

PreciousSeed

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'And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet
of Nazareth of Galilee', Matt. 21. 11.

PS
Magazine

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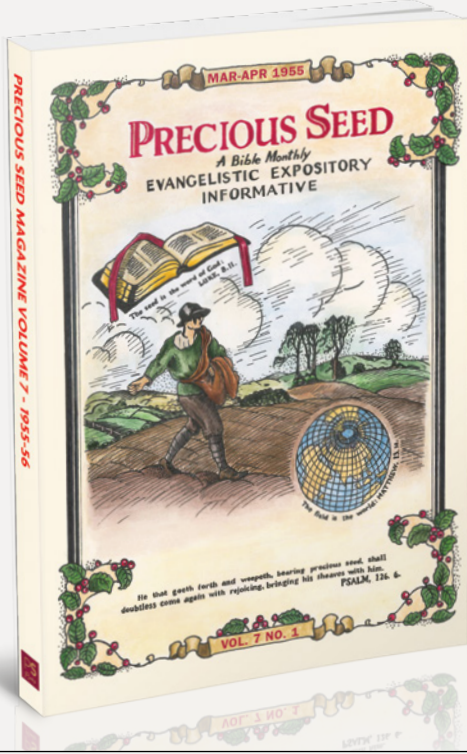
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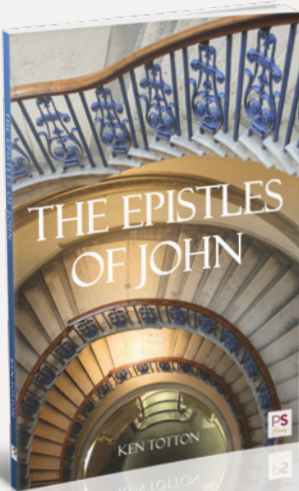
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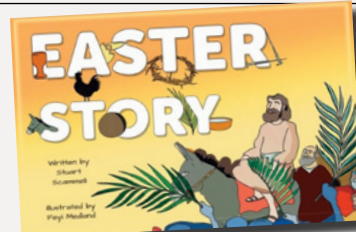


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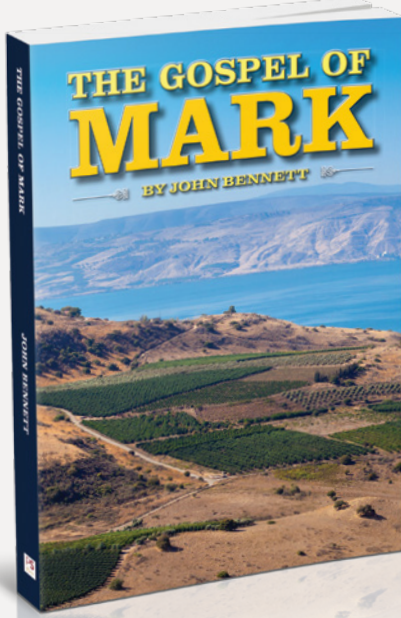


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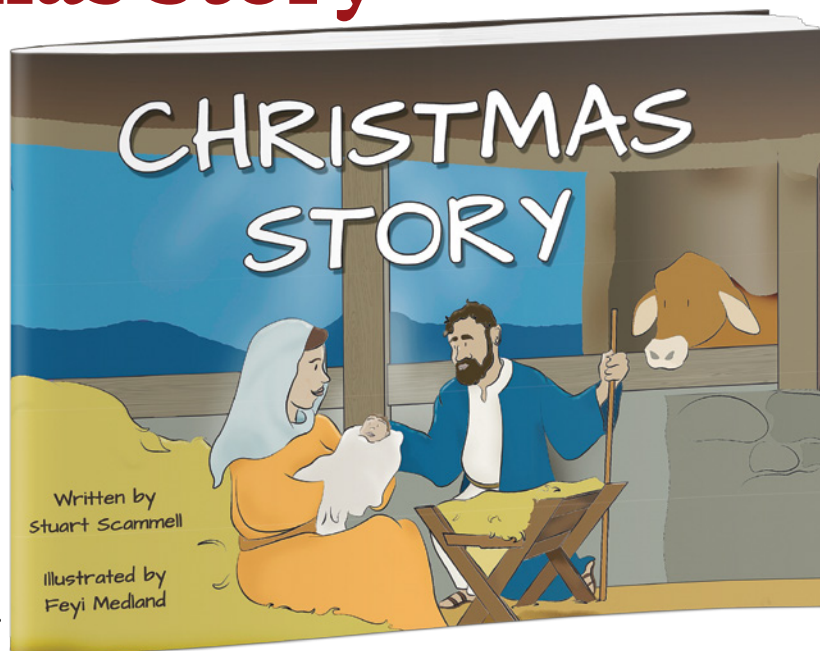
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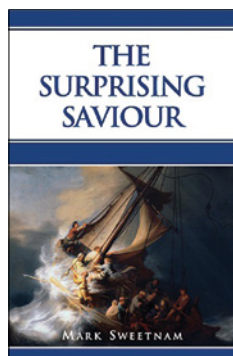
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Book Reviews



The Surprising Saviour Mark Sweetnam

Paperback, 68 pages, Published by Scripture Teaching Library, Northern Ireland and available from Ards Evangelical Bookshop, Newtownards. ISBN: 978-1-909789-56-2.

This book is a compilation of the eleven articles that the author wrote for *Truth and Tidings* magazine, Canada, from 2019 to 2020. They are centred around the single Greek word *thaumazo* which, as the writer indicates in his introduction, 'has as its root the idea of a response befitting the manifestation of the supernatural'.

Chapter 1 takes us through Nicodemus' reaction to the Saviour's teaching and His transforming message. Speaking of the familiarity of John chapter 3, SWEETNAM makes the telling point, 'In their familiarity, its words have lost something of their power to surprise us as they ought'. Chapter 2 covers the Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth and how amazement at His gracious words gave way to a murderous rage as the truth of them hit home. Chapter 3 deals with the Lord's encounter with the woman of Samaria and

the reaction of the disciples when they saw the Lord speaking with her at Sychar's well. The author paints the background with skill and simplicity, establishing the wonder of the Lord's interest in the spiritual welfare of a Samaritan woman – and one of such dubious reputation. Chapter 4 covers the Sea of Galilee and the calming of the storm. Considering the disciples' question of the Lord as to His care during the storm, SWEETNAM challenges us, 'we can look back to Calvary, and see there the incontrovertible evidence that He cares'. Chapter 5 considers the Lord's determination to go to Jerusalem and the response of the disciples as the Saviour taught of events that would follow. Chapter 6 brings us to the Lord's trial before Pilate summarized by the author's comment, 'the Saviour stood silent, and Pilate marvelled'. Chapter 7 reflects upon Calvary and the fact

that Pilate marvelled that the Lord was dead in so short a time following His crucifixion. Chapter 8 deals with the resurrection and the wonder of the empty tomb. Chapter 9 contemplates the sense of wonder that will be expressed when the Lord returns in glory to deliver the nation of Israel and establish His kingdom. Finally, chapter 10 (wrongly labelled chapter 11 in my copy) moves from the Lord to the apostles and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

This is a beautifully written book that was a pleasure to read. Even familiar passages were brought to life conveying something of the sense of wonder that the book is all about. It may be short, but it is choice material that is worth reading and re-reading that we all might develop a truer sense of wonder and worship of the One who is its central theme.

‘He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar’, Ps. 99. 7.

Paul reminds us that one of the things that should characterize us as Christians is a forbearing or gentle spirit towards everyone. The reason for this is then given, ‘The Lord is at hand’, Phil. 4. 5. If we take this clause with the preceding verses, then it could mean that the Lord is near in time – the coming of the Lord will be very soon. However, if we link this clause to verses 6 and 7, then it could be interpreted as the Lord being nearby or ever-present, cp. Ps. 119. 151. In other words, the Lord is near us or always beside us, and thus we should be conscious of His presence at all times, affecting the way in which we think and act, cp. Ps. 145. 18; Acts 23. 11.

When the children of Israel were redeemed out of Egyptian bondage, God went with them in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. This represented His continuous presence with them, guiding and protecting them, Exod. 13. 21, even when there was a cloud over the nation’s life. How could anyone disobey God in the presence of so vivid

a witness? Yet Israel still murmured against Moses, 15. 24, disobeyed God Himself, 16. 28, desired the food of Egypt again, Num. 11. 5, and worshipped other gods, Exod. 32. 1-4. The cloud both revealed and concealed God’s presence, 16. 10; Lev. 16. 2, while the fire signified God’s power and purity, Exod. 19. 18; Mal. 3. 2. God left no doubt in their minds, because of His continued presence with them, as to where and when He wanted them to travel, and when He wanted them to rest. We, however, have no cloud or pillar to lead us today, but God has not left us to our own devices but provided us with two infallible guides, namely His word and the person of the Holy Spirit. They enable us to follow Christ in the daytime when things are relatively easy to discern, but also when much harder to discern in the night when the darkness seems to envelop us. Faithfulness to God’s word which mediates Christ’s presence by the Holy Spirit is extremely important, and the great encouragement for us today is that God will never forsake us, Heb. 13. 5, even though we often

forsake Him. What God requires from us is the prayerful reading of His word, and allowing the Holy Spirit to apply the text to our hearts and minds so that we practise the presence of the Lord on a daily basis. Is this our practice, or, like Israel, has the spiritual significance of the cloud (His presence) faded into the background of our lives?

We have been through another challenging year, and it has been difficult for the people of God to physically meet together. Local church meetings, previously taken very much for granted, have now become even more precious to us. Long may this be our sentiment, Heb. 10. 25, as we enter, in the Lord’s will, a new year. We take this opportunity once again to thank all our readers for their continued support both spiritually and financially, and also all our writers who have contributed to the edification of the body of Christ.

BRIAN CLATWORTHY

Ministry Articles Editor

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Solomon’s Temple

By JEREMY GIBSON

YPS

The Son of Mary

By **MALCOLM DAVIS** Leeds, England

It has been well said that our Lord Jesus Christ, in His earthly life and ministry, was as much a man as us, but not such a man as us, in every way unique and transcendent. As the natural son of Mary, not Joseph, He was the fulfilment of the Lord God's promise to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden that the seed of the woman, rather than the man, would bruise the serpent's head, while he bruised His heel, Gen. 3. 15. As the legal son of Joseph, Jesus Christ is the rightful heir to the throne of David. The virgin Mary was truly blessed to be the mother of the Messiah, but she is not to be worshipped as if she became the mother of God, as some blasphemously teach. She humbly called herself the handmaiden of the Lord and rejoiced in God as her own Saviour from sin. Our study will emphasize the true greatness of our almighty and sovereign God in the whole process and circumstances of His beloved Son's incarnation. All glory to Him!

The Lord's genealogy: how God overcame the curse on Coniah

The Lord, through Jeremiah, had pronounced a curse on king Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, for his wickedness, saying that he would be written down as childless, in the sense that none of his many children would succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah, Jer. 22. 24-30. Coniah is otherwise known as Jehoiachin or Jeconiah, and was carried away captive to Babylon, where he died as the last surviving king of Judah many years later. His uncle, Zedekiah, was actually the last ruling king of Judah until Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem in 586 BC, but he was also taken to Babylon and probably died there earlier than Jehoiachin.

This meant that Christ could not be born from Coniah's line of descent, which included Mary's future husband Joseph, who was thus the legal heir to David's throne. Nor could He be born from Joseph's seed anyway because, as the descendant of Adam, he was a sinner. Therefore, in order to overcome the curse on Coniah, God chose to use Mary's line of descent from David through his son Nathan, not Joseph's from Solomon. Matthew's genealogy of our Lord traces Joseph's ancestry,

in order to establish Christ's legal right to the throne of David, while Luke's reverse genealogy traces Mary's ancestry back to David via Nathan. Thus, Christ was both the natural descendant of David as well as the legal heir to his throne. By this means, God had overcome one major obstacle in the way of His Son's incarnation. However, there was the other major obstacle, the original sin of all Adam's descendants.

The Lord's miraculous conception: how it led to misunderstanding

Both Gospel writers, who explain how the Lord Jesus was conceived, carefully guard the truth that it was accomplished in His virgin mother's womb by the Holy Spirit's overshadowing power in a way that we cannot fully understand, but surely believe to be true. Matthew chapter 1 tells us Joseph's side of the miracle, after he became alarmed that his espoused wife had mysteriously become pregnant before they had come together. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream to reassure him concerning this and instruct him to call the Son, Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins. The angel explained that He would literally be God manifest in flesh, Emmanuel, the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy

concerning the virgin who would conceive and bear a Son, Isa. 7. 14.

Luke chapter 1, on the other hand, tells us Mary's side of the miracle. There we read that the angel Gabriel had appeared to Mary before she had conceived to explain what was about to happen to her. Gabriel said that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her, so that 'that holy thing' which would be born of her would be called the Son of God, Luke 1. 35. His name was to be called Jesus. He would be great, the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God would give Him the throne of His father David forever.

Although scripture thus guards the truth of our Lord's miraculous conception, it did cause both Him and His mother to be misunderstood by their contemporaries, many of whom probably assumed that some immorality had occurred. For example, when in John's Gospel chapter 8 verse 41 the Jews said to the Lord Jesus, 'We be not born of fornication', they may well have implied that our Lord had been so conceived and born. This was one of the grievous misunderstandings that both He and Mary must have had to live with throughout His earthly life. However, this miracle was necessary if Christ was to be without a taint of Adam's original sin.

The Lord's exemplary treatment of His mother

Here we should remember who the Lord Jesus really is and was during His earthly life and ministry, fully God as well as perfect Man, one unique and holy person with a divine mission. This fact will explain His reactions to some of His mother's approaches to Him recorded in the Gospels. Otherwise, unbelieving readers may be tempted to find fault with His words to her. We should remember the transcendence of God and the precedence of His gracious purposes over our limited and imperfect understanding of them.

In Luke chapter 2, when Jesus had stayed behind after the Passover feast in Jerusalem to converse with the doctors of the Law in the temple,

and Mary complained to Him that ‘thy father and I’ had been distressed by His absence from their group of pilgrims, she failed to understand His reply, ‘wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?’ However, Jesus did return with them, and ‘was subject unto them’. Mary kept all these sayings in her heart, pondering their meaning.

Likewise in John chapter 2, at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, when Mary said to Jesus that the wine had run out, probably implying that He should help the situation, Jesus replied, ‘Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come’. He was not being impolite, nor unkind, but had higher purposes to think of in His life. He proceeded to turn water into wine, and thus, miraculously, ‘manifested forth his glory’, but then humbly went down to Capernaum with His mother, brothers, and disciples.

Three Gospels record the occasion when the Lord’s mother and brothers asked to speak to Him, probably to persuade Him to cease His constant ministry of healing and to take some rest. In reply to them, Jesus said that His true relatives were not really His earthly family, but all those who obeyed the word and will of God, emphasizing that spiritual relationships are more important than earthly relationships. Before His resurrection, His earthly brothers did

not believe in Him, although later they did so, and James and Jude each wrote an Epistle. Often today, Christians find that they have more in common with their fellow-believers than they do with their earthly relatives.

However, the Lord Jesus did care for His mother and earthly family and attended to their needs. It appears that His legal father, Joseph, probably died while He was young, and He certainly became a carpenter to support His family, for He is called both ‘the carpenter’ and ‘the carpenter’s son’, Mark 6. 3; Matt. 13. 55. To prove His love for His mother, the Lord Jesus, in His hour of deepest distress and agony on the cross, committed Mary into the care of His close disciple John, who then ‘took her unto his own home’, John 19. 25-27. The Lord did have a balanced and caring attitude towards His mother, despite these earlier, perhaps surprising, statements. These were made in view of His overriding mission, the salvation of mankind and the glory of God His Father.

Mary’s sorrow over her Son’s sufferings

This latter scripture is the final fulfilment of the aged Simeon’s prediction to Mary, Luke 2. 34, 35, that ‘a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also’ as a result of bearing Christ. It appears that throughout the

Lord’s life and ministry He was not fully understood even by believers like Mary, who is said to have ‘kept’, or ‘pondered’ certain words that He said. He said, ‘no man knoweth [“fully knows”, or “understands”] the Son, but the Father’, Matt. 11. 27. Christ is inscrutable in His nature and person, fully and perfectly human yet fully divine.

This fact must have caused Mary some anguish, but her sorrow was clearly greatest when she stood beneath Christ’s cross, with all its pain, shame, and anguish, as He hung there bearing ‘our sins in his own body on the tree’, 1 Pet. 2. 24. However, whatever she understood about His rejection and crucifixion then, her deep sorrow will have been turned into joy after His triumphant resurrection, and we last see her in Acts chapter 1, with His brothers, waiting for the fulfilment of His promise of the Holy Spirit.

The vital importance of the truth of the virgin birth of Christ

Finally, we must assert from scripture that the virgin birth of Christ is a cardinal truth of our faith, and say that any who deny or doubt it, as some members of the professing Christian community are doing today, are probably not true believers at all, but apostates. It is vital, because otherwise it means that Christ could not have been sinless since He would have inherited Adam’s original sin. That would have meant that He was quite unqualified to become our Saviour and the substitute for our sins.

On the other hand, as the unique son of Mary, His humanity is real and perfect, so that He is able to empathize with us in our weaknesses and infirmities as our Great High Priest in heaven today, interceding with God on our behalf. The Holy Spirit of God overshadowing the virgin Mary in a way we cannot fully understand combined her humanity with His own divine nature to produce a unique and perfectly holy Man, able to fulfil all the counsels of the Godhead for our salvation and His own greater glory. Christ has two natures, divine and human, but is one indivisible person. Praise His name!



Old Testament women who appear in the New Testament

RUTH

By **KEN TOTTON** Cambridge, England

Introduction

‘Ruth the Moabitess’, as she is frequently designated in the book that bears her name, is deservedly one of the most celebrated women of the Bible. Through faith, loyalty, and labour, in the providence of God she becomes an ancestor of David the king, and therefore, of Jesus Christ.¹ She is one of five women named in Matthew’s genealogy of the Lord Jesus.

Redemption is the great theme of the book that bears her name. Naomi’s fortunes are slowly but surely transformed from desolation to the fullness of blessing.² On a human level, the key to the restoration of Naomi, the Israelite, is Ruth the Gentile.³ The book also emphasizes the sovereignty and covenantal loyalty of God, notwithstanding troubled times, and the absence of prophetic messages.

Those who love the literary structures of the Bible delight in the instructive symmetries of the book. Orpah’s mere amiability and return to Moab highlights the thoroughgoing loyalty and devotion of Ruth to God and to Naomi. Similarly, in chapter 4 the selfish concerns of the ‘nearer kinsman’ serve to accentuate the selfless generosity of Boaz in redeeming the inheritance and marrying Ruth. We marvel at the narrator’s artistic skill, as the action moves from the tragedy and desolation of Moab to the joyful birth of the child, Obed.

Ruth deciding

Ruth is first mentioned amidst the sorrows of a family under the discipline of God in Moab. The loss of father-in-law Elimelech and a childless marriage are then followed by the tragic death of her husband

Mahlon, 1. 5. Yet, amidst all the heartache and death, the living God is at work. Ruth comes to exercise faith in the God of Israel. Sometimes we must lose temporal and earthly things in order to gain the better and eternal possessions.

On the road to Bethlehem, and faced with the realistic promptings of Naomi to return to Moab with prospects of remarriage and physical security, Ruth makes her famous declaration, vv. 16, 17, ‘And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me’.

By faith she is forsaking Moab, the land of her birth, and committing herself to Israel’s God, renouncing all prospect of marriage to devote herself to the maintenance of her mother-in-law, Naomi. Crucially, commitment to God also commits her to His people. Her step of faith compares favourably with that of the illustrious Abraham, because she has no comparable promise.⁴

God honours such robust faith. Naomi can only see despair, and the heavy hand of God in her life; little does she appreciate what a treasure she has in Ruth as they make their way to Bethlehem.

Ruth working

Having responded to the report that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread, what a happy providence that they should arrive at Bethlehem right at the start of barley harvest!

Unprompted by Naomi, Ruth sees an opportunity to support her mother-in-law by the demanding work of gleaning.⁵ Respectfully, however, she first puts the plan to Naomi for her approval. She shows further respect in not presuming on the right to glean. ‘And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz who was of the clan of Elimelech’, 2. 3 ESV, showing that our sovereign God is in control of our lives – even the place where we work. Chapter 2 introduces the key figure of Boaz, who graciously offers Ruth the right to glean, protection, and water. Amazingly, not only can she quench her thirst, but she is invited to his table!

Ruth requesting

Chapter 3 brings us to the dramatic centre of the book. Ruth’s earlier basic plan to obtain food is now matched by Naomi’s plan to secure rest for Ruth by marriage to Boaz. With acute intuition Naomi has noted the admiration that Boaz had expressed for Ruth. She also recognized the way he had been the channel for the display of the loving kindness of God in protecting Ruth and providing for them both. Naomi’s thinking is dominated by ‘the man’ – Boaz,⁶ the potential kinsman-redeemer. Accordingly, in the confidence of faith she instructs Ruth to present herself at the threshing floor of Boaz and to request him to marry her. This bold strategy is not without significant risk, for if Ruth is seen with Boaz at the floor, some Bethlehemites would put the worst construction on their meeting, 3. 14.

Believers are not to sit back passively expecting good outcomes to happen automatically. Rather, Naomi’s plan illustrates how they must learn to sense the providential leading of God and embrace presented opportunities in faith.

Ruth displays many admirable qualities. She pledges complete obedience, both to the letter and the spirit of Naomi’s instruction, 3. 5, 9. Washed, anointed, and dressed for Boaz, she courageously but discreetly goes to the threshing floor. There are certain matters in spiritual life where the utmost discretion is required!

By going to Boaz privately Ruth again shows respect; should he be unable or unwilling to fulfil the role of redeemer, then there will be no damage to the reputation of either party. She requests Boaz to act in accordance with an ancient custom. By spreading his garment over Ruth, he is pledging that he will offer her the protection of marriage. God Himself said to Israel, 'I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine', Ezek. 16. 8.

Significantly, the Hebrew word for 'skirt' is translated 'wings', 2. 12, suggesting that Boaz becomes for Ruth the mediator of the love, care, and protection that God Himself affords. Boaz becomes the answer to his own prayer!⁷ Godly people do not need complex lists of rules in order to know how to respond in new situations. For Boaz, God's redeeming love and covenant loyalty to Israel are sufficient to guide his behaviour. Similarly, for us the gospel of grace should suffice to set our values and direct our behaviour.

Purity and virtue characterize this delicate night scene – nothing less than we would expect, knowing both characters. They are two of a kind, for the single adjective translated



'worthy' ESV, serves to describe them both, 2. 1; 3. 11b. Following the celebrations marking the completion of harvest, Boaz is sleeping at the threshing floor to guard his precious grain. The removal of the covering of his feet makes him awake. Ruth identifies herself and then makes her momentous request, 3. 9.

What selflessness she demonstrates by accepting marriage to an older man so that the family inheritance might be restored! This devotion immediately appeals to Boaz; this kindness⁸ exceeds her earlier display of kindness to the mother-in-law, 2. 11. Her obedient pledge of verse 5 is rewarded by Boaz' commitment to her. Whilst her entry into the rest afforded by marriage still awaits, chapter 4, she can then enter into rest, based on the faithful word of her beloved.⁹

Is there not a massive need for young people like Ruth today? Those prepared to devote themselves to the support of older believers, in order that the evangelical heritage be treasured, and the worthy name of Christ be restored upon His inheritance.

Mention in genealogies

We have noted how Ruth committed herself to God, and also to the maintenance of her Israelite mother-in-law. She readily accepted marriage to the elder Boaz in order that an heir might be born. The godly choices and commitments we make have amazing consequences for generations to come. God is no man's debtor; she is named in the genealogy of David, and then also of the Messiah. Amidst the frequent anarchy of the period of the Judges, God is surely at work towards the establishment of a monarchy through David and his dynasty. Ruth is frequently described as 'the Moabitess' – marking her alien character. Excluded by Israel's law,¹⁰ conversion brings her into blessing on the ground of sovereign grace. Mrs. E. F. BEVAN penned the words:

Trembling, I had hoped for mercy –
Some lone place within the door;
But the crown, the throne, the mansion
All were purposed long before.

Matthew wrote to convince Jews that Jesus is their long-promised Messiah. But it is also the Gospel of Gentile inclusion in divine purpose, signalled by Ruth's name alongside other women in chapter 1. Significantly, when she was proclaimed wife of Boaz, she is never again designated the Moabitess! Similarly, Paul could encourage Gentile believers, 'Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God', Eph. 2. 19.

Further, the marriage of Boaz and Ruth leads directly to the restoration of the fortunes of Naomi. A comparison of chapter 1 verses 1 to 5 with chapter 4 verses 13 to 17 bears this out. Naomi personifies the failure and restoration of Israel. In the Old Testament, Israel nationally is pictured as a widow woman, bereft of her children.¹¹ Yet our God specializes in restoration! Like Naomi, Israel is not discarded forever. God will restore her.¹² Whilst Israel is in unbelief, God deals with Gentiles – brings them by grace to believe on the God of Israel. All of which proves: Elimelech! . . . God (really) **is** King!

Endnotes

- 1 Matt. 1. 5.
- 2 Compare Ruth 1. 1-5 with 4. 13-17.
- 3 This is a beautiful prophetic prototype of the restoration of Israel. Gentile inclusion in divine purpose will lead to the eventual salvation of 'all Israel', Rom. 9-11.
- 4 Cp. Gen. 12. 1-3.
- 5 God in His compassion commanded farmers in Israel not to harvest the corners of their fields so that the poor and needy, such as aliens, widows, and orphans, could glean enough food to live, Lev. 19. 9-10; 23. 22.
- 6 Note the expression 'the man' 3. 3, 8, 16, 18.
- 7 Ruth 2. 12.
- 8 Kindness, covenant loyalty, mercy (Heb. *hesed*) is a keyword of the book, 1. 8, 2. 20. It is characteristic of God Himself, 2. 20; 2 Chr. 7. 6; Ps. 17. 7, Lam. 3. 22, but also demonstrated by Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.
- 9 Similarly, the believer has already entered into the rest through faith, Heb. 4. 3; on the other hand, the eternal sabbatic rest awaits the future consummation, 4. 9.
- 10 Deut. 23. 3; Ruth 2. 10.
- 11 Isa. 49. 21.
- 12 Rom. 11. 26.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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

16

The daughter of Jairus, 5. 21-24, 35-43

The next major event in this chapter of deliverance is the raising of Jairus' daughter.

The attitude of Jairus, vv. 21-23

We should note the manner in which Jairus approaches the Saviour. He comes:

- **Publicly** – 'much people gathered unto him', v. 21. The crowd would see and hear all that was done. This was not a covert meeting arranged in a corner. WIERSBE makes an interesting observation, 'One crowd sighed with relief as they saw Jesus leave, but another crowd was waiting to welcome Him when He returned home to Capernaum'.¹
- **Humbly** – 'he fell at his feet', v. 22. Jairus was 'one of the rulers of the synagogue'. He was a man of social standing and importance amongst the community. He could well have been a man of some wealth. All this he counts for nothing in the presence of the Saviour. He prostrated himself before the Lord.
- **Earnestly** – 'and besought him greatly', v. 23. Jairus was earnest in his pleas to the Lord. He was not averse to begging for the Lord's help although it might bring him religious ridicule and public embarrassment.
- **Believingly** – 'lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed', v. 23. There was no question in Jairus' mind. If the Lord was to act, his daughter would be saved, healed, and restored to the family. Jairus had great faith in the Saviour's ability.

The action of the Saviour, v. 24

The Lord's response to Jairus was immediate and speedy. WUEST states, 'Jesus went with him. The Greek

has it, went off with him promptly'.² However, progress was not as fast as Jairus may have wanted. The following crowd through the Saviour and impeded His progress. They were almost suffocating in their attention to Him.

It is interesting that the Lord did not heal the daughter at a distance as He had done with the nobleman's son, John 4. 46-54. It would seem that, in the purpose of God, the journey was necessary for the blessing of the woman and that the greater miracle of the raising of Jairus' daughter might be witnessed.

Thus, at this point the woman with the issue of blood uses the crush of the crowd to seek her own healing.

The assurance of the Saviour, vv. 35-37

Whilst the Lord is dealing with the woman with the issue of blood, a message comes from Jairus' house indicating the death of his daughter. The bearers of the message assume the finality of this situation, 'why troublest thou the Master any further?' v. 35. They not only assumed the situation to be closed, and the cause lost, but they also assumed this whole request of Jairus to the Lord to be a trouble, an inconvenience, or an annoyance to Him. How little they knew the Saviour!

It is at this point that the Lord gives assurance to Jairus, 'Be not afraid, only believe', v. 36. One of the continuing themes of the Gospel is the contrast between fear and faith, 4. 41. They cannot co-exist. Where there is fear, faith is marginalized. Luke tells us that the Lord added the words, 'and she shall be made whole', Luke 8. 50. The faith that Jairus had exercised in seeking the help of the Saviour would be rewarded, if only he kept believing!

With the three disciples, those chosen

to be the witnesses of the miracle, the Saviour went on to the house.

The activity of the mourners, vv. 38-40

The reality of the death of Jairus' daughter is confirmed for us here, for the mourners had arrived. As Mark records, they 'wept and wailed greatly', v. 38. These 'professional lamenters' were making a considerable tumult, but the hollowness of their supposed grief is seen as soon as the Lord gives His assessment of the situation. Their grief is turned to mockery and laughter, 'they laughed him to scorn', v. 40.

The Lord declared that 'the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth', v. 39. What a testimony to Jairus! His daughter was dead, but she would not remain so. When the Lord is present, He has power over death. Whatever the mourners may think and say is of no consequence. They are put out. The one who is master of the storm is now master of the house before He becomes master of death. Only five people were privileged to see the miracle performed – Jairus, his wife, Peter, James, and John.

The animation of Jairus' daughter, vv. 41-43

It is interesting that all three synoptic Gospel writers mention the fact that the Lord took the girl by the hand. It is significant in its tenderness but also in its strength in assisting the damsel, once alive, to sit up and then walk.

The importance of the words of the Lord are seen in the fact that they are:

- **Authoritative** – 'I say', v. 41. It was by His authority that the life of the girl returned to her. The one in whom the power of life is resident can speak with all the authority of heaven.
- **Personal** – 'unto thee', v. 41. This was not a general resurrection but a specific one.
- **Commanding** – 'arise', v. 41. This is a voice that cannot be ignored and a power that cannot be denied.

The outcome of the words of the Lord are seen 'straightway', v. 42. The reality of the miracle is seen in that she 'walked', v. 42, and kept on walking about,³ and that she ate, v. 43. The evidence was conclusive! What

wonder and astonishment filled the hearts of those who were prepared to believe and whose faith was ably rewarded.

The deliverance of the woman, vv. 25-34

As what is almost a distraction from the general account of the raising of Jairus' daughter comes the account of the woman with the issue of blood.

Her condition, vv. 25, 26

The full nature of the healing that is accomplished by the Lord can only be appreciated against the detailed background of her condition. Mark tells us of:

- **The disease** – ‘an issue of blood’, v. 25. Where the blood was flowing from is unclear, but the consequences of that flow were considerable. She would be constituted ritually unclean and this would affect her religious and social relations.
- **The duration** – ‘twelve years’, v. 25. What a burden!⁴ It is interesting that she had experienced this malady for the same number of years as Jairus' daughter had been alive.
- **The distress** – ‘had suffered many things of many physicians’, v. 26. Mark emphasizes that she had suffered. Apart from the physical, religious, and social effects of the disease, she had also tried various remedies, all of them seemingly costly, and without benefit. All that the medical sciences of the day had succeeded in doing was taking her money. She was physically, emotionally, and financially distressed.
- **The decline** – ‘but rather grew worse’, v. 26. All the expense had achieved nothing. She was now aware of the growing toll that the disease was taking on her frame.

Her conviction, vv. 27, 28

This woman was now desperate. All human resources, medically and financially, had been exhausted. But Mark tells us that ‘she . . . heard of Jesus’, v. 27. This was the hearing of faith. She acted upon what she had heard and made her way to meet the Saviour.

The extent of her faith is given us. Her inner thoughts were that, ‘If I

may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole’, v. 28. She felt that any part of the outer clothing would do. A touch was sufficient. The discretion with which she moved was to avoid any embarrassing public disclosure of her condition.

Her cure, v. 29

In Mark's customary language, he reminds us that the cure was immediate. There was no wait afforded by a lengthy treatment. There was no period of convalescence. There was no doubt, ‘she felt in her body’. The cure was complete as ‘the fountain of her blood was dried up’. She was delivered, the scourge of the disease was taken away and taken away permanently.

What an extensive and remarkable miracle was performed! What relief and joy were brought to the woman as a result of her faith in Christ!

His challenge, vv. 30-32

But the woman's desire to effect a cure without public disclosure is thwarted by the Lord. As quickly as the cure had been wrought, the Lord also knew ‘immediately’ what had been done. The Lord's repeated question, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ v. 30, was asked, not because He did not know the answer, but to allow the woman to come forward and make herself known willingly.

The disciples were incredulous. They assumed that the crowd, pushing and pressing forward around the Saviour, would have made physical contact on numerous occasions. But the Lord was not interested in the involuntary touch caused by physical nearness. He was concerned to meet the one whose touch was the voluntary, dependent touch of faith.

With the question comes the searching and probing look of the Lord, ‘he looked round about to see her’, v. 32. He kept looking and, it is clear from the verse, He kept looking for the woman. He knew her identity and searched to locate her. Nothing can be hidden from Him!

Her confession, v. 33

She had heard the question and, no doubt, felt the penetrating gaze of the

Saviour. Now, she came in response to the Saviour's command:

- **Reverently** – ‘fearing and trembling’. There was a sense of awe and reverence in her approach.
- **Humbly** – ‘and fell down before him’. She prostrated herself at the feet of her healer and benefactor. It was an acknowledgement of the unworthiness of her stealth.
- **Candidly** – ‘and told him all the truth’. He knew the account before it was given but open confession must accompany any salvation. Her testimony was also necessary to furnish the detail of the story and for the witnesses to appreciate what had been done.

His comfort, v. 34

Was she to be admonished in the way she had received her cure? Was what had been wrought to be undone? The words of the Lord are important and necessary for the woman, to bring comfort and assurance to her heart, and to the crowd, to testify of the way to spiritual blessing. They are words of:

- **Affection** – ‘Daughter’. The only recorded mention of this term indicated to the woman a new relationship into which she had been brought.
- **Affirmation** – ‘thy faith hath made thee whole’. It was not the physical touch. It was the belief in the healing and saving power of Christ that brought the cure.
- **Assurance** – ‘go in peace, and be whole of thy plague’. There was assurance of the future, one of peace. What a contrast with the distress and decline during the period of her illness. There was assurance as to the permanence of her cure. She was now whole and would continue to be so.

Against the pressing crowd and the pressing need of Jairus and his daughter, the Lord finds time for this woman, this social and religious outcast. What a testimony to the Saviour! What a challenge to us!

Endnotes

- 1 W. W. WIERSBE, *op. cit.*
- 2 K. S. WUEST, *op. cit.* pg. 109.
- 3 K. S. WUEST, *op. cit.* pg. 117.
- 4 HIEBERT comments, ‘Twelve years speaks of the long duration of her agony and distress’. D. E. HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 141.

Charles Stanley (1821-1890)

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

Charles Stanley, known under the initials of 'C.S.', was born in Rotherham, England. Little is known of his parents as he was left an orphan at the age of four and was brought up by a grandfather whom he described as 'a man of the strictest integrity'.¹ He began earning his living at the age of seven by working in the fields in the summer.

Attending school during the winter months, he had a great thirst for books and learning. Of that thirst he commented, 'One day I happened to say, in the presence of a poor woman, how I longed for books, and had nothing to read. "What, Charles," she said; "there is the word of God on that table, and you have nothing to read!" She said no more, but those words could not be forgotten. They were used by the Spirit to show me that I had no heart for God. This, no doubt, came with deeper force as I had, though only twelve years of age, a good knowledge of the letter of the word. In those days it was the lesson book in the village school, which I had left about a year; and for which I have ever been thankful'.² Although this initial reading only developed in him the desire to be religious, he acknowledged, 'the more I tried, the worse I became'. Sadly, as a seeking soul, he enquired of those church-going folks around him but confessed, 'There were none in those villages who could point me to the finished work of Christ'.³

However, by the mercy of God, he was converted when fourteen. Of that conversion he later wrote, 'After months of struggle and distress, I was returning home one dark rainy night, when the burden on my soul was so great, that I fell down on my face in the road, and cried out, "Oh Lord, I can do no more," and a deep sense that I was lost came over my soul. It was there, as I lay in the dark

lane alone, that the Spirit of God revealed to my soul the finished work of Christ. Then it was that I saw that which I was vainly trying to do had been done by my precious Substitute on the cross'.⁴

After his conversion, he moved to Sheffield and was apprenticed to a man who kept a steel, iron, and general hardware store. Of that time, he acknowledged, 'In looking back on those years, I am struck with one fact, that is, I made no advance in divine knowledge'.⁵ At age twenty-three, he began his own hardware business in Sheffield and opened a little room in Duke Street, Sheffield, for the preaching of the gospel. It was in that room that he met the businessman Captain Wellesly, under whose teaching 'the Bible became a new book to him'.⁶ He spent the next eighteen months studying the Epistle to the Romans.

Those early days left a deep impression upon Stanley. From his association with Wellesly, he heard that the Captain and a few others met to break bread. Intrigued as to what this meant, he went to find out. He commented, 'I sat behind, and naturally looked for the pulpit. There was no pulpit, but a table spread, or covered with a white cloth, and on it the bread and wine, in commemoration of the death of the Lord Jesus. I then looked for the minister, or president; there was no such person. All the believers gathered were seated around the table of the

Lord. A deep, solemn impression fell upon me: "These people have come to meet the Lord Himself".⁷ Some weeks later he joined the company and, initially, sat in silent worship.

In association with his business, he crisscrossed England, travelling as far as Exeter in the south-west as well as north to Newcastle. He also moved into Kent, north Wales, and Scotland, yet never neglected to preach the gospel in the villages surrounding the industrial centres of his home area of Sheffield and Rotherham. Wherever he journeyed it was because of a deep impression that he ought to go to specific places to preach the gospel, often where he had never been. PICKERING records one example, when Stanley was going to Tetbury, "On arriving at Wootton-under-Edge, I had some time to spare. It was about five o'clock on a hot day in the midst of harvest. There was scarcely a person to be seen in the little town. I was very distinctly impressed from the Lord, that I must preach the Gospel there that afternoon, yet there appeared to be no people to preach to. Nearly all seemed to be out in the harvest field. Yet the conviction deepened, that I must preach". Taking a handful of tracts, he began hunting for a congregation, great or small. He was standing in a little shop, speaking to a woman about her soul, when from up the road, a man puffing with exertion, perspiration streaming off his face, charged into the shop, and said, "Please, sir, are you a preacher of the Gospel?" "Yes," he admitted . . . The man, who was the town bellman (town crier), said, "I was working in the field, and a woman came past and told me someone was distributing tracts in Wootton, and it was just as if a voice had said to me, You must run, and there must be preaching in Wootton today. That is why I left my work, and came immediately".⁸ From that preaching souls were saved.

In addition to the Lord's leading as to his preaching, Stanley wrote of the Lord's provision. 'As we were reading, the Spirit of God laid

it on my heart that I must go to Scarborough to preach . . . This was a long journey then, via York, and I had not money to take my ticket. But then the Lord knew that. I took my bag, told the friends I was staying with that I felt distinctly called to go to Scarborough, though I had never been there, and only knew the name of one person there, and I had not money to pay my fare . . . I left the house, and walked until I was just stepping up to the booking-office, when A. J. cried out behind me, "We have just heard you are feeling led to go to Scarborough to preach to-morrow. A brother, Mr. H., desires to have fellowship with you, and has sent you, [I think it was £3] to pay your expenses".⁹

In contrast to some more modern forms of preaching, Pickering records of Stanley, "The preaching was devoid of emotional string-pulling or psychological manipulation. Stanley did little inviting, or pleading with sinners. He spoke almost entirely of the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner, and of justification in the risen Christ".¹⁰ Stanley was

not interested in counting the number of those who attended his meetings or of those who made professions of faith. He always viewed the results of his gospel preaching with caution. Rather, he commented, 'Oh depths of mercy, not only to have saved us from hell, but to use us as channels of mercy to others'.¹¹

Apart from Stanley's extensive preaching he will be remembered most for what became known as 'C.S. tracts'. Initially, many of those tracts were evangelistic in nature, including one on a favourite subject, entitled *Mephibosheth; lame on both feet*.¹² Of the extent of the usage of his tracts, Stanley later wrote, 'How little did I think at that moment that the Lord would use them in so many languages'.¹³ His simple and pithy style proved a blessing to many and his topics expanded as he began to 'write for the whole Church of God, or Gospel to every sinner'.¹⁴

During the last ten years of his life, he was editor of the monthly periodical *Things New and Old*.

In a period of significant turmoil in Christian circles, he used the periodical to contend for the divine authority of the scriptures, labouring also to build up believers in their faith. Of this period, SNELL writes that Stanley had 'nothing less before him than the blessing of the whole church of God. To the importance and scriptural teaching of this, he often referred. His ministry, in a word, was concerning our Lord Jesus Christ'.¹⁵

On Lord's Day evening, March 2nd, in what had become his home city of Sheffield, Stanley preached his last gospel message. Feeling unwell and conscious of his own frailty, he wrote to his daughter, 'I am entering my sunny year of 70, and shall in a few more days at most, be in the kingdom and the glory of Him who has loved me and died for me'.¹⁶ Rallying a little, Stanley was eventually called from his earthly home to glory on March 30th 1890. Of him, SNELL summarizes, 'he was an eminent evangelist, and had great delight in the service, both in oral ministry and in the writing, publication, and gratuitous distribution of gospel tracts'.¹⁷



Endnotes

- 1 CHARLES STANLEY, *The Way the Lord has led me*, found here: https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/stanley/Way_Lord_Led.html.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 HENRY PICKERING, *Chief Men among the Brethren*, Pickering and Inglis. Found here: <http://www.plymouthbrethren.org/article/51>.
- 7 STANLEY, *op. cit.*
- 8 PICKERING, *op. cit.*
- 9 STANLEY, *op. cit.*
- 10 PICKERING, *op. cit.*
- 11 STANLEY, *op. cit.*
- 12 A copy can be found here: <https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/stanley/Mephibosheth.html>.
- 13 PICKERING, *op. cit.*
- 14 PICKERING, *op. cit.*
- 15 H. H. SNELL, *Recollections of the Last Days of Charles Stanley*, G. Morrish, 1890. Found here: https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/stanley/Last_Days.html.
- 16 SNELL, *op. cit.*
- 17 SNELL, *op. cit.*

Memories of a godly man – the influence of Mr William Trew

By **DENNIS MACKINNON** Eastbourne, England

When I was asked to put pen to paper in a tribute to the life and work of Mr Trew, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his homecall, my first reaction was, surely it cannot be fifty years or more since I sat at the feet of this man of God and learned, from him, of Him who was the passion of his life. But it was – and, half a century on, the fragrance of the man and his teaching still abides with me.

I was saved in 1958 at the age of 13, coming from a non-Christian home in Cardiff, Wales, and, soon afterwards, got to know and value the man whom I, and other young believers of my generation, always referred to as ‘Mr Trew’ – although older brethren and sisters might refer to him as ‘Willie’ Trew.

It was of the goodness of God that we were able to sit for our formative years under the ministry of two great servants of God, whose ministry in South Wales shaped the spiritual experience of a generation of young people – Mr William Trew and Mr Cyril Hocking. I knew and valued both men, who were instrumental in teaching the scriptures of truth by life and by word.

Others may speak of Mr Trew’s birth in Stevenston, Lanarkshire, in Scotland in 1902 and his death in 1971, and all the work that he did in the Welsh valleys (often in partnership with Mr Walter Norris), taking the gospel to the people of Wales, after having been commended to full-time service at the rather tender age of 19. I speak of my knowledge of him during the 1960s when I sat at his feet, not only in assembly meetings but also in his (ever open) home. I well remember attending college about 150 metres from his home and slipping away when I did not have lectures to spend some time with him. He and his godly wife, always ‘Mrs Trew’, made me ever welcome.

My abiding memory of Mr Trew is that he was a man who exuded a love for his Saviour and who had a deep appreciation of the word of God. I was living in Zambia when he was called home in 1971, at a time when he and I were having an exchange of letters about the grating around the brazen altar. I regretted that, at the time of his passing, I did not know until well after the funeral, but his dear wife told me when my wife and I visited her at Christmas 1971, that the grating had occupied much of his thoughts in his last days.

But, essentially, for me the great thing about Mr Trew was not his teaching – of which more later – but the character of the man. He epitomized what was written by BEATRICE CLELLAND (1912-1997):

Not merely in the words you say,
Not only in the deeds confessed,
But in the most unconscious way,
Is Christ expressed.

Is it a beatific smile,
A holy light upon the brow? Oh no,
I felt His presence while
You laughed just now.

For me, ’twas not the truth you
taught,
To you so clear to me so dim,
But when you came to me you
brought
A sense of Him.

And from your life He beckons me,

And from your heart His love is
shed,
Till I lose sight of you and see
The Christ instead.¹

By the time that I got to know Mr Trew, the great ‘Norris and Trew’ gospel tent campaigns in the Valleys were but a memory and I knew him more as a teacher of the word. He had a particular way of breaking down the sections of his ministry. Some readers may remember, for example, his series on Philippians, in *Precious Seed* in 1963.² He broke down the chapters as follows:

- Ch. 1 – Christ the passion of a devoted life
- Ch. 2 – Christ the pattern of a selfless life
- Ch. 3 – Christ the pursuit of an ardent life
- Ch. 4 – Christ the power of a victorious life

He then broke down each chapter into subsections, some of which were further broken down, in his characteristic style.

Another breakdown of a book that I found in my notes of Mr Trew’s ministry in the late 1960s was of Malachi, which he outlined as shown in the table opposite.

It was characteristic of the man to give outlines of a whole book, before dealing with the text in his inimitable style.

During the time that I knew him, the concept of the New Testament assembly was very precious to Mr Trew. He valued and treasured it – and the saints who comprised it. He lived in a bungalow, from which he could see the Heath Gospel Hall, Cardiff, where he was in fellowship. In this he found delight; ‘Dennis’, he would say, ‘that’s where the saints meet!’ He considered each believer precious.

And this was reflected in his ministry at the time, where he would delight in expounding passages dealing with ‘church truth’, to the equal delight of those who heard him expound the scriptures.

Another characteristic feature of Mr Trew was that if one asked him

(i)	1. 1-5	General. Addressed to all Israel. Emphasis on the love of the Lord's heart.
(ii)	1. 6 – 2. 9	Direct. Addressed to the priests. Emphasis on the majesty of the Lord's name.
(iii)	2. 10-17	Direct. Addressed to Judah and Jerusalem. Emphasis on the weariness of the Lord's Spirit.
(iv)	3. 1-15	Direct. Addressed to the priests, Judah and Jerusalem. Emphasis on the immutability of the Lord's ways.
(iv)	3. 16 – 4. 6	The remnant introduced – the results of Malachi's ministry. Emphasis on the righteousness of the Lord's recompense.

a question, he would never 'beat about the bush'. He would always give his considered judgement to any question. This was really helpful to those young people who wanted 'the trumpet to give no uncertain sound'. He understood the issues behind the question and always gave his views on the matter.

When asked to pen this tribute to Mr Trew, I took counsel from another brother who knew him well, Roger Brind. Roger's recollections include the following:

When I first came to Cardiff as a student in 1964, I was regularly invited to the Trews' house for meals. This was before they lived in the bungalow, and I would arrive on my bicycle. Mr Trew always insisted that I put it around the back of the house behind a locked gate and not leave it locked in the front garden. He said, 'I believe in the total depravity of man – so let us not put temptation in his way!'

When in the house, he was always ready to ask and answer questions. He

had a habit of thinking through his answers before beginning to speak. I remember Mrs Trew saying once, 'Willie, you should start answering more quickly: you'll put the boy off asking questions'. He apologized but said that this was his way.

I also remember a visit that a number of us 'young people' made and prophetic issues came up. If I remember correctly, he was just recovering from a heart attack and he told us that he had read and read the prophetic books during his recovery period and had seen things he had never seen before. He took down a large map of the Middle East, put it on the floor and then showed us where all these new pieces of information fitted into the divine plan and where the events were to take place geographically. It must have been a strange sight, four or five young men sitting on the floor and Mr Trew kneeling down and using the large map and his NEWBERRY Bible to teach us.

Another thing that I remember was

when he came to Llandaff North Gospel Hall, Cardiff, every Monday evening from July 1970 to October 1971 for our prayer meeting and Bible study. I usually picked him up and, as we set out for the hall, invariably the first question was, 'how is Susan (my wife)?' Then, 'how are Joanna and Mark (my children)?' Then he would ask about my parents, who were old friends. His detailed concern for individuals and his memory of them was a real example. He wanted prayer information. While in the meeting he encouraged all to take part and, although we were in awe of him for his knowledge, understanding and spirituality, he was remarkably encouraging to us all. We all learned what a kind and considerate man he was. One particular thing I remember him saying was, 'People quote me but rarely in the spirit in which I said what I said'.

I remember that, on the last Monday he was at Llandaff North, before he went on his last journey to Peterhead, in Aberdeenshire, an assembly which he loved, he asked if he could say a few words at the end of the meeting. He told us he would be away for about a month and that we would be very much in his prayers. He told us the doctor had advised him, because of his health, that this should be his last 'preaching tour' and he had accepted that. He had asked the doctor if he could continue visiting us and the doctor had agreed. He told us he planned to spend his time writing on this return from Scotland. He then commended us into the hands of God. It was very much an Acts chapter 20 moment! The Lord had other plans, as he was called home following his last message in Peterhead. Mrs Trew told me afterwards that he spoke on John chapter 17 for the week, and it was as if he were already in heaven as he lifted the saints there as well'.

To know the man was to love him. May these few thoughts open to another generation the man that Mr Trew was.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.litsjournal.org/2017/07/16/seeing-christ-followers/>.
- 2 Found here: https://www.preciousseed.org/article_detail.cfm?articleID=2099.



BALAAAM

Part 6: Numbers 23. 27 - 24. 9

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

Balaam's first two attempts to curse the children of Israel had been totally unsuccessful. Each time the Lord intervened and, instead of a curse, Balaam pronounced a blessing. In the first parable, Balaam described them as being a separated people 'not . . . reckoned among the nations'. In the second parable, they are spoken of as being a holy people in their standing before God, 'He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel'.¹ At the end of the first attempt, Balak complained, 'I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether'. After the second attempt, he said 'Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all', to which Balaam replied, 'Told not I thee, saying, All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?'² Despite what Balak said, and clearly dismissive of the sovereign power of God, he granted to Balaam a third opportunity to curse the people. It seems Balak still clung to the thought that maybe the location was unsuitable and a different locality, not to mention new altars and sacrifices, might produce a different result. FEREDAY succinctly says, 'This was sheer wickedness, Jehovah had twice thwarted his plans, yet Balak was determined to make another effort'.³

For the third attempt, Balak brought Balaam to 'the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon', 23. 28. The word 'Jeshimon' denotes a desert or wilderness, the location being a ridge from which it seems Balaam had the clearest view yet of Israel's camp spread out before him. The name 'Peor' suggests it was an appointed site for the worship of 'Baal-Peor', the 'Lord of Peor', the worship of whom the children of Israel were later seduced into by the women of Moab, Num. 25. The familiar ritual of building altars and offering sacrifices is repeated. Taking a summary, there have now been twenty-one altars, twenty-one bullocks, and twenty-one rams. Could God be manipulated into changing His mind with a wealth of altars and sacrifices? Balak might have hoped so but Proverbs chapter 21 verse 27 says, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?' – the exact situation with Balak and Balaam.

Though the altars and sacrifices were simply a repetition of what

had been done previously, when we come to Numbers chapter 24 there are some noticeable differences concerning Balaam:

1. 'When Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness', v. 1. In the second parable, Balaam said, 'Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob', 23. 23. He has realized, no doubt much against his will, that whatever power or influence he possessed regarding the spirit world, it was impotent in seeking to prevail against the purpose and the people of God. He has abandoned seeking enchantments.
2. 'The spirit of God came upon him', v. 2. Formerly the Lord 'put a word' in Balaam's mouth, but on this occasion the Spirit of God came upon him. In verse 3, he describes himself as the 'man whose eyes are open [i.e., "uncovered, unveiled"]',

in verse 4, that he 'heard the words of God . . . saw the vision of the Almighty, falling' (striking Balaam down). The words 'into a trance' should be omitted, 'falling . . . but having his eyes open', the eyes of his understanding opened to clearly perceive God's purpose respecting His people.⁴ Why such a detailed description? His ears open to hear God's voice, his understanding open to perceive God's purpose. Surely to impress upon Balak the clarity of the vision given to Balaam and the divine authority of the message he is about to give.

Setting his face toward the wilderness, 'Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes', v. 2. What a sight that must have been! The tabernacle in the midst and the tribes abiding in their appointed places, by their standards as recorded in Numbers chapter 2. Each tribe in its divinely appointed place, God dwelling in the midst. David would later write, 'How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity . . . there the Lord commanded the blessing', Ps. 133. 1. We know that during the reign of Rehoboam the nation of Israel was divided into the northern and southern kingdoms, a breach that, to this day, has never been healed, but there is a time coming when the tribes will be regathered. Looking on to that day, the prophet Ezekiel was directed to take two sticks, one representative of the northern kingdom, the other of the southern kingdom, the Lord saying, 'Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all'.⁵ As we picture the scene before Balaam, what of the unity and order that should mark the people of God today? Are our words and ways consistent with 'endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'?⁶

In the first parable, Israel was a **chosen** people, in the second, **cleansed**, now, in the third parable, a **comely** people. The description Balaam gives of the camp stands in marked contrast to the wilderness terrain that he set his face toward. Balaam speaks of valleys, gardens, trees, rivers and waters.⁷ 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters', Num. 24. 5, 6. TATFORD comments, 'These were far more than the abodes of insignificant nomadic tribes, and the language of the poet broke from Balaam's lips . . . Balaam saw the settlements of Israel spreading out like broad valleys, the open ground between the tents reaching into the distance like beautifully watered glens, the tents like riverside gardens planted by the Lord, the people like lign aloes and cedar trees'.⁸ This is a description suggestive of **life and vitality, beauty and fragrance, strength and stateliness**. It may not be Balaam's view but, empowered by the Spirit, he is giving voice to how the Lord saw them. Despite the nation's subsequent history and present state, that is how the people will yet be seen in the outworking of divine purpose. Foretelling such days, Isaiah says, 'thou shalt be

like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not', 58. 11. In the book of Hosea, the Lord says, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon', 14. 5, 6. While all these verses relate to Israel, we should not forget that Paul spoke of the assembly at Corinth as 'God's husbandry' or 'cultivated garden', 1 Cor. 3. 9. Divine order marked Israel's camp, should that not be so of each local assembly? Doesn't the apostle say, 'God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints', and again, 'Let all things be done decently and in order', 1 Cor. 14. 33, 40? As a cultivated garden, shouldn't each assembly be found fruitful before God? Fruit, attractive to behold and sweet to the taste? All speaking the same thing, with no divisions among them, perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgement, 1 Cor. 1. 10.

Having described Israel's camp Godward, Balaam next spoke of what, in divine purpose, they were appointed to be in witness and testimony manward. 'He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted', Num. 24. 7. Four

things are mentioned: his 'buckets . . . seed . . . king . . . kingdom', and they naturally divide into two couplets.

The imagery is first of a man carrying two pails of water on a pole stretched across his shoulders. The buckets are full to the brim and at each step he takes the water spills out. This is illustrative of the people abundantly blessed of God and becoming a channel of blessing to others. The next stanza continues that theme, 'his seed . . . in many waters' and carries an echo of Genesis chapter 22 verses 17 and 18 and the Lord's promise to Abraham, 'That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice'. Perusing these statements, we cannot but think of the future days of blessing that lie in store for the nation, when, according to the prophetic scriptures, not only will the people of Israel be richly blessed of God, but will, through divine enabling, be themselves a channel of blessing to others. As to the blessing of the nation, 'Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring', Isa. 44. 2, 3. But, as we shall see in the next article, Israel's influence will yet be worldwide.



Endnotes

- 1 Num. 23. 9, 21.
- 2 Num. 23. 11, 25, 26.
- 3 W. W. FEREDAY, *Jonah and Balaam*, John Ritchie Ltd., pg. 62.
- 4 Cp. Paul's prayer for the believers at Ephesus, Eph. 1. 18.
- 5 Ezek. 37. 21, 22.
- 6 Eph. 4. 1-6.
- 7 J. J. STUBBS, *What the Bible Teaches*, Numbers, John Ritchie, pp. 322, 323.
- 8 F. A. TATFORD, *Prophet from the Euphrates*, Prophetic Witness Publishing House, 1973, pg. 50.

The preservation of the Messianic line

By **MERVYN WISHART** Newcastle, Northern Ireland

Part 2

By might of Israel's enemies

The children of Israel were oppressed by the Egyptians in Egypt for 430 years. When they commenced their journey through the wilderness, they were attacked by the Amalekites. When they crossed the Jordan and entered the land of Canaan, seven nations, each greater and mightier than themselves, awaited them, Deut.

7. 1. In the days of the judges, the Midianites and the Philistines were their constant enemies. Babylon was another mighty enemy that conquered Jerusalem around 604 BC.

The question is, why were the Israelites hated so much that their enemies' aim was to blot out their name forever? The psalmist, speaking to the Lord, said, 'They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance', Ps. 83. 4.

It was a spiritual warfare. To understand the reason for it, we must begin in the garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, God said to the serpent, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel', Gen. 3. 15. If the enemies of Israel, energized by Satan, could wipe out the nation, then the line of the Messiah would be broken. But their survival was assured. They were protected by an omnipotent God, the same God whose promise was, 'For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her . . . he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye', Zech. 2. 5, 8.

By a man

In speaking of Judas Iscariot, the Lord Jesus quoted from Psalm 41

verse 9, 'Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me'. This is a clear prophecy that it would be someone close to the Lord who would betray Him. None of the other disciples seemed to suspect Judas; they thought rather of themselves, and asked, 'Lord, is it I?' Matt. 26. 22.

In John chapter 13, there are two passages which confirm that when Judas acted as he did, and sold the Saviour for thirty pieces of silver, he was acting under the control of Satan. 'And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him', v. 2 – the idea for the betrayal of Christ was conceived by the devil. 'And after the sop Satan entered into him [Judas]. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly', v. 27 – he was possessed by Satan.

Later that evening in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus would say to the band of men who came to arrest Him, 'this is your hour, and the power of darkness', Luke 22. 53. Satan was active both in the conception of the plan and in carrying it out, a further example of his enmity against the seed of the woman. He frantically attempted to frustrate the purposes of God, not aware that these events were moving according to God's eternal plan and

in fulfilment of His prophetic word written one thousand years before in Psalm 41.

A brief look into the future may help us to understand the past

In Revelation chapter 12 verse 1, John sees a woman, who wears a crown of twelve stars. She is mentioned seven times in the chapter. The twelve stars lead us to conclude that the woman could be Israel. This is confirmed by verse 5, 'And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne'. It was from Israel that the Saviour came, 'of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen', Rom. 9. 5. The child is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus. He alone will rule all nations with a rod of iron, Ps. 2. 8, 9; Rev. 2. 27. He alone in His ascension 'was caught up unto God, and to his throne'.

There was one who was enraged at the birth of the child. Four names are given in Revelation chapter 12: the dragon, that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan, v. 9. 'He persecuted the woman [Israel] which brought forth the man child', v. 13; '[he] was wroth with the woman', v. 17.

Even after the child is born and caught up to God in His ascension, the animosity of the devil continues against Israel. Subsequent history has made clear that the persecution of Israel continues to this day.

Although 4,000 years had rolled by since the words of Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 were spoken, the promise was fulfilled, 'But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons', Gal. 4. 4, 5.

God's first promise has been fulfilled, and every subsequent promise will be fulfilled, 'there hath not failed one word of all his good promise', 1 Kgs. 8. 56; 'For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen', 2 Cor. 1. 20.



Solomon's Temple

By **JEREMY GIBSON** Derby, England

PART 1

When King David wanted to build a house for God's name, a permanent resting place for the ark,¹ Jehovah revealed to him a full blueprint of the structure of the temple, its surrounding courts and furniture, as well as instructions detailing the courses of the priests, 1 Chr. 28. 11-19. But, because David was a man of war, God chose Solomon to build the temple.²

Appreciating the enormity of the task ahead of his son, David prepared with all his might 'abundantly before his death', 1 Chr. 22. 5; 29. 2, dedicating to the Lord a combination of military spoils and gifts offered by mostly subjugated Gentile nations.³ He took golden shields and vast quantities of brass from Hadarezar King of Zobah, 2 Sam. 8. 7, 8; 1 Chr. 18. 7, 8, and amassed 100,000 talents of gold, one million talents of silver, brass, iron, timber, 'onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance', 1 Chr. 22. 2-5, 14; 29. 2-5.

Beginning in the fourth year of his reign, 480 years after the Exodus, Solomon took seven years to build the temple,⁴ erecting it on Mount Moriah, Gen. 22. 2; 2 Chr. 3.1, and on the site of Ornan's threshing floor, where David had offered a sacrifice to arrest God's judgement.⁵

The house

The main temple structure was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits broad and thirty cubits high.⁶ High in its walls were windows large enough to let light in, but narrow enough to possibly prevent intruders, 1 Kgs. 6. 4. Without noise or dust, each carefully prepared stone was slotted into its place, v. 7. Inside, 'from the floor . . . to the ceiling' the walls were completely panelled with cedar boards.⁷ After the cedar panelling was carved with

'gourds and open flowers', 1 Kgs. 6. 18, 29, NASB, it was covered with 3,000 talents of gold.⁸ This gold may have been in the form of thin plates, engraved with palm trees, chains, open flowers, and cherubim, which were nailed to the underlying cedar wood with fifty shekels weight of golden nails, and then garnished with precious stones.⁹ It is unclear how the 7,000 talents of silver devoted to the walls was used, 1 Chr. 29. 4. Gold-covered fir-planking formed the floor, 1 Kgs. 6. 15, 30, the roof being made of 'beams and boards of cedar', v. 9.

The oracle

The house subdivided into two sections: the oracle and the greater house. A twenty-cubit cedar cube, lined with 600 talents of gold, 2 Chr. 3. 8, was called 'the oracle' [*debir*, 'innermost part of the sanctuary'],¹⁰ 1 Kgs. 6. 5, 16, 19, 20, 'the inner house', v. 27, 'the place of the mercy seat', 1 Chr. 28. 11, and 'the most holy house', 2 Chr. 3. 8. The ten cubits, unaccounted for in the oracle's height, may have accommodated the 'upper chambers' which were also lined with gold, v. 9. The Ark of the Covenant, only containing 'the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb', 1 Kgs. 8. 9, was placed within the oracle,¹¹ its long staves not being removed, cp. Exod. 25. 12-15, as the KJV infers, but visible 'from the holy place before the oracle', 1 Kgs. 8. 8 JND. Above it, 'facing the main room' like sentries,¹² stood two ten-cubit high cherubim, sculptured in olive wood and overlaid with gold. Their five-foot long wings extended from one wall to the other, meeting midway.¹³ Together they were called 'the chariot of the cherubim', 1 Chr. 28. 18.

The greater house

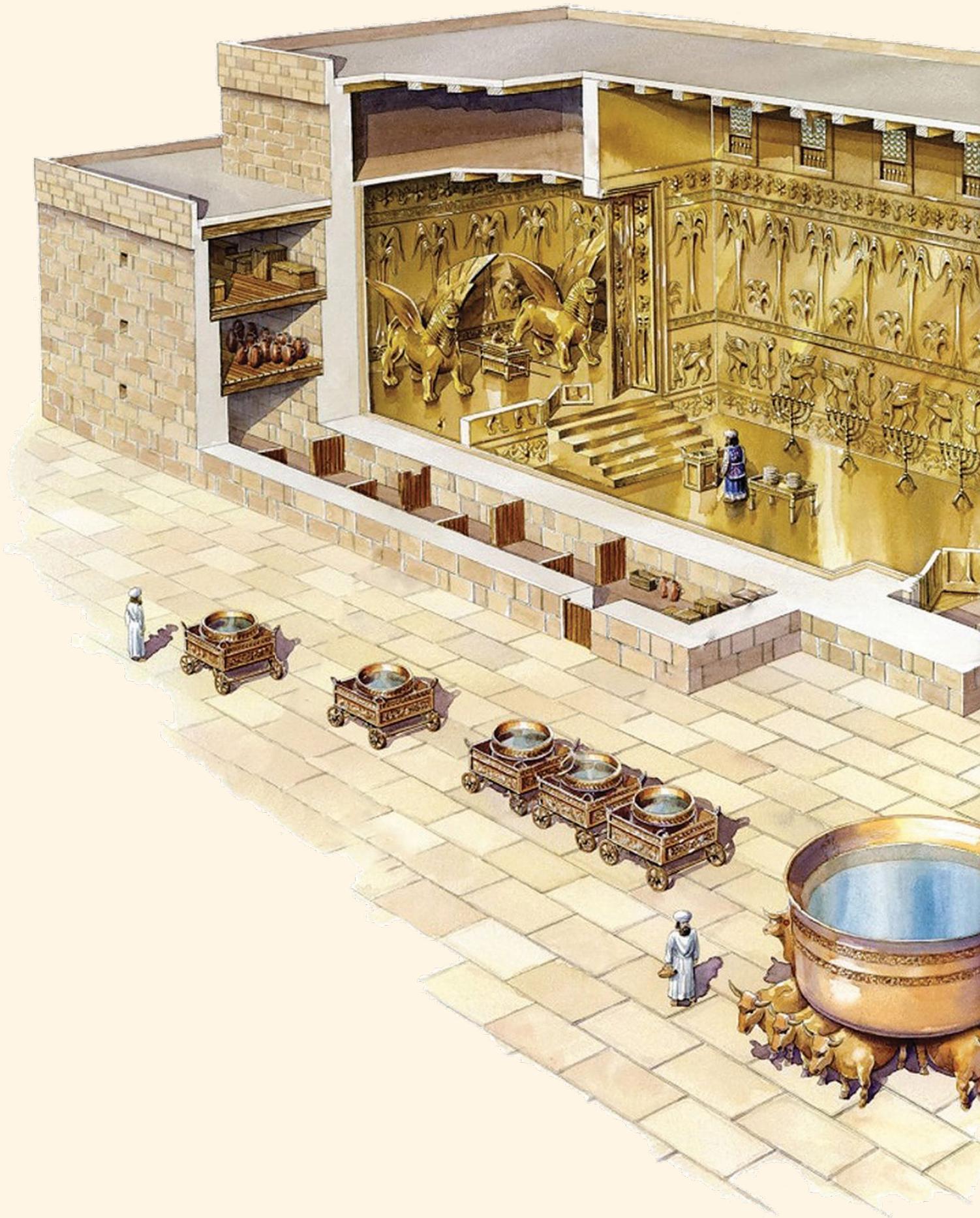
The main hall was forty cubits long, termed 'the temple [*heykal*, a large public building]', 1 Kgs. 6. 5, 17, and 'the greater house', 2 Chr. 3. 5. The

oracle was separated from it by its gold-covered cedar wall containing two olive wood, gold-plated doors, which hung on golden hinges and were decorated with cherubim, palm trees and open flowers.¹⁴ In front of these doors were golden chains, 1 Kgs. 6. 21, and a veil, made of 'blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon', 2 Chr. 3. 14. This triple barrier made it clear that the holiest remained mostly inaccessible. Immediately beyond the veil was the cedar wood, gold-covered altar,¹⁵ upon which King Uzziah attempted to burn incense, 2 Chr. 26. 16-18. Five golden lampstands, each ornamented with flowers¹⁶ and five golden shewbread tables lined the right and left sides.¹⁷

The chambers

Adjoining the main structure were three-tiered, five-cubit high chambers. The lower chambers were five cubits broad, the middle six and the upper ones seven, their cedar wood ceilings and floors resting on buttressed shelving, which avoided damaging the main temple walls, 1 Kgs. 6. 5, 6, 10. These chambers were accessed through a door on the right side of the main temple, a winding staircase joining the three levels, v. 8. The silver tables and lampstands may have been used in these chambers, 1 Chr. 28. 15, 16.¹⁸ There were also chambers within the walls of the inner court. Although not explicitly detailed, it seems that these chambers together served multiple functions.

The wealth of the royal family, money dedicated to the temple, and trespass money (which belonged to the priests) was stored in them,¹⁹ as was the food tithes for the priests, 2 Chr. 31. 4-14. David's spears and shields, the tabernacle and its holy vessels, as well as those vessels which were in active use were all kept in these chambers.²⁰ Singing Levites 'remained in the chambers', 1 Chr. 9. 33, and Levite temple porters 'lodged round about the house of God', vv. 17-27, perhaps in the chambers. Joash was hidden from Athaliah in a





*Image taken from the ESV Study Bible
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bedchamber in the house of the Lord.²¹ At the beginning of Josiah's rule they found a copy of the Law of God in the temple, perhaps in a chamber, 2 Chr. 34. 8-15. Important meetings took place in these chambers, many of which were either claimed by or allocated to individuals or groups.²² In Ezekiel's day, Judah's elders worshipped idols in a chamber next to 'the door of the court', Ezek. 8. 7-13.

The porch

The main temple doors were bi-folding, made of fir trees and carved with cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. They were gold-covered, hanging on olive tree posts.²³ Projecting ten cubits in front of the house was a twenty-cubit porch, probably twenty cubits high, 1 Kgs. 6. 3; 2 Chr. 3. 4.²⁴ This entrance porch was overlaid within with pure gold. Its steps – 'pillars', 1 Kgs. 10. 12; 2 Chr. 9. 11, translates the Hebrew word *mis'ād*, meaning steps²⁵ – were made of almuḡ wood, which was 'probably red sandalwood (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) imported from India (Ophir) . . . [which] wears well as a tread'.²⁶

The two brazen pillars²⁷

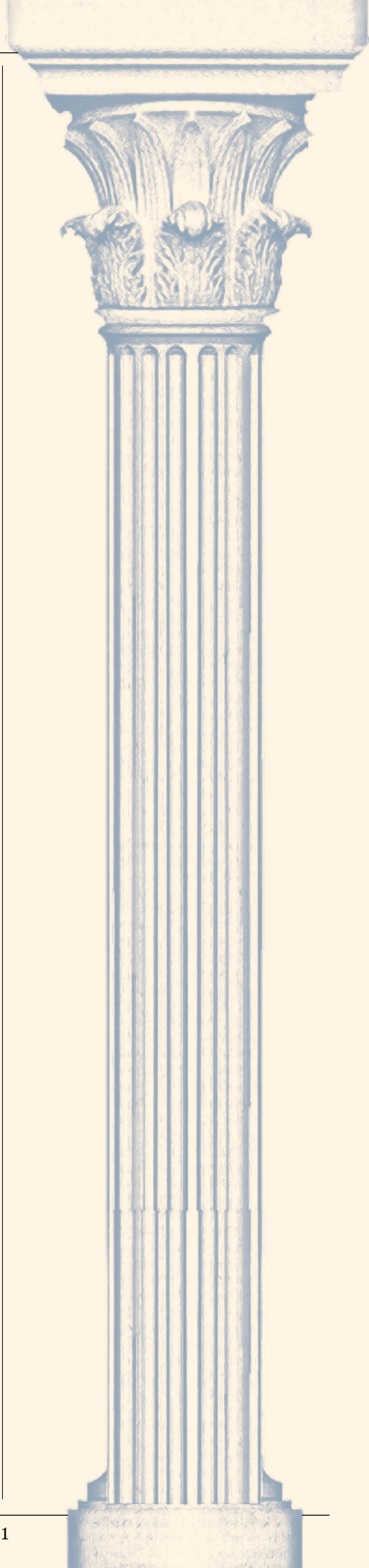
At the entrance to the porch stood two brazen pillars, named Jachin ('he will establish') and Boaz ('in him is strength'), 1 Kgs. 7. 21. Hiram seems to have cast a four-finger thick, twelve-cubit in circumference and thirty-five-cubit long cylinder, which he then bisected. If each half was raised onto a half cubit base, they would be eighteen cubits tall. Their hollow 'heads', 2 Chr. 3. 16, or chapiters²⁸ were five cubits high, the top four cubits being of 'lily-work after the manner of the hall', 1 Kgs. 7. 19.²⁹ Each head was covered with 'nets of network', v. 17, over which were two rows of one hundred pomegranates connected by a chain³⁰ and closely linked to seven 'twisted threads of chain work', v. 17 NASB. Joash stood by one of these pillars when he was anointed king, armed guards standing in front of the temple from right to left by the brazen altar, 2 Kgs. 11. 11; 2 Chr. 23. 10-13, the courts being filled with people, 2 Chr. 23. 5.

BIBLE MEASURES³¹

Hebrew measure	Metric equivalent
Cubit (<i>'ammāh</i>)	45 centimetres
Bath (<i>bath</i>)	22 litres
Shekel (<i>sheqel</i>)	12 grammes
Talent (<i>kikār</i>)	36 kilogrammes

Endnotes

- 1 2 Sam. 7. 1, 2; 1 Chr. 17. 1; 22. 7; 28. 2.
- 2 2 Sam. 7. 12, 13; 1 Chr. 17. 10-14; 22. 8-10; 28. 3, 6.
- 3 2 Sam. 8. 2-12; 12. 30; 1 Chr. 18. 2-11; 20. 2.
- 4 1 Kgs. 5. 17; 6. 1, 37, 38; 2 Chr. 3. 1, 2.
- 5 2 Sam. 24; 1 Chr. 21; 2 Chr. 3. 1, 2.
- 6 1 Kgs. 6. 2; 2 Chr. 3. 3.
- 7 1 Kgs. 6. 15, 18; 2 Chr. 3. 5 NASB.
- 8 1 Kgs. 6. 21, 22; 1 Chr. 29. 4.
- 9 2 Chr. 3. 5-7, 9; cp. 1 Chr. 29. 2, 8.
- 10 J. STRONG, *A concise dictionary of the words in the Hebrew Bible; with their rendering in the authorized English version*, Hendrickson Publishers, pg. 29.
- 11 1 Kgs. 6. 19; 8. 1-11; 2 Chr. 1. 4; 5. 2-14.
- 12 2 Chr. 3. 13 NASB.
- 13 1 Kgs. 6. 23-28; 1 Chr. 28. 18; 2 Chr. 3. 10-13.
- 14 1 Kgs. 6. 31, 32; 7. 50; 2 Chr. 4. 22.
- 15 1 Kgs. 6. 20, 22; 7. 48; 1 Chr. 28. 18; 2 Chr. 4. 19.
- 16 1 Kgs. 7. 49; 2 Chr. 4. 7, 20-22.
- 17 1 Kgs. 7. 48; 2 Chr. 4. 8, 19.
- 18 T. NEWBERRY, *Solomon's Temple and its Teaching*, John Ritchie Ltd, Reprint 2009, pp. 61, 62, 64.
- 19 1 Kgs. 7. 51; 14. 25, 26; 15. 15, 18, 19; 2 Kgs. 12. 4, 9, 10, 16-18; 22. 3, 4; 2 Chr. 5. 1; 12. 9; 15. 18; 16. 2; 24. 8, 11; 28. 21; 34. 8-15; cp. 1 Chr. 28. 11.
- 20 2 Kgs. 11. 10; 2 Chr. 23. 9; 1 Kgs. 8. 4; 1 Chr. 9. 28.
- 21 2 Kgs. 11. 2, 3; 2 Chr. 22. 11, 12.
- 22 2 Kgs. 23. 11; Jer. 35. 3, 4; 36. 10, 20, 21.
- 23 1 Kgs. 6. 33-35; 2 Chr. 4. 22.
- 24 C. F. KEIL and F. DELITZSCH, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1996, Volume 3, pg. 586.
- 25 R. L. HARRIS, G. L. ARCHER, B. K. WALTKE, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Moody Publishers, 1980, pg. 629.
- 26 J. EVANS, *God's Trees*, Day One Publications, 2015, pg. 64.
- 27 1 Kgs. 7. 15-22, 41, 42; 2 Kgs. 25. 17; 2 Chr. 3. 15-17; 4. 12, 13; Jer. 52. 21-23.
- 28 Described as a 'belly' [*beten*, 'denotes the "lower abdomen"' C. F. KEIL and F. DELITZSCH, *op. cit.* pg. 71], 1 Kgs. 7. 20, or 'bowls', v. 41, or 'pommels, *gullāh*' KJV, or 'globes' JND in 2 Chr. 4. 12.
- 29 C. F. KEIL and F. DELITZSCH, *op. cit.*, pg. 71.
- 30 1 Kgs. 7. 18, 20, 41, 42; 2 Chr. 3. 16; 4. 12, 13; Jer. 52. 23.
- 31 PETER SCHMIDT, *Biblical Measures and their Translation: Notes on Translating Biblical Units of Length, Area, Capacity, Weight, Money and Time*, SIL Electronic Working Papers, February 2014.



Zebedee and his faithful wife

By **RODERICK A. BARTON** Birmingham, England

In the scriptures, the Spirit of God draws our attention to the spiritual value of what might appear, to the human mind, to be purely secondary detail. However, they are the most practical writings given to man, and being so precious, they embrace every aspect of life. Thus, it is profitable to observe the way in which the name of a fisherman of Galilee, Zebedee, is so often linked to two of the three disciples who were closer to the Lord Jesus than the rest of the twelve.

In Matthew chapter 4 verse 21, the Lord Jesus sees 'James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets'. What is the significance of this detail or even the mention of Zebedee's name?

Zebedee had been in the craft of his trade including mending nets with his sons. Two generations were labouring together for their livelihood. James and John had probably learnt the ways of fishing from their father from an early age, learning to work for the mutual good of one another. It may be that discipline was being instilled in the lives of these two young men far beyond the trade of fishing, moulding them for usefulness in divine service, as service for God often requires working in harmony with, and for the mutual benefit of others. In their experience, the patient learning and practice of net mending had to come first, and often the seemingly menial tasks of everyday life impact upon the development of the character for serving the greatest of masters. Have we not seen the tragedy of those who, through no fault of their own, have become involved in the Lord's work and got into difficulties because they have not first proved themselves in the basic responsibilities and disciplines of life, including family commitments? The Lord Jesus fulfilled His family responsibilities and learned the discipline of the carpenter's trade before He embarked on His public ministry.

Zebedee and his wife were a partnership used by God to prepare

their two sons for His service, and they, along with others, would faithfully preach a message that would change the lives and eternal destinies of millions, for His own glory. Zebedee is recorded in all four Gospels as the father of James and John, and his wife is mentioned twice. In Matthew, she is presented in her motherhood. Mark treats her more as an individual who bears the name Salome, and follows the Lord Jesus to the cross, witnessing His sinless life, death, and resurrection. Following Him did not hinder her role as a wife and mother. She faithfully discharged all those responsibilities before God and was privileged to walk with other godly women.

In Matthew chapter 20 verse 20, we read that she came worshipping and desired that her sons sat one on either side of the Lord Jesus in His kingdom. Although she did not realize the gravity of what she was asking, in her heart she had the highest spiritual ambition for her sons. Spiritual ambition for one's children is no light thing but should prayerfully occupy the mind of every believing parent. A home may never rise above the level of the commitment of the mother. She can be crucial to its long-term welfare both spiritually and practically. Zebedee's wife is a worthy example.

The second mention of her is seven chapters later. She stands alongside Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and other women, witnessing the events at the cross. On

both occasions, she is described as the mother of Zebedee's children. What great credit is given to this couple! Furthermore, such a description is preserved for eternity, Ps. 119. 89. Zebedee and his wife are a lovely picture of a married couple whose home was a place where children had been brought up 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord', Eph. 6. 4, where love, mutual support, encouragement, respect, and loyalty were so evident in family life. This God-fearing home was also mirrored in the family business. What a blessed example of a well-ordered home, and well-ordered business under the headship of Zebedee.

Zebedee's character has lessons for us. Mark's account of James and John being called to discipleship refers to the fact that he was not left alone in the boat. There were hired servants left with him. The Lord had prospered the enterprise for father, sons, and servants alike, and He had prepared for James and John to become 'fishers of men', Mark 1. 17, without harming the livelihood of others, 1 Sam. 2. 30. Scripture reveals no words spoken by Zebedee which shows, along with his wife, a heart prepared to let God have His way. He saw his sons go in the service of God without a murmur. How fitting that his name is derived from a Hebrew word which means 'giving'. Zebedee the fisherman and his good wife are an encouragement, and an example to all believing parents that a home where His name is honoured will have far-reaching consequences right into eternity.

A final word – the learning, the working together, and the mending of nets in the boat came first. Then James and John were fitted to be taken by the Lord Jesus Himself up onto the Mount of Transfiguration, into the bedchamber of Jairus' daughter, and further than all others into the Garden of Gethsemane shortly before His crucifixion. How close they, and fellow fisherman Peter, walked with the Lord Jesus! No wonder they were so mightily used for the glory of God. Zebedee and his wife must have rejoiced to see their sons whom they had loved and raised go forward in divine service for the glory of God.

THINGS THAT CONCERN US

PHILIPPIANS

By **FRED WHITELOCK** Warrington, England

5

Your moderation, 4. 5

The word 'moderation' means gentleness, and has been rendered 'yielded-ness', or 'sweet reasonableness', which is identified as a trait of character.¹ This should speak to us. How do we react? Sadly, how often do we allow the 'flesh' to come to the fore? There are another two points which challenge all our hearts: the first being, 'unto all men'; and the other, 'The Lord is at hand'. With respect to the first, it not only includes our attitude to our brethren and sisters in the Lord, but also to the world outside. The testimony of Christ is at stake and it is of paramount importance that we do not mar it. With respect to the second, throughout the Epistle, Paul has underlined the coming day of assessment, 1. 6; 2. 16. The thought of the Lord 'at hand' can also be taken to mean that He is present at all times, and therefore our behaviour should be in accord with this as He weighs every thought and action in all that we do.

Your requests, 4. 6

What a privileged people we really are! We have not only been saved and made sons of God by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, but also brought into fellowship with the eternal God, and able to call Him 'our Father'.

How little we appreciate this privilege, and do not spend enough time, not only in prayer, but also in His presence. The attitude of our lives should be one of constant prayer in the presence of the Lord. If we do not spend time in His presence, how can we make our 'supplications' know unto Him?

How often have we found ourselves in situations where we are anxious – being full of care, and failing to look to our

heavenly Father and seek His help 'in prayer and supplication'. It is not just ourselves individually that the apostle is thinking of, but that of the collective body of saints, the assembly, as well. Additional to that is the thought of 'thanksgiving'. Do we remember to give thanks to our God and Father for the help and answer that He gives to our prayers and requests? Again, how often we fail to remember these things, yet He appreciates and looks for that sweetness of thanksgiving from our hearts. For therein is the peace of God ensured.

Your hearts and minds, 4. 7

Following his thoughts in the previous verse, he now underlines a blessed assurance that is found in pursuing such an attitude of prayer and supplication. It is one of peace and tranquillity that comes as a result of the closeness of union with our God. It is a peace that will 'keep [garrison]' our hearts and minds, 'through Christ Jesus'. It is that which will encircle the troubled one with that assurance of a caring and loving Father. Notice the two aspects of that peace:

- If it is our 'hearts', it is His **love** which encircles with that peace.
- If it is our 'minds', it is His **thoughts** which encircle, again, with that peace.

Your care of me, 4. 10

How precious it is when saints show a caring attitude to their brethren and sisters in the Lord. It is a wonderful source of comfort and encouragement that is much needed today, even as it was in the days of Paul. It is a comfort to know that someone is thinking of me and is prepared to show the love of Christ to me. It is sad when one hears of the world showing

more love and care for a dear saint than that which the saints show to the same individual. Paul underlines this in his letter to the Corinthians, where he states, 'That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another', 1 Cor. 12. 25. Caring for saints is what the Lord described in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where the Samaritan cared for an injured man, Luke 10. 34, 35. The difference here in this verse is that they wanted to show that love and care for the apostle but had lacked opportunity to do so. In other words, he is giving them credit for the gifts and all that he had received via Epaphroditus from them. The apostle had learned from experience in his walk with the Lord, that no matter what the situation was he found himself in, he was able to say, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me', 4. 13. He knew the truth of the words that Peter expressed, 'Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you', 1 Pet. 5. 7. May the Lord help us to make a love and a care for fellow saints real in our lives, and not be hypocritical about it, even as the Lord has shown to us, such guilty sinners as we are.

Your account, 4. 17

Whilst gifts and help given to the Lord's servants and work can be envisioned here, we can be assured that whatever is given to the Lord is recorded in heaven's account book and will be rewarded a hundredfold in a coming day, Matt. 19. 29. What have we that we have not received? We are to return to Him that which is His own. It is not the tithe, but how much I can sacrificially give of my income to the work of the Lord, as the Lord has prospered me, 1 Cor. 16. 2. How the apostle rejoiced at their unselfish giving that more than met his needs and following this he will give them assurance concerning their own need, v. 19. All that we do for the Lord, whilst here, will not be without significance, for all our work will be tested before the Judgement Seat, 1 Cor. 3. 14. Let us heed the exhortation of John, 'Look

to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward', 2 John 8.²

However, I believe that the idea of the apostle is that the fruits of righteousness should be seen in them. It was not so much the gift, but the giving, that was uppermost in the apostle's mind. And, because they had so unselfishly, and sacrificially, given out of their resources in their love for the Lord and His servant, he knew that they themselves would be looking in faith to the Lord to meet them in their need.

Your need, 4. 19

The thought is that since they had not forgotten the needs of the Lord's servants, the Lord would not forget their needs. It was a sufficiency they would prove. They had ministered to the apostle again and again, 4. 16; now he is saying 'My Master will fully repay you; I cannot'. We have a God, who not only cares for the sparrow but, so much more, cares for His children. The psalmist underlines this by

saying 'the earth is full of thy riches', 104. 24. We, as believers, can thank Him for the fact that He is 'rich in mercy', and for the 'riches of his grace', and His kindness toward such vile sinners as us, Eph 2. 4, 7.

What a blessed truth for every one of us to grasp, that the Lord Himself taught that with prayer comes the assurance, 'your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him', Matt. 6. 8. The early church gave evidence of their liberality in giving to all who had need, Acts chh. 2, 4. How much more, again, is the exhortation of John in his Epistle, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have **need**, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, **how dwelleth the love of God in him?**' 1 John 3. 17. May the Lord preserve us from a selfish attitude to all around us, particularly those of the household of faith.

We should not miss the last phrase of verse 19 'by [through] Christ Jesus'. What a blessed people we are, and our rejoicing and

thanksgiving should be abounding to the One who, at great cost to Himself, brought about our salvation. More than that, we should consider the words of the apostle in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 7, 'That in the ages to come he [God] might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus'. How true the words, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him', 1 Cor. 2. 9!

Appendix

It was while meditating on this Epistle, and that of the apostle's desire for fruit that would abound to their account, I came to the reality of seeing that they also gave evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in their walk with the Lord.

- **Love** – that was displayed to the Lord and His servant, 1. 9; 4. 14.
- **Joy** – they had in sending to his necessity, 4. 14-16.
- **Peace** – in that they enjoyed God's blessing, 4. 7, 9.
- **Longsuffering** – in that they waited for news of his welfare, 1. 19.
- **Gentleness** – in their concern for Paul and Epaphroditus, 1. 30; 2. 26.
- **Goodness** – in giving of their liberality, 2 Cor. 8. 2.
- **Faith** – that not only would the gift reach its destination, but also that their own need would be met, 4. 18, 19.
- **Meekness** – in that they did not look for glory, 2. 15.
- **Self-control** – in the conflict that they were now experiencing, 1. 29.

Endnotes

- 1 RV marginal reading
- 2 See also Colossians 3. 24; Hebrews 10. 35; 11. 26



THE FINAL JUDGEMENTS

By **RICHARD COLLINGS**, Caerphilly, Wales

Part 12

Introduction

For details of the judgement of Israel during the tribulation please refer to *Precious Seed*, Volume 75 issue 3. In this current article, and the following one in the series 'What does the Bible tell us about the future?', two specific judgements will be considered.

Taking them in chronological order, they are:

1. The judgement described in Matthew chapter 25 verses 31 to 46, this is often referred to as 'the judgement of the living nations'.
2. The judgement presented in Revelation chapter 20 verses 11 to 15, the Great White Throne judgement.

In this article we shall focus on Matthew chapter 25, with the following article covering the Great White Throne judgement.

The appointed judge

Because He is who He is, God has the right to judge every created being, for all are accountable to their creator. As Abraham interceded on behalf of Sodom, he described God as being 'the Judge of all the earth', Gen. 18. 25. However, whilst it is God's prerogative to be judge, the agent by whom He does the judging is His Son. In John chapter 5, the Lord Jesus said to the Jews, 'the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son', v. 22. For that reason, the judge in each of the judgements covered in these articles is the Son of God.

The judgement of Israel

Matthew chapters 24 and 25, amongst others, are critical chapters in setting out a general chronological overview of events following the rapture of the church. Chapter 24 verses 4 to 26 cover the seven-year tribulation period and verses 27 to 30 detail the

second advent of Christ to earth. According to Ezekiel chapter 20 verses 34 and 35, God is going to gather those of the nation of Israel who have survived the tribulation and assemble them in 'the wilderness of the people'. There He will judge those people, the faithful and the unfaithful. He will bless those who have been faithful, but He will purge out 'the rebels, and them that transgress against me', v. 38. The New Testament commentary on those verses in Ezekiel chapter 20 is detailed for us in the two parables in Matthew chapter 25 verses 1 to 30.

The judgement of the nations

With Israel having been judged, the rest of chapter 25 presents to us the judgement of the surviving peoples of the Gentile nations. Hence, it is often referred to as the 'judgement of the living nations'. From this frequently used designation, we must not think that this judgement is a judgement on the various Gentile nations *en bloc*. It is a judgement on individual people irrespective of their nationality.

However, it is rightly termed the 'judgement of the living nations' because the ones judged are those who are alive at the time of the Lord's return to earth. There is nothing in the passage in Matthew chapter 25 to suggest that at this point the deceased of the Gentile nations are raised to appear before the Son of man. Their day of judgement takes place over a thousand years later at the Great White Throne.

At the time of writing, the population of the world is approximately 7.8 billion people, but the number who will appear before the Son of man when this judgement takes place will be significantly less than that for several reasons. One reason is that

the rapture of the church will have removed many living people from this world, at least seven years before this judgement. Another reason is, as just noted, there will be no Jews present; this is a judgement on the Gentiles not the Jews.

However, there are two other significant factors which will have drastically reduced the world population. First, this event takes place at the close of the tribulation. During those troublesome years there will be a huge loss of life through wars, murders, starvation, natural disasters, and other cataclysmic events. Such is the devastation and depopulation that will take place during those years that the Lord said, 'except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved', Matt. 24. 22.

Secondly, the so called 'Battle of Armageddon' will have taken place, what the Bible describes as being 'the battle of that great day of God Almighty', Rev. 16. 14. In equally graphic terms, it is referred to a few chapters later as being 'the supper of the great God', 19. 17. In fulfilment of Psalm 2, the armies of the world will be gathered together with the intention of freeing themselves from all divine restraint, but however massive an army and no matter how sophisticated an arsenal men can assemble, they shall be totally routed. None of that vast militia will survive and, therefore, none of them will be present at the judgement we are considering.

How many will be judged we do not know, but the prophecy of Joel tells us who will be there and where the judgement will take place, 'I will also gather all the nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of my people and mine inheritance, Israel', Joel 3. 2 JND.

The location of the judgement

The precise location of this valley may not be known, with several suggestions being made by commentators. We are on safe ground for stating that it will be in the land of Israel for that is the

place to which Christ will return, but beyond that it is not possible to be dogmatic. PENTECOST makes an interesting observation in his book *Things to Come*. He refers the reader to Zechariah chapter 14 verse 4 and writes that when the Lord returns to 'the mount of Olives a great valley shall be opened. A valley that is not in existence today shall come into being at the time of the second advent. Since the name Jehoshaphat means "Jehovah judges" it may be that the newly opened valley outside Jerusalem will bear that name because of the momentous event to transpire there'.¹

The basis of the judgement

At the Great White Throne, men will be judged according to their works and the reason for their being present at that assize is that they will not be found written in the book of life. Following that judgement, all, without exception, who appear there will be cast into the lake of fire. At the judgement detailed in Matthew 25, there are those who, following their appearance before the King, shall be blessed and will 'inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world', v. 34. Others will be told, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels', v. 41.

These two groups are segregated, in a manner similar to what pertained

in the east when a shepherd would separate his sheep from the goats. Those who are viewed under the metaphor of sheep will be placed on the right-hand of the Son of man, the right hand being the place of blessing and favour. Those likened to goats will be on the left and, thus separated, those two groups of people will be eternally separated.

The basis for this segregation is clearly stated for us in verses 40 and 45. To those on His right, the King will say, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me', v. 40. To those on His left, He will say, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me', v. 45. Those described as being 'the least of these my brethren' are those Jews who throughout the tribulation will not succumb to the deceit of the false prophet and the man of sin. They will refuse the mark of the beast and consequently they will not be able to buy or sell.

This faithful Jewish remnant will be in penury, not knowing where their next meal will come from. In their distress they will cry out, 'Give us this day our daily bread', Matt. 6. 11. Those Gentiles who will help them, as described in verses 35 and 36, will, by their kindness, be demonstrating that they too are not followers of the

beast but will have embraced the gospel of the Kingdom and have been converted. Equally, the converse will be the case with those who will refuse to assist the beleaguered Jews.

It is important that we understand that the blessings of these good Gentiles and their entrance into the millennial kingdom was not a salvation based on works. Their works were but a confirmation that they were 'saved', for they are described in verse 46 as being 'righteous'. This is the truth that James emphasizes in his Epistle, 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone', Jas. 2. 14-17.

The outcome of the judgement

There are at least two very significant consequences resulting from this judgement. Those who are likened to goats are cursed and will be condemned to 'everlasting fire', v. 41, and will be banished into 'everlasting punishment', v. 46. The sentence imposed on these people is eternal suffering not eternal annihilation. These, therefore, will not appear at the Great White Throne, for their everlasting punishment will have already been handed down.

The other consequence is that when the millennial kingdom commences, which it does immediately after this judgement, it will be entirely comprised of redeemed and, hence, righteous people. Not one unbeliever will enter it, so that at its inception, the millennial earth will be populated exclusively by those who have been born again, thus proving what the Lord said to Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God', John 3. 3.

Endnote

1 DWIGHT PENTECOST, *Things to Come*, Zondervan, 1965.



THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

By **JOHN RIDDLE** Cheshunt, England

Part 1

The Apostle Paul told Timothy that, 'the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables', 2 Tim. 4. 3, 4 RV. It hardly needs to be said that the 'itching ears' belong to the hearers rather than the teachers. Even the Lord's people, at times, 'like to hear what they like to hear'. One Bible teacher of yesteryear got rather 'near the bone' when he said to his audience, 'What would you rather hear – an address on Russia, or an address on Romans?'

When it comes to the foundations of the faith, we must not assume too much. David asks the question, 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?', Ps. 11. 3. Thankfully, our 'foundations' can never be destroyed, but we must be familiar with them. This involves all the people of God: young believers must be taught them, and older believers who 'know them, and be established in the present truth', must have their 'pure minds' stirred up 'by way of remembrance', 2 Pet. 1. 12; 3. 1.

With this in mind, it is essential for us to be completely assured that the Bible **is** the word of God. We must remember that the scriptures are more than our **final** court of appeal in 'all matters of doctrine and practice' – they are our **only** court of appeal.

Our confidence in the word of God will be weakened if we fail to recognize that 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God', 2 Tim. 3. 16, something that is often called 'the plenary inspiration of scripture'. If we are not convinced that this is the case, we will be seriously disadvantaged in endeavouring to 'declare . . . all the counsel of God', Acts 20. 27. As already stated, we rightly contend that the teaching of the Bible is binding in all matters of doctrine and practice. It is now our task to prove that this contention is justified.

In 2 Timothy chapter 3, we are confronted with the difficulties of the last days, and learn that the stability afforded by the scriptures is vital. Timothy is urged, 'But continue [abide] thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them', v. 14. Notice how the structure of verses 9 and 10 is repeated in verses 13 and 14. The word 'thou' is emphatic. Whatever was happening around him, Timothy was to remain constant.

The final section of this chapter brings us face to face with the 'holy scriptures'. We will deal with these important verses by asking, and answering, five questions:

1. How should we treat the scriptures, v. 14?
2. When should we get to know the scriptures, v. 15?
3. Why can we trust the scriptures, v. 16a?
4. Where should we apply the scriptures, v. 16b?
5. What will be accomplished by the scriptures, v. 17?

We will address the central question first:

Why can we trust the scriptures, v. 16a?

In this connection, we should note:

The extent of inspiration

'All scripture is given by

inspiration of God'. The word rendered 'inspiration', *theopneustos*, comes from *theo*, meaning 'God' and *pneo*, meaning 'to blow' or 'to breathe'. Hence the expression, 'God-breathed'. The word emphasizes the **source** of scripture, rather than the **channel** by which we receive it. It describes 'breathing out', rather than 'breathing in'. The scriptures are **still** 'warm with the breath of God'. We prove this every time we open our Bibles.¹ Hence, the Old Testament scriptures are called 'the oracles of God', Rom. 3. 2. In the New Testament, Paul writes, 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord', 1 Cor. 14. 37. Because they are God-breathed, they are authoritative. We must remember that:

Inspiration includes Old and New Testaments

Note the way in which 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 18 combines Old and New Testaments as scripture, 'For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn', referring to Deuteronomy chapter 25 verse 4, and, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire', referring to Luke chapter 10 verse 7. Notice, too, that Peter placed Paul's Epistles alongside the other scriptures, 2 Pet. 3. 16. Whether Old or New Testaments, both are alike given by inspiration of God. In 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 15, the word 'scriptures' refers particularly to the Old Testament scriptures, but, in the following verse, 'All scripture' refers to both Old and New Testaments.

Inspiration includes the very words of scripture

See, for example, Matthew chapter 5 verse 18, 'For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled'. The 'jot' is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and *yod*, the 'tittle', is the little projection which distinguishes some Hebrew letters. So, inspiration extends to the very

letters which make up the words of the Bible. No wonder Ezra was a student of the **words** of the law of the Lord, Ezra 7. 11. John records the words of the Lord Jesus as follows, 'For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book . . . and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy', Rev. 22. 18, 19.

Examples of the accuracy and importance of the very words of scripture are legion. For example, 'Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ', Gal. 3. 16. Note, in this connection, the singular in Genesis chapter 22 verse 17, 'thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies'. A further example lies in the use of the little word 'one', 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord', Deut. 6. 4. This translates the Hebrew word *echad*, which comes from a root meaning 'to unite' and conveys plurality in unity.² Another Hebrew word conveys an absolute unity, but this is never used in connection with God. He chose exactly the right word to describe the Godhead, for God is one, but within that unity there is a plurality of divine persons. To this end, books which help us to

understand the meaning of Bible words are most valuable.³

The means of inspiration

Bearing in mind that the word 'Spirit' comes from the word *pneuma*, akin to *pneo* above, we can see that when Paul says that 'All scripture is given by inspiration [*theopneustos*] of God', he refers to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Notice how the Holy Spirit is mentioned in connection with every part of God's word.

In connection with the law

Speaking of the Day of Atonement, we read 'The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing', Heb. 9. 8.

In connection with the prophets

Note, for example, 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 20 and 21.⁵ When the apostle says that, 'no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation', he is referring to the prophets themselves, not to the readers. The prophets did not record **their** interpretation of what was revealed to them, they recorded exactly **what** was revealed to them.

We should also notice Acts

chapter 3 verses 18 and 21, 'But those things, which **God** before had showed **by the mouth of all his prophets**, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which **God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets** since the world began'. In this connection, we should notice that the written word of God is perfectly divine, yet perfectly human. Its unity is divine, but it is expressed through the background and personalities of the various writers. It is perfectly divine in its absolute accuracy and authority; it is perfectly human since it is expressed in the language of men, and therefore intelligible to us.

In connection with the writings

See Mark chapter 12 verse 36, 'For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool'. 'Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas . . . For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein', Acts 1. 16-20.

David himself recognized that he spoke by the Holy Spirit, 2 Sam. 23. 1, 2. The prophets said, 'Thus saith the Lord'.

In connection with the New Testament

See, for example, John chapter 16 verses 12 and 13.

To be continued . . .

Endnotes

- 1 For other examples of God breathing, see Gen. 2. 7; Ezek. 37. 1-14.
- 2 Also see 'a branch with one cluster of grapes', Num. 13. 23.
- 3 For example, W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Oliphants.
- 4 John chapter 20 verse 22 is interesting in this connection, 'he **breathed** on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost'.
- 5 See also, Acts 28. 25; 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11.



Paul's First Missionary Journey

LESSONS FOR TODAY

By **MALCOLM DAVIS** Leeds, England

The record of Paul's first missionary journey is found in Acts chapters 13 and 14. From it may be taken many valuable lessons for missionaries implementing the Lord's great commission down the centuries of the Christian era until today. We shall consider some of these in this article.

The missionaries' itinerary through Gentile country

After the local assembly at Antioch in Syria had commended both Barnabas and Paul to the Lord's work, they let them go. The two missionaries went down to the Mediterranean coast at Seleucia and sailed to Salamis in Cyprus. There they preached in the Jewish synagogues before moving on to Paphos, the capital of the island, where they met the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus. He became a Christian after Paul had miraculously silenced an opponent of the gospel; a sorcerer named Elymas. From Paphos they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia on the south coast of modern Turkey. There, sadly, John Mark, whom they had taken with them as their servant, decided to leave them and returned home to Jerusalem. However, the other two travelled almost a hundred miles north through some rough and mountainous terrain to Antioch in Pisidia along a Roman highway called the Via Sebaste, which connected several Roman colonies inland with the coast. After experiencing some Jewish opposition at Antioch, the missionaries moved on south-eastwards some fifty miles to Iconium, and then to nearby Lystra in Lycaonia, both cities within the Roman province of Galatia. There Paul was seriously injured by opponents of the gospel, but miraculously recovered and proceeded to travel the next day to Derbe, about sixty miles to the east. There they had a better reception for their message, before deciding to

retrace their steps back to the south coast at Attalia in Pamphylia. They then sailed back to Antioch in Syria.

Probably, much of their journey was travelled on foot, often using good Roman roads, but facing many dangers from natural obstacles and robbers. Paul later summarized all the dangers that they faced en route, 2 Cor. 11. 26, 27. However, for many of the longer journeys they used reliable shipping routes. They had covered several hundreds of miles altogether between AD 46 and 48. Missionaries today are often required to travel long distances in their service and to face many similar dangers, for which they need our prayers and practical fellowship.

Their usual strategy in evangelism

First, Paul and Barnabas concentrated their work on recognized centres of population, often on Roman colonies, because here communications were easier, so that the gospel could be propagated more widely throughout the surrounding districts. Second, wherever there was a Jewish synagogue in the city reached, Paul went to it first and preached Christ to the worshippers there. If the local Jews rejected the message, he then turned to preach to the Gentiles, who were often more receptive. This strategy exemplified his principle explained in Romans chapter 1 that the gospel was first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles, because it came to mankind through the Jewish nation. Third, the missionaries did not outstay their welcome in any place

but were prepared to move on to territory untouched by the gospel to give others an opportunity to receive the blessings of salvation. Fourth, wherever they went, they aimed to establish local assemblies, permanent testimonies to Christ, which they then nurtured through return visits or letters sent to guide and encourage the young Christians. This strategy is still a good one for servants of Christ to follow today.

Typical sermons delivered to different audiences

In Acts chapters 13 and 14, there are recorded two typical sermons preached to the people they met: one to the Jews in a synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia and another to a Gentile audience in Lystra. They reveal very different approaches to their hearers, but for very good reasons.

First, amongst his fellow-Jews, Paul was able to assume a good knowledge of Old Testament scripture. Therefore, starting from where his hearers were in their thinking, he:

- rehearsed much of the gracious dealings of God with His people Israel;
- showed how the latter had unknowingly fulfilled those scriptures in rejecting and crucifying their true Messiah, Jesus Christ;
- taught that God had raised Him from the dead;
- preached that if only they would repent and trust Him as their Saviour, they would experience forgiveness of their sins;
- ended with a warning of judgement for refusal to repent.

Second, among a crowd of ignorant Gentiles, the missionaries did not assume any knowledge of scripture, but only the fact of creation, and proceeded to try to persuade the crowd not to worship them, but to turn from their futile idolatry to the living God who created all things and has revealed Himself in gracious providential ways to mankind. They did not have opportunity to present a fuller gospel than this. Both approaches are valid and appropriate with their respective

kinds of hearers and could be followed today.

The results of their preaching

Those who listened to the messages that the missionaries gave reacted in various ways, as so often happens today. Some of their hearers accepted the gospel and followed Paul and Barnabas, while others delayed a decision until another time, and many more rejected both the messages and the messengers, often threatening their lives. We may expect such reactions today and need to be prepared to face both encouragement and outright opposition and persecution.

At Antioch in Pisidia, the Gentile hearers requested that the missionaries preach the same message to them on the next sabbath day, while many of the Jews and religious proselytes were converted and followed Paul and Barnabas. However, soon after, the unbelieving Jews, motivated by envy, began to stir up opposition against the preachers, so that they were obliged to shake off the dust of the city and move on to Iconium. Here again, the gospel produced two different reactions, faith, and violent rejection, so that they had to flee the city and go on to Lystra and Derbe to avoid being stoned.

At Lystra, the idolatrous Gentiles wanted to worship the missionaries, who had a problem in restraining them from doing so. Also, soon afterwards Jews came from Antioch and Iconium to stir up trouble again, and the natives stoned Paul and left him for dead. However, he recovered miraculously, and the next day left the city for Derbe. Here the missionaries had a quieter reception and some encouragement, before retracing their steps back to the coast.

During the first century AD, much of the opposition to the gospel came from unbelieving Judaizers, but sometimes the Gentiles also reacted violently to the preachers, and nearly all the apostles eventually died martyrs' deaths. Believers today need to be prepared to lay down

their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Their message is not always accepted or tolerated; usually, it is only a minority of their hearers who believe and are saved, and then go on with the Lord.

The establishment of local assemblies

The aim of all missionary work should be the establishment of local assemblies functioning according to the scriptural pattern indicated in the New Testament. In Acts chapter 14, we find that, as the missionaries returned along the same route that they had taken on their outward journey, they stopped in every city visited to do just this. They encouraged all those who had become Christian disciples, strengthening them with helpful teaching, and exhorting them to continue in the faith. They appointed elders in every local assembly, recognizing those who were already acting as true shepherds. They also warned them that we must expect many afflictions from unbelievers before we enter the coming kingdom of God, when Christ will rule supreme in this world. Only then will persecution of Christians finally cease. Paul, especially, knew what he was talking about in this respect.

However, the follow-up work in the region of Galatia did not end with Paul's first journey to evangelize there. A little while later, he wrote to the Galatian assemblies a stern letter, in which he expressed his great sadness that many of the believers there had been persuaded to listen to false teachers, who denied the truth of the gospel in an important respect. The latter were saying that the Galatian saints needed to keep the law of Moses and be circumcised to complete their salvation, requiring law-keeping in addition to divine grace. This is a denial of the complete efficacy of the death of Christ for us, and always needs to be resisted and corrected. Salvation is by grace alone, by faith in Christ alone, based on His vicarious death for us alone. Other gospels are no gospel at all.

Professing believers do sometimes

cause such disappointments to their fathers in Christ. People, like helpless and defenceless sheep, need constant care, encouragement and guidance in right ways, a good diet of sound teaching, and protection from, and warning about, many dangers, both moral and doctrinal. The local elders, like good shepherds, should be foremost in providing this careful nurturing, although they may be helped by the other assembly members exercising their gifts and showing Christian love in practical ways as well.

How they reported back to their commending assembly

Finally, when Paul and Barnabas eventually arrived back to their commending assembly in Antioch in Syria, they reported to the gathered company all that God had done with and through them during their two-year period of service. This missionary report meeting set a good precedent for many thousands of similar report meetings down the centuries of the New Testament church age. Then they stayed in their home assembly for an extended missionary furlough for about a year, exercising their ministries there again, as they had before they went abroad. There is a principle of accountability to be followed in missionary work; the commending assembly is accountable for the prayerful and practical support of the servants they sent out, while the missionaries themselves, who live 'of the gospel' by faith, receiving gifts from the homeland, are accountable to their commending assembly for the diligence they have exercised during their period of service abroad. This is true fellowship in the Lord's work.

So ended the first significant missionary journey made by Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, to the surrounding foreign countries. The scriptural record provides Christians today with a helpful blueprint to follow in similar forays into foreign territory. Ever since that time, many dedicated servants of the Lord have made strenuous efforts to fulfil His great commission to His church to evangelize the whole world. Hallelujah!

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Leviticus chapters 16, and 23 verses 26 to 32

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

The Hebrew word *kaphor*, which means a covering, occurs 102 times in the Old Testament. It appears more frequently (sixteen times) in Leviticus chapter 16 than anywhere else. This chapter describes the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, one of the most significant dates in Israel's calendar. Once a year, on the seventh day of the tenth month, somewhere between September and November, God formally reminded Israel of their sins through this elaborate ritual, Heb. 10. 3. No Old Testament sacrifices could remove sin; they only covered it over in anticipation of Calvary, Rom. 3. 25. This feast was of such crucial significance that even today Jews throughout the world keep it with fasting and prayer at the synagogue.

The Day of Atonement was the sixth of seven feasts in the Jewish calendar, the second of three autumnal feasts in the tenth month. The book of Leviticus focuses our mind on Israel's coming into the presence of God. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the Day of Atonement. Everything about it emphasizes God's holiness and the care and caution demanded of those who approach Him. Aaron himself would have felt this keenly, especially given that his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, had just been devoured by fire because of their irreverent approach to God, Lev. 10. 1, 2. Even though Christians living under grace, not law, have unfettered access into the presence of God through prayer, they should always approach Him with reverence and godly fear, Heb. 12. 29.

Sin pervaded every aspect of national life. While no Old Testament sacrifice could remove sin, the Day of Atonement provided a comprehensive but temporary solution to sin everywhere in the nation. This included the tabernacle, its altar and priests, as well as every member of the congregation, Lev. 16. 16, 17. On this ceremonial

Sabbath, when no work was to be done, vv. 29, 30, there was expected to be a humble reflection, v. 29. As 'a statute forever', vv. 29, 34, this remembrance was passed on from one generation to the next; it was never interrupted, even with the death of a high priest.

The whole sequence of actions of the day centred on the movements of the high priest. Washed and dressed in holy linen garments, Aaron brought a young bullock and a ram into the tabernacle court, vv. 3, 4. Having offered the bullock as a sin offering for himself and for his house, vv. 6, 11, and taken a censer full of burning coals from off the brazen altar, and finely beaten incense, he entered the holiest of all, vv. 12, 13. With the cloud of incense shielding him from God's holiness, he sprinkled the blood with his finger once upon, and seven times before, the mercy seat, v. 14.

It was only after this that Aaron presented two goats as a sin offering for the people at the door of the tabernacle, vv. 7, 15. One goat was to be sacrificed and the other, the scapegoat, was

sent out by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. Casting lots determined which goat would fulfil each role, vv. 8-10. He then slew the goat that was for the Lord, carried its blood into the holiest of holies, and sprinkled the mercy seat as he had just done with the blood of the bullock. Afterwards, he put the blood of the bullock and of the goat 'upon the horns of the altar round about . . . and . . . shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times', vv. 18, 19. This whole process of applying and sprinkling the blood of the bullock and the goat made atonement for sin, cleansed and sanctified Aaron and his house, v. 6, the holy place, v. 16, the tabernacle, v. 16, the congregation, v. 17, and the altar, v. 18.

Aaron then laid both his hands upon the head of the scapegoat, confessing over it 'all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in their sins', v. 21. This act imputed the sins of the nation to the goat. When it was then led into the wilderness, to 'a land not inhabited', that sin of the nation was symbolically removed.

Having given over the scapegoat into the hands of a fit man, Aaron re-entered the tabernacle, removed the linen garments, washed himself with water and redonned his garments of glory and beauty, vv. 23, 24. He then offered two ram burnt offerings, one for himself and one for the congregation, which he burnt with the fat of the sin offering. This all contributed to the work of atonement, vv. 24, 25. Returned from the wilderness, the fit man burnt his clothes, bathed and re-entered the camp, v. 26. Finally, outside the camp, they burnt the bodies of the dead bullock and goat 'in the fire, their skins, their flesh and their dung. And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp', vv. 27, 28.

The Day of Atonement is a beautiful picture of the person and work of Christ. Even though Aaron seems to have entered the holy place

more than once on the Day of Atonement, the New Testament views his movements as but one, so picturing Christ's one offering for sin, Heb. 9. 7. Just as the high priest removed his garments of glory and beauty, arraying himself with plain, fine linen clothing, the Son of God humbly laid aside the outward appearance of divine glory and became man, v. 4; Phil. 2. 5-8. Unlike the high priest of Israel, who first had to offer for his own failure, our Saviour is without sin, v. 6; Heb. 7. 26. Taken together, the goats symbolized both the propitiatory aspect of Christ's death and its substitutionary character, v. 8. The fragrant incense reminds us that Christ 'hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour', Eph. 5. 2. Old Testament scripture presents God as majestic, dwelling 'between the cherubim', Ps. 80. 1. Sprinkled by blood, the lid of the ark, where God dwelt, was graciously termed a 'mercy seat', v. 15. Aaron going into the holiest alone, as well as the scapegoat being left alone,

pointed to the solitary nature of the Saviour's sufferings on the cross, forsaken by His friends and His God, vv. 17, 22; Matt. 27. 46; Mark 14. 50. Furthermore, whilst Aaron entered an earthly tabernacle, Christ has entered 'into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us', Heb. 9. 24. Whereas Israel was barred from the presence of Jehovah, because of where our Great High priest is, and what He has done, we can boldly enter the holiest of all, Heb. 4. 16. When the high priest exerted pressure with both his hands upon the head of the scapegoat, he symbolized the truth that Christ bore 'our sins in his own body on the tree', 1 Pet. 2. 24. Christ's exaltation, after His suffering, is anticipated by the high priest dressing again in his garments for glory and beauty, v. 24; Phil. 2. 9-11.

Sadly, even to this day, the nation of Israel has no appreciation of the full significance of their ritual and ceremony. They never fully understood what they were

doing, nor appreciated that it was a picture of heavenly things and the sacrifice of Messiah. To those who gather in local assembly fellowship, there is a recognition that the typical significance of the Day of Atonement points to a day still future when a repentant nation, besieged on every side and in bitter sorrow, realize for the first time what they did to their Messiah, the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. 2. 8.

There is a day coming when God will renew dealings again with the nation of Israel and they 'shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son'. In fulfilment of the national humility on *Yom Kippur* the nation again 'shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn . . . And the land shall mourn, every family apart', Zech. 12. 10-12. Finally, the nation will acknowledge collectively, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed', Isa. 53. 4, 5.

How blessed for us as the sons of God, John 1. 12, to humbly reflect:

'Thy precious blood was freely
shed for me
On Calvary
To save me from a lost eternity;
Glory to Thee!
Nor death, nor hell, nor things
below—above
Can sever me from Thy eternal
love.

Like shoreless seas, Thy love can
know no bound;
Thou lovest me!
Deep, vast, immense,
unfathomed, Lord—profound,
Lord, I love Thee!
And when above, my crown is
at Thy feet,
I'll praise Thee still for Calvary's
mercy seat'.

[EDWARD C. QUINE]



His Miracles

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

The words that form the title of this meditation are found only once in the Gospels and that is in John chapter 6 verse 2. Many have tried to calculate how many miracles the Lord performed but what is recorded for us, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, shows that the Lord was indeed the Christ of God. Interestingly, in contrast, we have the comment of scripture that John the Baptist did no miracle, John 10. 41.

It is worthy of note that in John chapter 2 verse 23 it states that 'many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did'. Then, Nicodemus says to the Lord, 'no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him', 3. 2. This is the outcome when only one miracle had been recorded, that being at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Recalling the woman who touched the hem of the Lord's garment, Mark 5. 25-34, Matthew points out that many others touched the hem of His garment and were made perfectly whole, 14. 34-36. So many received the benefit of His miraculous powers. It seems, therefore, that heaven alone records each occasion.

Three words can be used for the Lord's works:

- 'miracles' – a supernatural act.
- 'wonders' – the effect on those who observed.
- 'signs' – spiritual lessons to be derived.

Looking at the miracles recorded in John's Gospel, John records seven miracles before the cross and one after. He writes in chapter 20 verse 30, 'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples' indicating that John is selective in his recording of the miracles but that they are written, 'that ye might believe', v. 31.

First, notice that what is lacking is supplied in each miracle. At the marriage in Cana of Galilee, they had no wine, but wine is supplied in a remarkable way, 2. 1-11. With the second miracle, the nobleman's

son was at the point of death, 4. 47. There seemed to be no hope, but hope was given, 'thy son liveth', v. 50. The man at the pool of Bethesda, having been there for thirty-eight years, had 'no man', 5. 7, but the man Christ Jesus healed him. In the feeding of the five thousand they had no food, only the meagre supplies of one lad. The Lord fed them, 6. 1-15. When the Lord walked on the water, the disciples were fearful – faith was lacking. Yet, when the Lord spoke to them, He said, 'be not afraid', v. 20, and they willingly received Him into the ship. Fear was dispelled. Later, we encounter a man born blind. He has no sight. Indeed, he had never seen – but sight was given, 9. 1-41. In the raising of Lazarus, he was a man who was sick and died. For Lazarus, life was lacking but life was given, 11. 44. Finally, seven disciples were fishing but had caught nothing for their toil – fish were lacking. But the Lord took control, and they received a tremendous catch, 21. 1-14.

Second, note the commands obeyed. In chapter 2 verse 5, we have the only words recorded that the Lord's mother spoke in this Gospel, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it'. It is worth tracing this through the miracles in John's Gospel. Note what the Lord said in chapter 2. He said, 'Fill the waterpots with water', then, 'Draw out now', vv. 7, 8. The servants obeyed and they brought forth the best wine. In chapter 4, the Lord instructs the nobleman to go home, 'thy son liveth', v. 50. He obeyed and his son lived. In chapter 5, the man by the pool heard the Saviour say, 'take up thy bed, and walk', v. 8. He did so, and was healed, vv. 9, 11. In chapter

6, the Lord knew what He would do to feed the hungry crowd, but the disciples are told to, 'Make the men sit down', v. 10, and they did so in order that the vast company might be fed. How important that things are done decently and in order. Later in that chapter, the Lord walks on the water and said to His disciples, 'be not afraid', v. 20, and their fear departed when they realized it was the Lord. In chapter 9, the man born blind is given seven words, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam', v. 7, and he came back seeing. In chapter 11, how is the Lord going to deal with the death of Lazarus? He delays going to Bethany but, having seen where Lazarus was buried, He said, 'Take ye away the stone', v. 39, and issued the command, 'Lazarus, come forth', v. 43. We read, 'And he that was dead came forth', v. 44. In chapter 21, we have an embarrassing night of toil in which no fish were caught. Notice the words of the Saviour, 'Cast the net on the right side . . . and ye shall find', v. 6.

Third, note how the Lord is master of each of these miracles. At the wedding, He is master of a dilemma – no wine. With the nobleman's son, He is the master of distance. At the pool of Bethesda, He is master over the man's disability. With the feeding of the five thousand, He is master of the distribution to meet the need. In walking on the sea, He is master over danger and despair. In healing the man born blind, He demonstrates that He is master over the man's physical darkness. When Lazarus was raised, the Lord was master over death. Thinking of the disciples' disastrous fishing trip, the Lord shows He is master of the deep. What power the Lord demonstrated, enough to show that He is indeed the Christ.

Fourth, as Peter preached concerning the Lord, 'who went about doing good', Acts 10. 38, let us note what good or profit the Lord brought.

In chapter 2, the narrative makes it clear that it was six water pots of water, which would contain something like twenty or thirty gallons each, and so it was some task. We read of the reaction of the ruler of the feast, vv. 9, 10, but not the

servants. They must fill them to the brim, meaning nothing can be added, and then draw out and distribute it. It was good wine. The Lord brought gladness to the wedding.

In considering the healing of the nobleman's son, the Lord removed sadness from him. This man showed faith, and, from a distance, the son was healed. Faith rests in God's word and responds. It requires no sign. May our faith increase in every situation of life.

The scene changes in chapter 5 to a man by a pool. Bethesda looked like a modern hospital's A & E Department. Many had 'written him off' because he had been in that condition for so long, but not the Lord. The man singled out for mercy was nameless, friendless, helpless, hopeless, and useless but he met someone that day with power to heal. Here was someone to help. The cure was as simple as the condition.

Coming to the feeding of the five thousand plus others, it must have been wonderful to witness.

In creation, God made something out of nothing and, in feeding the multitude, the Lord from a small amount kept feeding the gathered throng – the lad's lunch became the meal for the multitude. The Lord had compassion on them all, 6. 5, and met the need of all.

Later in that same chapter, we read of the Lord walking on the water. The Lord's voice is heard through the storm, 'It is I', v. 20. Though many of the disciples had been fishermen and should have known such storms in the past, fear gripped them. It was the Man walking on the water that changed the scene. The difference becomes evident later when these same men are noted for their boldness, Acts 4. 31. His presence and power on and in the sea exemplify what He brings to His own in the troubles and storms of life that may beset us.

As we come to chapter 9, it emphasizes that our Lord was interested in individuals. This is also seen in chapters 4 and 5. Comparing the Lord's encounter with a woman

at the well, ch. 4, and the man born blind, ch. 9, both have an increasing appreciation of Christ. In giving sight to the man, we note the three things the Lord did: 'made clay . . . anointed the eyes of the blind man . . . and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam', vv. 6, 7. In obedience, we note the three things the man did: 'He went his way . . . and washed, and came seeing', v. 7. All of this was 'that the works of God should be made manifest in him', v. 3. However, the people took some convincing as to who he was, and one cannot help but feel sorry for him as he was bombarded with questions. One thing was certain, and the words of the man himself tell it so simply, 'whereas I was blind, now I see', v. 25. That experience could not be taken away from him and it is a reminder of the power of a personal testimony.

Of the miracles recorded in John's Gospel, Lazarus is the only beneficiary named. What a delightful story is brought before us in this chapter. It is appropriate that it should be set against the background of chapter 10, 'he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out', v. 3. Thus, we read, Jesus 'cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth', 11. 43. In essence, Lazarus was a silent man – we never read of a word that he spoke – but his life was a tremendous and effective witness. How is our witness for the Saviour?

The miracle of chapter 21 took place in the days after the Lord's resurrection. The seven disciples toiled all night and caught nothing – fruitless labour as a reminder of the Lord's words 'for without me ye can do nothing', 15. 5. What a difference when the Lord directs the fishing operation, for He knew where the fish were! Thus, the disciples cast, they caught, and they counted! What had happened? The manpower was the same and the method was the same, but the motivation was different. What a change the Lord wrought!

May the meditation on His miracles in John's Gospel bow our hearts in greater worship and service for the best of masters.



What is thy beloved more than another beloved?

Part 1

Song of Solomon Chapter 5

By **ANDREW BENNETT** Sound, Shetland

This question was asked of the Shulamite regarding her beloved, and she provided the answer. Whilst historically it refers to Solomon and the Shulamite, we want to consider it devotionally as it would speak of Christ and the believer.

It was a test for the Shulamite as she was being asked to tell those that questioned her about her beloved and, before we consider the question, we might apply that test to ourselves. As I pray, what have I learned to appreciate of the Son that I can tell the Father about? We can note that the bride doesn't hesitate to speak of the beauties of her beloved. What of us?

Overall, we note through the description given of the 'beloved' that there is no deterioration – from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet, all is 'fine gold'. Notice:

- His head – 'the most fine gold', v. 11;
- His hands – 'as gold rings set with the beryl', v. 14;
- His legs – 'set upon sockets of fine gold', v. 15.



We can contrast this with the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw, Dan. 2. 31-33. It started well, the head of gold, but there was deterioration down through the arms and torso through to the feet: iron mingled with clay. Here, in Song of Solomon chapter 5, there is perfection seen throughout. She speaks of his head, his locks, his eyes, his cheeks, his lips, his hands, his inwards, his legs, his countenance, and his mouth. In all of this, the glories of the Lord, the bridegroom of the church, shine forth. We can see His personal glory, His moral glory, the glory of His words and ways, and the sweetness of His presence.

White

She starts by saying that her beloved is white and ruddy. When we think of white, the idea is 'bright and clear', dazzling white. White symbolizes the purity and holiness of the Saviour.

There were no shades of grey; there was nothing shady in His character. We can think of many individuals in the scriptures where there were shades of grey in their character, those sins that they committed. Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife. The same was true of Isaac. Moses murdered the Egyptian and smote the rock twice when he should have spoken to it. All the mighty biblical figures were flawed except when we come to the Saviour. Here was One who is perfect, intrinsically pure – 'white'.

Think of Him upon the mount of transfiguration. Mark records, 'And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them', 9. 2, 3. This was the outshining of the impeccability of the Saviour. Here was One who could not sin, one who was 'separate from sinners', Heb. 7. 26.

Ruddy

This same word was used of David. Here we can see the description of a greater than David. As a youth, David constantly watched over his father's flock. In later years he was to have the responsibility of the care of the nation as their king. However, when we think of the Saviour, we think of One who loved the flock and gave Himself for it, John 10. 11. His love and compassion was demonstrated on so many different occasions, but supremely at Calvary. Paul wrote, 'the Son of God . . . loved me, and gave himself for me', Gal. 2. 20.

Chief

'The chiefest among ten thousand' is the estimation of the Shulamite. David's men said of him that he was worth 'ten thousand of us', 2 Sam. 18. 3. Here, v. 10, the bride goes further, saying he is the 'chiefest among ten thousand'. STRONG says that the word means 'being conspicuous like the raising of a flag or banner'. When we think of Christ, we think of One who is supreme. The psalmist states, 'My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever', Ps. 45. 1, 2.

In a future day, there will be a multitude that declare, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing', Rev. 5. 12.

WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

Maal – Above, forward, upward

Ma'alah – Degree, step, stair

Maalal – Endeavour, invention, work

The feminine noun *ma'alah* is regularly translated as 'degree' in the Old Testament. It is derived from a Hebrew word meaning 'to go up', but it can also be translated as 'step' or 'stair'.

Ma'alah appears as early as Genesis chapter 2 verse 6 of the mist that rose up from the ground to water the earth's surface. In Genesis chapter 13 verse 1, it is used geographically of Abram when he went up from Egypt and returned to Canaan. In Numbers chapter 21 verse 33, it is recorded of Moses that he literally marched 'up the road' to Bashan to engage the forces of King Og at the battle of Edrei.

The word 'steps' is translated by *ma'alah* in Exodus chapter 20 verse 26, where the priest is prohibited from using steps as he approached the altar of God, ensuring that his naked parts were not exposed beneath his garments. The word also refers to the six steps built into Solomon's ivory throne giving it the appearance of being high and lifted up, 1 Kgs. 10. 19. In the account of Jacob's dream at Bethel the word is used to describe a ladder or a stairway that he saw leading or rising up to heaven, Gen. 28. 12. The word was also used to indicate an elevated position as in 1 Chronicles chapter 17 verse 17, where David is viewed by God as a man of degree or distinction.

Perhaps the most famous context in which this word *Ma'alah* is used is in the Hebrew superscription 'A Song of degrees or, literally, "ascents"'.¹ It is recognized that psalm superscripts are notoriously difficult to interpret, and in the case of this superscript interpretations have been quite diverse. The Septuagint renders the superscript as the 'Song of the steps', and this has given rise to a number of theories. EATON states that the 'steps' are associated in Jewish tradition

with steps leading up to the inner court of the temple; the fifteen steps there are said to correspond to the fifteen psalms, and on them Levitical musicians made melody in the autumn festival, Mishna Sukka, 5. 4.² GOULDER, however, argues strongly for the going up from Babylon after the exile, which he suggests was phased over a period of time. He also links his argument by reference to Ezra chapter 7 verse 9, and the Peshitta, which gives a heading to Psalm 120, 'The First Song of the Ascent: the people in Babylon pray that they may be delivered'.³ The most convincing theory, though, is that this collection of Psalms were 'pilgrim songs' sung by bands of pilgrims as they journeyed up to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the great annual festivals of Jehovah.^{4,5} Passages such as Psalm 42 verse 4 and Isaiah chapter 30 verse 29 seem to imply that it was not unusual for pilgrims to sing *en route*.⁶

The degrees of a sundial are also translated by *Ma'alah* in Isaiah chapter 38 verse 8 where God indicated to Hezekiah that, in moving the sundial backward by ten degrees, his life would be extended by another fifteen years.⁷ It can also mean 'to shoot up' (of plants), as in Isaiah chapter 11 verse 1, where the prophet predicts the rise of another Davidic king from the line of Jesse. This is clearly a reference to Christ, and as MOTYER observes, 'One of the striking features of this remarkable passage is the dual title of the coming King as both the *shoot* (1) and the *Root* (10) of Jesse'.⁸

The word is used to describe the possibility of David's anger being aroused when the news of the death of Uriah the Hittite was reported to him, 2 Sam. 11. 20. Similarly, in Exodus chapter 2 verse 23, it is used metaphorically of the children of Israel when their cries went up to God. When Nehemiah's enemies heard that the walls of Jerusalem were 'made up' [*Ma'alah*], and the breached parts were being filled in, they became very angry, Neh. 4. 7.

In the Septuagint (LXX) *Ma'alah* is usually translated by the Greek word *anabainō* and often refers to an individual going up into a high place to worship God such as a mountain, as with Moses going up to Mount Sinai, Exod. 34. 4, or a sanctuary, as with Elkanah, who went up from his hometown to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh, 1 Sam. 1. 3.

This same Greek word is used in the New Testament and 'retains the basic spatial sense of climbing a mountain or going up to Jerusalem for the Passover (Luke 2. 4; 18. 10; John. 7. 8-10; Acts 3. 1; Gal. 2.1)'.⁹ Other references again reflect the use of the word in the Old Testament, including: the growth of plants, Matt. 13. 7; the rise of an idea, Luke 24. 38; and the rise of prayer to God, Acts 10. 4. As we think of One who was once elevated to the cross, we praise God that this same person has ascended up to where He was before, John 6. 62.

Further reading/study

Introductory

Ma'alah, WARREN BAKER, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament*, AMG Publishing, 2008, pg. 643.

Advanced

LXX ἀναβαίνω, G. KITTEL, *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Eerdmans, 1972, pp. 109-111.

Endnotes

- 1 There is an exception with Psalm 121, where the wording is 'Song of/for the goings up'.
- 2 JOHN EATON, *The Psalms*, Continuum, 2003, pg. 423. Ezekiel uses the word of the steps in his temple vision, Ezek. 40. 6 *et seq.*, and Amos figuratively of the rooms in God's house, Amos 9. 6.
- 3 MICHAEL D. GOULDER, *The Psalms of the Return* (Book V, Psalms 107-150), Continuum, 1998, pg. 20.
- 4 Deut. 16. 16; Exod. 23. 17; 34. 23.
- 5 SIGMUND MOWINCKEL links these special 'festival psalms', 120-134, to the Feast of Tabernacles and suggests that these were sung at the water-pouring rite on the eighth day of celebration. (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, SBL Press, 2014, pg. 3).
- 6 HERMANN GUNKEL states that since the superscript refers to the pilgrimage journey itself, none of the songs in the Songs of Ascents would have been performed in the temple. (*Einleitung in die Psalmen*, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, pg. 453).
- 7 Cp. 2 Kgs. 20. 9.
- 8 ALEC MOTYER, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, IVP, 1993, pg. 121.
- 9 G. KITTEL, *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Eerdmans, 1972, pg. 109.

The Father's hand

By **DAVID E. WEST** Leicester, England

Though God is Spirit, 'God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth', John 4. 24, nevertheless, sometimes scripture speaks of Him in human terms to describe some of His actions and ways, so that men can understand. This is known technically as 'anthropomorphism' and may be defined as 'the attributing of human form or personality to God'.¹ However, whilst 'anthropomorphism' can serve in helpful ways to a better understanding of God's attributes, it is most important not to interpret these human characteristics to mean that God the Father exists in human form.

Although on several occasions, God is referred to as having hand(s), e.g., 'And the Lord said unto Moses . . . the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them', Exod. 7. 1, 5; 'He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city [Zidon], to destroy the strong holds thereof', Isa. 23. 11, nevertheless, there is only one direct reference to 'my Father's hand' in the word of God.

The context of these words was the division that took place

among the Jews as a result of Christ's discourse on the Good Shepherd. This was followed on the occasion of the Feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem when the Jews came 'round about him, and said unto him . . . If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly', John 10. 24.

The response of the Lord Jesus was to continue to speak of 'my sheep'. Those who came to challenge Him were not His sheep, as He said, 'ye believe not', v. 26. However, as to His sheep, the Lord said, 'and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out

of my hand', John 10. 28. This would be better read, 'none shall pluck them' – the words are to be taken as including every spiritual foe; it applies to either men or demons. No man, however persuasive in his argument or mighty in rank or power, no demon with all his cunning and allurements will be able to pluck them out of Christ's hand. To 'pluck' suggests 'to rob', 'to seize and bear away', as a robber does his prey. There is no power that can snatch a sheep from His grasp.

The passage continues, 'My Father, which gave them me' – they are my Father's gifts – 'is greater than all',² i.e., is more powerful than all. In the context, He is greater than all the enemies who would seek to snatch away the sheep; 'and no man [i.e., none] is able' – has the power – 'to pluck them out of my Father's hand'. The power of the Father to keep the sheep is not here contrasted with the power of the Son, but it is simply stated that the Son is not alone or by Himself in the protection of the sheep. Surely this is an echo of previous discourses in which the Son asserts that He does nothing, judges no one, says nothing, teaches nothing, witnesses nothing, without or apart from the Father. Particularly in that of preserving the true sheep, they work together.

Thus, the Lord Jesus adds, 'I and my Father are one', John 10. 30; this primarily means one in the exercise of divine power in the protection of the sheep. How thankful we should be for the truth of the eternal security of the believer!

Endnotes

- 1 DELLA THOMPSON (ED.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 1995.
- 2 It may be of interest to note that 'some ancient authorities' read this as 'That which my Father hath given me is greater than all'.



QUESTION

Should we look for signs today that the Lord Jesus will return soon?

ANSWER

When it comes to understanding what the future holds, believers are the most informed people on the planet. Both Old and New Testaments teem with detailed information about the future, describing specific events, eras of time, significant individuals, and nations. God did not hide from Abraham, 'the Friend of God', Jas. 2. 23, the thing that He was about to do in pouring out judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18. 17. Likewise, the Lord Jesus has entrusted to us as His friends the truth pertaining to the things that God is about to do to this earth, John 15. 15. We need to remember, however, that just because truth is revealed to us it does not necessarily mean that it is about us. This was true of Abraham who was only really affected by the coming judgement because his nephew Lot dwelt in Sodom.

Most unfulfilled prophetic truth in the Bible relates to two distinct future periods of time. Firstly, the seven-year-long tribulation period, Matt. 24. 4-28; Rev. 6-18, culminating in the personal return of the Lord Jesus to the earth, Matt. 24. 29-31; Rev. 19. 11-19; and, secondly, the thousand-year, or millennial, reign of the Lord Jesus immediately following His return to the earth, Matt. 25. 1; Rev. 20. 4. We do not have space to elaborate on these vast subjects, but the key to interpreting current events in the light of biblical prophecy is to understand that the tribulation period does not involve us since we will not be present on this earth when the tribulation period commences.

This is apparent from passages which tell us that, 'God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ', 1 Thess. 5. 9. In the context of this Epistle, Paul is speaking about the wrath of God poured out on the earth during the seven-year tribulation period. He assures the believers in Thessalonica that they will be removed from this scene prior to these events occurring through the personal return of the Lord Jesus to the air, when all believers alive on the earth at that time will be immediately transported to heaven, also called the rapture, see 1 Thess. 4. 13-18.¹

Another important point to remember is that this present period of time, the church age, is described in the New Testament as a mystery, e.g., Eph. 3. 8-10; Eph. 5. 32. This means that although the truth about this age has now been revealed, the Old Testament is essentially silent in relation to the church age in which we currently live.² This means that prophetic events and eras described in the Old Testament, including the tribulation period and millennial reign of Christ, are distinct from this present church age.

The implication of these points is that attempting to apply prophecies about the tribulation period

or millennium to events happening today is both misguided and potentially damaging. Furthermore, attempting to identify events or individuals living now that might be important in the future tribulation period is highly speculative. A preoccupation with such activities can be unhelpful. Such was true of the Pharisees in Luke chapter 17 when they questioned the Lord Jesus as to when the Kingdom of God should come. His answer to them revealed that their fixation with prophecy was a distraction away from more important issues, vv. 20, 21. For them, it was pointless to predict the arrival of the Kingdom of God by observing signs since the Kingdom of God had, in one sense, arrived. The King was already present among them. Their fascination with prophecy had diverted them away from focusing on the Saviour Himself. Similarly, we need to make sure that we are not guilty of diverting our attention away from Him.

One of the few exceptions in the New Testament regarding prophetic truth that does relate to this current period of time is provided by the Lord Jesus in Luke chapter 21 verse 24, although this is primarily about Israel and not the church. Here the Lord states that the inhabitants of Jerusalem 'shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled'.³ This prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and took many of the Israelites dwelling in Jerusalem into captivity. Since this time, during this present age, Israel and Jerusalem have been dominated by Gentile nations and even now the holy temple site is host to two Muslim mosques.⁴ The centrality of Israel to the past century of world events, including the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, is an important indicator that Israel as a nation will one day take centre stage in the final purposes of God. These recent historical events serve as a solemn reminder that the return of the Lord Jesus to the air to remove His people from the impending scene of judgement will take place very soon.

Endnotes

- 1 Please note that the return of the Lord Jesus to the air, 1 Thess. 4. 13-18, is quite distinct in character from the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth in judgement, 2 Thess. 1. 7-10.
- 2 The truth of the church is represented in picture form in the Old Testament. However, specific revelation with respect to the Church of God being comprised of Jews and Gentiles, in which both have equal status, is hidden in the Old Testament.
- 3 Although not directly stated as being a prophecy, perhaps the seven churches described in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are another notable exception, prophetically summarizing the history of the church age.
- 4 Jerusalem shall also be 'trodden down of the Gentiles' during the tribulation period, see Dan. 9. 27; Matt. 24. 15; Rev. 13. 15.

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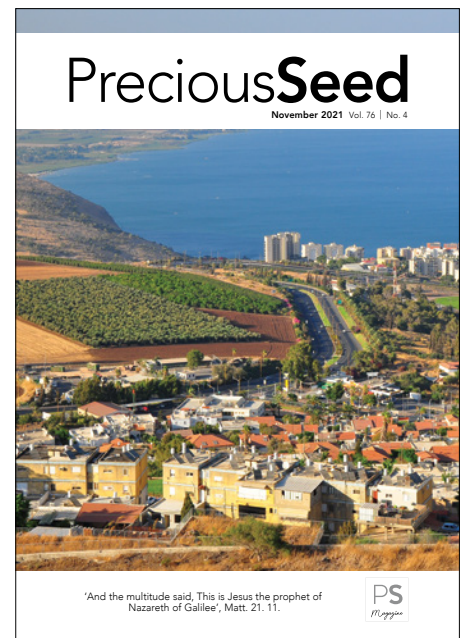
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'And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee', Matt. 21. 11.

Galilee forms one of the most northerly parts of the land of Israel, its soil and sea often forming the backdrop of the Lord's teaching and miracles. EASTON states that, 'It is noteworthy that of his thirty-two beautiful parables, no less than nineteen were spoken in Galilee. And it is no less remarkable that of his entire thirty-three great miracles, twenty-five were wrought in this province. His first miracle was wrought at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, and his last, after his resurrection, on the shore of Galilee's sea' (*Bible Dictionary*).

Yet, apart from its associations with the public ministry of the Lord, it was also the place where He was brought up. Matthew records that Joseph relocated to Nazareth in the southern region of Galilee because of a fear of Archelaus, Herod's son, and, in addition, because he was warned of God in a dream, 2. 22. The reputation of Nazareth, John 1. 46, seems to be almost characteristic of the region, John 7. 52; Matt. 26. 73. However, these were the people that listened to the Lord gladly and followed Him enthusiastically, Matt. 4. 25, and from which He called several of the fishermen to be His disciples, 4. 18.

Although poorly regarded by many, it was the place to which the Lord often resorted, John 4. 3; 7. 1, and it was from this region that 'many women were there [at the cross] beholding afar off', Matt. 27. 55. As ROBERTSON comments, 'We have come to expect the women from Galilee to be faithful, last at the Cross and first at the tomb' (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*). Finally, it was to Galilee that the Lord went after His resurrection and there that He commissioned His disciples to 'teach all nations', Matt. 28. 19.


It may have been an area of little importance, humanly speaking, but it was greatly blessed by the presence and ministry of the Saviour.

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