

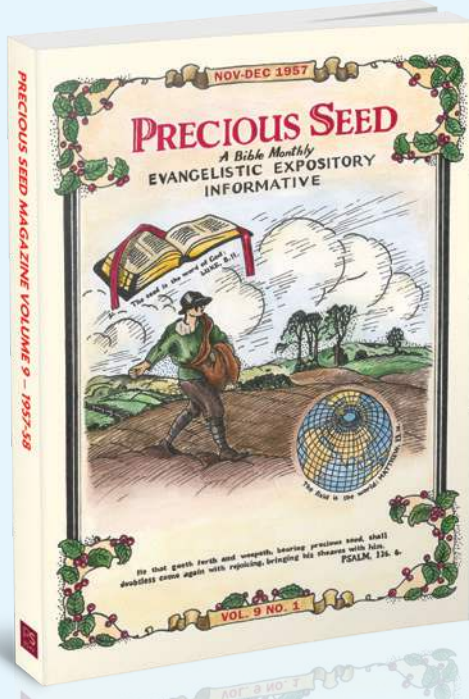
PreciousSeed

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'They shall make an ark of shittim wood', Exod. 25. 10

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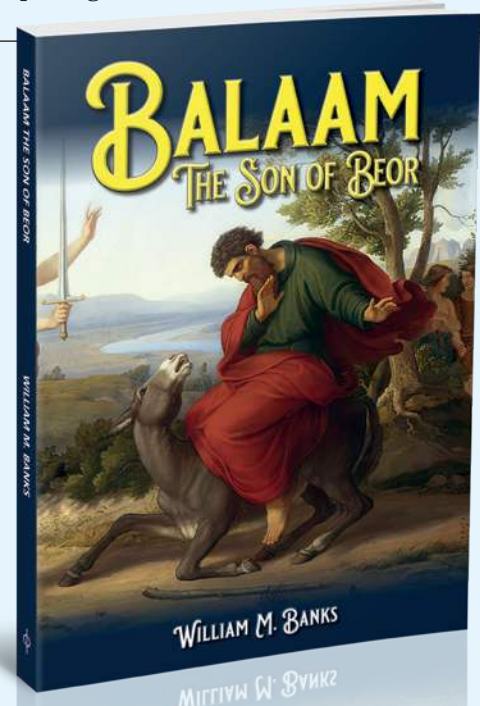
Balaam the son of Beor

Balaam has a large place in the scriptures. He is mentioned in eight books and referenced sixty-three times in fifty-nine verses. Whilst his only assignment was to curse God's people, God was working out all of the apparent disparate circumstances for the implementing of His sovereign purposes.

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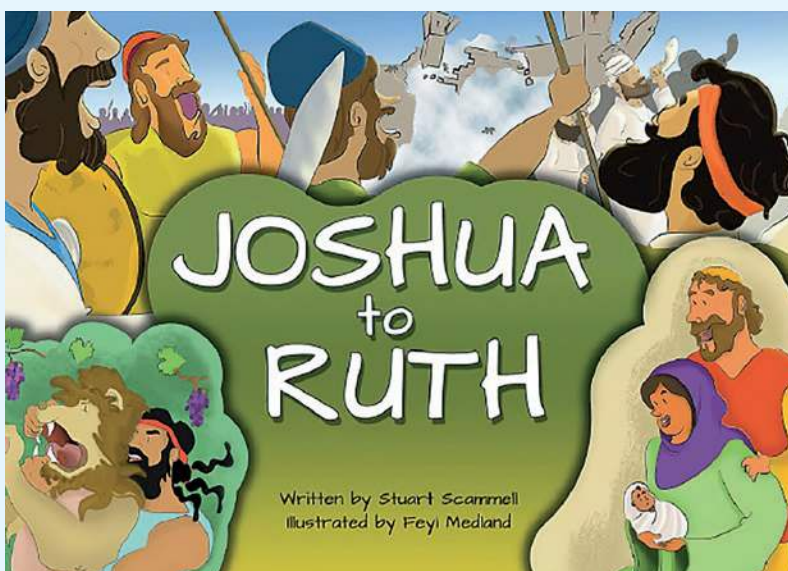


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‘For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh’, 2 Cor. 10. 3.

Living in the world is a constant challenge for the believer. Paul reminds us, however, that we do not conduct our Christian lives by ‘the standards of this world’, 2 Cor. 10. 2 NIV. The Apostle John writes that we should not love ‘the world, neither the things that are in the world’, 1 John 2. 15, and to let the world mould us is also contrary to our Christian vocation, Rom. 12. 2. When James states ‘know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?’ Jas. 4. 4, he is not suggesting that believers should be isolationist. What all these writers are emphasizing is that as Christians we must not identify with the standards or priorities set by the world so that we become indistinguishable from it. The church of God must be truly a counterculture, and cannot live in close fellowship with God and, at the same time, have a mindset towards the world. Our Lord once warned His disciples about the serious incompatibility of serving two masters at the same time, Matt. 6. 24.

What does this mean for us in terms

of evangelism? Although we place ourselves under the discipline of a Christian lifestyle, we cannot then simply ignore the world as if it did not exist, or disassociate ourselves from people, especially in terms of outreach. Merely preaching the gospel week by week, to believers and family members, is not a substitute for obeying the Great Commission to go out into all the world and preach the gospel, Matt. 28. 18-20; Mark 16. 15, which, from a local perspective, means reaching out into our communities. While the salvation of our own families is important, the idea that we withdraw from the world because we fear moral defilement from the unsaved will ultimately hide the gospel from those who are perishing, 2 Cor. 4. 3, and be no more than an in-house message for the initiated, which is the very antithesis of the universality of the gospel of the grace of God, Col. 1. 5, 6, 28. We are reminded in this context of the thought-provoking words of HUDSON TAYLOR, ‘How sadly possible it is to delight in conferences and feasts of

good things; to enjoy, in a way, all the ministry that is brought before us and yet to be unprepared to go out from and with these good things in self-denying efforts to rescue the perishing’. May we ever be mindful of our responsibility to go out with the precious seed of the gospel to a lost world.

Once again, we are very grateful to all those who have contributed to the continued success of the magazine over the past year, and we look to the Lord for His future blessing as we shortly approach a New Year.

Brian Clatworthy
Ministry Articles Editor

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Economic parables 6

THE TALENTS (1) Luke 19

By **MARK SWEETNAM** Dublin, Ireland

The parable of the talents, as recorded in Luke chapter 19 verses 11 to 27, must surely number among the most challenging told by the Lord Jesus. The clear central message of the parable – that we are responsible to Christ for our stewardship of the resources that He has entrusted to us – is a vital and sobering lesson.¹ This lesson does not, however, exhaust the teaching of this parable. At this crucial point in His journey to the cross, the Lord uses this parable to teach His disciples about the whole sweep of the dispensation that was about to dawn and of the roles that would be played, in that dispensation, by Himself, Israel, and you and me.

The comparison of the parable

One of the issues that we must address is the relationship of this parable with the parable recorded in Matthew chapter 25 verses 14 to 30. The similarities between the two passages are obvious – in both, an authority figure goes away for a period of time, leaving his servants with financial resources that they must invest on his behalf. In both, there is a return and a review, with a particular focus on the performance of three servants, two of whom receive commendation for the profit they have generated, and a third who is condemned for his failure, not just to generate a profit, but to make even the most rudimentary effort to do so. In addition, there are a number of verbal similarities between the two passages.² These resemblances have led some to conclude that Matthew and Luke present two records of one parable, and that the inconsistencies between the two reflect different recollections of Christ's words and the different emphases of the two Gospels. This explanation is, to put it mildly, suspect on the grounds of the low view of scripture that it expresses. We believe that 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God', 2 Tim. 3. 16, and, thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit, we are not at the mercy of Matthew's memory or the memory of Luke's sources.

Even leaving this important issue to one side, however, a closer

examination of the two parables reveals significant differences between them that are best accounted for not as distortions of a common source but as authentic differences between two independent accounts of two distinct parables.

The parables have a different setting – Matthew's is set in Jerusalem, Luke's in Jericho; Matthew's is delivered before a crowd while Luke's account has the Lord speaking to His disciples. The personnel in the parables also differ; Matthew has a businessman, while Luke has a king; Matthew's account features three servants, Luke's ten. In Matthew's parable, the servants are given differing numbers of talents (a very large sum of money), but in Luke's account, each servant receives one pound or *mina* (a considerably smaller sum).³ In Matthew's account, each of the good servants is given the same reward ('I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord', Matt. 25. 21, 23), while in Luke, the rewards distributed vary. In Matthew, the unfaithful servant is cast 'into outer darkness: [where] there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth', Matt. 25. 30; no such judgement awaits the failing servant in Luke.

In the face of these differences, quite apart from the implications of biblical inspiration and inerrancy, the most plausible solution is that

we are dealing not with one but with two parables, and that the parable recorded in Luke chapter 19 is unique to this Gospel.

The context of the parable

This is an important insight because the full significance of this parable is closely tied to its context. The Lord, with His disciples, has left Jericho on His final journey to Jerusalem and, as Luke makes explicit, the teaching of this parable arises directly out of the circumstances of this journey, 'And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear', 19. 11. Although the Lord had made it clear to His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to be rejected and crucified, the disciples had been unable to grasp the meaning of His words, 'Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying', Luke 9. 44, 45. Still, they clung to the idea that the long-awaited kingdom was about to be inaugurated, and where else, other than Jerusalem, would that great event take place? Surely it was this prospect that drew their Lord inexorably to the city of the great king!

The disciples were right that Christ was going to inaugurate the kingdom. They were right about the significance of Jerusalem as the place where that event would take place. But they were wrong about both the timing and the sequence of the arrival of the kingdom, and it is because of this error, 'because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear', that the Saviour speaks this parable.

The content of the parable

Responsibility, vv. 12-14

As the parable begins, we are introduced to the three parties who will play a role in this story – the nobleman, his servants, and his citizens. That the man of noble birth is central to the story is immediately clear: both the servants and the citizens are defined in relation to

him, it is his actions and initiative that drive the action of the whole narrative, and we begin with an overview of the story from his perspective. There are three stages to his story – he is going into a far country to receive a kingdom, and then to return. He leaves as a nobleman but will return as a king; he goes to the far country not to receive a kingdom there but to receive a kingdom in the place from which he left.

The application of this to the Lord Jesus requires no special insight. He is, we recall, addressing the disciples' misapprehension that the kingdom 'should immediately appear'. He does so by reminding them, in parabolic form, of the sequence of events that must take place. He must go away, by way of the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension and, in exaltation, He receives the kingdom.⁴ There will be a period during which He is absent, when He will have received the kingdom but before He has returned to claim it.

In that period, the nobleman will be absent but not unrepresented. He leaves ten servants – literally slaves – behind to work for him, using the resources that he has entrusted to them. That there are ten servants is striking – not just because of the contrast with Matthew's parable, but because at the end of the parable only a sample of three is reviewed and rewarded. Ten in scripture is the number of responsibility – there were ten commandments, ten plagues on

Egypt, and ten spies who brought back an evil report from Canaan. In contrast to the servants in Matthew chapter 25, there is no differentiation in the amount entrusted to each servant – they each receive one pound, or *mina*. 'One *mina* was worth about four month's wages' for a labourer – a substantial, but by no means enormous amount.⁵ With this amount came the instruction, 'Occupy till I come'. *Pragmateuomai*, the word translated 'occupy' in the KJV, is the word from which we get the English 'pragmatic', and it means 'to carry on a business or to trade' and its force here is 'make a profit'.⁶ The nobleman expects his servants not to be idle, certainly, but more than that, he expects them to engage in activity that will further his interests.

The interpretation of this verse is as solemn as it is obvious – especially as it refers directly to believers of this dispensation. We have been left here in our Lord's absence. To each of us have been given resources of all sorts. Some of what has been entrusted to us is spiritual, but the juxtaposition of this parable with the story of Zacchaeus and the implications that salvation had for his management of his material possessions should keep us from restricting the teaching of the parable only to spiritual resources. After all, 'nothing' is the only honest answer that any of us can give to the question, 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?' 1 Cor. 4. 7 – everything we are and have has been given to us and no part of us or of our possessions is unaffected by

the command to 'Occupy till I come'. As Christians, we are expected to be active, 'redeeming the time, because the days are evil', Eph. 5. 16. But mere activity is not our goal – it is alarmingly easy to be active to little or no purpose. Like these servants, our highest aim is our Master's business – we are active to advance His interests.

Rejection, v. 14

The respect and obedience of the nobleman's servants stands in sharp contrast to that of the citizenry more widely. They 'hated him' is the sad summary of their attitude. It was not so much that they objected to the idea of a kingdom; rather, they detested the man who had gone to receive it. Their message to the far country is not, 'We will not have someone to reign over us'; it is, 'We will not have this man', literally, the derogatory 'this one', 'to reign over us'.

Again, the interpretation need not puzzle us. In these rebellious and rejecting citizens we see the response of the Jews to their true King. Very shortly, the streets around Gabbatha would echo with the cry, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him . . . We have no king but Caesar', John 19. 15. It was not that the Jews did not want a kingdom or a king – they longed fervently for both of those things. The issue was, not this King, not this One, not the One they hated.

Endnotes

- 1 Clear, that is, to most commentators. Cp., however, DAVID E. GARLAND, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Zondervan, 2011, pp. 754-763. GARLAND interprets the parable as portraying the grasping and exploitative nature of the human rule that will continue until Christ returns. Thus, he does not see Christ or the concept of stewardship in the parable. There are good reasons why this remains a minority view.
- 2 These resemblances are outlined in J. A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel according to Luke (x-xxiv)*, Anchor Bible, Doubleday, 1985, pg. 1230.
- 3 See MERRILL F. UNGER, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1988, 'Metrology', s.v.
- 4 The verb used here (*poreuō*) is the same one that the Lord uses of His death in Luke chapter 22 verse 22, 'truly the Son of man goeth'.
- 5 DARRELL L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Baker Academic, 1996, pg. 1533.
- 6 *Ibid.*



THE TEACHING IN THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Part 3 – The Christology of Hebrews

By **KEN TOTTON** Cambridge, England

The term Christology means the doctrine of Christ. The person of Christ and His work are inseparable, for the one imparts value to the other. The Epistle to the Hebrews is particularly rich in this respect; its primary purpose is to insist on the absolute and unrivalled supremacy of Christ our unique Saviour and Lord. Correspondingly, it solemnly warns its readers that to abandon Christ and His salvation is to guarantee eternal judgement.

The letter addresses the spiritual needs of a community of Hebrew Christians just prior to the fall of Jerusalem. They had endured considerable opposition and persecution for their faith in Christ, but several factors had combined to tempt some to revert to Judaism. Christ had not returned, and opposition had intensified. The response of the writer is to present Jesus, the Son of God, to them in a manner unrivalled in the rest of the New Testament, so that the noontide blaze of His radiance might eclipse all rival attractions. In this brief survey, we will broadly follow the sequence in which the Holy Spirit presents the person of Christ.

Great Prophet of our God

Chapter 1 makes a formidable contribution to our subject, and especially the opening verses. Christ is revealed as Prophet, Priest, and King. The God who spoke piecewise through the prophets has now fully and finally spoken to us in His Son.¹ So doing, He has ushered in the last times, the era of fulfilment. Later, there will be emphasis on the supersession of the entire Mosaic dispensation, for by contrast all that the Son has done is stamped as eternal.

Whilst Christ is here introduced

as the ultimate Prophet, there is a clear categorical distinction from all previous prophets. The eternal Son embodies, as well as articulates, the divine word, Heb. 1. 2, for He is the Word-become-flesh. Only in union with Him can others become sons of God, and enjoy the destiny that waits such, 2. 10.

The Son is appointed 'heir of all things'. This probably echoes the language of Psalm 2 verse 8, 'Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession'. Further, Jesus, the last Adam, will have all things put under His feet, Heb. 2. 5-9.

The eternally pre-existent Son of God is the creator of the world, 1. 2. The world created by Him is the world that will be redeemed through Him. He is 'the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature', v. 3 ESV. Radiance shines forth from a source of light. Christ is one with the Father in possessing the divine glory – the supreme revelation of God to men.² The 'exact imprint' denotes a perfect correspondence of the Son with the Father, so that the Son is eternally the image of God. Moreover, He upholds all things by the word of His power, implying that

He dynamically sustains and carries the cosmos forward to its purposed consummation.

With marvellous succinctness the writer states that in His incarnate state the Son 'made purification of sins', 1. 3 RV. This is the recurrent theme, and its bold statement immediately implies the supersession of the Mosaic dispensation, because He has achieved what no former sacrifices could ever do. The climactic statement is that 'He . . . sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high', v. 3 NKJV, cp. Ps. 110. 1, signifying both the completion of His great work, and His enthronement in the seat of utmost honour and authority.

Lower than angels?

Thoughtful readers ponder why the writer expends significant effort on contrasting Christ with angels. The reasons probably lie with the speculative tendencies of certain strands of 1st-Century Judaism to elevate archangels to supreme positions in the messianic kingdom.

Christ's implied superiority over angels is, however, clear from the opening verses of the Epistle. They are stated to be 'ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation', v. 14 ESV. Further, in chapter 2 sovereignty over the world to come is committed not to angels but to man. Here Christ is seen as the Man *par excellence* to whom Psalm 8 applies. During the days of His flesh, the incarnate Son became 'for a little while . . . lower than the angels', 2. 9 ESV. On account of His suffering of death, He has been 'crowned with glory and honour', exalted far above angels, Heb. 2. 8, 9. It was fallen human beings, not angels, that He came to deliver, and through His suffering, death, and resurrection He conquered Satan – the most exalted of rebellious angelic beings, 2. 14.

Son over His own house

The towering figure of Moses has had a unique hold on serious Jewish minds. Many pious souls sought a truer experience of the ideals of the covenant established through Moses. But to imagine that this could somehow be combined with

Christianity would be to mix mutually exclusive possibilities, 10. 18. The writer allows that comparisons may be made between Moses and Christ, 3. 1, 2. Yet, Moses served a house that was part of creation, whereas God is the builder of all, and here the reference to Christ is unmistakable, v. 4.

Chapter 3 goes on to emphasize the fact that the wilderness years were no golden era to be emulated, 3. 12 – 4. 13. Even the Canaan-rest which the nation entered under Joshua fell far short of the eternal sabbatical blessedness that is the portion of all those who rest in the promises of God, 4. 9.

Finally, as regards Moses and his covenant, had not Jeremiah announced that a new covenant was to be brought into force, clearly implying the temporary and provisional nature of the former? Heb. 10. 16; Jer. 31. 31.³

Bringer of perfection

Aaron, Israel's high priest, occupied a unique position alongside Moses as the people's representative in the presence of God. Law and covenant were inextricably linked, Heb. 7. 11, 12, because the giving of the law necessitated a system of forgiveness by way of blood sacrifice, if God in His holiness was to dwell amongst His people.

As a major departure, Melchizedek, the ancient king-priest of Salem, Gen. 14. 18-20; Ps. 110. 4, is taken to be a type of the Lord Jesus, both in terms of what is said and what is not said. Significantly, Melchizedek means first King of Righteousness and, second, King of Peace (cp. Salem), Heb. 7. 2.⁴ In rabbinical fashion, the writer finds that the silence of Genesis in respect of Melchizedek's ancestors suitably points to Christ, the eternal King-Priest. Further, the illustrious patriarch Abraham implicitly acknowledges the superiority of Melchizedek, by paying tithes to him and by being blessed by him, vv. 6, 7. By extension, the as yet unborn Levi acknowledged the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek, v. 9.

The introduction of a King-Priest

of a different order and from the tribe of Judah eclipses the Aaronic priesthood, combines the offices of ruler and priest, and validates the Lord Jesus as the heir of the rich promises to the house of David. Once again, the prediction of Psalm 110 verse 4 during the era of the Aaronic priesthood points to its limitations and impermanence, cp. Heb. 7. 11.

We have noted already in respect of prophets and angels that Christ excels them all. Similarly in respect of priests and their sacrifices. The sinfulness of the people meant that under the Mosaic covenant, a priest's job was never done, for there would always be fresh guilt to be atoned for. The whole system cried out for something better.⁵

So, Christ by His one unique self-offering brought about **perfection**. For the believer, this means the unspeakable blessing of permanent access to God, free from an accusing conscience, 10. 19-22. As regards Christ, it conveys that His atoning sacrifice is complete, final, and forever, vv. 11-18, 'for by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified', v. 14 ESV. So doing He became the mediator and surety of the new covenant: He guarantees the perpetual benefits of the covenant on behalf of His people. By enduring the cross and despising the shame, 12. 2, He became the perfect Exemplar of the enduring faith that His people are called to demonstrate.

Great High Priest and servant of the sanctuary

The way into the divine presence of old was beset by barriers blocking the approach of the worshipper. There were indeed many priests and unnumbered animal sacrifices, but only one could enter the Most Holy place on the annual Day of Atonement.⁶ Despite the elaborate rituals, Israel stood distant from their God. The typology surrounding this most solemn day lies at the heart of the argument of Hebrews.

Christ in full spiritual intelligence and moral perfection willingly offered a single offering, functioning in the

realm of the divine, 9. 14, so procuring eternal redemption. The efficacy of this unique self-offering stretches both backwards and forwards in time, v. 15, as indeed it needed to do, 'for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins', 10. 4 NKJV.

Following the typology, Christ has entered once-for-all into the presence of God on the basis of His self-oblation. So doing He is our forerunner, 6. 20, guaranteeing our arrival there too. And it is from thence that He will soon appear to call His waiting people to Himself, so consummating their salvation, 9. 28. Further, on account of the 'perfection' explained earlier, even now every one of His people can enjoy access through the veil, right into the immediate presence of God.⁷

What about His temple? Christ's priestly service on His people's behalf is performed in the sublimely glorious heavenly sanctuary – of which the Mosaic tabernacle was but a pale earthly copy and shadow.

The manifold riches of Christ's person add surpassing value to His intercessory care and support of His people. Hebrews repeatedly highlights His qualifications for priesthood.⁸ All that He is, He is **for** His people, 9. 24b. May we enjoy the ministration of His grace to us as we, in our turn, run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Endnotes

- 1 Divine speech is an important subtheme in the Epistle.
- 2 Mark 9. 2-10; 2 Pet. 1. 16-18; cp. Acts 26. 13.
- 3 For contrast between old and new covenants see further 2 Corinthians chapter 3. See further, P. T. O'BRIEN, 'The new covenant and its perfect mediator', in J. GRIFFITHS (ed.), *The Perfect Saviour*, IVP, pp. 13-34.
- 4 This is the biblical order, righteousness . . . peace. The one derives from the other.
- 5 'Better' is a keyword: Heb. 6. 9; 7. 19, 22; 8. 6; 9. 23; 10. 34; 11. 16, 35, 40; 12. 24.
- 6 Lev. 16.
- 7 Heb. 10. 20; Matt. 27. 51.
- 8 Heb. 4. 14-16; 5. 7; 7. 25; 13. 20.

The scriptural route to evangelistic ‘success’ – ‘I . . . have sent them into the world’, John 17. 18

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

There is a most important principle lying on the surface of the high-priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus in John chapter 17. It culminates here in verse 18. The development is as follows.¹ His own are seen as being associated with ‘the world’ in four perspectives:

- ‘out of the world’, v. 6, as to **electing provision**, cp. 15. 19.
- ‘in the world’, vv. 11, 12, as to **physical location**.
- ‘not of the world’, vv. 14-16, as to **spiritual condition**, cp. 15. 19.
- sent ‘into the world’, v. 18, as to **evangelical mission**.

The above order is important. Those who are involved in evangelism must be manifestly different from the world. We don’t become ‘like them to win them’. It is the very opposite – our distinctiveness is our strength. A casual approach is not in keeping with the dignity and grandeur of the message we proclaim. The world’s methods are not ours! We must not compromise with a value system based on worldly thinking – we are not to console by our life, but to condemn – not arrogantly but axiomatically by our unworldliness.

It is of interest to look at the context of each of the verses in turn.

‘Out of the world’, v. 6, as to electing provision, cp. 15. 19

The believer has been given as a love gift from the Father to the Son, ‘I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me **out of the world**: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word’, v. 6.

It is a thrilling thought that we as believers in the Lord Jesus have been given to Him as the Father’s love gift. Since we were ‘chosen . . .

in him before the foundation of the world’, Eph. 1. 4, it is likely that the love gift was given then as well. In this context, it has been well said that, ‘God is seen to be moving for His own glory and the eternal satisfaction of His own heart . . . Election as taught in verse 4 has to do with a sovereign God, is connected with the past and is related to persons; predestination as taught in verse 5 has to do with the Father’s good pleasure, is connected with the future and is related to a position marked out for persons . . . Israel knew something of election and sonship, but with a difference: their election was as a nation, they were an elect race: their sonship was as a nation, “Israel My son”. The election of this unique day is individual as is also sonship’.² Thus, the thought is that ‘before the foundation of the world’ we were as individuals, known intimately to the heart of God and without any merit of our own, given by Him to His Son as a love gift ‘**out of the world**’ to share in the blessings of an eternal relationship and to have the opportunity of being associated with the display of His glory.

The love gift here is linked with the **manifestation of the Father’s name** and the ‘keeping’ (‘holding fast’, ‘guarding’) of the Father’s word. The idea in the word ‘manifest’ (*phaneroo*) is to make visible what has been hidden, whether by teaching or deeds. The Lord Jesus did this in His ministry and miracles. He could say, ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father’, 14. 9. He thus disclosed the meaning of the ‘name’. The Father’s love, joy, peace, gentleness but also His antagonism to sin in all its forms was displayed in the lovely life and walk of the Lord Jesus. Thus, the first step in effective evangelism is to appreciate God’s electing provision in taking us ‘out of the world’ and

appreciating something of the significance of ‘the Father’s name’ and the keeping of the Father’s word.

‘In the world’, vv. 11, 12, as to physical location

Interestingly, the context here is also of the believer as a love gift from the Father to the Son. ‘And now I am no more **in the world**, but these are **in the world**, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through [*en*, “in”] thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them **in the world**, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled’.

The phrase ‘in the world’ is thus used three times in these two verses: once negatively and once positively of the Lord Jesus, and twice positively of the believer. The Lord has, as it were, already left the world and gone back to the Father. While the Lord Jesus was in the world, He had ‘**kept them in thy [the Father’s] name**’, v. 12. However, He was going back to the Father. He was leaving them and commending them into the care of His ‘Holy Father’. Those who are thus kept – ‘in thy name’ – will know also what it is to be kept ‘from the evil [one]’, v. 15. While the believer is ‘in the world’, he is not exempt from the Father’s influence. There is a serious danger of being overwhelmed by the world’s value system.

These verses teach us the **two fundamental necessities** while ‘in the world’. The **first** is to live consistently with the honour of being kept ‘in . . . [His] name’. The significance of this preposition ‘in’ (used twice) has to do with the sphere of which the Father’s name speaks. The name is the self-disclosure of the person and here it is clearly that of holiness, since the Lord Jesus is addressing His ‘Holy Father’. The lesson is that a sanctified condition is clearly necessary if the believer is going to be effective in evangelism. The lack of holiness today is perhaps one of the most serious hindrances in this regard.

The **second** main focus here is **on**

apostolic unity ‘that they may be one, as we are’, v. 11. This was answered, as evidenced by the Pentecostal unity in the early Acts. There was a paralleling in the world of the unity of purpose of divine persons. God is still looking for unity today. Alas, again, the lack of unity among God’s people is altogether apparent. The pride of the human heart is far too evident. A united company of believers is one of the most powerful tools for evangelistic ‘success’.

‘Not of the world’, vv. 14-16, as to spiritual condition, cp. 15. 19

In these verses, the Lord Jesus is emphasizing **four features** that distinguish believers from the world. ‘I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are **not of the world**, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are **not of the world**, even as I am not of the world’.

Observe that verse 16 is a repetition of what was said in verse 14, thus emphasizing its importance.

The **first** feature that marked them out from the world was their reception of and adherence to the ‘word’. Note that the ‘word’ here is in the singular, as distinct from

‘words’ in the plural in verse 8, ‘I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me’. These were the daily communications the Son had received, Isa. 50. 4, 5. The ‘word’ in the singular is the accumulated totality of divine communication to His own.

Second, their implementation of the inerrant and infallible ‘word’ in their behaviour led to hatred from the world, ‘the world hath hated them’. The Lord had informed His own, 15. 19, that this would be the case. It is, of course, no different today, cp. 1 John 5. 19, 20. Separation from the world is the fundamental strength of the faithful evangelist, 2 Tim. 4. 1-5; Rom. 12. 1, 2.

The **third** feature is conformity to Christ, ‘They are not of the world, **even as I** am not of the world’. This is surely one of the highest accolades possible. This is a constant theme in the Epistles, ‘put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ’, Rom. 13. 14; ‘For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ’, Gal. 3. 27.³ Perhaps our failure in this is one of our greatest weaknesses in assembly testimony.

The **final** characteristic emphasized here is the need to be kept ‘from the evil’ or, perhaps more accurately, the evil one. It is evident that this is not something we can do on our own.

The Lord Jesus prays that the Father should do it for them and us. Satan is always busy, and the believer is not exempt from responsibility in this regard. We have to be aware of his tactics – sometimes as ‘a roaring lion’, 1 Pet. 5. 8, 9, requiring us to ‘be sober, be vigilant . . . [and resisting] stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world’. On other occasions, he uses subtlety, ‘But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ’, 2 Cor. 11. 3. We cannot be careful enough!

Sent ‘into the world’, v. 18, as to evangelical mission

We have now reached the apex. ‘As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world’.

Those who are the love gift of the Father to the Son in electing provision, are now ready to be sent into the world as their Master was. Although currently ‘in the world’ as to physical location, they are ‘in the world’, but not of it and are distinct from it as to spiritual condition. The word for ‘sent’ (*apostello*) is akin to that used of ‘apostle’. The Saviour was clearly aware of His own commission, as sent by the Father, and was conferring a similar dignity on those being sent by Himself. It is a tremendous honour to be commissioned by Christ. There can be little doubt that the phenomenal success seen by the apostles in the early Acts (see, for example, 2. 41; 4. 4) was due to the principles enunciated here being put into effect.

The possibility of emulating them is available to us – the sacrifice and cost is great. Are we prepared to count that cost, follow the example of the early apostles, and know the warmth and wealth of spiritual success?

Endnotes

- 1 First heard in public ministry by ALBERT LECKIE.
- 2 A. LECKIE, *Ephesians* in K. STAPLEY and T. WILSON (ed.), *What the Bible teaches*, John Ritchie Ltd, 1983.
- 3 See also Eph. 4. 24; Col. 3. 10; Rom. 3. 22.



DONALD ROSS (1823-1903)

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

Introduction

Someone has said that ‘The years that followed the great revival of ’59 and the [eighteen] sixties were the most fruitful in the annals of Christianity in . . . [Scotland] . . . since the Reformation’. During that period, similar revivals were also experienced in Ireland and Wales. These were the years when the subject of our consideration, Donald Ross, was active as an evangelist in Scotland and saw many people saved. Later in life he moved to the USA to continue his work of evangelism.

Donald Ross was born on 11 February 1823, into a Christian home in Ross-shire, Scotland. Twice each day in his home there was prayer and Bible reading, but young Donald disliked this, and he often tried to find excuses to be absent. He later admitted that at that time he was ‘as proud as a peacock, and as empty as a drum’, but he nevertheless said his prayers morning and night, so that – he thought – God would not judge him.

At the age of fifteen, walking alone through the heather on a hillside, returning from visiting his dying brother, he was brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through the words of John chapter 18 verse 8, ‘if . . . ye seek me, let these go their way’.

For five years following his conversion, Ross was a member of the Church of Scotland. Then, together with his father, he left during what was called ‘The Disruption of 1843’, when 474 evangelical ministers, led by Thomas Chalmers, split from the mainstream Presbyterians to start the Free Church of Scotland. Then, when Donald moved to Edinburgh, he attached himself to the Free Church where a Mr. Tasker was the minister, and actively engaged in evangelistic work. From 1858 to 1860 he was an evangelist among the mining communities of Lanarkshire.

In 1860, he was appointed the salaried secretary and superintendent of the North East Coast Mission (founded in July 1858), making the city of Aberdeen his headquarters. One of the Mission’s early directors was the famous Hebrew scholar Alfred Edersheim, then minister of a Free Church in Aberdeen. During the ten years that Ross was in this important and responsible position he was greatly used of God in the salvation of souls.

Ross had started preaching in an unused church building in Aberdeen and around this time he met John Ritchie (later the founding editor of the *Believer’s Magazine*) who had been saved under one of the Mission evangelists, Donald Munroe.

Mr. Ross was a diligent student of the scriptures and, as he searched his Bible, he became exercised about his position, and, after ten years’ service in the North East Coast Mission, he resigned.

Up until that time, Donald Ross always sent those who were saved back to their original church, but he realized there was no spiritual life or proper teaching in the established church. He realized his own current position was spiritually incorrect, and, step-by-step, he started to right the situation. First, in 1870, he established the Northern Evangelistic Society and preached the gospel solely supported by ‘the Living and Eternal God’. Anyone joining him would not take pay or position, only what God provided. Several evangelists joined him. Soon afterwards that society was dissolved, and he ceased being connected with any society or denomination whatsoever, leaving himself completely free to serve the Lord.

Also, around this time, Ross saw the truth of believer’s baptism and the need to gather to the name of the Lord Jesus and remember Him in the breaking of bread, which he

and others did in a small chapel in Edinburgh where he preached the gospel for two years from 1871. Thus, slowly but surely, he had come to the scriptural truth that will be recognized by many readers of this magazine. Ross and other evangelists linked with him were responsible for the founding of no less than twenty-seven assemblies in Scotland between 1871 and 1873.

Eventually, however, Ross felt the time had come to evangelize elsewhere, thinking like the Apostle Paul at one point, ‘having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you’, Rom. 15. 23. He had already made a brief visit to the USA, where he found many open doors for service. This was an interest shared by others of his associates also, who, over the period 1871 to 1880, went to North America.

He moved to Boston in 1876 and three years later to Chicago, a good base for work in western and north-western states. Like the Apostle Paul, Ross thereafter made his headquarters in strategic cities and worked out into the districts around.

Due to their efforts, it has been claimed, Ross and his co-workers saw about 400 assemblies established in the USA and Canada! At this time other of his fellow evangelists had moved to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and blessing followed there also.

Mr. Ross ‘died in harness’ at the age of 80 in 1903, two days after preaching the gospel in another new area in Savannah, Georgia. Just before he died, he said, ‘I will be eighty on the 11th of February, and if I had other eighty [years] before me I would spend them in this gospel of God’s grace. There is no other work of such importance in the whole world. All other investments amount to nothing compared with this’. Alexander Marshall, later summing up Ross’s life of service, said, ‘He was a labourer, and he toiled for the perishing; at fairs and races, in tents and halls, in barns and chapels, in music halls and theatres, in cottages and in the open air, he sounded out the wondrous story’.

The Three Disciples

By **JEFF BROWN** Nantgarw, Wales

Peter

Peter, writing about thirty years after the event, speaks of what he saw on the 'holy mount', 2 Pet. 1. 16-18. Although everything was still vivid in his mind, he never mentions the three tabernacles, nor his fellow disciples, nor himself. There was not even a word about Moses and Elijah, great men revered by the typical Jew; he only spoke of Christ – that was all that mattered to him! Peter certainly learned from his mistakes. Peter had repented and he was not only forgiven, but also was inspired to write two Epistles that were to remain on record for the challenge and encouragement of the people of God in every generation. Are we willing to forgive those who have made mistakes but who have sought forgiveness?

Transfigured before them

The disciples saw something of Christ revealed to them that they had not seen before. He was, literally, changed to another form. 'His countenance was altered', Luke 9. 29. In our everyday language we speak of metamorphosis when considering the changing of the caterpillar to a chrysalis and ultimately to a butterfly.

Face ... shone as the sun

Matthew chapter 17 verse 2 states, 'his face did shine **as** the sun, and his raiment was white **as** the light'. We notice that the Lord's face did shine **as** the sun, and **as** the light – not **from** the sun! What those three disciples saw was no mere reflection

or mirage. It was His own intrinsic glory, that which shone from **within** His skin. What a contrast to Moses after being in the divine presence, Exod. 34. 29-35; Moses' face shone, but this was not Moses' own glory. It was an absorbed or reflected glory from an outside source – the divine presence!

There is a lesson for us here. Being alone in the presence of God had an effect on Peter and on Moses, and it will have an effect on us today – it will affect what we are and how we live. When out of the immediate presence of God, those features will fade – we need to be constantly in His presence so that we can radiate Christ all the time.

Moses and Elijah

These were great men of God, men that stood out in their generation. Moses represented the law and Elijah represented the prophets. Peter recognized them both, although he had never seen either before. Moses and Elijah appeared together, although on earth they never knew each other, having lived centuries apart! Moses had viewed the promised land from afar before his death but had never been in the land up until this point.

Certain features are prominent in the lives of these two men who were both greatly used of God. They were both associated with the altar and with prayer. The altar speaks of sacrifice and offering – what do we bring to God and what has it cost us? Prayer speaks of dependence. Are we totally dependent on God and His leading via His word?

Fasting and controlling

Moses, Elijah, and Christ all fasted forty days and all three controlled waters. Moses stretched his rod over the sea, Exod. 14. 16. Elijah used his mantle, 2 Kgs. 2. 8. Christ spoke the word, Mark 4. 39. They had invested power and authority to do what they did, but the Lord exhibited His supreme, inherent power and authority.

Pressure

At one stage, Moses was set to give-in, Num. 11. 14. Elijah once claimed, 'It is enough', 1 Kgs. 19. 4. The Lord suffered greater opposition and greater pressure than either of these two men, but He declared, 'not my will, but thine, be done', Luke 22. 42, and, ultimately, 'It is finished', John 19. 30.

Exits

Both men left this Earth in unusual ways. Moses died on a mountain and God buried him, Deut. 34. 1-6. We don't know where exactly. Elijah never saw death (like Enoch); he was translated to glory. Moses is typical of those who died, while Elijah of those who will not see death. This seems to be a picture of the two types of believer that will be at the rapture, 1 Thess. 4. 13-18. In light of the rapture, let us live and adjust our lives with the thought of the Lord's imminent return before us.

The bright cloud

It would have to be a bright cloud to overshadow that glory! It has been said, 'The cloud hid the men, and the voice hailed the man'. This was no ordinary cloud, no ordinary voice, and no ordinary words. Here we see: the intimate, tender relationship that existed eternally and was enjoyed between the Father and the Son; the intense pleasure and delight that existed between divine persons; finally, the words of absolute divine command. This was the voice from heaven. But the divine imperative calls for total and absolute obedience to His voice via His word, and to Him and Him alone.

Conclusion

At the beginning of our Lord's public ministry, Luke 3. 22, the voice from heaven was heard regarding the Father's infinite delight and pleasure in His Son – perhaps alluding to the Lord's hidden life in Nazareth, or even a prophetic announcement of those years of public ministry that were ahead. Just over three years later, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father declared the same pleasure and delight in His Son, Matt. 17. 5 – a life of total, consecrated consistency! What about us? Is our spiritual character and condition consistent, despite changing circumstances in our lives?



Pauline metaphors Athletics

By **MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE** Grantham, England

Part 8

By the time Paul was writing in the New Testament, the Olympic games were an established event. Started sometime in the 700s BC, they had become so significant 'that in late antiquity historians measured time by the interval between them—an Olympiad'.¹ By the end of the 6th century BC, three other games had attained 'classical' status and were held at varying intervals throughout the Olympiad: the Pythian held at Delphi; the Nemean at Nemea; and the Isthmian at Corinth. Their cultural importance, along with the honour given to the victors, can perhaps be explained by the religious festivals of which they were a part.

Within the games, Paul found rich illustrations for the Christian. The desire, discipline, and determination shown by the athletes were all things that he drew on to challenge and encourage the attitude of the believers. We will look at some of those attitudes that are found in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verses 24 to 27, while looking at the athlete's purpose, passion, and prize in Philippians chapter 3 verses 12 to 14.

The athlete's purpose – 'this one thing I do', Phil. 3. 13

To enter the Olympic games was not to be done lightly; total dedication was required by both the athlete and his training team. 'It is the custom for athletes, their fathers and their brothers, as well as their trainers, to swear an oath upon slices of boar's flesh that in nothing will they sin against the Olympic games. The athletes take this further oath also, that for ten successive months they have strictly followed the regulations for training'.² The athlete was expected by the game's authorities to be willing to give up all, to be single-minded so that he would be able to compete properly.

Earlier in Philippians chapter 3, Paul had spoken of his willingness to suffer 'the loss of all things, and . . . count them but dung, that I may win Christ', v. 8; that he would be able to 'know him, and the power of his

resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead', vv. 10, 11. Understanding that he had not 'attained' this, he would 'follow after [pursue, press on, strive]' in order that he might take hold upon that kind of life for which Christ had laid hold upon him, v. 12. The strength of language shows us the seriousness and single-mindedness with which the apostle views the purpose of the Christian life. Could the same be said of us?

That seriousness is in evidence again in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, 'So run, that ye may obtain', v. 24. The athlete knows that there is only a prize for one, so he prepares and runs in a way that means he can win. Earlier, Paul expressed his commitment to sacrifice his rights as an apostle, making himself a 'servant unto all, that I might gain the more', v. 19. Willing service would bring a reward, v. 17, 'So run!' Be serious about the race. If the Olympic athlete was willing to sacrifice to 'obtain a corruptible crown', v. 25, should not the believer sacrifice to obtain 'an incorruptible'?

The writer to the Hebrews says, 'let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us', 12. 1. The serious runner removes anything that will hinder his running

effectively, and especially that which will positively harm his chances in the race. Is the purpose of the Christian race so firmly in our hearts that we see clearly what needs to be removed – and have sufficient desire to do something about it?

The athlete's passion – 'forgetting . . . reaching . . . pressing', Phil. 3. 13, 14

The attitude of the Greeks towards their games is summed up in the word they used for it, *agones*, meaning competition, or conflict. The contrast in purpose with the Roman games is interesting. 'The Greeks originally organized their festivals for the competitors, the Romans for the public. One was primarily competition, the other entertainment'.³ If to be victor rather than entertainer was the purpose, then the competitor must maintain an inner passion for that purpose. Paul describes three things that will be essential to, and evident in, the passionate competitor.

1. Forgetting – past failures **and** successes count for nothing within the current race, and both have the potential to hamper the way that we run through guilt or complacency. Each new day requires fresh desire, discipline, and determination. Let us carry the lessons of each day with us, but not the chains of failure or laurels of success.
2. Reaching – an intensive form of the word 'to stretch'. Sometimes an athlete will literally fall across the line, so intensely has he been reaching for it. We all know what it is like to put effort into something – and the difference when we put **all** our effort towards a thing. Paul uses the word *agonizomai*, 1 Cor. 9. 25, to describe the intensity of the desire of the combatant to gain the victory. Do we appreciate that the Christian life will be a struggle? Hebrews chapter 12 challenges us as it moves from the illustration of the track to the wrestling contest, 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin', v. 4. May our passion for the prize – and our Lord – energize us in the battle against our former master, sin.
3. Pressing – the same word as 'follow after' in verse 12, it is a

focused pursuit. On the running track, there was a pillar to mark where the race would begin, one halfway along, and the final one where the judge sat with the prize. Here the eye of the runner would focus, blocking out all distractions, and gaining that final motivation to give all for the prize. To the Corinthians, Paul says that he is serious about the conflict, and is therefore ‘temperate in all things’, 1 Cor. 9. 25. His focus means that he does not run ‘aimlessly’ ESV, or ‘box as one beating the air’ ESV, and that he disciplines his body to ‘bring it into subjection’, vv. 26, 27. MACDONALD says, ‘His service was neither purposeless nor ineffectual. He had a definite aim before his eyes, and his intention was that his every action should count. There must be no wasted time or energy. The apostle was not interested in wild misses’.⁴

The Christian’s race lasts far longer than the historic 600-foot race of the original Olympics and will need to be run with patience, Heb. 12. 1. Two things are presented as encouraging our passion and perseverance in that chapter. First, the great cloud of witnesses that compass us about. The greatest athletes are inspired, not intimidated, by the watching crowds, and even more so if former champions are in that number. May the stories of the heroes of faith motivate a victor’s passion in us. Second is the great ‘author and finisher of our faith’, Jesus. A

concentrated gaze upon Him shows us the perfect example of One who, in keeping His focus on ‘the joy that was set before him’, was able to endure ‘the cross, despising the shame’, v. 2, and will be the safeguard against us becoming ‘wearied and faint in [our] . . . minds’, v. 3.

The athlete’s prize – ‘the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus’, Phil. 3. 14; ‘Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness’, 2 Tim. 4. 8

The ancient athlete did not train for ten months just to make up the numbers; he was there to win the race on the field, and honour and financial security from his hometown. To guard against the temptation to cheat, there was the twin deterrent of a solemn vow to not ‘sin’ against the games and what would happen if they did. Banned from any future competition, they would also have to provide, from their own expense, a named statue of themselves to be placed where future competitors would pass by. To be a ‘castaway’, 1 Cor. 9. 27, was a shameful thing.

The apostle pressed towards ‘the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus’, but reminded Timothy that, ‘if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully’, 2 Tim. 2. 5. The judge of the race would sit on a raised platform to clearly see not just the winner, but also the way in which the race was run. From there, the victor crowns would be given.

This reminds us that believers ‘must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad’, 2 Cor. 5. 10. A great motivation for Paul’s disciplined life in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verses 24 to 27 was the concern that, having run in the race, he would find himself disqualified from receiving a reward because of the way he had run it.

It must be emphasized that salvation is not in view at the judgement seat of Christ. Just as those in the early times of the Greek games had to be free-born Greeks, so we cannot be in the ‘race’ unless we are in God’s family. However, the following will be made manifest, reviewed, and reward given or withheld at that time:

- The quality of what we have built into the local church, 1 Cor. 3. 12-15.
- The faithfulness and motives of our stewardship, 1 Cor. 4. 1-5.
- How we have conducted ourselves towards our fellow believer, Rom. 14. 1-12.
- Our actions, 2 Cor. 5. 10.

The apostle’s goal was to finish his race well and to receive the ‘prize’, the ‘[victor’s] crown of righteousness’, 2 Tim. 4. 8. By the time he wrote his final letter to Timothy, he was confident that because he could look back over the race run, and the fight fought, that prize was there for him. He had loved the ‘appearing’ of the Lord, and this had so ordered his life that he could be confident that ‘the Lord, the righteous judge’, would meet him at the finish line with the incorruptible crown that he had striven for.

That crown is available for ‘all them also that love his appearing’. Will we be willing to live the athlete’s life, one of purpose and passion, with the prize always in view, resulting in a life of discipline and determination?

Endnotes

- 1 www.britannica.com/sports/Olympic-Games.
- 2 PAUSANIUS, quoted here: <https://jmichaellester.com/lessons-from-pauls-references-to-athletics>.
- 3 www.britannica.com/sports/Olympic-Games.
- 4 W. MACDONALD, *Believers Bible Commentary*, e-sword resource.



Lessons for the believer from Habakkuk

By **RODERICK BARTON** Birmingham, England

At the end of the Old Testament, there are twelve books often referred to as the 'Minor Prophets'. The term 'minor' only refers to their length, not to the status of their content. Far from it! The importance of these prophets cannot be overstated. They deal with events of their day and prophetic truth, all vital for the serious student of the word of God. But they also reveal something of the ways of God and how His people should order their lives. There is much instruction about personal behaviour, relationships with the world, the discipline of waiting upon God, and bowing to divine sovereignty. Looking particularly into Habakkuk, in addition to these lessons there are those relating to the conduct of a God-fearing people and the high standards of worship and meditation He requires. It should also be noted that Habakkuk is a book quoted a number of times in the New Testament.

There are no details of who Habakkuk is or where he comes from. What an interesting lesson for every believer in a day of self-promotion and hero worship! Men of God do not occupy themselves with who they are, or anything they may have or may not have been positively involved in. John the Baptist said, 'He must increase, but I must decrease', John 3. 30. Similarly, the Apostle Paul described himself as 'the least of the apostles', 1 Cor. 15. 9. Later, in Ephesians, he speaks of himself as being 'less than the least of all saints', Eph. 3. 8. Finally, in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 15, he humbly called himself the 'chief' of sinners.

In Habakkuk, we find a spirit of personal humility coupled with a deep burden, not for himself but rather with a heart for the nation. He is so burdened that a people so dear to his heart and special to the Lord was found utterly defiled and marred by sin, 1. 3, 4. As believers saved by grace, have we such a burden about the things of the Lord? Does the spiritual welfare of the local believers have a special place in our hearts? As Habakkuk

surveyed the wreckage of Judah, he had cried out so long for divine help, 1. 2. It seemed to him that the Lord was not listening. Everything was going wrong. He had a sensitive soul for divine order. He abhors the evil, the rejection of the truth of God, and the abandonment of spiritual standards. Just as the prophet was living in an evil day, so are we. Do we show a sensitivity to the slide into the rejection of the ways of an eternal God?

Habakkuk cried out for an answer, but when it came it was not what he expected. It is part of a believer's experience to receive and fully accept an answer to prayer even when the answer is not what we expected. We must always accept the response of God in His righteousness. 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts', Isa. 55. 8, 9. Habakkuk is shocked that the nation is to face being ransacked by the pagan, godless Chaldean empire from the east, led by

Nebuchadnezzar, 1. 5-11. In modern terms, the prophet is, in effect, exclaiming, 'You cannot be serious, Lord. Are You really going to allow an ungodly, violent nation with no time for You to extend its empire by sweeping through the land and taking away the people?' However, he does realize that there is a need for divine discipline, 1. 12-17. But why by means of the Chaldeans?

The lesson for us today is that, like Judah, we cannot prosper spiritually if pride, worldliness, and division have brought about a departure from the pathway of truth. It is to the prophet's credit that, after heaven's answer to all that has shocked him, he raises no further complaint. He bows to the righteous authority of God to do as He will, but understands that, whatever the consequences, the nation will be preserved. He is, however, perplexed and still cannot understand why the Lord is dealing with the nation in this way. Here we have the cornerstone of the prophet's spirituality. Despite the dreadful situation, he has a high appreciation of the Lord. This is brought out in the preciousness and high standard of his worship which is particularly demonstrated by chapter 1 verses 1, 2, 12 and 13, chapter 2 verse 1, and the whole of chapter 3. Even in an atmosphere of tragic departure, just over a third of the book is devoted to worship. Men who stand for God in troublesome times should be men of worship. This is the secret of spiritual leadership. Nevertheless, the prophet too has much to learn, and he does it by waiting upon God by faith. He will remain silent. He says that he will stand up on his watch, 2. 1. He is to stand and not sit in expectation. He stands above the affairs of earth anticipating heaven's message. Similarly, the believer needs to wait, away from, and above, the thoughts and ways of unregenerate, foolish men. He needs to look out to see what God has to say to him. In time, this is the place of divine comfort, assurance, and instruction.

The message Habakkuk is to receive is to be proclaimed far and wide, as it is not just for that time alone. The

fourth verse of chapter 2 heralds these words, 'but the just shall live by his faith'. This is repeated no less than three times in the New Testament, Rom. 1. 17; Gal. 3. 11; Heb. 10. 38. The next fifteen verses prophesy the judgement of God upon the Chaldeans, which concludes with a conversation about their idolatry, Hab. 2. 18, 19. The final verse turns to a declaration of the Lord as the sole object of worship, 'let all the earth keep silence before him'.

The result of all that God has told Habakkuk sends the prophet into a song of worship, ch. 3. Sadly, worship has become one of the most misunderstood subjects. So important to the Lord and essential to the spiritual progress of the worshippers, it is not a demonstration of physical movement nor a product of popular music. It is not a display of art, acting, or repetitive chanting, nor the wealth of religious promotions. True worship is from a heart in touch with God, bowed in reverence, uttering words of deep appreciation concerning the glory

of God, the person of Christ, and all things pertaining to what is pure and honourable before the Lord. Hence, the third chapter brings together a plea for revival, v. 2, an acknowledgement of the power of God over creation, vv. 3-6, and an appreciation of the nation's history.

It is clear from the tone of chapter 3 that the prophet is no stranger to worship, neither its practice nor its importance. His commitment to worship gives us a great lesson as to how true spiritual worship affects our lives. First, we are strengthened in our assurance of salvation. Second, we are strengthened and blessed in our knowledge of Christ. Third, we are drawn closer to Christ because we get to know Him more personally and more intimately. Fourth, we are nurtured to a more positive personal testimony. And, finally, we are led to consider less of self and more of Him as our appreciation of Christ grows.

The psalmist in Psalm 29 said, 'worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness', v. 2. That is the standard of worship. Again, in Psalm 19,

'Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer', v. 14. That is the testimony of worship. The last three verses of Habakkuk chapter 3 show just how well the prophet has progressed in his spiritual life through his dialogue with God. Although all the gifts God has liberally given for the welfare of mankind are missing, he says in verse 18, 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation'. He is a man who now truly believes that whatever the circumstances, God will meet every need. This is confidence in worship. The prayer of Habakkuk is the outpouring of a man who triumphs over every circumstance because he has strength through divine provision. In light of this challenging book, every believer should ask themselves: have they joy in the person of Christ, joy in salvation through Christ, joy in Christ as their sole divine resource, joy in His power to keep us, joy in the pathway in which He leads us, and joy in giving Christ all praise and worship?



The brides of scripture 4

ASENATH

A GLORIOUS BRIDE

By **JONATHAN BLACK** Bicester, England

Asenath, the final bride in Genesis, is unique because she was a Gentile taken out of the world of Egypt and presented to her bridegroom, Joseph, in his day of exaltation. The three previous brides, Eve, Rebekah, and Rachel, were linked respectively to a wounded man, a wealthy man, and a willing man, but Asenath is married to a man described by Pharaoh as 'wise' (the first godly 'wise' man in scripture), Gen. 41. 39. Joseph is a beautiful type of Christ, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge', Col. 2. 3. If, in Eve, we have great failure, in the final bride we have a glorious future, 'The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready', Rev. 19. 7 NKJV.

Joseph, in his exaltation, receives seven things from Pharaoh that point to his glory: a new position, his ring, vestures of fine linen, a gold chain, a chariot, a new name and, the seventh, a wife called Asenath. The type would not be complete without a bride for Joseph, but it is only after he receives his new name Zaphnath-Paaneah, meaning 'Saviour of the world', that he receives Asenath as a gift. Had there been no suffering, there would have been no bride. She owed all that she had to the obedience of the beloved son who was willing to leave his father's house and who became the suffering servant.

As Gentiles, we too had no hope in this world but for the kindness of God our Saviour, and through His rejection and glorious exaltation, we are espoused to our heavenly bridegroom who has been highly exalted and given a name that is above every name. It is important to distinguish between the three wedding terms that scripture uses to describe the church. The first is 'a chaste virgin', 2 Cor. 11. 2, picturing the espousal stage of the church today – espoused to one man who is coming back. The second term, 'the bride', Rev. 22. 17, describes the church when Christ comes in glory and she becomes His bride. Finally, in Revelation chapter 21 verse 9, she

is ready to enter into an eternal union and reign with Christ, for which the bride, 'the Lamb's wife', has made herself ready. What a glorious future she has compared to the destruction of 'the great whore', Babylon, Rev. 19. 2!

Asenath was delivered from a world of religious confusion. Her father, Potipherah, was an Egyptian priest whose name was linked to the Sun God, Ra. Asenath's name means 'belonging to the goddess Neith'. She was the goddess of creation, wisdom, weaving, and war. God's grace, however, would ensure that this aristocratic woman of Egypt would now forever be united to the God of creation, the creator of the sun, and loved by the wisest man in Egypt. What a glorious change was wrought in the life of this woman on account of Joseph! While Asenath's link with the priesthood of Egypt would be broken, a new link with a high priest in Israel would be formed. Asenath reminds us that God is still able to work in this world for His own glory by taking a bride for Himself.

Asenath – A fruitful bough

The timing of Asenath's presentation to Joseph as his bride is interesting if we look at the dispensational picture in this relationship. It takes place before the seven-year famine, which

foreshadows 'the time of Jacob's trouble', Jer. 30. 7 – the tribulation. The bride would be safe with Joseph, just as the church will be in the safekeeping of our heavenly Joseph as the world is starved under the dreadful regime of the antichrist. It can only be Christ that will give His people their 'daily bread'.

God would bless her with two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, causing Joseph to forget his rejection. In Manasseh, God would cause him to forget his toil, while in Ephraim he recognized, 'God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction', Gen. 41. 52. One of the purposes of Christ taking a bride for Himself is that there would be fruit for His glory. It would make all the suffering of Calvary worthwhile, as Isaiah wrote, 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many', Isa. 53. 11. The writer to the Hebrews wrote, 'who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God', Heb. 12. 2.

Asenath – A double blessing

Of all Joseph received in Egypt only the fruit that came as a result of his bride would have any lasting benefit and blessing. Ephraim and Manasseh would be brought into blessing by adoption and possess an inheritance in the land that they had no right to by birth. The double portion of Joseph would be eternally linked to the bride that he loved and cherished. We never read of Asenath in the other major accounts of Joseph's life, Psalm 105 or Acts chapter 7, as it seems that her identity is forever bound up in the name of Joseph just as our name is bound up in Christ. Unlike his forefathers, we never read of Joseph having another wife – fulfilling Christ's singular love for the church – neither do we read of Asenath's death, reminding us that in our heavenly Joseph we have life which is eternal. John sees the Lamb's wife 'having the glory of God', Rev. 21. 11. This is a fulfilment of the Lord's prayer, 'the glory which thou gavest me I have given them', John 17. 22. Asenath never deserved such glory, nor do we.



Edited by
STEPHEN BAKER

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED

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

PHIL ARMSTRONG, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

One of the stand-out events of 2023 was the coronation of King Charles III, and I became rather interested in the Crown Jewels used in the ceremony. Perhaps you have been to the Tower of London and queued up to view this collection of ceremonial objects, which includes crowns, swords, sceptres, orbs, trumpets, and even a spoon! Among the 23,578 gemstones in the collection, the Cullinan I, also known as the Great Star of Africa, is the largest clear-cut diamond in the world. This 106g stone may sound impressive, but only until you turn to the end of the book of Revelation and find that God has made a huge city – the New Jerusalem – with twelve foundations, each made of a particular gemstone. The identity of these foundation gemstones is part of the information given to the Apostle John two thousand years ago by an angel, his extraterrestrial tour guide through his visions. They are the jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth and amethyst, Rev. 21. 19, 20.

Do you know that the choice of these gemstones is strong evidence that the scriptures are authored by God? There is something special about these twelve gemstones that John could not have known back then. Today, scientists can cut raw gemstones into very thin slices and view them through a microscope under cross-polarized light. This is very 'pure' light, rather than the usual jumble of wavelengths, and it is produced using two light filters like those found in polaroid sunglasses. According to David Woodward, of the twenty-eight known gemstones with a Mohs hardness value of 7 or over, sixteen of them produce a burst of different colours when pure light is sent through them. Amazingly, all twelve foundation gemstones of the city are in this group. The others are simply black when viewed under the same conditions. Woodward suggests reasons why the other four of the sixteen are not on the list, for example, ruby produces a dangerous laser light under these conditions.

If John chose gemstones at random, the probability of getting these twelve is less than 1 chance in 30 million! If John had chosen the stones without supernatural instruction, he would almost certainly have included diamond, one of the most valuable precious stones, yet it does not have the special property. These gemstones remind me that 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God', 2 Tim. 3. 16, and I am looking forward to the things that God has prepared for His new creation.

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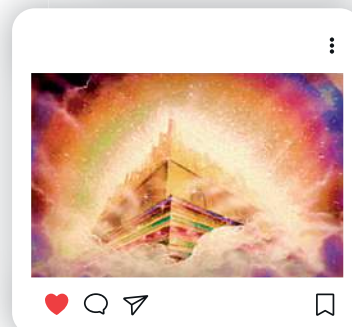
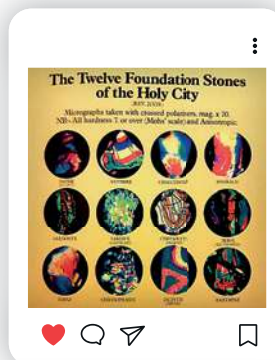


Editor's Introduction

Thanks once again for reading our magazine – we really do appreciate it. Whether you read it from cover to cover or just dip in and out of it, we hope that you find the articles interesting, challenging and biblical. One of our objectives is to encourage the study of scripture. Please don't ever replace reading your Bible with reading books or magazines about the Bible. For good physical growth and health, we need to have a good diet and a reasonable amount of exercise. So it is for the spiritual health of the believer. The word of God is our food, and so we need to feed on it every day – how disciplined are you at reading the Bible? We also need spiritual exercise – you need to live and practise what you have learned from the word of God.

Every blessing,

Stephen Baker



Soul-Searching Scriptures

BY ERIC BAIJAL, WICK, SCOTLAND

One of the pieces of evidence that the Bible is the inspired word of God is the way the Holy Spirit takes a verse we may have read many times and impresses a lesson from it upon us personally. That happened to me with this verse a few months ago; and it has continued to grip me every time I read it. I found myself wondering about the wisdom of getting involved in a work opportunity that could have impacted on my freedom to preach the gospel. Then God spoke through Luke chapter 9 verse 60.

In this second main section of Luke's Gospel, the Lord Jesus begins His journey to Jerusalem. The disciples are going to learn that there will be personal sacrifice in following the Lord. He teaches them that the path of discipleship is not one associated with rest or comfort on earth. The Lord then turns to a man and commands, 'Follow me'.

Luke records that the man asks to be excused so he can first bury his father. There is no indication that his father was dead yet! He uses what might be thought to be a legitimate excuse of family responsibilities to avoid obeying the Lord's command, but the Lord Jesus replies, 'Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God'.

As I understand the verse, the Lord Jesus was telling the man that the spiritually dead could deal with the burial of the dead. In other words, there are certain responsibilities that unsaved men can fulfil perfectly well. He, however, was commanded to go and preach that men should repent and receive the King. Only believers can do this.

This verse has impressed itself upon me in relation to my

priorities and the use of time. There is a danger that a believer wastes time on sinful or worthless pursuits. However, there is also a possibility that they could be diverted from their primary calling by being taken up with legitimate commitments that are not where God would have them spend their time.

There are many worthy causes in our communities. There may be times for the sake of the reputation of the Lord and the local church when it is prudent to help. It would be a sad indictment on us if believers were the people who never show kindness to the elderly or provide help in the local school when volunteers are needed. However, we must never forget that our primary calling is to reach people with the gospel of Christ.

I have not managed yet to get these issues completely in balance in my life, but this verse helps me decide how I manage my time. Is the commitment or obligation core to my identity as a Christian? How does it fit with my personal calling? Could an unsaved person equally carry out the task? Is it legitimate and helpful for the advancement of the gospel? Why am I undertaking it?

'Letting the dead bury the dead' partly informs my decision not to be involved in the political system and to ask why I spend time in any charitable cause. Is it being done as part of secular employment? Is it being done with the advancement of the gospel in mind or is it a drain on my time that diverts me from my core responsibilities as a Christian?

I am praying that this verse will also help you prioritize spiritual commitments and obligations in your life.



We four kings... – Lessons from some of Judah's kings

BY RICHARD SMITH, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND



If Rehoboam was a carnal man, lacking in any conviction at all, is there any hope for his family? You've maybe heard the expression, 'the apple doesn't fall far from the tree', or 'a chip off the old block'. In other words, we often behave in the way that our parents did before us. It is certainly unusual, and often not an easy path, for a person to come out of the shadow of their parents – but it is possible!

Abijah had a lot of obstacles to overcome. His father was an arrogant, selfish, carnal man who was devoid of moral compass. God's instruction had been that Judah was not to fight with Israel after the division at Shechem, 2 Chr. 11. 4, and initially Israel had obeyed. However, that changed and 1 Kings chapter 15 verse 6 tells us that Rehoboam and Jeroboam had been at war all Abijah's life – he had never known anything else. What about his mother? She was Maacah the granddaughter of Absalom who had attempted to remove David, his own father, from the throne of Israel. She, according to 2 Chronicles chapter 15, worshipped an idol and had made a 'detestable image', v. 16 ESV, of it. Because of his recent family history Abijah was up against it! What would he do? 'And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him', 1 Kgs 15. 3. In particular, 2 Chr. 13. 2, 'there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam', in spite of God's instruction not to go to war against his relatives.

Do we just write Abijah off? Is he just a casualty of his parents' sin? There is a fascinating expression in 1 Kings chapter 15 verse 3, 'his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father'. This verse is worth investigating because it is making a comparison with the greatest king there has ever been, King David. There is a clue that although he was not the man after God's own heart that his forefather David had been, 1 Sam. 13. 14, there was a faint glimmer of his great-grandfather. Let's view Abijah in the same way as we viewed Rehoboam, in the 'triangle of conviction', namely his attitude towards the word of God, the house of God and the people of God. In the battle he had with Jeroboam, recorded in 2 Chronicles chapter 13, we see a different picture. Instead of risking his people's lives by putting them straight into war with an army twice the size of his, he tried to reason with Israel. He reminded them of the worship of God that went on in the house of God in Jerusalem. He clearly knew the word of God, because he understood the priesthood and the sacrificial system. It becomes clear that Abijah was a man of great conviction, had a real desire for God, His word, His house and His people. So, what was his problem?

Where Rehoboam lacked **conviction**, Abijah lacked **courage**. He didn't have the courage to reverse his father's bad decision to go to war with Jeroboam, or to remove his mother from the throne of Judah. He didn't have the courage to lead the nation back to the Lord again. He simply didn't have any backbone. It must have been a miserable life for Abijah, knowing the truth and not doing it. He must have felt his three years on the throne were a complete failure. To crown his disastrous reign, he realized that while he was trying to reason with Israel, they had trapped him in a military 'pincer movement', and were about to massacre the people of Judah. That was when Judah cried to the Lord, raised the battle cry, and roundly defeated Israel in what had seemed an unwinnable war. What was the secret? 2 Chronicles chapter 13 verse 18 states, 'Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers'.

What about us? Whatever our background, however strong or weak our parental example might be, we must all stand on our own two feet, develop convictions about what matters to the Lord, and defend them with the courage of our convictions. Where does that courage come from? Is it within? Not at all – it is from reliance upon the Lord. It comes from an acceptance that I can do all things through Christ who pours His strength into me, Phil. 4. 13!



Saints' CVs: William Tyndale

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

WILLIAM TYNDALE 1494-1536

Can you imagine the hardship of not being able to read the Bible in your own language? This was the situation throughout the Middle Ages when the scriptures were only available in Latin, which few people could read or understand.

William Tyndale stated his great ambition to a Catholic priest, 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy who drives a plough to know more of the scriptures than you do'.¹ Tyndale's life work was to translate the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek languages into English. This effort was bitterly opposed by the Catholic church, but Tyndale persevered despite tremendous persecution.

Educated at Oxford and Cambridge, Tyndale was fluent in many languages. He had access to an edition of the Greek New Testament compiled by the scholar Erasmus, and published in 1516. Tyndale was forced to flee to mainland Europe in 1524. He not only faced pressure from church authorities in England, but also offended Henry VIII since he opposed the king's divorce and remarriage.

Tyndale's complete New Testament in English was printed in 1526 at Worms, a city strongly associated with Martin Luther. Some of these precious books were smuggled into England, although, sadly, many were burned by the authorities. Today there are only three remaining copies of Tyndale's original New Testament edition, one of which is held at the British Library.²

Later, Tyndale moved to Antwerp where he continued working on an English translation of the Old Testament. He was arrested in 1535 and imprisoned in Vilvoorde near Brussels. He spent a cold winter in jail; like the Apostle Paul, 2 Tim. 4. 13, he begged for a warmer coat and some study materials:

'Send me, for the Lord Jesus' sake, a warmer cap ... and a warmer coat ... But above all, I beg and entreat your clemency earnestly to intercede with the lord commissary, that he would deign to allow me the use of my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew lexicon, and that I might employ my time with that study'.³

Tragically, in 1536 Tyndale was found guilty of heresy and condemned to death. He was strangled then burned at the stake. According to Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Tyndale's final words were: 'Lord, open the king of England's eyes'. This dying prayer was answered remarkably – within two years Henry VIII would

approve English Bibles being placed in churches, and within a century James I would commission a full translation of the Bible into English.

Notably, all modern English translations trace their heritage to Tyndale's work. He coined recognizable phrases like 'let there be light' and 'the salt of the earth'. Tyndale refused to use Catholic idioms in his translation; for instance, he translated the Greek word *ekklesia* as 'congregation' rather than 'church'. Literary scholars recognize Tyndale as the 'father of modern English'.⁴

When we encounter Tyndale's translation, it does sound strangely familiar to us. Here is a well-known evangelical passage:

'For by grace are ye made safe thorowe fayth and that not of youre selves. For it is the gyfte of God and commeth not of workes lest eny man shuld bost him silfe'. Eph. 2. 8, 9.

On the other hand, some renderings might cause a wry smile. Here Tyndale describes Joseph:

'And the LORde was with Ioseph and he was a luckie felowe and continued in the house of his master the Egypcian'. Gen. 39. 2.

If you are interested in reading the full text of William Tyndale's translation it can be accessed online at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/tyn/>.

So, what is our response to the life and work of William Tyndale? Surely, we must appreciate more fervently the value of the scriptures in our own language. We can thank God for Bible translators – people from centuries ago like Tyndale, together with more modern contributors such as Frances Siewert who compiled the Amplified Bible. Further, we can support the ongoing work of scripture translation and distribution. According to the Bible Society, complete translations of the Bible are available in 700 languages but there are more than 7000 languages in the world.⁵ Finally, we have renewed confidence in the preservation of God's word. We close with Tyndale's translation of the Lord Jesus describing the permanence of scripture:

'Heven and erth shall perisshe: but my wordes shall abyde,' Matt. 24. 35.



¹ As quoted in the *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, touching Matters of the Church* (Foxe's Book of Martyrs) by John Foxe. Source: <https://quotepark.com/quotes/1939813-william-tyndale-if-god-spare-my-life-ere-many-yeares-i-wyl-cause/>.

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John the Baptist Part 2

By **COLIN LACEY** Bath, England

Suggested reading:

Luke 1. 39-80

One of the noteworthy features of these remarkable times was the harmony that existed between Zacharias and Elisabeth, who were to become John's parents. Naturally speaking, many things conspired against any prospect of the long-term survival of their partnership. A key factor that bound them together was their deep longing for many years that God would grant them the gift of a child. However, as the years passed by, it appeared as if they were not going to receive the answer to their prayers that they longed for. This immense disappointment would have driven less spiritual couples apart from each other; however, Zacharias and Elisabeth remained devoted to each other and faithful to the Lord! Their example lives on and inspires Christian couples of all ages to remain faithful to the Lord, even if He sees fit at times to take them in a direction that they would prefer to avoid. They encourage us to examine the strength of our relationships within our families, including with our children. Genuine unity does not come easily or overnight, but it develops on the bedrock of true love and a healthy prayer life together.

There is abundant evidence in the scriptures that children were viewed, particularly by godly women, as a gift from God:

- Consider the words of Hannah, concerning the gift of Samuel, “For this child I prayed, and the Lord

has granted me my petition which I asked of Him”, 1 Sam. 1. 27 NKJV.

- Consider the words of Elisabeth concerning the gift of John the Baptist, “Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people”, Luke 1. 25 NKJV.

Support the weak

‘You must support the weak’, Acts 20. 35 NKJV – this clear command was given by Paul to the elders in the church at Ephesus during the first century. Although it was given in a different context, it is equally applicable in many contexts today. Elders who fail to grasp the importance of support for the members of the local assembly fellowship for which they have a care, particularly those who are weak in their faith and understanding of the word of God, will never see it grow strong spiritually and reach its true potential for the Lord. Even the seemingly strongest servant of the Lord will feel the need for support from time to time. When King David, the mighty warrior king of Israel, was confronted by his enemies, he wrote in one of his many songs, **‘But the Lord was my support’, 2 Sam. 22. 19 NKJV.**

With these thoughts in mind, we turn the spotlight again on Zacharias and Elisabeth. Zacharias had to face God's hand of discipline, when he was made dumb by the Lord for doubting His word concerning the birth of John. It

says a great deal about his spirituality that he did not complain about it or consider it to be unjust. It is also of interest to note that there is no hint of him receiving a reprimand, publicly or privately, from his wife for his unwise words and actions. Their harmonious relationship remained secure throughout. Elisabeth's loyalty to him would, no doubt, have been a great support at this time. It is so easy for us to be censorious and unsupportive of those who are guilty of making an unintentional error of judgement, when they primarily need our encouragement and support.

We cannot begin to imagine the pressure Elisabeth endured or the level of support she would have required at this time. Her advanced age was just one of the burdens she bore. The support that she received from God would have exceeded her expectations. When she was six months pregnant, she received a totally unexpected visitor in the person of Mary. She had been told by Gabriel that she would conceive and bring forth a son, who would be called Jesus. The presence of Mary in the house of Zacharias for about three months must have been a stimulating time, full of expectancy, prayer, worship, and mutual support.

Amazingly, this time of great rejoicing was also entered into by the two unborn children, Jesus and John. If there was any doubt as to the unique relationship between the two children, it would have been dispelled from the moment Mary entered the house of Zacharias. Indeed, all she had to do was to speak and the atmosphere changed immediately to match the nature of the occasion. Although many commentators would point to the customs of the day to confirm the unusual nature of what took place in the house, it is clear that all that happened had been planned and brought about by God. The presence of Mary and the sound of her greeting caused the unborn John to leap in Elisabeth's womb. Some would suggest that he was already filled with the Spirit at this stage, as had been promised by Gabriel earlier to Zacharias. It most certainly left an indelible mark on Elisabeth and led her to acknowledge that Mary was ‘the mother of my Lord’, v. 43.



Seven reasons why women should be veiled in the public gatherings of the Assembly Part 2

Application of the principle to the woman, 1 Cor. 11. 5, 6.

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

Reason number one why women have to be veiled, v. 5

To submit to man's God-given headship

The first reason for women to be covered or veiled in the public gatherings of the Lord's people is given in the first half of verse 5. In this case the word 'head' is used metaphorically again; not now of Christ, as is the case of the man, but to the woman's head, *viz.* the man. The question arises as to what way she dishonours the man. The answer is that she does not submit to man's God-given headship.

Reason number two why women have to be veiled, v. 5

To be uncovered equates to 'unisex'

The second reason for women to be veiled is that to be uncovered would equate to being 'shorn or shaven', vv. 5, 6. The word for '**shorn**' is found four times in the New Testament – twice here in verse 6, once in Acts chapter 8 verse 32 of a 'lamb dumb before his shearer' and in Acts chapter 18 verse 18 of Paul 'having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow'. It is clear that the hair is thus shorter than would normally be the case for a man, since Paul had his head shorn. It is thus cropped 'into the quick'.

The word for '**shave**' is used three times in the New Testament – twice here in verses 5 and 6 and in Acts chapter 21 verse 24 of four men who had a vow. In this case, the hair was shaved off completely in both cases, the words are applied to men. The lesson is thus abundantly clear – there should be a definite distinction

between the male and the female. The length of the woman's hair should not give the least indication of 'unisex'; a tactic the devil is using to blur the distinctiveness of the sexes. The length of the woman's hair should immediately indicate a distinctiveness from the opposite sex. Otherwise, it is a 'shame'.¹ Note, in passing, that if the woman's 'hair' is her covering (as some teach) then when a woman's head is uncovered she does not have any hair on!

Explanation of the principle, vv. 7-12

The apostle, having stated the principle of headship and shown its application to both the man and the woman, now takes the matter a stage further and explains the reasons for his preceding conclusions. Note the repetition of 'for' in verses 7, 8, 10 and 12. He wants the Corinthians to be in no doubt about the solid foundation on which his arguments rest. He is not culling from the culture of the day in Corinth but building on the infallibility and integrity of Old Testament scriptures, particularly the early chapters of Genesis upon which the whole structure of biblical revelation and doctrine rests.

Explanation of the principle in the case of man, v. 7

The statement is clear, 'For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God'. Actually, there is no definite article before 'image' emphasizing the qualitative significance of the picture presented. Man is 'image of God' in the sense of representation and manifestation. As VINE² says, he 'visibly reflects the sovereignty of the invisible Creator'

and as such he is suitable to bear responsibility, see e.g., Ps. 8. 4-6. But he is not only 'image of God', he is also 'glory of God'. As such 'honour is shed on God from the visible image expressed'.³ Thus man is the visible representation of divine authority in the assembly of the Lord's people. This is in direct contrast with the Old Testament, where man was covered as indicated earlier (e.g., Exod. 28. 4, 40) since he served in the tabernacle where the visible sign of God's presence could be seen.

Explanation of the principle in the case of woman, vv. 7-10

Reason number three why women have to be veiled, v. 7

To recognize that the visible authority of God is vested in the man

Paul states unequivocally that 'the woman is the glory of the man' or she is 'man's glory' JND. This is not something that would go down too well in modern cultural thinking. There would be an accusation of misogyny! But the record of scripture is clear. There are two reasons why she is man's glory:

- Divine fiat in creation, v. 8, i.e., by divine sovereignty man was first in the order of creation, and she was taken 'out of' man, Gen. 2. 22, 23.
- Divine purpose in creation, v. 9, 'Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for [*dia*] the man', cp. Gen. 2. 18.

Again VINE⁴ gives an excellent answer as to why the head covering implements this truth, 'she renders conspicuous the authority of the man' and hence the authority of God, that is, she does now what the man did in the Old Testament. When he was covered then he was recognizing that God had the visible authority; when the woman covers her head now, she is accepting that the visible authority of God is vested in the man.

Reason number four why women have to be veiled, v. 10

To satisfy the guardians of the created order of verses 8 and 9

The reason for the introduction of 'angels' at this stage is not immediately clear. This is no doubt

why a variety of suggestions have been made. BRUCE⁵ gives an interesting suggestion that angels are ‘guardians of the created order’ which has just been asserted by Paul. As such they have an intelligent interest in that order being exemplified in the local church. So, the apostle avers, ‘For this cause ought the woman to have power on **her** head because of the angels’, v. 10. She is in subjection based on creatorial order in verses 8 and 9, so she should display that to the angels in the assembly. The word ‘power’ is translated as ‘sign’ RV, or ‘token’ YLT, of authority upon her head, evidently referring to a covering. It is interesting to reflect that angels also take an intelligent interest in:

- The conversion of sinners, Luke 15. 10.
- Apostolic struggles and sufferings, 1 Cor. 4. 9.
- The ‘infinitely diversified wonders’⁶ of divine wisdom in the church, Eph. 3. 10.
- The ministry of Christ’s servants, 1 Tim. 5. 21.
- ‘Them who shall be heirs of salvation’, Heb. 1. 14; cp. Matt. 18. 10.

The interrelation between man and woman, vv. 11, 12

The apostle seems to be aware that an attitude of superiority or inferiority might creep in because of his teaching. To guard against such, he is keen to emphasize the mutual dependency of man and woman. He does it very cleverly in verse 11, ‘Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord’. He emphasizes their necessary complementarity. There can be no independence in the sphere of the Lordship of Christ. Verse 12 further accentuates the basis of this truth,



‘For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God’. Thus, while woman is from, *ek*, man in creation, man is through, *dia*, woman by birth. It is all in the overall providence or sovereignty of God, ‘all things of [*ek*] God’. He dictates the terms. There is no basis for complaint!

Illustration of the principle, vv. 13-15

In the closing verses of the paragraph, the apostle refers to nature and to the custom of the churches. He confirms that he is addressing two coverings in the paragraph, veil and hair, and that they are complementary, inasmuch as one teaches the other.

Reason number five why women have to be veiled, v. 13

To concur with spiritual intelligence

Paul effectively appeals to spiritual intelligence in verse 13, ‘Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?’ The word ‘comely’ has in it the idea of seemliness and propriety and, therefore, inherently assumes the wearing of a veil in the context of communal prayer to make the public distinction between the man and the woman. Paul is assuming a spiritual sensitivity in his readers. Perhaps there was then a general reverence in society which would be more evident among the Lord’s people. Sadly, reverence is not only almost totally absent in society but is certainly not to the fore among God’s people as it should be.

Reason number six why women have to be veiled, vv. 14, 15

To implement the lesson from long hair

In this penultimate reason for women to veil their head, the apostle appeals to nature, ‘Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering’, vv. 14, 15. Note that Paul immediately assumes an evident distinctiveness between the sexes. In our society, this is disappearing fast; it should be a distinctive feature among

the assemblies of the Lord’s people. The apostle appeals to present physical facts as he draws the lesson from nature. He asserts that flowing locks ‘disgrace’ ESV, ‘dishonour’ JND, a man. Their preponderance in society is evidence of rebellion against divine order. On the other hand, long hair is a glory to a woman for it is given her for, *anti*,⁷ a ‘covering’.

As indicated earlier in these articles, the word for covering is translated as ‘vesture’, Heb. 1. 12. Thus, there is an important lesson from the long hair. Just as it is used as an actual or equivalent covering for the body, so a veil is used as a covering for the head.

The practice of the principle as the custom of the churches, v. 16

Reason number seven why women have to be veiled, v. 16

To follow the example set by all other churches established by the apostles

Earlier in the Epistle, Paul has been emphasizing the need for Corinth to be in line with his teaching in all other churches, see 4. 17; 7. 17; 14. 33. He did not want Corinth to be out of step. Some never tire of being out of step, ‘But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God’, v. 16. Others never tire of raising objections, see 3. 18; 8. 2; 14. 37. He wants them to know that the apostles (‘we’ in this verse) have no custom of women being unveiled in the meetings of the assembly; veiling is common to all the assemblies of God. Corinth, and assemblies today, should be no different!

Endnotes

- 1 This also means ‘base’ or ‘dishonourable’; see also the use of the word in 1 Cor. 14. 35 and Eph. 5. 12 – the only other two times it is used in the New Testament.
- 2 W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary on New Testament Words*, World Bible Publishers, 1991.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 F. F. BRUCE, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible, Oliphants, 1971.
- 6 F. L. GODET, *Commentary on St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Vol. 2), T. & T. Clark, 1893.
- 7 ‘Can mean one thing as equivalent to another’, G. D. FEE, *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, e-Sword resource.

Studies in the twelve (minor) prophets 5

THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA Part 1

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

Introduction

Hosea prophesied during the reigns of five kings, four of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah) and one of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Jeroboam II), Hos. 1. 1. He was a prophet of the eighth century BC and was a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah, Amos, Micah, and possibly Jonah. The decline of the Syrian empire gave Jeroboam II the opportunity to greatly extend the Northern Kingdom. 'He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher', 2 Kgs. 14. 25. This ushered in an unprecedented period of prosperity for Israel. Social injustice and decadence, however, became an everyday occurrence, and even though Israel still observed religious requirements assiduously, it was altogether superficial and meaningless. Israel's prosperity was taken to be evidence of God's favour, but, in reality, their complacency made them ripe for judgement. Jeroboam II failed to see the dark clouds of Assyria forming on the horizon, and this eventually led to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser in 722 BC, 2 Kgs. 17. 3.¹ As EHIJD BEN ZVI states, 'It is a period of apostasy, of social disintegration, of wrongful leadership, of failed alliances, in sum a period in which knowledge of (and reverence for) the Lord are lacking'.²

Hosea lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and was probably active during the period leading up to the destruction of that kingdom. What is evident, even from a cursory reading of Hosea's prophecy, is the overwhelming sense of grief felt by the prophet because of Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord. His own life story provides us with an object lesson or a living illustration of Israel's failure to comply with the precepts of God's word and to be called His people, Hos. 1. 1 – 2. 23. So, hope for Israel is set against a backdrop of seeming hopelessness.

The name 'Hosea' is derived from the Hebrew word *yasar* meaning 'to save', or 'one who delivers'. He was the son of Beerī, which literally means 'the deep wells of Jehovah'.

One might suggest, therefore, that Hosea is a prophet who exhibits the tenderness and compassion of a saving God who is prepared to deliver His people, but who will not overlook their sins. Little wonder then that G. CAMPBELL MORGAN entitled his commentary on this prophecy, *The Heart and Holiness of God*. The key word in the prophecy is 'return', which is referred to on fifteen occasions and which is an important theme in the book. Hosea is raised up by God to call the nation to repentance. ROBERT LEE suggests, 'it is a book for backsliders. Here we have a delightful exhibition of God's methods in the restoration of a backsliding people'.³

The name 'Ephraim' occurs in the book over thirty-five times and the

name 'Israel' with equal frequency. Ephraim is used as an alternative name for Israel, cp. Isa. 7. 2. The reason for this is probably because the Northern Kingdom's first ruler, Jeroboam I, was from the tribe of Ephraim, 1 Kgs. 11. 26, and the land occupied by the tribe of Ephraim was central to the administration of the Northern Kingdom, 1 Kgs. 12. 25. Judah is only mentioned fourteen times, and the city of Jerusalem is never mentioned. The cities that are mentioned by Hosea are Samaria, Bethel, and Gilgal, which were located in the Northern Kingdom and were of significant importance in terms of administration and public worship, see 1 Kgs. 12. 25, 33.

The prophecy is difficult to structure as it 'appears to be a loose anthology of speeches rather than a tightly structured collection'.⁴ We think, however, it can be divided into the following two parts:

Chapters	Constituent
Part 1 Chapters 1-3	Hosea's family history symbolic of God's relationship with Israel.
Part 2 Chapters 4-14	The charge against Israel and its ultimate restoration.

One of the important aspects of this prophecy is that although the setting is in the Northern Kingdom, it is also aimed at the Judeans so that they might reflect upon the judgement and destruction of the Northern Kingdom. In this sense, therefore, it has a dual perspective and purpose.

Part 1 – chapters 1-3

On the face of it, Hosea is commanded by God to marry a prostitute named Gomer, 1. 2, 3, who would consistently return to her promiscuous ways, 3. 1, but there are difficulties with this interpretation. The question that arises from chapter 1 verse 2 is whether God would command Hosea to marry a prostitute. This moral dilemma has had a profound impact on how the verse should be interpreted, and scholars are divided on this issue. THOMAS E. MCCOMISKEY writes, 'The majority of commentators have espoused the proleptic⁵ view

of Hosea's marriage. This view holds that Gomer was chaste when Hosea married her, and only after some time did her propensity to unfaithfulness manifest itself. In this view it is necessary to hold that only one group of children appears in the narratives, since Gomer had no children when Hosea took her as his wife. As a result of this, the proleptic view regards the children of 1. 2 and 1. 3-9 as the same. This makes it necessary to view the children of 1. 2 as yet unborn, and the command to Hosea to mean that he should have children by Gomer — not adopt children already born to her. Several versions reflect this understanding of the text (RSV and NASB "have"; NEB "get children"). This is not indicated by the text, however. The command states literally, "Go take to yourself a wife of fornications, and children of fornications." The implications of this literal rendition of the command is that the prophet married an unchaste woman and, at the same time, adopted the children who were already hers because of her sexual promiscuity'.⁶

The story is, in effect, a metaphor of how God suffers because of His people's infidelity. It also shows how grace operates in that, despite what our spiritual condition might be, God can still love us and bring us back to Himself, as Hosea restored Gomer. But, like all metaphors, they do not totally mirror reality and are simply used for comparison or symbolism. ROBERT B. CHISHOLM JR. writes, 'Gomer's subsequent unfaithfulness, no matter what her status at the time of the marriage, was enough to satisfy the intended symbolism'.⁷

As a result of the union, three children are born, two sons and a daughter. All of the children's names are prophetic and convey a message to Israel. The first child is a son, whom they name Jezreel, 1. 3, 4, which literally means 'scattered' and speaks prophetically of the scattering of Israel. The massacre of Ahab's family by Jehu at Jezreel was a violent affair, 1 Kgs. 19. 17; 2 Kgs. 9, 10, and the same fate awaited the house of Jehu because of its

wickedness. This prophecy would be fulfilled when Shallum assassinated Zechariah, 2 Kgs. 15. 8-12.⁸ The second child is a daughter, whom they name Loruhamah, 1. 6, 7. This child's name means 'unloved' or 'not having obtained mercy'. This spoke prophetically of God withholding His love and mercy from the Northern Kingdom. On the contrary, He would intervene in the affairs of Judah to save them and establish the Southern Kingdom, 1. 7. After the daughter had been weaned, Gomer conceived again and had another son, whom they named Lo-ammi, 1. 8, 9. This child's name means 'not my people' and expresses the final chapter in Israel's sorry story when God would reject them. He would no longer be their God, nor would they be the people of His pasture or the flock under His care, Ps. 95. 7. But this rejection would not be permanent as God would restore His people again in the future. They would lose the title 'not my people' and be renamed 'sons of the living God', 1. 10, and Israel and Judah would be reunited again under one (Davidic) leader, 1. 11; 3. 5. The name 'Jezreel' would no longer then have a negative association but would be interpreted positively as 'sown (or planted) of God' with the idea of growth and fruitfulness. So, in the very depths of despair, a future is promised to Israel, cp. 2. 23; Rom. 9 – 11. Chapter 1, therefore, sets the scene for the whole book.



Endnote

- 1 See also Hosea chapter 7 verse 7 and chapter 8 verse 4 that probably refer to the events of 2 Kings chapter 15.
- 2 EHIJD BEN ZVI, *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford University Press, pg. 1144.
- 3 ROBERT LEE, *The Outlined Bible, Analysis No. 28*, Pickering and Inglis.
- 4 ROBERT B. CHISHOLM JR., *Handbook on the Prophets*, Baker, 2009, pg. 336.
- 5 The word 'proleptic' refers to the assumption of a future act or development as if it presently existed or has been accomplished.
- 6 THOMAS E. MCCOMISKEY, *The Minor Prophets, A Commentary on Hosea, Joel, Amos*, Expositor's Bible Commentary, Zondervan, pp. 11, 12. For a complete survey of this issue see pages 13-17.
- 7 ROBERT B. CHISHOLM JR., op cit., pg. 337.
- 8 The massacre of the family of Ahab by Jehu is referred to in Hosea chapter 1 verse 4.

The life and times of Elijah the prophet 4

THE VICTORY AT MOUNT CARMEL

By **MERVYN WISHART** Newcastle, Northern Ireland 1 Kings 18

Obadiah – Governor of Ahab's house

It is remarkable that in the scriptures we often find a faithful witness for God in the most unexpected places. In the household of the wicked king Ahab and his evil queen Jezebel, their chief servant was Obadiah, of whom scripture records, 'Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly', 18. 3; 'but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth', v. 12. When Jezebel ordered the death of the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah hid one hundred of them in two caves and risked his own life in providing them with bread and water.

We could think of many others who, in a hostile environment, spoke out boldly for their Lord. When Jehoiakim, king of Judah, dared to cut sections from the scroll of the writings of Jeremiah and burn them on his fire, three men, Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah, remonstrated with the king that he should not 'burn the roll', Jer. 36. 25. When Daniel and his three friends stood fearlessly for God in Babylon, they were delivered from the ferocity of the lions and the furnace of fire, Dan. 3. 17; 6. 10, 20-22. God never leaves Himself without a witness on earth.

Obadiah meets Elijah

Obadiah asked the prophet, 'Art thou that my lord Elijah?' 1 Kgs. 18. 7. Elijah sent him to his master, King Ahab, to announce, 'Behold, Elijah is here'. He repeated the request three times to a reluctant Obadiah. It was understandable that Obadiah had no desire to convey the news of Elijah's arrival to Ahab, for the king had previously sent his servants to search far and wide to find the prophet, doubtless with a view to causing him harm. Now Obadiah's life was

in danger, especially if his work in protecting the prophets of the Lord had been discovered. Nevertheless, due to Elijah's persistence, he agreed to go to the king. Elijah showed no fear. The Lord had sent him to meet Ahab, the man who had been searching for him to kill him; but he was confident that he was under divine protection.

Elijah meets Ahab

Ahab greeted Elijah with a question, 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' v. 17. The prophet replied, 'I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim'. 1 Kings chapter 16 verse 31 records that Ahab 'went and served Baal, and worshipped him', and 1 Kings chapter 21 verse 25 says, 'But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up'. Ahab led Israel into idolatry, breaking the first commandment, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me', Exod. 20. 3. The form of idolatry which Ahab introduced was the worship of Jehovah and Baal, rather than the exclusive worship of Jehovah. The ministry of Elijah was to draw Israel back to the one true God.

Scripture repeatedly warns us of the danger of divided loyalties, 'A double minded man is unstable in all his ways', Jas. 1. 8. The Lord claims the first place in the lives of His people. WILLIAM COWPER (1731-1800) wrote, 'The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be, help me to tear it from Thy throne, and worship only thee'.

The prophet told the king to assemble

all Israel at Mount Carmel, and with them the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Elijah was alone, except for one servant, fearlessly confronting that vast gathering. It was soon to become evident that 'one man with God is always in the majority'.

At Mount Carmel

Elijah fearlessly presented the gathered company with a choice, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him', 18. 21. It must be one or the other; it could not be both. There was a stunned silence – 'And the people answered him not a word'. Elijah outlined the test, which would indicate conclusively whom they should acknowledge as their God, Jehovah or Baal. Two bullocks would be taken, and the prophets of Baal could choose one. The animal was to be cut in pieces and laid on wood with no fire under it. Then they must call on the name of their gods. The deciding factor would be, 'the God that answereth by fire, let him be God'. Everyone agreed that the outcome would be decisive, 'And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken'. The prophets of Baal chose one of the bullocks, prepared it and laid it on the wood.

They began early in the morning to shout, 'O Baal, hear us', and they continued their cries until the time of the evening sacrifice. 'But there was no voice, nor any that answered', v. 26. As they became more exhausted, 'they limped around the altar that they had made', 18. 26 ESV. Elijah began to mock them, saying: (a) he cannot hear you; you need to cry louder; (b) he is too busy to answer you as he is engaged with someone else; (c) he is far away on a journey and out of reach; (d) he is asleep and you need to waken him, v. 27.

What a contrast between the futility of praying to an idol, and speaking to the true and living God, 'his ear [is not] heavy, that it cannot hear', Isa. 59. 1; He hears even silent prayers, 1 Sam. 1. 13, 27; He is never too busy to hear our prayer, 'God is our refuge and strength, a help in distresses, very readily found', Ps. 46. 1 JND; He is never at a distance from us, 'The

Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth', 145. 18. He is never asleep and unavailable to us, 'Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep', 121. 4.

The prophets of Baal were in a frenzy. They began to harm themselves, cutting their bodies with knives and lancets, until their blood gushed out, v. 28. We can see clearly here the danger of emotionalism, which has no connection to either God or His word. The result is not beneficial but harmful. By contrast, when our emotions are stirred by the word of God being preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, there is the potential for lasting blessing as a result.

Elijah stepped forward and addressed the assembled throng. He invited



them to gather as close as possible, saying, 'Come near unto me', v. 30. All were able to witness what would take place; there was no sleight of hand, no trickery, nothing was concealed. Just as Paul said when he was speaking about the great foundational events of the gospel, 'for this thing was not done in a corner', Acts 26. 26. Luke spoke of 'many infallible proofs', 1. 3. When the people came close, Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. Years of neglect had reduced it to a heap of stones. To rebuild it Elijah took twelve stones, 'according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob', v. 31, and he made a trench around the altar.

After the death of Solomon there was a division of the twelve tribes: ten tribes in the north (Israel), and two tribes in the south (Judah). It is important to note that, although the tribes were divided, yet in the purposes of God there were still twelve. There were twelve loaves on the table of shewbread in the temple, twelve names on the breastplate worn by the high priest and looking forward to the new Jerusalem there will be twelve gates, 'and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel', Rev. 21. 12. While men have introduced division, in the purposes of God there are still twelve.

The second bullock was cut into pieces and laid on the wood on the altar. In order to show that the fire could not possibly ignite by itself, Elijah commanded that they fill four barrels with water and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood, 1 Kgs. 18. 33. He told them to do it a second time, and then a third time, twelve barrels in all. The water completely saturated the sacrifice and the wood and overflowed, filling the trench around the altar. Then the prophet prayed earnestly to the Lord, 'Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word', v. 36. 'Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people

saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God', vv. 38, 39.

The miracle of the rain

James in his Epistle draws from the experience of Elijah to encourage us in the exercise of prayer, 'The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working', Jas. 5. 16 ESV; 'He prayed earnestly that it might not rain', v. 17. This was before Elijah had prophesied to Ahab in 1 Kings chapter 17 verse 1, 'there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word'. His prayer was answered, 'it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months', Jas. 5. 17. When Elijah prayed again on Mount Carmel, 'he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees', 1 Kgs. 18. 42. His prayer that it might rain was answered, 'And it came to pass . . . that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain', v. 45.

In James chapter 5, Elijah prayed fervently, v. 16; earnestly, v. 17; repeatedly, v. 18.

In 1 Kings chapter 18, he prayed believingly, v. 41. Before there was any visible sign of even a dark cloud, he spoke to Ahab of 'a sound of abundance of rain'. He prayed humbly, v. 42, when he cast himself down upon the earth. He prayed expectantly, v. 43, when he sent his servant to look towards the sea seven times.

It is a challenge for every believer to ask, 'How many features of Elijah's prayer life are seen in mine?' When we pray for a particular need, we ought to be looking for an answer, and should not be discouraged when the answer seems to be delayed. Elijah sent his servant to look towards the sea for a sign of rain clouds approaching. Six times he returned saying, 'There is nothing'; the seventh time the servant reported that he had seen a small cloud the size of a man's hand. Had Elijah not been a man of faith, he may have ignored such a small token, but he took it rather to be the harbinger of good things to come. We too should look to see the early signs of the Lord at work in the lives of those for whom we earnestly pray.

Towns and cities in the life of the Lord

Part 2

NAZARETH

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

Nazareth is now home to more than 60,000 Israeli Arabs, as well as thousands more Jewish residents. It is situated inside a bowl on the top of the ridge of hills or mountains north of the Jezreel Valley. However, in the time of the Lord Jesus, it was a relatively isolated village with a population in the hundreds, possibly no more than four to five hundred. The purpose of this article is to consider what scripture records of this place and what lessons we might learn from that record.

The place of shame and stigma, Matt. 2. 22, 23; John 1. 45, 46

Matthew chapter 2 presents us with a remarkable paradox. Chapter 1 details the credentials of the King, 1. 1, and in chapter 2, there is a recognition of His claim to be King, 2. 2. Yet at the end of chapter 2, we note the contrast, v. 23. The Son of God was identified with despised Nazareth of Galilee.

We are all familiar with Nathanael's assessment of the place, John 1. 46. He could not imagine that the promised Messiah would have anything to do with such a place of poor repute. Surely, and perhaps thinking like the wise men from the east, Matt. 2, 1, 2, the Messiah would come to Jerusalem. The King would be associated with the administrative capital of the land, and the centre of religious worship. But man's ways are not God's ways! He did not come the first time to subdue His foes and restore the land to the people. He came as one 'meek and lowly in heart', ready to seek and to save that which was lost. What condescending grace that the One who 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God' should make 'himself of no reputation', Phil. 2. 6, 7. What amazing love that the creator and sustainer of the universe should humble Himself and be 'found in fashion as a man', v. 8.

At the beginning of Matthew chapter 2, we have mentioned the visit of the

wise men from the east. They declared to Herod, 'we . . . are come to worship him', v. 2. The view of the nation of Israel was, in the words of Isaiah, 'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not', Isa. 53. 3. Literally, they esteemed Him as nothing! How instructive that Gentiles who had travelled from the east recognized what the nation had failed to see, and they worship Him. In prophetic terms, we live in a dispensation when, in the words of DANIEL WHITTLE, the hymnwriter, the Lord is
'now rejected
And by the world disowned,
By the many still neglected,
And by the few enthroned'.

But it is our privilege to worship Him. Like the wise men who brought their gifts, we can bring what the Lord has given us and offer it in appreciation and recognition of His worth.

The place of subjection, Luke 2. 39, 40, 50, 51

We have thought, briefly, of the condescending grace of the Lord Jesus. One who stepped from the throne of glory to be associated with despised Nazareth and to be called a Nazarene. But we know and appreciate that the Lord of glory went further than that.

Luke chapter 2 gives us a remarkable

statement, 'he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them', v. 51. The One who spoke and brought the worlds into being, who upholds all things by the word of His power, is subject here to His earthly parents. Have we grasped the wonder of it?

Let us note that His subjection was not just on this occasion. The verb 'subject' is a present participle denoting an habitual or continuous subjection. In essence, the Lord behaved as any true and perfect child should. He obeyed His earthly parents and did so as a matter of course.

But we might notice another point in these verses. In verse 42, Luke tells us that 'when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast'. In Jewish terms, this was the point when the Lord became a 'son of the law' and was expected to obey its ordinances. It was, in many respects, part of His transition into adulthood. Thus, and we should note it, it is at this point that the Lord 'was subject unto them', v. 51. When the Lord said, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil', Matt. 5. 17, this was true from the very outset of His personal responsibility for its keeping and fulfilment. The law said, 'Honour thy father and thy mother', Exod. 20. 12, and the New Testament confirms that, 'Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord', Col. 3. 20. This is what the Lord obeyed, voluntarily and humbly.

As we come to verse 49, 'wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?', it is important to note that these are the first recorded words of the Lord Jesus. Here was a life devoted to accomplishing the Father's will. This was His priority. We come to the penultimate cry of the Lord Jesus from the cross and it relates, in part at least, to the same cause and purpose – the Father's will – and the Lord cries, 'It is finished', John 19. 30. That which He set out to accomplish here, Luke 2. 49, was fulfilled there.

But, notice His words, 'I must'. Although this was a choice, the

Lord states that it is a necessity that He obeys the Father's will and accomplishes His purpose. There is a far higher purpose to be achieved. On a practical note, Paul reminded the Romans, 'even Christ pleased not himself', Rom. 15. 3. Here is the challenge for the life of every believer. Are we prepared to sink our own desires and ambitions in pursuit of the Father's will for us? Paul wrote to the Ephesians, 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God', Eph. 5. 21, and subjection or submission is the hardest action to obey, yet one perfectly displayed by the Lord. He has, indeed, left us an example.

The place of rejection and suffering, Luke 4. 14-30

As always, it is important to note the context of this event. Although Luke does not always follow a chronological approach to the narrative of his Gospel, it is instructive as to the position of this account. The chronological position may well be given at the end of Matthew chapter 13.

Here, following the Lord's testing in the wilderness where He overcame

the devil, we read, 'Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee', v. 14, and 'he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up', v. 16.

Note what the custom of the Lord was – 'he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day'. Although the passage is speaking of the sabbath and the synagogue, the application might be made of the responsibility of us all to ensure that we are present at the gatherings of the Lord's people. The writer to the Hebrews exhorted his readers, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another', Heb. 10. 25.

We come, then, to the passage read by the Lord from Isaiah chapter 61 and His comment on the passage, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears', v. 21. Although it is not the subject of this article, it is an interesting study to see how many scriptures the Lord fulfilled. It is particularly evident at Calvary, and we can refer to John chapter 19 verse 28, 'Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, **that the scripture might be fulfilled**, saith, I thirst' [emphasis added]. From

the outset of His earthly ministry through to its close, the Lord fulfilled scripture. As He said Himself, 'the scripture cannot be broken', 10. 35.

Thus, as the Lord concluded His reading and His statement, they 'wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth', Luke 4. 22. How remarkable it is to hear gracious words. Clearly not the language that was normally heard! Those present realized that all the rumours they had heard of the Lord Jesus were not exaggerations but had foundation – the fame mentioned in verse 14 signified that here was someone wholly different. Indeed, here was someone unique!

However, this was the challenge to their preconceptions. How could this one who had grown up among them and had been identified as Joseph's son be who He claimed to be? As the Lord continued His message, so the anger of the synagogue members began to grow. It finally boiled over as they thrust Him out of their midst.

You will appreciate, I am sure, that here is a clear illustration of John chapter 1 verse 11, 'He came unto his own, and his own received him not'. How sad that those who ought to have known Him best, actually knew Him least. Is it not a sad fact that here the Spirit of God is at work, the Lord is the preacher, and conviction is effected, but men and women rise up in anger at the message? There could be no greater opportunity for blessing, but the message and the messenger are rejected.

Have we ever experienced something similar? Have we felt the Spirit of God at work in the gathering, the power of the word of God as it has been preached? There have been those present to hear the message, but the response has been one of indifference or direct opposition and anger. The Lord acknowledged, 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house', Matt. 13. 57. Nazareth was a place of rejection. Says the writer to the Hebrews, 'Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach', 13. 13.



INSECTS IN THE SCRIPTURES

By **MERVYN GRIST** Andover, England

Insects are small creatures with a three-segment, stiff shell instead of bones, six legs, and two or four wings protruding from the middle segment (thorax). The one million species of insects are a large proportion of mobile animals in God's world. They mostly have a four-stage life cycle (egg, larva, chrysalis (pupa), and adult). The United Kingdom hosts about 24 thousand species. Many have important tasks for humanity, such as pollination, dung disposal (task of some larvae), silk fibre, honey production, and aphid control. Conversely, some are vectors of disease such as malaria, and river blindness, or cause crop failure (e.g., mosquitos, river black fly larvae, locusts).

It is not surprising, therefore, that some insect species are mentioned in God's word. A check of direct references with any concordance will yield the following statistics of references:

- Locusts – twenty-three, including three in the New Testament,
- Hornets – three,
- Bees – five,
- Moths – eight,
- Flies – five,
- Ants – two.

In addition, there are thirty-nine insect product references to honey or honeycomb, and three to silk, woven with fibre from silk moth chrysalis wrappings.

Locusts

These are big flying insects, 3-6 cm long, of the grasshopper group that feed voraciously on all green vegetation. Three locust sub-species are mentioned in Leviticus chapter 11 verse 22. Even now, locusts can erupt in huge, dense swarms that destroy crops on a large scale from northeast Africa eastwards as far as Pakistan. Their average life span is three months. In consequence, whole communities may face starvation and

require food aid from international donors.

In Old Testament times locusts would have caused many people to perish with hunger. They were the eighth judgement on Egypt, blown in from the east by the Lord to persuade Pharaoh to release the children of Israel, Exod. 10. 12-27. All green vegetation was eaten, the sky was dark with the insects. Pharaoh recognized the power of the God of Israel, v. 17, upon which a westerly gale drove out the insects into the Red Sea. However, he only offered a conditional release that Moses refused to accept.

Other locust swarms are briefly mentioned in Proverbs chapter 30 verse 27 and threatened as retribution upon Israel in Nahum chapter 3 verses 15 and 17, here referring to their grasshopper-like body and habits, v. 17. Locust invasion is listed as a potential retribution for national disobedience in the Promised Land, Deut. 28. 42, and actioned, as reported in Joel chapter 1 verse 4. Locusts can, however, be eaten, presumably fried, Lev. 11. 22, and they formed part of the diet of John the Baptist, Mark 1. 6.

In the last days of the fifth trumpet, the first woe, men without the seal of God will be tormented by very special locusts, Rev. 9.

Hornets

These are the largest species in the wasp family and rightly feared for their aggressiveness and potentially fatal sting. In the Old Testament they are among the weapons promised by the Lord to ensure victory over the tribes in the Promised Land, Exod. 23. 28, as recorded in Joshua chapter 24 verse 12. Probably, Deuteronomy chapter 1 verse 44 actually refers to hornets (not bees) chasing men on nest disturbance, as they have this author!

Bees

These are rightly reported as beneficial insects. Isaiah 7 verse 18 refers to the old practice of hissing to call forth honeybees – this in reference to calling invaders to punish Israel. Samson acquired honey from honeybees occupying a lion's carcass, Judg. 14. 8, 9. The many references to honey in the Old Testament indicate that such raiding was commonplace, as it still is in some countries today. Also, organized colonies of bees in hives must have been the practice of the Canaanites, as their land was said to flow with milk and honey. Psalm 118 verse 12 shows that the reaction to the human nest raiders could be hazardous! The large nesting colonies of honeybees are unique, though all species of bumblebees practise it on a limited scale.

Moths

The five references mainly refer to the appetite of some moth larvae for cloth fibres, thus the destruction of stored clothes – most likely to affect the rich in Bible times. Mention of silk, from the silk wound cocoons of the silk moth, is made in Ezekiel chapter 16 verses 10 and 13. Only the very rich could dress in this material, Rev. 18. 12.

Flies

Swarms of flies were the fifth judgement brought upon Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave the country, Exod. 8. 21, but, after dallying, he refused. This is recorded in Psalm 105 verse 31. Then, as now, flies must have spread many diseases, e.g., malaria by mosquitos, and flies might even contaminate the ointments of the apothecaries, Eccles. 10. 1.

Ants

Ants are amazingly well organised and make full provision for each colony to grow in the summer (with 'meat') and survive the winter (on earlier harvested items) when the search for provision items is futile. This timely action is referred to in these scriptures although then the complex structure of ant colonies was unknown.

These biblical records demonstrate how God can and will use His insects to deliver messages, and control and punish wayward human society.

Mark chapter 16

By **KEN RUDGE** St. Austell, England

Mary Magdalene and the women, vv. 1, 2

The women who came to the tomb were both practical and devotional in their commitment to the Lord Jesus. The repeated witness of scripture to their actions is a sterling testimony to the value and appreciation God has of their actions. We too need to place such value on it and sense that the contribution of sisters to assembly meetings is as much appreciated as that of the brothers. Please note that they came well prepared for their service and took the very first opportunity they had to perform it! One must ask where were the apostles? Are we missing when devotedly we ought to be there for the Lord? They really loved Him!

Their reward of devotion to Christ, vv. 3-7

They were wise to consider the problems their surprising mission would pose for them, but evidently it did not stop their hearts' desire for the Lord. In fact, they were too late to fulfil it as they purposed but, nonetheless, they received ample reward for their willingness to go. Surely this must be the challenge for us in that we too, individually, and collectively, have tasks to perform for the Lord but often fail to face up to them. For example, do we regularly discuss purpose, methods, and intent in presenting the gospel to all around us? We can be disappointed at the little response, but we need to keep pressing on, looking for new doors to open, and opportunities that will arise.

What greater reward could they have wanted, for they received the wonderful message that He was alive. They were also given a service to fulfil. Surely, we are never without our rewards for willing and devoted service to the Lord. Note the hymn,

'Go, labour on; spend, and be spent;
Thy joy to do the Father's will;
It is the way the Master went;
Should not the servant tread it still?'
[HORATIUS BONAR 1808-1889]

The immediate response of the women to what they saw, v. 8

A sad but very understandable note as to the immediate response of the women at that moment. Surely there can be no criticism of their immediate response to what they saw. It truly was a miracle that had no rational explanation. Happily, we know it to be the greatest news humanity has ever heard! Christ is the victor over the grave!

Recovery and restoration, vv. 9-20

Verses 9 to 20 are often printed after a gap from the main text. This is because some translators feel that they have been added to what Mark wrote by a later writer. However, to leave the gospel record here would seem to be a sad end and so we are grateful they have been most often included as a fitting end to this swift-moving Gospel.

We raise an interesting point as to why the Lord should choose Mary Magdalene as the bearer of this astounding experience. Yet what is now recorded of her is surely the reason why. The remarkable testimony to the grace of God in her life, rescued from satanic powers, meant that the disciples would surely believe her story. We should never underestimate the value of personal testimony. It is one of the most precious possessions any believer has! Yet sadly the record is, 'they . . . believed not', v. 11.

Unbelief is what lies at the bottom of many of our failures to see God at work. We have our prayer meetings, but do we ever examine what results we have for our much praying?

A second witness rejected, vv. 12, 13

We cannot blame their stubbornness to accept this glorious testimony of the two. Truly we sympathize, for which of us would not have been the same?

Revelation and recommission, vv. 14-18

There now follows this wonderful record of the way the Lord Himself recovers their wavering faith and unwillingness to accept the word of personal witnesses. We do well to remind ourselves, constantly, that, 'with God nothing shall be impossible', Luke 1.37.

Note it was 'afterward', v. 14, and sad that He had to intervene personally, yet it met their immediate needs and forced them to see the continuance of the pathway and the future of their testimony for their Lord. One feels that we often lack vision, not clearly seeing and responding positively to the needs of our generation, and not seeing the issues and ways to open new doors for gospel testimony. Do we have the will to change as the Lord directs us?

The accompanying 'sign' miracles were a wonderful introduction to their testimony, a supernatural confirmation that it came from God. These sign gifts were designed and purposed for the commencement of our age and certainly aimed specifically at the Jew. The Corinthian letters aid us to see the fallacy of their necessity today; they belong to the beginning only.

The truth is that it is our godly character and warm embrace of all men, willing to 'spend and be spent' for others, hopefully distinct and different from this passing world, that will draw attention and cause men to think.

The final touch of thrilling encouragement, vv. 19, 20

How beautiful is this final touch of the inspired pen! The same Saviour, who was there for them, is now seen to be in 'heaven . . . [at] the right hand of God' and sat down! Whilst the work of salvation is finished, He is ceaselessly at work with us and for us. Oh, that we might learn how to be consciously casting ourselves more often on that blessed Man rather than our own sufficiency. So, we learn the path to take to make us faithful and fruitful unto all good works, until He comes.

Individual Christian life in the wilderness

1 Peter 1. 22 – 2. 3

By **CHARLIE BANKS** Gorgie, Edinburgh, Scotland

The Christian position

Peter sees his audience as pilgrims in the wilderness. The author's view of the Christian position of his readership is an important principle in contextual interpretation. For example, in Romans we have died and await a future resurrection, Rom. 6. 4, 5; in Colossians we have died and risen, and our life is hid with Christ, Col. 2. 20; 3. 1, 3; and, in Ephesians we have been quickened with Christ, are raised, and, in Him, we are now seated in the heavenlies, Eph. 2. 5, 6.

However, the context of Peter's Epistles is different. He views his readers (ethnic Jews, converted to Christianity) as a wilderness people, suffering in the light of millennial and eternal glory. The principle of suffering before glory is seen in Peter's opening remarks. His readers are 'scattered' from their native home, v. 1, are 'in heaviness through manifold temptations', v. 6, and are experiencing the 'trial' of their faith, v. 7. Although persecuted, they are being kept for a glorious future 'salvation' in heaven, v. 5. This salvation, when 'revealed', will eclipse all hardship and bring with it a blessed inheritance, to be enjoyed after the wilderness way is over. What motivation for weary pilgrims – them and us – as we suffer now in light of future bliss.

Outline

It is with this backdrop that Peter exhorts these Jewish believers to exhibit proper Christian conduct in the wilderness. He begins by delineating how a Christian should live relative to God, 1. 13-21. He tells us that a believer is characterized

by obedience to God, v. 14, has been called by a holy God, v. 15, and that the One he calls Father is worthy of all fear, v. 17.

There are practical implications because of these things, and we do well to heed them. Given the immense price which was paid to bring us into connection with God, vv. 18, 19, how can we not obey and fear Him?

Peter starts a new section of teaching, 1. 22 – 2. 10, by moving from the Christian's conduct relative to God, to his position and conduct relative to his brethren, v. 22. We read of 'love of the brethren', 1. 22, 'a spiritual house, an holy priesthood', 2. 5, and various descriptions of the believing Jewish remnant, 2. 9, 10, which all bring before us the collective nature of this section. Peter wants Christians to understand how they relate to one another in this barren scene. Given the hostility and emptiness of our surroundings, we need one another fundamentally.

The command to love one another, 1. 22

In the following sub-section, 1. 22 – 2. 3, Peter details our individual responsibilities toward our fellow Christians. He starts with an important exhortation, that we 'love one another with a pure heart fervently'. In a world that is antagonistic to Christians, it is vital that we foster an atmosphere of love among us. Peter's practical exhortation is based on a doctrinal foundation. Doctrine and practice must not be severed. The verse highlights that the love we show flows from the fact of our salvation. The command to love is grounded

in the reality that we have 'purified' our 'souls in obeying the truth . . . unto unfeigned love of the brethren'. This is the 'obedience of faith', Rom. 16. 26, the moment when a sinner capitulates to God in obedience to the demands of the gospel, acknowledging that Christ is Lord. Peter emphasizes that this obedience resulted in the purification of our souls. We were washed from all that was impure, particularly that which was contrary to brotherly love. This positional washing results practically in these impurities being laid aside, 2. 1, thereby producing 'unfeigned love of the brethren'. Here, 'love' (*philadelphia*) is a warm, brotherly affection for one another. Hence, our salvation must result in brotherly love; there could be no other outcome to our souls being purified.

Having said that conversion results in affection, Peter now commands us to 'love one another with a pure heart fervently'. The love (*agapao*) here is self-sacrificial and demonstrable; it prioritises the interests of others before our own. Peter is demanding that the warm affection which conversion effects must give rise to a practical love that is evident among these Jewish believers. They desperately needed this in their circumstances, and so do we. The people of the world hate the things of God and hate His people. However, although there is external hostility, there ought to be internal harmony and real love amongst brethren.

Being born again, 1. 23-25

Peter now shows why salvation causes brotherly affection (lit. affection of the womb). This is a love which is based on 'being born again', v. 23. In the natural realm, there is a love between siblings; not because they are worthy of one another's love or have gone to great measures to earn it, but simply because they have been born by the same means. Likewise, the new birth is the foundation of this organic 'affection of the womb' among Christians; an affection based on the means of birth. In the remainder of the chapter,

1. 23-25, Peter shows that this new birth is of a more enduring nature than natural birth. Having been born of 'corruptible seed', we are fleshly and corruptible. Corruptible seed produces corruptible things. Peter underlines this by saying, 'all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass'. This shows that the connections we have

with our fellow men by natural birth are only temporary. Familial and civilian ties will not endure eternally. However, things are quite different with the new birth. Since we have been born again 'of incorruptible seed', the links we have with our fellow believers are eternal. This incorruptible seed was brought about by the word

of God. It seems that the word of God is not the incorruptible seed itself, but that the incorruptible seed is produced 'through' its instrumentality. The fact that this seed was produced by God's word is important because the word of God 'liveth and abideth for ever' – a point that Peter later emphasizes – 'the word of the Lord endureth for ever', v. 25. This seed that gives us new birth lasts eternally because the word of God endures forever. This also means that the relations which we have with other believers who share the new birth are relations which will endure forever.

Peter makes this point to underline the importance of brotherly love. Affection among Christians ought to be greater than the affection that exists among natural brothers, since our common birth is of a more enduring nature.

That ye may grow, 2. 1-3

Having mentioned being born again, Peter briefly writes on the next phase of a Christian's development – growth. Having laid aside things contrary to love, 2. 1, we are to 'desire the sincere milk of the word', – this is how we 'grow', v. 2. The connection between birth and growth is apparent: what was instrumental in our birth is also instrumental in our growth – the word of God. Hence, we must 'desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word', v. 2 JND. The original language suggests that the milk is food for our minds. When we are mentally feeding on God's word (with our hearts likewise engaged), spiritual development will follow. We must ensure that we are regularly feeding on the word of God. We have no other sustenance and cannot grow without it. Every Christian must invest serious time in the Bible – not necessarily with literature about the Bible (although very helpful), but with God and His word alone.

Christians, we have been born again. Therefore, let us love one another, and let us read the word of God to grow thereby.



WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

Kabed (Liver)

Kabod (Glory)

Kabsah (Ewe lamb, lamb)

When Eli's daughter-in-law heard the news that the ark of the covenant had been taken by the Philistines, and both Eli and her husband were dead, 1 Sam. 4. 19, the shock was so great that she went into premature labour and sadly died in childbirth. Before she died, however, she named her son '*I-chabod*' meaning 'the glory [of the Lord] is departed from Israel', 1 Sam. 4. 21, to reflect not only her own personal grief but the tragedy that had beset Israel. As MICHAEL A. GRISANTI writes, "'Glory' occurs at numerous junctures in the OT as a technical term for God's presence. In referring to the departure of the 'glory,' Phinehas' wife uses a verb that commonly refers to exile (HALOT, 191) – 'the glory has been exiled from Israel'".¹ If the Philistines thought that they had captured and neutralized Israel's God then they would soon be disillusioned!

Although this is not recorded in the Book of Genesis, Adam possessed glory and honour in the Garden of Eden when he was given complete sovereignty over the earth, Heb. 2. 7, 8. What has marred the exercise of this sovereignty is the fall and so it is only through the second man, the last Adam, that that which was subsequently lost has been gloriously restored, v. 9; Ps. 69. 4.²

The Hebrew noun *kabod* means 'glory' in most of its occurrences in the Old Testament. It has the root sense of something being 'weighty'; hence, it is often used in connection with 'wealth'. For example, in the case of Abram, he is described as 'very rich' when he came up out of Egypt, Gen. 13. 2. It is also used critically of Jacob by Laban's sons of the 'wealth' that he had gained from their father, 31. 1 NIV. It can also mean 'honour', as in Genesis chapter 45 verse 13 NIV, where Joseph

addresses his brothers and asks them to tell his father Jacob 'about all the honour accorded' to him in Egypt. Broadly, when the word is used in association with human activities, it gives prominence to honour or reputation. So, in a subjective sense then, it is the opinion that others have of someone else or the reputation that they have gained from others, 1 Sam. 2. 29; Eccles. 10. 1. It is similarly used in this way by Josephus and Philo. W. E. VINE points out that, "The phrase 'my glory' has reference to the tongue, in Psalms 16:9 (compare Acts 2:26); 30:12 (margin); 57:8; 108:1. The tongue, as the interpreter of the soul, is the glory of man as superior to the brute; it is that by which he glorifies God, and therefore as associated with the soul, is man's highest glory'.³ In writings outside the Old Testament, it is used of inanimate objects to describe such things as the magnificence of a building, 1 Ezer. 6. 9.⁴ But the chief use of the word *kabod* in the Old Testament is in relation to God and what distinguishes Him from all others.

This distinction is expressed by the word *kabod* in a variety of ways. As G. KITTEL states, 'Since God is invisible, it necessarily carries a reference to His self-manifestation'.⁵ How then does God express His glory when He is invisible? Sometimes it is through mighty acts of nature, such as the imagery of the thunderstorm and bolts of lightning blazing across the skies making manifest His glory (*kabod*), Ps. 29. 3; 97. 2-6. The heavens themselves reflect God's effulgent glory, 19. 1, and when God deigns to meet with men, it is 'in a thick cloud', Exod. 19. 9; Deut. 4. 11; cp. Heb. 12. 18, and His glory is manifested, Exod. 40. 34; 1 Kgs. 8. 10-12. Moses' experience of being in the presence of God's glory is transmitted to him and radiated in his face, Exod. 24. 15; 2 Cor. 3. 7. Later, he asked to see the glory of God, and had to hide in the cleft of the rock when God's glory passed

by him, Exod. 33. 18-23. Ezekiel has visions of the glory (*kabod*) and splendour of God as he experiences the revelation of the throne of God, Ezek. 10. 1-6, but it is in the act of salvation that God's glory is seen throughout the habitable world, Ps. 96. 2-9. Even though Israel had forfeited the glory of the Lord, 1 Sam. 4. 21, that glory (*kabod*) will return in the last days bringing salvation to Israel,⁶ and many nations of the earth will join themselves to the Lord, serve Him, and experience His glory, Isa. 66. 3-6; Zech. 2. 11. In Psalm 24 verse 7, God is revealed as the God or King of glory who is further identified as the Lord of Hosts, v. 10.

The Old Testament is therefore punctuated by the manifestation of the glory of God and, as one commentator rightly observes, 'A survey of the references yields a tour of some of the Bible's great moments – from the giving of the law (Ex. 24: 12-18), to the wilderness wanderings of Israel (Num. 14:10, 21, 22; 16:19, 42; 20:6), and the worship of God in the tabernacle (Lev. 9:6, 23) and temple (1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron 5:14), to the call and prophetic vision of the prophets Isaiah (Is. 6) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1)'.⁷

In the Septuagint (LXX) the word *kabod* is represented by the Greek word *doxa* and often expresses the word *Kabod* in slightly different ways. For example, in Isaiah chapter 62 verse 8, the Masoretic Text (MT) reads, 'The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength' which is translated by the LXX as, 'For the Lord has sworn by his glory, and by the might of his arm'. Thus, the LXX interprets the right hand of God as the place of His glory. Similarly, in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, chapter 2 verse 11, the MT reads, 'My liver is poured upon the earth' whereas the LXX states, 'My glory is cast down to the ground'. Here, the lament by the writer expressed by the use of the word 'glory' or literally 'weight' in the LXX highlights his profound emotional reaction to the nation's calamitous state.

This same Greek word *doxa* is

the dynamic equivalent in the New Testament of *kabod* where it occurs over 160 times and is used in a variety of contexts not only in relation to God but also to human and earthly powers. In respect of human glory or kudos, the word is used negatively of those who speak on their own account, not God's, and seek their own glory, John 7. 18, of those who glory in their shameful activities, Phil. 3. 19, and of those who seek glory from men, 1 Thess. 2. 6.⁸ Positively, when applied to God, it is directly linked with formal praise, as in Luke chapter 2 verse 14 where a multitude of the heavenly host glorify God's name, and of Abraham who rightly gave God the glory for fulfilling His promise to him of a son, Rom. 4. 20. Conversely, in a negative way, it is used where Herod failed to give God the glory for his elevated status, Acts 12. 23. But it is in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ that the glory of God is perceptibly uncovered. John in his prologue identifies the Word with the glory of God, John 1. 14, and even though the synoptic parallels detailing the transfiguration do not refer to Christ's glory,⁹ Peter, who was an eyewitness of this event, makes it quite clear later that it was

a visible example of the glory of God in Christ, 2 Pet. 1. 16-18. Just as there were occasions when the *Shekhinah* glory of God filled the tabernacle, Exod. 40. 34, 35, so the glory of God perfectly resided in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, John. 1. 14, 18; 17. 5, 22-24. In Peter's first letter, he also refers to the glory of Christ's resurrection, 1 Pet. 1. 21; cp. Rom. 6. 4. For Paul, the visible glory of God is seen in Jesus Christ, whom he describes as 'the Lord of glory', 1 Cor. 2. 8; cp. Jas. 2. 1, and in whose face the knowledge of the glory of God is tangibly expressed, 2 Cor. 4. 6. The gospel that Paul preached was a revelation of the 'glory of Christ, who is the image of God', 2 Cor. 4. 4 ESV. Those who exercise faith in the finished work of Christ not only have the certainty of glory, Col. 1. 27, but will one day 'appear with him in glory', 3. 4. 'Glory is one of the great positive images of the Bible . . . it is paradoxically a divine quality that is remote from human finitude and yet is held out to believers as something they will share'.¹⁰ May we constantly then be 'waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ', Titus 2. 13 ESV.

For further reading/study

Introductory

'Glory' in LELAND RYKEN *et al* (eds), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP Academic, pp. 330, 331.

Advanced

Kabod in WILLEM A. VANGEMEREN (ed.), *Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Zondervan, Volume 2, pp. 577-587.

Endnotes

- 1 MICHAEL A. GRISANTI, *The Bible Knowledge Word Study, Joshua-2 Chronicles*, David C. Cook, pg. 132.
- 2 Interestingly, in the Qumran community it was anticipated that the elect would 'inherit all the glory of Adam' (IQH 4:15; cf. CD 3:20) see VERLYN D. VERBRUGGE (ed.), *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, STL, pg. 346.
- 3 W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*, Oliphants, pg. 65.
- 4 This is a reference to the First Book of Esdras, which is Deuterocanonical.
- 5 G. KITTEL, *TDNT* (Abridged in One Volume), Eerdmans, pg. 178.
- 6 Isa. 4. 5, 6; 60. 1-3; Ezek. 39. 21-29.
- 7 LELAND RYKEN *et al* (eds), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP Academic, pg. 330.
- 8 In this context the word *doxa* could, in fact, be rendered 'honorarium', so Paul could be asserting he was not looking for financial reward from the Thessalonians, hence his qualification, 'as apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you', 1 Thess. 2. 6 NIV.
- 9 Matt. 17. 1-8; Mark 9. 2-8; Luke 9. 28-36.
- 10 LELAND RYKEN *et al* (eds), *op. cit.*, pg. 331.

Chairman's Notes November 2023

For many of us, the years seem to pass by with increasing rapidity. No sooner had 2020 drawn to its close but we seem to be at the end of 2023. Where has the time gone? However, we are grateful for the end of the pandemic and, for most of us, the return of meetings in person.

This issue of the magazine will see some changes brought about by colleagues retiring from certain responsibilities or from the trust altogether. Brian Clatworthy has served on the trust since July 2009. He has written extensively, not least his regular paper entitled Word for Today. His attention to detail, whether in the trust accounts or in the proof reading of articles, has been of great help and, in recent years, he has assisted Sandy Jack as joint editor of the magazine. We have all come

to appreciate his wise counsel and diligence in the work. He has now decided that it is time to step down from the trust and we wish him well in his retirement.

John Scarsbrook has served on the trust since April 2004, now nearly twenty years of service, with many of those years as secretary. Whilst he plans to remain on the trust for a little longer, he is relinquishing the work of secretary. As someone with whom I have worked particularly closely, I am aware of the amount of work he has done and how much effort he has expended to help the Lord's people by being the accommodating voice on the end of the Precious Seed phone line. That phone line service will be discontinued and to contact us subscribers should use the email or PO Box address.

In the light of these changes, we will be welcoming some new trustees, and details of these will be revealed in future issues of the magazine. We would value your prayers as they settle into the work in its varied forms. May we also encourage those who co-ordinate assembly parcels of magazines to review how many copies are needed so that we might be good stewards of what the Lord graciously provides through His people – distribution is our biggest cost.

We thank you for your continued support both prayerfully and practically.

John Bennett

Chairman and General Editor
Precious Seed International

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FACTS AND FIGURES

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 - It is distributed, without charge, to over 100 countries, many in the developing world.
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 - 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.
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'They shall make an ark of shittim wood', Exod. 25. 10



'They shall make an ark of shittim wood', Exod. 25. 10.

The title 'shittim wood' is also translated and generally understood to be the Acacia. There are several varieties which grow in the Middle East, the Acacia seyal being the most common. They are, however, different to the acacias that we might be familiar with in the United Kingdom and North America. In Isaiah chapter 41 verse 19, it is called the Shittah tree, which is a transliteration of the Hebrew, but translated 'Acacia' NKJV.

As our text indicates, the wood was extensively used in building the ark, as well as the table of shewbread, the altars, and the tabernacle. It is suggested that its significant usage was because of its availability in the context of the wilderness, the durable nature of the wood, and its resistance to attack by insects. In practical terms, whilst it is hard and durable, it is also light, which would enable portability of the items built with it for onward transit.

Geographically, we have references to the place of Shittim, e.g., Josh. 2. 1; 3. 1. It was the place from where Joshua sent out the two spies to assess the strength of Jericho. The children of Israel were to destroy the city as it stood in the path of their conquest of the promised land. The New King James Bible, by translating this place as Acacia Grove, suggests the reason for the name adopted by other versions.

In typical terms, shittim wood is a suitable reminder of the perfect humanity of the Lord. His impeccable character means that He is not only free from sin but also impervious to the attacks of the adversary, Luke 4. 1-13. Although it is perfectly true to say that the Lord did not sin, we must emphasize that He could not sin. He is, and ever remains, holy. We rejoice in the fact of One who was perfectly man and God. How remarkable that we can know Him as our Saviour and Lord.

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