
Tom Merriman, Frank Proudlock,  
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*All committee members can be contacted at  
**secretary@preciousseed.org**  
or via **0044(0)1142 511700***

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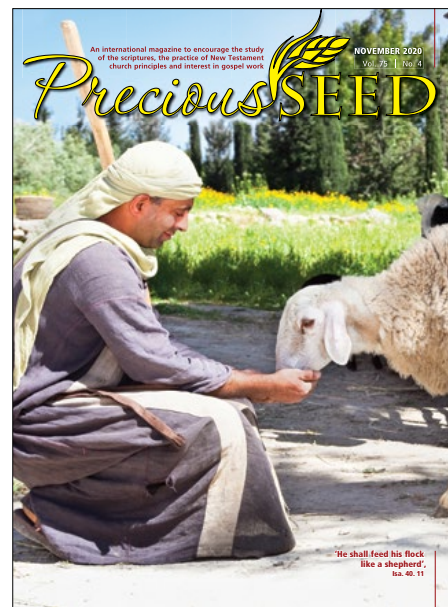
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## 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd', Isa. 40: 11

Isaiah chapter 40 begins a new section of the prophecy of Isaiah. It looks on into the future to see Israel's return and restoration as the people of God. At the very point of Israel's greatest calamity, when it appears that it will be erased from the map of the world and scored out of human history, the Lord will return to the earth and deliver His people. Thus, the chapter begins with the words, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people', v. 1. After a period when the occupants of Jerusalem could find no comfort and no solace from their invaders and opponents, the Lord says, 'Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem', v. 2. Their deliverer has come. While His enemies are dispatched with power, His people are comforted with sensitivity and affection. We might note the moment when the shepherd moves. In verse 10, He comes in power to deliver because of the defenceless and exposed condition of His people. Such compassion was manifested when the Lord was here. Matthew writes, 'But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd', Matt. 9: 36. In relation to their sicknesses, or in relation to their hunger, the Lord could say and, by His actions, prove, 'I have compassion on the multitude', Matt. 15: 32. As His disciples struggled across the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee, the Lord drew near in the extremity of their need, Matt. 14: 25. This is the ability of the Shepherd. But our verse concentrates not just upon the compassion of the Shepherd but also on His provision, 'He shall feed his flock', v. 11. The word for 'feed' here has a much wider meaning than simply to provide the sheep with something to eat. It means 'to provide pasture', 'to tend to the need of the sheep', and 'to draw alongside them in their need'. The shepherd psalmist wrote, 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want', Ps. 23: 1. One who knew what it meant practically to shepherd sheep could say, 'The Lord is my shepherd!' He had proved the ability of His God to supply all his need. He had been in the 'green pastures' of divine provision as well as through the valley of the shadow of death. Here we find the qualities of the true Shepherd: He feeds; He tends; He provides; He draws alongside; He has integrity of heart.

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