

# PreciousSeed

February 2021 Vol. 76 | No. 1



'So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee', John 4. 46

PS  
Magazine

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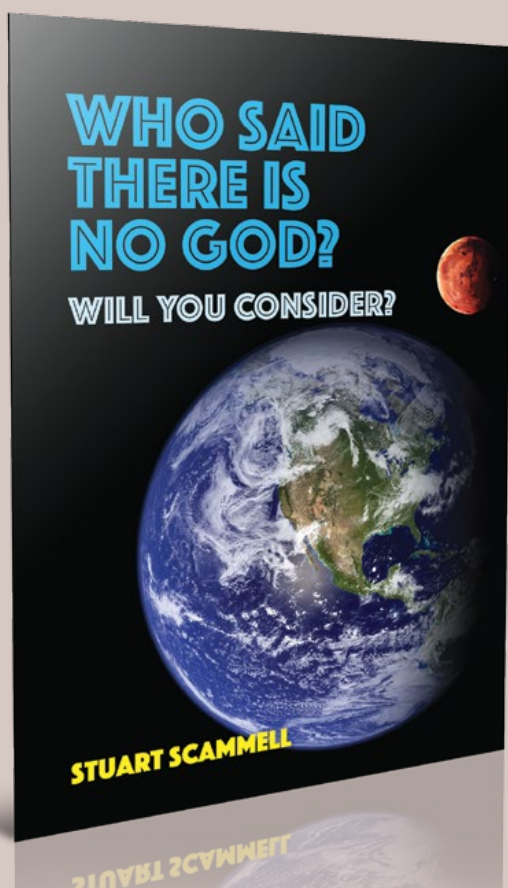
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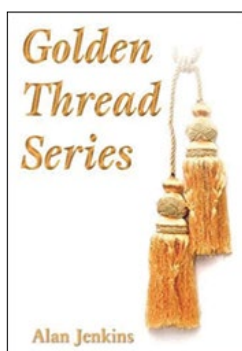
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# Book Reviews



## **Golden Thread Series** Alan Jenkins

518 pages, Paperback. Published by Grosvenor House Publishing Ltd, Link House, 140 The Broadway, Tolworth, Surrey, KT6 7HT. ISBN-13: 978-1-839750-55-7.

This book is evidence of a great deal of time spent by the writer in studying the scriptures. It is, in essence, a series of character studies under four general headings: the Patriarchs, the Pioneers, the Prophets and the Preachers. The overriding theme which unites the individuals considered in this book is their willingness to listen to the voice of God, and to follow the guidance and instruction given, in order to live lives which the Spirit of God has left on record for our learning. The opened ear and the responsive heart of those considered, provide the golden thread which runs through the book as through the scriptures from Genesis (Noah) to Revelation (John).

Choice is made from the

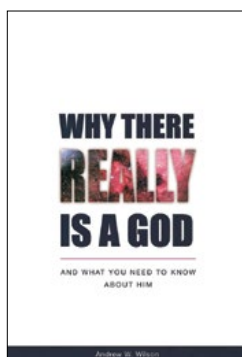
available subjects to develop certain themes which provide practical lessons for the people of God in every age. The first of the Patriarchs considered is Noah, the man who listened. His story is developed around the eight occasions when God spoke directly to him in Genesis chapters 6 to 9. This is followed by Abraham, the man who obeyed, Isaac, who submitted, Jacob, who learned, and Joseph, the man who waited. Their life stories are each told, mainly through a series of chapters with alliterative headings, which brings out the main features of the subject's life.

This structure continues throughout the chapters which follow, always maintaining

the fundamental precept of willingness to obey the voice of the Lord. The blessings which resulted bear out the importance for every believer to hear and attend to the words communicated by the Spirit of God through the scriptures.

As in all character studies, different readers may take an alternative view of certain events and actions, but, overall, this book maintains a consistent line in bringing out the best of those under consideration.

The first section of the book is not well served by the copious and unnecessary use of uppercase words in the narrative. These disappear from part two onwards to the overall benefit of the book.



## **Why there really is a God: and what you need to know about Him**

Andrew Wilson

482 pages, Paperback or eBook. Published by Believer's Publications, Australia. Available on Amazon. ISBN-13: 978-0-994397-75-1.

Books written to oppose and refute the doctrine of atheism are not in short supply. Many are written by authors from a scholarly or scientific background for a readership with similar interests and understanding of the issues being discussed. This latest book by Andrew Wilson is both scholarly and scientific, but written in an accessible way and in a style which the average reader will enjoy, and which the intellectual will not feel patronized. I found it to be one of those compelling books that draws the reader into wanting to read the next chapter.

The arguments raised in denial of deity are mostly well-worn, futile, fundamentally flawed and founded on ignorance. Andrew Wilson delves into the experience and teaching of sixteen diverse individuals from Socrates to the present day, considering Albert Einstein, Stephen King, William

Shakespeare and King George VI, among others. Each chapter approaches the subject from a different but related standpoint, using, for example, the evidence of conscience, creation, design, morality, the person of Christ, scripture and personal experience. In each case the author highlights the utter inability of the atheist to provide a rational explanation which answers the inescapable proof that such fundamental realities exist.

A knowledge of God is, of course, essentially a matter of faith. So, having considered beyond reasonable doubt his original interrogation regarding the existence of God, Andrew Wilson entitles the second part of the book, 'What you need to know about God'. He considers, using eight headings, the essential attributes of God as revealed in the scriptures, commencing with the intangible reality that 'God is Spirit'.

Subjects which follow are the omnipotence, the omniscience and omnipresence of God, His love, His holiness and the nature of the Trinity, of which a particularly well-expressed explanation is given on a subject that many find difficult to grasp or define.

Part three faces some of the well-known arguments raised by unbelievers under the title, 'Objections to God'. Using such headings as; 'Who made God?'; 'Faith is just believing without evidence'; 'Religion causes wars', and 'The problem of evil and suffering', the author presents lucid and logical explanations, which an unbiased mind would find hard to refute.

I have already recommended this book to others and fully intend to read it again, to reinforce its reasoned arguments in my own mind to meet the challenges often faced today.

## ‘The Lord shut him in’, Gen. 7. 16.

It is nearly twelve months since, here in the United Kingdom, society was ‘put into lockdown’. How we live our lives has changed in so many ways. For some they have had to deal with bereavement, for others, changes in employment and for many saints these times have been and remain times of anxiety. Routines that underpinned so much of our way of life have been challenged and for many it has prompted a time of reflection on what is important in their lives. For some older saints, who have understandably built their lives around assembly ‘meetings’, it is especially hard when such gatherings are prohibited and much of the ‘truth’ for which they feel they have stood faithfully is apparently under attack. For young believers, there are equally difficult challenges – lack of fellowship, changing opportunities for service, uncertainty, and difference of opinions among those whom they should be able to look up to, to point out a few.

How does a Christian work through these thoughts and challenges, and has God stopped working with His people

just because the doors of the ‘Meeting Hall’ are closed?

To answer the latter question first: ‘No’! Throughout scripture, there is evidence of God working behind closed doors! God shut Noah in to **protect** him and his family while He dealt with an evil world. It was from behind a closed door that God **provided** for the needs of a desperate widow, 2 Kgs. 4. 4. It was behind a closed door that God worked to **restore** life in a family where a child had been lost, v. 33. Our Lord Himself promoted the privacy of shutting ourselves behind a door, Matt. 6. 6, and the greatest miracle ever performed was wrought by the Godhead behind a closed door, 27. 60! Such was the impact of the reality of this miracle, that it transformed an anxious company of God’s people, who were shut away behind closed doors, into a ‘glad’, John 20. 20, bold band of witnesses which ‘turned the world upside down’, Acts 17. 6.

In the circumstances we are living through and which God in His infinite understanding has allowed, let us be

careful that we do not mistake His care for carelessness. Equally, let us ensure we take the opportunity of being behind ‘closed doors’, to search the scriptures honestly and diligently and allow the Spirit of God to test our understanding of them in order that we ensure we have rooted our convictions four-square in the word of God and not mere traditions we may have soaked up through years of stale habit.

As we wait for His Son from heaven, it is the prayer of the committee, that what writers have contributed to this issue of the magazine, will, in some small way, encourage us all to refresh our love for the Lord and rekindle our zeal for the truths found in the pages of holy writ.

Let us never forget that there is a gracious purpose and amazing power to protect, provide and provoke us, which is only to be learnt in solitude, behind closed doors!

**SANDY JACK**  
Ministry Articles Editor

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# THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE

By **ANDREW WILSON**, Brisbane, Australia

## A Little History

In AD 1453 the fall of Constantinople to the twenty-one-year-old Sultan Mehmed of the Ottoman Empire brought an end to the Byzantine (i.e., Eastern Roman) Empire which had stood for 1,000 years. Greek Orthodox monks fled westward into Europe bringing with them Greek New Testament manuscripts. At the very same time in Germany, the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg made the mass production of books possible. In 1516, the first printed Greek New Testament, published by Erasmus, called into question the Latin Vulgate (i.e., 'common version'), which had stood for 1,000 years as the Bible of the Roman Catholic church. Just one year later, in 1517, came the Reformation.

Erasmus' edition of the Greek New Testament was a runaway bestseller. Indeed, it was said that 'Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched'. It was used as the basis for his German Bible, and later by King James' translators in 1611. Erasmus' text, reprinted with variations over the next century, was advertised in 1633 as 'the text received by all', the *Textus Receptus* (TR).

Many more Greek manuscripts became available in the following 400 years, including the fifth century Codex Alexandrinus, offered to King James by Cyril Lucar, the Reformation-sympathetic Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople. In the nineteenth century, two fourth-century manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, were discovered. In the twentieth century, even earlier fragmentary Greek New Testament papyri were unearthed in Egypt, some dating from the second century AD.

These early manuscripts showed many differences from Erasmus' TR, and after two centuries of scholarly attempts at revision, in 1881 two Cambridge professors, B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, produced an edition of the Greek

New Testament relying heavily on early manuscripts, with about 6,000 differences from the TR. This became the basis of the English Revised Version of 1885.

In 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, dating from the second century BC to the first century AD. Although 1,000 years older than previously available Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts, they were very similar to, and confirmed the reliability of, the standard Hebrew Masoretic text.

While differing little textually in the Old Testament, modern Bibles fall largely into two camps: those whose New Testament is translated from the TR (KJV, NKJV), and those based on the modern NU (Nestle-Aland/United Bible Society) texts, which are similar to Westcott and Hort's 1881 text (RV, NASB, NRSV, NIV, ESV, NLT).

## Two Extreme Reactions

Differences between Greek New Testament manuscripts have provoked two extreme reactions. First, atheists argue that we cannot trust the text of scripture because (a) we do not possess the original documents, (b) the manuscript copies contain too many variant readings, and (c) scribes intentionally changed it. However, while we do not possess the original autographs (i.e., written by the apostles themselves), and no two manuscript copies we possess are identical, the atheist conclusion is baseless. On the contrary, we possess an 'embarrassment of riches', over 5,500 Greek New Testament manuscripts, some very early (from the second century, AD), in addition to over 15,000 copies of ancient 'versions' (i.e., translations into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, etc.) and scripture quotations in early Church Fathers' writings. We can be certain that the original readings have been preserved among this evidence. Additionally, most variants are inconsequential, e.g., spelling

differences, and the vast majority of scribes were faithful copyists. No doctrines of scripture are endangered by manuscript difference because doctrines are repeated in many verses where all manuscripts agree.

At the other extreme, some Christians insist that Erasmus' *Textus Receptus* (TR), or the KJV which was based on it, is the original New Testament. However, Erasmus' TR had many problems. In a rush to beat another edition into print, Erasmus himself described it as 'precipitated rather than edited'. Its hundreds of typographical errors were corrected over five editions. It was also based on a very small number of late Greek manuscripts that Erasmus had on hand in Basle, dating from the twelfth century onwards. In Revelation, he had only one manuscript, and Erasmus resorted to back-translating the missing last six verses from the Latin into Greek! As a result, KJV has 'book of life' instead of 'tree of life', Rev. 22. 19, an error found in no Greek manuscript.

Erasmus was a Roman Catholic priest (and the illegitimate son of a priest)<sup>1</sup> who never left the Church during the reformation. He produced the TR, in part, for fame and money, which was why the TR was such a hurried job. Erasmus included some verses from the Latin, found in very few Greek manuscripts,<sup>2</sup> which have no real claim to be part of the original Greek. The inspired apostolic authors wrote in Greek, not in King James Version English (or Latin), and we must base our Bible on the best Greek manuscript evidence, not vice versa.

## Problems with the Modern NU Greek Text

Most textual scholars today favour the NU text, underlying modern Bible versions, for two reasons, first, because it is based on the earliest available manuscripts, and second, because of scribal habits. That is, scholars have believed that scribes tended to add to, and relieve difficulties in, the text as they copied. Preferring 'shorter readings', the NU text is about 2,500 words shorter than the TR, and omits many words or verses found in the KJV.<sup>3</sup>

Preferring 'more difficult readings', the NU text also adopts certain readings

precisely because they make less sense. As a result, modern Bibles contain readings that are jarring for believers: Christ being angry (or indignant) with a leper, instead of compassionate, Mark 1. 41, NIV 2011 update; Matthew being mistaken about Christ's ancestors' names, Matt. 1. 7, 10, ESV; the Lord saying He was not going to Jerusalem, John 7. 8, NASB, which He did in verse 10; or all anger being sinful, Matt. 5. 22 RV instead of anger 'without a cause' – although the RV margin does recognize that many ancient authorities insert 'without a cause'.

The NU is a shorter and more difficult text than the TR. However, recent academic research, including the author's at Cambridge, shows that scribes tended to omit rather than add at a rate of sixty to forty.<sup>4</sup> This is only common sense – omission is the easiest mistake to make. The author's study also showed that scribes created more difficulties rather than improving the text. Scribes are the (unintentional) corrupters, not improvers(!), of God's word.

Some commentaries which follow the NU text speak of the so-called 'best' manuscripts, but this is now admitted by textual scholars to involve circular reasoning – the 'best' manuscripts are ones which contain the 'best' readings, but the 'best' readings are those found in the 'best' manuscripts. Avoiding this circularity, studies in scribal habits show that these 'best manuscripts' contain many errors. Another problem with so-called 'earliest and best' manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, is that they disagree with each other over 3,000 times in the Gospels alone, ignoring minor spelling variants.<sup>5</sup> Simple maths means that one or the other is wrong, at least, 3,000 times – thirty times per chapter. Few people copying out a chapter of an English Bible today would make as many mistakes. The signature errors of these manuscripts are excessive omissions, and more difficult readings.

The NU text is largely Alexandrian, that is, based on manuscripts related to the early Coptic (Egyptian) versions and quotes from Alexandrian Church Fathers. It preserves an early, but likely localized, form of text. The NU text is also often based on very few

manuscripts, and in a few places, none at all – the editors abandon all manuscripts and conjecture, i.e., guess, the original reading, Acts 16. 12; 2 Pet. 3. 10.

### The Majority (M) Text

The text of the majority of over 5,000 Greek manuscripts was dismissed by Westcott and Hort as corrupt, the result of a third-century official revision. This theory is now abandoned by textual scholars, and some champion the Majority Text as the original text. It is similar to the TR,<sup>6</sup> and comes from the heartland of the Greek-speaking church (from Antioch through to Greece, where most New Testament Epistles were originally located), with manuscripts dating from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries.

However, for all its numerical superiority, the Majority Text is not perfect. It has some bizarre features: it moves the Roman doxology from chapter 16 verses 25 to 27 to chapter 14 verse 23; in Revelation chapter 4 verse 8 the angels say 'Holy' nine times; and some other verses, e.g., James chapter 2 verse 18, and 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 8, are virtually nonsensical. Occasionally, all the early manuscripts and all geographically separate ancient versions oppose the Majority Text reading; we should reject the majority here and follow the early manuscripts.

The Old Testament also shows us that the majority of later manuscripts are not always right; the 'majority (Masoretic) text' is sometimes not used in New Testament quotations. In Hebrews chapter 1 verse 6, we read, 'let all the angels of God worship him'. We search in vain for the source of this quote in the KJV, which is based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text, where this phrase (Deut. 32. 43) is missing. It is present in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Greek Septuagint. The inspired New Testament thus proves that the Masoretic majority text is sometimes wrong.

### A balanced approach

Textual scholarship has swung from one extreme to another, from one eccentric, late and very long text based on few manuscripts (Erasmus' TR) to another early, eccentric, localized, very short text based on few manuscripts [the NU text].

Avoiding extreme positions involves adopting balanced principles: (1) **Antiquity**: preferring earlier readings; (2) **Quantity**: avoiding readings based on few manuscripts; (3) **Proximity**: preferring readings with broader geographical attestation among manuscripts, versions and 'fathers'; (4) **Explanatory**: avoiding readings better explained as scribal errors, i.e., omissions and harder readings; (5) **Theology**: prayerfully considering what the inspired authors were more likely to have written, depending upon divine illumination.

What Bible should we read? I suggest a TR-based Bible, like the KJV or NKJV (which have fuller and more sensible texts). Textual criticism is a complex task and for those not able to evaluate the textual information found in a modern Greek New Testament, the author recommends the NKJV marginal notes. These show the readings of the three main texts, the TR, the Majority Text (M) and the NU text. While the Majority Text is generally preferable, we should be wary of readings based on only one of the three texts but take readings from a number of these sources for a balanced view of scripture.

In conclusion, let us not forget that scripture is not an end in itself irrespective of the text we use. It is a means of enjoying fellowship with God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

### Endnotes

- 1 See *Wikipedia* or <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Erasmus-Dutch-humanist>.
- 2 For example, Luke 17. 36; Acts 8. 37; 9. 5b-6a; 15. 34, and, most famously, 1 John 5. 7, 8, which is only found in four late Greek MSS from the 14th century onwards, as well as in six other manuscripts, in marginal notes written after the 16th century.
- 3 For example, Matt. 17. 21; 18. 11; 23. 14; Mark 11. 26; 15. 28; Luke 23. 17. Two longer passages are marked as doubtful: Mark 16. 9-20 and John 7. 53 – 8. 11.
- 4 ANDREW WILSON, "Scribal Habits in Greek New Testament Manuscripts", *Filologia Neotestamentaria*, 24 [2011], pp. 95-126.
- 5 H. C. HOSKIER, *Codex B and its Allies*, Bernard Quaritch, 1914, Vol 2, pg. 1.
- 6 The Majority Text differs from the TR in 1,838 places. PROFESSOR DANIEL WALLACE, *The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?* <https://bible.org/article/majority-text-and-original-text-are-they-identical>.



# The Forgiveness of Sins

By **MALCOLM HORLOCK** Cardiff, Wales

*References are from the NKJV unless stated*

On the page of scripture, God has employed many graphic word pictures to convey to His people the complete removal of their sins. Ponder afresh today a few better-known examples.<sup>1</sup>

God declares that the believer's sins:

## (i) Cannot be reached

'As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us', Ps. 103. 12.<sup>2</sup> David speaks, not of 'north from south', about 12,500 miles around the earth's surface, but of 'east from west', thereby indicating an immeasurable distance.

For, though a person travelling either north or south eventually arrives at a pole, from which he can proceed no further, somebody travelling east or west never reaches any such a point. There are therefore no points from which to measure the distance between 'the east' and 'the west'.

## (ii) Cannot be seen

'You have cast all my sins **behind Your back**', Isa. 38. 17.<sup>3</sup> Sins are depicted as hurled well and truly out of God's sight, as no longer being the subject of His attention or concern.

## (iii) Cannot be remembered

'Their sin I will **remember no more**', Jer. 31. 34.<sup>4</sup> 'Seeing then, that Christ is on the throne, where are my sins? They are not on Him now. Oh, No! No! They were all put away on the cross, and buried in the grave of everlasting forgetfulness. Not one of them will ever be found. They have even gone from the very recollection of God'.<sup>5</sup>

And it is wonderful to know that the very One who pledges 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will **remember no more**', Heb. 10. 17, Himself 'is not unjust to **forget**' any of their

work and loving ministry performed 'toward His name', 6. 10.

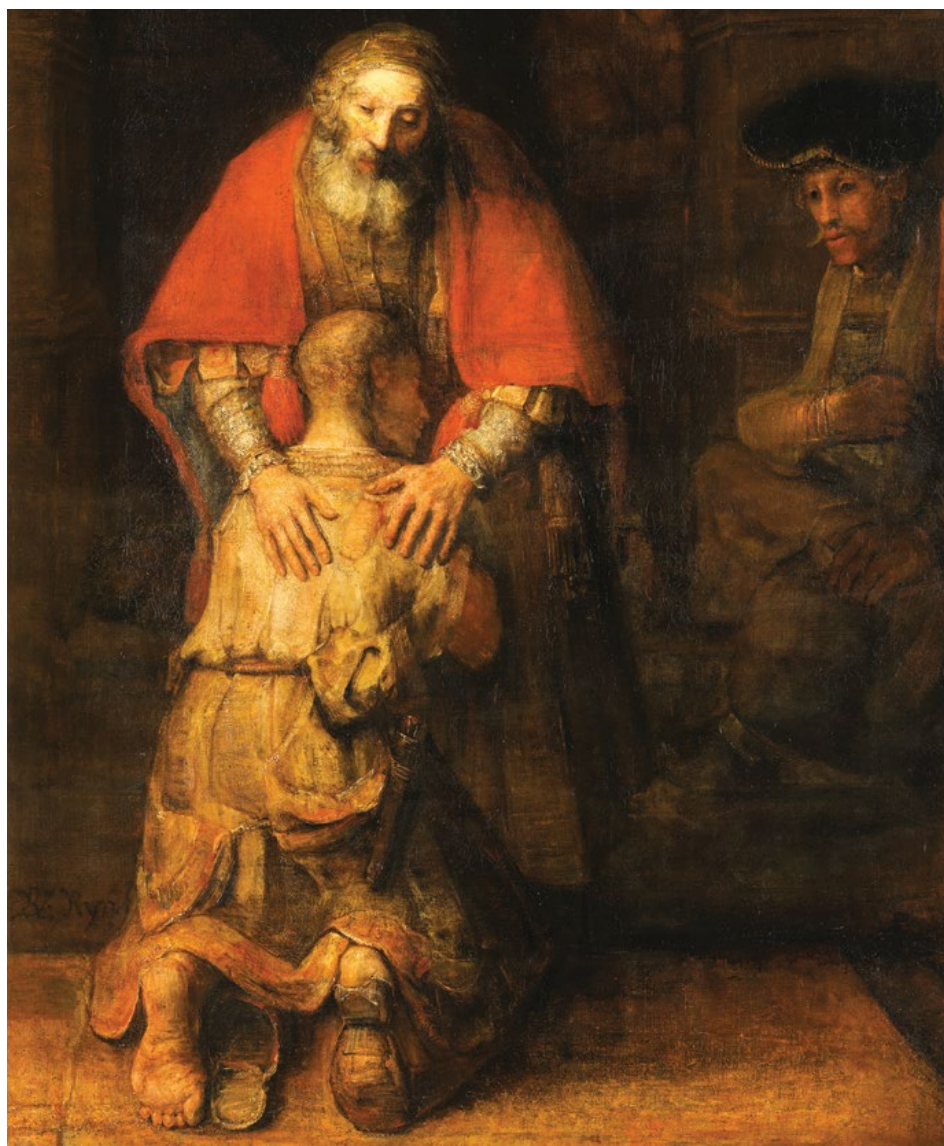
## (iv) Cannot be found

'You will cast all our sins **into the depths of the sea**', Mic. 7. 19,<sup>6</sup> from where they can never be recovered. For, no! God does not throw them **onto the surface** of the sea, leaving open the possibility that they might float back to shore. He casts them

**into the vast depths**, like such a spot, we might say, as the Mariana Trench in the Pacific Ocean which reaches almost seven miles down!<sup>7</sup> And, what is more, He permits no fishing in that sea!

'Sheila O'Gahagan was a factory girl in Ireland. Broken down in health, she was advised to try the effect of a holiday by the seaside. In her heart of hearts she was perplexed by a problem that struck much deeper than that of her health—the problem of her sins. One day she sat, with her Bible on her knee, looking out on the waves breaking on the Giant's Causeway, and came upon the passage in Micah: "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea". As she surveyed the horizon, she said to herself: "My sins are all cast into the depths of the sea".

A few months later she died, and the following verse was found in her desk:



Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn - The Return of the Prodigal Son



"I will cast in the depths of the fathomless sea  
All thy sins and transgressions,  
whatever they be;  
Though they mount up to heaven,  
though they sink down to hell,  
They shall sink in the depths, and  
above them shall swell  
All the waves of my mercy, so  
mighty and free:  
I will cast all thy sins in the depths of  
the sea".<sup>8</sup>

### (v) Cannot be read

'I . . . am He who **blots out** your transgressions', Isa. 43. 25. We note that 'transgressions' are not merely '**crossed out**', following which they might still be read, but '**blotted out**' – so completely erased and eradicated that no trace remains. The Apostle Paul speaks in similar language, 'God . . . having **blotted out**'<sup>9</sup> the handwritten indictment [of our indebtedness] which was against us . . . has set it aside, nailing it to the cross', Col. 2. 12-14 lit. And so perhaps we might say that, in one sense at least, our transgressions **have** been '**crossed out**'!

The apostle's point is captured brilliantly by HORATIO SPAFFORD in his soul-stirring hymn, 'It is well with my soul':  
'My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
**Is nailed to the cross**, and I bear it  
no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
O my soul!'

And we do well to remember that MR SPAFFORD wrote those lines at the time when he had recently lost: (i) all his possessions to fire, and (ii) all his four daughters to water.<sup>10</sup> The godly man derived his comfort and encouragement from that which he knew lay well outside the range of all earth's trials, sorrows and sufferings; namely, the blessedness of having one's sins forgiven.<sup>11</sup>

We do well to put aside all our fears and anxieties, and to bask in the sunshine of the divine pronouncement, 'your sins are forgiven', 1 John 2. 12.<sup>12</sup> And bear in mind that, when David started to enumerate some of the many

'benefits' which he had received from the Lord,<sup>13</sup> he placed the

forgiveness of all his sins at the top of his list, Ps. 103. 2, 3!

### Endnotes

- 1 Consider also: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow", Isa. 1. 18, and 'wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow', Ps. 51. 7.
- 2 'The farthest point *east* and the farthest point *west* in the United States are both in Alaska . . . *Pochnoi Point* in the Aleutians is as far *west* as you can go and still be in the US. But if you travel a few miles farther west, you'll end up at Alaska's *Amatignak Island*. Because that spot is west of the 180th meridian separating the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, it is technically *east* of the rest of the US. But you'll never find a spot where east and west are *actually* next to each other . . . East goes on forever. West goes on forever. They never meet. You can't get farther from something than that . . . When you read in Scripture that your forgiven sins are separated from you "as far as the east is from the west", you are assured that they are an immeasurable distance away – gone forever', DAVE BRANON, *Our Daily Bread*, 9 November 2008. (The distance between the two points in Alaska is only about 70 miles.)
- 3 For the imagery, contrast how, in the days of the Judges, Israel 'cast' God's law 'behind their backs', Neh. 9. 26.
- 4 The Lord's words here through Jeremiah stand in marked contrast with His earlier judgement pronounced on Israel's false prophets through the same prophet, 'behold, I, even I, will utterly **forget** you . . . and will cast you out of My presence', Jer. 23. 39. The Hebrew word translated 'forget' there occurs in only five other verses in the Old Testament. Outside of the book of Job (Job 11. 6; 39. 17, where the word may signify to extract or deprive), the word unmistakably carries the meaning 'to forget', Gen. 41. 51; Isa. 44. 21; Lam. 3. 17. Interestingly, an early edition of the King James Version (dated 1638) was wrongly printed with our Lord's words in Luke chapter 7 verse 47 shown as, 'her sins which are many are **forgotten**'!
- 5 C. H. MACKINTOSH, 'The Cross and the Throne', *Things New and Old*, Volume 1.
- 6 As He once drowned the Pharaoh of the Exodus in 'The depths' of the Red Sea. Exod. 15. 4, 5.
- 7 'The Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench is the deepest known point in Earth's oceans . . . at 10,994 metres (36,070 feet) below sea level . . . If Mount Everest were placed at this location it would be covered by over one mile of water', <https://geology.com/records/deepest-part-of-the-ocean.shtml>. (36,070 feet is over 6.83 miles.)
- 8 A. NAISMITH, *1200 Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes*, number 1019.
- 9 Paul actually used the same Greek word in Colossians chapter 2 verse 14 as was used in the Greek Old Testament translation of Isaiah chapter 43 verse 25.
- 10 Mr SPAFFORD's material wealth was consumed in the Great Chicago Fire

of 1871. Having invested heavily in land and property in the downtown area of expanding Chicago, he lost everything overnight. But the worst was yet to come. Just two years later, in November 1873, his four daughters, eleven-year-old Annie, nine-year-old Maggie, five-year-old Bessie, and two-year-old Tanetta, drowned in mid-Atlantic when the ship on which they travelled to Europe with their mother Anna collided with another vessel. Along with the other survivors, Anna was brought to Cardiff, from where she cabled a heart-rending telegraph message to her husband. The first two words said it all, 'Saved alone'. Mr Spafford left on the next available ship to cross the Atlantic and join his wife. According to an account written by their fifth daughter (born after the tragedy), midway across the ocean 'the captain called Father into his private cabin. "A careful reckoning has been made", he told (him), "and I believe we are now passing the place where the Ville du Havre was wrecked". . . . On the high seas, near the place where his children perished, he wrote the hymn that was to give comfort to so many' (extracted from: BERTHA SPAFFORD VESTER, *Our Jerusalem*).  
11 Ps. 32. 1, 2; Rom. 4. 6, 7. Remember that when the Lord's wider circle of disciples reported back to Him that 'even the demons are subject to us in Your name', He responded, 'do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven', Luke 10. 17-20. If I may paraphrase His words, 'What matters most is not the **power** of **my** name **on earth**, but the **presence** of **your** names **in heaven**!' The Saviour was counselling His disciples to ensure that their joy was based, not on the 'rollercoaster' of success or failure which they would doubtless experience in His service, but on that which lay altogether outside the reach and range of any experiences on earth; namely, on their eternal salvation. Indeed, sometime earlier, the apostles themselves had experienced an embarrassing public failure when attempting to cast out a demon, Luke 9. 40.  
12 According to Luke, those very words 'your sins are forgiven' had been spoken by Jesus to a man and a woman separately, Luke 5. 20; 7. 48. On both occasions, those present questioned His authority to 'forgive sins'. 'Who is this?' they asked, Luke 5. 21; 7. 49. Who, indeed? The Pharisees may have been spot on with their **Theology** ('Who can forgive sins but God alone?'), but they were way off the mark with their **Christology** ('Who is this who speaks blasphemies?'), Luke 5. 21.  
13 'He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude', C. H. SPURGEON, *The Treasury of David*, on Psalm 103 verse 3.

# THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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

13

As we continue our studies in chapter 4, these verses provide further teaching by parable – something that was commenced in chapter 3 verse 23.

## **The parables in private, vv. 21-34**

Within this third section of the chapter, the Lord moves, in part, from the public arena to the private, teaching those to whom He has revealed the meaning of the parable of the sower.

Of the transition from seed to light, F. B. HOLE comments, ‘At first sight the transition . . . may seem incongruous and disconnected, but . . . we shall soon see that in their spiritual significance both parables are congruous and connected. When the word of God is received into an exercised and prepared heart it brings forth fruit that God appreciates, and also light that is to be seen and appreciated of men’.<sup>1</sup>

It might also be noted that these statements appear scattered throughout the other Gospels, the only parallel being in Luke’s Gospel, 8. 16-18. On this point, CONSTABLE observes, ‘It means that Jesus frequently used these expressions at other times during His teaching ministry as well as here’.<sup>2</sup>

## **The manifestation of the light, vv. 21-23**

Using the example of the light on a lampstand, the Lord teaches the importance of testimony. HIEBERT comments, ‘just as it is the function of light to shine, so it is the duty of His disciples to let their light shine that others too may come to know the truth’.<sup>3</sup>

There was a twofold danger to

testimony – the bushel and the bed. What each metaphor actually means is not indicated, but most commentators take the bushel or basket to symbolize business and the bed leisure and lethargy. Both are a serious hindrance to the servant and, therefore, the furtherance of testimony. The business can be a significant thief of time and, in terms of money, can generate temptation and be a snare. Leisure time and the perceived need for rest can breed lethargy and leave the work of the Lord not done.

The truth of God is not to be hidden. It is to be blazed forth, as a lamp upon a lampstand. The day will declare it and, hence, the duty of the disciples is plain, ‘If any man have ears to hear, let him hear’, v. 23.

## **The measure, vv. 24, 25**

God is interested in the minute details of the lives of His people. The previous verses have shown His deep interest in our witness and its effectiveness. Here, He is concerned with our own personal reading of and meditation in His word.

The reading of the word of God is meant to be a daily occupation, but that reading is not enough. For the word to gain an entrance, the Lord is bidding His disciples to meditate upon – give time to think upon, seek the meaning of, and generally understand the principles within – God’s word. Equally, once we have benefited from that time in the things of God, we should seek to impart that truth to others for their spiritual blessing.

This time, spent in meditation and in teaching, is measured. The more we invest, the more will be returned to us, ‘unto you that hear shall more be given’, v. 24. However, the converse applies. What we fail to invest in the scriptures, and the things of God, is lost. It can never be retrieved. Similarly, that truth which we had learnt, if it is not reinforced by further study, will also be lost. ROBERTSON comments, ‘The man who does not acquire soon loses what he thinks that he has’.<sup>4</sup> How crucial to spend time in the word!

## **The mystery of growth, vv. 26-29**

It is suggested by some commentators that the phrase, ‘And he said’, v. 26, marks the commencement of a further period of public teaching.

The emphasis of these verses is this mystery of growth. The farmer may plant but how the seed germinates and grows, ‘he knoweth not how’, v. 27. The farmer has fulfilled his responsibility:

- ‘a man should cast seed into the ground’, v. 26. The seed is what is cast, or broadcast, by hand carefully and purposefully.
- ‘he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come’, v. 29. His next responsibility is to bring in the harvest at the appropriate time. Whilst the farmer has not produced the grain, his action is needed to bring in the result.

What he has no control over is:

- the germination of the seed, ‘the seed should spring and grow up’, v. 27. The when and how is outside of the control of the farmer. No amount of anxious thought for the seed will change anything!
- The process of growth, ‘the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself’, v. 28. It is to be noted that the earth does this by itself – there is no human agency. Equally, the process may be known about but it cannot be hurried or put into a different order.

The lesson to be learned in a practical and spiritual sense is that ‘neither is he that planteth anything, neither



he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase', 1 Cor. 3. 7. However, the Lord is teaching about the progress of 'the kingdom of God', v. 26, from its inception, when the Lord sowed the seed, through to its consummation, when the Lord gathers in the harvest.

The growth and development of the Kingdom of God remains a mystery, but all is in the hands of God who, in His own time, will put 'in the sickle', v. 29.

### The mustard seed, vv. 30-34

This is a further parable pertaining to the Kingdom of God. In the previous parable the emphasis has been upon the seed sown and the mysterious process of growth from the seed. Here, that idea is continued, but the emphasis is upon the outcome – the bush, the branches, and the birds.

The Lord draws a contrast between the relative insignificance of the seed and the plant that it produces. The 'grain of mustard seed', v. 31, was the smallest seed planted by any farmer. GRASSMICK comments, 'It took 725-760 mustard seeds to weigh a gram, 28 grams equal one ounce'.<sup>5</sup> However, the outcome, when the plant was fully grown, was a bush between ten and twelve feet (three to four metres) in height. This phenomenal growth meant that it changed its character. Classified as a herb, to provide that

which is edible and, potentially, medicinal, it has become something more than that, providing shelter for the birds who are able to 'lodge under the shadow of it', v. 32.

The picture of the mustard seed, as illustrative of the Kingdom, would teach us a number of lessons:

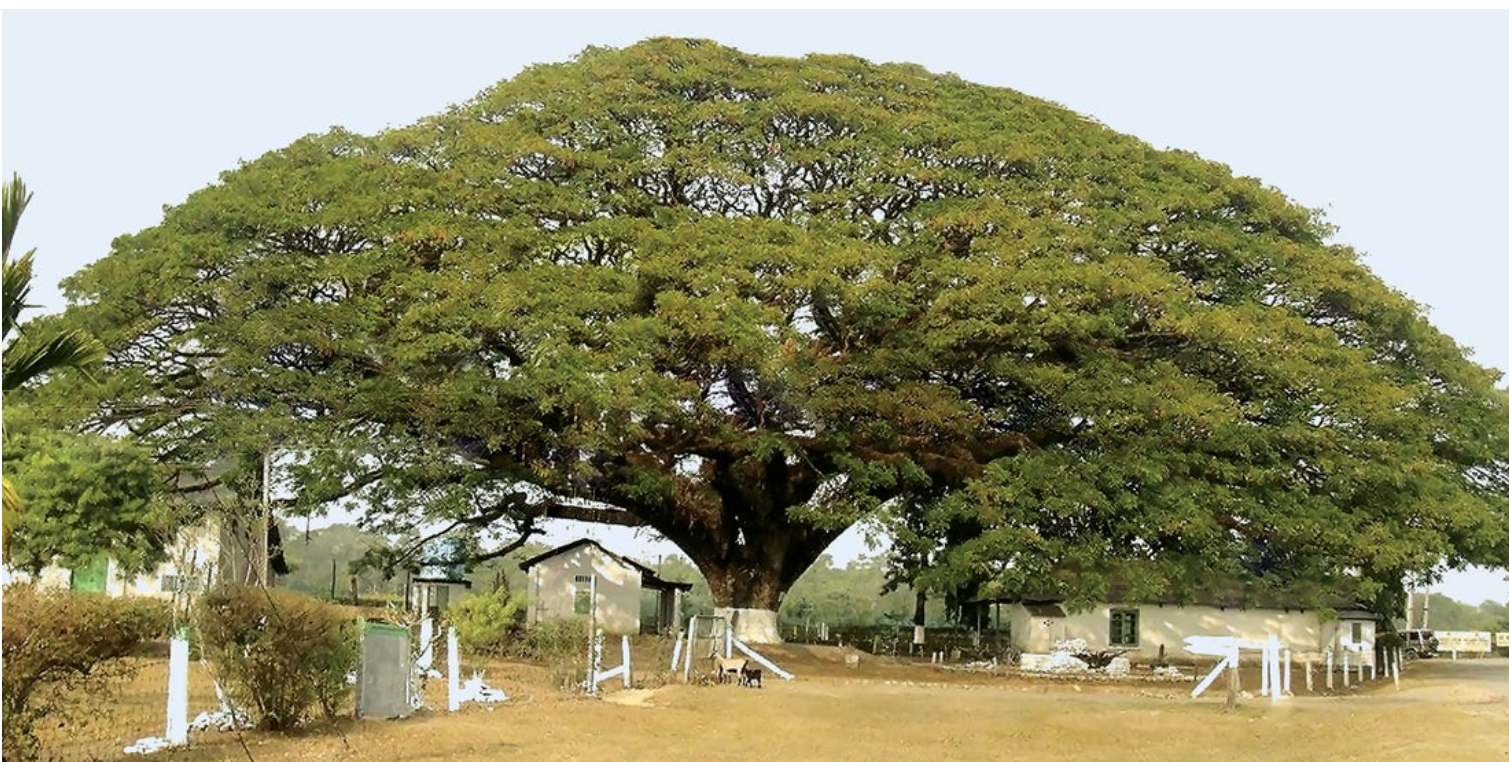
- The phenomenal growth does not produce something that is healthy. It grows beyond its bounds – the rise of professing Christendom is not what God desired to see from the sowing of the seed.
- The birds that find shelter must be seen as forces of evil, cp. v. 4.<sup>6</sup> It serves a purpose for which it was not intended – it lodges those who teach error and have evil intent in their heart, being those of false profession.
- It casts a shadow, providing cover and darkness for those who have no affinity with the light. It shelters those who are not believers at all.

The Lord had said to His disciples that to them, 'it was [is] given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God', v. 11. For this reason, 'when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples', v. 34. They were the ones to whom divine truth would be imparted, so that they, in their turn, would teach others these things.

In concluding this section of parabolic teaching, we note that there is a practical lesson. We are told that the Lord 'spake . . . unto them, as they were able to hear it', v. 33. WUEST comments, 'The verb to hear refers not only to the act of hearing, its usual meaning, but also in some contexts, to the act of understanding, as in 1 Cor. 14:2'.<sup>7</sup> Whilst we acknowledge that the Lord could read the hearts of His hearers, whereas we cannot, there is a challenge as to whether we make our teaching understandable and give thought to that vital issue. In the verse that follows, the Lord also reinforces the importance of understanding His teaching, spending further time with His disciples to ensure that they have grasped that teaching. WUEST adds, 'He expounded . . . the composite word means to give additional loosening, so as to explain, make plainer and clearer, the Word of God'.<sup>8</sup> Bible teachers, take note!

### Endnotes

1. F. B. HOLE, *Commentary on the New Testament*. Source: <https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/hole/NT/MARK.html#a4>.
2. THOMAS CONSTABLE, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, e-sword resource.
3. D. E. HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 116.
4. A. T. ROBERTSON, *op. cit.*
5. JOHN. D. GRASSMICK, *op. cit.*
6. Of other negative references to birds, see: Gen. 40. 17, 19; Jer. 5. 27.
7. K. S. WUEST, *op. cit.*, pp. 94, 95.
8. K. S. WUEST, *op. cit.*, pg. 95



# The Tabernacle<sup>1</sup>

By **JEREMY GIBSON** Derby, England

The tabernacle was built at Mount Sinai, according to a detailed pattern given by commandment to Moses.<sup>2</sup> A team of highly skilled and committed craftsmen, led by Bezaleel, completed it in about six months.<sup>3</sup> The whole structure was an earthly representation of heavenly realities, Heb. 9. 24, a mobile sanctuary for Jehovah to dwell among His people.<sup>4</sup> Known as 'the tabernacle of the congregation', 28. 43, it was here that God met with and spoke to His people, 25. 22; 29. 42, 43, and where the priests served, 28. 43; 38. 21. Each morning and evening, they offered burnt sacrifices, trimmed the lamps and burned sweet incense, 29. 38-46; 30. 7, 8; every Sabbath they changed the showbread, which they were permitted to eat in the holy place, Lev. 24. 5-9. Being 'the tabernacle of testimony', its presence in the camp witnessed to onlooking Gentiles that God was with Israel.<sup>5</sup>

Just as the tabernacle was carefully crafted according to divine instructions, everything Christians do ought to be subject to scripture. The technical skill of Bezaleel and Aholiab shows the spiritual perception required to effectively handle God's word, 2 Tim. 2. 15, and to build into a local assembly, 1 Cor. 3. 10. God has always wished to dwell with His people. He walked with Adam in the garden, Gen. 3. 8. The Shekinah glory, which filled the tabernacle, later filled Solomon's temple, 1 Kgs. 8. 10, 11. The Holy Spirit now resides within individual believers, 1 Cor. 6. 19, and local assemblies are viewed as God's house, 1 Tim. 3. 15. Like Israel, who offered daily morning and evening burnt sacrifices, Christians should worship every day. The trimming of the oil lamps can be seen to picture the Lord's tender disciplining of Christians, removing their dross and enabling them to shine more brightly through the Spirit's energy (represented by the oil). Burning incense morning and evening shows the importance of praying every day, with the assurance that our prayers are sweet to God. As Old Testament priests ate the showbread, Christians feed on Christ, 'the bread of life', John 6. 35. While only the sons of Aaron were priests in Israel, all Christians are priests, 1 Pet. 2. 5, 9.

Apart from the mandatory 100 talents (and 1775 shekels) of atonement silver,<sup>6</sup> the materials for the tabernacle were given voluntarily, and enthusiastically.<sup>7</sup> A total of twenty-nine talents (and 730 shekels) of gold and seventy talents (and 2400 shekels) of brass were offered, 38. 24, 29. Men and women brought 'bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold', 35. 22. Women, who were able, gave materials they had spun, 35. 25, 26. Rulers contributed precious stones, spices, oil and incense, 35. 27, 28. It was not long before Bezaleel and Aholiab had to tell Moses 'the people bring much more than enough . . . So the people were restrained from bringing', 36. 5, 6. Similarly, all Christians should give to the Lord as they are able, with joyful hearts, realizing this opportunity is short-lived, 2 Cor. 9. 7.

The tabernacle itself was a four-layered tent. The **innermost** layer, 26. 1-6; 36. 8-13, referred to as 'the tabernacle [*mishkān*, a residence]', consisted of 'ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work'. Each curtain was twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits broad. Joined together into two sets of five, the adjoining edges of each group had fifty blue loops, attached to the other group by fifty

golden clasps. The **second** layer, 26. 7-13; 36. 14-18, called 'the tent [*'ôhel*, a tent]', 26. 14, was made of eleven 'curtains of goats hair', each being thirty cubits long and four cubits broad. Posteriorly, these curtains were joined into a group of five and anteriorly into a group of six, the sixth curtain folded double at the front of the tent. The innermost edge of each group had fifty loops of an undefined material, which were joined to the second group by fifty brass clasps. The additional two cubits of longitudinal length hung 'over the backside of the tabernacle'; the additional two transverse cubits hung one cubit over each side of the tabernacle. The two outer coverings [*milseh*, a covering]', 26. 14, were made of ram's skins dyed red and the water-resistant 'skins of the sea-cow'.<sup>8</sup>

The embroidered cherubim of the tabernacle's inner layer were a visible reminder that angels are interested in God's redemptive plan (1 Pet. 1. 12); they even watch and learn from local churches, 1 Cor. 11. 10; Eph. 3. 10. While the tabernacle's waterproof outer layer was unattractive, it protected the rich colours, beauty and wealth within. Looks can be deceiving. From the outside a local assembly can seem unimpressive, yet God is there.

The tent was supported by walls of hard acacia wood<sup>9</sup> boards, each board being one-and-a-half cubits wide and ten cubits high, and overlaid with gold, 26. 15-30; 36. 20-34. Protruding from the lower end of each board were two evenly spaced 'tenons [*yād*, hand]', 26. 17, which were slotted into two silver sockets. These sockets reminded Israel they had been atoned for by silver. Christians, however, 'were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . But with the precious blood of Christ', 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. The southern and northern walls were each formed of twenty boards. The western wall was made of eight boards, two of these being corner boards, which were 'connected beneath, and . . . united together perfectly at the top unto one ring', 26. 24.<sup>10</sup> Each wall was held together by five gold-plated



acacia bars which were slotted into golden rings firmly attached to the boards. The middle bar stretched the entire length of its wall. Once erected, the tent was pegged with brass pins, 27. 19.

A vail<sup>11</sup> split the tabernacle into two main sections: ‘the holy place, and the most holy’. This ‘vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work with cherubims’ hung under the tabernacle clasps, upon four acacia pillars. These pillars, having four golden hooks, were themselves overlaid with gold and slotted into four silver sockets, each socket weighing one talent. Inside the vail was placed ‘the ark of the testimony’, 25. 10-22; 37. 1-9, an acacia box, overlaid with fine gold, inside and out, bordered by a golden crown and sealed with a golden lid (the mercy seat). With the exception of the high priest’s entrance into the most holy on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat, the vail (picturing Christ’s flesh) formed an impenetrable barrier into Jehovah’s presence.<sup>12</sup> By way of contrast, Christians have unfettered access to God, Heb. 10. 19-22.

There were three pieces of furniture in the holy place. First, just outside the vail was placed the golden altar.<sup>13</sup> Constructed of acacia – including its horns (speaking of strength) – covered with gold and framed with a golden crown, it was

designed exclusively for the burning of sweet incense (representing prayer, Rev. 8. 3, 4). It was carried by two gold-covered acacia staves, slotted into two golden rings. It was atoned for annually by applying sin-offering blood to its horns.

Second, on the north side was an acacia table,<sup>14</sup> overlaid with pure gold and edged by a double golden crown sandwiching ‘a border of an hand breadth round about’. It was carried by two gold covered acacia staves slotted into golden rings on each of its four corners. For this table, upon which sat twelve shewbread cakes, were made pure golden dishes, pans, jars and bowls, 25.29 NASB.

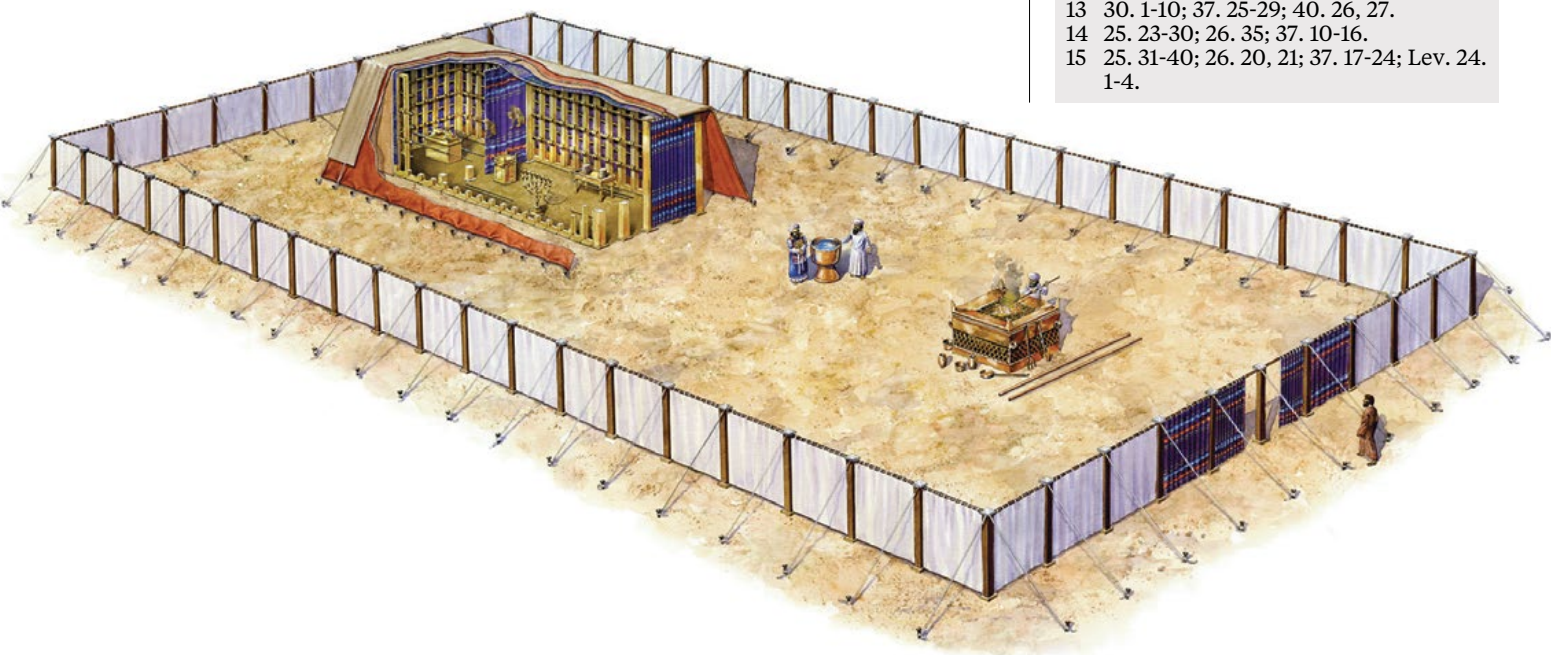
Third, on the south side stood the golden lampstand (*menôrâh*).<sup>15</sup> Since there were no windows in the tabernacle this lampstand was needed to give the priests light to serve in the holy place. One talent of pure gold was used to make this lampstand and all its vessels, including tongs and snuffdishes. Projecting out of two sides of its central shaft were three branches, upon which were three almond-blossom-like cups, a bulb and a flower (suggesting fruitfulness). The central stem itself had four almond-blossom-like cups, bulbs and flowers, three of the four cups positioned beneath the three pairs of branches. Lamps, burning brightly with olive oil (symbolizing

the Holy Spirit), topped the main shaft and each of its six branches. Beaten out of one piece of pure gold, this beautiful lampstand required immense skill in its manufacture.

At the tabernacle entrance stood five acacia pillars, covered with gold and slotted into five brazen sockets, 26. 36, 37; 36. 37, 38. Each pillar had golden hooks and gilded connecting-rods (JND), upon which was suspended a hanging ‘of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework’. It was here Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priest’s office, 29. 1-15; 40. 12-16; Lev. 8, and, within which, Aaron was ordered to remain while mourning his sons’ fiery judgment, 10. 6, 7, a solemn reminder that ‘our God is a consuming fire’, Heb. 12. 29.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, references are from Exodus.
- 2 25. 9, 40; 26. 30; 31. 6, 11; 38. 22; 39. 42, 43.
- 3 19. 1; 24. 18; 31. 1-11; 32. 1-19; 35. 10-20, 30-35; 36. 2; 38. 22, 23; 40. 1, 2, 17.
- 4 25. 8; 29. 43-46; 40. 34-38.
- 5 38. 21; Acts 7. 44.
- 6 30. 11-16; 38. 25-28.
- 7 25. 1-7; 35. 4-9, 21-29; 36. 1-7; 38. 24-31.
- 8 KEIL & DELITZSCH, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vol. Hendrickson Publishers, 1996, vol. 1, pg. 437.
- 9 J. EVANS, *God’s Trees*, Day One Publications, 2015, pg. 24.
- 10 H. SPURRELL, *A Translation of the Old Testament Scriptures*, Penfold Book and Bible House.
- 11 26. 31-33; 36. 35, 36; 38. 27; Heb. 9. 2, 3, 7, 8; 10. 19, 20.
- 12 Lev. 16. 14; Heb. 9. 7, 8; 10. 19, 20.
- 13 30. 1-10; 37. 25-29; 40. 26, 27.
- 14 25. 23-30; 26. 35; 37. 10-16.
- 15 25. 31-40; 26. 20, 21; 37. 17-24; Lev. 24. 1-4.



# Interpersonal responsibilities – ‘mutual deference’

## Colossians 3. 18 - 4. 6

12

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

The apostle has just shown the need for a responsible, transformed life as a result of having ‘put off the old man’, v. 9, and having ‘put on the new man’, v. 10. Following application to the believer’s life in general, he now turns to its application in particular interpersonal relationships. The section is comprehensive, covering the home life and the social life of the believer. The subject of wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters are all covered. A final paragraph, 4. 2-6, completes the overall section with the only basis upon which interpersonal relationships can be adequately maintained – prayer, vv. 2-4. The requirement for an appropriate ‘walk’ and gracious ‘speech’, vv. 5, 6, which is the basis of a spiritual testimony to those ‘that are without’, is then covered. The apostle is thus moving from a ‘Christ-centred’ life focused on character, 3. 5-17, to a ‘Christ-controlled’ life focused on action, 3. 18 - 4. 6.

### Outline

Wives and husbands, 3. 18, 19;  
Children and parents, 3. 20, 21;  
Servants [slaves] and masters,  
3. 22 - 4. 1;  
Prayer and testimony by life and lip,  
4. 2-6.

### Wives and husbands, 3. 18, 19

The treatment of the subject here is less comprehensive than in the parallel passage in Ephesians, where submission is enjoined as ‘one to another’ before detailing specific relationships.<sup>1</sup> Here, submission is confined to the home situation, but the principal ideas are similar. The Lordship of Christ is the key: ‘in the Lord’, v. 18; ‘unto the Lord’, v. 20; ‘of the Lord’, v. 24.

### The submission of the wife, v. 18

In this verse, the apostle gives an exhortation, the reason for it and the sphere in which it operates. The exhortation to the wives is unambiguous, ‘submit yourselves unto your own husbands’. It is clear

from this that home life is being envisaged. The reason for the call to submission is that ‘it is fit [proper]’; it is consistent with divine order. The sphere of its operation is ‘in the Lord’, cp. 3. 20 JND, RV; 4. 7, 17. The phrase occurs four times in Colossians and around forty times in the Pauline Epistles. An awareness of the Lordship of Christ is key to a successful Christian marriage. This is in contrast with the demise of the family unit, leading to the breakdown of the social fabric in society and all forms of anarchy.

### The love of the husband, v. 19

The word to the husband is in the present active imperative tense. It demands the expression of affection as a necessary precedent as well as response to the submission of the wife – active and unceasing care. The absence of bitterness is enjoined, ‘do not be harsh with them’ ESV. There is, of course, no question of superiority, inferiority nor inequality envisaged in the wife-husband relationship.

### Children and parents, vv. 20, 21

If the lovely relationship in verses 18 and 19 is in vogue, it is likely that this relationship will thrive, though not always. The book of Proverbs gives some excellent instructions for children.<sup>2</sup> Some excellent advice for parents is also given in Proverbs, in addition to the well-known, though often misquoted, verse, ‘He that spareth his rod **hateth** his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes’, Prov. 13. 24.<sup>3</sup>

### The word to children, v. 20

The commandment given here is very clear, ‘obey [to listen under as looking up] your parents’. The extent of the obedience is ‘in all things’. The reason adduced is that it ‘is well-pleasing in the Lord’ JND, RV. There is a lovely dignity involved in this heeding and respecting. In Ephesians, the additional levers of being the ‘first commandment with promise’ and long life are added, 6. 1-3. In the case where the child is the only believer in the home, the law of Christ always comes first, with any necessary deviation to be exercised in an attitude of love.

### The word to fathers, v. 21

There is wise counsel here for parents, ‘don’t irritate your children by being so unreasonable that children lose heart’, be positive, ‘make obedience easy . . . train them to be gentlemen’,<sup>4</sup> ‘bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord’, Eph. 6. 4. The reason given here is, ‘lest they be discouraged [“become spiritless”, found only here in the New Testament]’. A proper balance is necessary and effective.

### Servants (slaves) and masters, 3. 22 - 4. 1

It is likely that Christian slaves are in view in continuance of the context of the believer’s home. The principles, however, are applicable to all employees and employers. The abolition of slavery is not the result of demonstrations but the inculcation of biblical doctrine and practice. The exhortation to slaves is more extensive than to masters – perhaps indicating that Christians were more likely to be employees than employers. The letter to Philemon gives lovely balancing



truth in the subject matter of this paragraph.

### **The exhortations to ‘servants’, vv. 22, 23**

The apostle covers three things in these verses: the response anticipated from believing employees, ‘obey’; the sphere in which the activity is undertaken, ‘the flesh’; and the manner of the service, ‘heartily’. The apostle is very demanding, ‘obey in all things your masters’. Similar exhortations are given elsewhere with the reason being ‘that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed’, to ‘adorn the doctrine’, and that ‘this is thankworthy’.<sup>5</sup>

The sphere of activity is ‘according to the flesh’, i.e., the world order, not the relationships which obtain in the assembly. The slave could be in a leadership role there, cp. 3. 11, and could leave slavery if the opportunity presented itself, 1 Cor. 7. 21, 22. The manner of the service is outlined here, vv. 22, 23. The attitude to be adopted is unlike that of the world, ‘not with eyeservice . . . but in singleness of heart, fearing God’. In other words, not external but true, faithful and conscientious, or, in ‘all good fidelity’, Titus 2. 10. There must be a true motive, ‘not . . . as menpleasers; but . . . fearing God’, v. 22; not fear of an earthly master, but reverence for their heavenly Lord. The comprehensive conclusion is ‘whatsoever ye do, do

heartily, as to the Lord . . . not unto men’, v. 23. The same idea is found in Ecclesiastes chapter 9 verse 10, ‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might’.

### **The basis of the exhortations, vv. 24, 25**

Service will be assessed at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Each believer, without exception, will ‘receive’ for a ‘good thing’, Eph. 6. 8, or ‘receive for the wrong’, Col. 3. 25. The sense of ‘shall receive’ means he acts upon himself. In other words, each is responsible for the reward he receives, ‘his own reward according to his own labour’, 1 Cor. 3. 8! There will be no mistakes since the rewarder is ‘the Lord’; ‘the Lord Christ’ is the One whom we serve.

There are two possibilities envisaged: to ‘receive the reward’ inherited; or to ‘receive for the wrong which he hath done’. The Judgement Seat is not to be contemplated lightly. We can be assured, however, of the impartiality of the judgement; there is ‘no respect of persons’, v. 25.

### **The exhortation to masters, 4. 1**

The exhortation to masters is to ‘give . . . that which is just and equal’. They are to act fairly and impartially. The basis of the exhortation is given in the balance of the verse, ‘ye also have a Master in heaven’. They should treat their slaves in the same way they want to be treated by their Master, cp. Eph. 6. 9; Jas. 5. 1-4. Believers should be the best employees as well as the best employers.<sup>6</sup>

### **Prayer and testimony by life and lip, vv. 2-6**

#### **Praying, vv. 2-4**

In these verses the apostle shows the threefold attitude to be adopted in prayer: continuance, watching and ‘thanksgiving’. In Acts, they ‘continued stedfastly [to persevere, assiduous] . . . in prayers’, 2. 42, and the apostles gave themselves ‘continually’ to prayer, 6. 4. It was ‘first of all [the all things]’ to be observed in a local assembly, 1 Tim. 2. 1-3. There is also a need for watching in prayer; to be vigilant, to stay awake, v. 2! ‘Thanksgiving’ indicates a spirit of appreciation and gratitude, cp. 1. 3; 1 Tim. 2. 1. The subjects of the prayers

are indicated in verse 3, ‘us’, i.e., Paul and Timothy, but perhaps also the wider apostolic community. If they needed it, so do we!<sup>8</sup> The object of the prayers is threefold: first, that ‘a door for the word’ RV might be opened;<sup>9</sup> second, that the ‘mystery of Christ’ as the subject of the gospel, for which Paul was in bonds, might be spoken;<sup>10</sup> and, third, that the communication might be effective. Perhaps, in this latter point, Paul also had his defence before the imperial tribunal in view, Eph. 6. 20.

#### **Walking, v. 5**

There is wisdom necessary for effective testimony to ‘them that are without’: to walk ‘honestly’, with a ‘good report’, 1 Thess. 4. 12; 1 Tim. 3. 7. Unbelievers are on the lookout! It is necessary to buy up the opportunities – ‘making the best use of the time’, Eph. 5. 15, 16 ESV. ‘Buying’ can be costly!

#### **Speaking, v. 6**

There are two necessary ingredients: grace and seasoning [prepared] ‘with salt’.<sup>11</sup> Salt was connected to ‘wit’ in pagan society, and indicates ‘common sense’, or ‘rendering the speech palatable’, ‘not too much, not too little’. Grace and salt are both seen with the Lord, Luke 4. 22, 25.<sup>12</sup> The grace and salt give the combination necessary to know how ‘to give an answer to every man’, 1 Pet. 3. 15; cp. Acts 6. 10. Paul exemplified this, speaking appropriately to the Gentiles at Athens and to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, Acts 17. 16-34; 13. 14-41.

#### **Endnotes**

- 1 Eph. 5. 21 - 6. 9.
- 2 See Prov. 1. 8; 6. 20; 23. 22. See also Deut. 27. 16.
- 3 See Prov. 10. 13; 22. 15; 23. 13, 14; 26. 3.
- 4 F. F. BRUCE, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, Erdmans, 1984.
- 5 1 Tim. 6. 1, 2; Titus 2. 9, 10; 1 Pet. 2. 18-20.
- 6 See Jacob, Gen. 30. 26, 27 (his employer even asked him to state his salary! 30. 28-31, twice!); 31. 6, 38-40, and the best employers, Boaz, Ruth 2. 4-17.
- 7 Cp. ‘Watch ye and pray’, Mark 14. 38; Luke 18. 1.
- 8 Cp. Eph. 6. 18, 19; Rom. 15. 30-32; 1 Thess. 5. 25; 2 Thess. 3. 1, 2.
- 9 Cp. 1 Cor. 16. 9; 2 Cor. 2. 12; Rev. 3. 8.
- 10 Cp. Gal. 1. 16; Eph. 6. 19.
- 11 See also Luke 4. 22; Ps. 45. 2; Eph. 4. 29; Matt. 5. 13.
- 12 Also, ‘neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more’, John 8. 11.



# An Assembly of the Lord's people will be a people among whom ... SEPARATION IS REQUIRED

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

Part 10

Following the recent Covid-19 pandemic this subject has taken on a different meaning and significance. Whilst the concept is not new, social distancing has entered the vocabulary and consciousness of the population. The need to exercise care to avoid the possibility of contamination has become paramount for individuals and companies of the Lord's people. The foe, an unseen virus, could have devastating effects upon anyone infected. Vigilance is not an option but a necessity.

In that context the subject of separation does not seem extreme but obvious. If someone comes into the assembly who is infected with the coronavirus, without sensible precautions, any number of people could catch the virus and, in the worst case, die.

Bringing that background into the spiritual realm, perhaps we have not been as conscious of an unseen enemy that pursues the believer. We face a world of sin, as seriously infectious and deeply dangerous as any virus that humanity has known. Its effects are as insidious and destructive, bringing many a promising Christian to desperate straits and ineffective service – shipwreck. That world of sin and enmity towards God is all around us. It permeates everything that we come into contact with – the school, the college, the university, the workplace, and the places of social interaction generally. We are exposed to it in the media, on our phones, on our radios and other electronic devices. It seems that we cannot escape it. What makes it doubly dangerous is its appeal – it is presented to us as 'harmless', 'entertaining', even 'healthy'.

As we turn to the word of God and the section of verses in 2 Corinthians

chapter 6 verses 11 to 18, we read Paul's stark command, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers'. Scripture is not silent! Scripture is not deceptive but presents the truth. Sadly, what used to be a frequent passage of scripture in ministry is seldom heard taught. It was written to the Corinthians, and to us, as a warning about worldly associations and their dangers. Today, the world has not lost its deceptive appeal, and the line between truth and error has become increasingly blurred by those who have 'a form of godliness' but deny the power thereof, 2 Tim. 3. 5.

However, before coming to the verses mentioned above, it would be helpful to explore the context of the chapter. Paul's command does not emanate from a cold, impersonal, condemnatory heart. He writes in verse 1, 'We then, as workers together with him, beseech you'. It is an appeal from Paul and his fellow workers, individuals who had worked amongst the Corinthians and knew them, and the city in which they sought to worship and witness. But more than that, they were 'workers together with him', whom the previous chapter will indicate as the Lord. The command has divine authority! Yet the words of verse 1 seem to conflict with the idea of a command – 'we . . . beseech you'.

It is because this command comes from the heart. Note the words, 'O ye Corinthians . . . our heart is enlarged', v. 11. He looks upon these believers and loves them, 'I speak as unto my children', v. 13.

## The qualities of love, vv. 11-13

Too often this section of the chapter has been used as a stick with which to beat the people of God – we are living too close to the world and adopting its ideas. But, as we have seen, in the verses that introduce Paul's instruction of verse 14 there is a wholly different motive. His appeal is from a heart of love and one of the qualities of that love is the open mouth, 'our mouth is open unto you', v. 11. An open mouth is a symbol of free speech. WUEST translates as 'we speak freely to you, we keep nothing back'.<sup>1</sup> Of the enlarged heart, WUEST suggests that Paul's heart was 'widened in its sympathy towards you'.<sup>2</sup> What parent could withhold the warning shout to their child in the midst of danger? What shepherd would allow a believer to 'find out the hard way' when the outcome may be spiritual loss? Whilst the warning may not always be heeded, it does not excuse the failure to issue it.

In the light of recent events it might seem pointless to ask, 'why should we listen and heed?' Yet many have ignored the instructions of 'lockdown'. Many have flouted the restrictions issued by governments across the world. But it is not the potential danger that Paul bases his appeal upon. The reason the Corinthian believers should heed the warning is given by the apostle in verse 13. If Paul had shown his love for them, here and elsewhere, they should reciprocate that love in obedience, 'in return for the same' NKJV, or as 'an answering recompense' JND. Love is very practical, and it is demonstrated in the simplest ways. Speaking as their spiritual father, Paul says that they should not find it difficult to 'make a large place in your heart for me', WUEST.<sup>3</sup>

## The questions of love, vv. 14-16

The five rhetorical questions posed in this section show the incompatibility of believer and unbeliever. The first



question shows the effect upon **our walk**, v. 14. The apostle is not talking about people, as pleasant as they may be. He is writing about principles. It is vitally important to look behind the personalities. What fellowship can there be between righteousness and lawlessness? They do not pull together. Moral excellence is conformity to the will of God whereas wickedness is not. It is the opposite. As Amos asked Israel, the relevance of his question applies here; how 'can two walk together, except they be agreed?' Amos 3. 3. These two, righteousness and unrighteousness, point and pull in opposite directions.

What do light and darkness have in common? The second question concerns **our moral welfare**, v. 14. Here is the reason to exercise spiritual social distancing! There is nothing shared and no common ground between light and darkness. The Apostle John reminds us that 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all', 1 John 1. 5. Any attempt to bring light and darkness together will mean the utter destruction of the character of one or the other. Our attitude to darkness is given by Paul elsewhere, 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them', Eph. 5. 11.

The third question affects **our warfare**, 'what concord ['accord' NKJV] hath Christ with Belial?' v. 15. The picture is of two opposing forces with two opposing commanders, Christ and Belial. With a command to arms, we cannot show allegiance to both. The Lord taught His disciples, 'No man can

serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other', Matt. 6. 24.

'What part ["portion" RV] hath he that believeth with an infidel?' v. 15. The fourth question challenges **our witness**. The believer has no portion with the unbeliever. The believer's part is heavenly. Why would we want to become occupied with earthly things? Not only can earthly things consume our time, they can damage our testimony. Rather, the apostle says elsewhere, 'set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth', Col. 3. 2.

The final question is one that affects **our worship**, 'what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?', v. 16. As NEWBERRY points out, the assembly is 'the inner temple of God',<sup>4</sup> indicating the presence of God. This is serious! We are living stones which are 'built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices', 1 Pet. 2. 5. Thus, to bring idols into the presence of God is to insult the name and character of the God that we have supposedly come to worship. It shows disobedience to His command, Deut. 5. 7, a lack of understanding of the examples of biblical history, cp. 2 Kgs. 21. 4, 5, and a shallow appreciation of the 'living God', v. 16.

### Quotations from the word of God, vv. 16-18

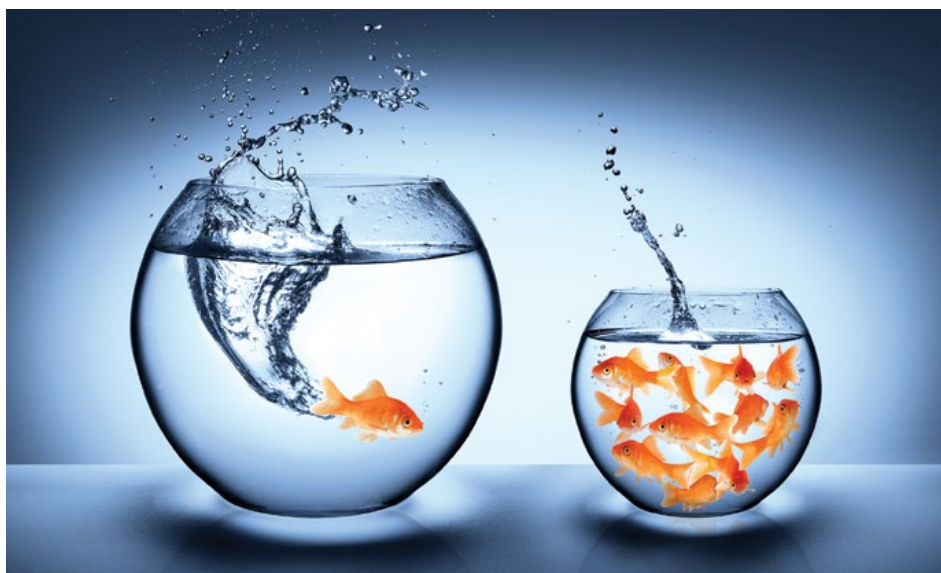
Any spiritual argument designed to change the believer's behaviour should be supported by the word of God and

it is significant that Paul summarizes his argument not with his own words but with those of the word of God itself, 'God hath said', v. 16. These are not Paul's own ideas or an expression of his own prejudices; this is 'saith the Lord', vv. 17, 18. Drawing from a number of scriptures, Paul shows that we cannot enjoy the fellowship and fatherhood of God whilst maintaining friendship with the world.

The force of the command is 'Wherefore come out from the midst of them', v. 17 JND. The Corinthians may not have realized how far in they had drifted. A careful reading of the Gospel accounts of Peter's denial of the Lord show how he 'followed afar off', Luke 22. 54, then 'sat down among them', v. 55. Departure from our 'first love' is not usually one giant step but a series of many little, almost imperceptible steps! The dangers are real for every believer. The serpent has not lost his subtlety.

But the apostle shows that we should not just separate ourselves physically or externally. In adding 'and touch not the unclean thing', v. 17, he is speaking of those things that we can cling to. He is emphasizing that old practices have to be cleared out completely. The children of Israel left Egypt physically but, sadly, did not leave it mentally or emotionally, cp. Exod. 16. 3; Num. 11. 4-6.

In giving up the world and its amusements, we are to receive blessings of a far greater character. Perhaps we have been guilty of presenting the truth of separation as a wholly negative principle whereas the converse is true. God will dwell in us, will walk with us along the way as our source of knowledge, will manifest His care over us as our protector and benefactor, and will show His favour to us as the objects of His love. Can the temporal things of the world really be compared with such wonderful blessings?



### Endnotes

- 1 K. S. WUEST, *The New Testament: an expanded translation*, Eerdmans, 1961.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 THOMAS NEWBERRY, *The English-Greek Testament*, Bagsters, n.d.

# The Twelve Tribes of Israel

## EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

13

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

In the introduction to this series we explained how it was that Ephraim and Manasseh came to feature in the twelve tribes of Israel. Revisiting that introduction at this point is recommended, *Precious Seed*, Vol. 73 No. 2.

### Perfect start

One imagines that home life for Manasseh and Ephraim was very different to the dysfunctional one their uncles grew up in. Theirs was a happy, stable home, surrounded by the comforts afforded them by Joseph's elite position in government. They also enjoyed an exclusive, joint blessing from their grandfather, Gen. 48. 20. And if that was not enough, Ephraim, meaning 'fruitful', received Jacob's double portion, 48. 19.

Of all the tribes of Israel we might think that these two were guaranteed to go far. They will blaze a trail for God, refuse to compromise and, surely, will never forget the incredible circumstances of their birth.

Ephraim and Manasseh's story will be the story of so many readers. We have enjoyed the comforts of a godly home, sheltered from all the world's dysfunction. We know the grace of God that saved our parents and perhaps our grandparents too<sup>1</sup> and, wonderfully, we have come to know it for ourselves through faith. God's blessings have been extended to us despite being Gentiles in the flesh, Eph. 2. 11. Would to God that such circumstances would guarantee our spiritual success. Alas, it was not so with Ephraim and Manasseh, and nor is it necessarily so with us.

### Promising growth

At first, things look fairly good for the two tribes. Ephraim leads one of the camps in their wilderness sojourn. They manage to avoid any specific mention of stirring trouble, though Manasseh was implicated in the spies' bad report.

But at least Ephraim was upheld by their faithful leader, Joshua, who stood with Caleb from Judah, Num. 13. 8; 14. 6. And at least Manasseh was later upheld by the daughters of Zelophehad, who were zealous for the land God had promised, 27. 1-11. The Pentateuch closes with Moses' blessing upon the two tribes, positively overflowing with high expectations.

### Pitiful compromise

How disappointing to read of their compromise in Judges chapter 1 verses 27 to 29. Intimidated by the Canaanites, they spared them and their cities in return for labour.<sup>2</sup> Yet, if a shepherd boy with a sling can topple Goliath, then a sandal-wearing troop, empowered by the Lord of hosts, could have toppled the Canaanite strongholds like Megiddo, 1. 27-33. Carnal means of compromise will not do. 'We do not war after the flesh . . . the weapons of our warfare are . . . mighty through God to the pulling

down of strong holds' and we must be ruthless in laying hold on God's power to this end, 2 Cor. 10. 3-5. Despite this evident compromise, apparently Manasseh did not think it hypocritical to complain to Joshua that they had insufficient space. How often we do this – we are presented with a problem, for which we are actually partly to blame, yet we place the onus of remedy on a third party. Joshua's leadership is brave. To use modern parlance, he insists that Manasseh 'own it', and go after the land, Josh. 17. 14-18.

### Prominence forfeited

Infighting was a feature before and after the split of the kingdoms and Ephraim was often the culprit. One wonders whether his double portion went to his head, cp. Isa. 28. 1. When the nation became divided, God chose Jeroboam from Ephraim to rule the northern tribes. God graciously promised him blessing if he walked in the ways of David, 1 Kgs. 11. 37, 38. Alas, he walked in the way that seemed right in his own eyes, bringing outright idolatry into the north. Thus, 'Ephraim' became a way of referring collectively to idolatrous Israel, and her demise is graphically portrayed in the book of Hosea. Readers are encouraged to read Psalm 78 where Ephraim (Israel) is juxtaposed with Judah, led by a man after God's own heart. It is a deeply sobering tale for those who hold potential for God.

### Purpose secured

This is not to say that our fidelity to God down here has any ultimate bearing on His final purposes. God can, and will, take Judah and Ephraim and make them one again, Ezek. 37. 19; cp. Hos. 1. 11. He can, and will, apportion both Ephraim and Manasseh land along with their peers, Ezek. 48. 4-6. At the end of the day, God's purposes will stand. But, since we have a case study in Ephraim and Manasseh of how it is possible to finish poorly even having had a comfortable start, may we learn from their mistakes, possess our possessions without compromise, and walk 'worthy of the vocation wherewith . . . [we] are called', Eph. 4. 1.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Cp. Gen. 50. 23.
- <sup>2</sup> Whilst the law made provision for the employment of foreigners, Lev. 25. 44-46, this was to be held in careful balance with taking possession of the land, Deut. 20. 10-18.





# Proverbs

By **WARREN HENDERSON** Chippewa Falls, USA

## Introduction

Scholars have debated what *marshal*, the Hebrew word rendered ‘proverb’ in the Old Testament means. Observation tells us that a proverb is a pithy maxim, often of a metaphorical nature, to express a simile. This understanding would agree with what many believe the word ‘proverb’ literally means, ‘to be like’, thus prompting the reader to consider an association of things. Proverbs, then, is a collection of succinct common-sense sayings, which, by comparison or contrast, convey a practical certainty that should be heeded. The book of Proverbs provides a lengthy contrast of wisdom and foolishness. Such practical wisdom should preserve the younger generation from repeating the mistakes of their parents, 1. 5.

Biblical wisdom is not knowledge alone, nor philosophical speculation about our existence; it is learning and experiencing principles of a God-honouring life. While six different Hebrew words are translated ‘wisdom’ in Proverbs, the first to appear, and the most common word in the book, is *chokmah*, which means ‘to have skill’. Just as sailors, singers and craftsmen have expertise in their related professions, a believer is to be competent in godly living. Knowledge can be memorized, but wisdom is dynamic; it must think through what is known in order to render the most profitable response. Wisdom skilfully applied will guide righteous, honest, pure, and orderly behaviour.

Proverbs is a treasure-tome of godly wisdom addressing a vast number of timeless topics. Where the books of the law decreed righteous statutes to be obeyed, Proverbs goes further, to direct proper attitudes and discretion in daily living. Moral conduct is explicitly declared to us in God’s word; however, discerning between wise and foolish, helpful

and harmful, and profitable and worthless behaviour is more difficult because of its practical implications. This is especially true in questionable areas of conduct – thankfully, Proverbs provides meaningful guidance and stern warnings for such facets of daily living.

## Purpose

Proverbs is different from any other book in our Bible, in that it is neither historical, nor prophetic, nor law, nor a narrative, nor ritualistic in nature. While it certainly belongs with the other books of wisdom, it is clearly distinct from them in format and purpose. We do not need to read far into Proverbs to understand the purpose of the book, the writer tells us in the opening verses. Notice the author’s fourfold intention for his book:

‘To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion’, Prov. 1. 2-4 NKJV.

Proverbs is God’s textbook for teaching His people: to have wise and disciplined behaviour, to learn proper reasoning skills, to understand moral ethics, and to impart prudence, so they would not be gullible, but exercise wisdom in all matters. While learning wise and discreet behaviour is profitable for readers of any age, the focus of Proverbs is to instil these virtuous qualities into the younger generation, 1. 4. In fact, Solomon invokes ‘my son’ terminology some fifteen times in the first seven chapters to address his own children or possibly young pupils. After chapter 7 the phrases ‘wise son’ or ‘foolish son’ are repeatedly used to convey the same tenor. To this end, Proverbs provides a character sketch

of a spiritually mature person that has God’s approval – both young and old should aspire to it.

Because individual proverbs contain easy to understand sayings and are couched in a concise poetic format, memorization was encouraged, and retention enhanced. Frequent word-pictures throughout the book also assist us with understanding a particular proverb’s meaning and application. This ensures that all of God’s people will find Proverbs a valuable source of guidance in all of life’s affairs. It is noteworthy that the authors do not address the Jewish nation *per se*, but rather individuals who must make right choices daily. Thus, Solomon’s appeal is to ‘a wise man [someone who] will hear, and will increase learning’, 1. 5. We cannot force others to change their ways or correct their bad habits, but with God’s help each believer can become more Christ-like by yielding to God’s word.

The overall purpose of Proverbs is to teach God’s people godly character and wise conduct, so that they can avoid the pitfalls of sin and of foolish behaviour. If wisdom is learned, if prudence is gained, if godly character is shaped, and if divine counsel is heeded, believers will be able to live ‘skilfully’ before the Lord. As further explained later, the ‘fool’ in Proverbs is not a mentally challenged person, but someone who rejects divine knowledge and wisdom: ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding’, 9. 10. ‘The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God”’, Ps. 14. 1. A person who has no time nor respect for God is a fool, because he is morally and spiritually bankrupt and does not know it. Accordingly, in Proverbs, foolishness is closely linked with death, which normally speaks of the entire realm that conflicts with life, more than merely a single event that ends physical existence. May God’s people learn wisdom and avoid the deadly foolishness that Solomon warns us about in Proverbs.

## Divisions/Outline

The content of Proverbs is difficult

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and t

*Mrs Folly*

*Portraits of w*

BOOK OF PSALMS

## The strange woman

The pathway of the fool to her house

Her mouth

'The mouth of strange women is a deep pit;  
He that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein',  
Prov. 22. 14

Her lips

'For the lips of a strange woman drop as  
an honeycomb', Prov. 5. 3

Her foolishness

'A foolish woman is clamorous;  
she is simple, and knoweth nothing',  
Prov. 9. 13

Her wounds

'For she hath cast down many wounded:  
yea, many strong men have been slain by her.  
Her house is the way to hell', Prov. 7. 26, 27

'But king Solomon loved many  
strange women', 1 Kgs. 11. 1

Tree of knowledge  
'a tree to be desired  
to make one wise', Gen. 3. 6

## A FOOLISH SON

Simple  
Sinner  
Mocker  
Evil  
Stranger  
Sluggard

'A foolish son is the  
heaviness of his  
mother', 10. 1

CHR

'the power of God, and  
1 Cor. 1

'Then I was by him, as one  
and I was daily  
rejoicing always  
Prov. 8.

Worshipped in wisdo

Walking in wisdo

Words of wisdom – M

Works of wisdom

Wounds of wisdom

Wealth of His wis

Worthy of His wis

'In whom are hid all the treas

'Behold, a greater than Solo

## Old Testament outline

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

The 5 books  
of Moses

Joshua  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Samuel  
2 Samuel  
1 Kings  
2 Kings  
1 Chronicles  
2 Chronicles  
Ezra  
Nehemiah  
Esther

The 12 history books

Job  
Psalms  
Proverbs  
Ecclesiastes  
Song of Solomon

The 5 books  
of wisdom

Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Lamentations  
Ezekiel  
Daniel

The 5 major  
prophets

Hosea  
Joel  
Amos  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Micah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi

The 12 minor prophets

Learning from Ants, Prov. 6. 6

Ants

No guide  
No overseer  
No ruler  
Provides food  
Gathers food

Sluggard (Lazy)

Late, (How long, 6. 9)  
Sleepy, 6. 9  
Restless, 13. 4  
Poverty, 6. 11  
Hungry, 19. 15  
Beggars, 20. 4

Job - Wisdom for patience to suffer

Psalms - Wisdom to praise and sing

Proverbs - Wisdom from parents to sons

Ecclesiastes - Wisdom and its purpose under the sun

Song of Solomon - Wisdom and its place in marriage

## Wisdom fo

The doings

'Even a child is known by  
work be pure, and u  
Prov.

The diet o

'Train up a child in the  
when he is old, he wi  
Prov.

The discipline

'Withhold not correction  
thou beatest him with th  
Prov.

The delight brou

'He that begetteth a  
joy of him',

'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all m



**Key words:** wisdom, understanding, instruction, fool, better-than **Writer:** Solomon & others

the knowledge of the holy is understanding', Prov. 9. 10

Wisdom for today

Mrs Wisdom

WISDOM

the wisdom of God',  
24

brought up with him:  
his delight,  
before him',  
30

dom – Matt. 2. 11

m – Luke 2. 40

ark 6. 2; Matt. 7. 24

– Matt. 13. 54

– 1 Cor. 1. 23, 24

dom – Col. 2. 3

dom – Rev. 5. 12

asures of wisdom', Col. 2. 3

mon is here', Matt. 12. 42

## A WISE SON

Righteous  
Saints  
Sluggard  
Upright  
Prudent  
Lowly

'A wise son maketh  
a glad father', 10. 1



## The virtuous wife

The pillars of wisdom in her house

### Her pillars

'Wisdom hath builded her house,  
she hath hewn out her seven pillars',  
Prov. 9. 1

### Her price

'Her price is far above rubies',  
Prov. 31. 10

### Her principle

'The heart of her husband doth  
safely trust in her',  
Prov. 31. 11

### Her provision

'She looketh well to the ways of her household',  
Prov. 31. 27

### Her praise

'Let her own works praise her in the gates',  
Prov. 31. 31

'For all the city of my people doth know  
that thou art a virtuous woman', Ruth 3. 11



Tree of life

'She is a tree of life to them  
that lay hold upon her', Prov. 3. 18

BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

## Proverbs outline

## For parents

### of the child

y his doings, whether his  
whether it be right',  
20. 11

### f the child

way he should go: and  
ll not depart from it',  
22. 6

### e of the child

on from the child: for if  
he rod, he shall not die',  
23. 13

### ght by the child

wise child shall have  
Prov. 23. 24

### Portraits of wisdom – commandments for a son

Ch 1 – Wisdom and her purpose  
Ch 2 – Wisdom and her preservation  
Ch 3 – Wisdom and her path  
Ch 4 – Wisdom for parents  
Ch 5 – Wisdom is purity  
Ch 6 – Wisdom and prosperity  
Ch 7 – Wisdom and its protection  
Ch 8 – Wisdom and her perfections  
Ch 9 – Wisdom and her pillars

### Proverbs of wisdom – chosen by Solomon

Ch 10 – A wise son maketh a glad father  
Ch 11 – The importance of being balanced  
Ch 12 – A love for instruction  
Ch 13 – Listen to the instructions  
Ch 14 – Building with the instructions  
Ch 15 – Handling a matter wisely  
Ch 16 – Pride goeth before destruction  
Ch 17 – Children's children are the crown of old men  
Ch 18 – The name of the Lord is a strong tower

Ch 19 – Wealth maketh many friends  
Ch 20 – Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging  
Ch 21 – Every way of a man is right in his own eyes

### Words of the wise (22. 17)

Ch 22 – Train up a child in the way he should go  
Ch 23 – Buy the truth, and sell it not;  
Ch 24 – The thought of foolishness is sin

### Proverbs of Solomon – copied by King Hezekiah

Ch 25 – A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold  
Ch 26 – The words of a talebearer are as wounds  
Ch 27 – Boast not thyself of tomorrow  
Ch 28 – He that covereth his sin shall not prosper  
Ch 29 – He that being often reproved

### Prophecy of Agur communicated by a son

Ch 30 – Every word of God is pure

### Prophecy of the Queen mother – constraining her son

Ch 31 – Who can find a virtuous woman

men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him', Jas. 1. 5

to classify because of the wide range of subjects addressed, often within the same chapter. C. I. SCOFIELD suggests four main topical divisions for Proverbs:

- 1 Fatherly exhortations addressed mainly to the young, Prov. 1-9.
- 2 Wisdom and the fear of God contrasted with folly and sin, Prov. 10-24.
- 3 Proverbs of Solomon selected by the men of Hezekiah, Prov. 25-29.
- 4 Supplementary Proverbs by Agur and Lemuel, Prov. 30, 31.<sup>1</sup>

Some, like WILLIAM MACDONALD, have divided Proverbs according to authorship and themes:

1. Introduction, Prov. 1. 1-7.
2. Proverbs of Solomon on wisdom and folly, Prov. 1. 8 – 9. 18.
3. Proverbs of Solomon on practical morality, Prov. 10. 1 – 22. 16.
4. Proverbs of wise men, Prov. 22. 17 – 24. 34.
5. Proverbs of Solomon compiled by Hezekiah's men, Prov. 25-29.
6. The words of Agur, Prov. 30.
7. The words King Lemuel's mother taught him, Prov. 31. 1-9.
8. The ideal wife and mother, Prov. 31. 10-31.<sup>2</sup>

Irrespective of how it might be outlined, Proverbs addresses a host of beneficial topics: sound business practices, disciplined living, generosity, controlling the tongue, avoiding gossip, rearing children, moral purity, handling peer pressure, managing anger, maintaining a good marriage, self-control, greed, social relationships, picking good friends, substance abuse, grief, lying, laziness, ignorance, death, anxiety, and many more. If we want to be successful in life, from the eternal perspective, we need to read, understand, and practise the wisdom imparted in Proverbs.

## Authorship

According to the text and the Hebrew superscripts, Solomon, a man impressively gifted with divine wisdom, 1 Kgs. 4. 29-34, is the main author of Proverbs, Prov. 1. 1; 10. 1; 25. 1. According to 1 Kings chapter 4 verse 32 Solomon uttered some 3,000 proverbs and wrote

1,005 songs. Solomon was a prolific writer, but the Lord has determined to preserve only a small portion of Solomon's literary works for our benefit, perhaps because he did not walk with the Lord in his autumn years.

The writers of Proverbs chapter 22 verse 17 to chapter 24 verse 34 are identified as 'the wise', 22. 17; 24. 23. Perhaps these men were known for their profound wisdom prior to Solomon's time and he therefore chose to include some of their writings with his own. Many of the sayings in this section are warnings, i.e., 'do not' and require two to four lines to complete the thought. The proverbs contained in chapters 25-29 were written by Solomon but compiled nearly three centuries later by men of Hezekiah, 25. 1. Agur and Lemuel contributed Proverbs chapters 30 and 31 respectively; their identities are unknown. Given their names, they are not likely to be of Jewish descent; furthermore, Lemuel is referred to as a king, 31. 1, and there is no Jewish record of such a man ruling in Israel. Agur and Lemuel may have been alternative names for Solomon, but this seems unlikely. The acrostic poetry construction of Proverbs chapter 31 verses 10-31 is a distinct stylistic change from the previous nine verses, which were written by Lemuel. This suggests that an unknown author may have penned that portion of the text at a later date.

## Date and Historical Setting

Since Solomon reigned as Israel's king from 971 to 932 BC, his literary works would have been composed during that time. The final compilation, assuming the men of Hezekiah completed the arrangement, would have been about 700 BC. SID BUZZELL suggests that 'Solomon wrote the Song of Songs in his early adult years, Proverbs in his middle years, and Ecclesiastes near the end of his life as he reflected on his experiences'.<sup>3</sup> This seems reasonable, as several early chapters in Proverbs are addressed to his son of a marriageable age, and Ecclesiastes is his reflection on a full life of experiences and

disappointments. Regardless of authorship or the timing of compilation, the Spirit of God has inspired and maintained a collection of priceless wisdom for humanity to benefit from – Proverbs is a book of heavenly guidance for earthly living.

## Observation

Unlike Ecclesiastes, Proverbs is occupied with the wider subject of wisdom, which is centred in the fear of the Lord, not just with the nature of man as he is. It is observed that when Solomon refers to God in Proverbs, he uses 'Jehovah' as a rule, rather than the less personal term of 'God', which is rarely found in the book, and then mostly as a modifier. However, in Ecclesiastes, Solomon uses the term 'God' almost exclusively, until he speaks of the fear of Jehovah at the end. Jehovah supplies for His covenant people the very wisdom they require to maintain fellowship with Him; what revelation is needed is supplied. The secular axiom proclaims, 'Ignorance is bliss', but Proverbs declares that it is foolish to live in wilful ignorance. This highlights the wonderful benefit of studying and heeding Proverbs – joyful communion with the Lord and enjoyment of His blessing!

## Endnotes

- 1 C. I. SCOFIELD, *The New Scofield Study Bible, KJV*, Oxford University Press, 1967, pg. 672.
- 2 WILLIAM MACDONALD, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, pg. 791.
- 3 SID BUZZELL, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and Roy Zuck, Victor Books, 1986, pg. 902.



# Henry Alford, biblical scholar and polymath (1810-1871)

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

Henry Alford was born in the city of London on 10 October 1810. Sadly, his mother died giving birth to him, and so he spent much of his formative years living with relations in Somerset. His father, who was an evangelical clergyman, came from a long line of evangelical ministers. At the time of Henry's birth, Britain was still engaged in the Napoleonic Wars, and much of the population found itself in financial difficulties.

Henry was somewhat delicate as a child, but as a man he exhibited considerable mental ability and travelled extensively both in England and in other parts of the world. He was educated at a number of private schools, and Betjeman wrote of Alford that, 'he was another very clever man – in fact, he wrote Latin odes and a history of the Jews before he was ten'.<sup>1</sup> He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1829, and because of his impoverished state he secured the Bell Scholarship in 1831.<sup>2</sup> He graduated in classics and as a wrangler<sup>3</sup> in January 1832, and was ordained in 1833, serving as a curate in his father's parish near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. The following year he was elected to a fellowship at Trinity College, and then in 1835 he accepted the incumbency of Wymeswold in Leicestershire. It was at this time that he married his cousin Fanny Alford whom he had known from his stay with her family in Somerset. They had four children, two boys and two girls, but both boys died in childbirth. He spent eighteen years at Wymeswold, and apart from his demanding parish duties and giving private tuition for seven hours a day, he still found time to produce a new edition of the Greek New Testament with a critical commentary on the Greek text, about which SPURGEON wrote, 'He [Alford] is, for the present at any rate, indispensable to the student of the original'.<sup>4</sup>

His first volume was published in 1849 and the fourth and final instalment in 1861. According to MOYER, the edition was 'made distinguished by introducing English readers to German learning of Olshausen, Stier, Meyer and Tischendorf'.<sup>5</sup> His

digest of German New Testament exegesis has permanent value'.<sup>6</sup> The commentary marked a change in approach to biblical exegesis in that it moved away from the typical homiletic commentary of the past, and gave greater insight into the nuances of the language and historical development of the New Testament. The commentary can be downloaded free of charge today from the Internet and is well worth mining for helpful insights into the Greek text.

Later, in 1869, Alford issued a revision of the English Authorised Version (KJV) of the Bible with the express 'hope that his work might speedily be rendered useless by the setting up of a Royal Commission to revise the AV'.<sup>7</sup> That hope came more quickly than he anticipated and resulted in the Revised Version of 1881 and 1885.

Not only was Alford a biblical scholar but he was an accomplished poet, having spent time at Cambridge in the company of, among others, Alfred



(later Lord) Tennyson, and Christopher Wordsworth. His first collection of poems was published before he was twenty-two years of age, and later he edited the works of the metaphysical poet John Donne. He wrote hymns, including his most famous and enduring hymn, 'Come, Ye Thankful People, Come', which he based on two parables, one recorded in Matthew chapter 13 verses 24 to 30, and the other in Mark chapter 4 verses 26 to 29. Even more remarkable was the fact that despite all his other commitments he found time to illustrate picture-books, including 'The Riviera' which he published in 1870. The book shows what a talented artist he was and includes pen and pencil sketches from Cannes to Genoa.<sup>8</sup> In March 1857, Lord Palmerston advanced him to the deanery of Canterbury, where he lived until his death in 1871.

We have no record of a conversion, but most historians describe Henry Alford as having a strong evangelical faith, who had shaken off the clericalist movement holding firmly to a fundamental Protestant position. He was much revered by his contemporaries, not only because of his erudition, but also on account of his amiable character. The later discovery of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament would mean further revisions to the Greek New Testament by many others, including his great friend and fellow scholar S. P. Tregelles. Nevertheless, his contribution as a textual scholar should not be underestimated. Others continue to enter into his labours, John 4. 37.

## Endnotes

- 1 *Sweet Songs of Zion*, pg. 141
- 2 The Bell Scholarship was created to assist impoverished clergymen of the Church of England to meet the costs of sending their sons to Cambridge University.
- 3 A 'Wrangler' at Cambridge University is an undergraduate who gains a first-class honours degree in Mathematics.
- 4 *Commenting and Commentaries*, pg. 141
- 5 Tischendorf was the man who discovered the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus in 1849.
- 6 *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, pg. 9.
- 7 F. F. BRUCE, *History of the Bible in English*, Lutterworth Press, pg. 131.
- 8 The book has been digitized by Google from the library of New York Public Library and uploaded to the Internet Archive.

# ASPECTS OF CALVARY

## The sufferings of Christ in 1 Peter 4

By **STEPHEN FELLOWES** Skibbereen, Ireland

Even a cursory reading of Peter's first Epistle would leave the reader in no doubt that suffering and persecution are key themes of the letter. Whether that be the sufferings of Christ, or the sufferings of the Christian, the whole Epistle is permeated with the subject, making it a masterpiece of persecution literature. Amongst other things, Peter speaks of the Christian both as a stranger and a sufferer in the world; to the stranger Peter will unfold the glory of the future inheritance, and to the sufferer, as a saint, he will speak of the sufferings of Christ.

Our exercise is to trace one reference to the sufferings of Christ in each of the five chapters.

### The prediction of His sufferings, 1. 11

After the opening salutation, vv. 1, 2, Peter presents a beautiful paragraph of scripture which continues right through to verse 12. The theme of this paragraph is **salvation**. Salvation is mentioned three times and is connected with the three persons of the Godhead, vv. 5, 9, 10. The Father is connected with the **prospect** of salvation, for which we are being kept by divine power, vv. 3-5; the Son is linked with the **present pathway** associated with salvation, a pathway wherein we suffer but are sustained by having our hearts fixed upon one 'whom having not seen', we love, vv. 6-9. The Holy Spirit of God is associated with both the **prophecy** and the **preaching** of salvation, vv. 10-12.

The prophets 'searched diligently', v. 10, into this great salvation, seeking to discover the full import of their prophecies in relation to their circumstances and their times, v. 11. It was 'the Spirit of Christ' who was the source of their prophecies. This is a reference to the person of the Holy Spirit, but it is worded in such a way, because Christ was the One of whom they testified.

The two great subjects of their prophesying were 'the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow', v. 11. The fact that plural words are used, 'sufferings' and 'glories', emphasizes the fullness of both experiences.

How vast and full are the Old Testament prophecies as to the sufferings of Christ! Perhaps our minds automatically think of Psalm 22, or of Isaiah 53, but no matter where we turn, we find that God had foretold that sufferings were purposed for Christ, but a fullness of glory would follow. This would surely be an encouragement to suffering saints, 5. 10!

### The example of His sufferings, 2. 21

This verse brings before us the Lord's sufferings from an entirely different standpoint. Here we have the sufferings of the Saviour as one who endured the unjust treatment of men.

Peter has just reminded his readers that doing what is right before God can bring upon you unrighteous treatment, vv. 19, 20. So, to encourage and stimulate saints who are found in such circumstances, he points us to Christ. KELLY has helpfully noted that 'the saints need an object from God to form our souls and fashion our

ways'.<sup>1</sup> The perfect object is always His Son; whether it is humility, Phil. 2, benevolence, 2 Cor. 8, love, Eph. 5, or anything else – Christ is the perfect example.

The word 'example', v. 21, translates the Greek word *hupogrammos*, literally meaning 'an under-writing'. Just as a teacher would write words at the top of the page for the student to copy, so the saint amidst sufferings is exhorted to imitate Christ's pattern. We follow the pathway marked out by His steps; we can never follow **in** His steps absolutely, because He was sinless and perfect, v. 22. In His walk, words and waiting on God, He was impeccable, v. 23. By God's grace we follow to the best of our ability.

### The result of His sufferings, 3. 18

Once again Peter takes up the subject of suffering; firstly, that of the Christian, vv. 13-17, then of Christ, vv. 18-22. They are connected because the Christian is warned about the importance of suffering 'for well doing, [rather] than for evil doing', v. 17, and then Peter directs them to Christ's once-for-all suffering for sins, v. 18. It is never to be expected that the believer suffers for sins; all the suffering for sins has been experienced by Christ. Although we are dealing here with Christ's sufferings on the cross, or His atoning sufferings as we often call them, they are brought in here in a practical sense.

The verse has been a happy hunting ground for gospel preachers, packing into a handful of words a vast array of precious truth, namely, propitiation, substitution, reconciliation, crucifixion and resurrection.

Christ's sufferings were once-for-all, never needing to be repeated, and glorious in their sufficiency. Our thoughts must go to those momentous words 'but now once in the end of the world [age] hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself', Heb. 9. 26. That these sufferings were 'for sins' or 'concerning sins', implies that it is not His exemplary sufferings that are in view. In His death He dealt head-on with the great question of



human sins, and only He could deal with them. Thus, we are reminded of His moral fitness to suffer for sins when we read of Him as ‘the just’. He, the perfectly righteous One, who alone had the competency to deal with our sins, was ‘manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin’, 1 John 3. 5. He took our place, and in doing so He brought us to God. We often think of being brought to heaven at the end of life’s journey, but here Peter tells us that the purpose of Christ’s sufferings was to bring a people to God in the here and now, with all that it means to enjoy all the blessedness that is involved in fellowship with God, who is now our Father.

#### **The power of His sufferings, 4. 1**

I have termed this verse ‘the power of His sufferings’ because I think the passage is designed to empower the Christian in the face of suffering by keeping Christ’s perfect example before us. KELLY is again worth quoting when he describes this as ‘the practical power of His sufferings to give power against sin day by day’.<sup>2</sup> ‘Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh’, directs us back to chapter

3 verse 18 where we read that He suffered in the flesh in dealing with our sins. But the key thing to grasp is that He had the mind to do so; in other words, He was resolved to do the will of God even though that meant suffering on the cross. A picture of this is seen in the placing of the head of the bullock of the burnt offering upon the altar of burnt offering, Lev. 1. 8, showing us that there was one whose every thought was for God’s glory, and whose will was subject to the will of God.

We are to equip ourselves with the same mind as Christ and be prepared to suffer in the flesh in seeking to live for God. Philippians chapter 2 presents the mind of Christ in relation to humility, whereas here, in 1 Peter, we see the mind of Christ in His resolve to do God’s will. We should emulate both the humility and resolve of Christ. By doing this we prove that we have ‘ceased from sin’, that is, our life is no longer dominated by it. Its power was broken at conversion, and unlike the seed on the stony ground, Matt. 13. 20, 21, we endure the tests and give evidence of our genuineness.

#### **The witness of His sufferings, 5. 1**

When Peter writes this Epistle, he writes from a four-fold standpoint. First, he writes as ‘an apostle of Jesus Christ’ and as such he speaks as one with divinely delegated authority, 1. 1. He then reminds us in chapter 5 verse 1, that he also writes as ‘an elder’, marked by spiritual maturity in the things of God. Furthermore, Peter is ‘a partaker’ of the coming glory of Christ in which all His saints will share. Lastly, he writes as ‘a witness’ of Christ’s sufferings. There are different views as to the significance of this expression which we cannot delve into now but, without being dogmatic, we take it in the simplest sense, that Peter is reminding the saints that he was an actual eyewitness of the Saviour’s sufferings.

These sufferings are very comprehensive; we cannot be sure how much of the crucifixion Peter witnessed, but he was there in the Garden alongside John and James as one of the privileged trio. Even though withdrawn from Christ, he must have witnessed something of His sorrow, and likewise in the High Priest’s judgement hall where ‘Peter . . . went in . . . to see the end’, Matt. 26. 58. In addition to this, the Lord’s sorrows through His life at the rejection and unbelief of the nation must surely have left a great impression upon the mind of Peter. He could not have spent so much time with Christ and not have beheld His grief and anguish during His public ministry. Peter is stressing his fitness to exhort the believers to emulate Christ in His sufferings, because he himself was a witness of those sufferings.

In closing, may we by God’s grace follow the pathway of the suffering Saviour, whose sufferings for our sins have saved our souls, and whose sufferings for righteousness have set us an example.

#### **Endnotes**

- 1 Can be consulted at <https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/kelly/2Newtest/1peter.html#a2>.
- 2 *ibid*.



# THINGS THAT CONCERN US PHILIPPIANS

By **FRED WHITELOCK** Warrington, England

2

## **Your furtherance [continuance, advancement, profit], 1. 25**

The apostle is expressing a deep, heart-felt desire for the saints at Philippi for their spiritual progress. Thus, his confidence is a conviction deep in his soul, knowing that God is at work amongst his children, 1. 6. There are two aspects to this desire. First, 'what is taught', and second, 'what is received or heard'.

Faith is that which is built upon the word of God and therein is faith not only established but also built upon. The word of God, read and taught, are two main starting points in the building up of the believer and this brings me to the question as to how much I give myself to reading and being allowed to be taught with the help of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it is essential that those who teach, are themselves established in the word of God and free from error. Additionally, as a child of God I must be teachable, as Peter emphasizes, 'desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby', 1 Pet. 2. 2, meaning that I should have an appetite for the word of God, and that I will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, seek to be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only, 'deceiving your own selves', Jas. 1. 22. This does not mean that we should accept everything that a speaker might seek to teach, but we should verify his teaching to ensure it is in accord with the word of God. This was the practice of the early church, 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so', Acts 17. 11.

Sadly, many believers have not applied themselves to this essential point and many are lacking in truth, insomuch that they are much like the saints at Corinth, of whom Paul had to say, 'And I, brethren, could not

speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?' 1 Cor. 3. 1-4.

Equally, there are those whom God has raised up to teach, and those who are being raised for that purpose, who themselves are thus exhorted in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 15, 'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth'.

Coupled with this, is the vital purpose of **edifying, exhorting and encouraging** the saints in their faith.

- 'How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying', 1 Cor. 14. 26.
- 'Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying', 2 Cor. 12. 19.
- 'From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love', Eph. 4. 16.
- 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers', Eph. 4. 29.

Interestingly, the apostle uses the same word as he thinks of his own

circumstances and the gospel, in spite of him being in prison, 'But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the **furtherance** of the gospel', Phil. 1. 12. Here, he considers the progress of the gospel, as others have taken up the baton, and rejoices in the fact. He also gives encouragement to Timothy, that he would 'give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine . . . that thy profiting may appear to all', 1 Tim. 4. 13-15.

## **Your rejoicing [cheerfulness, glorying, boasting], v. 26**

This Epistle is characteristically a letter of joy. 'Joy' is mentioned six times, 'rejoice', ten times and 'rejoicing', once. Primarily, it is appreciation of the Lord, and then of others. This is evident in chapter 2 where the apostle presents the Lord as the supreme example, followed by Timothy and Epaphroditus. Noticeable at the commencement of this chapter is the statement, 'Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same [kind of] love, being of one accord, of one mind', v. 2. The challenge presented is, do I have that same delight and joy for **all** my brethren and sisters in the Lord, or do I hold some animosity against them? How lovely when I see those who are close to me, and when I think of family or friends; how much more should it be towards those who are of the spiritual family. The coming of Titus and the progress of the saints at Corinth caused great rejoicing to the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. 7. 6, 7.<sup>1</sup> In the context of Philippians chapter 1 verse 26, there is not only the joy the saints in Philippi would have when Paul arrived at the assembly, more than that, it was the joy they would have to see their prayers answered.

What a day it was when the Lord, after His resurrection, appeared to His disciples and we read those lovely words, 'Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord', John 20. 20. How humbling it is to consider the words, 'who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God', Heb. 12. 2. Think again of the



words He spoke to His own ere He went to the cross, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, that ye

love one another, as I have loved you', John 15. 10-12.

I trust that every believer is waiting for that day when our blessed redeemer will appear in the clouds to catch us away to glory. What rejoicing there will be when we see Him as He is!



## Your conversation [citizenship, conduct], v. 27

The word 'conversation' means 'manner of life', from which we derive the idea of 'conduct' from the Greek word *politeuesthe* referring to living as a citizen. Therefore, we see that 'conduct' is linked with the principle of 'citizenship', meaning that for those who belong to a king or lord, their conduct must be in line with his edict.

There are a few examples in scripture which are of help to us in this matter.

The first thing we realize is that though we live in this world, our state and standing is in heaven. This is what the Apostle Paul is referring to when he speaks of those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, as being 'no more strangers and foreigners, but **fellowcitizens with the saints**, and of the household of God', Eph. 2. 19. Our blessed Lord Himself comforted His disciples with this assurance, 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you', John 14. 2. This is further underlined in Hebrews where the apostle speaks of the heroes of faith that 'now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city', Heb. 11. 16.

Paul himself spoke of his own conduct as he stood before the council and said, 'Men and brethren, **I have lived** in all good conscience before God until this day', Acts 23. 1. Therefore, we are exhorted, 'as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of **conversation**', 1 Pet. 1. 15.

Underlining this in our Epistle, the apostle reminds saints of their responsibility, especially since our blessed Lord is coming soon, 'For our **conversation** is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ', Phil. 3. 20.

### Endnote

- 1 For other examples see: Phil. 4. 10; 2 John 4; 3 John 3.

# BALAAM

## Numbers 22. 36 to 23. 12

3

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

### God has separated them

‘For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations’, 23. 9.<sup>1</sup> They were an elect people whom God had separated unto Himself. Though, at the moment, Israel nationally has been set aside in divine purpose and the people dispersed amongst the Gentile nations, nevertheless they still retain their Jewish identity, distinct from all other peoples.

While the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites and the other ancient tribes frequently mentioned in the Old Testament have been absorbed into the Gentile nations, the Jews remain distinct:

- **A people loved and chosen by God;** ‘the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people’, Deut. 10. 15.
- **A people for His own possession;** ‘the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth’, Deut. 14. 2. And, we must not forget, it was entirely due to divine grace.

What of believers today? We have been called with a heavenly calling and **severed from the present course of the world;** ‘Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father’, Gal. 1. 3, 4. Writing to Titus, Paul says, Christ ‘gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself **a peculiar people**, zealous of good works’, Titus 2. 14. But, though by divine calling separated from the nations,

sadly, in their subsequent history the children of Israel failed to live true to their calling. Are we living true to ours? ‘Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you’, 2 Cor. 6. 17.

### God has multiplied them

‘Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?’ 23. 10. If a ‘fourth part’ is so many, what must the whole camp be like? Balaam says this after all the efforts of Pharaoh to destroy them and after a generation had fallen in the wilderness because of unbelief. The way they had multiplied bore testimony to the grace and faithfulness of God. In Genesis chapter 13 verse 16, the Lord gave this promise to Abram, ‘I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered’. In the early chapters of Acts and the days following Pentecost, we see a similar numerical increase. Prior to Pentecost, ‘Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples . . . (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty)’, Acts 1. 15. Following Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit, we are told, ‘in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied’; ‘the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith’, Acts 6. 1, 7. Though unlikely we are witnessing such growth today, nevertheless the Lord said, ‘I will build my church’ and that work is progressing, Matt. 16. 18.

### God will not forsake them

Far from cursing them, Balaam wished to be like them, ‘Let me die the death of the righteous,

and let my last end be like his!’ 23. 10. Commenting on the phrase ‘the death of the righteous’, EDERSHEIM, quoting a German commentator, wrote, ‘The pious Israelite could look back with calm satisfaction in the hour of his death, upon a life rich in proofs of the blessing, forgiving, protecting, delivering, saving, mercy of God . . . knew that he would carry them with him as an inalienable possession, a light in the darkness of Sheol’.<sup>2</sup> Today, we have the added benefit of New Testament teaching and the assurance that for the believer, ‘to be absent from the body’ is to ‘be present with the Lord’, 2 Cor. 5. 8.

Balaam didn’t just speak about the death of the righteous but added, ‘let my last end, be like his’. It seems that he is looking on to their final, ultimate destiny, their future glory, when, despite their present position, Israel will be the head of the nations and not the tail, Deut. 28. 13.<sup>3</sup> But what glory are we marked out for? To be with Christ, to be like Christ, and to behold His glory.<sup>4</sup> Balaam, seeing their position, blessings and destiny, wished to be like them. Do we live in such a way that others might wish to possess what we have found in Christ?

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Moses would later say, ‘When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye’, Deut. 32. 8-10.
- <sup>2</sup> ALFRED EDERSHEIM, *Bible History*, Vol. 3, pg. 26.
- <sup>3</sup> The Lord says, ‘Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth’, Zeph. 3. 19, 20.
- <sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. 4. 17; 1 John 3. 2; John 17. 24.



# SOUTH AFRICA

By **RODNEY BROWN** Bellville, South Africa

Evangelical missionary work in South Africa goes back to 1737 when George Schmidt, a Moravian missionary, came to the country. He settled in a town now known as Genadendal, in the Western Cape. Eventually he had to leave due to opposition when he baptized believers. The problem seemed to be on two fronts. First, this caused an upheaval among the Colonialists in the Cape, as, politically, it was not clear whether or not converts to Christianity from the indigenous population should be accorded the same civil and political rights as the Colonists. Second, the 'Council of Policy' forbade such baptisms by Schmidt, citing the excuse that he was not an ordained minister. In 1744, Schmidt left the Cape for Holland to be ordained, but he never returned.

Assembly work commenced around 1850, first by brethren in business and later by full-time commended workers. Over the years the work has extended to many areas of the country, although there are still provinces with no assembly testimony. The assemblies vary greatly in size. Sadly, due to numbers dwindling away, some assemblies have closed. A few assemblies in the Western Cape, where a reasonable number are in fellowship, have some brethren who go into rural districts each weekend to support small assemblies, as part of the 'Evangelical Enterprise'. They use a minibus and leave two or three of the visiting brethren at different locations and then fetch them *en route* home on Sunday.

Emmaus Correspondence International operates in South Africa in five languages: Afrikaans, English, Zulu, Xhosa and Ethiopian Amharic. At present, there are about 22,500 students registered in the English school and eighty-four percent of these are active. The Zulu school has about 2,000 students. The new Afrikaans school is growing and showing very good potential. At present, it has just over 400 students. The Xhosa Emmaus work is struggling but has good prospects with new initiatives put in place. The Amharic work is growing, having seen over 300 students achieve their diplomas in the last three years (June 2019).

Generally speaking, there is religious tolerance in South Africa, and there are quite a number of religions within the

country. In a 2015 census, eighty-six percent of the population claimed to be of the 'Christian' religion. There is relative freedom to evangelize in church buildings, public halls, schools, prisons, care institutions and some work places. There are also a few Christian radio stations, Christian book shops, with organizations and publishers producing evangelistic literature in many languages. Open air preaching is carried on in many communities and very often people are willing to listen to the messages and receive literature. It has been noted that, in general, there are more unbelievers willing to listen to the gospel in the open air, than would attend a meeting in a hall. Many people amongst the less affluent communities see it as an honour to welcome Christians into their homes to preach the gospel.

Due to the unstable political situations in some other African countries, refugees have flooded into South Africa although they have not always found the better life they sought. In recent years, some South Africans have blamed foreign Africans for taking local houses and jobs (as many of these refugees find casual employment) and have made them unwelcome in their communities. Christians have taken the opportunity to befriend them and they are responsive and willing to accept literature in their home languages.

Alcohol and substance abuse are major problems. In many township

areas, gangs operate openly, and this often leads to indiscriminate injury and death. Violent crime is widespread, as reflected in the statistics for 2016/2017, when the murder rate was over fifty persons a day countrywide. Sexual immorality and the disintegration of the family unit have led to much parental neglect, abuse of many kinds and dysfunctional homes. It is good to remember that evangelical believers have the answer to this crisis in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many children in these circumstances have heard the gospel through outreaches, and it is so good to see God's power displayed in transformed lives.

Many South Africans have grown up with some knowledge of the gospel. Sadly, many who have professed faith in Christ have not continued in the faith, calling themselves 'backsliders'. This may be due, in part, to some preachers pressurizing people to make a profession, without a clear understanding of the message. On the other hand, it has been very encouraging to follow genuine cases of conversion. It is good to visit assemblies where new believers have come into fellowship and to listen to their intelligent participation. It has been wonderful to hear young converts relating clearly how much God has changed their lives. It is so encouraging to see these believers so enthusiastic in their service for the Lord.

Please pray that the government might continue to be sympathetic to gospel preaching and that many doors might remain open for Christians to take the message to the people. Pray for the gospel to be preached soundly, and for genuine repentance and conversion. Pray that workers would be called and sent into areas where there is very little evangelistic testimony. Pray that believers would remain faithful to the Lord, and not succumb to temptation. Pray that Christians would have an appetite for the scriptures and that they will be strengthened in the faith.

As we think of the future, we are reminded that we do not know how long we have left to serve the Lord. We must use the opportunities available to us, so that we, with many others, will be ready to meet Him when He comes again.

# What does the Bible tell us about the future

## The final days of the tribulation and the two witnesses

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

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The previous part of this study considered the 144,000. A great wonder appears in heaven and, in Revelation chapter 12 verses 1 and 2, we have a woman in celestial purpose. Another wonder occurs in verses 3 to 6, now she is seen in satanic conflict. We see the 144,000 before the tribulation sealed, in chapter 7, and after the tribulation walking with the Lamb, chapter 14. Does the scene of chapter 12 also refer to them during the tribulation? The woman is evidently some aspect of Israel in governmental authority. This is what she is in divine purpose, for this is a wonder in heaven; her position during the tribulation is vastly different. She cries travailing in birth having a man child in her womb. This man child is to rule all nations. I suggest that the nation is preparing to govern but, when the devil sees this, he makes an attack to eliminate the purpose of God for he has his man ready to come forth and take his place in chapter 13.

Because of this, nearly all expositors assume this man child must be the Lord Jesus; but we are in prophecy, not history, and the arguments set forth to make this Christ are both feeble and out of character with Him. The Lord always confronted the devil and defeated Him completely. In the man child being caught up to God and His throne we see that the purpose of God is not cancelled because of the devil's attacks, but the purpose of God for Israel is now linked with the man on the throne, who will shortly come in power to reign. At this point the devil turns his attention to the woman, who flees into her place in the wilderness, where she is nourished for a 'time, and times, and half a time'. This being the second half of the tribulation, the tribulation is great. Nothing can harm her as the Lord preserves her, just like the 144,000 at that time. Now, the devil turns his attention to the remnant of her seed in verse 17, and these are evidently the rest of Israel, making a very definite distinction between the woman

and others in the nation. This is something to ponder.

Chapters 11 to 13 bring before us events that will take place during the second half of the tribulation. In chapter 11 there are two witnesses; in chapter 12, two wonders; and in chapter 13, two wild beasts.

### **We are concerned with the two witnesses of chapter 11**

The chapter begins with two mourning prophets and ends with a majestic Christ. It is surprising that, in the midst of the reign of the man of sin, God would manifest that what is owned by Him is left out of the measuring of the city. The city is Jerusalem, and what belongs to God, the temple, is reserved for Him even when the Antichrist rules, but the city is trodden under foot in complete subjugation, even during this time of the ascendancy of the man of sin when Satan seems to have gained his desire. Once having ruled the world from Babylon he now has his man in the place that supremely belongs to God, Jerusalem. It is

something to know that during the days of this defiance, God is still going to have His witnesses in the midst of satanic darkness. It is the clear teaching of the word of God that God is going to have a witness at the time that Jerusalem is trodden down despite the fact that the trinity of evil seems to be impregnable, and that there will be two who will stand against them during this period of time, and they can do nothing against them. This is not unusual when God is dealing with the nation. Did He not have a Moses in the courts of Pharaoh, and an Elijah that opposed Ahab in days of gross idolatry? There are those who insist that this number is not the real number, as if God does not know this fact, and has written things for our imagination to toy with. Again, there are many who will not accept that these are two in number, and follow Kelly, who advocates that two is the number of testimony, and can be any number – some make this all who bear testimony throughout the tribulation period.<sup>1</sup> Once again, the period is specified, being forty-two months, in other words, 1,260 days, vv. 2, 3. This time period corresponds with the second half of the tribulation and limits the testimony of the two witnesses to that time. Is it not an amazing thing, when we know so much of the awesome power of the Antichrist, that these will stand against him, and he can do nothing to stop their witness for God? Some like Hoste, Newberry and Ironside, make the testimony of the two witnesses to be in the first half of the tribulation. The fact that the time factor that is mentioned in the earlier verses is always linked with the second half of the tribulation settles the matter.

Many have sought to identify who these witnesses are. The plain fact is we are not told who they are; if God wanted us to know He would have revealed it. When scripture is silent it is not for us to go into the realms of speculation. There are features of events carried out in a former day that have caused some to grasp at straws as they make their assumptions.

We see the great power that the Lord



has invested them with when they can bring 'fire that proceedeth out of their mouth' which of course is Elijah-like, causing some to assume this is Elijah, who in Malachi chapter 4 is said to return at this time. This fire is to consume those who would seek to hurt them. Also, like Elijah, they have power to shut up heaven that it rain not, and like Moses they can turn the waters into blood. I suppose this is what would cause some to put in names where scripture is silent. Others have suggested Enoch as one who is before us, but as he was in the antediluvian period, before Abraham was called out to be the father of the nation and, as this is dealing with Israel in tribulation days, it is hardly likely that God would bring him back to earth to die, especially when he was translated that he should not see death, Heb. 11. 5, and he had no connection with the nation at all.

These two witnesses are impregnable during these 1,260 days. It is evident that the Beast of Revelation chapter 13 will be doing his utmost to eliminate them and their testimony. The fact that they are clothed in sackcloth speaks of the grief that marks them as they feel in their souls the apostasy that has gripped Israel, that the claims of God are not only set aside, but deliberately flouted. John the Baptist was arrayed in the same as he preached repentance; there is no such preaching here, all is too far gone.

They are said to be the two olive trees; the olive brings before us the blessing that God has bestowed upon the nation, Rom. 11. 16-24. There is still hope for some but there are few at this time who will know it. They are also said to be two candlesticks; these would again speak of the testimony that the Lord has put into their hands in Jerusalem's darkest hour. They are

also said to be standing before the God of the whole earth. I recall our very good brother JOHN RIDDLE bringing before us in ministry that this term simply means, '**readiness to serve**'. These are certainly ready to serve at this time. The days before us are when men will claim despotic rights to the earth, but we are reminded that it still belongs to God who is 'the God of the earth'.

We now see the torments that they will bring upon men during their ministry. Fire, and waters turned to blood and all plagues will have an effect upon those who oppose God in Jerusalem at that time. Their testimony is not to last until the final day of the tribulation, nor until the Lord comes, though that is but a few days away. The beast will have his mastery over them when their service for God has come to an end. Having withstood the Beast for 1,260 days now he is to make war against them. It seems that a battle will take place, but, unlike that of chapter 19 where the Lord is supreme, the witnesses are killed. They are not allowed to be buried as the world rejoices over them and, as if it is another Christmas or birthday, they send presents and make a party out of it. Such are they who have rejected all that is of God and rejoice when His word is silenced. Like their Lord, they lie but for three-and-a-half days, when the spirit of life returns to them and a positive display of it is seen when they stand on their feet. The world will witness that there is a resurrection and also a rapture. For if it was only the disciples who saw the Lord ascend into heaven the people of the city will witness the power of God in His vindication of His servants. God deals with this unruly mob and an earthquake sees 7,000 of them slain. God is both glorified and vindicated in this.

We listen for the same voice, 'Come up hither!'

#### Endnote

- 1 If the two witnesses are any number of people as KELLY asserts, can one imagine them all being killed, and then rising before the people, before being raptured?





# Assembly Testimony in CUBA

By **ASHLEY MILNE** Surrey, British Columbia, Canada

The following is a brief history of the start of the work of the Lord in Cuba together with the current status of the assembly testimony in this country.

Last October and November, I once again had the opportunity to visit some of the assemblies in Western Cuba. It had been four-and-a-half years since the home call of my dear wife Jean, while on a visit there in March 2015. Accompanied by my grandson Austin, we attended a conference in Pinar del Rio, where about 150 believers from five assemblies had gathered. It was wonderful to witness how the Lord has maintained the assembly testimony in Cuba since all the missionaries left following the Revolution in Cuba, during the period from 1959 to 1961.

## History

The first missionary couple from the assemblies to arrive in Cuba were Thomas and Jean Smith, who had initially been commended to the work in Malaga, Spain, in 1920. Due to the Spanish Civil War, they were forced to leave Spain in 1936. Then, they went on to serve the Lord in the Congo but were forced to leave there in 1938. On their way to Canada, they had passed through Cuba, and the Lord gave them an exercise to return to Cuba later that year. They settled in Havana, where they began the dedicated work of tract distribution in the port and other areas of the city. A family who worked at the seaport offered the use of their home for meetings, and thus the work began. After serving the Lord faithfully for many years and seeing the Lord work in salvation, they were able to get established, but, once again, they were forced to move and this time to settle in Canada.

In 1940, George and Betty Walker, who had been corresponding with brother Smith were commended from

assemblies in the Chicago area of the USA. They were exercised about going on to Chile, but, while visiting with the Smiths, decided to settle in Cuba. They started their work in a small town called La Salud, about twenty-five miles south of Havana. Betty, who was a nurse, helped a local doctor in his practice as well as with his English studies. Brother Walker also used tracts extensively, as well as a radio programme called 'Gospel Bells', receiving help from brother Smith with that radio work. Eventually, an assembly was established in La Salud, which carries on faithfully to this day. After leaving Cuba, the Walkers moved to Miami and started work among the many Cubans who had settled there.

In 1941, Arnold and Kathleen Adams were commended from Toronto, Canada, and started a work in Guira de Melena, a town about fifteen miles from La Salud. A small assembly started there, they had a hall, but, unfortunately, it is no longer functioning. Soon after, they moved to Pinar del Rio, a city about 100

miles west of Havana, and, after some years, they moved to the east end of the country to help in the mountains where the Castro revolution started. This was in response to a Cuban brother, Ovilio Diaz, who had gone there in answer to an inquiry and returned with a report of the need. It was a four-hour mule ride to get there, but Arnold and Kathleen happily went and built a home there. Shortly after that, a large assembly was established. Later, they moved to the foothills and formed an assembly in the city of Bayamo. The assembly still meet there in a home but have had a small conference in recent years. The Adams returned to Canada and continued in the Lord's work until their home call.

In 1938, Robert and Effie Leighton were commended to the work of the Lord in the Bahamas from an assembly in Scotland. They laboured there until 1942 when they moved on to Cuba for several years. They laboured in Havana and then moved on to San Antonio de Los Baños. The work in that town was very difficult, and although they saw a few souls saved, an assembly formed and the work carried on faithfully for many years, sadly it has now closed. Latterly, a faithful brother carried the work but it terminated when he went home to glory. After leaving Cuba, the Leightons moved to Puerto Rico, working with the assemblies in that country.

The next set of missionaries commended from Toronto were David and Agnes Adams, and they joined Arnold and Kathleen in Pinar del Rio. Later that year, Patricia Ritchie also joined the work. The men focused on outreach with several young men who

*Cuban brother Pedro Flores, aged 90 second from left with Ivan, Felipe, elders in Pinar del Rio and Ashley.*





*A group of young believers at the conference in Pinar del Rio.*

had been saved. The ladies started children's work in a couple of homes in the city.

While visiting the country in the 1940s, a brother from Houston, Texas, Henry Dedman, saw the need for assembly buildings and provided funds for building excellent halls in Vedado, Vibora, and Pinar del Rio. Those Gospel Halls have been in use ever since and, although needing repairs at times, are well taken care of today. In the 1950s, Brother Dedman also sent a utility van equipped with two beds, which was used by various missionaries who travelled the country from end to end, giving out literature and New Testaments. He also funded a printing press which was located on the property of Arnold and Kathleen Adams. David learned about printing, and, eventually, a printing work was commenced there with work performed by a Cuban brother, Pedro Flores. He is still a member of the assembly in Pinar del Rio at age 90.

In 1951, when brother Doherty arrived, he assumed responsibility for the printing operation, which made considerable demands on his time, particularly in answering correspondence. By the mid-50s, close to 200,000 tracts were being printed and mailed out to Latin America every month. Following the revolution, when David and Agnes returned to Canada, David established a print shop to carry on the work which he had begun in Cuba. He also devoted much of his time ministering among the assemblies in both Canada and the USA.

Another couple, Vernon and Ilda Markle, were commended from Toronto in 1948 and worked in the Vibora area of Havana, while the Smiths worked in another area of Havana called Vedado. These two assemblies are still going on well today.

In 1953 the Markles moved to Holguin in the eastern part of the country where a small assembly was established, but sadly it did not survive the opposition of the local authorities. They returned to Canada for a time and then went to serve the Lord in El Salvador. After some years there, they returned to Canada for reasons of health and continued to be active as long as they were able.

As mentioned earlier, in 1951 Edward Doherty was commended to the work from Northern Ireland, and, after a short stay with the Walkers in La Salud, moved to work in Pinar del Rio. 1953 saw the first wedding in the Gospel Hall in that city when Edward and Patricia were married. The Dohertys went to Canada after the Revolution and continued in the Lord's work there.

Edward and Henrietta Wickert were commended from the USA in 1952 and worked with the Vibora assembly. They had already been in Cuba for a few years working with another mission organization but were impressed with the way of gathering and had returned to the USA seeking fellowship with a local assembly. Subsequently, they were commended

from that assembly back to Cuba. After the Revolution, they also returned to the USA and continued in the Lord's work until their home call.

In 1953, Kathleen Hamilton was commended from the USA, working with Emmaus courses among the young people in La Salud and neighbouring villages. She devoted much of her time to five young men, four of which have gone on faithfully till now. She returned to the USA, where sadly, she was killed in an automobile accident shortly after.

Douglas and Kathleen Reid were commended from Vancouver, Canada in 1956, working with the other missionaries in the Pinar del Rio area. After their departure, they returned to Canada for a time and then went to serve the Lord in Costa Rica. Douglas was called home recently, and Kathleen still resides there at present. She and Agnes Adams are the only missionaries still living who were commended by the assemblies in Canada.

### **Current Status**

For the most part, the assemblies mentioned earlier in this article continue in a healthy state to this day, with some being very zealous in outreach and holding to the truth of scripture. A delightful new generation of young people are active in these assemblies.

Since 1960, following the revolution, the believers in Cuba felt alone, isolated, and even somewhat abandoned, as there were difficulties in travelling to Cuba and restrictions within the country. However, in recent years they have had visits from brethren in North America as well as the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Venezuela, Columbia, and Argentina, which they appreciate very much and are encouraged by them.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author acknowledges the help of brother Ivan Alexeis Madera Hernandez (Pinar del Rio, Cuba) and brother Steve Adams (Toronto, Canada) in the compilation of this article and trusts that it might encourage the Lord's people to pray for fellow believers in Cuba.

# The Son – His Second Coming

By **STEPHEN SHERWIN** Derby, England

8

The Apostle Paul, when writing in 1 Corinthians chapter 16 verse 22, says, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha'. This is a word of warning against such that love not the Lord – 'Anathema' meaning 'accursed' – and he reminds his readers that the Lord is coming - Maranatha, 'our Lord cometh'. This is not a new truth which is being revealed in the scriptures. Jude records the words of Enoch who prophesied, 'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all', Jude 14, 15, and the Old Testament is full of references to the kingdom of God under His Christ, e.g., Pss. 2, 45.

The New Testament has much to say about the coming of the Lord. This is a subject which should thrill the heart of every believer. However, to correctly understand this truth, the Bible student will need to carefully compare scripture with scripture. The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the Lord Jesus has made a personal promise to the church regarding His coming as well as the revelation that He will return to this world to take up His kingdom.

First, it is important to note that there is a distinction between Israel and the church. Failure to do so will lead to great confusion and cause much of the Bible to be spiritualized when seeking to understand it. Whilst this subject would take up an article by itself, we should note that the church did not exist in Old Testament times. It was while the Lord Jesus was here that He said, 'I will build my church', Matt. 16. 18 – a future event which would commence on the day of Pentecost following His ascension back to heaven. There are those who teach that following Israel's rejection of Messiah, Israel have been permanently set aside and the church has taken its place. This leads blessing promised to Israel being applied to the church, while firmly applying the curses as a result of disobedience to Israel only. It is evident that the complete fulfilment of Daniel's

prophecy concerning the seventy weeks as detailed in Daniel chapter 9 – remains future. This prophecy is addressed specifically to Israel – 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city', v. 24. Romans chapter 11 teaches that whilst Israel has been set aside, they have not been cast away, but there is coming a day when they will be reconciled to God.

Second, the word 'coming', *parousia*, in the New Testament needs to be examined as to its usage. VINE states that the word, 'denotes both an "arrival" and a consequent "presence with"'.<sup>1</sup> This can be seen in 2 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 6 in the 'coming [*parousia*] of Titus'. It was not just that Titus had arrived but that being present he was able to comfort the apostle. Where the word is used in respect of the Lord Jesus, we can see that it refers to both His personal return for the church, 1 Thess. 4. 15, and also when He returns to the earth, 2 Thess. 2. 8. Therefore, while the New Testament refers to only one future coming, it has two phases.

## First phase – the rapture of the Church

The word 'rapture' does not appear in the New Testament. It is taken from the Latin word, *rapto*, which includes in its definition the idea of 'seize', 'snatch away'. The Greek word

*harpazo* carries a similar meaning and is used in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 17 – 'caught up'. The word *harpazo* occurs 17 times in the New Testament and is used of both Philip when he was taken away from the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8. 39, and also 'a man in Christ' who was 'caught up into paradise', 2 Cor. 12. 2, 4.

## Imminency

It becomes apparent when reading the Epistles that the Lord's return is imminent, that is, He could come at any time. No prophecies await fulfilment prior to His coming. Examples that can be cited include: 'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ', Phil. 3. 20 NKJV; and 'ye turned to God from idols to serve . . . and to wait for his Son from heaven', 1 Thess. 1. 9, 10. Rather than passing through the Great Tribulation, which will affect the whole world, this verse informs us that the believer in the Lord Jesus is delivered (away) from coming wrath. Furthermore, the message of the risen Lord to the church at Philadelphia was that He would keep them 'from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth', Rev. 3. 10. No wonder the hymn writer S. T. FRANCIS has said, 'I can almost hear His footfall on the threshold of the door'.

## The promise of His return

Whilst there are a number of references to the coming of the Lord for His church, there are three key passages which deal with the subject.

The Lord Jesus, in His Upper Room Ministry, John chapters 13-17, introduced several truths which are then further developed in the Epistles. Dear to the heart of every believer are the words, 'I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also', John 14. 3. These are the words of one who cannot lie, and we wait longingly for their fulfilment! The promise was made against the backdrop of the Lord returning to heaven via the cross. The fact that this is a personal return is echoed in, 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout',



1 Thess. 4. 16. The promise not only involves His return for us but that from then onwards we will be wherever He is – ‘so shall we ever be with the Lord’, v. 17.

The sequence of events will be as follows:

- The Lord returns personally to the air bringing those which ‘sleep in Jesus’, 1 Thess. 4. 14.
- At His summons, the dead will rise first and the believers who are alive upon the earth will be caught up and together we will meet the Lord in the air, v. 17.
- 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 51 to 57 detail the transformation that will take place. Bodies which are currently suited for the earthly sphere will be fitted for the heavenly sphere. Bodies that are subject to death and decay will be ‘fashioned like unto his glorious body’, Phil. 3. 21.

## Second Phase – the manifestation in power and glory

When Paul writes to the Thessalonians in the second Epistle, he does so to correct the error that

‘the day of Christ is at hand’. It is only after certain events have taken place that the man of sin will be destroyed, ‘whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming [*parousia*]’, 2 Thess. 2. 8. It is this occasion where the Lord will be ‘revealed’, 2 Thess. 1. 7, from heaven to an unbelieving world. The word ‘revealed’ is the Greek word *apokalypsis* which is translated, ‘revelation’, ‘manifestation’ and involves an unveiling of the person and glories of Christ.

The timing of the rapture is unknown. We are called upon to wait expectantly and serve whilst we wait. Currently, the timing of the manifestation is also unknown. But the Lord gave a special word of warning and encouragement to those who will pass through the days of the Great Tribulation as to the time of His return. We mentioned above that the final week of Daniel’s prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. This equates to a period of seven years. The Lord said in Matthew chapter 24 verses 15 and 16, ‘When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains’. Daniel referred to this as taking place ‘in the midst of the week’, Dan. 9. 27. From that point, those who are able to read and understand will know that there will be a period of three-and-a-half years before the Lord returns. The Lord warns them to flee for safety to preserve their lives so great is the peril that they should not by any means delay.

## The place of His return

As the disciples stood and gazed up into heaven having watched the Lord Jesus ascend until a cloud covered Him from their sight, two men in white apparel appeared to them and said, ‘this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven’, Acts 1. 11. The place of His departure from earth was the Mount of Olives and, according to Zechariah chapter 14 verse 4, ‘his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives’.

## The manner of His return

The utter folly of man is seen when the Beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies gather together, united in their opposition to Christ. The Psalmist says, ‘He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision’, Ps. 2. 4. When the Lord was arrested, Pilate and Herod were made friends because of Him. Their verdict was overturned when God raised the Saviour from the dead. In Revelation chapter 19, we see the opposition of men reduced to nothing when the Lord returns with the armies of heaven. The place of His rejection becomes the scene of His victory.

## The triumphant entry into Jerusalem

Following His return to the Mount of Olives and with His immediate enemies destroyed by the sword which ‘proceeded out of his mouth’, Rev. 19. 21, the Lord wends His way in triumph to the city of Jerusalem – the seat of His government. The Psalmist describes Jerusalem as ‘the city of our God . . . the city of the great King’, Ps. 48. 1, 2.

The Lord made this journey before. He entered into Jerusalem fulfilling the words, ‘behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass’, Zech. 9. 9. As He approaches this second time, we hear the words of Psalm 24 verses 9 and 10 ringing out, ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory’. No wonder the Psalmist ends his meditation with the word ‘Selah’!

Whether we contemplate the upward call of the Saviour or His return in power and glory, surely the response to His words, ‘Surely I come quickly’ is ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus’, Rev. 22. 20!

## Endnotes

- 1 W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Oliphants.
- 2 See John 14. 1-3; 1 Cor. 15. 51-57; and 1 Thess. 4. 13-18.



# WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

**teleo** (*To bring to a close, to finish*)

**telos** (*End, termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be*)

**telones** (*A tax-gatherer*)

We often use the word 'end' and its associated words to describe the idea of cessation or termination. WINSTON CHURCHILL stated, after the allied victory at El Alamein in 1942, that the 'victory was not the end, it was not even the beginning of the end, but it was, perhaps, the end of the beginning'. And for believers 'the beginning comes out of the infinite so the end will also lose itself in it'.<sup>1</sup> Hence the words of God and of Christ, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end', Rev. 21. 6; 22. 13.

The noun *telos* had a variety of meanings in the Greek world including, 'achievement', 'fulfilment', 'final step', 'result', 'goal', 'conclusion', 'cessation' or 'end'. *Telos* was further expanded through time to describe an 'obligation', and culturally to signify an 'offering' to a deity or the 'fulfilment' of sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> On rare occasions, it was also translated as 'tax' or 'levy', Num. 31. 28 LXX.<sup>3</sup>

In the Septuagint (LXX), the word *telos* occurs in both metaphorical and literal ways. In God's speech to Jacob in Genesis chapter 46 verses 1 to 4, He assured Jacob that even though he was going into Egypt it would not vitiate the promises that He had made to his ancestors. In a

very touching statement in verse 4, God also indicated that when Jacob died, his son Joseph would close (*telos*) his eyes, i.e., effectively recognizing that his life had come to an end. Interestingly, in Leviticus chapter 27 verse 23, the word *telos* is translated as 'worth', signifying the full or complete measure required to purchase a field. When Joshua stood with the children of Israel on the banks of the River Jordan, we read that the flow of water was completely cut off (*telos*) by God to facilitate the crossing, Josh. 3. 16.

Job uses the word in the sense of reaching a 'goal' as he seeks to find God who he believes has hidden Himself from him, Job 23. 3. The word occurs some fifty-five times in the Septuagint (LXX) title to many of the Psalms, in the expression *eis to telos*, which is translated as 'for ever (more)' or 'to the end', cp. Hab. 3. 19, but which is translated by the Masoretic text as 'to the choir leader' or 'chief' (musician).

The writer of Ecclesiastes reflects on the effectiveness of the wise words of the Preacher as they stick in the memory and stimulate appropriate action. This is contrasted with the endless (*telos*), almost mindless, stream of pagan wisdom literature that, when studied, simply brought exhaustion to the reader, Eccles. 12. 11, 12.

When the noun *telos* and the verb *teleo* are carried over into the New Testament they take on the dynamic idea of fulfilment, that is, everything moving towards a goal or an ultimate conclusion. For example, our Lord uses the word *telos* of His fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 53, Luke 22. 37. Paul contrasts the heterodoxy of false teaching with the purity of apostolic teaching, 1 Tim. 1. 4, 5. KNIGHT writes, *telos* 'has here the meaning of "goal" or "outcome toward which something is directed". The goal of Christian instruction is love manifested in

the Christian's life through three channels, which are a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith'.<sup>4</sup> Peter reminds us that salvation is the ultimate end or goal (*telos*) of our faith, 1 Pet. 1. 9, and Paul writes that it is because Christ is the 'end' (*telos*) of the law, righteousness becomes available to every person who believes, Rom. 10. 4.<sup>5</sup> It is also a word very much associated with prophecy and the end times as demonstrated by Paul's use of *telos* in respect of the consummation of God's redemptive purpose and the coming of the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 15. 24. Yet, even though all things are moving towards a final eschatological goal or end, we can praise God that His kingdom and that of His Son will be without *telos* (end), Luke 1. 33.

## Further reading/study

### Introductory

End, Ending (*telos*) in W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, pp. 26, 27.

### Advanced

*Telos* in GERHARD KITTEL AND GERHARD FRIEDRICH (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Abridged in One Volume), pp. 1161, 1162.

## Endnotes

- 1 COLIN BROWN (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, pg. 164.
- 2 For a comprehensive list of the meanings of the word *telos*, see H. G. LIDDELL AND R. SCOTT, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.
- 3 For further examples of the use of the word in taxation see MOULTON AND MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the New Testament*, pg. 630, and, also, Rom. 13. 7.
- 4 GEORGE W. KNIGHT III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, pg. 76.
- 5 The word *telos* **has** three possible interpretations in this context. It could mean 'fulfilment', 'goal' or 'termination'. **In our view**, C.E.B. CRANFIELD is right when he states, 'that Christ is the goal to which all along the law has been directed, its true intention and meaning', *Romans*, pg. 519. Ultimately, of course, without Christ the law is unintelligible.



# Old Testament women who appear in the New Testament

# RACHEL

By **IAN REES** Tenby, Wales

‘May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah’. This blessing, pronounced over Jewish girls even today, shows us the importance in the Jewish faith of these four women, known in Jewish tradition as the four matriarchs. ‘As matriarchs of the Jewish people, Sara, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah each possess qualities that make them worthy role models. According to Jewish tradition, they were strong women who kept faith with God during tough times. Between the lot of them, they endured marital troubles, infertility, abduction, envy from other women and the task of raising difficult children. But whatever hardships came their way these women put God and family first, eventually succeeding in building the Jewish people’.<sup>1</sup> The only one of these Old Testament women not mentioned in the New Testament is Leah.

To the Jewish people, Rachel is particularly important because of the two sons that were born to her – Joseph, who became the saviour of his people when they went down into Egypt, and Benjamin. Benjamin’s tribe, along with that of Judah, formed the southern nation that resisted the idolatry of Samaria and stayed loyal to their God for so much longer than the northern tribes. Rachel also embodied the essential spirit of a hugely persecuted people when she pleaded with her husband, ‘And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die’, Gen. 30. 1. With pogrom after pogrom over the millennia of time, the task of Jewish women to bear children to carry on the hopes of the nation has been of paramount importance.

Rachel was, of course, Jacob’s

first love. She bore him his favourite son, but she also died in giving birth to his youngest son, and here we come to the third reason why Rachel is so significant. She named her last-born Ben-oni, which the KJV margin translates as, ‘The son of my sorrow’. ‘Rachel’s choice of a name accurately reflects her knowledge that she was about to die. Furthermore, it gives necessary weight to her role as a tragic figure who was the first love of her husband yet was never able to live a settled and fruitful life with him’.<sup>2</sup> And it is here that we see the ongoing significance of Rachel in Jewish tradition. We encounter her name in the book of Jeremiah. ‘Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel [Rachel] weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not’, Jer. 31. 15. Some suggest that the word ‘Ramah’ here stands for ‘on high’; thus, ‘A voice was heard on high . . . Rachel weeping for her children’. In Jeremiah, Rachel, a type of sorrowing Jewish women since her own premature death, weeps as though from the grave (not audibly, of course) as she sees her children being taken into captivity and with many slaughtered in the streets of Jerusalem. On the other hand, Ramah was a place near Bethlehem, a place where the captives from Jerusalem were held before many, including Daniel and his kind, were taken to Babylon. Jeremiah recalls when he was held in Ramah, until he was given the option to return home, Jer. 40. 1-6. There is a dispute amongst Jewish historians as to where exactly Rachel’s tomb is located. Rachel had been buried, not in the family tomb with Sarah, Rebekah and Leah, but on the road to Bethlehem, Gen. 35. 19, 20. Saul is told by Samuel to find two men ‘by Rachel’s sepulchre

in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah’, 1 Sam. 10. 2. Thus, it could very well be that the voice of Rachel in Ramah itself wept over her lost children.

What has this to do with the New Testament? Matthew records for us the ‘slaughter of the innocents’ by Herod, who, in order to ensure the death of the one ‘born King of the Jews’, commanded the murder of ‘all the [“male” NKJV] children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under’, Matt. 2. 16. He then adds, ‘Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not’, Matt. 2. 17, 18. Here we see the motif of Rachel once again as the epitome of the sorrowing Jewish mother. We also observe what is quite often seen in scripture that a prophecy can have an immediate fulfilment and a later one. The exile of God’s chosen people in Jeremiah’s day, and Rachel’s refusal to be comforted, was followed by an assurance from God Himself, Jer. 31. 16. Thus, God promises the glorious restoration, regathering, redemption and revival of Israel. Just as the women of Ramah were given hope from the Lord, so too the women of Bethlehem would find great David’s greater Son would bring hope to His people, the One whom the wicked King Herod sought to destroy. It is remarkable to notice the words that follow the weeping of Rachel in Matthew chapter 2. ‘But when Herod was dead’, Joseph is told in a dream, ‘Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life’, vv. 19, 20. In a time to come, when God gathers His chosen people to their promised land, and their great Messiah comes, Rachel shall no longer weep. Man proposes but God disposes.

## Endnotes

- 1 ARIELA PELAIA, *Blessing the children on Shabbat*, <https://www.learnreligions.com/blessing-the-children-on-shabbat-2076757>.
- 2 LEWIS WARSHAUER, *The meaning of Benjamin’s name*, JTS Torah online, <http://www.jtsa.edu/the-meaning-of-benjamins-name>.



# HIS HEAD

By **JOHN TINKLER** Red Row, Northumberland, England

Many of us may recall from our past that, in many children's Bible story books, the Lord was depicted as having a halo above His head. In later life we came to appreciate that this was never the case. The Lord was a real man and, as believers, we enjoy the fact of His deity but also His humanity, sin apart. However, there is no scripture that we can turn to that reveals anything of His personal appearance.

## His head on a pillow

We commence this study in Mark chapter 4 and, whilst His head is not mentioned, He was in the middle of a storm, 'in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow', v. 38. Having had a busy day, it was He who requested that the disciples sail to the other side. In His mind the journey was assured, but, in the boat, He was awakened by their calls of distress and He rebuked the wind and the sea. Remarkably, as the disciples observed, 'the wind ceased, and there was a great calm', v. 39. Their reaction is recorded, 'What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?' v. 41.

## Poured upon His head

Our next scene is found in Matthew chapter 26 verses 6 to 13.<sup>1</sup> In both Matthew and Mark, the woman is not named but in John's Gospel, she is named as Mary. It is John that records that she poured the ointment on the Lord's feet, whilst in the other two accounts she poured it on His head. Whether the ointment was poured first upon His head and trickled down to His feet or not, the point to be emphasized is that nothing was withheld.

Thinking just of Matthew's account, we might note:

- Undeserved criticism, 'this waste', v. 8;
- Unprecedented devotion, 'this ointment', v. 9; 'very precious ointment', v. 7;
- Universal in scope, 'this gospel . . . preached in the whole world', v. 13;
- Unidentified individual, 'this woman', v. 13.

## Placed upon His head

Matthew chapter 27 verse 29 mentions the crown of thorns. They 'platted a crown of thorns . . . [and] put it upon his head'.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the soldiers made it themselves and in mockery they said, 'Hail, King of the Jews'. We are not informed when it was removed but I am sure it was temporary as this was their treatment of such a prisoner – a mock coronation.

We can recall, when our present Queen was crowned on the 2nd June, 1953, the crown was held aloft then carefully placed upon her head. What a contrast here! A crown platted – intertwined with thorns. It was unlikely to be placed carefully on our Lord's head. John tells us in chapter 19 verse 5 of his Gospel that the Lord was brought out arrayed before the people wearing the crown of thorns. Its purpose was to afflict the mind and to cause pain. Matthew and Mark mention that they smote the Lord on His head with a reed.<sup>3</sup> With the desire to punish Him further, they did their worst to Him.

## Placed over His head

As we consider Calvary itself, Matthew records His accusation 'set over' or placed over His head, 'This is Jesus the king of the Jews'.<sup>4</sup> It is John that tells us the reaction of the chief priests, but in this Pilate would not be swayed, 'What I have written I have written', 19. 22.

## Bowed His head

In three Gospels, we read of the Lord giving up the ghost, but in John's account we are told that 'Jesus

knowing that all things were now accomplished . . . said, It is finished', 19. 28, 30. He 'bowed his head, and gave up the ghost'. This was a deliberate act and He put His head into a position of rest. He who found no rest for His head in His life here, found rest at last.<sup>5</sup>

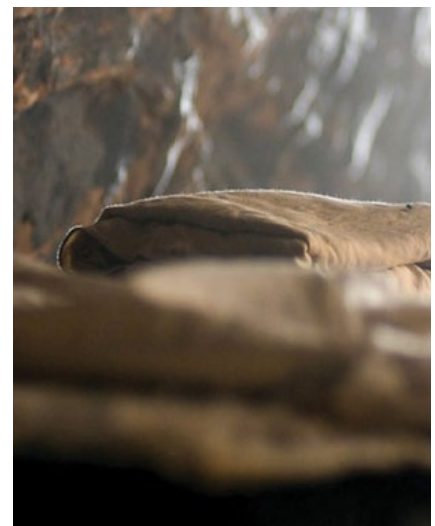
## About His head

Finally, John chapter 20 verse 7 takes us to the resurrection morning and mention is made of 'the napkin, that was about his head . . . but wrapped together in a place by itself', 20. 7. Why was this folded? In the Hebrew tradition of the day, the folded napkin had to do with the master and the servant. If the master got up from the table, folded his napkin and laid it beside his plate, it meant 'I'm coming back'. And so He will!

'O Head, once filled with bruises,  
Oppressed with pain and scorn,  
O'erwhelmed with sore abuses,  
Mocked with a crown of thorn!  
O Head, to death once wounded  
In shame upon the tree,  
In glory now surrounded  
With brightest majesty'.

PAUL GERHARDT

In a coming day, our Lord will be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.



## Endnotes

- 1 Parallel passages are: Mark 14. 3-9; John 12. 1-11.
- 2 Parallel passages are: Mark 15. 17; John 19. 2.
- 3 Matt. 27. 30; Mark 15. 19.
- 4 Matt. 27. 37.
- 5 The Lord did say, 'The Son of man hath not where to lay his head', Matt. 8. 20; Luke 9. 58.

# QuestionTime

Conducted by  
**Frank A. Proudlock**

## QUESTION

**Who were the Pharisees and why do they feature so much in the New Testament?**

## ANSWER

In my late teens I recall reading through the Gospels for the first time. One thing that struck me was that interactions often occurred between the Lord Jesus and a religious group called the Pharisees. I knew next to nothing about these Pharisees and yet they seemed to occupy such an important place in the Bible. So, who were they and why do we read about them so much?

The Pharisees are held in great esteem by many religious Jewish people today. They were considered to be the founding fathers of Rabbinical Judaism. They were responsible for the origin of the Mishnah, a written collection of the Jewish oral traditions that many practising Jewish people still follow now. Similarly, in New Testament times, the Pharisees were a highly respected group of religious leaders. In contrast to the Sadducees, who were an elitist group that had their power base in the temple in Jerusalem, the Pharisees were men of the people. They were associated with locally based synagogues and would have been well known in their communities.

The name Pharisee means 'separated' and they placed great emphasis on personal piety through keeping the commands of the Old Testament law along with other oral traditions. Another reason the Pharisees were so popular is because they protested at Roman rule and Hellenization (the influence of the Greek language and culture), in contrast to the Sadducees who collaborated with the Roman authorities for political advantage. Consequently, many Pharisees took great pride in their identity and standing. Prior to his conversion on the Damascus road, Paul was a Pharisee. He described himself as 'an Hebrew of the Hebrews' and as 'blameless' with respect to 'the righteousness which is in the law', Phil. 3. 5, 6.

Given this information, what then was so wrong with the Pharisees and why was the Lord Jesus often at variance with them? Paul provides a clue in Philippians chapter 3. He describes his pre-conversion experience as 'having mine own righteousness, which is of the law', v. 9. The chief problem with the Pharisees was self-righteousness. This one fundamental error lay at the root of many of their other behaviours.

Several of the most well-known parables told by the Lord Jesus were directed towards the Pharisees. In Luke chapter 18 verses 9 to 17,

we read the 'parable of the publican and the Pharisee' as they were going up to the temple to pray. In contrast to the publican, who, on entering the temple, would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven, the Pharisee was full of pride. He completely misunderstood the most basic lesson on approaching God, that our approach is not based on what we can offer God but on what He can do for us through the sacrifice of Christ. The Pharisee returned to his house in the same unforgiven sinful state as when he left.

Sadly, despite the Pharisees often having a great knowledge of the scriptures, and understanding important truths such as resurrection, many of them were not saved. Their legalistic tendencies were a symptom of their underlying condition. They constructed a system of laws they could keep, to try to hide the fact that they could not keep God's law as given in the Old Testament. This, of course, was humanly impossible because of the sinful human condition.

In Luke chapter 15, the Lord Jesus told three parables that were also directly addressed to the Pharisees and scribes, v. 3. In each parable, something had been lost, a sheep, v. 4, a coin, v. 8, and a son, v. 32. In all three parables, a seeking process took place. If one looks carefully, there is a subtle twist to the last parable, where the seeking process carried out by the father is not made towards the prodigal son, as one might expect, but rather towards the self-righteous son. The so-called 'parable of the prodigal son' is as much a parable about the self-righteous son. He is the son for whom we read, 'therefore came his father out, and intreated him', v. 28. Behind the exclusive attitude of the Pharisees was a failure to realize that they themselves were also lost and that God's offer of forgiveness was open to all.

One reason the Pharisees feature so much in the New Testament is that the Lord Jesus had a great love for them and was fully aware of the grave danger they stood in eternally. The Lord Jesus uttered some of His strongest words to the Pharisees to shake them out of this complacency and ignorance. Along with publicans and sinners, He was also seeking them. It is clear that certain of the Pharisees (see Acts 15. 5), including named individuals such as Nicodemus and Paul, responded in faith.



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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:

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*All committee members can be contacted at  
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or via **0044(0)1142 511700***

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  - Numbers printed are over 12,000 (50% of these going overseas) plus over 1500 in India.
  - Postage accounts for over 60% of our costs.
  - Including postage, each magazine costs around £1.10 sterling.
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## PreciousSeed

February 2021 Vol. 76 | No. 1



'So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee', John 4. 46

PS  
Magazine

### 'So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee', John 4. 46

The Arab village of Kafr Cana (or Kefr Kenna) in the Lower Galilee is identified in Christian tradition as Cana of the Galilee. It was officially recognized by the Vatican in the seventeenth century and is the place to which most tours of Israel are taken. However, an alternative site, Khirbet Qana, lies some eight miles northwest of Nazareth and twelve miles west of the Sea of Galilee. It is high on a hill overlooking the Bet Netofa valley. TOM MCCOLLOUGH, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, describes it as 'a modest, well-connected Jewish village in the Hellenistic and Roman periods', circa 323 BC to AD 324, with its identity 'confirmed by the discovery of a Roman-period synagogue'. Some of the debate over the specific location can be found in MARCUS DODS, *The Gospel of John*, and elsewhere.

Our verse details the Lord's second visit to Cana. It is of note, then, that the place should be associated with the first and second miracles. Whilst the Gospels contain many examples of the Lord's healing power, this one stands out from them all. Luke records the incident of the centurion's servant who was healed at a distance but this one is different because the distance from Cana of Galilee to Capernaum was almost twenty miles. That explains why the nobleman took so long on his journey, vv. 51, 52. This miracle attests the Lord's sovereign power and control over disease, irrespective of distance or other seemingly adverse circumstances. It is also a testimony to the blessing that comes through the nobleman's faith, 'himself believed, and his whole house', v. 53.

However, although John gives us the detail of the geography of the Lord's journeys and activities, he omits the names of the recipients of the miracles. Whose wedding was it, John 2? What is the name of the man by the pool of Bethesda in chapter 5? We do not know. But John does tell us, 'these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God', 20. 31. The focus is upon Christ. As the Baptist, said, 'He must increase, but I must decrease', 3. 30.

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