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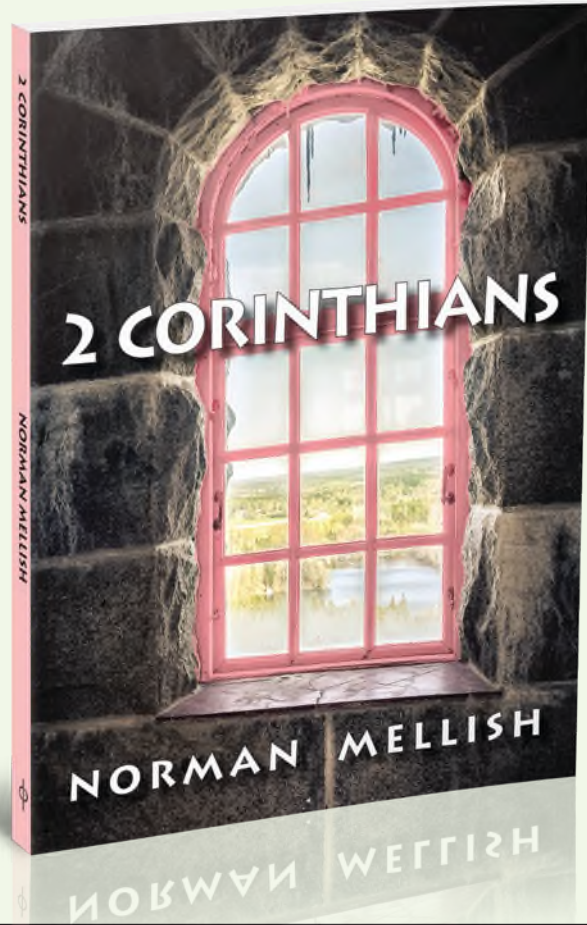
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'Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion',
1 Sam. 17. 34

PS
Magazine

NEW MATERIALS AND OFFERS FROM PRECIOUS SEED



Norman Mellish's Commentary on 2 Corinthians

From the outset of this Epistle, Paul reasserts his apostolic calling indicating that his authority to speak as he does is because that authority is from God Himself. The content of this letter would show that it followed not long after the first had been written. It was to encourage the Corinthians for the actions that they had taken. Indeed, this is one of a number of links between the two Epistles and it shows how the truth of God is maintained and developed between them.

In writing on this oft-neglected book, the author provides us with his customary analysis and exposition of each chapter, and many word studies that will be of profit to the reader. Although this book does not afford the space, there are also lines of truth that will give the student ample scope for meditation.

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'A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse', S. of S. 4. 12

Modern activity-oriented Christianity puts great emphasis on 'doing'. God is interested also in our 'being'; not simply our function, but what we are and what we may become by His grace.

Many of us take pleasure in gardens, and the Song of Solomon chapter 4 pictures the bride as a garden, cultivated, but enclosed ['barred' KJV margin]. It is therefore a private **personal possession**, belonging exclusively to her lover, a place of rest and refreshment. She is also likened to a delightful orchard, v. 13, where the Persian loan-word denotes an estate reserved for a king's pleasure.

Israel was supposed to be God's treasure for His own enjoyment. Yet the temptations of Canaanite religion caused her to go astray. Today, the church is unique, special, 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession', 1 Pet. 2. 9 ESV. On a personal level, the psalmist wrote, 'But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself', Ps. 4. 3.

Naturally, as His purchased possession, Christ wants us for Himself – completely for Himself, that is. Thus, John issues a

warning, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him', 1 John 2. 15.

No eastern garden can flourish without constant irrigation, S. of S. 4. 12, 15. A spring secures an inexhaustible supply; a fountain cools and irrigates the garden. Together, they speak of the vital refreshment provided by the indwelling Spirit. Christians cannot flourish, apart from the **Spirit's supply**.

This well-watered garden supports a variety of exotic plants and precious fruits, rare and aromatic, emblems of the bride's qualities, vv. 13, 14. Similarly for the believer, 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace', Gal. 5. 22; an exquisite composite of heavenly fruits on earthly soil. The bride is a precious source of refreshment and joy to her lover. Likewise, Christ takes pleasure in His own work in us! God is at work in us 'both to will and to do of his good pleasure', Phil. 2. 13.

To complete the sensory delights, the garden exudes **fragrance and fruitfulness**. The lover sends, and the bride welcomes, alternately cold and warm winds that release the scents,

'Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out', v. 16. Just as the wind agitates, and stimulates, and strengthens the plants in a garden, the Lord blends the adversities of life and testimony – as well as times of joy – to develop heavenly graces in His people. This is seen in the Acts, times of persecution interspersed with times of peace, Acts 8. 4; 9. 31. MAY GRIMES penned the beautiful hymn *Speak, Lord, in the stillness*, including the following lines:

Like 'a watered garden' - Full of
fragrance rare,
Ling'ring in Thy presence - Let my
life appear.

The winds waft the perfumes beyond the garden enclosure, so that others can appreciate what the lover finds so compelling in his bride, cp. 2 Cor. 2. 15.

In commending this latest issue to our readers, we are indebted to able and busy servants of God who give themselves unstintingly to the preparation of helpful teaching. We trust that you will be edified and encouraged.

Ken Totton

Ministry Articles Editor

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1 Peter 3

By **ANDREW DUTTON** Norwich, England

Part 4

There is no greater way to encourage believers in practical Christian living than the example of the Lord Jesus. This is the technique that Peter adopts in 1 Peter chapter 3. From chapter 2, into chapter 3, whatever circumstances the believers are in, they are exhorted to godly living. This might have led to suffering, and, in this case, we are called to suffer, that we 'should follow his [Christ's] steps', 2. 21. At the end of chapter 3, the example of Christ's suffering is mentioned again, but this time with His exaltation so that the believers would be encouraged in their suffering for righteousness' sake.

We can divide the chapter into the following sections:

1. Wives and husbands, vv. 1-7
2. Godly behaviour, vv. 8-13
3. Suffering for righteousness' sake, vv. 14-17
4. Suffering of Christ and His exaltation, vv. 18-22

1. Wives and husbands, vv. 1-7

Peter has addressed the various circumstances in which believers find themselves – citizens, 2. 13-17, servants, 2. 18-25, and now he turns to wives, vv. 1-6, and husbands, v. 7. The example given is of a wife that has been saved, with a husband that is disobedient to the message of the gospel. The wonderful prospect is that it is possible for someone who is not engaging with the word of God and far away from salvation to 'be won by the conversation of the [wife]', v. 1. It is not preaching that will reach the husband, but the submission and godly manner of life of his wife. In this domestic scene of a saved wife and a husband that is not saved the implication is that the practical advice should also apply when both husband and wife are believers in the Lord Jesus. Compared to the 'outward adorning', v. 3, that is valued by the world, the following is emphasized:

- **'chaste conversation . . . [and] fear', v. 2** – a 'pure', JND, manner of life in the fear of God.
- **'adorning . . . of the heart . . . of a meek and quiet spirit', vv. 3, 4** – **'meek'**, *praos* or *praus* means gentle and mild¹ and is used of the Lord Jesus, Matt. 11. 29.

- **'being in subjection unto their own husbands', v. 5** – VINE indicates that *hupotasso* is a military term² that includes obedience.

The teaching to the believing husband sets a high standard. 'Likewise', v. 7, indicates that the matter of subjection is equally important for the husband. In a general sense, all believers are to submit themselves 'one to another in the fear of God', Eph. 5. 21 and ultimately to Christ, v. 23. Living with his wife, the husband is to provide for his wife's 'physical, emotional and material security'.³

2. Godly behaviour, vv. 8-13

Following the teaching to believers in various settings, providing exhortations for godly living, Peter now reaches a climax and sums up the teaching so far with, 'Finally, be ye all', v. 8. Now all the saints are addressed. The overarching command is clear, 'be ye all of one mind'; *homophron* has the idea of 'unity of aim and purpose'.⁴ This is not an expectation of all having the same opinion, but rather a unity of character that considers others; ultimately, we are to have the mind of Christ, Phil. 2. 5. Peter then sets out how this will be displayed practically, both positively and negatively:

- **'having compassion one of another', v. 8** – DARBY uses the word 'sympathising', demonstrating the need for consideration for other believers, 'sharing the grief that abounds'.⁵

- **'love as brethren', v. 8** – this is brotherly love because of being part of the family of God.
- **'be pitiful', v. 8** – DARBY translates this as 'tender hearted', carrying the idea of inward care.
- **'be courteous', v. 8** – some might say that there is not much courtesy today, but courtesy should mark believers. But the word has the idea of being 'humbleminded', RV, or lowly. These qualities complement courtesy and the Lord Jesus is our perfect example, who 'humbled himself', Phil. 2. 8.
- **'not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing', v. 9** – the world's way is to get even, in action, 'evil for evil', or in word, 'railing for railing'. We noticed in chapter 2 the response of the Lord Jesus: He did not respond 'when he was reviled', 2. 23; He 'openeth not his mouth', Isa. 53. 7. He 'threatened not' when 'he suffered', 1 Pet. 2. 23; there was no retaliation.
- **'but . . . blessing', v. 9** – returning evil with blessing should be the way of the believer, because this is what God has done for us.

Peter then quotes from Psalm 34. Generally, people in the world could be described as striving to 'love life, and see good days', v. 10, yet here we have the recipe:

- **'refrain his tongue from evil', v. 10** – this is an imperative, giving the sense that the tongue must be stopped!
- **'lips . . . speak no guile', v. 10** – 'guile' means 'to mislead', and the lips can be used to distort the meaning of the words said. This should not be true of believers.
- **'eschew evil, and do good', v. 11** – VINE defines eschew as 'to turn aside' and 'turn away from'.⁶ This is our attitude to evil, yet we are actively and purposefully to do good.
- **'seek peace, and ensue it', v. 11** – Christ is the source of our peace, yet we are exhorted to pursue after peace too.

The concluding reason for this righteous living is twofold: the Lord sees and hears His people, v. 12, and nothing can harm 'followers of that

which is good', v. 13. The Lord Jesus said, 'fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul', Matt. 10. 28.

3. Suffering for righteousness' sake, vv. 14-17

Peter now applies righteous and godly living to suffering. 'But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake', v. 14, suggests that suffering was possible, even likely, but not certain. However, the result of suffering 'for righteousness' sake' is a blessing – 'happy are ye', v. 14. Peter's exhortation is 'be not afraid' or 'troubled', v. 14, but instead 'sanctify the Lord God in your hearts', v. 15. NICHOLSON describes this nicely as: 'to recognise His holiness and to set Him apart as the special object of love and loyalty'.⁷ Might this be our continual object, with the Lord's help, both in and outside of suffering!

With the confidence of the indwelling presence of Christ, the believer is 'ready . . . to give an answer . . . of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear', v. 15. This is not the fear of men, but the reverential fear of God. The readiness is based on 'a good conscience', v. 16, before God, and 'good conversation', v. 16, (or behaviour), before men.

Verse 17 concludes that suffering should not be for evil-doing but for well-doing, in the permissive will of God.

4. Suffering of Christ and His exaltation, vv. 18-22

There is much truth unfolded in this section which it is impossible to exhaust. A summary of verse 18, attributed to JACK HUNTER, is helpful:⁸

1. Expiation – 'Christ . . . once suffered'
2. Substitution – 'the just for the unjust'
3. Reconciliation – 'that he might bring us to God'
4. Crucifixion – 'being put to death in the flesh'
5. Resurrection – 'quickened by the Spirit'

Expiation – 'Christ . . . once suffered'

This includes the idea that the

suffering of the Lord Jesus paid the price for sins, in all their awfulness. Peter emphasizes that it happened once for all; it would never need to be repeated and would be eternally valid.

Substitution – 'the just for the unjust'

'Just' is *dikaios* and includes the idea of righteous; it is used of the Lord Jesus. He is righteous. Yet He suffered for the unjust, unrighteous. 'For' is *huper* meaning 'instead of' and teaches us about substitution.⁹ As a believer in the Lord Jesus, He took my place; He suffered on my behalf; He paid the price that I deserved for my sin. How we need to continually appreciate the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus for us individually – it will affect our manner of life.

Reconciliation – 'that he might bring us to God'

We were 'dead in trespasses and sins', Eph. 2. 1, and far away from God, but now have been 'made nigh', v. 13. In Romans chapter 5 verses 10 and 11, the death of the Lord Jesus is the basis for reconciliation: being 'enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son . . . being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life', v. 10. The death of Christ is substitutionary and, as a result, we have 'received the reconciliation', v. 11 RV. Because of being enemies and far away, we were condemned, and the death of Christ (and justification) has removed this condemnation. This reconciliation allows us to 'joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ', v. 11. Might we live in the full enjoyment of such reconciliation.

Crucifixion – 'being put to death in the flesh'

In Peter's first message in Acts, he spoke about the Lord Jesus 'being put to death': 'ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain', Acts 2. 23. But Peter emphasizes that though the 'men of Israel' were guilty, this was only possible because 'God had made His plan and arranged all in His counsel'¹⁰ – the Lord was 'delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God', v. 23. The Hebrew writer notes that the Lord's incarnation was necessary 'for the

suffering of death' and that He 'should taste death', Heb. 2. 9.

Resurrection – 'quickened by the Spirit'

'Quickened' means 'made altogether alive from the dead'.¹¹ Whilst opinions differ, we take it that this reference to 'the Spirit' is to the work of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Peter preached, 'Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly', Acts 10. 40, and wrote, 'God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory', 1 Pet. 1. 21. Peter also preached that 'it was not possible that he should be holden of it [death]', Acts 2. 24. Therefore, we can see all persons of the Godhead in the Lord's resurrection, cp. John 2. 19-22.

It is good to note that the section does not end with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but His ascension and exaltation. The One that suffered has 'gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God', 1 Pet. 3. 22. This is the great climax. The practical encouragement is that, just as 'Christ also suffered for us', 1 Pet. 2. 21 and is now exalted, believers that 'suffer for righteousness' sake', 3. 14, will look forward to blessing. Through Christian experience, whether enduring suffering or not, might we look heavenward and be encouraged in the certainty that the best is yet to come!

Endnotes

- 1 W. E. VINE, *Vine's Complete Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Nelson, pg. 401.
- 2 *Ibid*, pg. 606.
- 3 J. B. NICHOLSON, *What The Bible Teaches, 1 Peter*, John Ritchie Ltd., pg. 87.
- 4 *Ibid*, pg. 89.
- 5 WILLIAM KELLY, *The Epistles of Peter*, Chapter Two, pg. 190.
- 6 W. E. VINE, *op. cit.*, pg. 206.
- 7 J. B. NICHOLSON, *op. cit.*, pg. 93.
- 8 Notes taken from his oral ministry.
- 9 For a more detailed explanation of substitution and use of Greek words *huper* and *anti*, see: *Building Blocks for the Christian Faith* (youngpreciousseed.org).
- 10 A. C. GAEBELEIN, *The Acts of the Apostles, An Exposition*, Our Hope, pg. 56.
- 11 J. B. NICHOLSON, *op. cit.*, pg. 96.

Words at the Cross

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is to say, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Matt. 27. 46.

By **MERVYN WISHART** Belfast, Northern Ireland

Part 5

The central saying

The first and the last of the sayings of Christ on the cross were addressed to God His Father; the fourth was a heart-rending cry to God. The passers-by had mocked Him, saying, ‘He trusted in God’, and, although spoken in mockery, the words were true. Amidst all His suffering, His trust in God was unshaken. As we consider these sacred words, uttered in the untold agony of Calvary, we feel like Moses did long ago; we stand on holy ground and are compelled to ‘turn aside, and see this great sight’, Exod. 3. 3.

This saying is found in only two of the Gospels, Matthew and Mark; the other sayings are recorded, three by Luke and three by John. By His words from the cross, the Lord fulfilled the scriptures, but this is the only saying which He quoted directly from the Old Testament, Ps. 22. 1.

The questions

It is the only saying of the seven that asks a question, and the only one recorded for us in the language in which the Lord spoke, followed by the translation, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ David wrote the psalm, but he never knew what it was to be forsaken by God. The psalm is messianic and speaks of Christ.

Why ‘Me’?

There was no other. When the soldiers had platted a crown of thorns, ‘they put it upon his head’, Matt. 27. 29. Thorns were the consequence of the fall and the emblem of the curse. He alone was fitted to be the sin bearer, because the sacrifice on God’s altar must be without blemish. He was the lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world: He alone was the unblemished Lamb of God.

No other man on earth could be our Saviour; all alike are defiled by sin

and thereby disqualified. No angel in heaven could accomplish this great work, for angels do not die and could not meet the penalty of God’s law, cp. Ezek. 18. 20.

‘No angel could His place have taken,
Highest of the high tho’ he.
There on the cross, despised, forsaken,
Was one of the Godhead three’.

JAMES M. GRAY, 1851-1935

Why ‘so far’?

The plea of Psalm 22 verse 11 is, ‘Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help’. God’s holiness demands that He must be **separate** from evil of every kind. Verse 3 says, ‘But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel’. This is expressed again in Habakkuk, 1. 13. When the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross, God, who is intrinsically holy, was separated from Him by an infinite, immeasurable distance.

The account of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus chapter 16 records how Aaron the High Priest confessed the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the people on the head of the scapegoat, which was then led away by a fit man into a land not inhabited and set free. The name **scapegoat** comes from the Hebrew word *azazel*, which is translated as ‘the goat that departs’. How wonderful it is for the Christian to remember that our sins are removed from us by an immeasurable distance, Ps. 103. 12.

The darkness

Darkness covered the whole land from the sixth hour until the ninth hour, see Mark 15. 33. The words of the prophet were fulfilled, Ps. 88. 18. Doubtless, the darkness added to the loneliness of the Saviour on the centre cross. The prophet Amos spoke of a day of judgement that is still future, but his words can doubtless

be applied to the darkness that surrounded the cross, ‘And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day . . . and I will make it as the mourning of an only son’, Amos 8. 9, 10. We remember that the one who was impaled on the cross and suffered in the darkness of Calvary was God’s only Son, John 3. 16.

It was midnight at midday. At Mount Sinai, where Moses was given the Law, written with the finger of God on tables of stone, there was darkness that covered the mountain. ‘And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was’, Exod. 20. 21. In the darkness of Calvary, the Son of God suffered the penalty for a broken law, ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us’, Gal. 3. 13.

Psalm 22 verse 2 speaks of His cry in ‘the daytime . . . and in the night season’, referring to the period of three hours from the third to the sixth hour, and the hours of darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. The darkness was not due to an eclipse of the sun, nor can it be explained by astronomy or science.

How amazing that the one who suffered in darkness on the cross for our salvation said on two occasions, ‘I am the light of the world’, John 8. 12; 9. 5. He endured the darkness so that believers might share in ‘the inheritance of the saints in light’, Col. 1. 12.

‘Well might the sun, in darkness, hide,
And shut his glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker, died,
For His own creatures’ sin’.

ISAAC WATTS, 1674–1748

The silence

In Psalm 28, David wrote, ‘Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me’, v. 1. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, heaven was silent. During His earthly ministry, He said in prayer to His Father, ‘And I knew that thou hearest me always’, John 11. 42. But now His cry is unanswered, ‘O my God, I cry in the

daytime, but thou hearest not', Ps. 22. 2, and there was silence from His third saying at the sixth hour until the final four sayings were uttered in succession at the ninth hour.

His silence was the fulfilment of Isaiah chapter 53 verse 7, 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter . . . so he openeth not his mouth'. He endured all the mocking and taunting, the cruelty of the soldiers, and the crude, vulgar insults of the crowd with never a word – 'Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again', 1 Pet. 2. 23; but at the ninth hour He cried with a loud voice to heaven, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Forsaken

The word **forsaken** is one of the most tragic words in human language. David, who wrote Psalm 22, also wrote, 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread', Ps. 37. 25 – not even when the children of Israel ignored the commandment of the Lord and made a golden calf. And, worst of all, they attributed to the calf their deliverance from Egypt. As Nehemiah recounted their history, he could speak of a God who was 'ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not', Neh. 9. 17. He continued to guide them and provided manna from heaven to sustain them for forty years.

In spite of the many failures of its inhabitants, the city of Jerusalem, the citadel of the Jews, was preserved. In Isaiah chapter 62 verse 12 it is called 'A city not forsaken', and in Psalm 48 verse 2, 'the city of the great King'. Yet the Messiah, the great king, was crucified outside its city wall, where **He** was forsaken. He was forsaken by His disciples, though Peter vowed to be with Him even to death, and the other disciples all said likewise, Matt. 26. 35. In Gethsemane, when the arresting party approached through the darkness with their lanterns, torches, and weapons, 'Then **all the disciples** forsook him, and fled', v. 56. He was denied by Peter,

betrayed by Judas, and forsaken by all. Even those who had received healing and blessing from His hand were nowhere to be found. 'I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none', Ps. 69. 20.

All through His earthly life He had enjoyed unbroken fellowship with His Father in heaven. He said, 'And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him', John 8. 29. But now He is forsaken by God, abandoned by earth and heaven. The same scripture that asks the question supplies the answer, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' – 'But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel', Ps. 22. 1, 3.

'Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry
His universe hath shaken,
It went up single, echoless, "My God, I
am forsaken!"

It went up from the holy lips amid His
lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use
those words of desolation'.

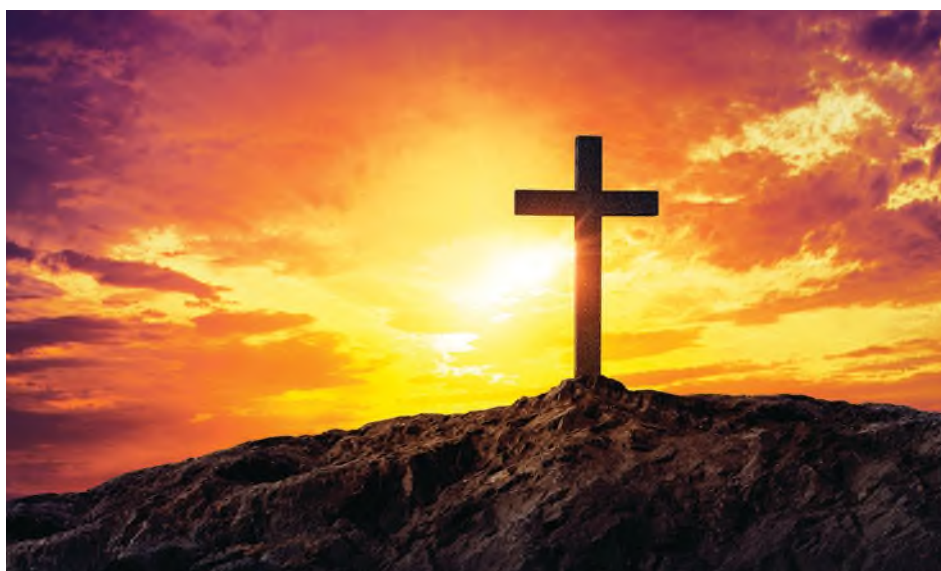
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING,
1806–1861

A multitude of angels announced His coming into the world, an angel ministered to Him in the wilderness temptation, an angel came to strengthen Him in the Garden of Gethsemane; they watched over His body in the tomb and appeared to those who came there after His resurrection. Angels stood by at the ascension and spoke of His return to the wondering disciples.

But we do not read of angels being at the cross; He was alone. Some of those who stood by the cross misunderstood His words, and said, 'This man calleth for Elias' (Elijah). The rest said, 'let us see whether Elias will come to save him', Matt. 27. 47, 49. Little did they know that He was the one who had said, 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?' Matt. 26. 53. He had no need to call for Elijah.

This period of time was unique in all of eternity. He had hitherto experienced unbroken fellowship with God, but now His cry is, 'Why hast **Thou** forsaken me?' After Martin Luther had spent many hours in solitude contemplating this text, it is recorded that he said, 'God forsaken by God – who can understand it?' It was surely the most bitter ingredient in the cup which the Father had given Him to drink. He was forsaken so that we might be forgiven; He suffered dereliction for our deliverance; He was alienated from God so that we might be reconciled to God; His abandonment was for our atonement.

The lesson that we learn from this central cry from the cross is of the uncompromising holiness of our God. Such is His abhorrence of sin in every form that He 'spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all', Rom. 8. 32. Therefore, the challenge goes out to every believer, 'Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy', 1 Pet. 1. 16.



Initiator and completer of needful tasks in a timely manner

By **DAVID BRAUCH** Wauwatosa, USA

All quotation are taken from the New King James Bible, unless otherwise stated.

The name of March is derived from that of the first month of the earliest Roman calendar, namely 'Martius'. It, in turn, was named after the Roman god of war, 'Mars'. He was the supposed ancestor of the Roman people through his fictitious sons, Romulus and Remus. The latter, incidentally, are credited in legend with the founding of Rome itself.

In addition, the month Martius marked the start of the season for warfare that ended in October. It is not surprising that this practice continues today in modern warfare. Does this suggest to you any biblical account? 'It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem', 2 Sam. 11. 1. Breaking with the normal custom of personally leading his troops in their military pursuits at this time of year freed this successful and popular king to have time on his hands. Sadly, on this occasion he committed two most grievous sins – first, adultery with Bathsheba, and second, arranging for the subsequent murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite.

Contrast this with the members of the Godhead's pattern of initiating and then completing needful and sometimes onerous tasks in a timely manner. In relation to the Lord's coming to earth, Galatians chapter 4 reads, 'But when the fullness of the time had come, God [the Father] sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons', vv. 4, 5. Moreover, Isaiah states, 'Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish

it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this', 9. 7.

Once on earth, the Father's Son busied Himself, taking the initiative and carrying out His Father's directives/biddings from the age of twelve. We might recall that when Mary and Joseph were *en route* home from celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem with other Galilean worshippers, they could not find Jesus. Therefore, they returned, and they located Him in the temple interacting with the teachers of the law who were astonished at His spiritual acumen. Note that when questioned why He had not started on the way home with the rest of the family, He, even at the young age of twelve, knew and so declared that He was obliged to be engaged in His Father's business, Luke 2. 49.

Soon after His baptism and undergoing a forty-day temptation in the Judean wilderness, our Lord is recorded as being in Jerusalem performing His first cleansing of the temple and meeting with Nicodemus. He was in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Upon witnessing the desecration of the temple caused by money-hungry folks merchandizing animals for sacrifice, our Lord took the initiative and then completed the onerous task of driving these sellers out with a handmade whip, John 2. 13-25. It is interesting to note that just a few

days after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and a few days before celebrating that Passover, our Lord again took the initiative to carry out a similar temple cleansing.

Mark chapter 1 verses 14 and 15 read, 'Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel"'. Our Lord, motivated by His mission, said to the Twelve early along the journey, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth', Mark 1. 38.¹ When He and the Twelve were in Sychar, Samaria, after He had just ministered to the woman drawing water who had married five husbands, Jesus said to the disciples, after going without eating, 'My food ["meat" KJV] is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work', John 4. 34. It could be rightly said that the fundamental mission of Christ's time on earth was to fulfil the Godhead's plan of providing salvation for the lost in a timely manner. The Lord put it succinctly, saying, 'The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost', Luke 19. 10.

There was only one instance, as recorded in Mark chapter 6 verses 7 to 13, where our Lord sent the disciples out by themselves, two by two, throughout the land, preaching 'that people should repent'. But He Himself stayed behind where He was. He was testing them by this action, and, when they returned, He questioned them regarding their experiences.

On many occasions during His earthly ministry, Christ took the initiative to seek to forgive those whom the self-righteous leaders of the day shunned. In addition to the woman at the well and the Samaritans of her town, John 4. 39-41, He specifically sought out other outcasts of society. All through the Gospels, we see Jesus seeking to find and forgive the worst of sinners who had a repentant heart, Luke 15. 21, 22; cp. Isa. 57. 15. Additionally, the physical mission

of Christ included taking the initiative of reaching out to the poor, delivering the captives, restoring sight to the blind, and lifting up the downtrodden – some actions considered unthinkable by the ‘religionists’ of that day.

Sometime during the middle of His three-year ministry, our Lord spoke to the Twelve some startling and sad words, as recorded in John chapter 6 verse 51, ‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world’. About the same time, He also said to them what is recorded in John chapter 7 verses 6 and 8; ‘My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready . . . You go up to this feast [of Passover]. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come’. Somewhat later he also said, as recorded in Luke chapter 9 verse 51, ‘Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up [into glory], that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem’. On His way there, He passed with His disciples through Jericho, Luke 19. It is interesting

to note that Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector who was short in stature, climbed a sycamore tree to get a better view of our Lord. Our Lord saw him, took the initiative to order him down, and declared Himself a guest of this despised businessman. Zacchaeus responded to the gospel during Jesus’ visit, because Jesus announced, ‘Today salvation has come to this house . . . for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost’, vv. 9, 10. Our Lord satisfactorily initiated and completed His stated spiritual goal with Zacchaeus.

Just several days after triumphantly entering Jerusalem with His disciples, our Lord said to those disciples, ‘Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, “The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples”’, Matt. 26. 18. After overseeing its celebration and undertaking the humbling task of washing the feet of the disciples, our Lord instituted the Lord’s Supper with all except Judas Iscariot. Following this and instructing them regarding living without Him, John 15, 16, He began praying

aloud to His Father, indicating that He had accomplished His earthly mission. This is commonly referred to today as His ‘intercessory prayer’. He declared to His Father, ‘I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do, John 17. 4.

After these activities, our Lord with His disciples, now eleven instead of twelve, initiated walking to the Garden of Gethsemane, John 18. Once in the garden, our Lord took Peter, James, and John along with Him to ‘watch’ and asked the others to engage in prayer. Our Lord then underwent that evening what could be described as ‘the extreme of mental agony’ as He verbally struggled with His Father’s will. He pleaded with Him, at three separate junctures, Matt. 26. 39, 42, 44, to remove the upcoming ‘cup’ of unmatched, excruciating suffering that He was about to endure. However, in the end, our Lord agreed to drink it, as it were, to its dregs.

He then found all eleven of His disciples dozing and roused them to accompany Him to face those coming to arrest Him. Jesus was determined to face the upcoming torturous events head-on. Mark chapter 14 verse 42 reads, ‘Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand’. The natural tendency when facing some upcoming unpleasant circumstances is to delay them as long as possible! Finally, in Romans chapter 5 verse 6, Paul presented the outcome by stating, ‘For when we were still without strength, in due **time** Christ died for the ungodly’.

In conclusion, from boyhood throughout His entire ministry on earth, our Lord demonstrated a commitment to initiate and complete in a timely manner every needful task – whether onerous or not. He successfully carried out every one of them during His earthly mission at the right time and in a timely manner.

Endnote

- 1 Some other occasions where our Lord demonstrated initiative in carrying out His mission are found in verses also containing the phrase ‘Let us’, e.g., Mark 4. 35; John 11. 7; 14. 31.



THE TEACHING IN THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Part 8 – Faith that can be seen

By **ALAN GAMBLE** Glasgow, Scotland

Sometimes Hebrews chapter 11, 'Faith's Hall of Fame', is presented apart from the message of the Epistle as a whole. Actually, it plays a vital role in the appeal to the readers to maintain their confidence in Jesus as Messiah and Lord. D. W. GOODING explains, 'The great need of the Hebrews to whom the letter was written was faith'.¹ The heroes of faith before Christ came belonged to the Hebrew believers, not to those who clung to Judaism. Believers in Christ were the heirs of the long line of men and women of faith who lived in Old Testament times. The immediately preceding context is a challenging call to the readers to persevere in faith.² The succeeding context reminds us that in running the race of faith 'we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses'.³ Those witnesses are the men and women whose faith has been celebrated. They are examples of living faith to all the readers of the Epistle.

Faith is not only exercised when we first trust Christ for salvation, it shows its presence by the evidence of the overall direction of our lives. It brings certainty about future events which we hope for and conviction about unseen realities.⁴ That certainty and conviction should be displayed in the choices each of us make in life.

The biggest question men and women face is, 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' The only true answer is that the universe was formed out of nothing by the spoken word of the personal Creator.⁵ That answer is revealed in His written word. We grasp it by faith.⁶ Creation by God is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith.

So is the need for blood sacrifice for humans to approach God. That is the testimony of Abel, the first

named witness to living faith. Probably on the basis of teaching from his parents, Adam and Eve, who in turn had received revelation from God, Abel acted in faith by offering the very best of his flock of sheep. He was accepted by God as a result of the acceptability of that sacrifice. Now the only way to secure acceptance by God is to come to Him relying on the once and for all sacrifice of Christ.⁷ Abel was the first martyr. He was murdered because of his faithful witness. He still speaks after long centuries, reminding people of faith so that they can face opposition and even persecution. Sadly, this persecution often comes from people who are merely religious, like Cain.

The next named witness is Enoch. By faith he lived a life that pleased God and was spent in close personal fellowship with Him. Enoch did

not experience death. God called him into His immediate presence without him dying. A similar privilege awaits Christians who will be alive and remaining at the return of Christ.⁸ Noah received a warning from God about future judgement. He responded by building the Ark. No doubt this involved scorn and derision from the people of his day. However, by building it he brought salvation to his household and condemnation to the world's system.

It is not surprising that the longest treatment is given to the faith of Abraham. Paul describes him as 'the man of faith'.⁹ He is the leading example of faith in the Old Testament. Abraham's home was Ur, the centre of the leading civilization of its day. Yet Abraham abandoned Ur and became a pilgrim, seeking a far greater city. His hope was focused not only on Canaan, but even more so on the heavenly city of God.¹⁰ He left his homeland in implicit obedience to God and total trust in Him and His promise. Never ever did he seek to return to Ur. Abraham's wife, Sarah, shared his faith. Trusting in the promise that she would have a son together with Abraham, she experienced a supernatural conception of Isaac, despite her age and Abraham's.¹¹

The greatest test of the faith of Abraham came when he was commanded by God to offer up Isaac in sacrifice. It proved to be the greatest display of Abraham's trust in God, the One who keeps His promises. So convinced was he that God would keep His commitment to create a nation, through Abraham and his line, that he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead if he had been slain. He was sure that God could do this and would do it even though he had never known of any resurrection taking place.

The writer goes on to briefly describe specific episodes in the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Perhaps surprisingly, he includes Isaac's blessings on Jacob and Esau. Beyond all of Rebekah's plotting and

his own gullibility, God saw ‘a core of genuine faith’¹² in Isaac that the line of promise would run through Jacob, the younger brother and not the older one, Esau. God had already declared in advance that this was His purpose. Jacob, on his death bed, and much chastened by the hard knocks of his life expressed the same principle by blessing the younger son of Joseph over his older grandson. Joseph, just before his own death, expressed a certain hope that Israel would eventually leave Egypt and return to the promised land. He also expressed a desire to be buried in Canaan. Despite his highly successful career in the government of Egypt, his heart was with his own people who were indeed the people of God.

Moses is clearly one of the leading figures in the history of Israel. After his birth, his parents displayed their faith by hiding him from Pharaoh’s pogrom. They trusted that God had a special role for their infant son. As a young adult, Moses made highly significant choices which reflected his faith. He preferred being identified with the people whom God had chosen to the status of a prince in the royal family of Egypt. He did so, accepting mistreatment and reproach instead of enjoying all of the pleasures of the palace. He was motivated by eternal values. Egypt’s pleasures were only for time. God’s reward was forever. Moses had the great privilege, under God, of leading Israel’s deliverance by blood at

the Passover, and by power at the crossing of the Red Sea.

God’s people gained the land of Canaan by faith. The walls of Jericho were not impregnable. They fell to the assault of Israel’s army who believed that the strange tactics God told them to use would prevail. Rahab, a woman of ill repute, was saved from the destruction of Jericho by her faith in Israel’s God. She believed that He was the great Creator and that He had given Canaan to His people. She put this faith into action by welcoming Israel’s spies, even though that was treason to her city.

The great chapter of faith ends by giving an impressive list of ‘Faith’s victories and apparent defeats’.¹³ This section of the chapter would give great encouragement to the first readers who were suffering persecution for their faith. ‘They died without being vindicated. Faith is not always seen to be triumphant in this life. And it takes greater faith to suffer apparent disaster, unvindicated, and to go on believing still’.¹⁴ Such was the experience of the only perfect man of faith, the Lord Jesus Himself.¹⁵ He endured what appeared to be total disaster and defeat but through it all He has reached the highest place in glory. His followers are promised a similar blessing.¹⁶

We, the contemporary readers of this tremendous chapter, are challenged that we should follow the steps of the men and women of faith and display faith that can be seen.



Endnotes

- 1 D. W. GOODING, *God’s Unshakable Kingdom*, Gospel Folio Press, pg. 213.
- 2 Heb. 10. 36-39.
- 3 Heb. 12. 1 ESV.
- 4 Heb. 11. 1.
- 5 Ps. 33. 6.
- 6 Heb. 11. 3.
- 7 Heb. 10. 12.
- 8 1 Cor. 15. 51-55; 1 Thess. 4. 17.
- 9 Gal. 3. 9 ESV.
- 10 Heb. 11. 10, 13-16.
- 11 Heb. 11. 11, 12.
- 12 D. W. GOODING, *op. cit.*, pg. 229.
- 13 *Ibid*, pg. 236.
- 14 *Ibid*.
- 15 Heb. 2. 13.
- 16 2 Tim. 2. 12; Rev. 3. 21.

NEHEMIAH

A MAN OF PROGRESS – THE PEOPLE Chapter 3 Part 5

By **TOM MERRIMAN** Tenby, Wales

The work summary follows an anticlockwise journey around Jerusalem's perimeter, beginning at the north. It reports the activity of individuals and groups with attention drawn to certain features of the city's walls.

Nehemiah was concerned for God's people, and for the place associated with His name, Neh. 1. 2; here he saw progress. He was instrumental in preparing the work and chapter 4 records his participation, but he does not directly figure here – the words 'I' and 'me' are absent.¹ This is fitting, for it was the Lord's work and it could not have been accomplished alone. Credit is given to each labourer.

This study focuses on the people. Workers were male and female, older and younger, of varied social standing, and of different spiritual heritage. Imagine Nehemiah's joy to witness the work underway and to observe God's people labouring together for the honour of His name.

In our day too, it has pleased God to take up His people from all walks of life, that unitedly they might further His work and testimony. What a privilege!

Their activities

Building work was necessary where gates, towers, and sections of wall needed to be entirely reconstructed. Where enough of the original structure was still standing, repairs were performed. A sound structure requires a proper foundation, from which a building takes its shape.²

Paul wrote that the household of God is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone', Eph. 2. 20; cp. Matt. 16. 18. Of God's

building, he said, 'I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon . . . other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ', 1 Cor. 3. 10, 11. Assembly testimony must be built and shaped on none other.

Repair work differs from building. Compromised material needs to be removed before remedial works take place.³ Nehemiah's report refers to building work seven times, but to repairs, thirty-five times. Error soon emerged in the early church that had to be identified and addressed. In the Epistles, this often involved returning to foundational aspects of truth and restating the gospel, practices which are still necessary.⁴

The broad wall was **fortified**, v. 8. Every section required inspection, and strengthening where necessary. Are all doctrinal bases covered in our personal readings and collective ministry for our spiritual strength? Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God', Acts 20. 27. Peter wrote, 'I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth', 2 Pet. 1. 12.

As work around the city involved different aspects of work, concerning the church we read, 'there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all', 1 Cor. 12. 6.

Their approach

Leadership was demonstrated by Eliashib the high priest, who, 'rose up . . . and . . . builded', v. 1. 'Every one' of the priests who lived in

the city attended to the wall, 'over against his house', v. 28. Though not occupying the city, 'the priests, the men of the plain' also toiled, v. 22, but since they were associated with this place, the finished wall would give them dignity. They would be 'no more a reproach', 2. 17.

How sad that whilst the 'Tekoites repaired . . . their nobles put not their necks to the work', v. 5! It seems that necks that wore lordly chains refused to wear the yoke of service. These earthly lords, used to being waited on, did not do 'the work of their Lord'.

Better is said of the two rulers of the 'the half part of Jerusalem', vv. 9, 12, who rolled up their sleeves. Other rulers who repaired came from Bethhaccerem, v. 14; two from Mizpah vv. 15, 19; and of Bethzur, v. 16. The rulers of Keilah were more honourable than their ancestors who would have delivered up David to Saul, 1 Sam. 23. 12. These repaired a portion of wall helping to secure his memorial, vv. 16-18.

Leaders today are called to be a pattern to others, paying heed to God's word and labouring among His people, 1 Pet. 5. 3. Timothy was counselled, 'be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity', 1 Tim. 4. 12; cp. Titus 2. 7, 8.

Fellowship describes the spirit of Eliashib, who rose up 'with his brethren', v. 1. This was also found amongst the workers; the word 'next' appears in conjunction with 'him' or 'them' fifteen times, vv. 2-19. The phrase 'next unto him' indicates that where someone took responsibility for their own portion of wall, they were near to others – no-one was a 'lone wolf'. Understanding between the parties would have been necessary to bond together the sections of wall.

Shallum's family shared his exercise, for we read that 'he and his daughters' repaired, v. 12. 'And his sons' appears nowhere in the passage, but it is good to see that there was fellowship amongst other families, for 'brethren' repaired

alongside one another, v. 18. This was not a privilege 'the sixth son of Zalaph' enjoyed, v. 30; his faithfulness is commendable, but where were the other five?

The importance of unity amongst the Lord's people cannot be overstated and the theme is present in Paul's letter to the Philippians. Believers are not intended to work alone, and if anything is to be accomplished for God, love is essential.⁵ It is a particular blessing when families are able to share together in the Lord's work, but those who are alone among their natural family should be able to enjoy the fellowship of God's family.

Following Israel's victory over Sisera's host, Deborah sang of those who 'jeopardied their lives'; but not all the tribes had contributed, Judg. 5. 16-18. Similarly, after one of ten lepers cleansed by the Lord returned to offer thanks, Jesus asked, 'Where are the nine?' Luke 17. 17. Whilst our labour does not merit salvation, it is one answer of a regenerate and thankful heart for Christ's finished work for us, Titus 3. 5; Heb. 6. 10. Whatever He enables us to do, let it be in fellowship with others, and for Him, 1 Cor. 3. 8, 9; Eph. 4. 16.

Stewardship of each portion of work was necessary. Every gate, tower, and section of wall was essential to the whole. Some had the honour of building the sheep gate near to the temple, v. 1; others repaired the wall by the dung gate, vv. 13, 14. Some industrious workers repaired 'another piece'. Was this because others had not risen to the task? Thankfully, someone took responsibility for every breach.⁶

Every believer has a work for which God has exclusively enabled him or her. Let us neither despise nor seek another's role, for all 'are necessary'. Some might appear to have a more honourable role, but 'the members should have the same care one for another', 1 Cor. 12. 20-25. Each of us have 'gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us' and are vital, Rom. 12. 6-8. So let us take responsibility for, and wait on, the

ministry for which we have been equipped.

Workmanship would have been important for structural integrity. Following the repairs described in the south, the expression 'after him/them' occurs sixteen times, vv. 16-31. Along this uphill section of wall, the upper portion would have depended both on the completion and the quality of the lower.

The quality of our work for God affects the whole testimony and other people. It has a bearing on the heritage to be received by the following generation. Paul said, 'let every man take heed how he buildeth', for, at the Judgement Seat of Christ, it will be tried to see 'of what sort it is', 1 Cor. 3. 10, 13.

Their abodes

A number of workers performed repairs 'over against [opposite]' their dwelling.⁷ Azariah repaired 'by his house' – perhaps near or adjoining the wall, v. 23. Others laboured near to a shared dwelling, v. 23. Meshullam worked 'over against his chamber [room]'; small as his lodging was, its security mattered, v. 30. The priests repaired 'every one' over against his own house, v. 28; but repairs near the house of Eliashib the high priest were undertaken by Meremoth – 'from the door. . . even to the end of the house', v. 21 – did Eliashib neglect his own house?

God's testimony is affected by the spiritual condition of our homes, however small they are. The sad experience of Eli is a stark warning, where both his household and the testimony was lost, 1 Sam. 3, 4. If the household of God is to be properly maintained, homes must be well ordered, especially those of spiritual leaders, 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1.

Their attitude

There is more to be gleaned from the many workers mentioned in the chapter, but the following are worthy of note for their attitude.

The **business** of 'the men of Jericho', v. 2. Of their city, whose walls God brought down, Joshua

said, 'Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city', Josh. 6. 26. They did not occupy themselves in a dishonourable and fruitless work but busied their hands with the worthy task of Jerusalem's wall – God's centre of testimony. They did not set out to make themselves a name but contributed to the place associated with God's name. Likewise, let us be diligent, making the Father's business our priority.

The **humbleness** of goldsmiths, merchants, and 'the son of one of the apothecaries', vv. 8, 31, 32. Their hands exchanged gold for stone, and the aroma of sweet perfume was replaced with dust. They worked willingly alongside more lowly men. Paul encouraged believers to 'mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate', Rom. 12. 16. In the same Epistle, greetings were sent from Erastus, the treasurer of the city of Corinth, found alongside Quartus – a name likely given to a slave – who is called 'a brother', Rom. 16. 23.

The **earnestness** of 'Baruch the son of Zabbai'. His is the only work preceded by an adverb; he 'earnestly repaired', v. 20. Comparison could be made with Epaphras' fervent prayer and zeal for the saints in the Lycus valley, Col. 4. 12, 13. Such fervour is also reminiscent of the Lord Jesus, our supreme example, whose passion for God's sanctuary reminded His disciples of Psalm 69 verse 9, 'the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up', John 2. 17. He said, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work', John 4. 34.

May we aspire to labour for our Lord and count it our privilege to engage in His work as 'labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building', 1 Cor. 3. 9.

Endnotes

- 1 His namesake of verse 16 has a different father.
- 2 Cp. Matt 7. 24-27.
- 3 Compare, a house affected by leprosy, Lev. 14. 40-42.
- 4 See 1 Cor. 15; Gal. 2. 12.
- 5 See 1 Cor. 13.
- 6 Neh. 3. 19, 21, 24, 27, 30.
- 7 Neh. 3. 10, 28-30.

LESSONS FROM EPHRAIM THE MAN, THE TRIBE, AND THE KINGDOM

By **MALCOLM DAVIS** Leeds, England

First of all, the man named Ephraim was the second son of Joseph and his Gentile bride Asenath in Egypt after Joseph's remarkable promotion from his prison years to become the second ruler after Pharaoh in that empire. His name means 'fruitful', and his older brother Manasseh's name means 'forgetting'. Joseph said after their birth that God had caused him to forget all his previous unjust affliction and to become fruitful again in Egypt, Gen. 41. 51, 52. So, the first lesson that we can learn from Ephraim is that God overrules all our afflictions and sufferings in this present life to produce much fruit of godly character and blessings both for ourselves and for many around us. The Lord's pruning knife is unpleasant for all of us, but it always has a gracious purpose, and results in His greater glory.

Second, there is instruction in the way in which Jacob blessed both Manasseh and Ephraim when Joseph brought them to him, for Jacob purposely crossed his hands to bless Ephraim with the portion of the firstborn rather than Manasseh, his older brother, 48. 14. Jacob had at last learned the lesson which he should have learned in his youth, when he and his mother Rebekah conspired to deceive Isaac into blessing him rather than Esau, his older twin brother. God does not need our deceitful stratagems to bring His purposes of grace and blessing to pass; He can sovereignly overrule everything to achieve this in His own time and way. Often in scripture, the Lord blessed the younger, the youngest, or the weakest of people to accomplish His own will, since this brings most glory to Himself. Have we yet learned this lesson?

Next, the tribe that issued from Ephraim became one of the most prominent tribes of Israel. However, 1 Chronicles chapter 7 verses 20 to 23 record a tragedy that befell Ephraim's immediate family, for the men of Gath attacked and killed some of them in order to steal their cattle. Ephraim mourned deeply

for his lost sons, and named his next son Beriah, 'because it went evil with his house', v. 23. How do we react to such tragedies which sometimes inexplicably affect our own families? Do we become bitter or angry against God, or are we able to voice the patriarch Job's initial calm reaction to his calamities, 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord', Job 1. 21? May the Lord grant us the spiritual maturity to accept all His dealings with us in grace and humility, believing that He means them for our spiritual good and that which will most glorify His name.

Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant and successor in leading Israel in the initial conquest of their Promised Land, was undoubtedly the most faithful, godly, and able of the descendants of Ephraim recorded in scripture. Only he and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, who represented Judah in the spying of the land, were courageous enough to bring back a positive report of that land, because they believed that the Lord would enable Israel to overcome all the strong enemies whom they had seen in it, Num. 14. 6-9. Therefore, they alone of all the adult wilderness generation

were permitted to live long enough to enter their inheritance. Do we believe that nothing is impossible with God? How far have we entered today into our own spiritual inheritance in the heavens in Christ, as the Epistle to the Ephesians encourages us to do? We will enjoy many blessings there, but we will also need to conform our behaviour to live like our Lord did in this evil world, and engage in battle with many spiritual enemies around us in the strength that He alone can supply. Joshua only made a very few mistakes when he failed to consult the Lord about Ai and the deceitful Gibeonites, but fulfilled his ministry well, and was very humble and self-effacing to its end, only accepting his own inheritance in Ephraim shortly before he died at 110 years of age. Do we, like the Apostle Paul, desire to finish our course of service in this world with joy, Acts 20. 24? Then we must, like Joshua, trust and obey the Lord consistently throughout our lives, whatever difficulties we face. 'Whose faith follow', Heb. 13. 7!

By contrast, sadly, the history of the Ephraimite tribe within their nation is not nearly so encouraging or faithful as the biography of Joshua. In the book of Joshua, the record of the inheritance of Ephraim in the land is closely linked with that of Manasseh as Joseph's other son. Joseph had received the double portion of land as his birthright in place of Reuben, Jacob's first child, because of Reuben's sin with Bilhah, Gen. 49. 4. To a certain extent their inheritance was mingled, and neither tribe succeeded in driving out the Canaanites from it completely, as Israel had been commanded to do by Moses. Theirs was an incomplete obedience to the word of the Lord, which always leads the people of God into trouble later. In fact, in Joshua chapter 17, the children of Joseph began to complain that they had not received a large enough inheritance compared to some of the other tribes. They considered that they were a great people and should be favoured as such. Joshua, however, although he himself was an Ephraimite, did not support

their complaint, but rebuked them severely, saying that, if they really were a great people, they should bestir themselves, and make an effort, with the Lord's promised help, to conquer more of their inheritance. God will not do for us what we can easily do ourselves. Today, we also should not be proud like the Ephraimites were but think humbly and realistically both what we are gifted to do for God, and what we ourselves cannot do.

Then, in Judges chapter 12, the Ephraimites were involved in another sad incident with Jephthah, caused by their own inflated opinion of themselves. After Jephthah had returned from defeating the Ammonites without their help, they threatened to burn his house down. Jephthah pointed out that, when he had called them previously, they had failed to join him against Ammon, and proceeded to gather all the men of Gilead to fight the Ephraimites in revenge for their attitude, so that 42,000 of the latter tribe died in the ensuing civil war. Pride and self-seeking are the cause of so much trouble and strife amongst the people of God. May the Lord keep us humble and usable in His service!

Idolatry entered the tribe of Ephraim during the days of the Judges and became a major problem both then and later during the monarchy. First, a young Ephraimite named Micah made an idol in his home, then met the Danites as they were migrating to the north of the land, probably contrary to the Lord's will for them, Judg. 18, 19. The latter brought it into their tribe in their new settlement, and thus idolatry took root there until the captivity. However, it was Solomon who caused such idolatry to spread more widely within his kingdom, for, as a result of his apostasy during his later years, the Lord raised up several enemies against him, including an industrious young Ephraimite named Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Although he had to flee to Egypt from Solomon, 1 Kgs. 11. 40, after Solomon died he opposed his son Rehoboam when the latter came to the throne. The Lord's prophet, Ahijah, had promised Jeroboam that the Lord was rending ten tribes from Solomon and giving them to him as chastisement for apostasy, 1 Kgs. 11. 29-39. Thus, in 931 BC, the monarchy became divided between Rehoboam in the south and Jeroboam in the north. The northern kingdom of Israel never recovered

from idolatry after this, because Jeroboam created a counterfeit system of worship based at Bethel and Dan, to deter his subjects from being attracted back to the true worship of the Lord at Jerusalem. Complete apostasy marked the northern kingdom ever after this until their exile to Assyria in 722 BC. The northern kingdom was often known as Ephraim, because Ephraim was the most prominent tribe within it.

Thus, Ephraim has had a very sad history of idolatry, which may explain why both the tribes of Ephraim and Dan are omitted from the 144,000 future Jewish evangelists in Revelation chapter 7. But the Lord in grace will include them in the arrangements for the millennial kingdom, see Ezekiel chapter 48. Also, the prophet Hosea predicted that in the end times Ephraim would be fully restored to the Lord, and decisively reject all idolatry, see Hosea chapter 14. God still loves Israel despite their waywardness and outright apostasy.

We need to beware of all forms of idolatry, which displaces God from our lives, destroys His rightful glory, and always leads downwards into degrading behaviour. Behind any idol stands a demonic spirit tempting us to sin. The Apostle John ended his first Epistle with the command, 'Little children, keep [or guard] yourselves from idols', 1 John 5. 21, so it must still be a great danger. The idol can be a person, perhaps one dearly loved, or a special place, or any inanimate object of value to us. Learning from Israel's apostasy, we also see that any substitute, or counterfeit form of worship must be decisively rejected, in order to worship God alone in spirit and in truth. The day of Judaistic ceremony and ritual was ended at the cross of Christ, but sadly many professing Christians still practise it in Christendom around us. 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage', Gal. 5. 1. May our meditation on Ephraim encourage us to do so!



Henry William Soltau (1805-1875)

By **STEVE SHERWIN** Derby, England

The name Henry Soltau is perhaps one which is not particularly familiar to a current generation. However, in his day he was a well-known servant of the Lord.

Early life

Henry was born in Plymouth on 11th July 1805, the second of six children. Both of his parents were Christians and were members of the Church of England. They had a keen interest in the spiritual welfare of their children. His father, George, was one of the founders of a large free school in Plymouth which gave opportunities for gospel witness alongside the teaching of secular subjects. Sadly, George died at the age of forty-four and never saw the conversion of his son.

Education and career

After studying with a private tutor, Henry entered Trinity College, Cambridge in 1825 and studied law. He graduated in 1827, and he subsequently entered Lincoln's Inn, London, where he was called to the bar.

He was an intelligent man who had a great interest in a variety of subjects, including science and natural history, yet finding time to learn Hebrew to help in his reading of the Old Testament! Whilst at Cambridge, Henry had a great interest in hearing the gospel, recognizing that there was something lacking in his life. He listened to the best preachers of the day, but, sadly, seldom was the gospel preached faithfully and Henry remained without salvation.

When he moved to London, convictions that had exercised him whilst he was at Cambridge were suppressed and he threw himself into the pleasures of society. He was a popular man and well sought after, having a great interest in music and the 'innocent amusements' of the day. And yet in all of this he was not happy – he remained unsatisfied and did not know how to free himself from his situation. Later in life, when preaching in the open air in Soho Square, London, Henry referred to his previous life and how he was converted.

Conversion

In 1837 news reached him that his mother was unwell. Henry was very fond of his mother and even though the report he received did not indicate that the situation was serious, he decided that he would immediately make the journey from London to Plymouth, fearing that he would not get to see his mother. His suspicions were well founded, and he was met by his uncle who told him that his mother had passed away. It is said that he prayed that night by his mother's coffin, 'Lord, if Thou dost not save me, I am lost for ever!'

Shortly after this, whilst attending a gospel meeting, the way of salvation became clear, and Henry trusted Christ. The subsequent change in him was such that a relative is reported to have said, 'You are like the man in the third of Acts, walking and leaping and praising God'.

The friends who previously welcomed Henry's company soon turned from him when they heard that he now had 'peculiar opinions'. Henry concluded there was nothing left for him in London, and he decided to give up his position at the bar and move back to Plymouth.

It was at Plymouth that Henry encountered believers who taught the truth of gathering according to New Testament principles. Having been convicted of these truths, Henry, along with many others, saw the need to separate himself from the established church. He soon discovered that this came at a cost, and he suffered rejection by both friends and family.

Family life

In 1841, Henry married Miss Lucy Tate Smith, a marriage which lasted for thirty-four years until Henry's death. The family home was first set up in Plymouth but following divisions amongst the believers (which sadly continue to the present day in some circles) the family moved, first to Exmouth and then to the market town of Northam in North Devon. The

couple had nine children, and Henry had the joy of seeing all his children trust the Saviour. At least six of these children were associated with the missionary Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission.

Service

From the time of his conversion, Henry was very active in preaching the gospel, as well as ministering to the saints. He retired from professional life to dedicate himself to the work of the Lord, working throughout Devon. As a result of his work, and that of others, many souls were saved and assemblies planted. The legacy of such labours can be seen in the reports of assembly testimony in Devon in past issues of *Precious Seed*, which are available at www.preciousseed.org.

It was following a move to Exeter that Henry became known to a wider audience, both in public and printed ministry.

Publications

Henry published several books. The most well-known ones are, *The Tabernacle*, *The Priesthood and The Offerings* and *The Holy Vessels and Furniture of the Tabernacle*. Both books are worth obtaining as, in addition to providing a detailed study of the tabernacle, there is also much which exalts the person of Christ. He also wrote *The Soul and its Difficulties*, aiming to make the way of salvation clear and provide assurance to those who lacked it.

Death and legacy

Whilst in his early fifties, Henry began to lose his sight, and it was anticipated that he would become totally blind. However, some sight was restored to him enabling him to read the largest print Bible. He visited many parts, including London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Hereford, and Dublin, where he was especially welcomed.

In 1867, his health began to fail. During a short visit to London, he was laid low by paralysis, and he never spoke in public again. In 1870, he moved to Barnstaple to end his days near his beloved friend, R. C. Chapman. After he had been unconscious for several weeks, he died on 1st July 1875.



Edited by
ANDREW DUTTON

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED

is a supplement of *Precious Seed*, designed for those young in the faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed*, PO Box 10544, Grantham, NG31 0HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.

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YOUNG.PRECIOUSSEED

Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the May issue of YPS.

With exam preparation or other work pressures it might be a busy time just now. But with summer around the corner, God willing, it's a great time to plan how to use the holiday season for

the Lord. Why not find out if there are special outreach activities you could support, a Christian camp, or Bible teaching series you could attend? If you would like some ideas, we would be pleased to try and help at YPS.

This edition has more helpful articles and I hope that they will be a blessing to you.

Andrew Dutton

Seeing the world through a biblical lens – Creation

ANDREW DUTTON, NORWICH, ENGLAND

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth', Gen. 1. 1, is not only the opening statement of the Bible, but the basis to scripture that follows. It is a foundational truth on which Christians stand. If these words, along with the following record of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are disregarded, or even subtly adjusted in an attempt to fit the biblical account of creation with other world views, the truth of scripture is undermined. This leads to serious problems – if I don't accept that these chapters are the exact and accurate account of creation, how can I rely on the whole Bible, including God's way of salvation?

It is therefore important to start with the basis that 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God', 2 Tim. 3. 16, and 'thy word is truth', John 17. 17. As a believer in the Lord Jesus, my conviction should be formed on the fact that God's word is true, no matter what the world around me thinks, understands or believes.

The purpose of this article is not to show that science can agree with biblical creation, but to state some of the biblical truths relating to creation and then consider the implications to me practically. After all, I'm no scientist and there are many good resources available.¹

The truths stated

- **God is eternal and there was a point in eternity when He created:** 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God', Ps. 90. 2.
- **The Son of God was instrumental in creation:** 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made', John 1. 1-3.
- **Creation was for God's glory:** 'The heavens declare the glory of God', Ps. 19. 1.

- **God created from nothing:** 'God created the heaven and the earth . . . the earth was without form, and void', Gen. 1. 1, 2.
- **The entire universe was part of God's creation:** 'Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?', Job 38. 31-33.
- **God created all things in six days:** 'And the evening and the morning were the sixth day', Gen. 1. 31.
- **Mankind was distinct in creation:** 'God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion', Gen. 1. 26.

Implications

So, what are the implications of the stated truths? First, because God has stated these things in His word, I believe them as true facts – without question! As a Christian, this is to be my conviction, regardless of what other voices say around me, including most schoolteachers and textbooks. This is hard, particularly for those in schools and universities that are taught opposing views, disguised as facts. As such, it's important to be prepared:

- Learn God's word, and become familiar with verses about creation, such as those above.
- Pray about the verses and ask the Lord to help you to be certain and unmovable in your own conviction. After the Apostle Paul had taught about the truth of the resurrection he said, 'God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . be ye steadfast, unmoveable', 1 Cor. 15. 57, 58.
- Recognize that it is 'through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God', Heb. 11. 3.

Second, I can praise and worship God – 'All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee', Ps. 145. 10. We can

appreciate God's great power displayed in the vast universe. But also, how amazing it is to think that we who 'were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ', Eph. 2. 13, because the eternal Son of God came to the world He created.

'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty', Rev. 15. 3.

¹For example, the reader can find helpful material at:

- YPS Series - Evidence From Nature of a Creator's Touch – www.youngpreciousseed.org/series/evidence-from-nature-of-a-creators-touch
- Answers in Genesis – www.answersingenesis.org
- Creation Ministries International – www.creation.com

Gone, but not forgotten. Epitaphs of the kings of Judah

RICHARD SMITH, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND



All quotations are taken from the New King James Bible

2. Comparisons with David

How do I know if I am a success? A useful tool is comparison. Observing others to identify the differences or similarities and decide our status. Children compare who got the biggest slice of cake, who is punished more severely, to determine who is the favourite child. Often, they reach the wrong conclusion! The world judges success by material things such as brand of clothing, number of likes, retweets, and so on – too often the comparison is shallow, causing dissatisfaction.

The Lord often used comparisons: two men went to the temple to pray; two men built houses; a man had two sons; two men passed the victim on the Jericho road and a third 'came where he was', Luke 10. 33. Comparison is an effective tool, and used properly gives an indicator of where we are spiritually. The temptation to think like the Pharisee in Luke chapter 18 verse 11, 'I thank You that I am not like other men', is to be avoided.

Judah's kings are sometimes compared to Israel's greatest king – David. Acts chapter 13 verse 22 quotes Samuel: the Lord had found 'a man after My own heart, who will do all My will'. Wait! What about Bathsheba? Uriah? Surely David failed. Yes, but his heart was right – he wanted what was right and, on the occasions when he failed (see Psalms 32 and 51), he was quick to repent and put the matter right with God.

When Asa was confronted with his failure, in his rage he imprisoned his accuser. When faced with his sin, David repented immediately and put the matter right. That is the reason that 'his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father', 1 Kgs. 15. 3 ESV. The recorder does give Asa his due: when he does good, we are told, 'Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David', 1 Kgs. 15. 11. He was different to David in the matter of **repentance**.

Later we come to Amaziah, a man who appeared to be doing well, but scratching the surface reveals that he encouraged idolatry in the nation, even making offerings to idols, 2 Chr. 25. He went to war against Israel despite God's instruction. 'He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a loyal

heart', 2 Chr. 25. 2; 'not like his father David', 2 Kgs. 14. 3. He differed from David in **reality**.

Amaziah's great-grandson was Ahaz. His was a reign of failure. He walked in the idolatry of the kings of Israel, even sacrificing his son to an idol. Besieged by Syria and Israel, he surrendered to the Assyrians, removing the treasures from the House of God, giving them, and his liberty to them, 'I am your servant and your son', 2 Kgs. 16. 7. What a difference with David! Ahaz 'did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God, as his father David had done', 2 Kgs. 16. 2. The contrast with David is in his **rebellion**.

Ahaz's son was Hezekiah, his great-grandson Josiah. These were remarkable kings. They discovered the word and worship of God, and though neither were perfect they were reforming, diligent kings, determined to make a difference for God. Hezekiah 'did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done', 2 Kgs. 18. 3; Josiah 'did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left', 2 Kgs. 22. 2. They were the same as David in their **resolve**. Perhaps the reason for Josiah's resolve was his decision, 'while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David', 2 Chr. 34. 3.

What about us?

- **Repentance:** How do I respond to sin? By sinning again? By covering it with more sin? Or by confessing, repenting, with a determination to return to my former devotion?
- **Reality:** Is my life just for show? Is what I do more important than who I am? The Lord knows and judges the motive as well as the action.
- **Rebellion:** Is my life rebellious? Set against the truths of scripture, am I determined to please myself?
- **Resolve:** Let's resolve to put ourselves behind us, to prize what God would prize, to look at the positive example of a man like David, and, in the words of Paul, 'forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus', Phil. 3. 13, 14 ESV.

Christian basics – establishing Christian friendships

STUART SCAMMELL, CARDIFF, WALES

‘A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother’, Prov. 18. 24.

Social media is a huge influence on us today. Many have an online persona that may actually reflect very little of the reality in their lives. Everyone has a need to be accepted, and, for some, popularity is very important. Social media often measures this by the number of likes, or the amount of ‘friends’ we have online. The verse in Proverbs would remind us that true friends are not superficial acquaintances that we meet in passing, or that we might send a friend request to. True friends are people who earn our trust through their actions, and this is a two-way street. The verse tells us that a true friend is invaluable and can be closer even than family. These friends will be lifelong, will see past our faults and should be cherished.

Christian friendship is so important to the life we lead for our Lord. I look back to my teenage years and I am thankful for Christian friends who encouraged me and offered a sense of community.

Many will have school friends that will be loyal, loving, and supportive, yet, ultimately, they will have very different values, dreams, and ambitions. We value these friendships and would prayerfully seek to tell them about our Saviour, but increasingly they will encourage us to participate in activities, frequent places, and talk about things that would be detrimental to our spiritual progress.

As I look back at my younger days, sadly many of my Christian friends are no longer walking with God. It is very possible that they grew to love what this world has to offer, or maybe followed popularity, feeling the need to fit in. We are reminded in Romans chapter 12 verse 2 not to ‘be conformed to this world’. God warns of this for a reason. In John chapter 14 verse 30, the devil is described as the prince or ruler of this world. This world is set up to take us away from God. It will rob us of our time, change our outlook, and lead us to have goals and ambitions that are not spiritual.

In 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 10, we read of Demas. Paul, in Philemon verse 24 described him as his fellow labourer, but here we read that he deserted Paul because he found the things the world had to offer so appealing. That is extremely sad; Demas turned to the pleasures of this world for whatever time he had left in his life, but missed out on much. He missed out on knowing the joy of living for God and building into heavenly, eternal blessings.

Our friends undoubtedly influence us and encourage us to make choices that will benefit us, or otherwise. A true friend will lovingly point out our faults. If we don’t have our faults revealed to us, we will carry on in them and this could end in disaster. Proverbs chapter 27 verse 5 tells us that ‘Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed’. Verse 6 goes on to tell us that, ‘Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful’. These verses emphasize the value of true Christian friends, who will lovingly help us with our faults, and we should help them too.

We must also, of course, be positive. In a slightly different context, Hebrews chapter 10 verse 24 encourages us to, ‘consider one another in order to stir up love and good works’. It is a good test of how good a friend really is, if through their conversation and encouragement, we are brought closer to God, His work, and to display Christian love.

In the UK at least, there are far fewer Christians than in previous generations and certainly fewer in assembly fellowship. We must be careful not to isolate ourselves in our home assemblies, where there might be only a few younger believers. Our local assembly is where we are called to serve and help one another, and we should be regularly gathering and becoming more involved. However, we should make every effort to attend meetings at other assemblies, Bible study weeks and weekends. Here we will not only learn more from the word of God, but we will establish good friendships that can be vital to our spiritual wellbeing and help us to live meaningful lives serving the Lord, whom we love because He first loved us.



Saints' CVs: Charles Thomas Studd

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

CHARLES THOMAS STUDD 1860-1931

Pick up any cricket encyclopaedia and flick through it; you will soon find the entry for C. T. Studd. This is what Cricinfo says about him:¹

'A great batsman, a fine field and a high-class bowler, CT Studd developed his powers so rapidly that, while still at Cambridge, he was in the best Eleven of England. He possessed a fine upright style in batting and was particularly strong on the off-side. He bowled right-hand rather above medium pace and, tall of build, brought the ball over from a good height. In 1882 he made 118 for Cambridge University and 114 for the M.C.C. against probably the strongest bowling Australia ever sent to this country'.

Studd was the Ian Botham or Freddie Flintoff of his day – a world-class all-round cricketer. In two seasons, he 'did the double', scoring 1000 runs and taking 100 wickets. He played in the first Ashes match between England and Australia. Studd's name is contained within a poem written on the original Ashes urn.

He had a privileged upbringing; as the son of a wealthy Victorian landowner, he was educated at Eton College and Cambridge University, two of the most prestigious education institutions in the UK. When Studd was a teenager, his father was saved during a gospel meeting where D. L. Moody was preaching. Immediately, Studd senior started inviting travelling preachers to visit his country manor, Tedworth House. Within a year, C. T. Studd and his two brothers were saved, along with other people in the neighbourhood.

During his time at Cambridge, Studd was convicted about serving the Lord as a missionary. The famous Hudson Taylor was visiting Cambridge, and his message provoked Studd, along with six other young men, to volunteer to serve with the China Inland Mission. The Cambridge Seven² caught the attention of the country, leading to a nationwide tour of speaking engagements. Many others were saved and later devoted their lives to missionary work.

While in China, Studd married Priscilla Stewart who was a fellow missionary.³ He also received a vast inheritance from his father, but Studd renounced this fortune, choosing to donate it to charitable causes including George Muller's orphanage in Bristol.

C. T. Studd and Priscilla were sent home from China due to

poor health. However, they later became missionaries in India for several years. Finally, Studd elected to travel to Africa. He had been attracted to a meeting about African mission work by a notice which read, 'Cannibals want missionaries'.⁴ He died in what was then the Belgian Congo in 1931. Studd was the founder of the World Evangelisation Crusade (WEC), a missionary organization that remains in operation today.

I think the most striking image of C. T. Studd is found in a pair of photographs from Studd's biography by his son-in-law, Norman Grubb.⁵ The first photo shows the magnificent Tedworth House, set in the beautiful English countryside. The second photo shows Studd outside a ramshackle wooden hut in Africa. The pictures are accompanied by a verse caption, 'Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt', Heb. 11. 26.

Studd was renowned for forceful words and challenging poetry. He often offended people with his uncompromising and challenging tone. Some of his most famous quotations are listed below.

- Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.⁶
- Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.⁷
- If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.⁸

Studd leaves a tremendous legacy as an inspirational missionary pioneer. His Cricinfo biography goes on to say, 'Unhappily for English cricket, C. T. Studd was not seen in the field after 1884'. Happily for the gospel, Studd exchanged the cricket field for the mission field, renouncing sporting glory for his Master's service. 'And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life', Matt. 19. 29.

The books listed in the footnotes are all excellent reading – swashbuckling missionary stories about C. T. Studd and his service for the Lord.



¹ <https://www.espncricinfo.com/cricketers/charles-studd-20398>.

² JOHN POLLOCK, *The Cambridge Seven*, Christian Focus, 2006 (revised edition).

³ EILEEN VINCENT, *CT Studd and Priscilla*, STL Books, 1988.

⁴ GORDON PETTIE, *No Sacrifice Too Great*, Sovereign World, 2021.

⁵ NORMAN GRUBB, *CT Studd: Cricketer and Pioneer*, Lutterworth Press, 1933.

⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 145.

⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 170.

⁸ GORDON PETTIE, *op. cit.*, pg. 219.

One God and Father of all

By **RICHARD COLLINGS** Caerphilly, Wales

This article continues the occasional series titled 'Father of' and the words above are an extract from Ephesians chapter 4 verse 6. Before considering the content of the verse, we shall look at its setting within the overall Epistle, and also within chapter 4.

The setting of verse 6

The six chapters of Ephesians can be divided into two primary sections. Chapters 1 to 3 are entirely doctrinal; there is a complete absence of any exhortations. The subject matter centres around our wealth in Christ and our heavenly standing. Chapters 4 to 6 are mostly practical, and open with Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, beseeching the saints at Ephesus to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called'. The focus of these chapters emphasizes our work for Christ and our walk on earth. However, although the second half of the Epistle is practical, verses 4 to 6 of chapter 4 bring to our attention a sevenfold doctrinal unity.

Just as the book as a whole can be divided into two equal sections, the same is true of the fourth chapter. In verses 1 to 16, attention is drawn to 'unity in Christ' and in verses 17 to 32, the emphasis centres on 'conformity to Christ'. In relation to the unity in Christ, Paul expresses a desire for it to be maintained in verses 1 to 3 and then sets out a display of unity in verses 4 to 6. It is within this display of doctrinal unity that the words 'one God and Father of all' occur.

In chapter 2, we learn that a unity has been made from two parties that for centuries were incompatible and antagonistic to each other. In verses 4 to 6 of chapter 4, the apostle unfolds further truth in relation to this unity and it is a unity that is formed around the persons of the Godhead. Verse 4 refers to 'one Spirit', verse 5 to 'one Lord' and verse 6 to 'one God and Father'.

To assist us in our consideration of the phrase 'one God and Father of all', and the remaining part of verse 6, we shall break it down into its component parts.

One God

In contrast to the plethora of gods the Gentiles worshipped, there is only 'one God'. Paul is teaching that there is not one god for the Jews and a different kind of god for the Gentiles. There is only one God. This is a truth that is emphasized in the prophecy of Isaiah. In chapter 45 verse 21, Jehovah declares, 'there is no God else beside me' and in chapter 46 verse 9, God declares, 'Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me'.

and Father of all

Although the Old Testament presents aspects of the Fatherhood of God, for example in Malachi chapter 2 verse 10 we read, 'Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?', yet the revelation of God as Father is much more pronounced in the New Testament. Maybe God is referred to as Father here because prior to conversion the Ephesians worshipped a female god; they worshipped the goddess Artemis, perhaps better known to us by the Roman name 'Diana'.

There is a sense in which God is the 'Father of all' in the widest use of the word 'all' because He is the Creator.



When Paul addressed the Athenian intelligentsia on Mars Hill, he said, 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device', Acts 17. 28, 29.

However, this reference to God as Father in Ephesians chapter 4 must be seen in the context of the unity of the Spirit and therefore it can only refer to those who are saved and members of the body of Christ. Converted Jews and converted Gentiles have access by one Spirit unto the Father. This is akin to what the apostle taught the churches of Galatia, 'because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"', Gal. 4. 6 NKJV.

The remaining part of Ephesians chapter 4 verse 6 presents a threefold description of God, each part being introduced by a preposition. God is 'above all, and through all, and in you all'.

who is above all

God is preeminent. There is an infinite gulf between God and the highest created being, His transcendence is immeasurable. It is astounding to contemplate that we, mortal and finite creatures, can approach such an august and ineffable being and address Him not only as our God but as our Father.

and through all

This must differ from the final clause of the verse. It refers to God working out His purposes through us. God not only works for us but He also operates through us to achieve His objectives.

and in all

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon asked, 'will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?' 1 Kgs. 8. 27. How amazing it is to contemplate that the one whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain resides in each of us. We may not be aware of it – but it is true.

TITLES OF JEHOVAH ⁴

JEHOVAH-

MEKADDISHKEM

‘Jehovah that doth sanctify you’¹

By **JOHN SCARBROOK** Killamarsh, England

The ‘Titles of Jehovah’ in this series of articles can be found listed in the introductory notes of *The Newberry Bible*.² Some are very familiar to the Bible student, and all serve to shed light on the character of our God and the way in which He reveals Himself in a variety of circumstances.

The title under consideration in this article, however, may not be so familiar. The word ‘Mekaddishkem’ is an unusual compound word, apparently derived from the Hebrew word ‘kaddesh’ or ‘qadash’ which is the word given in STRONG’S concordance for all the above references and is variously translated throughout scripture as ‘sanctified’, ‘holy’ or ‘hallowed’.³

To be sanctified is to be set apart, particularly with a view to serving or honouring God. This is seen in a number of applications in the Old Testament relative to both animate and inanimate objects and also to persons, as we shall see. In the New Testament, ‘sanctification’ embraces both positional and practical aspects for believers in the Lord Jesus.

The foundational truth, which underpins every revealed aspect of the Almighty, is that God is intrinsically and fundamentally holy. When the prophet Isaiah and the Apostle John were given privileged audience into the throne room of heaven, they both referred to the sound of angelic beings crying, ‘Holy, holy, holy’ to the Lord of hosts, Isa. 6. 3; and to the Lord God Almighty, Rev. 4. 8. If we could appreciate the purity and perfection of divine holiness, we would begin to understand just how heinous sin is, and, indeed, any falling short of this standard constitutes an offence. Even Moses was denied access to the

Promised Land because in smiting the rock he failed to sanctify Jehovah in the eyes of the children of Israel, Num. 20. 12; Deut. 32. 51. Well may Jeremiah record, ‘It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness’, Lam. 3. 22, 23.

The first mention of sanctification in scripture confirms the tone for what follows. Having completed the six days of creation to His satisfaction, ‘God . . . rested on the seventh day from all his work’, Gen. 2. 2. This was not, of course, a rest occasioned by fatigue, but rather a foreshadowing of His purpose to bring creation into a millennial rest when His planned ages have run their course. To this end He ‘blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it’, v. 3, set it apart to be distinct. The principle of six days plus one became established in wilderness days when the manna was given and the first reference is made to the sabbath, Exod. 16. 23, simply meaning ‘rest’ or ‘repose’. The seventh day was later enshrined in Sinai’s law as a day which God had blessed and hallowed (sanctified), 20. 11, with strict and summary penalties for transgressors.

The Lord Jesus made it clear that ‘The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath’, Mark 2. 27, emphasizing the goodness of God’s provision for man’s welfare. The scribes and Pharisees, however,

used it as a stick with which to beat others into submission to their self-appointed authority.

It is interesting to observe that in modern Israel, now primarily a secular and materialistic nation, that at 6 p.m. on a Friday evening work mostly ceases, shops close and the sabbath is kept. Also, on the outskirts of some villages a post and wire fence still indicates the extent of a sabbath day’s journey!

In Exodus chapter 31 verse 13, the keeping of the sabbath is revealed as a sign given only to succeeding generations of Israelites to make clear that God had set them apart for Himself. Later, He will remind them that the law, also given exclusively to Israel, marked them out as sanctified, Lev. 20. 8. Within the nation, Aaron’s family was then subjected to more stringent regulations as being sanctified to officiate in the sacrificial offerings. The word through Moses concerning those of the priesthood was, ‘Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy’, Lev. 21. 8. Note here, as throughout scripture, the words ‘sanctify’ and ‘holy’ are synonymous.

Israel had to learn that the holiness of their God Jehovah pervaded every aspect of their lives, whether personal or ceremonial. Every aspect of the tabernacle and, later, Solomon’s temple, was sanctified as being the dwelling place of God. The materials, the furniture, and the individual components of the high priest’s garments were all deemed to be holy. The sphere of priestly ministry was called the holy place, and the inner sanctuary, entered by the high priest on one day of the year only, was known as the most holy, or the holy of holies.

The Epistle to the Hebrews considers our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, who officiates in the heavenly sanctuary. His priesthood is of a higher order than that of Aaron, whose descendants, though sanctified to serve, were compassed with infirmity and subject to death. By contrast, the Lord Jesus in both

His deity and humanity is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens', Heb. 7. 26.

The title under consideration reveals Jehovah, the sovereign, covenant-keeping God as the source of sanctification. The references given above confirm the unique relationship which the nation of Israel has in the purposes of God. A people set apart and singularly blessed 'to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came', Rom. 9. 4, 5. Scripture shows, however, that we can understand sanctification in a broader sense as revealed in the New Testament. Jude, in his introduction, reminds us that, as believers, we are 'sanctified by God the Father', v. 1. Sanctification is also the work of the Son, Heb. 2. 11; 13. 12, the Holy Spirit, Rom. 15. 16; 2 Thess. 2. 13, and the word of God, 1 Tim. 4. 5. These references, together with others, show conclusively the equality and unity of Father, Son, and Spirit, proving to us also that scripture is from the very heart of God.

When a person trusts the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, a number of remarkable changes take place. The



individual may not be immediately aware of, or understand, the extent of what has happened as in a moment they have become a new creation, 2 Cor. 5. 17, and now belong to the family of God, 1 John 3. 1, 2. They no longer walk in darkness because their eyes have been opened, they have a new Master and a new destiny, Acts 26. 18; they are redeemed and forgiven, Col. 1. 14. Added to all this, in heaven's estimate, the believer in the Lord Jesus is sanctified, 1 Cor. 6. 11; Heb. 10. 10. Just as Israel, God's earthly people, were set apart that through them the ways of the one true God may be made known to idolatrous nations, so, consequent upon the work of Calvary and the descent of the Holy Spirit, God has a people set apart for Himself to make known 'the manifold wisdom of God', Eph. 3. 10.

Throughout the New Testament, Christians are identified and addressed as 'saints', quite simply, 'sanctified ones'. The world at large, following the traditional and unscriptural teaching of Christendom, thinks that saints are long dead martyrs, and those who lived virtuous lives and performed miracles. By being elevated to 'sainthood', they are able to receive and respond to the prayers of the faithful. This, of course, has no foundation in scripture and only draws unstable souls further away from the truth.

In the writings of the Apostle Paul, with the exception of the Galatian letter and the Pastoral Epistles, he consistently refers to the recipients of his letters as 'saints'. In so doing he embraces all true believers, even though at times he is presenting a corrective ministry. To the Corinthian church, where a number of issues involving morality, doctrine, and practice needed addressing, the apostle still calls the believers 'saints', 1 Cor. 1. 2; 6. 1, 2; 16. 15.

We are reminded on two occasions, Rom. 15. 4; 1 Cor. 10. 6, that the experiences and failures of the people of Israel have been left on record as a warning to succeeding generations. Jehovah sanctified the nation with the purpose in mind that they should

live and behave as those set apart for the glory of God. Sadly, both individually and nationally they so often failed. Scripture bears record, however, that in every generation there were those who faithfully upheld and maintained the purposes of God as revealed to them.

Those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and are therefore in the sight of God sanctified now have the indwelling Spirit of God enabling them to live sanctified lives. In 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 14 to 16, the apostle reminds his readers to live 'as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy'. It is interesting to observe that Leviticus chapter 11, from which this quotation is taken, is full of instructions regarding Israel's diet, what they should and should not eat. The immediate context of the verses quoted from First Peter chapter 1 is the believer's mind. The lesson is clear, that what I allow my mind to feed upon will determine the measure in which holiness characterizes my life and walk. Paul takes this up when writing to the Philippians, 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report . . . think on these things', Phil. 4. 8. The prophet Haggai reminded the returned remnant of his day that holiness is not contagious, but uncleanness is, Hag. 2. 12, 13.

We will let the Apostle Paul have the last word, 'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification', 1 Thess. 4. 3, written very aptly just before the promise of the Lord's return.

Endnotes

- 1 Exod. 31. 13; Lev. 20. 8; 21. 8; 22. 9, 16, 32; Ezek. 20. 12.
- 2 THOMAS NEWBERRY, *The Newberry Bible – Single Column Reference Edition*, John Ritchie, 2021, pp. xii, xiii.
- 3 JAMES STRONG, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Hendricksen.

OBADIAH

By **STEPHEN G. BAKER** Liverpool, England

This is the shortest of the writings of the Old Testament having only twenty-one verses. It forms part of a group of books in the Old Testament called 'The Prophets' and often known as the 'Minor Prophets'. This expression describes the length of the book, not its rating in God's eyes or its importance.

The man who wrote it is unknown apart from the fact that he was a Judean. The name means the servant worshipper of Jehovah. Surprisingly, the first impression you get when reading this prophecy, is not of a call to worship, but as you read it through you will bow in worship as you reflect on the character of God – His justice, care for His people, power to carry out His purposes, and ultimately, His authority.

There is some uncertainty about when this document was written; some estimate between 586 and 539 BC but other authorities say 890 BC.¹ It does not really make a big difference.

Its main message

In this book Jehovah is communicating the fact that the nation of the Edomites will be judged by God because of the part they played in the overthrow and destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonian Emperor, Nebuchadnezzar.²

The city of Jerusalem had been invaded on four occasions up until this point in time.³ It is the fourth invasion that is described in this little book. While this was going on, the Edomites watched the city being attacked and ransacked. In fact, they had entered the city, looted, stood, and gloated, v. 12, at the pain of the residents of Jerusalem. They even blocked the exit of those who were running for their lives, v. 14.

All of this would have been awful enough if it had not been for the fact that the Edomites were related to the Judeans.⁴

God pronounced judgement on the evil actions of these people. Despite

the sin of the Jewish nation, which Jehovah will always judge fairly and righteously, God will not permit those who oppose His people to prosper.

The following summary of the book will help you get your head round its main themes:

- The punishment of Edomites is predicted, vv. 1-9
- The reasons for the punishment are explained, vv. 10-14
- The nature of the punishment is defined, vv. 15, 16
- The deliverance of Judah is predicted, vv. 17, 18
- Details of the disposal of the Edomites' land and possessions are given, vv. 19, 20
- The re-establishment of Jerusalem and the Kingdom is stated, v. 21.

There are a number of themes in the book. Up to verse 19, the focus is on the judgement of the Edomites. Verses 20 and 21 highlight the future restoration of the nation of Israel. As can be seen from the division of the book, the attention is centred on the judgement of the Edomites. The book could also be divided as follows:

- The defeat of Israel, ending with the prediction of judgement on the Edomites, vv. 1-19
- The victory of Israel, ending with the prediction of them once again possessing the land of promise, vv. 20, 21.

Let us now look at each section of the chapter.

The punishment of Edom predicted, vv. 1-9

In verse 1, Obadiah starts by reminding his readers that this is a message from the sovereign Lord. The Edomites are

about to face the judgement of God for their sinful behaviour.

The language of diplomacy is used to describe what is going to take place. A representative of the government of God, heaven's throne, has been sent to the nations of the world. It is a call to action and the outcome will be a joint task force of the armed forces of the world in bringing judgement upon the state of Edom. In the 20th and 21st centuries we have become familiar with this type of activity. It is usually instigated by one of the world's superpowers with the objective of confronting some 'axis of evil'. How interesting! It is also fascinating to see that Satan will inspire a similar confrontation with God and His people. This is described in Psalm 2, the writings of the prophets, the Gospels, and the book of Revelation.

Verse 2 describes the outcome of this divinely inspired action – Edom will become small among the nations and greatly despised. Later verses will explain that the reason why they are despised is that their behaviour towards their ancient relatives was regarded as abnormal by anyone's standards.

When we come to verses 3 and 4, we are given an insight into the thinking and attitudes of the Edomites. They were proud, v. 3, considered themselves invincible, v. 4, and had been guilty of self-promotion, v. 4. The Lord reminds them that He will bring them down. The words of Galatians chapter 6 verse 7 come to mind; 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap'.

Pride is an awful thing, and it is not long before those who are drawn into its deceitful net find themselves facing its devastating consequences – shame, Prov. 11. 2, contention, 13. 10, destruction, 16. 18, and being brought low, 29. 23. It was the cause of the fall of the prince of Tyrus, Ezek. 28. 2, and the king of Tyrus in verse 12, both of whom would seem to be depicting Satan and the show of pride he exhibited before the fall he engineered in Eden, v. 13. In latter days this same pride will be seen in the 'man of sin' as he opposes God, 2 Thess. 2. We would be well advised to avoid an attitude of pride if we want to live to the glory of God.

In verses 4 and 5 of the section, the Lord uses two illustrations to stress how inappropriate the behaviour of the Edomites was towards Judah. First, He says, if thieves broke into your house, they would not clear everything out; they would leave some of your possessions. And, when people harvest grapes, they do not strip the vine of every vestige of the crop but leave some for the poor. But, as the men of Edom had stripped Judah of everything, so the just judgement of Jehovah will be commensurate with their actions.

It seems to be that Edom was an impressive civilization at one time. As a result, they had a lot to lose. In the remaining verses of the section, we are told what would happen:

- Esau will be exposed⁵
- Their hidden treasures will be found and removed
- Their allies would turn against them
- They would be deceived by their trusted friends
- All the intelligentsia of Edom would be removed from the land
- Their military would be reduced to trembling and terror
- All of the population of Edom would be wiped out.

The reasons for the punishment explained, vv. 10-14

In this second section we are given the reasons for the severe treatment of the Edomites. They stood guilty of:

- Violence against close relatives
- Inaction in the face of a neighbour's adversity
- Failing to protect Judah's national property when it was in their power to help
- Wagering on the success of the invasion as opposed to assisting the oppressed
- Revelling and gloating in the destruction of another nation and the exile of its people
- Rejoicing over the misfortune of others
- Speaking arrogantly in the time of Judah's trouble
- Plundering the wealth of another nation
- Preventing the escape of citizens
- Murdering people trying to escape from the invasion

- Capturing survivors and handing them over to the invading forces.

The nature of the punishment is defined, vv. 15, 16

The narrative seems to move beyond the immediate judgement of the Edomites to include what Jehovah will bring upon all nations that have attacked and opposed Israel. Those that have persecuted Israel will one day cease to exist.

The first statement, 'the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen', v. 15, seems to be comprehensive and covers all nations. The second statement, 'as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee', may be more specific and refer to actions of the Edomites.

The imagery of verse 16 is very vivid. God says, 'You swallowed up my people and so you will swallow the punishment that I pour out upon you'. A similar picture is painted in Psalm 75 verse 8. Jehovah is portrayed as having a full cup of judgement in His hand and the wicked of the world will drink the very dregs of the cup.⁶ The just judgement of God against the wicked nations of the world in end times is a terrifying reality.

The deliverance of Judah is predicted, vv. 17, 18

This is a more uplifting section of the prophecy. In end times, Mount Zion, Jerusalem, will fulfil the potential that God intended for it. The city will become:

- A refuge for the exile (as opposed to being emptied by exile)
- A place noted for its holiness (as opposed to the idolatry and defilement that once was normal)
- Repopulated by those whose right it is to live there
- The instrument of God's judgement rather than the victims (there will be the raging fire and the house of Joseph⁷ will be the flame and the house of Esau stubble).

There will be no survivors from the house of Esau (Edom) – see also verses 10 and 16.

Details of the disposal of the Edomites' land and possessions are given, vv. 19, 20

In contrast to the Edomites ransacking

and stealing the possessions of the people of Judah, verse 19 states that their land will be repopulated by the people of the south [south of Judah, the Negev region]. They will occupy the territory of the Philistine plain, Ephraim, Samaria, and the people of Benjamin will occupy the region of Gilead.

In addition to this, verse 20 explains that the exiles of Israel will return to their land and occupy as far north as Zarephath on the Phoenician coast and the exiles of Jerusalem will populate the south. While we may struggle to see exactly where the territorial boundaries are, this scripture indicates that the land will be repopulated by God's people, the Jews.

The re-establishment of Jerusalem and the kingdom is stated, v. 21

This small prophecy concludes with the deliverers or saviours ascending to mount Zion and governing the mountains of Esau. In that day, the kingdom will belong to the Lord and He will reign with His people from Zion.⁸ What a glorious day that will be when Messiah and His people reign from Jerusalem!

This little prophecy reminds us that God is working out His purposes despite the arrogant intentions of men to destroy His people and wreck His plans.

Endnotes

- 1 For a discussion of this point see F. A. TATFORD, *Prophet of Edom's Doom*, Prophetic Witness Publishing House, 1973, pg. 17.
- 2 2 Kgs. 25; and 2 Chr. 36.
- 3 By Shishak, 1 Kgs. 14. 25; 2 Chr. 12. 2; by the Philistines and Arabians, 2 Chr. 21. 16, 17; by Joash, king of Israel, 2 Kgs. 14. 8-14; 2 Chr. 25. 19-24; and by Nebuchadnezzar, 2 Kgs. 25; 2 Chr. 36. 11-21.
- 4 See Genesis chapter 36 verse 1 and spot the link between the names Esau and Edom.
- 5 Those who valued the things of this world more than the covenant blessings of God, Gen. 25. 29-34.
- 6 See also Jer. 25. 15.
- 7 Joseph was noted for fruitfulness and blessing, Gen. 48. 15; 49. 22-26.
- 8 Zion is the stronghold that David conquered, 2 Sam. 5. 7, and symbol of the future reign of Messiah, Isa. 35. 10; 62. 11.

The life and times of Elisha³ Jehoram, Jehoshaphat, Elisha and Mesha^{2 Kings 3}

By **FRANK PROUDLOCK** Leicester, England

Frederick Augustus Klein was an Anglican missionary who dedicated his life to reaching Palestinian populations in Nazareth and Jerusalem between 1851 and 1877. As an avid amateur archaeologist, in August 1868 Klein discovered the Moabite Stone, or Mesha Stele, while exploring the ancient ruins of Dhiban in present-day Jordan. This basalt stone, inscribed with 34 lines in the Moabite language, is the longest Iron Age inscription found in the region and contains the earliest extrabiblical mention of Jehovah. Although written very much from a Moabite perspective, the stone refers to figures and events described in the passage under our consideration, 2 Kings 3. It also contains the most extensive record recovered from this period referring to the kingdom of Israel.¹

Although fascinating from an archaeological perspective, the chapter is more important in its relevance for God's people today. Central to the narrative are four very different characters: Jehoram, the ungodly king of Israel; Jehoshaphat, the righteous yet flawed king of Judah; Elisha, the unwavering prophet; and Mesha, the depraved king of Moab. Let us consider these individuals in turn.

Jehoram the pretender, vv. 1-6

Jehoram,² king of Israel for twelve years, did not have good role models or peers. His parents, Jezebel and Ahab, were among the most wicked leaders in Israel's history. His elder brother Ahaziah was an inveterate idolater, enquiring of Baalzebub even on his death bed, 2 Kgs. 1. His sister Athaliah became one of the most wicked and tyrannical rulers Israel had witnessed, 2 Kgs. 11. Although Jehoram was a moderate ruler compared to his contemporaries, removing Baal worship, v. 2, we are told, 'Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin', v. 3. Like Aaron centuries earlier, Exod. 32. 4, Jeroboam had crafted calves of gold declaring, 'behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt', 1 Kgs. 12. 28.

Jehoram professed to follow Jehovah, adhering to the first commandment, 'I am the Lord thy God . . . thou shalt have no other gods before me', Exod. 20. 2, 3. Yet he flagrantly violated the second commandment, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them', vv. 4, 5. In reality, Jehoram was a pretender, and his profession was false. The religion he followed was a corrupted version of the true worship of Jehovah. Despite claiming to love and serve the Lord, his actions showed otherwise.

Verse 6 becomes a trigger point for the events that follow with Mesha king of Moab rebelling against Israel's domination after the death of Ahab, Jehoram's father.

Jehoshaphat the partner, vv. 7-12

Jehoshaphat's twenty-five year reign over Judah had many commendable qualities,³ for example, his leadership over God's people leading them in prayer in a time of crisis, 2 Chr. 20. 1-34. A weakness of Jehoshaphat, however, was his propensity to form unequal partnerships or yokes. Paul reminds us, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?' 2 Cor. 6. 14. These unequal partnerships were

seen in three spheres:

The unequal yoke of business:

Jehoshaphat went into a shipbuilding partnership with wicked King Ahaziah, 2 Chr. 20. 35-37. However, the Lord intervened, bringing disaster on the enterprise with the ships breaking up.

The unequal yoke of marriage:

The marriage of Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram (not the same Jehoram mentioned earlier),² to Athaliah the daughter of Ahab, had all the hallmarks of a political marriage that was probably planned by Jehoshaphat. The alliance ultimately led to the spiritual declension of Israel, 2 Chr. 21. 6. Our decisions in respect to marriage have wide-reaching implications on our life and the lives of others. Apart from salvation, it is perhaps the most important decision we can make in life.

The unequal yoke of fellowship:

Jehoshaphat demonstrated a concerning pattern of forming dubious political alliances. He previously allied with the evil King Ahab in the ill-fated battle of Ramothgilead, 1 Kgs. 22; 2 Chr. 18. Jehu the prophet subsequently admonished him, 'Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?' 2 Chr. 19. 2. Despite the caution, in our chapter when Jehoram asked for support in confronting Moab, Jehoshaphat expressed his solidarity by declaring, 'I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses', v. 7. Perhaps his actions were well-meant, hoping to foster harmony between Israel and Judah. However, Paul reminds us, 'what communion hath light with darkness?' 2 Cor. 6. 14. Jehoram was still in darkness and, as such, there was no basis for fellowship at all. Jehoshaphat was slow to learn these lessons.

The two kings opted to approach Moab by the wilderness of Edom, the plain to the south of the Dead Sea, where they were joined by the king of Edom. They hit their first challenge with a water shortage for their armies and accompanying animals,

v. 9. Tensions arose as they grappled with this dilemma, leading to very different opinions. Jehoram was quick to blame God for the problems, v. 10. In contrast, Jehoshaphat advocated seeking guidance from the Lord by enlisting the aid of a prophet, v. 11. Thankfully, Elisha was nearby. The outworking of the unequal yoke became apparent as the kings began to pull in different directions.

Elisha the prophet, vv. 13-25

When Elisha encountered the trio of kings, he keenly perceived a stark contrast in their spiritual state. Holding Jehoshaphat in high esteem, Elisha identified him as a devout servant of God. Additionally, Elisha's spiritual insight enabled him to discern the true condition of Jehoram as an idolater, v. 13. Angered by the situation, Elisha requested a musician to quieten his mind before delivering a message from the Lord, v. 15.

God would provide water for the kings with their armies, yet faith in action was first needed on their part. The word of the prophet was clear, 'Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches', v. 16.⁴ From a human standpoint, this directive seemed irrational and potentially reckless. With no signs of impending rain or wind, the men, already weary and dehydrated, faced the daunting task of excavating pits in the parched soil. This plan would make a weak army even more vulnerable.

At times, God calls us to obey Him in situations that defy our comprehension. Perhaps God is saying to you today to 'make this valley full of ditches' as it were. He is looking to bless you, but an act of faith in action is required on your part first.

At dawn, coinciding with the time of offering of the meat (or grain) sacrifice, water cascaded down from the high Edom plateau, v. 20. Perhaps a flash flood occurred, briefly filling the dry riverbed with water,⁵ which remained only in the prepared pits. The grain offering is significant in reminding us of the perfect life and death of the Lord Jesus.⁶ The water not only quenched the thirst of the

armies and their animals but also confounded the Moabite forces. The sunlight, reflecting off the pools of water, created an illusion of blood, sowing confusion among the enemy ranks, who mistook it for internal strife among the allied kings. God demonstrated His power and grace in giving much more than the allied armies had asked for, or even expected. Our God never changes. As Ephesians chapter 3 verse 20 affirms, 'Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us'.

Mesha the provoker, vv. 26, 27

The narrative takes a sombre turn as the king of Moab, in a final desperate act, attempted to kill his neighbour, the king of Edom, likely feeling betrayed by his alliance with the other two kings. When the attempt failed, he resorted to an abhorrent act of human sacrifice, offering his eldest son. This appalling act elicited horror and revulsion from the allied armies, prompting their swift departure to their respective lands.

Such heinous practices were tragically common among the pagan nations of the Old Testament era. Regrettably, in the ensuing centuries Israel itself succumbed to the corrupting influence of these pagan customs, permitting such abominable practices within its own borders. The establishment of the high places of Tophet in Jerusalem during the time of Jeremiah serves as a poignant example of this moral decline, Jer. 19. 4-14. It is noteworthy that during this era, the kingdom of Judah faced the dire consequences of its disobedience, culminating in the devastation of captivity.

The history of Israel underscores the vital importance for God's people to serve as 'the salt of the earth', maintaining our distinctiveness and preserving influence by steadfastly adhering to God's truth. As the Lord Jesus cautioned, 'but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men', Matt. 5. 13.



The Moabite Stone, or Mesha Stele, is a large stone (1 metre tall, 60 cm wide, and 60 cm thick) located in the Louvre Museum, Paris. Initially found intact, it was broken by a Bedouin tribe after a dispute with local Ottoman rulers. A papier-mâché impression taken before its destruction allowed for its reconstruction, with the reconstructed areas shown in black. IMAGE FROM WIKIPEDIA.

Endnotes

- 1 The find also gives credibility to the territorial claims of the modern-day state of Israel.
- 2 Jehoram, king of Israel, should not be confused with Jehoram, king of Judah, the son of Jehoshaphat who married Athaliah, the sister of Jehoram, king of Israel.
- 3 See 2 Chr. 17. 3-19; 19. 5-11; 20. 1-34.
- 4 Please note that this verse can be translated as, 'Thus says the Lord, "I will make this dry streambed full of pools"', ESV, rendering a different interpretation of events.
- 5 This is a well-known danger for hikers following wadi trails in Jordan today.
- 6 There are many aspects to this type described in Leviticus chapter 2, including: (i) the fine flour, v. 1, which speaks of the perfect and consistent life of the Lord Jesus; (ii) the addition of oil and frankincense, v. 2, which speaks of His fragrant Spirit-filled life; (iii) the sweet savour His life brought to God, v. 2; and, (iv) the application of heat from all directions, vv. 4, 5, which speak of the Lord Jesus being tested, especially in His suffering and death. As a result of His presence here on earth and ascension into heaven, the life-giving streams of the Holy Spirit abound in the world today filling the hearts of God's people, 'dug out' by the act of faith.

Towns and cities in the life of the Lord

Part 8

GADARA

By **IAN REES** Tenby, Wales

The first mention we have of a city called Gadara, on the shores of Lake Galilee, is at the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. The Gospel records of the miracle our Lord wrought in delivering the man Legion from his dreadful affliction identify different place names. In Mark it is 'the country of the Gadarenes' (Gerasenes RV) and in Matthew it is 'Gergesenes'. It would appear that Gadara was the chief city of the immediate area, whereas Gerasa may have referred to a wider area. 'Although topographical maps show hills all along the southeast shore of the Sea of Galilee, geographers who have visited the area say that the only place to locate the drowning swine incident is a strip of steep coastline near Gergesa, the present-day Kersa (cf. Gerasa, Gergesa)'.¹ Interestingly, the Jewish Encyclopaedia says, 'From the readings of the best texts and from the unsuitability of the locality around Gadara, it appears that the proper reading should be "Gerasenes" and the place located at Karsa, on the left bank of the Wadi Samak, near the sea of Galilee'.² Whatever the name, it was one of the ten cities in a region known as the Decapolis, on the eastern side of the Jordan River and on the south-east side of the Sea of Galilee. The majority of the inhabitants of the Decapolis were non-Jews who had evidently invested very heavily in herds of pigs. There are suggestions that the swine would have been sold as animal sacrifices as well as food, apparently Roman soldiers used pigs as propitiatory sacrifices to their gods.

Mark brings our Lord's visit to the Decapolis together with three others in a sequence in his Gospel. The first emphasizes our Lord's power over the **deep** with the miracle of His stilling of the storm with a word, the second His power over **demons** in His exorcism of Legion, the third His power over **disease** in that the woman was cured merely by touching the hem of His garment, and the fourth His power over **death** in His healing of Jairus' daughter, Mark 4. 35 to 5. 43. In each of these miracles, our Lord brings relief where no other man could have done so.

In the second of these miracles, He lands on the shores of the Decapolis having just faced consistent and persistent rejection of His ministry and His claims to be sent from God.

Jewish authorities asked for a sign, as though the miracles themselves were not sign enough. Our Lord's response was to remind them of two acts of remarkable Gentile faith – that of the men of Nineveh in Jonah's day and the Queen of Sheba. Shortly after this, He embarked in a ship from Capernaum with His disciples and crossed the lake to the other side, to the land of the Gergesenes, either landing on its foreshore or at a harbour. It is surely significant to note that this is the first recorded visit of our Lord to purely Gentile territory. It is a milestone in the spread of His message. Rejection by Jews would lead to the gospel being taken to Gentiles.

His visit was not prolonged, however, neither did it involve any travel

through the region. Our Lord landed on the shore, encountered Legion with all his problems, delivered him and then re-entered the ship and sailed away at the request of the owners of the pigs, leaving Legion behind. It would appear, therefore, that His visit was simply to liberate Legion and send him back to his own people as an evangelist. Neither our Lord nor His Jewish disciples would be peripatetic preachers in Decapolis at this time, but rather one of their own, a Gentile himself. Legion was to be a key man in the work of the gospel at that time.

Legion is a man who shows every sign of being in despair, beyond human help, and ceremonially unclean. He is probably a Gentile, is possessed by unclean spirits, lives among the tombs and is therefore in close contact with death, and has issues of blood, for he cuts and wounds himself. Each of these things would have made him unclean in the eyes of Jewish law and made him unfit for human contact. Yet our Lord comes to change all that. He shows the grace of God to the needy.

The third important aspect to this incident is what is revealed to us about demons. It would appear that demonic oppression or possession was greatly increased during the years of our Lord's public ministry. Is this an indication that Satan and his demons were doing their utmost to resist the work of the Son of God? Our Lord does say, 'The prince of this world cometh', John 14. 30, and we are reminded that, after His temptation in the wilderness, the devil 'left him for a space'. No doubt he was frequently attacking our Lord, even once through one of His own disciples, Peter, Matt. 16. 23. Legion is deeply troubled by these unclean spirits. At times, one imagines it is Legion answering the Lord; at other times it seems as if the demons control him and answer for him. 'My name is Legion, for we are many'. Although the Jews had, at least as far as their leaders were concerned, rejected our Lord's claims, the demons knew exactly who He was. 'What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high?' cries one of them, Luke 8. 28. Mark's Gospel

tells us they came rushing down to ‘worship him’, unable to keep away from His divine presence, perhaps even drawn to it. They recognize His divine nature and acknowledge His divine power, pleading with Him to be dismissed into the herd of pigs rather than being condemned to ‘the deep’. We might think that the deep referred to the sea itself, but it is the same word that is translated in the book of Revelation as the bottomless pit, the ‘abyss’. There is a place, ‘everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels’, Matt. 25. 41. Some demons have already been sent there – ‘God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment’, 2 Pet. 2. 4 – but some appear to be free to tempt and do the work of the devil in this world. The demons that possessed Legion evidently knew that their fate was to be sent to the abyss, but they also knew their time had not yet come – as did our Lord. The devil and his minions know what is ahead of them!

It is instructive to note the four times the word ‘beseech’ is used in this miracle. The first plea seems to be by one of the demons that the Lord ‘would not send them away out of the country’, Mark 5. 10. Perhaps they fear that they and the man whom they possess will be expelled from that neighbourhood if this Jesus is to remain there to preach. When they realize they are to be cast out of the man, they beseech the Lord to cast them into the herd of swine, v. 12. They evidently need some material body to possess, and even pigs will do! ‘When the unclean spirit is gone

out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none’, Matt. 12. 43. On hearing that their herds of swine have drowned in the sea, the swineherds beseech the Lord to depart from their coasts, v. 17. He is not welcome. But then Legion himself pleads to be allowed to go with the Lord and His disciples, v. 18. His request is refused. All, demons included, recognize the authority of the Son of God. All beseech the Lord, submitting to him.

Although we could point out Legion’s condition – tormented, possessed, isolated, naked, aggressive – and his cure – found relieved of the oppression of so many demons, sitting, and clothed at the feet of his Lord – we find in his new-found faith the hallmarks of a true believer. In the first place, he is ‘sitting at the feet of Jesus’, Luke 8. 35. This is a Jewish expression which indicates that he was taking the place of a disciple. Saul of Tarsus was taught at the feet of Gamaliel. This is where all true disciples should be found – at the feet of their Master, just as was Mary of Bethany, who desired the better part. Secondly, we note that Legion had a deep desire to be included in the company of our Lord’s disciples. He asked to go with them. ‘When he [Jesus] was come into the ship, he . . . prayed [besought RV] him that he might be with him’, Mark 5. 18. It is not a good sign when believers no longer look forward to or enjoy the company of the Lord and His people but would rather be found elsewhere. Thirdly, the man had a personal testimony. His faith was not second-hand, nor was it merely intellectual. ‘Go home to thy friends, and tell them

how great things the Lord hath done for thee’, commands our Lord, v. 19. And, lastly, Legion was obedient, as should be all true disciples. He left the little party to embark ship and went back, seemingly without complaint, to his people. But he did more than obey. Our Lord told him to ‘go home . . . and tell’, but he went ‘and began to publish in [the whole of] Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel’, v. 20. Men and women may deny the truth of scripture, they may argue over doctrine, but they cannot deny the testimony of a changed life.

Some commentators suggest that when the Lord healed the great multitudes who came to Him with their lame, blind, dumb and maimed and then fed four thousand men and women who had come to hear him, it was in the Decapolis region, the very place where eighteen months before Legion had begun his witness to the Lord.³ How remarkable is that! Rather than asking him to leave because He touched their pockets, this time they thronged around Him because He touched their people. They ‘were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well’, Mark 7. 37. Legion had done his work, Mark 7. 31; Matt. 15. 32-39. So should we.

Endnotes

- 1 Bible Gateway, Encyclopaedia of the Bible. Found here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Gadara>.
- 2 Article on Gadarenes in the Jewish Encyclopaedia. Found here: <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6458-gadarenes>.
- 3 See, for example, H. IRONSIDE, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Mark*, Loizeaux, 1948.



Church Terrace at ancient Gadara WIKIPAEDIA

Journey of the Ark of the Covenant

JERICHO

Part 2

By **STEPHEN FELLOWES** Skibbereen, Ireland

Having crossed the Jordan, Israel were now faced with another great obstacle barring their entrance into the Promised Land in the form of the city of Jericho.

Jordan was a natural barrier, but Jericho was a man-made barrier; it stood in the way of God's people and their enjoyment of the inheritance. It represents a world system that must be overcome if the child of God is to advance into the good of all that God would have him enjoy. The world will always come between the believer and the divine. Various cities and countries in scripture are emblematic of different aspects of the world.

Sodom portrays the world in its corrupt and immoral depravity. The saints of God have been set apart from 'this present evil world', Gal. 1. 4.

The Egyptian world provides everything for the natural man, all that would appeal to his senses. Moses forsook it by faith, 'choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season', Heb. 11. 25.

Babylon then speaks of a great commercial and religious world system in defiance of God. The believer is to be uncompromisingly separate from it – 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins', Rev. 18. 4.

Jericho represents the world as a barrier to the believer entering into the good of the inheritance. It was 'straitly shut up', Josh. 6. 1. It was intimidating and appeared to be invincible, its great walls seemingly impregnable. Could it be overcome? If so, how? We will see that just as the waters of Jordan opened up before the ark of God, so the walls of Jericho will come tumbling down before the presence of the very same ark.

Unseen preparation

Joshua chapter 5 contains the secret to overcoming Jericho. There are great principles to be learned in this chapter that will equip us for advancing towards Jericho in the next chapter. In fact, these matters are indispensable if we are to overcome the world. Notice four things:

1. Gilgal

'At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time', Josh. 5. 2. Circumcision involves the cutting off of the flesh, both literally and symbolically. If we are ever going to overcome the world, we need to put a knife to the flesh. How searching this is! 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof', Rom. 13. 14.

After Israel defeated the kings in chapter 10 of Joshua, they returned to Gilgal, but, in chapter 7, when they went up to the little city of Ai to take it, they failed miserably. After the great victory of overcoming Jericho, a return to Gilgal is most conspicuous by its absence. All of this is most instructive to us – Gilgal is the safe place; it is there that the flesh is judged.

2. Passover

They kept the passover, Josh. 5. 10. The hearts of the people must have gone out to Jehovah in gratitude as they recalled the great day of national redemption when, under the blood of the lamb, they found shelter from

coming judgement. God brought them out in order to bring them into the land of Canaan.

'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us', 1 Cor. 5. 7. We too have been delivered not only from judgement, but to enjoy all that we have been brought into in Christ. Salvation is just the beginning. The keeping of the passover in Joshua chapter 5 reminds me that I have been redeemed to enter into the good of the inheritance. It is all mine by right, I have a title to it.

3. Feeding on the old corn of the land

'And they did eat of the old corn of the land', Josh. 5. 11. The old corn was simply the produce of the land. The diet of the Israelites furnishes us with great typical lessons as to our feeding on Christ.

The roast lamb in Egypt speaks of the sufferings of Christ; it gave Israel the strength to leave Egypt. The manna in the wilderness reminds us of the One who came down from heaven to meet the need of a hungry world. The corn speaks of the risen Christ. The corn sprang up and this is most delightful when we consider the rich inheritance that Canaan represents, because it is all ours by virtue of a risen Christ. By feeding on truth connected with a risen Man we will gain strength to overcome the world.

4. The Captain of the Lord's host

Joshua chapter 5 closes with a revelation of the Lord Himself, appearing as captain of the Lord's host with sword drawn and ready for action. As ever, the manner in which the Lord appears is directly relevant to the circumstances of those to whom He appears. What an encouragement this must have been to Joshua just to know that the presence and power of the Lord was with him, as it is to us as we seek to overcome this world.

Unshakeable assurance

Even after all the preparation of

chapter 5, Joshua must have been further strengthened to hear the Lord say to him, 'See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour', Josh. 6. 2.

The three words 'I have given' made all the difference – not only was victory guaranteed but that victory would be a divine work. As Israel marched around the walls of Jericho, they would have felt their own powerlessness to achieve victory. This is doubtless one of the lessons that God was impressing upon them as they marched. The sure promise of God's word would resonate within every faithful heart – victory was already accomplished.

It is always wholesome to feel our own weakness because in weakness is strength. It is when we become self-confident and self-assured that we are in danger of falling. Likewise, it is great to know that by God's help the world **can** be overcome!

'Faint not, Christian! Though the world
Hath its hostile flag unfurled;
Hold the cross of Jesus fast
Thou shalt overcome at last'.

JAMES HARRINGTON EVANS,
1785-1849

Unnatural methods

I think it is safe to say that the battle of Jericho must have adopted the strangest strategy in the annals of military history.

Picture a daily circuit of the city for six days in a row and on the seventh day seven circuits of the city. What a peculiar sight it must have been to the eyes of the citizens of Jericho,



a people walking around their city daily without a word spoken, no battle cry, no arrows shot, or spears thrown, and, in addition to this, they are carrying a covered box on their shoulders.

This was all contrary to human logic, but is that not just what characterizes the ways of God? 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord', Isa. 55. 8. Paul wrote, 'we preach Christ crucified . . . unto the Greeks foolishness', 1 Cor. 1. 23. The gospel message, presenting a man who died on a cross as the means to eternal blessedness, was deemed folly by the rationalistic mind of the Greeks. This, however, is no surprise because Paul in the same Epistle tells us that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned', 1 Cor. 2. 14.

We should not be too concerned if we are treated as an enigma in this world. As believers we are fundamentally different, we do not fit in and are not meant to!

So, if Jericho cannot be conquered by human methods, how will it be overcome? 'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down', Heb. 11. 30. Faith is seen in just doing what God asks us to do – 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith', 1 John 5. 4. Faith believes God even though it may not be able to logically process what God has said or asked. We must not lean on the arm of the flesh. Paul says in Second Corinthians, 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds', 2 Cor. 10. 4.

Unquestioning obedience

And so, with simple and unquestioning obedience Israel marched around the city. We should never underestimate the importance of obedience to the word of God. There was a day when King Saul thought he knew better than to obey the explicitly clear command of the Lord. God said to destroy Amalek completely, but Saul said (by his

actions), 'No, I know a better way!' He would learn the weighty lesson that 'to obey is better than sacrifice', 1 Sam. 15. 22. Our Lord Jesus would stress to His own, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments', John 14. 15.

Pivotal to the march around Jericho was the ark of the covenant. It occupied the central place, uplifted on the shoulders of the priests. With soldiers to the fore and soldiers to the rear, there was the ark, the unmistakable symbol of the Lord's presence with His people.

This reminds us that in order to overcome the world the person of Christ must be given the place of supreme importance in my life; He must be uplifted and central to all that I do. I will never know overcoming power if He is on the outskirts of my life, kept merely on the periphery.

The New Testament writers emphasize how vital this is. Paul reminds us of the importance of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, Eph. 3. 17. If Christ is at home in my heart, not merely passing through as a visitor but residing there, He will impart strength and the ability to overcome. Likewise, in the writings of Peter, he exhorts 'sanctify the Lord God in your hearts', 1 Pet. 3. 15. DARBY helpfully translates this statement, 'sanctify [the] Lord the Christ in your hearts'. In other words, I am to set Christ apart in my heart, enshrine Him who is Lord, He who is worthy of complete authority over my life. John will speak of the glorious hope of one day being with and like our Lord, 1 John 3. 1-3, but in the present time this eager expectation must have a practical effect upon my life and thus he says, 'every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure', v. 3.

Many other scriptures could be cited to impress this truth upon us, but I think this will suffice to show that occupation with Christ and subjection to Christ is the all-important issue in the Christian's life to enable him to overcome this world.

A study in John 14

By **SAM TAUFEEK** Toronto, Canada

'And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son', John 14. 13.

Sometimes we quote this verse without the first word, 'And'. This small word is quite important in understanding the context of the passage. According to STRONG, 'This word is a primary particle, having a copulative and sometimes also a cumulative force'.¹ Usually, it is used to connect words or clauses linked in sense.² Accordingly, John chapter 14 verse 13 is linked to chapter 14 verse 12 and even to the whole chapter.

In this chapter, the Lord Jesus addresses the eleven disciples. The events were shortly before His suffering, death, and resurrection. The Lord appreciated the earthly limitations of His disciples. They needed the Holy Spirit to fully understand all of the divine truth regarding His suffering and the glories that should follow, v. 26. The Holy Spirit would bring back to their remembrance what the Lord said, and teach them spiritual truths. The disciples had difficulty understanding His deity and oneness with the Father, His mission and the cross, His ultimate glory with the Father, and, especially, their future mission.

We should not be surprised to see phrases in this chapter like, 'believe also in me', 'If ye had known me', 'yet hast thou not known me?', 'or else believe me for the very works' sake' and 'at that day you shall know'. The disciples did watch the Lord performing great works and certainly were surprised to hear that greater works were still to be done and to be done by them. The Lord Jesus did no miracles for His glory but for the glory of the Father, John 17. 4. So, 'greater works' means works that would bring greater glory to the Father. This could not happen before the death of the cross, the burial, the resurrection, the Lord's ascension to glory, the sending of the promised Holy Spirit, and, finally, going out with the gospel message to the whole world.

The disciples were satisfied with the glory they witnessed in the days of 'his flesh'. They did not know the divine glory the Lord had with the Father before the world was, the position associated with which He was going to resume. Otherwise, they would have rejoiced for Him. For now, they needed to have His commandments and keep them, to love Him through keeping His words, and, when it will come to pass, they will believe. He gave them His peace.

Now it is easier to understand John chapter 14 verse 13, 'And [in regards to such greater ministry] whatsoever ye shall ask in my name [the name above every name], that will I do [all the works are still done by none other than Him], that the Father may be glorified in the Son [that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of them, 2 Cor. 4. 7]'.³

We can read so many prayers in the Acts of the Apostles, and I would say all of them were centred around their greatest commission to preach the gospel and establish the church for the glory of God. 'And now, Lord,



behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus', Acts 4. 29, 30.

As the Lord promised, these prayers were answered. Many times, we pray for our daily needs, and there is nothing wrong with that. But let us seek the glory of God in every answer to our prayers. 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you', Matt. 6. 33.

How great was their ministry? Let us hear the answer from the enemies, 'These that have turned the world upside down', Acts 17. 6.

The disciples always gave the glory to God in all that they did. 'And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus', 3. 12, 13.

Before we can ask anything according to His will, first we need to live according to His will and for His glory. 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us', 1 John 5. 14. Equally, John records the Lord's words, 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you', John 15. 7.

Many have misquoted John chapter 14 verse 13, as they did also with other scriptures, to support false teachings under deceiving slogans. Such doctrines are 'the commandments and doctrines of men', Matt. 15. 9. Such teachers twist scriptures unto their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3. 16.

Endnotes

- 1 JAMES STRONG, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Hendrickson.
- 2 *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press.
- 3 Text was added for explanation.

Reflections on the Cross

Part 2 The Cross divides

By **ERNEST ABBOTT** Singapore

Although we know that the manner in which our Lord died was the subject of prophecy, Ps. 22; Isa. 53. 8, it is not until we get to the detailed narratives in the Gospels that we can see further significance in the arrangement of the crucifixion. From Luke chapter 23, we know that Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One of the thieves was saved and the other was lost. Even in the Lord's dying moments, He had time to speak to a thief who was repentant. This act symbolizes something much deeper than the conversion of the thief; it shows that the cross of Christ divides mankind. On the one side are those who acknowledge their true position as sinners in need of salvation and on the other side, those who reject the claims of the loving Saviour. The physical division of the cross between these two men would have been clear for all to see. The spiritual division was one that only God could see, yet it is one that we are privy to. The physical division symbolized the spiritual division of the cross.

Scripture does not tell us whether it was the thief on the right or the thief on the left who was the repentant sinner. The Lord talks about a judgement and division of the sheep and the goats. The sheep are to the right and the goats are to the left, Matt. 25. 33. The Lord uses the metaphor of 'sheep' to refer to those who have trusted in Him. The 'goats' are those who have mixed with His 'sheep', who bear some resemblance to His 'sheep', but are not His 'sheep'. It may be that it was the thief who was on the right who was the one to repent, and the one on the left was the one who did not.

The division between individuals is not the only place where the cross divides. The cross divides families, Matt. 10. 21. Missionary

Charles Marsh, in an account of his work in North Africa, outlines cases of people being converted to Christ who were then subject to murderous attacks from members of their own family. Testimonies abound of saints converted from some religion only to be subject to malicious attacks from their own kith and kin. We may know of cases where people have been ostracized by their family following their conversion. The cross of Christ does divide families.

People of the world are often talking about peace, but a peace which is only a cessation of hostilities between men. The gospel message is about peace between God and man, which leads to peace between man and man. However, the cross divides to such an extent that there may be hostilities. 'Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division', Luke 12. 51. The cross may bring the sword, but this is to be expected because what the cross stands for is antithetical to all that the world stands for.

The cross of Christ strikes at the very heart of people's concept of God. Religion would not have a god who condescends to become man and suffers a humiliating death. The god of man's imagination is easy-going, sometimes distant, unpredictable, even arbitrary. The God who is revealed by the cross of Christ is one who is loving, caring, intimately concerned about His creation and its redemption.

The cross divides the truth from falsehood, for the cross of Christ is a part of the revelation of God. Folk religions have no such revelation; they are founded in man's superstition and vain imagination.

The cross confronts and challenges those who seek signs and special

revelations. The Gospels record the Jews' penchant for signs, John 2. 18; 6. 30. Paul mentions the Greeks seeking for wisdom, 1 Cor. 1. 22. What both groups missed in the cross is that it is the greatest sign that could be given and displays the most profound wisdom ever displayed.

The cross challenges our value systems. On the one side of the cross, we serve God; on the other side, we serve mammon. We cannot serve both, Luke 16. 13. Do we try to cling to what is transitory or to what is eternal? The Pharisees serve as an example. Their love of money put them and kept them on the wrong side of the cross. They were like the thief who did not repent. Both derided Jesus. The value system adopted will determine how one views the cross and the Saviour.

The cross divides the wise and the foolish, Matt. 25. 1, 2, the perishing from the saved, the condemned from those who have everlasting life, John 3. 15, those who are in the kingdom of God from those who are not, those who are for Jesus and those who are against Him, Luke 9. 50, those who have life from those who are already under condemnation, John 5. 24, those who see and hear from those who will not see and hear.

The final division we shall examine is the one between Jesus and His God, Mark 15. 34. The One who was made sin for us, 2 Cor. 5. 21, was forsaken of His God. The perfect, spotless Lamb of God, who died in our place and on our behalf, knew what it was to suffer. Indeed, He said that it was necessary for Christ to suffer, Luke 24. 26. It seems that during this suffering, He was forsaken of His God. What loneliness, what solitude, what anguish must have racked His soul! Whatever the break was, He experienced forsakenness, which was the result of the cross. All this was done for us and our salvation.

As we can see from this brief survey, the cross of Christ divides, and, where it divides, the divisions have eternal consequences.

The two Josephs

By **JEFF BROWN** Nantgarw, Wales

Introduction

There are twelve men named Joseph mentioned in scripture but only two of them were closely associated with the Lord Jesus here on Earth. The first Joseph, the husband of Mary, is recorded at the beginning of the Lord's earthly life; the second Joseph (of Arimathea) is seen at the end of that life at Calvary! As far as we know, these two Josephs never met or knew each other and in many ways were completely opposite regarding their positions in life – yet both were to be used of God for a purpose at a specific time.

Both men were associated with Bible prophecies; the first Joseph's obligation to visit the city of David, Luke 2. 4, ensured the fulfilment of Micah chapter 5 verse 2 concerning the **birth** of Christ, while Joseph of Arimathea's provision of a dignified burial place fulfilled 'with the rich in his death', Isa. 53. 9, regarding the **burial** of Christ.

Joseph, the husband of Mary

This Joseph was a young man and a carpenter by trade, Matt. 13. 55, and was of the descent/line of David, 1. 20. He had little status, as carpenters were not highly regarded in those times. Joseph and Mary would later raise a large family, 13. 55, 56, in very humble circumstances in the backstreets of Nazareth. The last mention of this Joseph in scripture is in connection to the Lord's visit to the temple as a twelve-year-old boy, confounding the religious leaders, Luke 2. 41-51. He is not mentioned at the first miracle of turning water into wine at Cana of Galilee, while all the rest of the family were there; at Calvary, the Lord asked John to look after His mother after His death, John 19. 26, 27, so presumably Joseph had died by this time!

Joseph's character

It seems he was a considerate and caring man and thought a lot of Mary, Matt. 1. 19, and didn't act

rashly, v. 20. He certainly was a man of faith and obedience. He had many trials and challenges in his life, but he asked no questions, made no complaints, and discerned that what was asked of him was the will of God and therefore submitted to it! Consider some of the situations that Joseph had to face:

- to 'take unto thee Mary thy wife', v. 20, who was pregnant,
- to be denied proper shelter for the night, Luke 2. 7, something that might not have occurred with the other Joseph's money and influence!
- told to flee into Egypt, Matt. 2. 13, 14.

Joseph's submission

In every circumstance, Joseph was willing and obedient. Are we willing to acknowledge and submit to the will of God for our lives? We have little detail of Joseph's life, home, etc.; perhaps this is to turn the spotlight on Jesus' real father! Joseph was legally, but not physically, the father of Jesus; he is recognized as one of His parents, Luke 2. 41, and unwisely called 'thy father', v. 48. The word 'Father' is used 185 times by the Lord, but not once does it refer to Joseph! Even at twelve years of age, the Lord refers to His Father in heaven, v. 49. God's choice of Mary and Joseph was perfect. Though poor, both had a real spiritual interest, which was above all riches!

Joseph of Arimathea

What a contrast to Joseph, the husband of Mary! This Joseph was an older man and wealthy, Matt. 27. 57 – he could afford his own new tomb, v. 60. He was a secret disciple of Jesus, John 19. 38, but at Calvary he openly confessed to be a follower of the Lord. Scripture states that in contrast to the attitude of the Sanhedrin against Christ, this Joseph 'had not consented to the counsel and deed of them', Luke 23. 51. Here, he was making a stand against popular consent, despite his prominent position! Is this a lesson to us? He

went in to Pilate to request the body of Jesus after His death, Mark 15. 43-45, probably being able to do this because of his status and respect as a member of the Sanhedrin, Luke 23. 50. This was something the other Joseph, Mary's husband, could never have done!

Standing for Christ

Circumstances in life can be favourable or challenging for the believer. At Calvary, everything appeared to be failure and defeat, yet this Joseph stands out boldly for Christ, in complete contrast to the Lord's disciples who had forsaken Him and fled! It was unheard of for a Jew of high-standing, as he was, to claim the body of a crucified criminal, as Christ was perceived to be! Those that were crucified were regarded as the basest in society! What faith and courage this Joseph had! How would we fare in a similar situation?

Contrasting men – yet the same

What great contrasts there were between these two Josephs – in age, status, wealth, circumstances, etc. Yet an interesting point of similarity is that no specific words are ever recorded of either of the two men – which really shows us that it's not so much what we say but what we are! Scripture reveals a very important feature characteristic of both men – they were both just men, Matt. 1. 19; Luke 23. 50.

Both were used in the purposes of God because of what (not who) they were! Neither of these two Josephs knew beforehand that they would be used of God – but, when the time came, they both stepped out in faith! What a challenge to us! The one Joseph was there at the beginning of Jesus' earthly life, Luke 2. 7; the other Joseph was used at the end of that life when He was wrapped in linen and laid in a sepulchre, 23. 53!

Conclusion

These two Josephs show us that God chooses whom He will! Whatever our situation in life, God can and will use us for His ultimate purposes. What is God asking each one of us to do today?

WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

Μυσία (*mysia*) – A province of Asia Minor

Μυστήριον (*mystērion*) – A mystery or secret of any kind

Μυωπάζω (*myōpazō*) – To be short-sighted

One of the many fictional genres popular in bookshops today is that entitled ‘Mystery’, which most people associate with detective stories or unexplained occurrences that the writer seeks to unravel by the end of the novel. The story gains its momentum by building up tension throughout the novel until the mystery is ultimately solved. When we come to the New Testament, however, we should dismiss from our minds the idea that the word ‘mystery’ refers similarly to the mysterious or something that needs to be solved. Quite the reverse in fact! The word is used in the sense of that which is now revealed but previously undisclosed. As J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON writes, ‘A mystery in this sense is not a thing which *must* be kept secret. On the contrary, it is a secret which God wills to make known and has charged His Apostles to declare to those who have ears to hear it’.¹

In the whole of the Septuagint (LXX) the word *mystērion* only occurs in the prophecy of Daniel where it is used in relationship to the mysterious dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. What is clearly inscrutable to men is only to be revealed by God through His servant Daniel,² cp. Gen. 40. 8; 41. 16. The reason for this limited use of *mystērion* in the LXX may well be because the text of these verses in Daniel is Aramaic, not Hebrew. The word only then occurs as a technical term in the Hellenistic period, that is, the period inaugurated by the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. According to SHAYE J. D. COHEN, ‘In the sphere of cultural history the Hellenistic period endured for centuries . . . but for most inhabitants of the Levant, it ended when the rule of Macedonian kings

of Egypt and Syria was replaced by that of Rome in the first century – for the Jews it was even shorter’.³ Hence the word’s frequent inclusion in the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament. The word also occurs in the literature of Second Temple Judaism such as in 1 Enoch. It is a word though ever associated during this period with the cultic practices and mysteries of those who followed false deities. Romans adopted these false deities into their own religious pantheon of gods, creating secret societies. The word later became part of Gnostic teaching where secret revelations and obscure doctrines concerning angels and other mysteries were regarded as the exclusive possession of a privileged few. Its vocabulary consisted of such words as knowledge, wisdom, mystery, and fulness. To pass on these mysteries and secrets to the uninitiated was a grievous offence.

Paul challenges the very heart of Gnostic teaching by demonstrating that the mystery of God in Christ was universal in its comprehensiveness. It was not simply for an exclusive group of people, Col. 1. 6, 23, 28, but even the worst sinner (the barbarian) or the Scythian (the worst kind of barbarian) could be blessed, 3. 11. There are no hidden secrets in Christianity because the mystery concerning Christ has now been fully revealed in the gospel.⁴ This mystery is complete in itself and contains the total of **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, 2. 2, 3.

The word is used sparingly throughout the New Testament but of this number (twenty-eight), it is used by Paul on twenty-one occasions. The reason for this may be that Paul’s defence of the gospel is often set in juxtaposition to gnostic and cult teaching of the first century. The list below shows some of the mysteries that are disclosed in the New Testament and by whom. Notice that the first mystery to be revealed is by our Lord Jesus Christ and it is in respect of the kingdom of God. The secrets of His kingdom and appearing

are then expressed in His parables.

By the Lord Jesus

The mystery of the kingdom of God – Mark 4. 11, 12 and parallels.

By the Apostle Paul

The mystery of blindness, in part, of Israel – Rom. 11. 25

The mystery of the gospel – Rom. 16. 25, 26; *et al.*

The mystery of bodily transformation – 1 Cor. 15. 51

The mystery of His will – Eph. 1. 9

The mystery of the Gentiles being fellow heirs with Christ – 3. 6

The mystery of Christ and the Church – 5. 32

The mystery of Christ indwelling believers – Col. 1. 26

The mystery of iniquity – 2 Thess. 2. 7

The mystery of the faith – 1 Tim. 3. 9

The mystery of godliness – God manifest in flesh – v. 16

By the Apostle John

The mystery of the seven stars and seven golden lampstands – Rev. 1. 20

The mystery of God – the defeat of evil – Rev. 10. 7

The mystery of Babylon – Rev. 17. 5

In conclusion, what we find in the New Testament is a radical change to the way in which the word was used in the ancient world. As W. E. VINE writes, ‘In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; its scriptural significance is truth revealed’.⁵ Since these mysteries have now been entrusted to us, may we be ever faithful as ministers of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. 4. 1.

For further reading/study

Introductory

W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. III. Lo-Ser, pp. 97, 98.

Advanced

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, *Commentary on Ephesians: Exposition of the Greek Text*, ‘On the meaning of *μυστήριον* in the New Testament’, pp. 234-240.

Endnotes

- 1 J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, *Ephesians*, James Clarke, pg. 240.
- 2 Dan. 2. 18, 19, 27, 28; 4. 9.
- 3 SHAYE J. D. COHEN, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pg. 14.
- 4 Rom. 16. 25, 26; Eph. 3. 5; Col. 1. 25-27.
- 5 W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. III. Lo-Ser, pg. 97.

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*'Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion',
1 Sam. 17: 34*



'Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion', 1 Sam. 17. 34

Known as 'the king of beasts', the lion is a large, powerfully built cat that is second in size only to the tiger. It has no natural predator or enemy, except man, and is one of the best-known wild animals. Historically, it was found across much of Europe, Asia, and Africa, but now is restricted mainly to parts of Africa.

As its title implies, it is a formidable foe, feared and respected by most. In that sense, it enabled David to express his valour. There might have been those who thought this inexperienced shepherd boy unsuitable as an opponent to Goliath the Philistine warrior. However, David was able to speak of the lion and the bear that he had confronted and defeated in protecting his father's sheep. Equally, he proved that with God's help he could overcome Goliath because he knew that he came to the battle 'in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel', v. 45.

But the lion is also used in scripture as a picture, describing a spiritual foe. Peter writes, 'your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour', 1 Pet. 5. 8. This depicts a hungry lion that is prowling, seeking something to swallow in one go and thus to destroy. This is an opponent that has an insatiable and violent interest in prey. Such words should convey that this is a foe worthy of the greatest respect.

Hence, says Peter, 'Be sober, be vigilant'. Whilst this verse may be a reminder especially to elders and shepherds of the spiritual flock, these are qualities that we all need to exercise. We should not be complacent. Indeed, the man who wrote these words had learned his lesson the hard way when Satan desired to have him, Luke 22. 31. It necessitated the Lord's prayer for him that 'thy faith fail not', v. 32. What a testimony to the truth for every believer today, 'greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world', 1 John 4. 4.

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