

# PreciousSeed

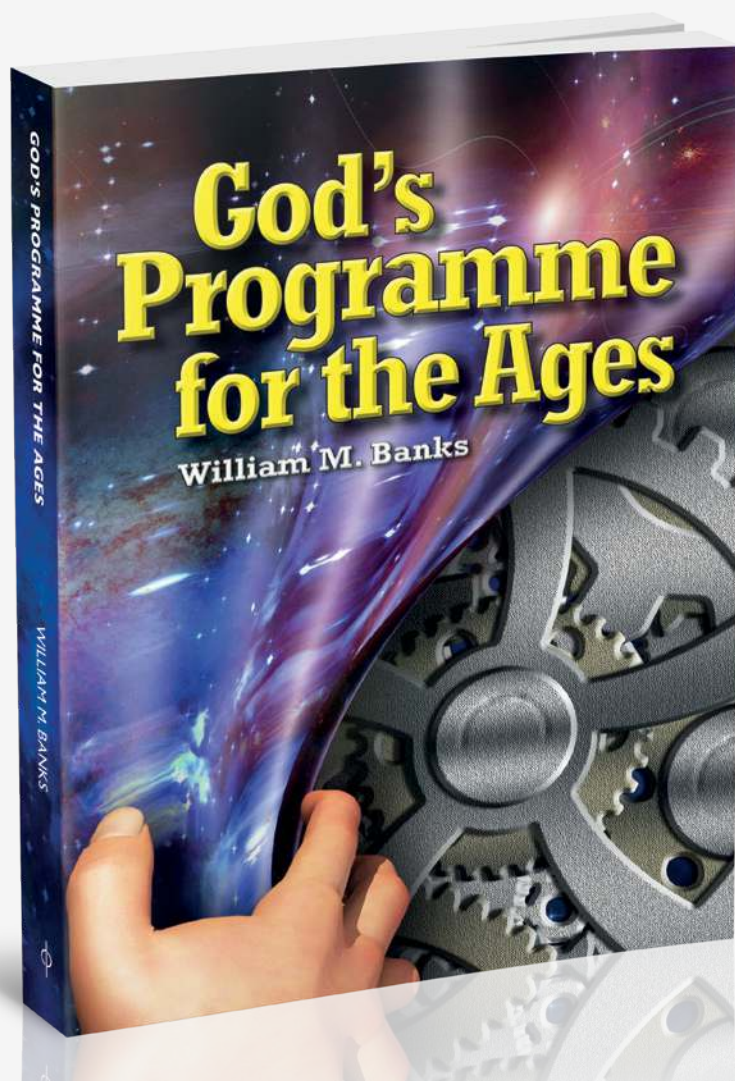
FEBRUARY 2023 Vol. 78 | No. 1



'Make thee an ark of gopher wood', Gen. 6. 14

PS  
Magazine





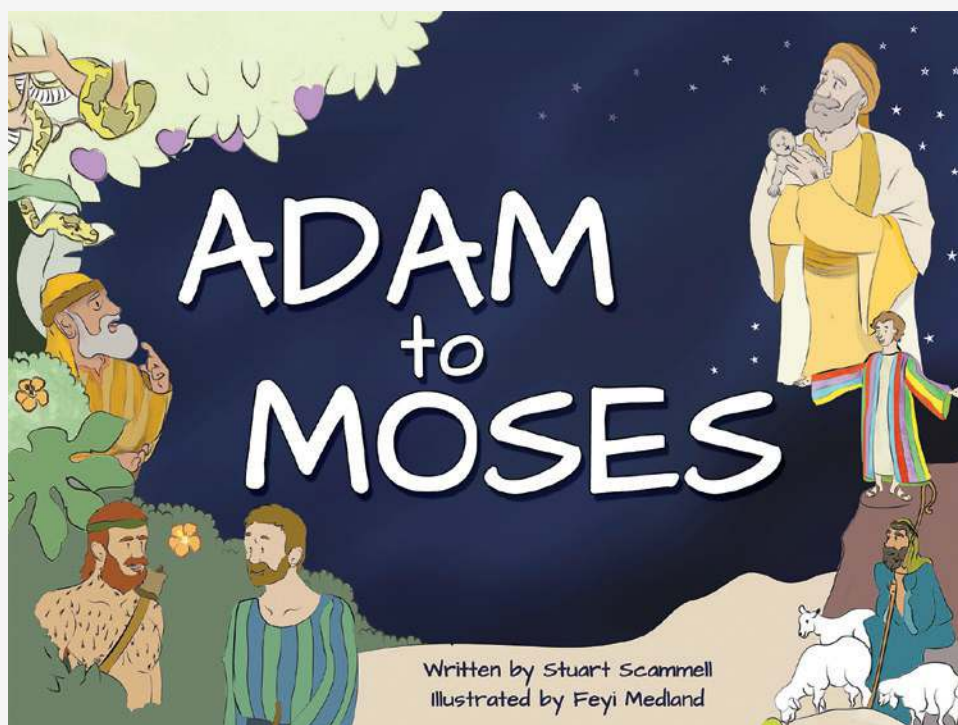
## God's Programme for the Ages

This book shows that nothing is happening by chance. God is in complete control. The step-by-step developments in the seven feasts of Jehovah, Lev. 23, the seven mysteries of the kingdom, Matt. 13, and the seven churches of Asia, Rev. 2 and 3, show unequivocally that everything is under a higher hand. They trace developments in relation to the nation of Israel, the Church as the body of Christ, as well as its local expression, and those in the world around us. In all the movements, God has one purpose in view, 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him', Eph. 1. 10.

Some of the features marking previous dispensations in anticipation of this final sovereignty of Christ in the millennial kingdom are covered as appropriate throughout the book. The final glorious triumph of the Saviour is not in doubt!

**Order your copy today for**

**£8.00** each  
plus postage at cost.



## Adam to Moses

The stories of Adam to Moses from the Bible have been put into rhyme to help make memories children will never forget.

Reading it will teach your child to value God's word, the Bible, and create a habit so that they might read it for themselves as they grow older.

There is no greater book and no greater message from a great God.

**Order your copy for**

**£4.50** each  
plus postage at cost.

## ‘That the scripture might be fulfilled’, John 19. 28

As publishers of a Christian magazine that focuses upon the exposition of scripture, this is an important text. Its context is the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, and it prefaces one of the seven sayings of the Saviour from the cross.

In the events preceding, as well as those at Calvary itself, there is a record of fulfilled scripture. Remember that in the garden as they came to take the Lord with swords and staves, Matthew records, ‘all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled’, 26. 56. In the betrayal by Judas and the use of the thirty pieces of silver to buy the potter’s field, Matthew again records, ‘Then was fulfilled that which was spoke by Jeremy the prophet’, 27. 9. As the soldiers crucified the Lord and parted His garments casting lots, Matthew tells us that it was all done, ‘that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet’, v. 35. These were not events that could have been orchestrated by any other than God, the sovereign controller of all things.

Seeing the Saviour amongst two malefactors, occupying the place of the chief of sinners, the sceptic might describe Mark’s comment, ‘the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors’, 15. 28, as coincidental, but reading in John chapter 19 that the spear that pierced the Saviour’s side was a fulfilment of scripture cannot be dismissed so easily. John tells us, ‘these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken’, v. 36.

Whilst these are instances of the essential unity of the scriptures, they also declare their divine origin, inspiration, and authority. All the prophetic scriptures concerning the life and death of the Saviour were fulfilled. As other writers in this magazine have shown, this fact can be a tremendous tool in seeking to reach the lost. The prophetic scriptures show that the Bible is God’s word to a needy world.

However, this text is also a help to all

believers. Challenges to the veracity of the word of God are not new, but to trace through the scriptures the occasions where God has portrayed the future in some detail and all that detail has been fulfilled, should fill us all with assurance that we can trust the scriptures for every part of our lives. Equally, as we come to scripture which describes what will take place in coming days, we can view such chapters and verses with assurance. As God has kept His word before, He will keep His word again. We can echo the words of the Apostle Paul, ‘all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us’, 2 Cor. 1. 20.

As you come to this magazine and the articles that it contains, we trust that you will find something that will be to your spiritual blessing and edification, whether it be a word of encouragement or a word of challenge.

**JOHN BENNETT**

General Editor

## Contents

### **Economic parables – Part 3** ..... 2

By MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE

### **Son of David** ..... 4

By KEN TOTTON

### **The teaching in the letter to the Hebrews – Part 1** ..... 6

By BRIAN CLATWORTHY

### **Malawi – reaching the warm heart with the gospel** ..... 8

By STEPHEN HARPER

### **Frederick W. Baedeker 1823-1906** ..... 10

By BERT CARGILL

### **Pauline metaphors – Part 5** ..... 12

By KEN TOTTON

### **Alien** ..... 14

By DAVID BRAUCH

### **The widows of Luke’s Gospel – Part 3 – The widow of Nain** ..... 15

By REX TROGDON

### **The voice of God** ..... 16

By MERVYN WISHART

### **Paul’s third missionary journey – Part 2** ..... 18

By FRANK A. PROUDLOCK

### **Studies in the twelve (minor) prophets – Part 2 – Joel** ..... 20

By STEPHEN FELLOWES

### **The life and times of Elijah the prophet – Part 1** ..... 22

By JOHN BENNETT

### **The brides of scripture – Part 1 Eve the first bride** ..... 24

By JONATHAN BLACK

### **The Godhead as inviters** ..... 26

By DAVID BRAUCH

### **Three revelations** ..... 28

By JEFF BROWN

### **Question Time** ..... Inside Back Cover

By FRANK A. PROUDLOCK

### **PULL-OUT**

#### **YPS**

By STEPHEN BAKER

# Economic Parables 3

## The Pharisee and the Publican Luke 18. 9-14

By **MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE** Grantham, England

What or whom we trust is a question of immense importance, for the answer to it will determine our current actions and future destiny. In this chapter, Luke brings together teaching and incidents that challenge his reader as to the focus and object of our trust. Faith in God should result in persistence in prayer, vv. 1-8; the disciples needed to learn that childlike trust was required to enter the kingdom of God, vv. 15-17; riches are a barrier to the kingdom, for it is so hard to give up reliance upon them, vv. 18-27; but for those who are prepared to give up everything to follow Christ, there is promise of abundant recompense, vv. 28-30; following Christ, however, will not be easy, for suffering must come before glory in the purposes of God, vv. 31-33; a blind beggar provides a fitting conclusion to the chapter as he displays simple trust in the Lord, leading to persistence in 'prayer', an abundant blessing, and a heart to follow, vv. 35-43.

In our section, the context is clear, 'he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others', v. 9. A solemn section dealing with the need to weigh carefully whom our trust is in, for the answer to this will result in either justification before God or simply self-justification.

What kind of righteousness do we crave? Job asked, 'how should man be just with God?' Job 9. 2, and scripture is blunt in its verdict upon humanity, 'There is none righteous, no, not one', Rom. 3. 10, so it is evident that righteousness before God is outside of our efforts. Humanity, however, can be fooled by the outward veneer of a seemingly pious life and, sadly, self-justification and the praise of man can be a tempting substitute for that righteousness which we ought to seek.

The word 'trust' in verse 9 has the idea of persuade. The Lord speaks to those who had managed to reason themselves to the point that they believed they had a right standing before God, as well as to those who considered that these were indeed the

ones God considered righteous. He shatters this illusion by considering the outcome of the attitude and prayers of two men.

### Two men

The Pharisees were a Jewish sect formed after the return from the Babylonian captivity as a reaction against those who sought to compromise the law. 'They were extremely accurate and minute in all matters pertaining to the law of Moses', cp Acts 26. 5.<sup>1</sup> Thus, outwardly they appeared to men to live righteously, and Paul's statement in Philippians chapter 3 verse 6 sums up what seems to have been their self-evaluation, 'touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless'.

In contrast, the publicans were a byword for the very lowest in society. The word describes those who collected taxes on behalf of the Romans. The Jews hated the occupation of Rome, and those of their own number who collected taxes locally were despised, 'to be spoiled by foreigners was bad, but to be

plundered by their own countrymen was far worse'.<sup>2</sup> Linked with others of low repute, Matt. 21. 32, and often guilty of extortion, Luke 3. 13; 19. 8, the term became synonymous with sinner and pagan, Luke 15. 1, 2; Matt. 18. 17.

### Two attitudes

'The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself', v. 11. The Lord had previously condemned some for loving to pray in public places, Matt. 6. 5, but here the suggestion is that this man is so well satisfied with himself that he doesn't even require that public recognition. The same reasoning that led him to trust that he was righteous, also led him to despise others, Luke 18. 9. This is an attitude seen in Herod's soldiers when they 'set him [Jesus] at nought', 23. 11, an utter disregard for the worth of others.

Such is the danger of trusting oneself. A genuine desire to follow God's word can quickly degenerate into self-righteousness, as we add extra rules to the word of God. Judgement of others who do not follow the same rules can result. From there, it is a small step to despising others. May the warning of Romans chapter 14 verses 1 to 12 ever guard our attitude.<sup>3</sup>

The posture and actions of the publican demonstrate the marked difference in attitude. Although he came to pray, he stood 'afar off', and 'would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast', v. 13. Perhaps the words of Ezra convey the feelings of this man, 'O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens', Ezra 9. 6. It is challenging to consider that self-righteousness led the Pharisee to be content to pray to himself, but the sense of his unworthiness drove the tax gatherer to the presence of God to seek mercy, recognizing that there was no hope to be found in self. Which describes our attitude as we come to pray?

### Two prayers

The prayers were expressions of the hearts of both men and reveal something of their inner reasonings.



While both prayers begin by addressing 'God', A. T. ROBERTSON suggests that, for the Pharisee, it was 'a soliloquy with his own soul . . . for his own satisfaction' and W. HENDRIKSEN writes, 'the man was actually talking to himself, congratulating himself'.<sup>4</sup> His thankfulness was without the humility found in the expression 'there but for the grace of God go I'. Those marked out for comparison were such as the majority of the population would have hoped not to be like. How easy it is to find those to whom we can feel morally superior! 'His *religious* merits complete his grounds for congratulation'.<sup>5</sup> Going beyond the inspired law, this man introduced more fasts and more tithing to his life. In light of this he could not imagine how God could fail to declare him righteous. How sad to read of the Saviour's condemnation of those who reasoned in such a way, Matt. 23. 23, 24. May we never fall into the trap of thinking that keeping the rules we make, guarantees acceptance and favour with God.

How different the publican, whose self-description 'the sinner', v. 13 JND,<sup>6</sup> matches Paul's attitude in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 15. Understanding that there is no merit in him at all but rather one who was

'devoted to sin',<sup>7</sup> he came casting himself upon the mercy of God alone.

'God be merciful', v. 13; 'God be propitious' YLT. In using this expression, the publican demonstrated his understanding that God must have a righteous basis if his sins were to be removed. It is lovely to consider that, at that very moment, there may have been an animal being sacrificed upon the temple altar. It is as though the sinner in all his guilt asks God to place the value of that blood to his account, that his sins and guilt might be covered. Romans chapter 3 verse 25 tells us that such sacrifices were presented in light of the coming propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. Verses 26 and 27 remind us that this is the only basis by which God can remain just and yet be 'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus'. The result: boasting (self-righteousness based on works) is excluded, righteousness can only be gained through faith, and upon the ground of a propitiatory sacrifice.

### The outcome

'This man went down to his house justified rather than the other', v. 14. The shocking conclusion to the story is that the despised character is the one declared righteous in the sight of

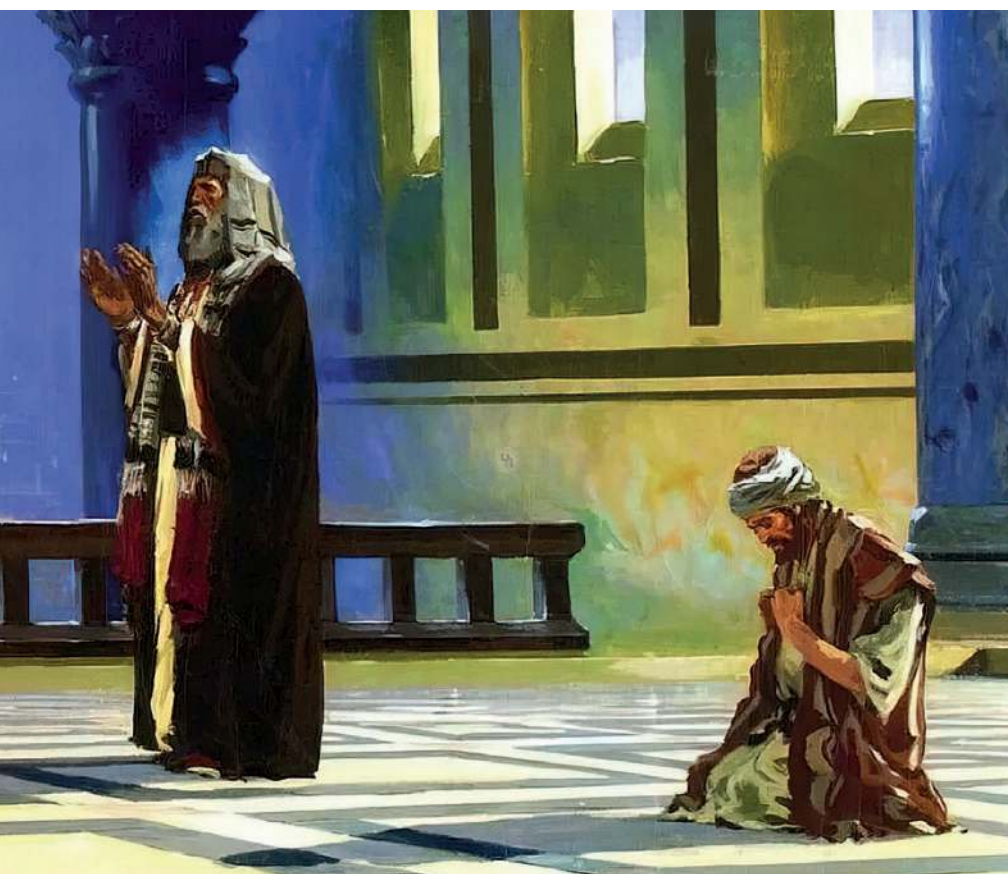
God. If we stop for a moment and try to enter into the horror the original listeners would have had, then we will have a fresh glimpse into the wonder of what God has done – and is able to do. Dare we, with the self-righteousness of the Pharisee, ever consider any section of society beyond the redeeming effect of the value of the precious blood of Christ? What grace has been displayed that ever the sinner can approach God in faith one moment, and the next be able to confidently say, 'There is therefore now no condemnation', Rom. 8. 1, or, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?', 8. v. 33. Such confidence can never be in self, but rather for those who 'are in Christ Jesus', and resting in the 'God that justifieth'.

### The principle

The Lord sums up the point of the story by comparing the reasoning of man with the logic of God, 'for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted', v. 14. In whom should we place our trust? In the economy of God, there is only one reasonable answer, for 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble', Jas. 4. 6. May we remember the beautiful words of Isaiah chapter 57 verse 15 so that both personally, and in the proclamation of the gospel, we may be encouraged that 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy . . . [dwells] in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'.

### Endnotes

- 1 M. G. EASTON, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, e-Sword resource.
- 2 A. R. FAUSSET, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*, e-Sword resource.
- 3 Cp. the word for 'despised', Luke 18. 9, and 'set at nought', Rom. 14. 10.
- 4 Both quoted by N. CRAWFORD, *What the Bible teaches, Luke*, John Ritchie Ltd, pg. 294.
- 5 R. JAMIESON, A. R. FAUSSET, and D. BROWN, *Whole Bible Commentary*, e-Sword resource, italics original.
- 6 'It is curious how modern scholars ignore this Greek article. The main point in the contrast lies in this article. The Pharisee thought of others as sinners. The publican thinks of himself alone as the sinner, not of others at all', A. T. ROBERTSON, *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament*, e-Sword resource. J. H. THAYER, *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, e-Sword resource.



# SON OF DAVID

By **KEN TOTTON** Cambridge, England

This article briefly surveys scripture's presentation of Christ as Son of David. This glorious title encompasses both the deity and humanity of our Lord. It denotes His royal character and assured sovereignty over the nations in the purposes of God.

## Son of David in promise

2 Samuel chapter 7 describes one of King David's finest hours. He had conceived an ambition to build a house, i.e., a temple to the honour of the God who had taken him from minding sheep, preserved him from the murderous intentions of Saul, and established him on the throne of Israel. To his great surprise and humbling, God far surpassed his exercise and instead insisted that **He** would build David a house, a dynasty of kings. Surely what God has done (and will yet do) for us far outstrips anything we can ever do for Him.

This covenant secured a special status for the Davidic king as the Lord's anointed, and representative of His people. Each king, insofar as he feared the Lord and faithfully represented Him, pointed forward to the ultimate son of David, Jesus the anointed One, the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> Realistically, the covenant also anticipated the failure of some and the consequent exercise of God's discipline but assured an everlasting dominion to the house of David. On the other hand, the subsequent history of Israel, including exile and subjugation to foreign powers, called into question the credibility of these glowing promises, Ps. 89. 38-51.

## Son of David in prophecy

In view of David's major contribution to the Psalter, we might expect that the Spirit of inspiration would shed further light on the fortunes of his successors on the throne of Judah. Psalms 2, 45, 72, 89, and 110 all spring to mind in this connection.

Psalm 2 introduces us to a menacing confederacy of nations in revolt against the Lord and His anointed. Yet God is unperturbed in view of the fact that He has established His king

by decree on His holy hill of Zion. God's purposes for Christ cannot be overthrown. Those same rulers of earth are advised to sue for peace, and 'kiss the Son, lest he be angry', Ps. 2. 12.

Psalm 45 is a magnificent hymn composed for a royal wedding. The poet is bubbling over with his irrepressible theme as he contemplates the king's person, his prowess in battle, and the expected fruit of his marriage. Whilst hyperbole was an accepted element in such contexts, the extravagant language of verses 6 and 7 transcends a mere human monarch. Centuries later, the writer to the Hebrews quotes these verses to establish the deity of Christ, Heb. 1. 8, 9.

Psalm 110 is succinct but frequently quoted in the New Testament. Perhaps David had been reflecting on his recent acquisition of Jerusalem and its ancient king-priest Melchizedek. Be that as it may, the first Christians found here a major testimony to the exaltation of Christ, albeit with the necessity of an interval between His two advents. The opening verse indicates that under the Spirit's guidance David acknowledges his successor as his Lord.

Dark days in Israelite history came with the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria. It must have seemed that the very existence of the house of David was in jeopardy. Yet God, through a succession of prophets, fostered the hope that His promises would achieve a fulfilment far greater than anything Israel had so far experienced.<sup>2</sup>

## Son of David in person

Matthew's Gospel opens with the

genealogy of Jesus Christ, 'the son of David'. Luke records the angel's announcement to a wondering Mary that her child 'shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him **the throne of his father David**', Luke 1. 32. In due course, Joseph was providentially guided to Judaea, to 'the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)', Luke 2. 4. There, in the humblest of circumstances, the Saviour was born, v. 11.

Centuries earlier, David conquered Jerusalem and made it 'the city of David', 2 Sam. 5. 4-10. The Jebusites, the natives of the land, taunted him, 'You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off', v. 6 ESV. David conquered the city and declared, "Whoever climbs up by the way of the water shafts and defeats the Jebusites, (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul) he shall be chief and captain." Therefore, they say, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house [i.e. the temple]", v. 8 NKJV. These taunts form an instructive contrast to Matthew's Gospel where, on six occasions, Jesus is called 'the Son of David'. In each case the episode is associated with conflict with the religious leaders, and there is also a reference to blindness.

- Two blind men successfully appealed to Jesus, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on us', 9. 27-41, evidence that He was indeed the Messiah, cp. v. 31.
- A blind and dumb demoniac was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, 12. 22. People asked in amazement, 'Is not this the son of David?' v. 23.
- Following a debate with the Pharisees, 15. 1-11, Jesus referred to them as blind guides, v. 14. Then in the region of Tyre and Sidon, a Canaanite woman asked, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely demon-possessed, vv. 21, 22 NKJV. Later He 'went up into a mountain', where 'great multitudes came unto him, having



with them those that were **lame, blind** . . . and he healed them', vv. 29, 30.

- The remaining three occasions are closely connected, 20. 30; 21. 9, 15. Leaving Jericho, two blind men called out repeatedly, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David', 20. 30, 31. Jesus healed them, and they 'followed him', v. 34. He journeyed on to Jerusalem, accompanied by shouts from the people, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 21. 9. Entering the city, **'the blind and the lame** came to him in the temple; and he healed them', v. 14. Again, conflict ensued 'when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David', vv. 15, 16.

These episodes demonstrate that Christ contrasts markedly with the attitude and ways of His ancestor King David. His mercy extends to the lame and the blind, with even the spiritually disadvantaged Canaanite blessed. David would have regarded her ancestors as enemies!<sup>3</sup> Yet,



paradoxically, those who considered themselves as the custodians of the Jerusalem temple were among His spiritually blind opponents, who refused to countenance what children readily understood, cp. John 9. 39-41.

### Son of David in power

Who exactly is Jesus? This remains the most consequential question that anyone can ask. It is to be noted that in His public ministry Christ did not describe Himself as Son of David, for obvious reasons, John 6. 15. When He posed a final question to His opponents, He did so to bring out not simply His Davidic descent, but His deity. The Pharisees readily acknowledged that Psalm 110 referred to the Messiah, 'What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?' Matt. 22. 42-45.

How can Messiah be both David's Son and David's Lord? The early Christians accepted 'the gospel of God . . . concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead', Rom. 1. 1-4. Speaking of Psalm 16, Peter explained that David, 'being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell,<sup>4</sup> neither his flesh did see corruption', Acts 2. 30, 31.

Thus, in Christ risen and exalted at God's right hand, the fortunes of the house of David are gloriously and permanently restored. It is Israel's greatest honour that 'from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever', Rom. 9. 5 ESV. Conversely, it is surely their greatest tragedy that the vast majority reject this preeminent Son of David. Yet happily millions from all

the nations render Him the obedience of faith through the gospel, Acts 15. 16-18; Rom. 1. 5.

Facing imminent martyrdom, Paul could exhort his friend Timothy to persevere in hardships and 'remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel', 2 Tim. 2. 8 ESV. To the church in Philadelphia, Christ is portrayed as 'he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth', Rev. 3. 7; cp. Isa. 22. 22. As far as the kingdom of God is concerned, all powers of admission and exclusion are vested in the Lord Jesus. Isaiah chapter 22 points to the fact that He is the unfailingly faithful and competent steward of the entire divine programme. John's tears are therefore unnecessary, for 'the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof', Rev. 5. 5. Those seals unloosed bring the purposes of God to completion, albeit by devastating judgements. What will bring terror to the world of the impenitent is at the same time the bright hope of Christ's people, Rev. 22. 16, 'I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star'.

We noted earlier that Christ inherits 'the throne of his father David'; moreover, there will come a glad day when 'the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever', Rev. 11. 15 ESV. This will far surpass David's conquests, and, correspondingly, the resultant blessings will far outstrip the peace of Solomon's reign, Ps. 72.

### Endnotes

- 1 For David as a type of Christ see: J. N. CASE, *Personal Types of the Lord Jesus*, J. Ritchie, pp. 72-83; A. F. KIRKPATRICK, *II Samuel* in Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Cambridge University Press, pp. 42-45.
- 2 See, for examples, Isa. 7. 14; 9. 6, 7; 11. 1ff.; 32. 1; Jer. 23. 5; 33. 15; Ezek. 21. 26, 27; 34. 23, 24; 37. 24, 25; Hos. 3. 4, 5; Amos 9. 11-15; Mic. 5. 2; Zech. 3. 8; 6. 12, 13.
- 3 See further, R. P. GORDON, *I & II Samuel*, Zondervan, pp. 49-53.
- 4 That is, Hades, ESV.

# The teaching in the letter to the Hebrews

## Part 1 – Introduction

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

In this introductory article we consider the historical context of this New Testament letter and its sustained argument. Put in another way, how does God reveal Himself in this letter as it focuses on the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ? Later articles will focus on the various topics identified in this introduction, but the emphasis throughout all these studies will be doctrinal rather than purely expository. We will also seek to understand its import and application to us as believers for today.

### Genre and authorship

This letter is different from most other New Testament texts in that whilst it ends like a conventional letter, 13. 22, it does not have an opening salutation. In this respect we can compare the opening verses of John's first letter, 1 John 1. 1-4. Some scholars think that the letter is principally a word of encouragement,<sup>1</sup> and this is probably how we should interpret the letter overall.<sup>2</sup> It also includes five warnings for believers who were in danger of rejecting the basic principles of their Christian faith and relapsing into Judaism.<sup>3</sup> While we give some background information relating to these warnings in this article, two separate articles will deal with them in more detail later.

As the letter has no opening salutation, it makes it very difficult to determine who wrote it, and the problem is compounded by the fact that in most early English translations of Hebrews, e.g., KJV, RV, authorship has been ascribed to the Apostle Paul, whilst later translations simply have the superscription, 'The Letter to the Hebrews', e.g., NIV, ESV. It is highly unlikely though that Paul wrote this letter, because the internal evidence suggests that the writer and the recipients were second-generation believers, see for example chapter 2 verse 3; both had received the message of salvation through the witness of others. This was clearly

not Paul's experience.<sup>4</sup> If we also compare this letter to Paul's letters there are few Pauline themes that can be identified.<sup>5</sup> Only once is there a reference to 'resurrection', the word 'gospel' is never used, and rarely does the writer speak of 'righteousness'. Although, for example, Paul uses the verb 'to justify' and the noun 'righteousness' almost exclusively in Romans and Galatians, it should be acknowledged that the presence or absence of phrases or words in particular Pauline letters are not the only determining factors in establishing Pauline authorship. The purpose of the letter would undoubtedly order the subject matter and the themes to be emphasized.<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars have suggested that the title of this letter 'To the Hebrews' is an editorial label as it only occurs in manuscripts in the last quarter of the second century AD and was therefore simply included for convenient reference. CLEMENT OF ROME<sup>7</sup> (AD 96) and HERMAS (in *Shepherd*) both quote from this letter at the end of the first century, but not under the title 'To the Hebrews'. Authorship was important when the letter was challenged as to authenticity and canonicity in the early church, but as the text itself does not disclose the name of the author, and this would be unprecedented if the Apostle Paul had written it, nothing now turns on this matter. What this all suggests, however, is that there are as many valid reasons for arguing that Paul wrote this letter as there are that another individual wrote this letter, but in our view the anonymity of the author as directed by the Holy Spirit is deliberate. He does not wish to detract from the main objective of His letter, which is to present the greatness of the person and work of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

### Date and destination

Two other issues should be mentioned before we set out the doctrinal argument of Hebrews. This relates to the date of the letter and its recipients. Hebrews was certainly written in the first century and, most probably, before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in AD 70. This would mean that the





Jewish sacrificial system was still a reality to the recipients of this letter, even though the writer majors on the tabernacle in the wilderness and not the Second Temple, i.e., the temple built to replace Solomon's temple and in existence in the post-exilic period from 516 BC to its destruction in AD 70. Nevertheless, if the writer is attempting to convince his readers of the inferiority of the Mosaic system, and dissuading them from returning to Jewish practices, an obvious argument would have been to mention the cessation of the temple sacrifices, if they were, in fact, no longer taking place.<sup>9</sup> The eventual destruction of the Second Temple became the watershed of Jewish history, especially in terms of national identity and religious worship.

The recipients of this letter are named 'Hebrews', which, according to T. W. MANSON, 'would mean one thing in Palestine and another outside. As the addressees are Christians, it would mean, if the document was sent to Palestine, Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians, natives of the land as opposed to Greek-speaking 'Hellenists', i.e., Christian Jews of the Diaspora'.<sup>10</sup> In our view, the frequent use of the Septuagint (LXX) suggests that the recipients of this letter were Hellenistic Jews living somewhere in the Dispersion<sup>11</sup> rather than in Israel.<sup>12</sup> They would have understood the letter's many citations and allusions to the Old Testament and shared in the writer's frequent use

of the Septuagint (LXX),<sup>13</sup> as their common language was Greek. While the expression 'They of Italy salute you' in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 24 is somewhat ambiguous, it could mean that the author of the letter was living in Italy at the time of writing.

In terms, then, the letter is written to Christians who are in imminent danger of abandoning their Christian faith and returning to Judaism with all its intrinsic failings. Even though the writer takes time to build up his argument, there is an emphasis throughout the letter on the calamitous consequences of neglecting the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It is against this backdrop that our writer proceeds to

show the ineffectiveness of Judaism as compared with the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. As BARNABAS LINDARS states, 'It is an appeal to particular people to revise their understanding of their Christian faith and to abandon action which is incompatible with it. There must be an intended effect on the readers'.<sup>14</sup> The letter is not therefore time-warped, but must have an attendant effect upon us as we read it, and 'join the struggle in defence of the faith, the faith which God entrusted to his people once and for all', Jude 3 NEB. The title given by W. E. VINE to his commentary on Hebrews (*Christ all Excelling*) captures the essential argument of this Christ-centred letter to which we now turn.

### Endnotes

- 1 2. 1; 3. 13, 14; 6. 1-12; 10. 22-39; 12. 1-29; 13. 13, 22. The comment in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 22 led Tertullian to say that Barnabas was the author because he is described in Acts 4. 36 as 'The son of encouragement'.
- 2 F. F. BRUCE commenting on Hebrews chapter 13 verse 22 states that, 'The word of exhortation refers to the whole of the preceding epistle. In Acts 13:15 . . . any "word of exhortation" . . . clearly denotes a homily; it is thus a very suitable description for this epistle, which is a homily in written form'. [*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New London Commentary on the New Testament, pg. 413].
- 3 2. 1-4; 3. 7-4. 13; 6. 4-12; 10. 26-39; 12. 14-29.
- 4 As confirmed by Galatians chapter 1 verse 12, and other similar texts.
- 5 The letter ends with a benediction like those found in other New Testament letters, especially those written by the Apostle Paul, but again this is not conclusive as to Pauline authorship. See, for example, the Apostle Peter, 2 Pet. 3. 18, and the Apostle John, Rev. 22. 21, which is the exact expression used by Paul in many of his letters, e.g., Rom. 16. 27; Phil. 4. 23; 1 Thess. 5. 28; 2 Thess. 3. 18.
- 6 MARTIN LUTHER originally assumed the letter was Pauline, but later he ascribed the letter to Apollos – see his *Preface to Hebrews* (1522). T. W. MANSON also argued that the author was Apollos suggesting, among other reasons, that the letter was characterized by Alexandrian exegesis in the manner of Philo on the Jewish side, and Origen later on the Christian side. [*The Problem of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, BJRL, Vol. 32 no. 1 (1949), pg. 16].
- 7 The earliest manuscript that includes Paul's letters is the papyrus P46, which is around AD 200. This codex is partly located at the University of Michigan, the rest in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland. The letter to the Hebrews is included in this collection, and the title shown above the letter is 'to the Hebrews'. Hebrews follows directly after the letter to the Romans, and the argument for Pauline authorship of Hebrews is that it was not necessary to state that in the letter as it is likely that the codex contained a fuller title, such as 'The Epistles of Paul', at the end of the codex, which is now lost.
- 8 We might concur therefore with the early church father Origen's judgement that 'Who actually wrote the epistle, in truth God knows'. Professor D. T. BLACK, however, observes in his review of Origen's comments on the letter to the Hebrews that Origen believed that the thoughts in Hebrews are Pauline, but the style and diction are to be credited to someone else.
- 9 Hebrews chapter 8 verse 13 seems to support this view. DAVID GOODING writes on this verse, 'Do you notice the exactness of the expression? The writer does not say that the old covenant and all that pertains thereto has vanished away . . . Then he adds, *now that which is old and aged is nigh unto vanishing away* – it has not yet vanished, but it soon will. History tells us that the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. Again if we read carefully in chapter 9 (R.V.) of this letter, where the writer for the sake of example refers to the services in the temple and tabernacle, we shall observe that he consistently uses the present tense, for all the time when this letter was written the temple still stood at Jerusalem and the Jewish priests were still carrying on their services in the temple'. [*An Unshakeable Kingdom*, pg. 11].
- 10 *The Problem of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, BJRL, Vol. 32 no.1 (1949), pg. 4.
- 11 The Greek word 'Diaspora' has quite a complex meaning in Judaism, but in simple terms it relates to Jews living outside of Israel by reason of exile, with its roots stretching back to the Babylonian captivity circa 597 BC.
- 12 Some scholars think, however, that because of the Jewish Hellenistic character of Hebrews, it can be linked to the group around Stephen mentioned in Acts chapter 6 verse 7. This seems highly unlikely in the circumstances of the letter.
- 13 The writer quotes over thirty-five times from the Septuagint (LXX).
- 14 BARNABAS LINDARS, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, pg. 135.



# MALAWI - reaching the warm heart with the gospel

By **STEPHEN HARPER**

## Introduction

It is twenty years since I arrived in Malawi, the beautiful 'warm heart' of Central Africa. Although Gail and I were exploring what we believed to be the Lord's calling, we had no idea how Malawi would totally steal our hearts.

We were on a short connecting flight to Blantyre in the south. Peering out of the window, I was transfixed by the natural beauty of a land famous for its volcanic mountains and rift-valley lake, but particularly the primitive otherworldliness of a landscape littered with thousands of simple grass-roofed, mud-built dwellings, such as I'd never seen before.

'This is real Africa'. The silence was broken by a typically friendly Malawian next to me. 'As close as it gets to what David Livingstone saw 140 years ago'. He was an executive of Southern Bottlers, the licensee for Coca-Cola in Malawi, and I remarked to myself that Doctor Livingstone hardly had the luxury of a cold Coke on his travels.

The licence has since changed hands, but the Coke is still made with Malawian cane sugar and it's still the best in the world. However, much has changed. Not all for the better. There are more tin roofs, latrines, and wells. Some people have mattresses, even a light bulb. There are more paved roads – and potholes. There are more cars

– and congestion. In town, there are coffee shops – and betting shops – and satellite TV – and salacious movies!

The native people of Malawi were originally animistic, worshipping ancestral spirits, but the country was largely Christianized by Scottish missionaries following Livingstone's 19th-century expeditions. Earlier, the Portuguese brought Catholicism, and Arab slavers, Islam, the influence of which continues to grow apace. Some strong pockets of traditional African religion remain, but its undertones are everywhere.

The most striking thing about Malawi is poverty. The majority are subsistence farmers, manually eking out an existence from a small parcel of over-worked, under-nourished land. Millions barely survive. This presents both challenges and opportunities in the Lord's work.

Technology and outside influences are rapidly changing one of the most conservative 'Christian' countries in the world. Thirty years ago, male tourists would have their hair cut in the airport if the police deemed it too long. Women would be detained for wearing trousers or showing too much flesh. Today, you are likely to encounter young people with 'enlightened' views on LGBT issues, and certain to meet many Muslim men and women in full Islamic attire. Such

is the persuasive power of the Pound and Euro and Middle Eastern oil money in a desperate developing world economy.

## History

When we moved to Malawi, our work was principally among 'assemblies' in the Shire Highlands. Between 2003 and 2006 we visited over thirty in an eighty kilometre radius, occasionally further afield. What we discovered discouraged and frustrated us, but was nevertheless valuable experience, giving insight into the folk gospel that is everywhere in Malawi until today.

Concluding that it was futile to continue itinerating as we were, we decided to concentrate on one 'assembly' near where we lived. Further disappointments left us more discouraged, and eventually it became clear that a radical rethink was necessary.

## Aspects of the work

The Lord used these setbacks to lead in an entirely different direction. In early 2009, we began establishing a work in the city of Zomba. We rented a shop unit on the main thoroughfare, opened a Christian bookstore and began holding weekly adults' and young people's Bible studies, and a children's group each Saturday morning.

## Literature

The interest in Christian literature dispelled a myth I had long believed. Literacy in Malawi is relatively poor, and I thought that it would be pointless to invest in literature work. I was wrong. On the contrary, although education standards are well behind the developed world, people with few material things put a higher value on literature they receive.

In 2011, we had to relocate to the United Kingdom. I wanted to maintain as much involvement in the work as distance would allow and planned to visit as often as possible. The Lord laid on my heart to use these trips to expand the literature ministry. With assistance from a local brother, Harold, we started to distribute gospel tracts, calendars, and other literature across the country.

That work has mushroomed. What

*Meeting at a typical village 'assembly' in 2004.*





started with a few thousand tracts carried in my luggage, has grown beyond my wildest expectation. To date, we have supplied over 14 million items, and demand continues to exceed our ability to supply. In 2018, we formed Southern Africa Literature Trust (SALT) to facilitate the further growth of the work. Our expanding range of literature includes:

- Twenty-plus Chichewa gospel tracts
- Annual Gospel Calendar (2022 circulation 1,100,000 copies)
- Seed Sower texts
- Exercise books
- Emmaus courses
- Bible teaching materials

We created regional storage depots to improve logistics and recently a central storage and distribution hub at Saidi (Thondwe). However, this work would be impossible without the large band of local volunteers who take the gospel all over the country. Most are very poor. Many don't possess a bicycle and cover large distances on foot, carrying heavy loads of literature. They are the heroes of the work.

### **Bible teaching/discipleship**

Most of these volunteers are contacts made since 2011. From various ecclesiastical backgrounds, they had no exposure to assembly truth. We freely provide literature based on their commitment to the true gospel. However, we have been building upon the foundation of this shared interest. Each May, when the maize harvest is complete, we invite some of the volunteers for residential Bible conferences. Previously, we had no alternative but to hold these in rented conference rooms, using restaurants and bed and breakfasts for food and lodging, but we look forward to having our own facilities soon. This should remove some of the limitations of such resource constraints. We receive positive feedback from many who have attended, and praise God for the investment of time, energy, and other resources. We've even had the joy of hearing of a couple of little assemblies formed as a result. To God be the glory!

### **Children's work**

In 2003, average life expectancy in Malawi was thirty-seven years, and fifty percent of the population was



*Millions of people in Malawi still till their fields by hand using only a Khasu (hoe).*

under fifteen years. Those statistics have improved a little but are a great incentive (if needed) to invest in the rising generation. Brothers Harold and Goodson have a real heart for young people's work. Goodson has built a strong children's work at Thondwe – over 300 regulars attended the special Christmas event. Harold's passion regularly takes him to many schools, where he has freedom to preach and distribute literature.

Recently we introduced Bible Time lessons in the Dzaleka Camp, home to about 50,000 Swahili-speaking refugees from around ten African states. This has been very successful, and about 1,000 children are studying God's word, with many more keen to do so. This is a pilot for the Chichewa *Nthawi ya Baibulo* which we are presently translating. God willing, the first year's lessons should be ready for printing shortly. Although there are around fifteen languages in Malawi, every student learns Chichewa, and, if this project takes off, it could be the most significant development in gospel work in Malawi for years.

### **Relief**

It's impossible to be unmoved by the overwhelming poverty in Malawi. Wisdom is needed to respond appropriately, balancing the impulses of compassion with the imperative of the commission. It is not easy. Some projects we are involved in include housing and food for cyclone victims, feeding refugee orphans and street children, and helping child-headed households in our area. We supply hygiene packs in support of the Prison

Emmaus work. Our aim is always to keep the gospel 'front and centre'.

### **MGO**

An annual highlight is Malawi Gospel Outreach (MGO) which has taken place each August since 2013, until disrupted by the pandemic. This two-week period of open-air preaching and literature distribution has been a huge blessing, and life changing for some who have participated. God willing, we are looking forward to resuming MGO this year.

### **Encouragements**

Despite frustrations, the Lord has given much encouragement. Anna Vallance (Livonia, Michigan) joined the work in May 2021 and has been a huge blessing already. Our local brothers demonstrate real spiritual growth and maturity, and there are many reports of the Lord saving souls and transforming lives, for which we praise Him alone.

### **Plans**

As many facets of the work expand, we thank God for providing a seven-acre site which we are developing as a Christian Resource Centre. Our plans are for the widespread deployment of *Nthawi ya Baibulo* (Bible Time) and further scaling up the literature work. We are enthusiastic about the opportunity the land gives to develop camp, training and conferencing facilities, and other possibilities we are praying about. We are humbled to see how the Lord has blessed thus far, and excited to see what He will do in the future.

### **Matters for prayer**

As I write, Anna has just experienced a traumatic burglary. She was tied up and her apartment ransacked. I recently was robbed while driving in Blantyre, and the site at Thondwe has had a series of thefts. The cost-of-living crisis will be catastrophic in Malawi, so please pray about that, but also remember the personal safety of the workers as economic hardship makes such attacks even more likely.

Please remember the logistical challenges of a rapidly growing work and the development at Saidi (Thondwe) – that the Lord will guide and provide.

# Frederick W. Baedeker

## 1823-1906

By **BERT CARGILL** St. Monans, Scotland

While Russia was still being governed by the elite czars, a choice servant of the Lord of German birth, Dr. F. W. Baedeker, heard God's call to take the gospel to its largely forgotten millions. He reached many members of the aristocracy in the cities to begin with, and then many thousands of miserable prisoners in jails right across that vast country. How he did this is an amazing story of dedication, perseverance and commitment to Christ and the gospel.

### The English connection

Fritz Baedeker, as he was known at home, was the second youngest child of F. W. J. Baedeker and his wife Frederika at Witten in Westphalia. When he was sixteen, he was apprenticed to a business in Dortmund, then at twenty-three he enlisted with the German army for two years of military service in Cologne, during which his health gave way and he was discharged, much to his delight. He obtained a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Freiburg, and, in 1851, he married a young lady, Auguste Jacobi, but sadly she died only three months afterwards.

He then began a period of travelling, first across Germany, then to London. From there he set sail for Tasmania on a four-month voyage beset by fierce storms. He became a tutor in a private school, then moved to Melbourne and later to Sydney. In 1858 he returned to France, then briefly to his family, and finally to England to settle and teach in a school in Weston-super-Mare, where he became a British subject. On 17th June 1862 he married a young widow, Mrs. Ormsby, the mother of a young boy at his school, and theirs became a long and happy marriage. They moved to Bristol to enable him to attend lectures on medicine and surgery, and here he made a lasting friendship with another fellow-countryman, GEORGE MULLER.

He was converted to Christ at the age of forty-three in Weston-super-Mare, where meetings arranged by the Earl of Cavan were being conducted by

Lord Radstock. One evening, Lord Radstock said to him, 'My man, God has a message through me for you tonight'. On his knees in an anteroom, he trusted Christ and the joy of salvation flooded his soul. Later he would say, 'I went in a proud German infidel, and came out a humble, believing disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise God!' His wife noted the great change in her husband and soon she too was saved and became united with him in a desire to serve the Saviour they had found.

### From England to Russia

To begin with he preached in his home area to good effect, while giving time to study the scriptures. In 1874 Lord Radstock was in Berlin where an American evangelist was preaching the gospel. He invited Dr. Baedeker to interpret the messages, which he did so enthusiastically that the German people said, 'Here is a man of our own race and tongue upon whom the Holy Ghost manifestly rests. We will listen to him!' He continued for a year and conducted his first gospel campaign in his native land. Many were saved, among them several of the aristocracy, some of whom provided premises for the preaching of the gospel for years to come.

Seeing great opportunities among a people largely deprived of the gospel, he moved to Russia with his wife and daughter for three years, preaching to its German-speaking people. Soon his ministry extended to much of what is now regarded as Eastern Europe, and subsequently to the western,

northern, and southern provinces of the Russian empire as it was then.

On arriving in a new city, he would approach its Governor, announce that he had come from England as an evangelist and ask whether he could hold a meeting in his drawing-room. Surprisingly to us, such a request was usually granted at once, and in several cities he preached the gospel to capacity crowds and many were truly converted. His audience would often have people of many nationalities, so he employed interpreters to translate his English or German into three or four other languages at the same time!

Sometimes he came up against an impasse, usually from a priest of the Orthodox Church, which was powerful and influential. He spoke about 'hostile priests and active police' inhibiting progress in many places. On one occasion in Riga, after he had advertised 'Christian Services', he was forbidden because the police said that only the Orthodox Church could hold such services. So, he changed his title to 'Lectures' which they could not forbid – the subject was 'Sin and Salvation'.

### Into prisons

In contrast to this early work, his greatest mission was to countless thousands of prisoners languishing in the most appalling conditions in jails across the continent. For eighteen years he had free access to every prison across Russia, including Siberia and the notorious Sakhalin Island. Overcrowding, filth, vermin, lack of sanitation, along with cruelty from prison guards, combined to make convicts' lives a misery. With heads half shaved, usually shackled by the ankles, they were forced to march long distances from one prison to another. Most would exist in despair until disease or brutality ended their existence. Often wives and children would try to accompany their men into exile, adding to the awful picture of destitution. Many would make a vain attempt to escape, soon to starve and perish in the cold.

In places such as these Dr. Baedeker brought hope and cheer with his kindly attitude and comforting



words from the scriptures. Hardened criminals and political prisoners alike (including many Christians and others incarcerated for their religious beliefs) were often reduced to tears, but uplifted and grateful to receive New Testaments. Some requested their visitor to write his name on the books 'so that they would remember to pray for him'. Prison governors too appreciated his visits and his concerns, for many of them also deplored the conditions in which they worked and longed to see improvements made. This would eventually happen, in some measure due to Baedeker's influence.

### The long journey

From St. Petersburg on the Gulf of Finland across to Russia's eastern coast on the Pacific is a distance of over 5,000 miles. Dr. Baedeker first made this epic journey at sixty-seven years of age. It began at Berlin in March 1890, by train to St. Petersburg and Moscow, and then by steamboat on the River Volga to Perm. 500 poverty-stricken emigrants accompanied him on the ship. Moved by their plight, he provided a hot meal for them. Another train journey took him across the Ural Mountains

into western Siberia, then several days on another steamboat on the River Obi to Tomsk. At each stopping place he made it his business to visit the prisons to leave tracts and New Testaments which had been shipped ahead for his arrival.

The next 1,000 miles or so were by road, at least such roads as existed. He travelled by *tarantass*, a primitive type of covered wagon pulled by three horses. His cases of books were packed in first, then luggage on top, some food supplies, and finally a mattress and pillows for such comfort as could be had over uneven roads, mudflats and through rivers. His *tarantass* was ferried across Lake Baikal, to travel another 1,000 miles through Siberia to Stretensk. He wrote home to say that during his long journey he had preached the gospel to 40,000 prisoners and distributed 12,000 copies of the word of God.

The final leg of the journey was 1,800 miles by steamer on the River Amoor to the coast, and then to Sakhalin Island, a place even more desolate and cruel than much of Siberia. At this destination he continued his task with unabated zeal for the

benefit of thousands of others living in hopeless despair. His return homewards was via Tokyo on 23rd September, then Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Colombo, and Port Said, finally arriving in England in early December.

He testified to the goodness of God during the whole of that long, arduous journey across Russia. He had been preserved from attacks by robbers, had always been provided with means of transport, although basic and comfortless, and with suitable clothing for the extreme cold. Despite many visits to the most unsanitary and unhealthy places, he never contracted any serious disease.

Dr. Baedeker's work continued for many more years. He made a second journey across Russia like the first. He laboured in Finland, Sweden, and Norway, making numerous prison visits again, but also holding meetings in some universities where professors and their students alike were blessed. In Armenia he met with some believers and continued his prison ministries both there and in the Caucasus although by then he was suffering frequent bouts of fever.

His home base was in Weston-super-Mare where he enjoyed fellowship with the believers in the Gospel Hall in Waterloo Street. His contributions to their work and worship were memorable, often preaching in the open air to crowds of holidaymakers.

Dr. Baedeker died after a short illness and his body was buried in Weston cemetery. Lord Radstock preached a fitting tribute and farewell. On his headstone were words frequently on his lips during his last few days:

FRIEDRICH WILHELM  
BAEDEKER, Ph.D.  
WENT IN TO SEE THE KING  
IN HIS BEAUTY,  
SAVED BY THE PRECIOUS BLOOD  
OF THE LORD JESUS,  
OCTOBER 9TH, 1906.  
AGED 83 YEARS.



#### Endnote

Information from ROBERT S. LATIMER, *Dr. Baedeker and his Apostolic Work in Russia*, 1908 (now out of print), gratefully acknowledged.

# Pauline metaphors Warfare and soldiering

By **KEN TOTTON** Cambridge, England

## Part 5

### Background

In New Testament times the Roman Empire held sway, sustained by the ruthless efficiency of its armies. On occasions, Paul the apostle benefited from his Roman citizenship,<sup>1</sup> and in the later chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, he enjoyed Roman protection against the hostility of Jewish opponents. It is not surprising, therefore, that he draws upon a rich set of military metaphors and allusions in his correspondence. This article reviews the spiritual teaching we can derive from his use of military metaphors.

### Conflict with dark powers

Salvation involves a profound change of realm and allegiance; it takes the believer out of the realm of darkness and into the kingdom of light and life. As a result, it brings inescapable conflict with the powers of darkness. Since this conflict is spiritual,<sup>2</sup> it follows that only spiritual resources will suffice.

There are myriad malignant forces in the spiritual realm in rebellion against God, cp. Dan. 10. 13-21. They are headed up by the 'god of this age', 2 Cor. 4. 4 NKJV, the devil. Defeated by Christ, they are nonetheless particularly active in those who refuse the gospel. They cannot rob us of our salvation, but they could easily neutralize our effectiveness for God.

Faced with such a struggle, complacency would be inexcusable, but so also would despair. Our Lord has fought and won the decisive battle at Calvary, and Satan is now a doomed and defeated foe. Satan and his minions staged their opportunistic assault at the cross, but our Lord triumphed comprehensively, 'by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him', Col. 2. 14, 15 ESV. Contrary to all outward appearances, Paul sees the Conqueror turning His cross

into the chariot of His triumph over all His foes. For the Christian, final victory is assured because Christ has conquered, Rom. 8. 37.

### The soldier's armour

Parallels are often drawn between Ephesians and the book of Joshua. The whole of the Promised Land lay before Israel, but they needed to move forward in faith (and strengthened by God), to fight their battles and possess their possessions. Beginning at Ephesians chapter 6 verse 10, Christians are seen as soldiers engaged in the cosmic conflict between the powers of good and evil. We are provided with the 'full armour of God', v. 11 NIV – nothing less than God's own armour that He now graciously provides to equip His people for their own spiritual battles. If we are to be effective Christian warriors, how must we proceed?

First, we are to be strong in the Lord, v. 10. The point is that God is our **only** strengthener.<sup>3</sup> His mighty power (literally 'the strength of His might') recalls its supreme demonstration in the resurrection of Christ, Eph. 1. 19, 20.

We are to avail ourselves of the 'whole armour' of God. This is the complete equipment of the heavily armed soldier. It is 'of God' in the sense that He has used it Himself, and now He provides it, and indeed appoints it, for our protection. We

need this strengthening and armour if we are to stand. I note the emphasis on 'stand' and 'withstand', rather than on 'advance'; we occupy ground that Christ has secured for us through His death and resurrection.

Even the best-equipped soldiers can be undone by a surprise attack. We dare not wait until the 'evil day' is suddenly upon us, the day of Satan's assault; rather, we are to be ready, armed, and watchful, on guard against sloth and carelessness. Job certainly experienced 'the evil day', with blows first in respect of his possessions and family, and then finally his health, Job 1. 13 – 2. 10.

'Wrestle', Eph. 6. 12, suggests conflict at close quarters. There is no escape; the struggle is personal! 'Loins girt' implies preparation for serious engagement. 'The girdle of truth', v. 14, suggests personal integrity. Isaiah chapter 11 verse 5 (LXX) states, 'And he shall have his loins girt with righteousness, and his sides clothed with truth'. In the Isaianic context, this points to Messiah's coming rule as one of righteousness and truth. 'Truth' denotes the truth of God, as revealed in the gospel, Eph. 4. 21; 5. 9, to be worked out in the lives of believers, displaying Christ's character in our language, attitude, and behaviour.

'And he put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and placed the helmet of salvation on his head', Isa. 59. 17 Septuagint (LXX). Again, this refers to God's actions for the vindication of His people. Donning God's righteousness involves putting on the new man, Eph. 4. 24, created to be like God in righteousness and holiness. Putting on God's righteousness commits us to behaving righteously in all our dealings.

What about combat footwear? Having one's feet shod with 'the preparation of the gospel of peace' alludes to Isaiah chapter 52 verse 7. It probably means a readiness to share the gospel of peace, and teaches that every Christian should be a bearer ('feet shod') of the saving message of the gospel for the blessing of others. 'Peace' recalls teaching in Ephesians chapter 2, and speaks of comprehensive blessings, salvation, and reconciliation, both in the vertical and horizontal dimensions.



Faith in God is frequently mentioned in Ephesians.<sup>4</sup> Deep confidence in God, 'faith', constitutes a large shield, v. 16. To 'take' the shield, we lay hold on God and His resources in order to withstand Satan's attacks, cp. 1 Pet. 5. 8, 9, 'whom resist steadfast in the faith'. Roman soldiers used to soak their shields in water to quench burning arrows. The devil will attack us with all sorts of destructive weaponry, both from without (opposition, propaganda, persecution) and from within (doubts, fears, temptations).

Our warrior God wears the 'helmet',<sup>5</sup> Isa. 59. 17, as He saves His people and judges their enemies. Now, He makes that salvation available; hence, salvation, appropriated and enjoyed, constitutes the vital helmet. The Epistle emphasizes the accomplished fact and the present enjoyment of salvation; Christ has triumphed over all the enemy's power, and we are in Him. The more we grasp this, the safer we will be.

The Christian warrior, like their Lord, is privileged to wield the 'sword of



the Spirit, which is the word of God'. We must take the battle to the enemy. The Holy Spirit gives the word of God its cutting edge. But have we made it our own? Are we comfortable and competent swordsmen? The Greek here suggests spiritual readiness with a timely word or saying (*rhema*). Whilst we might think of our Lord's own use of scripture during His temptations in the wilderness, it is more likely that Paul is thinking of the gospel. In Messiah's conflicts He slays the wicked with the sword of His mouth. When we faithfully proclaim the gospel in the realm of darkness, men and women held captive by Satan are liberated from his clutches. How ready we should be with a gospel word!

Then, finally, what an emphasis on watchfulness, prayer, and supplication, vv. 18-20! Surely this is an area of great weakness in the modern church. Prayer has a higher profile than any of the previous weaponry. Paul desires all kinds of prayer at all times, v. 18; Christian fellowship in prayer, praying for one another. As usual, Paul does not seek an easy life, but enhanced boldness to make the gospel and its glorious doctrines fully known, even at the highest levels.

### The soldier's attitude

In 2 Timothy chapter 2 verses 3 and 4, Paul exhorts Timothy to take his share in suffering as 'a good soldier of Jesus Christ'. This is one of several metaphors linked by the thought of discipline and effort.<sup>6</sup>

Timothy is to be a soldier on active service, 'not entangled in the affairs of civilian life'.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Uriah the Hittite refused to visit his wife Bathsheba when his fellow-soldiers were at war, 2 Sam. 11. 11. Singleness of focus and freedom from distracting cares are essentials in service for Christ.

Perhaps the highest incentive of all is the knowledge that we are pleasing the One who chose us for His service. The great commanders of history inspired outstanding loyalty. It is said that Alexander the Great's elite warriors would have gladly followed him to the ends of the earth. Surely

Christians cannot be less committed to pleasing the One who chose them to be soldiers?

### The soldier's reward

Military metaphors feature in 2 Corinthians, where Paul is seen to be embroiled in many instances of suffering and conflict. He alludes to spiritual weaponry, 2 Cor. 10. 3-6, deployed to demolish proud arguments and lofty opinions raised against the knowledge of God and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Earlier, he employs the vivid imagery of a triumphal procession, 2 Cor. 2. 14-16. The victorious Roman general could savour the ultimate honour of a triumphal procession in Rome. His trusted commanders and soldiers would be there to share his glory, with the fragrance of incense filling the air, receiving the adulation of the appreciative crowds.

Such scenes firmly point us to the future, and the day of Christ, the day of review and reward. Paul was looking well beyond the misery of prison and the approach of martyrdom when he wrote, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing'.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the paradox of our present experience regarded as 'sheep for the slaughter', Rom. 8. 36, for Paul the reality is that 'we are more than conquerors through him that loved us', v. 37.

### Endnotes

- 1 Acts 16. 37, 38; 22. 25-29; 23. 27.
- 2 John 16. 33; Eph. 6. 10; 1 Pet. 5. 8, 9.
- 3 2 Tim. 2. 1; Phil. 4. 13; cp. Josh. 1. 6, 7, 9.
- 4 Eph. 1. 13, 15, 19; 3. 12, 17; 4. 5, 13; 6. 23.
- 5 Cp. 1 Thess. 5. 8, 'for an helmet, the hope of salvation'.
- 6 The athlete must train and adhere to the rules of the competition; the farmer works hard in the hope of produce from his labours, 2 Tim. 2. 5, 6.
- 7 F. F. BRUCE, *Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul*, The Paternoster Press.
- 8 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8 RV.

# ALIEN

By **DAVID BRAUCH** Wauwatosa, USA

*All quotations are taken from the New King James Version*

Tragically, the war in Ukraine has, like previous conflicts, created many aliens. As a class of people there is one thing that characterizes them – typically, they are living a life of deprivation and suffering.

The Bible has something to say about people in this state. After suffering the loss of his property, children, and health, Job said, ‘Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants, count me as a stranger; I am an alien in their sight’, Job 19. 15.

The Godhead, knowing that there would be many aliens in the Promised Land, issued instructions relating to the treatment of them. Deuteronomy chapter 23 verse 7 records this warning and reminder given by Moses to the Israelites as they were about to enter Canaan, ‘You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land’. In addition, Deuteronomy chapter 26 reminds the Israelites in the Promised Land that when they brought their offerings of firstfruits and tithes, they too were aliens whom God had specifically blessed. But that identity is given as the reason why they should take good care of the aliens from other places that are now in their midst.

1 Chronicles chapter 29 verse 15 records David’s words as he gathered the people together to point out which of his sons was his choice to succeed him – namely, Solomon – ‘for we are aliens and pilgrims before You,



as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope’. Later, as king, Solomon numbered all the aliens who were in the land of Israel, after the census in which David his father had numbered them, and there were found to be 153,600, 2 Chr. 2. 17.

A ‘Messianic psalm’ of King David records words that the Son of David would utter after He came to earth and lived as part of Joseph and Mary’s family, ‘I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother’s children’, Ps. 69. 8. This was the reality of the situation that our Lord faced during His years on earth.

Our Lord had at least six siblings, consisting of four brothers as well as at least two sisters, Mark 6. 3, but He was the eldest child in the house of Joseph and Mary. In a typical family, there is admiration and respect shown by younger siblings toward the eldest. However, at some point while growing up, there undoubtedly was recognition by the younger siblings that their older brother’s behaviour was distinctly different and better than theirs. Perhaps the eldest of our Lord’s siblings would recall His ‘strange’ behaviour at twelve years of age, when He did not remain with the company of those returning to Nazareth (including the rest of His family) after celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem.

By the time their eldest brother entered adulthood and was approaching thirty years of age, they despised Him for relinquishing His ‘normal’ life working as a carpenter and adopting (what seemed to them) a nomadic life as an itinerant preacher. At one juncture, His family attempted unsuccessfully to compel Him to abort His ministry and return

home, Mark 3. 31. Luke chapter 14 verse 26 records a strong statement made by our Lord concerning a disciple’s relationship with his family, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple’. Our Lord demonstrated this.

Likewise, the townspeople of Nazareth reacted against Him. They are recorded as saying, “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?” So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house.” Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief, Matt. 13. 54-58.<sup>1</sup>

Before a certain date in each of our lives, we (Gentiles) were ‘without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ’, Eph. 2. 12, 13. Colossians chapter 1 develops the thought, ‘And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight’, vv. 21, 22. We have been brought near and reconciled to God.

Like no other aid worker, our Lord, the Good Samaritan, considered an alien Himself, can relate to these Ukrainian refugees/aliens in their current plight. He is fully capable of ministering to body, soul, and spirit.

## Endnote

- <sup>1</sup> Note that after our Lord’s resurrection both James and Judas (or Jude) not only became believers but authored books which are part of the New Testament. James became a leader in the Jerusalem church.





Edited by  
**STEPHEN BAKER**

#### **YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED**

is a supplement of *Precious Seed*, designed for those young in the faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed*, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.

Volume: 20 Issue: 1  
**FEBRUARY 2023**

## Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the new format of YPS. We have moved to this style of YPS insert as the cost of print and paper has risen significantly over the last 12 months and we are seeking to make sure that we produce our magazine as cost-effectively as possible. As always, this creates some fresh opportunities as well as some restrictions in terms of the size and structure of each article.

So, what have we got for you in this quarter and as we start a new year of publication?

Jeremy Singer, who is well known to many of you, has agreed to write a series on some of the interesting and challenging lives of believers down the centuries of church history. I will leave him in his article to give you a fuller introduction as to how he intends to handle this.

Phil Raggett continues his interesting and helpful series on things that every believer should know. This article is important as it confronts and challenges the current world view on the value of life. Every believer needs to be sure that they know what the scriptures teach on this important issue, and to make sure that this translates into biblical choices when facing tough decisions in life.

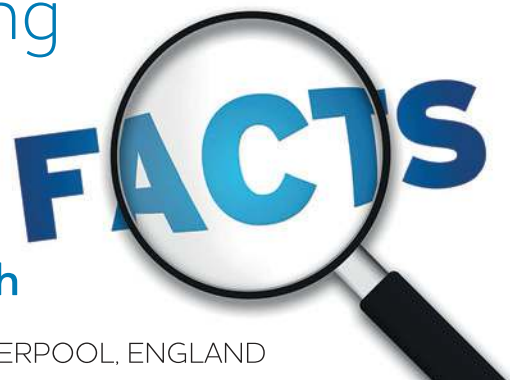
We are also starting a new series called 'Soul Searching Scriptures'. I will be asking various believers to write an article on a verse that had a major impact on their life. This might be a verse that brought them to faith in Christ, that strengthened their faith, or gave them the assurance that they were truly saved. Or maybe a verse that changed their direction of life completely. It will be interesting to see how this pans out. I am sure that there are many interesting stories to be told as to how God speaks to people through His word. Hopefully, this will get you thinking and encourage you to listen for God's voice as you read the scriptures.

Finally, we have a new series which hopefully will help young believers understand that the world round about them is full of evidence that God is the Creator and Sustainer of life. Phil Armstrong, as a biology teacher, is well placed to write this series for us. I for one, am looking forward to reading these articles.

Yours through grace,

Stephen Baker

## Fascinating Facts – Evidence from nature of a Creator's touch



PHIL ARMSTRONG, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

The Hawaiian bobtail squid (*Euprymna scolopes*) swims in tropical waters, blissfully unaware that it is marvellously designed by God. It has a neat 'symbiotic' partnership with a glowing bacterium, *Vibrio fischeri*, which lives inside it. This gives the squid a built-in torch to help it camouflage, by a crafty technique known as 'counter-illumination'.

In the first few days of its life, the squid sucks up hundreds of different types of microbes from the sea water and isolates the one type of bacterium to store in its specially designed 'light organ' that will make it glow. The different microbes journey to the light organ through narrow tubes. To appreciate the challenge of this journey, we need to imagine an assault course mixed with a deadly automatic car wash. These tubes are lined with microscopic cilia bristles that sweep in the opposite direction to the way that our microbe contestants are moving. With toxic chemicals and acid, only the *Vibrio* bacteria have what it takes to make it to the end and colonize the light organ. The squid also 'cheers on' the *Vibrio* bacteria with chemicals that attract them down the tube. When the light organ is full, they tell the squid to close the tubes and finish the making of the light organ with lenses. The squid will be able to alter its light to match the glow of the moon.

Every day, the squid squirts out most of the bacteria and the rest reproduce, refilling the light organ for the next glow session that night. It is even more remarkable to know that the bacteria can't make light unless they are inside the squid; they don't glow in the sea water by themselves!

These two organisms were made for each other and co-exist because of complex engineering. Each feature of the system shows purpose, and it is unthinkable that it could have developed from scratch through a collection of unguided errors that would be called 'evolution'. This should amaze us and cause us to glorify our Lord as Creator and Sustainer of life.

#### **Sources**

S. V. NYHOLM, and M. J. MCFALL-NGAI, A lasting symbiosis: how the Hawaiian bobtail squid finds and keeps its bioluminescent bacterial partner, *Nat.Rev. Microbiol.* 19, pp. 666–679, 2021.

KAREN L. VISICK, ERIC V. STABB, and EDWARD R. RUBY, A lasting symbiosis: how *Vibrio fischeri* finds a squid partner and persists within its natural host, *Nat. Rev. Microbiol.*, 2021.

# Things you should know – About life – Part 3

BY PHILIP RAGGETT, PRESTWICH, MANCHESTER, ENGLAND



The world we live in is moving away from the truths and principles set out clearly in the word of God with increasing rapidity. The common view is that only you can decide what is 'right for you' or what 'your truth is'; but the Christian is measured by a higher standard. We should always seek to find out what God says, what His standards are and try our utmost to live by them. One example of this is in the value we place on life. While we cannot deal extensively with this subject, I want to remind you of what the biblical standpoint is on such an important issue, so that you can apply these principles when faced with emotive arguments or presented with difficult circumstances.

## Life is precious

The Bible teaches that life is precious and has value because every human being is made in the image of God, Gen. 9. 6. This is the reason why taking a human life is prohibited, as it is explicitly stated in the sixth commandment in Exodus chapter 20 verse 13, 'thou shalt not kill'. This over-riding principle holds true regardless of the temptation to abort life in light of any deformities, disabilities, or deterioration that may exist in the unborn child. Whenever we are discussing abortion or euthanasia, we must remember that God values life and holds us accountable should we choose to violate His prohibition by taking a life – 'Hands that shed innocent blood' are 'an abomination unto him', Prov. 6. 16, 17.

## Life is provided

Life and death are in God's hands – Job chapter 33 verse 4 tells us, 'the Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life'. We are also told that 'he giveth to all life, and breath', Acts 17. 25. God not only gives life, but He also sustains it. Our breath is in His hands, Dan. 5. 23, and only He has the moral right to determine when life ends. We do not have the right to determine when someone is no longer fit to live, or of any value in society, and whether their life should be terminated. Every life is precious to Him and is provided by Him. Every child, regardless of physical attributes or mental capability, is a 'heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward', Ps. 127. 3.

## Life should be protected

If we believe what the Bible teaches, that life is precious and taking a life is prohibited, then the only question with regards to abortion is at what point does an unborn baby become a human being? We know that killing a child is wrong but does a baby only become a human being when they are no longer dependent on their parents? Or when they are new-born?

Or when they first have a heartbeat? What does the scripture say? While it does not give us a specific timeline, it is clear, from Psalm 139 verses 13 to 16, that God creates, cares for, and knows each baby in the womb in a miraculous way. We are indeed 'fearfully and wonderfully made', v. 14. The words used in verse 15, 'curiously wrought' have the thought of needlework or embroidery, giving us a clear understanding of the intricate care God has for, and the value He places on, babies in the womb. From the point of fertilization, each baby has its own unique set of DNA and is a distinct being that, within a matter of a few weeks, will start developing organs and a central nervous system. In Luke chapter 1 verse 41; chapter 2 verse 12, and chapter 18 verse 15, the same word is used to describe an unborn baby, a new-born baby and infants. From this we see that God places no distinction on the importance of a child's life regardless of the stage of development. From the moment life exists, at the time of fertilization, that life should be cherished and protected, regardless of the challenges that could be faced post-birth or the circumstances that brought about the conception of the child.

## Life has purpose

The final point I want to consider is the purpose of life. God provides life and sustains life for a purpose. 'All things are created by him, and for him', Col. 1. 16. God has a purpose for each life – even if life, for some, appears in our limited estimation to be less meaningful or worthwhile. Our lives here on earth are only temporary which makes them even more precious, as it is only in this life that we can prepare for eternity. Therefore, we should live our lives and make our decisions with an eternal perspective. Circumstances that we would not choose for ourselves can develop Christian character and can be used as a means of glorifying God. Many a saint caring for terminally ill loved ones has been a living example of the unconditional love of God. Their gracious character and peace in the face of tremendous difficulties is a bright testimony to carers and unsaved relatives, and, indeed, other believers looking on. Prematurely terminating a life, either at the beginning or end of life, would rob us of the opportunity to glorify Him. Scripture reminds us that 'as for God, his way is perfect', Ps. 18. 30. His will for our lives is perfect, even if our understanding of it is at times clouded by the difficulty of present circumstances that we are called to pass through.

The dilemmas and difficulties that are often raised in relation to this subject need an abundance of grace and compassion. The principles of the preciousness, provision and purpose of life should, however, reaffirm our appreciation of the sanctity of life and instil in us a desire to protect it.



# Soul Searching Scriptures

BY JOHN SCARBROOK, KILLAMARSH, ENGLAND

## Numbers 23. 19

Integrity is an admirable quality in the character of any man or woman. It is, however, an intrinsic attribute of deity. The Lord Jesus addressed His Father in John chapter 17 as the 'only true God', and as the One whose 'word is truth'. Paul commended the Thessalonians for their conversion to 'the living and true God'. The apostle introduced his letter to Titus with assurance of eternal life promised by 'God, that cannot lie'; not 'may not', or even 'will not', but 'cannot'! The writer to the Hebrews undergirds his whole argument by reminding his readers that it is 'impossible for God to lie', Heb. 6. 18.

With this in mind we understand that our salvation, our future, our destiny, all depend upon the word of God. Which brings me to a scripture that has had a lasting effect on my life. I look back to a moment when, as a young child, I knew in a very simple way that I needed to be saved. The Bible had always been an open book in our home. Sunday school and meetings at the local Gospel Hall are some of my earliest memories. I learned to quote verses of scripture and never remember a time when I did not accept the truth of what was taught from the Bible. One thing, however, caused me concern: the Lord's return. I was fearful of being left behind if my parents and brother were suddenly taken. My brother and I slept in one bed, and I recall one night waking up and reaching across the bed to make sure he was still there. I called my father and told him I needed to be saved. I can still see him as he knelt by the bed and prayed for me. It was a simple conversion, very much like Lydia 'whose heart the Lord opened'. I do not recall the date or even the time of year, but I knew from then I was saved.

I was baptized when I was thirteen, but I have to confess that my school life was largely wasted as far as any testimony or witness was concerned. I managed to steer clear of the excesses of my peers but remember being mocked by one

girl because I never swore like the other lads, which I suppose was some sort of compliment. To gain respect in the 1960s' grammar school I attended, achievement at sport was the determining factor and I opened bowling for the 1st XI cricket team; that carried kudos!

I was glad to leave school and started work in an engineering company at Newport Pagnell. A strange choice as I am the least practical person on the planet! But God overrules and I worked with another Christian who had a fearless testimony and was well known for his beliefs. This encouraged me to make a stand and begin to live as a believer should.

In my late teens I began to have serious doubts about my salvation. I could not share this with anyone, but I had heard preachers say that if we could not pinpoint the time, the date, and the place when we trusted the Lord, then our salvation could be questionable. The fear of the Lord's return re-surfaced, to the extent that I would phone my mother from work to make sure she was still there!

This uncertainty weighed me down as I tried to recall what I had actually said as a seven-year-old; were they the right words? Was it enough? I found myself looking through the scriptures for some assurance; nothing worked, the doubt remained.

Then I awoke one night with a verse running through my head. I must have read it at some time, but I wasn't even sure where to find it, **'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Num. 23. 19.** That was it, my salvation is not dependent on me and my feelings. Scriptures came flooding in: John 3. 16; Acts 16. 31; Rom. 10. 9; my doubts were gone: **my salvation is as secure as God's word!**





# Saints' CVs: Introduction

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

In any high street bookstore, the biography section is always popular. We are naturally attracted to stories about other people's lives; we can relate to them, gaining insight into their successes and, perhaps, their failures. This article introduces a new series covering some believers from history and their circumstances.

Since the church is about 2,000 years old, we will roam the centuries to select believers for consideration. We will look at some recent lives, like Corrie ten Boom who boldly served God among the horrors of occupied Europe during World War II. We will also delve back into history to consider ancient figures like Bernard of Clairvaux, a twelfth-century monk who wrote several beautiful hymns we still sing today, including *Jesus the very thought of Thee*.

Christianity has spread over every continent across the globe. Through our series we aim to give a sense of this geographic diversity, selecting believers from various countries and cultures. Despite these differences, all Christians share a common basis of faith, 'Jesus Christ is Lord', Phil. 2. 11, and the same scriptures, 'the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever', 1 Pet. 1. 23.

Whenever we examine fellow human beings, we will inevitably encounter flaws in their character. The only perfect man who lived on earth was the Son of God; the rest of us are marked by sinfulness. So, as we study the lives of saints, we must be aware they have 'warts and all'.<sup>1</sup> As a preacher now with the Lord, Robert McPheat, used to say when preaching a biblical character study, 'Their virtues I would covet; their vices I would shun'. Our attitude must be the same.

Most of the historical figures we cover will not be featured in secular history books. You probably won't find these characters in the biography section of your local bookstore. In earthly terms, these saints are insignificant. However, heaven has a different perspective. These heroes of faith have their deeds recorded; one day they will be fully rewarded by 'the Lord, the righteous judge', 2 Tim. 4. 8.

What is the motivation for studying the lives of Christians from days gone by? Apart from the biographical interest, there are good spiritual reasons for this study:

- 1) Our faith will be **strengthened** as we read of God's power in the most trying circumstances – whether oppressive governments, lack of access to the Bible, or international conflict. In such extremes, God works in and through His people.
- 2) We will be **thankful** as we recognize the sacrifice made by others, particularly so that we can read the scriptures in our own language.
- 3) We will be **challenged** as we see the faith of others, 'Whose faith follow', Heb. 13. 7. Their trust in God will provoke us to deeper faith, more meaningful dependence on the Lord, and greater commitment to Him.

We'll consider our first character in the next article. If you want to read a good book to get started, I recommend Wiersbe's *50 People Every Christian Should Know*.<sup>2</sup> Finally, if you have suggestions for saints we might feature in this series, please send them in via the Editor.

<sup>1</sup> This was the instruction Oliver Cromwell gave to his portrait painter, to capture an accurate likeness of his face including his warts.

<sup>2</sup> WARREN W. WIERSBE, *50 People Every Christian Should Know*, Baker Books, 2009.





# The widows of Luke's Gospel 3

## THE WIDOW OF NAIN

By **REX TROGDON** Pineville, USA.

Only Luke mentions the place known as Nain, located a day's journey southwest of Capernaum. Nain means **beauty**. Though insignificant as a relatively small village, it is recorded in scripture for that glorious day when God visited His people there.

In seven short verses, Luke 7. 11-17, Luke gives us an orderly account, written with certainty of those things which took place, Luke 1. 3, 4. Therefore, we have confidence in taking to heart every word for the express purpose of communicating truth for our lives. We'll look first at the **miracle**; then, the **message**.

The narrative opens with the Lord Jesus arriving at Nain. He was coming from Capernaum where He had healed a man, a servant of a Roman centurion who was commended by the Lord for his great faith. The Lord Jesus is accompanied by His disciples and a large crowd. We can imagine their enthusiasm, coming from the events in Capernaum, with joy in their hearts and a spring in their step.

As they approach the city to enter in at the gate, there is another large crowd that is going out of the city. It is a funeral procession for a young man, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. In striking contrast to our Lord's entourage, this procession was one of death and despair, weeping and wailing, engulfed with heartfelt sympathy for this poor widow now all alone. No husband, and now her son gone!

We watch in wonder at the sight before us as these two large crowds converge upon each other at the gate of the entrance into Nain and see this miracle unfold. We read, 'When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep"', 7. 13 NKJV. The Lord makes His way into the midst of the movement and, with the touch of His hand upon the coffin, everything comes to a stop. Stillness and silence replace

the symphony of joy mingled with sorrow. They hear the words from His lips, "Young man, I say to you, arise", v. 14 NKJV. And the young man sat up and began to speak.

We would like very much to know what the young man said, but his words are not included. However, Luke does include the fact that the Lord presents him to his mother. The reaction of the crowds, now blended as one, is that of fear that came upon them all and the words that glorified God saying, 'a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people', v. 16.

This visitation of God is only noted here at Nain. It was foretold by Zacharias in Luke chapter 1 and warned prophetically from Olivet by the Lord Jesus in chapter 19. But in present, personal power, we read that God visited His people when the Lord worked this miracle at the beautiful, little village of Nain.

But there's more to the **miracle**, for every miracle has a **message**. The **message** of the miracle conveys truths to which we all relate in life and



should bring us to the same conclusion as it did the crowd that day.

First, some **circumstances**. They were on a journey, and we are too. We are on the journey of life that takes us all to the ultimate circumstance, death. We need not fear, for the Lord looks on us like He did on the widow of Nain, with compassion. We may have been surprised to hear His words, 'Do not weep', for we are told to weep with those who weep. Someone has observed that no one ever died in the presence of the Lord of life! It was true that day.

Secondly, some **comparisons**. There are two 'only sons'. The Lord Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, and the lad, the only son of his mother. There are two large crowds. One crowd led by the Lord of life and the other crowd, a funeral procession. There are two directions, one coming in and the other going out. There are two experiences, one of joy and gladness, the other of sorrow and sadness.

Thirdly, there is a **consideration**. Everything culminates at one place, at the gate. This gate represents to us a decision between life and death. As life and death converge on each other, which will give way? Will life give way to death or will death give way to life? The Bible declares that 'Death is swallowed up in victory [life]', 1 Cor. 15. 54!

The wonderful message of this miracle is one of life. We read that the Lord Jesus presented the young man to his mother. The word, **presented**, is the same as the word translated 'gave' in John chapter 3 verse 16, 'that he gave his only begotten Son'. The gift of God is eternal life, and it is freely given to all who believe.

Lastly, a **conversation**. The young man sat up and began to speak. Don't you and I have something to talk about? We should be telling others how He touched our lives and brought us out of death and into life!

On that day when the Lord visited the little city of Nain, **beauty**, He gave beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning, Isa. 61. 3. He can do that in our lives, too.

# The voice of God

By **MERVYN WISHART** Newcastle, Northern Ireland

## 1. In the darkness

There is no better chapter to commence our study on the voice of God than Genesis chapter 1. Nine times in thirty-one verses we read, **‘And God said’**.

The first spoken words in creation and in inspiration are in verse 3, ‘And God said, Let there be light’. When God spoke, even though light takes over eight minutes to reach the earth from the sun, the dawning of light in a dark world was instantaneous, ‘and there was light’. The sun and moon were not created until day four; God created light before He created the source of light. The sceptic may say, ‘that could never happen’, but the believer accepts it exactly as scripture records.

That word, when creation was  
shrouded in night,  
Drove back the dark curtains, and lo!  
there was light.  
His voice o’er the vast waste of waters  
was heard,  
And lo! the creation in beauty  
appeared.

ALBERT MIDLANE (1825-1909)

There are three scriptures which speak with simplicity and power of the work of creation. As a young believer, I found it helpful to think of them together.

### Who is the Creator of the world?

‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’, Gen. 1. 1.

### How was the world created?

‘For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast’, Ps. 33. 9.

### How can we understand it?

‘Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God’, Heb. 11. 3.

At the sound of His voice on the first day of creation, God caused light to shine out of darkness. There would come another day, when at Calvary the voice of the Son of God was heard

after the darkness as He cried with a loud voice, ‘It is finished’, John 19. 30. At that moment, darkness was dispelled, and light shone once more.

## 2. In the garden

The first occasion that we read of man hearing the voice of God was in the garden of Eden. It was a perfect environment, a garden planned and planted by the heavenly Gardener. Every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food, the Lord God caused to grow, Gen. 2. 9. That which was pleasing is mentioned first, before that which was necessary for food. To complete the idyllic scene, ‘a river went out of Eden to water the garden’, v. 10. It was a garden of perfect order. Adam was still alone, and the Lord God gave him the responsibility to dress it and to keep it. It is worth noting that, even before the fall, it was God’s intention that man should work day by day.

We are not told how long Adam and Eve enjoyed daily communion with God during the period of innocence. Sin robs us of the enjoyment of fellowship with God, and for Adam it changed sweet fellowship to fear. ‘And they heard **the voice of the Lord God** walking in the garden in the cool of the day’, 3. 8. When the Lord called him saying, ‘Where art thou?’ Adam responded, ‘I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid’, v. 10. This was a new experience; an emotion he had never known before. For the first time in his life, he knew what it was to be afraid. In spite of its beauty, Eden became a garden of defeat and failure.

In glorious contrast, scripture speaks of another garden near Jerusalem, John 19. 41, where the Lord Jesus arose early in the morning of the third day from Joseph’s new tomb, Matt. 28. 6. It was a garden of victory and triumph.

## 3. In the storm

Psalm 29 has been called the most vivid description of a storm in the English language. It rises over the sea,

**‘The voice of the Lord** is upon the waters’, v. 3. It breaks in the north, over the land in Lebanon, felling the great cedars in its path, ‘The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars’, v. 5. The storm moves south, ‘The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness . . . of Kadesh’, v. 8. Seven times we are told that the voice of the Lord is the force behind the storm. It is described as powerful and full of majesty, ‘The God of glory thundereth’, v. 3.

There is comfort for God’s people in the storm, ‘The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever’, v. 10. He is in control and His authority is unchallenged. He who in the storm displays such awesome power, ‘will give strength unto his people’. Even when the storm is raging, ‘The Lord will bless his people with peace’, v. 11.

How fitting it is that David begins the Psalm by exclaiming, ‘Give unto the Lord . . . glory and strength’, v. 1. As believers, storms may come in each of our lives. How reassuring it is that the Lord (*Jehovah*), who is mentioned eighteen times in the psalm, is in control when the storm is raging. As on Galilee, He is able to say to the raging billows, ‘Peace, be still’, Mark 4. 39; cp. Nahum 1. 3.

## 4. In the stillness

Elijah, the man who stood unflinching on Mount Carmel and fearlessly challenged the 450 prophets of Baal, ran for his life from Jezebel, 1 Kgs. 19. 3. He began to look inwards, instead of upwards to the Lord. He had become self-absorbed, and when the Lord asked him, ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’, four times he used personal pronouns, **‘I** have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts . . . **I**, even **I** only, am left; and they seek **my** life’, vv. 9-10, 14.

But the Lord was at work to restore His servant. He had sent an angel to him, who touched him and twice brought him food and water. He went in the strength of that food forty days. Then the Lord spoke directly to him, ‘Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord’. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains . . . but the Lord was not in the wind: and



after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire . . . and after the fire **a still small voice** [“a sound of gentle stillness”, KJV margin]. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he . . . went out . . . And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? . . . Go, return’, vv. 11-13, 15.

He heard the voice of the Lord in the stillness and received correction and direction. We too need to find a quiet place, away from the noise and clamour of the world, where we can tune our ear to listen to the still small voice of God. ‘Be still, and know that I am God’, Ps. 46. 10.

### 5. In the scriptures

Queen Elizabeth II was given a copy of the scriptures during her coronation ceremony in 1953. The Moderator of the Church of Scotland made the presentation with these words, ‘We present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God’. It is not sufficient to say that the Bible contains the word of God; the Bible is the word of God. It is God breathed: it is warm with the breath of the Almighty, 2 Tim. 3. 16. This is known as verbal inspiration, and God’s thoughts are conveyed to us with infallible accuracy.

The writer to the Hebrews begins his letter, ‘God, who at sundry times and

in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets’. The voice of God is heard through the written word. The phrases, ‘the Lord commanded’; ‘the Lord spake unto’; **‘Thus saith the Lord’**, together occur a significant number of times in the Old Testament. Nowhere do we read of the thoughts or concepts of men being inspired. They were neither authors nor commentators, but channels through whom the voice of God was heard.

In the New Testament, Paul speaks of his writings in the same way. ‘Which things also we speak . . . in the words . . . which the Holy Ghost teacheth’, 1 Cor. 2. 13. The Lord Jesus affirmed the inspiration of scripture, extending to the smallest Hebrew letter, the *yod*, and the smallest distinguishing mark, the *tittle*, ‘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’, Matt. 5. 18.

As we read the scriptures, may our ears always be open to listen to the voice of God, and respond like Samuel, ‘Speak; for thy servant heareth’, 1 Sam. 3. 10. May we be mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’, Matt. 4. 4.

### 6. In His Son

‘God . . . hath in these last days **spoken unto us by [in] his Son**’, Heb. 1. 1, 2. It may be that God

has allowed this letter to remain anonymous to emphasize that He Himself is speaking. ‘God, who **spake** . . . hath in these last days **spoken**’. The challenge is, ‘To day if ye will hear **his voice**’, 3. 7; ‘The **word of God** is living, and active’, 4. 12 RV; ‘See that ye refuse not him that **speaketh**’, 12. 25.

God has spoken (in) the One who is ‘Son’. The aorist tense is used, indicating a completed action. It is God’s final word; He has nothing further to say. All is revealed in Christ. The other Epistles too, written after the ascension of Christ, reveal further the glories of ‘the Son’.

A brief summary of some of the glories of the Son is presented in Hebrews chapter 1: His unique relationship; the greatness of His person; the perfection of His work; the duration of His throne; the sceptre of His kingdom; the immutability of His character; the triumph of His cause.

God delights to speak of His Son as: My King, Ps. 2. 6; My Servant, Isa. 42. 1; My Shepherd and My Fellow, Zech. 13. 7; My Son, Matt. 3. 17. He introduces us to the pleasure He finds in His Son, so that we too may find our joy in Him, ‘thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures’, Ps. 36. 8.

### 7. In the gospel

The gospel message was heard first from the lips of Christ, ‘which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him’, Heb. 2. 3. He said, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear **the voice of the Son of God**: and they that hear shall live’, John 5. 25. ‘The hour’ extends to the present time, when the gospel is preached, the voice of the Son of God is heard. Hearing in this verse is ‘the hearing of faith’, Gal. 3. 5. It is not merely hearing the words but receiving by faith both the message and the person it presents. The hearers are described as being ‘dead in trespasses and sins’, Eph. 2. 1. The Lord Jesus said, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life’, John 5. 24.



# PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

By **FRANK A. PROUDLOCK** Leicester, England

## Part 2

### Summary

In Part 1, we considered Paul's extended visit to Ephesus, where a remarkable work of God took place, Acts 19. Satanic opposition ensued, culminating in a city-wide uprising with Paul narrowly escaping death. In Part 2, we will consider Paul's return journey to Jerusalem described in Acts chapter 20 and chapter 21 verses 1 to 17. After spending some time encouraging believers in Macedonia and Greece, Acts 20. 1-3, Paul leaves Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, v. 6. Paul has a strong compulsion to return to Jerusalem before the day of Pentecost, v. 16, and has less than six weeks to make the journey.

Acts chapter 20 provides more extensive details of events in two locations on the return journey, Troas and Miletus, both towns on the west coast of modern-day Turkey. Given the time pressure, the events in Troas and Miletus serve to remind us of several important spiritual priorities. Acts chapter 21 describes the final stages of Paul's journey to Jerusalem and of the repeated warnings he received from God. We will consider whether it was right for Paul to make this trip.

### Macedonia and Greece, Acts 20. 1-5

Few details are given of the several months that Paul spent in Macedonia and Greece, except of his exhortation of believers in the region, v. 2. Other scriptures indicate that this was a busy and stressful period for Paul. He was deeply troubled concerning the Christians at Corinth after dealing with problems in the assembly. He was awaiting news from Titus about the situation and was in turmoil over whether to visit or not.<sup>1</sup> Paul also probably wrote the book of Romans during this time.

He intended to commence his journey towards Jerusalem in verse 3, but a plot was made to apprehend him as he was about to set sail. He decides to make a detour by land through Macedonia and meet up with his co-workers in Troas. The list of Paul's fellow-labourers is provided in verse 4 and deserves further personal study. Some of them,

such as Timothy, we know better than others, although no doubt Paul valued the support they all provided. The list reminds us of the importance of fellowship and that, whether we are well-known or unknown, the Lord takes account of our labours for Him.

### Troas and Miletus, Acts 20. 6-38

Paul is in a hurry to arrive in Jerusalem before the day of Pentecost, probably because it was the last significant gathering of the Jewish nation for several months.<sup>2</sup> The events we read of in Troas and Miletus highlight several activities Paul prioritized under time pressure. Many of us are pushed for time with the demands of work and family life absorbing much of our week. These verses teach us the importance of prioritizing certain spiritual activities when we are busy:

**The Breaking of Bread, v. 7:** Although the expression can also be used to describe a meal (see v. 11), we believe that verse 7 describes the Lord's supper.<sup>3</sup> The verse strongly suggests that it was the practice of believers at this time to break bread on the first day of the week, i.e., Sunday or the Lord's day.<sup>4</sup> Possibly, Paul and his companions intentionally stayed longer to partake of the Lord's supper, v. 6. The breaking of bread is a time of the week when we do not consider ourselves, or our needs, rather we put the Lord Jesus first and give Him the pre-eminent place. We gain so much

personally, however, from engaging in this meeting as it serves to recalibrate and recentre our lives. It puts the many concerns we may have, often caused by the busyness of life, into the perspective of eternal realities.

### The teaching of the scriptures, vv. 7-12:

Luke paints a vivid picture for us. Paul holds an extended teaching meeting in an upper room, going on late into the night. Without the convenience of air conditioning, the open windows of the upper room provided better air flow, keeping the room cool. One young man, Eutychus, takes advantage by sitting on a windowsill high up in the building. It was late at night, probably after a long day's work. With many people in attendance and oil lamps burning, the carbon dioxide levels increase in the room. Eutychus nods off and falls from the window with devastating consequences, v. 9.

Meetings often come at the end of a long day, or at the weekend when we try to catch up on rest. The honesty of the scriptures provides encouragement for us, whether we are hearing or teaching the word of God. The saints may drop off to sleep at times, but we shouldn't be overly concerned, provided the seating is not precariously situated. The Lord 'knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust', Ps. 103. 14. Better to be at the meeting in the presence of the Lord, even when we feel tired, than not at all. What follows is one of the ten resurrection miracles described in the Bible as Paul is used by God to bring Eutychus back to life.<sup>5</sup>

### The work of shepherding, vv. 17-38:

These are key New Testament verses that provide instructions on the recognition and practice of elders in a local church.<sup>6</sup> Since Paul was pressing to get to Jerusalem on time, he calls the elders from the church at Ephesus over to Miletus, a distance of almost forty miles on foot. Probably the ship Paul was on stopped at the port of Miletus and not Ephesus. The fourteen-hour walk, required by the elders to meet Paul, emphasizes the priority of this occasion, especially since this was possibly the last time Paul would see their faces, vv. 25, 38.

Paul recounts the **past**, vv. 18-21, and



the time he spent at Ephesus (see Part 1 of this article). He reminds them of his commitment to share the gospel and teach the word of God despite the personal cost to himself. Paul informs them of the **present** situation, v. 22, and of his compulsion to visit Jerusalem and of their responsibility to protect, care for and feed the church at Ephesus, v. 28. Paul also speaks of the future and the possibility of his imprisonment and/or death, v. 23. He also warns the elders at Ephesus of an approaching Satanic attack on the assembly, through false teachers attempting to infiltrate the people of God, vv. 29, 30.

Verse 28 is a key verse. Firstly, we discover that the terms ‘elder’, v. 17, ‘shepherd’, and ‘overseer’ are interchangeable terms describing the same leaders of God’s people in an assembly. Much confusion has come from cherry-picking a specific label, such as pastor (derived from the word shepherd), or bishop (translation of the word overseer), when the biblical pattern is for a plurality of elders, v. 17. The terms highlight three different areas of responsibilities. **Elders lead.** They demonstrate spiritual maturity, and lead by example. **Shepherds feed.** They have the primary responsibility to tend and feed the flock of God, through teaching the scriptures, v. 28. ‘Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?’ Ezek. 34. 2. **Overseers take heed.** Like the shepherds in the nativity story, Luke 2. 8, they keep watch over the flock of God to care and protect it in the dark and dangerous environment of this world today, vv. 29-31.

Paul also reminded the Ephesian elders that the local assembly did not belong to them, but rather the Lord Jesus, who has purchased it with His own blood, v. 28. It is an entity, therefore, that is of inestimable value. Elders have a weighty responsibility, and they need the prayer, support, and encouragement of God’s people. Elders will also be rewarded if they carry out this work faithfully, with a crown reserved for them. Peter reminds all elders, ‘And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away’, 1 Pet. 5. 4.

It is an emotional time as Paul leaves these church leaders he dearly loves, praying, weeping, and kissing them as he leaves, v. 37.

### Journey to Jerusalem, Acts 21. 1-16

This section outlines Paul’s journey to Jerusalem which included various stopping off points. Repeatedly on his journey towards Jerusalem, Paul is warned of the dangers that await him on his arrival. Paul had told the Ephesian elders in Miletus that the Holy Spirit had witnessed in ‘every city, that imprisonments and afflictions await me’, 20. 23 ESV. Likewise, the believers in Tyre warn Paul, through the Spirit, not to go to Jerusalem, v. 4. In Caesarea, Agabus provides a graphic illustration of what Paul can expect, taking Paul’s belt and binding his hands and feet. He warns him, ‘so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles’, v. 11. This action pictured the next main phase of Paul’s life, in which he would

be incarcerated for around nine years, under varying degrees of freedom.<sup>7</sup>

Remarkably, these restrictions were instrumental in causing one of the most spiritually productive periods of Paul’s life. He was able to witness to several political and religious leaders and dignitaries, including the Roman emperor himself.<sup>8</sup> It was also when Paul wrote the New Testament prison Epistles which have been a source of immeasurable spiritual benefit through the centuries.<sup>9</sup>

The repeated warnings to Paul clearly came through Spirit-given prophetic revelations causing many to debate whether he was right to take this journey. The two books written by Luke, the Gospel of Luke and Acts, pivot around a decisive journey towards Jerusalem taken by the central characters, the Lord Jesus and Paul, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Both knew of the difficulties facing them. It is the view of the author that, in both situations, prior knowledge of the dangers faced was not an indicator that the journey should not be taken. Like the Saviour he sought to imitate, Paul demonstrated his faithfulness to God and love for his own people, Israel, by taking this journey even though difficulties and suffering awaited him.

### Endnotes

- 1 See 2 Cor. 1. 8, 9; 2. 12-14; 7. 5-7
- 2 The spring feasts were an important time of gathering of the Jewish diaspora from around the Mediterranean world, Acts 2. 1-11. Possibly the autumn feasts were less well attended, Neh. 8. 14-18.
- 3 See Luke 22. 1-23 and 1 Cor. 11. 23-34.
- 4 See also 1 Corinthians chapter 16 verses 1 and 2 which suggest that New Testament Christians gathered on the first day of the week.
- 5 The other nine are covered in the following article: <https://www.gotquestions.org/raised-from-the-dead.html>.
- 6 See also, 1 Tim. 3. 1-7; Titus 1. 6-9.
- 7 Time approximated from <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/paul/timeline.cfm>.
- 8 Included in the list of people that Paul witnessed to are Felix, Festus, Agrippa and Drusilla, Acts 23-26, the whole Roman Pretoria, Phil. 1. 13, and very likely the Roman Emperor Nero, 2 Tim. 4. 16, 17.
- 9 The prison Epistles traditionally include Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon although 2 Timothy was also written during Paul’s last imprisonment.
- 10 Read Luke chapter 9 and especially verses 43 to 45 and verse 51.



# Studies in the twelve (minor) prophets – JOEL

By **STEPHEN FELLOWES** Bandon, Ireland

2

## The penman

We know very little about the background of the prophet Joel, apart from the fact that his father's name was Pethuel, Joel 1. 1, and it seems clear from his book that he lived and ministered in Judah and Jerusalem but apart from this brief biography there is nothing else in scripture concerning him.

What we do know, though, is that he bore a name that was made up of two divine titles, *Jehovah* and *El*, meaning 'Jehovah is God', and, in many ways, this tells us all we need to know about the man. What he is says more than who he is.

Joel was a man who lived experimentally in the consciousness that Jehovah was his God. This clearly regulated his life and, as such, he became a fit vessel to communicate the mind of God, like other 'holy men of God [who] spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost', 2 Pet. 1. 21.

## The placing

There are no dates referred to in Joel's prophecy, neither are there any kings mentioned, so it is difficult to dogmatize as to the exact placing of the book. That said, there is a consensus amongst many conservative scholars that the book of Joel likely has a pre-exilic setting, which would place his ministry during the early reign of the boy king, Joash, king of Judah from 835 – 796 BC.

The reasons for this suggestion are as follows:

1. The temple was fully functioning with priests serving, Joel 1. 13, 14; 2. 17.
2. This religious revival was implemented through the influence of the godly priest Jehoida, 2 Kgs. 12; 2 Chr. 24.
3. The enemies in the prophecy are similar to those found during the

time of Joash's reign. Compare Joel 3. 4, 19 with 2 Kgs. 8. 20-22; 2 Chr. 21. 16, 17.

4. The victory of Jehoshaphat alluded to in Joel chapter 3 was still very fresh in the memory. This battle took place about forty years before Joash came to the throne, 2 Chr. 20.

## The point

The principal purpose of the book is to show that the Lord is behind the locusts.

The land of Judah had been devastated by a plague of locusts. Joel uses this literal, national tragedy as a foreshadowing of the ultimate discipline of the nation in the future day of the Lord, with a view to their repentance.

## The panorama

The book divides into two main sections:

- i) Judgement, 1. 1 – 2. 1
- ii) Blessing, 2. 18 – 3. 21

Right in the centre of the book we have two verses upon which the prophecy hinges, 2. 17, 18. The cry for recovery in verse 17, 'Spare thy people, O Lord', will be gloriously answered as 'the Lord [will] be jealous for his land, and pity his people'.

For a simple overview, I suggest we divide the prophecy into three sections:

### 1. The plague of locusts, 1. 2 – 2. 11

Chapter 1 verses 1 to 14 describes in graphic detail the awful destruction caused by the plague of locusts. As if adopting a scorched-earth policy, these pests had advanced through the land sparing nothing and affecting everyone they came across: old men, drunkards, priests and workers were all impacted by the devastation, 1. 2, 5, 9, 11.

No fewer than eighteen imperatives are used within these opening verses as the prophet impresses upon the people the urgency of their responding – 'hear', 'tell', 'awake', 'lament', etc.

He wants them to sit up and listen to God's voice through the calamity that has come upon them, to learn the lessons He would teach them.

As ever, God had been true to His word when He warned of the price of unfaithfulness in the book of Deuteronomy – 'all thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume', Deut. 28. 42. This surely shows us that the reformation under good King Joash did not have the lasting impact that was intended.

The section in chapter 1 verses 15 to 20 begins with the hopeless lament, 'Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come'.

These events in Joel's day foreshadow events that are yet future. It is in his prophecy that we meet with the first of five references to 'the day of the Lord', 1. 15; 2. 1, 11, 31; 3. 14. This is a vital biblical expression which indicates the time when God will publicly and judicially intervene in the affairs of earth. He has done this throughout Old Testament history but, in a very particular way, it refers ultimately to future times of tribulation judgement.

The two titles used in verse 15 are of great importance: as **Jehovah** He will act according to His immutability; He is the covenant-keeping God. This covenant will embrace God's place for Israel in relation to the earth and the subjugation of her enemies, and God will be faithful to His word in bringing this to pass. But He will also act as the **Almighty**. With infinite power He will bring to fruition His will, none can resist Him who is omnipotent.

The second chapter continues with the theme of the locust devastation; the threat of a second plague is clearly imminent, vv. 1-11. The prophetic watchman exhorts the people to 'blow . . . the trumpet in Zion, and sound



an alarm in [the] holy mountain'. War is coming! Like a great army, Joel describes the irresistible power and advance of the hordes of locusts, all moving under the authority of the Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Himself, 2. 11. They are, after all, the rod of His correction.

Once again, the historical, literal reality in Joel's day anticipates the distant prophetic future when the land of Israel will be invaded by her enemies.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. The plea and pity of Jehovah, 2. 12-27**

This section calls upon the nation to repent; they are encouraged to do so by God's character, 'for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness', 2. 13. This matter of repentance:

- a) is urgent, v. 12;
- b) must be complete, with 'all your heart', v. 12;
- c) must be real, 'rend your heart and not your garments', v. 13. God desires reality in repentance, not a mere outward show.

God assures them that upon this true repentance He will abundantly bless them, dispelling their enemies and blessing the land with fruitfulness and abundance. He Himself will be 'in the midst of Israel', and will thus effect His promise, v. 27.

## **3. The promise of a glorious future, 2. 28 – 3. 21**

This section commences with the words 'And it shall come to pass afterward'. Here we are projected forward in our minds to the dealings of God with the nation in the end times.

God will do three things during this period:

- i) He will bring renewal to the nation, 2. 28-32  
God will effect national regeneration, He says, 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh', v. 28. The dead bones of Ezekiel's prophecy shall live, Ezek. 37. Not only will there be divine action but also divine abundance; His Spirit will be poured out copiously so that 'all' within the nation will come into the good of the blessing, and

supernatural gifts will give expression to the reality of this divine work.

It is vital to understand that when Peter famously quotes from this passage on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, he is not saying that the events are the direct fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, but rather that it is characteristically the same. As F. B. HOLE writes, 'Peter's words, "this is that which was spoken", imply that it was *of the nature of* that which Joel had foretold, but not necessarily the full and conclusive thing which the prophecy had in view'.<sup>2</sup>

Before this day of national regeneration comes, ominous signs will be seen in the heavens and on earth, which will be the harbingers of 'the great and terrible day of the Lord', 2. 31. Yet even then the cry for deliverance will be answered in salvation.

- ii) He will bring retribution upon Israel's enemies 3. 1-17

These verses should be compared with the book of the Revelation, in particular chapters 16 to 19.

There will be two gatherings, 3. 1, 2. God will gather His people for blessing, but He will also gather the nations for judgement, the issue at hand being the attitude of the nations towards God's people, Israel, and the land. They will then reap what they have sown, v. 2.

- iii) He will bring restoration to the millennial Earth, 3. 18-21  
Abundance, fruitfulness, freshness, and permanent safety will characterize these days of unparalleled glory. The renewed nation will have been restored to the Lord and replanted in the land.

### **The principles**

Paul tells us that 'whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning', Rom. 15. 4. So, as we read this little prophecy, we can lift some of the abiding principles that stand for all time, irrespective of the dispensation.

One thing that stands out is the fact that God is in control of all things. From the small insect to the great

events of prophecy, His hand is over all. What a source of comfort to the believer in a world that, from a human standpoint, is in total disarray. We need not fear, the wheels of providence are still turning – it is still true that 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof', Ps. 24. 1, and He will fulfil His purpose in His own way and at His own time on His own creation.

We must not miss the searching, practical lessons. The book clearly implies that, in spite of the early religious reforms under King Joash, formality and barrenness had set in, hence the discipline of the locusts.

It is so easy to hide behind a form of things, to look the part but not to **be** the part! The scriptures speak of the functioning of the priests, Hophni and Phinehas, 1 Sam. 2, but their behaviour had no sign of holiness that becomes those in priestly service. To the human eye, things in the church at Ephesus looked to be in a great condition but, before the all-seeing eye of the risen Lord, their heart was far from Him; they had left their first love, Rev. 2. 4.

Another encouraging lesson is that God will always meet true repentance with blessing. Even in a book like Joel with the dark and grave background of the terrors of the coming day of the Lord, His grace shines out.

In chapter 2, we noticed that God's character of grace and mercy is the basis upon which blessing upon repentance can be experienced. Because of this in the future of the nation, 'all Israel shall be saved', Rom. 11. 26. In the same Epistle, Paul lifts the declaration of Joel chapter 3, 'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved', Rom. 10. 13, and applies it in the gospel in the present day of grace. Our God always delights to bless, consistent with His righteousness.

### **Endnotes**

- 1 See Isa. 28. 15; Dan 8. 25; 9. 27; 11. 45.
- 2 F. B. HOLE, *New Testament Commentary*, Scripture Truth Publications. Italics original.

# The Life and Times of Elijah the Prophet

## Part 1 – Introduction

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

In considering something of the life of Elijah the prophet, it is remarkable how he appeared on the pages of scripture without any preamble or record of his life, and he disappeared from the scriptures equally dramatically. He served the Lord in one of the darkest days of Israel's history and he did so with faithfulness and fearlessness, putting his own life in jeopardy.

If we want a reason for this study, we might think of James' comment about Elijah, 'Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are', Jas. 5. 17. Whilst we may not think we have any similarities with such a mighty prophet, there are clearly lessons for each of us to learn in our lives for the Lord.

### The conditions of the day

We have said that Elijah served in one of the darkest days of Israel's history. Reading the closing verses of 1 Kings chapter 16 will confirm this for us. We read, 'But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him', v. 25. After twelve years of such an evil rule, Omri died and 'Ahab his son reigned in his stead', v. 28. One might have hoped that things could not get any worse than they had been under the reign of Omri, yet the scripture records, 'Ahab . . . did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him', v. 30. Again, verse 33, 'Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him'. The list may seem short, but it is significant.

Note:

- He treated sin with flippancy, 'a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat', v. 31;
- He married a heathen wife, 'Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal', v. 31 – a woman whose name remains stamped with the character of evil;
- He 'went and served Baal, and worshipped him', v. 31. Never underestimate the detrimental significance of a partner in life

who is not a believer – note Ahab went in the direction of his wife and not the other way around!

- He 'reared up an altar for Baal', v. 32, and built a house for Baal.
- He 'made a grove', v. 33. The idea of a grove is more the setting up of an idol, a shrine to supplement the worship of Baal. This particular shrine was for the so-called female goddess Asherah.
- He allowed the cursed city of Jericho to be rebuilt, v. 34, thus moving in direct opposition to the commandment of God.

What a catalogue of disobedience!

We may feel that we are labouring in difficult days, but these examples of Old Testament servants are left there for our learning and encouragement. Like Elijah, we have a God who will equip us to meet the challenges.

### The character of the man

He is known as 'Elijah the Tishbite' and he was 'of the inhabitants of Gilead', 1 Kgs. 17. 1. We will search in vain for any other biblical reference to this place with which Elijah is identified. Tishbeh, or Tishbi, is obscure, difficult to pinpoint, but this is interesting in itself – that such an obscure, and hitherto unknown place, should suddenly produce a mighty man of God. What a testimony to the

grace of God! It has nothing to do with the place. It has nothing to do with the person. It has all to do with God – He has His man in place and ready to be used when God needs him. Isn't that what we should be? For us, it may not be a calling to the front line of the conflict, like Elijah, but whatever God wants us to do we should be able and willing to do it when God calls.

Think about the simplicity of this verse. Elijah walks all the way from Gilead into Samaria to the king's palace. Assuming he did so with the necessary introductions, he walks into the presence of the king to deliver a message of rebuke and divine judgement. The writer of the scripture makes no play upon the significance of this very bold act, yet, as we read on in 1 Kings, we will quickly get a picture of the danger that Elijah put himself in. Ahab was a wicked and amoral king. Jezebel, his wife, was even worse. The danger was real. Similarly, we have a message that people don't want to hear. It is a message that God will not allow people's sin to go unpunished. We have a message from God, but do we have the courage to state it?

### The content of his message

'As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word', v. 1.

The name Elijah means 'My God is Jehovah'. That, in effect, is how he introduces himself to the king. He states clearly that it is the God of heaven before whom he stands or whom he serves – not Baal or any other idol. In the midst of an idolatrous nation, a nation confirmed in its idolatry by its king, Elijah takes his stand for God.

But there is more than that, 'As **the Lord God of Israel** liveth'. He reminds the king of the God who had established a covenant with His people Israel. Ezekiel presented the desire of God before the people of his day, 'That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord God', Ezek. 14. 11.



This was ever God's desire, and that purpose of God Ahab had deliberately gone against.

Isn't it remarkable to think that in spite of man's rebellion and waywardness, God hasn't closed the door of opportunity? What a testimony to the longsuffering of God, 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance', 2 Pet. 3. 9!

Revealing the mind of God, Elijah also tells of the penalty of rejecting that message, 'there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word', v. 1. But what is the basis of Elijah's confident message? There are two reasons:

1. James tells us, 'he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not', Jas. 5. 17. Elijah was a man of prayer. He grasped the truth of intelligent prayer – praying in the mind and will of God. The Lord said to His disciples, 'And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son', John 14. 13.
2. His message is based solely upon the word of God, 'Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he

shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you', Deut. 11. 16, 17. He speaks with assurance and authority because he is speaking the word of God.

The message of divine judgement upon a sinful world is not popular. People have never liked to hear it – they dislike it today as much as they ever have. But the message we carry comes with all the authority of the revealed mind of God – it is a message from the Bible. Although we should not major upon matters of judgement to the exclusion of all else, in faithfulness to the word of God we should mention it in the gospel.

But there is more to Elijah's message than what is upon the surface. Why does Elijah bring God's message of divine judgement in the form of a drought? God could have brought Israel's enemies in judgement upon them. He could have brought a disease or some form of pestilence to indicate His displeasure. Why a drought?

As we have said, it was a fulfilment of scripture, but it was also appropriate that such a judgement should be meted out against those who had turned to idolatry with Baal. In

effect, Baal was the sun god, the one responsible for the fertility of the ground.<sup>1</sup> In Ahab's mind, Baal was the one who controlled the dew and the rain. He was responsible for the good crops and the prosperity of the land. Elijah throws down the challenge, 'the Lord God of Israel liveth', v. 1. In essence, Elijah states, 'this dumb and dead idol before whom you prostrate yourself is going to be shown to be what he is – nothing more than a man-made image and invention'. Baal will be shown to be the god of futility rather than fertility. He will be shown to be helpless before the God of Israel, and his followers will bear the consequences of their ill-founded activity.

### **The confirmation of his message**

'And the word of the Lord came unto him', v. 2. Elijah had 'put his neck upon the line'. He had delivered his message and aroused the anger of the king and queen. There is now a price on his head, a price that will grow for every day that the promised drought continues. Do we have the courage of Elijah? It was said by Paul of Priscilla and Aquila, 'who have for my life laid down their own necks', Rom. 16. 4. It is a remarkable testimony.

However, think also of the confirmation that God gives to Elijah. At this point, Elijah needed divine protection more than anything and we are told, 'the word of the Lord came unto him', v. 2. When the Lord commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel, He said unto them, 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen', Matt. 28. 20. It is interesting that Elijah was not spared from the effects of the drought, but he was brought through it with the assurance of divine provision. He came to know experimentally what the disciples were promised, 'lo, I am with you alway'. May we be encouraged in our service for the Lord!

#### **Endnote**

- 1 WILLIAM SMITH, *Bible Dictionary*, e-sword resource. GEOFFREY BROMLEY (Ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Erdmans, 1959.



# The brides of scripture 1

## EVE - THE FIRST BRIDE

By **JONATHAN BLACK** Bicester, England

### Pictures of the church universally

Throughout scripture there are several brides who are typical of the bride of Christ, the church. In this series, as we examine each bride and her character it will impress upon the reader the great weight God places upon the marriage bond and, typically, the gravitas with which He views the holy relationship between Christ and His church. It is truth that is being widely undermined today by a sustained attack on the integrity of Genesis.

The truth of the church was a concealed mystery in the Old Testament, Eph. 3. 1-11, but a gloriously revealed truth in the New. John chapter 3 verse 29 identifies Jesus as the Bridegroom and His followers as the friends of the Bridegroom, but those same men were going to enter an even closer relationship at Pentecost which was yet future – they would be part of the bride. The church which is the body of Christ is waiting on her heavenly Bridegroom to come at any moment and present His bride at the marriage ceremony followed by the marriage supper of the Lamb. God's 'order of service' is found in Revelation chapter 19 verse 7, entitled 'the marriage of the Lamb', while in chapter 21 verse 9 there is a beautiful wedding picture of the bride, the Lamb's wife.

### The order established

The first woman, Eve, in the paradise of Eden was joined to one man by God in a unique 'holy matrimony', where death and sickness were unknown on the sixth day of a world teeming with new life. The first bride and bridegroom enjoyed a special relationship with one another, walking daily in fellowship with God. It was the 'perfect marriage' until sin entered and spoiled the union under

the sentence of death, yet marriage never ceased to be the divine ideal.

Genesis chapter 2 magnifies events in chapter 1, but emphasis is placed on the name 'Lord God', *Jehovah Elohim*, the divine administrator, in contrast to *Elohim*, the Creator of chapter 1. In that administrative capacity, the Lord God made for Adam 'a woman' and brought her unto the 'man', precluding any redefinition of marriage or gender, as both are critical to the integrity of the type of Christ and His church. God made Adam 'first', establishing the order of headship. Therefore, as the first bride was subject to her head, the church should be subject to Christ, Eph. 5. 23, 24.

The first reason God gives for providing a bride is found in Genesis chapter 2 verse 18, 'It is not good that the man should be alone'. Marriage may not be God's will for everyone, but God always purposed that Christ should have a bride joined together with Him eternally in heaven. That is why, 'What . . . God hath joined together, let not man put asunder', Mark 10. 9. The bride is secure in His love, for 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Rom. 8. 35.

Second, God made Eve as a spiritual 'help' for Adam. Eve's glory came directly from Adam and when God presented her to him there were no other women for Adam to compare Eve with, so she would receive his undivided attention. She was the complement and fullness of the man, and her typical meaning is beautifully illustrated in the Hebrew word 'made', Gen. 2. 22, which means 'to build', 4. 17. Just as God built a bride for the first man, the second man, the Lord from Heaven, said, 'upon this rock I will **build** my church', Matt. 16. 18. The church was yet future, and the bride of Christ is distinct from Israel

who is the unfaithful wife of Jehovah, presently set aside for coming judgement. A spiritual 'help' is still God's ideal order for marriage today and we may well ask ourselves, 'Am I a help to Christ or a hindrance?' 'Am I a faithful help to my spouse?' Let no one think 'church doctrine' is not practical, for the marriage union is the very foundation of the family unit.

The order of marriage for the first bride was arranged by an omniscient God who had a perfect knowledge of Adam's needs and with omnipotence made a perfect woman out of Adam's rib. The New Testament pattern today is to marry 'in the Lord', 1 Cor. 7. 39. This anticipates the union of one man and one woman who are saved (in Christ), baptized, practically, walking together (in the Lord). 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?' Amos 3. 3.

### The object of his love

The word 'love', first mentioned in Genesis chapter 22, is used for the Father's love for His beloved Son which typically predates the love of Adam for Eve. The love of a husband for his wife should reflect the love that Christ had for the church and the glory we are called to share. Love is defined by the words, 'gave himself', Eph. 5. 25. The world's idea of 'falling in love' today and breaking up tomorrow shows no understanding of the sacrificial love of Christ. Nothing can compare to the blessed place which the church occupies in the purposes of God and in the affections of Christ.

As Eve was 'raised up together' with Adam and saw her husband for the first time she must have observed the similarities and yet the marked differences. Both came from the hand of God yet were physically different in gender and role, with Eve discovering she had the privilege of bringing children into the world. But Eve would learn that God caused Adam's side to be opened, and, made from his rib, she would be forever united with him as a member of his body. God's surgical skill would mean there was no mark left on Adam, Gen 2. 21. As we contemplate how Christ gave Himself for the church, it required a wound that was not visible to anyone



but the holy eye of God. Isaiah prophesied, 'by his stripe [singular] we are healed', Isa. 53. 5 lit. Eve, the first bride, was linked to a wounded man by precious blood, and so are we.

The Bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear Bridegroom's face;  
She will not gaze at glory,  
But on her King of grace,  
Not at the crown he giveth,  
But on His pierced hand;  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Immanuel's land.

[ANNE ROSS COUSIN]

### The oneness of marriage

As God conducted the marriage and brought Eve to Adam, he would recognize her dependence on him because she was taken out of him and now joined to him as 'one flesh'. In Ephesians chapter 1, our union with Christ is underlined using the preposition 'in Christ', for God's purpose is to gather together 'in one' all things in Christ, Eph. 1. 10. That describes our individual union with Christ as members of His body, and the corporate unity of Jew and Gentile together in 'one new man', 2. 15. In Romans chapter 8 verse 17, we are one as 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together'. Paul captures the truth of Genesis chapter 2 verse 23,

'For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh', Eph. 5. 30, 31. This 'oneness' teaches us that the church, the bride of Christ, exists primarily for the glory of God but, ironically, the assembly that received such a wealth of teaching on Christ and His love for the church was the church who had left their first love, resulting in Christ's call to Ephesus to repent, Rev. 2. 4.

### The objective of the union

It is the purpose of Christ that He might present His bride to Himself 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish', Eph. 5. 27. This looks forward to the marriage ceremony that will take place after the Judgement Seat of Christ, which is why the bride is 'arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints', Rev. 19. 8. God clothed the first bride, Eve, in a coat of skin available only through the shedding of blood; we have been clothed in 'garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels', Isa. 61. 10.

## Principles in the churches locally

### The subtlety of the devil

Sadly, while Eve was the first bride, she was also the 'fallen bride', appearing in the New Testament to teach us two important principles in the local assembly.

First, the local assembly at Corinth is described as an espoused bride, 2 Cor. 11. 2, 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ'. Paul's desire was for the saints at Corinth to be pure in light of the coming Bridegroom. He warned them of the danger of their minds being deceived and defiled by listening to 'another gospel', just as Eve's mind was so deceived by the devil's false gospel. They could spoil their spiritual chastity and, just as Eve listened to a false gospel, so today in the local assembly we need to be careful that we do not advance 'another Jesus'. The 'Jesus' of drama, acting or movies is an unacceptable substitute for the true gospel and has no place among God's people.

### The subjection of the woman

A second lesson from Eve is found in Paul's letter to Timothy, who was in the assembly at Ephesus. In chapter 2, Paul teaches the importance of the assembly prayer meeting and instructs us in what we should pray for, and who should pray in public. The woman should be silent. The reason given is not cultural but creatorial – Adam was formed first and therefore the woman should be subject to the man. Notice 'in like manner'; it is not a question of equality but authority. Eve usurped authority over Adam instead of being in subjection, with catastrophic results. This amplifies the teaching of Ephesians chapter 5 verse 24 where subjection is in the context of husband and wife, whereas here it is male and female, but the principle is the same.

The first bride teaches us that the church, whether universally or locally, should be subject to Christ until He comes.



# THE GODHEAD AS INVITERS

By **DAVID BRAUCH** Wauwatosa, USA

*All quotations are taken from the New King James Version*

'Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to  
breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming  
shore,  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-  
tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!'

These and other words by EMMA L. LAZARUS are engraved on a bronze plaque which is mounted inside the Statue of Liberty in the harbour of New York City. Many poor, needy, and oppressed foreigners were convinced that these words of invitation represented the sentiment of the American people as a whole to welcome and provide a home for them. A great number of these self-described folks sailed for America in great numbers, especially from 1875 to 1925. The majority were processed at Ellis Island near the Statue of Liberty. Among those from war-torn and impoverished Germany came my mother and other of her relatives. Things were so bleak in post-war Germany that despite owning a restaurant, my grandparents had resorted to pulling off the wallpaper, scraping off the potato paste, and using that to satisfy their own and their family's hunger.

We have witnessed a similar situation. Because of war many of those fleeing from Ukraine are ending up in Poland and other countries. There they are being invited by many individual families and also by charitable agencies – Christian as well as secular ones – to share their homes or residential facilities along with food and the necessities of life.

It is interesting that the Godhead is characterized throughout scripture as having an 'inviting' spirit. This is evident by the frequent occurrences of the word 'come'. Most of the uses of this verb are directed

universally rather than specifically to individuals, families, or groups. Initially, God delegated surrogates such as prophets to declare these invitations. For example, throughout Isaiah invitations were specifically made to the Jewish nation but were extendable to the rest of mankind. Initially, He invited humans to undergo a 'spiritual bath' – to be cleansed from the deep-seated stains of sin that no human can remove. Isaiah chapter 1 verse 18 states, "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool". Also, mankind is invited to experience a quenching of its spiritual hunger and thirst, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price", Isa. 55. 1. Mankind is typically drawn to things which are free.

It was predetermined in eternity that the second member of the Godhead, namely Jesus, was to take up residence with His creation. One of the Messianic psalms penned by King David records Jesus' intention, "Then I said, "Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart", Ps. 40. 7, 8.

Once on earth, God continued to extend invitations to mankind. The first recorded invitation was to Andrew and another unnamed future disciple to view Jesus' dwelling place. Jesus said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour)', John 1. 39. Another one of Christ's earliest invitations was extended to the husband of the Samaritan woman

that Jesus met at the well, 'Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here"', John 4. 16.

During His three-and-a-half years of ministry on earth our Lord invited those who were in need of spiritual sustenance to approach Him, 'And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst"', John 6. 35. He also extended invitations to individuals who were burdened to approach Him to obtain spiritual rest for their inner beings, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light", Matt. 11. 28-30. Mark chapter 6 verse 31 describes Jesus inviting His disciples to take a rest physically from their hectic lives, 'And He said to them [His disciples], "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat'. Most importantly, He invited the unsaved to repent, "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance", Matt. 9. 13.

Also, it may be noted that our Lord invited children to approach Him – He was passionate about keeping open their access to Himself. Matthew chapter 19 verses 13 and 14 state, "Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven".

On another occasion our Lord invited a rich young ruler to follow Him but only after the latter divested himself of the riches on which he was depending. Even after Jesus heard about the rich young ruler's consistent adherence to the law, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will



have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me”’, Luke 18. 22.

Now what was the overall response to our Lord’s kind invitations? John chapter 1 verse 11 reads, ‘He came unto his own, and his own received him not’, KJV. The Jewish hierarchy did not put out the ‘welcome mat’. I do not believe that our Lord ever received an invitation to preach or teach from any group of people, including city fathers located in Galilee or Judea.

While on earth the most moving and powerful invitation delivered by our Lord occurred on the last day of the last Feast of Tabernacles that was celebrated by Him with His disciples in Jerusalem. He addressed a large multitude of Jews. John chapter 7 verses 37 to 39 records His invitation to them to come and slake their spiritual thirst, ‘On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified’.

Not long afterward, in a nearby location outside Jerusalem’s city

walls, our Lord suffered extreme physical thirst on the cross during the three dark hours of agony when He was making possible the quenching of the spiritual thirst for believers in Him, ‘And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him’, Matt. 27. 33-35. I believe that our Lord’s purpose in not drinking at this juncture was His resolve to fully endure the sum total of the wrath of God against the evil thoughts, actions, and inactions of sinners, without having His own senses clouded or dimmed. John chapter 19 verses 28 to 30 carries on this narrative, ‘After this [the three dark hours on the cross], Jesus, knowing that all things [Him making full payment for the sins of those who would repent and place their saving faith in Him] were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit’.

The setting for the last invitation extended by our Lord was on the

shore of the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection. Some disciples had fished throughout the nighttime and had caught nothing. They seemed unaware that Jesus was on the shore cooking breakfast for them. After loudly instructing them to cast the net on the other side of the boat, where an abundance of fish were snagged, John chapter 21 verse 12 records that ‘Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?” – knowing that it was the Lord’.

Not only our Lord Jesus, but God the Father was and remains fervent about extending invitations to mankind. Remember that the Father took the initiative in sending His beloved Son to this planet, John 3. 16, 17. The Father is depicted in a parable that Jesus related near the end of His mission on earth. It is recorded in Matthew chapter 22 verses 1 to 9, concerning a king whose son is to be married. He is pictured inviting people to participate in His Son’s wedding feast. Comparing this account with that of Revelation chapter 19 verse 9, we deduce that the Father is passionate about honouring His Son by arranging for this wedding, namely, the so-called ‘Marriage Supper of the Lamb’. He is lavish in His preparations and feels very hurt when the original invitees, namely, the Jewish people, decline to come. He makes a second appeal for them to attend. When His servants who personally deliver the second invitation are terribly treated, the King responds in kind. He then sends His servants to the outcasts of society – namely, the poor, the needy, the infirmed, and lepers, and urges them to come as guests to this wedding.

Finally, not only are the Son and the Father inviters, but the Holy Spirit as well. There is a final appeal made by Him and believers to the unsaved, urging them to come and drink spiritually. Revelation chapter 22 verse 17 states, ‘And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely’.



# Three revelations

By **JEFF BROWN** Nantgarw, Wales

## Introduction

In Matthew chapter 16, the Lord Jesus makes three revelations or announcements to His twelve disciples concerning His **person**, His imminent sufferings (**passion**) and something of His coming **power and glory**. At the beginning of the next chapter, He takes just three of the disciples (Peter, James, and John) up the Mount of Transfiguration and endorses and enlarges on what He has already revealed to them about these three truths.

## The three revelations

The first revelation is seen in verses 13 to 20 where something of the dignity, distinctiveness and uniqueness of the Lord's **person** is seen. Peter is asked that searching question, 'But whom say ye that I am?' v. 15. The answer, 'the Christ, the Son of the living God', v. 16, is immediately attributed by the Lord to a revelation from His Father in heaven! This was not the result of natural intelligence or thought. Yet, what is He to us? Are we living day by day in the good of that confession?

The second revelation is found in verses 21 to 23. Here the Lord reveals something of His soon-coming **passion**, i.e., His going up to Jerusalem, suffering, being killed and rising again the third day – the reality of which would take place in possibly less than six months after this time. We notice that this revelation came after the truth of His person had been revealed! It was only because of who and what He was, that His death would be of infinite value. Previously the Lord had talked of His death in metaphorical language, Matt. 12. 40; John 2. 19-22. He now prophesies specifically about His coming death. What a blessing that we don't know what the immediate future holds for us, yet, praise God, we know and are confident regarding our eternal future!

The third revelation concerns His coming **power and glory**, v. 27. This seems to refer to the future establishment of His messianic kingdom. Again, as with the second revelation, it was only because of who and what He was that He could declare these things. Only He would have the power and the ability to

make it happen! While the first revelation concerning His person was about the present, the second revelation concerning His passion was clearly prophetic – near prophecy that would soon be fulfilled. The third revelation regarding the coming in power and glory is distant and, as yet, still unfulfilled prophecy.

## The mountain experience

In Matthew chapter 17 verse 1, the Lord takes Peter, James and John up the mountain and there endorses and expands on those revelations that had already been brought before them with the other disciples. In verse 1, we see three good men, Peter, James and John. In verse 3, we see two great men, Moses and Elijah. When we come to verse 8, we see only one man who stands supreme – unique. The voice from heaven was silent with regard to the disciples and to Moses and Elijah. It spoke only of Christ!

At His baptism in the river Jordan, the Lord was singled-out from the worst of men, others were 'confessing their sins', Mark 1. 5; here, on the mount, He is singled-out from the best of men. One man stood supreme. We should value and respect good spiritual men in our day, but certainly we shouldn't worship them. Only one man should have supreme place in our daily lives.



Luke's account speaks of 'his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem', 9. 31. To accomplish means 'to complete a work'. Even with this revelation, it appears that the disciples didn't really appreciate that it would or could happen. Later, in the Upper Room, just twenty-four hours before Calvary, they were still unsure of what was about to take place.

The third revelation was partially fulfilled in what the disciples witnessed on the mountain regarding the Lord's appearance before them, but not completely fulfilled. It was only a foreshadowing of what His sovereign reign in power and glory would be in a future day. The veil was, as it were, pulled aside and something of His regal glory was seen on the mount. What a contrast from the events of Matthew chapter 27 verse 51, when the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. What was the result as men looked on the inside because of the rent veil? What glories did they see? None! The glory had long departed, Ezek. 11. 22, 23 – all that was seen was the emptiness and shallowness of a defiled religion!

## Lessons for today – alone with Christ!

There are so many lessons to be learnt from this incident. The favoured three disciples, Peter, James and John, were to see something of His **glory** on the mount, something of His **power** in the raising of Jairus' daughter, Luke 8. 51-56, and something of His **suffering and sorrow** in Gethsemane, Matt. 26. 37-44. They were taken up into a high mountain, apart. This was a place of elevation, separation and quietness, with no distractions from the world below. They were to appreciate and learn of Christ things that they would not have learnt if they had stayed down below. These three had this special revelation on the mount. Bible study and ministry in the assembly is scripturally correct and rewarding – indeed, it is essential. However, it is not a substitute for being **alone** with Christ in the quiet place, away from any distractions. What do we know of time spent alone with Christ?



## QUESTION

**Are head coverings for sisters a relevant practice for today?**

## ANSWER

Head coverings for sisters using a head scarf or hat when a local church meets together, and perhaps on other occasions of spiritual activity, is a practice based on one specific passage in the New Testament, 1 Cor. 11. 1-16. Throughout history, head coverings have been a mainstream practice among Christian groups. The early church practised head covering, with Luther, Calvin, and John Wesley all advocating this teaching.<sup>1</sup> Today, it is limited to a small number of Christian groups, including New Testament assemblies. Are head coverings relevant now? After all, we are called to be New Testament believers living out the truth of the scriptures in our day, and not living in the past. In 1 Corinthians, Paul deals with some very serious issues including division, immorality, and false teaching. He takes the time to deal with this problem in chapter 11 providing several trans-cultural arguments in support:

### **Because of headship, vv. 3-6**

The practice of head coverings falls under a wider biblical principle called headship. This is outlined in verse 3 where we read 'that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God'. The idea of headship is recognizing and submitting to the God-given authority of another. A sister covering her head is visibly acknowledging her head, the man. Perhaps, even more importantly, if a man covers his head in the presence of God, he is dishonouring his Head, who is Christ. Ultimately, headship is about giving God His rightful place.

### **Because of creation, vv. 7-12**

Paul lays out three principles from Genesis chapter 2, describing the relationship God set in place between men and women. First, man was created in the image and glory of God, whereas woman is the glory of man, v. 7. Second, man was the source of the woman, since Eve was taken from the side of Adam, v. 8. Third, Eve was created for Adam, as a help 'meet for' (or comparable to) him. These principles take on eternal significance when we consider that they reflect the relationship between Christ and the church, Eph. 5. 22-33. Through the sleep of Adam, typifying the death of Christ, came forth Eve, an individual who owed her existence entirely to him. As Eve originated from Adam, so the church originates from Christ, through His death, and lives to serve Him as His eternal companion. Paul also anticipated that this

teaching appeared one-sided and in favour of men. He redresses the balance by also stating that God has created men and women to depend on each other, v. 11. Women are now also the originators of all men through motherhood, v. 12.

### **Because of the angels, v. 10**

Paul includes a tantalizing glimpse into the unseen world, v. 10, where we read, 'for this cause ought the woman to have [a symbol of] power on her head because of the angels'. The verse draws attention to an astounding truth. In real time, angels look on as we gather as Christians. One reason is given, 'that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold [multifaceted] wisdom of God', Eph. 3. 10. This is amazing! God is teaching the angels through New Testament churches today as we gather to worship. This elevates the practice of head coverings to a very high level.

### **Because of nature, vv. 13-15**

Paul also appeals to the natural order of things. As a general principle, around the world, women tend to have long hair and men shorter hair. In other words, a woman has a covering by nature. Partly this is biological, due to the adverse effects of male hormones on hair growth, but also long hair enhances the appearance of a woman – 'it is a glory to her', v. 15. Some argue that this passage is teaching that women should have long hair as a covering rather than needing an additional covering. However, why would Paul bring this argument in as another line of evidence if this was the point he was making in the first place? Also, the interpretation of verse 6 becomes problematic using such an argument.

One final point, more important than outward symbols, is our attitude of heart. It would be easy for our approach to be that of grudging conformity. Verse 3 highlights two opposing attitudes towards headship. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, humanity demonstrated rebellion towards His headship, saying, 'we will not have this man to reign over us', Luke 19. 14. In contrast, the Lord Jesus acknowledged the headship of God when He was here, saying, 'I do always those things that please him [the Father]', John 8. 29.

### **Endnote**

1 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_head\\_covering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_head_covering).

# The Committee

Chairman and General Editor:

**JOHN BENNETT**

19 Alfreton Road, Pinxton,  
Nottingham NG16 6JZ

Treasurer:

**MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE**

PO Box 10544, Grantham NG31 0HW

Secretary:

**JOHN SCARSBROOK**

34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh,  
Sheffield S21 1HW

Ministry Articles Editors:

**BRIAN CLATWORTHY,**

**SANDY JACK**

YPS:

**STEPHEN BAKER**

*Editors can be contacted through the  
email address below or by post to the  
Chairman.*

Other Trust Members:

**Andrew Dutton, Tom Merriman,  
Frank Proudlock, Stuart Scammell,  
Stephen Sherwin, Ken Totton.**

*All committee members can be contacted at  
[secretary@preciousseed.org](mailto:secretary@preciousseed.org)*

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- The magazine is published quarterly by the Precious Seed Trust, Registered Charity No. 326157.
  - It is distributed, without charge, to over 100 countries, many in the developing world.
  - Numbers printed are over 11,500 (50% of these going overseas) plus over 1500 in India.
  - Postage accounts for nearly 70% of our costs.
  - Including postage, each magazine costs around £1.25 sterling.
  - Gifts to help in the work may be sent in any major currency to any of the addresses shown below or through the website.
  - UK donors can add 25% to their gift by using the Gift Aid scheme (details available from the secretary).
- Magazine orders, amendments and gifts should be sent to the address below or to the Birkdale, Stouffville or Farmington Hills addresses below.
  - Contact Addresses:
    - U.K.** **Precious Seed International,**  
**PO Box 10544, Grantham, NG31 0HW.**
    - Australia** **Precious Seed International,**  
**12 Amalia Street, Birkdale, Queensland 4159.**
    - Canada** **Precious Seed International, Gospel Trust Canada,**  
**3 Hill Top Trail, Stouffville, ON L4A3G7 Canada**
    - U.S.A.** **Precious Seed International, c/o Truth & Tidings Gospel Trust USA,**  
**37177 White Tail Court, Farmington Hills, MI 48335.**
  - Visit our website: **[www.preciousseed.org](http://www.preciousseed.org)**
  - Make use of our email facility: **[secretary@preciousseed.org](mailto:secretary@preciousseed.org)**
  - Call us on **00 44 (0)1142 478636**



If you wish to help in the work, this can be done in several ways:

- 1) **BY CREDIT/DEBIT CARD** using our website [www.preciousseed.org](http://www.preciousseed.org) and selecting 'Support Precious Seed' on the menu bar, or
- 2) **BY ELECTRONIC BANK TRANSFER** either using online banking, or by instructing your bank local branch to make an electronic payment. The Precious Seed bank account details are:
  - Account name: Precious Seed Magazine • UK Account Number: 00399475
  - UK bank Sort Code 30-98-94
  - IBAN:GB75 LOYD 3098 9400 3994 75 • BIC: LOYDGB21454

**If you use this method please let us know separately either by email to [secretary@preciousseed.org](mailto:secretary@preciousseed.org) or via the post as sometimes the details of payees are not evident from bank statements.**

**USA** If you wish to make a donation using a cheque in US Dollars please:

1. Make payable to: Truth & Tidings Gospel Trust USA.
2. Send to: Truth & Tidings Gospel Trust USA, 37177 White Tail Court, Farmington Hills, MI 48335 with instructions to forward funds to *Precious Seed International*.

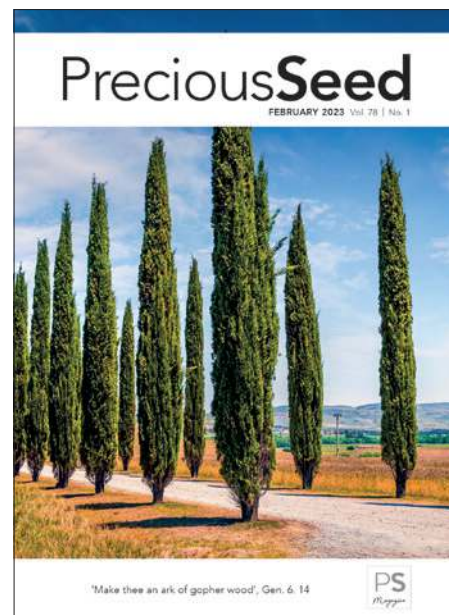
**Canada** If you wish to make a donation using a cheque in CAN Dollars please:

1. Make payable to: Gospel Trust Canada.
2. Send to: Gospel Trust Canada, 3 Hill Top Trail, Stouffville, ON, L4A 3G7 with instructions to forward funds to *Precious Seed International*.

**New Zealand** If you wish to make a donation using a cheque in NZ Dollars please:

1. Make payable to: Global Connections in Mission.
2. Send to: Global Connections in Mission, PO Box 744, Palmerston North, 4440 with instructions to forward funds to *Precious Seed International*.

NOTE: ARTICLES EXPRESS THE CONVICTIONS HELD BY THE AUTHORS. ALL THE TRUSTEES MAY NOT AGREE WITH EVERYTHING THAT IS STATED IN ANY ONE ARTICLE. ULTIMATELY, THE AUTHOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT IS WRITTEN.



## 'Make thee an ark of gopher wood', Gen. 6. 14

The opening verses of Genesis chapter 6 are incredibly sad. After the creation of the world in perfection and beauty, what havoc had been caused by the entrance of sin! The verses record, 'the wickedness of man was great in the earth', v. 5, 'for the earth [was] filled with violence', v. 13, and 'the Lord... was grieved in His heart', v. 6 NKJV. In the face of such continual evil, God's righteousness demanded that He must act in judgement. The sentence is passed, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth', v. 7.

It is at this point that one of the great contrasts of scripture is stated, 'But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord', v. 8. Whilst we might appreciate the awful state of the earth when only one man and his family are different, it is a testimony to the character of God, for this is the first mention of grace. Divine favour then led to revelation as God makes known to Noah what He is about to do, and in that revelation indicates His provision for Noah and his family – 'an ark of gopher wood'.

God created trees on the third day of His creation and whether then or later there was the cypress tree, an evergreen tree noted for its durability, that would be available at the right time. It is thought that this was the tree that was to provide the 'gopher wood' that Noah needed. How remarkable too, to find these trees in abundance in the right location for Noah to access all the resources he needed for such a huge building project. God is never taken by surprise and grace provides!

But notice too that Noah acts, 'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him', v. 22. The imagination of the thoughts of Noah's heart were not evil continually! But how daunting a task he had been given. Only a small workforce, and such a huge vessel to be built! We do not read of Noah asking any questions or seeking any clarification. Although written of Abraham, we might apply it to Noah here, for he 'believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness', Rom. 4. 3. Is our faith as great?

© Precious Seed International.

The magazine is copyrighted for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of the material and not to limit proper use of the articles. For use in other publications and for orders and distribution please contact Michael Buckeridge, PO Box 10544, Grantham, NG31 0HW, UK. The magazine is issued free of charge. Its production is maintained by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. Readers are requested to notify changes of address and to keep the number of magazines ordered under review. No member of the Committee receives any remuneration for services to the Trust.



**[www.preciousseed.org](http://www.preciousseed.org)**

 **Precious Seed International**