

PreciousSeed

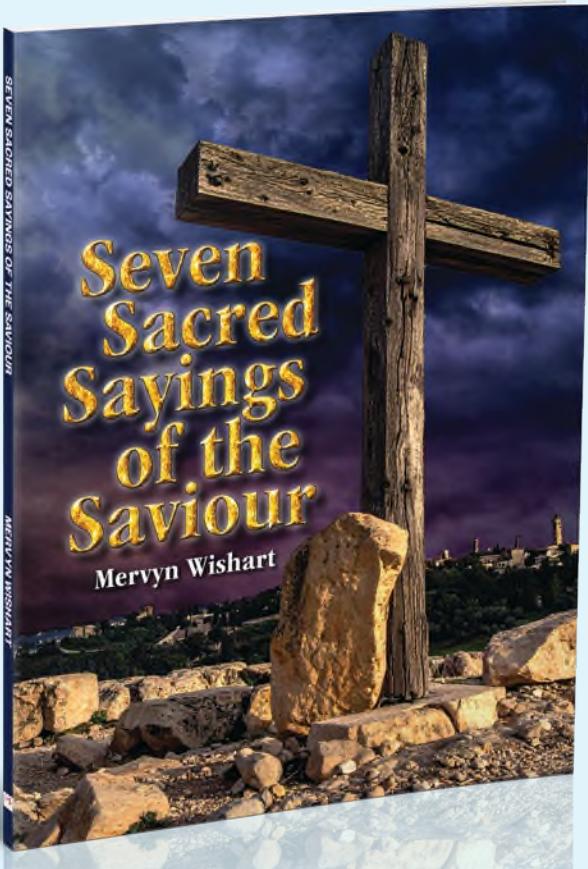
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'All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim,
which is the salt sea', Gen. 14. 3

PS
Magazine

NEW MATERIALS AND OFFERS FROM PRECIOUS SEED



Seven Sacred Sayings of the Saviour

by Mervyn Wishart

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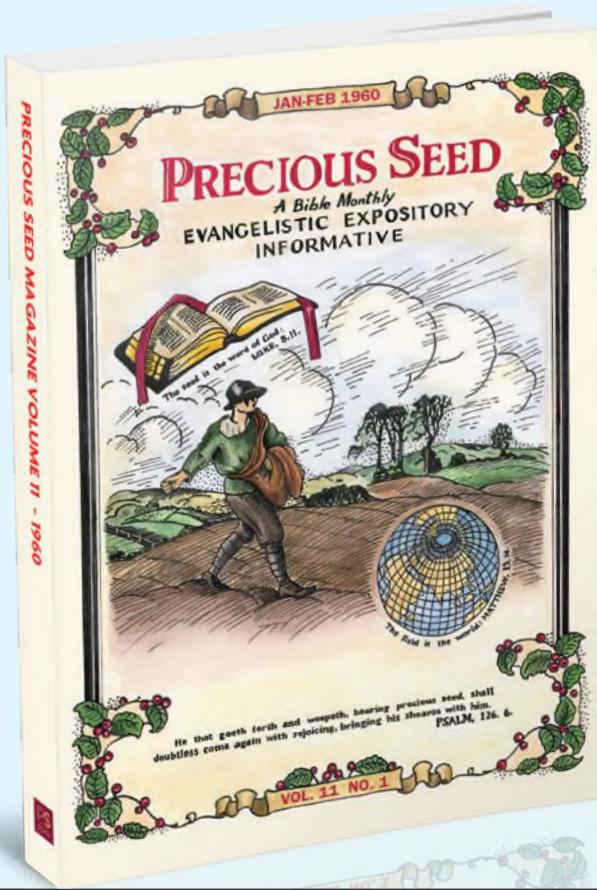
Whilst all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, the most treasured words in scripture are those which came from the lips of Christ. 'Never man spake like this man'. Of all His recorded words there are none more precious than the seven sacred sayings from the cross, spoken in the agony of crucifixion.

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Please check that the number of magazines requested reflects the number of magazines that you distribute. We ask that you do a regular review in order that we might be good stewards of the resources we receive from the Lord's people for the furtherance of the work. As stated on the back cover, distribution is our major expense and we are seeking to keep that to a minimum.

Editorial

'A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year', Deut. 11. 12.

In his farewell address, Moses reminds the new generation – about to pass over the Jordan – that their blessing, indicated in the possession of the land, would hinge on three main themes. First, their response to the commandments of the Lord, see vv. 1, 8, 13, 22, 27, 28. Second, their reliance on the capability of the Lord, vv. 2-7, 23-25. Third, their recognition of the care of the Lord, v. 12.

The commandments of the Lord

Deuteronomy chapter 11 verse 1 reminds us of an enduring principle – love for God would be seen in Israel's compliance with His commandments. Whatever descriptor is used for the law: 'his charge . . . his statutes . . . his judgments . . . his commandments'. Whatever duration of time is envisaged: 'alway'. The people of God, out of love for God, should adhere to the word of God. This is a timeless teaching of scripture; it is echoed in the farewell address of Christ, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments', John 14. 15. A quick

reading of Deuteronomy chapter 11 demonstrates this is a repeated theme. Their entrance into the land is based upon it, their enjoyment of the land is derived from it, and their endurance in the land will only be vouched safe in a society governed by the law, vv. 13-15, 21-23.

The capability of the Lord

Moses reflects on their history and notes that his audience, albeit they were young when some of the events happened, had witnessed the mighty power of God. They had seen it in their deliverance from Egypt, vv. 2-4, and in the discipline in the wilderness, vv. 5-7. The land not only would need to be cared for year after year but would need to be conquered in the not-so-distant future. Moses' message is clear – 'if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments . . . then will the Lord drive out all these nations', vv. 22, 23. God's capability is absolute, but He expects their faithful compliance.

The care of the Lord

The provision for the children of Israel

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was an amazing blessing, 'a land that floweth with milk and honey', v. 9. However, it was not a land that would prosper based on human ingenuity or activity. Their agriculture required water from heaven, not the man-made irrigation of the Nile, vv. 10, 11. All the necessities of life would be the direct provision of the Lord, vv. 14, 15. If they would trust Him and follow His word, lasting prosperity was assured.

It is a profound comfort that there is a God who cares for us, 1 Pet. 5. 7. In the trials and tribulations of life, and in the changes and challenges that seem to come at every corner, God's watchful eyes and willing provision are always there, 'from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year', v. 12. In this new year, it is our prayer that the articles in this magazine will draw us closer to the Lord, confident of His care and His capability to meet every need, every time, everywhere.

Graeme Andrews

Ministry Articles Editor

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The deliverer who was delivered

By **DAVID BRAUCH** Wauwatosa, USA

[All quotations are taken from the New King James Version]

There is a word which has 'taken off' in worldwide usage during the last ten years – 'deliver'. During the 1930s and 1940s, we in America had only two things delivered to us – mail and milk. While I was growing up, my parents' house had a built-in 'milk chute', to which deliveries were made by a dairy truck, and a mailbox. In time came the delivery of fast-food items, starting with pizza. Now there seems to be no limit to the type and quantity of food which delivery services will bring to your door. In more recent years, North America's populace has lost interest in travelling to stores to select and buy non-food items of interest. Thus, the United States Postal Service (USPS) as well as the long-existing United Parcel Service (UPS) have ramped up their deliveries. In addition, FEDEX and Amazon Prime have joined the competition. Recently, the latter has been experimenting with drone delivery of various items to our front doors.

Interestingly, the scriptures have much to say about the subject of 'deliverance'. A striking example in the Old Testament is that involving Joseph, who was raised to second-in-command over Egypt. After revealing his identity to his brothers, he declared, 'And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a **great deliverance**. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all of his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt', Gen. 45. 7, 8 [my emphasis].

Then, after Joshua and the Israelite men invaded Canaan and dealt with the resisting Canaanites, Joshua chapter 21 verse 44 records, 'The Lord gave them [the nation of Israel] rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord **delivered all** their enemies into their hand'. There are two verses which summarize what God accomplished throughout all the Old Testament years. Psalm 22 verses 4 and 5 state, 'Our fathers trusted in You [Lord]; they trusted, and You **delivered**

them. They cried to You, and were **delivered**; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed'.

During His earthly walk, our Lord Jesus, after berating the residents from towns in Galilee for their lack of belief in Him and His words, said, 'All things have been **delivered** to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him', Matt. 11. 27; cp. Luke 10. 22. There were, and are, no secrets between the Father and the Son.

Finally, it is significant regarding the number of times the word 'deliver' or 'delivered' occurs in relation to **our Lord's passion**. On the way to Jerusalem for the last time, He told His disciples, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and **deliver** Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again', Mark 10. 33, 34. During the last week of His earthly ministry, our Lord announced the

same thing to His followers. 'You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be **delivered** up to be crucified', Matt. 26. 2. Possibly, it was during that same week that Judas Iscariot consummated a deal with the Jewish religious rulers to betray Jesus to them. Matthew chapter 26 verses 14 and 15 read, 'Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I **deliver** Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver'.

Delivered to Annas

I believe that the Father's **delivering** up His Son for us all, Rom. 8. 32, was ratified after His Son endured an agonizing night of anticipation in prayer to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, after celebrating the Passover and instituting the Lord's Supper earlier. After much inner struggle, the Son proceeded onwards to the accomplishment of His Father's objective. Soon afterwards, as our Lord awakened the sleeping eleven disciples, He surrendered Himself to Judas Iscariot and those sent from the High Priest to arrest Him. We may recall that they led Him away and **delivered** Him to Annas first, for he, a former high priest, was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. There He was accused of many things but there was no corroboration to these charges. He was also struck in the face while blindfolded.

Delivered to Caiaphas

John chapter 18 verse 24 reads, 'Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest'. There He continued to be tried illegally by the latter and his cronies. Mark chapter 15 verse 1 states, 'Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and **delivered** Him to [Pontius] Pilate [the Roman governor]'. Then Luke states the reasoning behind this delivery, 'the chief priests and our rulers **delivered** Him to be condemned to death, and crucified', 24. 20.

Delivered to Pontius Pilate

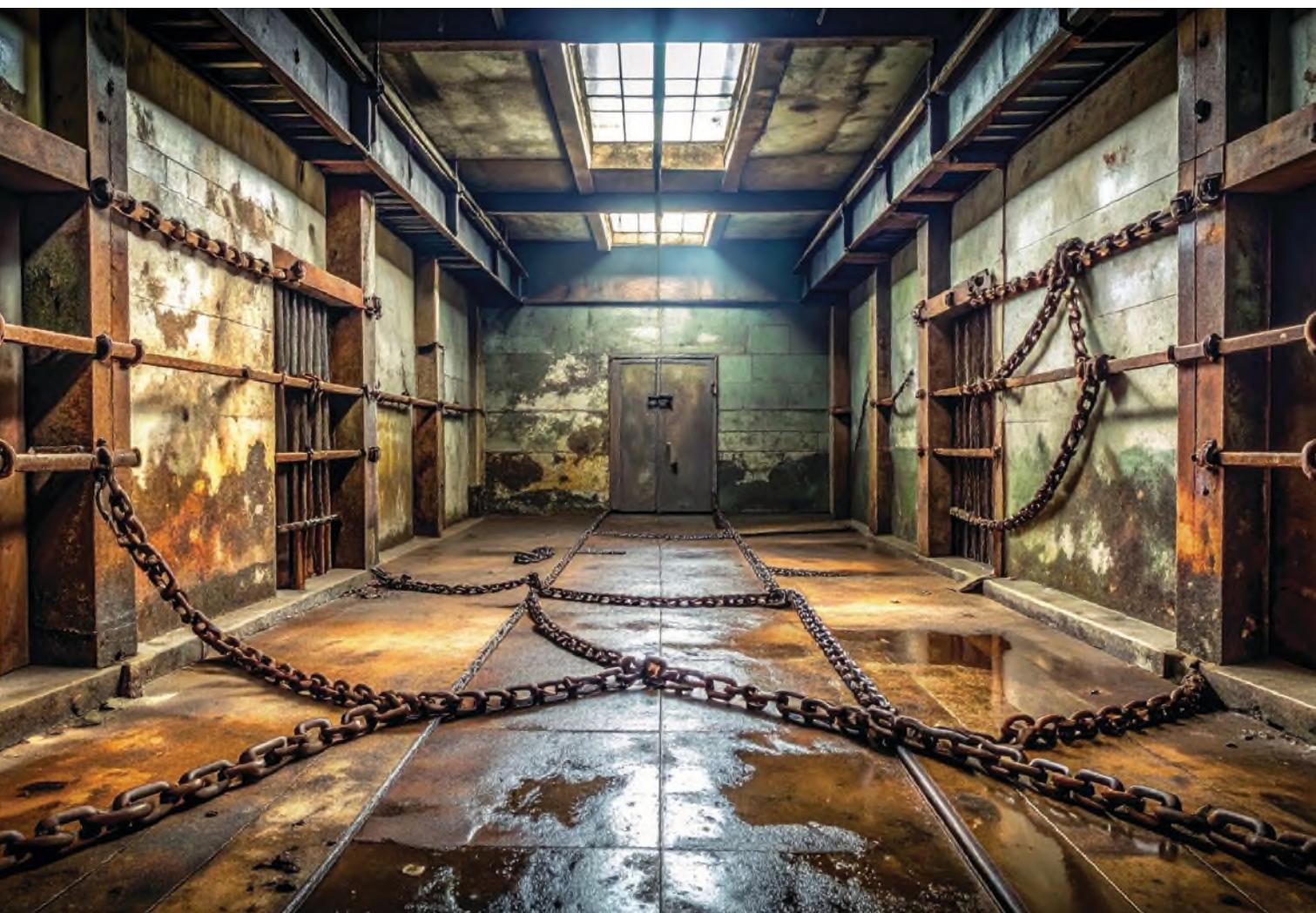
During His trial before the governor, John chapter 18 verses 35 and 36 record Pilate questioning Him, saying, 'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have **delivered** You to me. What have You done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should **not be delivered** to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here'. Speaking later, the Lord Jesus says, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who **delivered** Me to you has the greater sin', John 19. 11; compare verse 16 for its accomplishment. After this verbal exchange, Pilate hoped that the scourging of our Lord which he ordered would cause the Jewish crowd to feel pity for Jesus and enable him to free Him. Instead, after the crowd felt no pity for Him even standing before them in a beaten and bloody state, Luke chapter 23 verse 25 states,

'And he [Pilate] released to them the one they requested [namely, Barabbas], who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he **delivered** Jesus to their will'. Pilate acquiesced to their wishes to have Jesus crucified. Then, while on the cross, the chief priests also mocked Him, along with other religious figures. They shouted, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him **deliver** Him now if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God', Matt. 27. 42, 43. It is interesting to recall verse 14 of the Messianic Psalm 69 which records the Son of David crying out, sometime during His passion, '**Deliver** me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be **delivered** from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters'.

After this desire on the part of our Lord was fulfilled, and our Lord arose, angels were there to declare

what transpired to those followers who came to our Lord's tomb. Luke chapter 24 verse 7 records the angels saying, 'The Son of Man must be **delivered** into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again'. After our Lord's ascension, Peter spoke boldly on the day of Pentecost, 'Him [the Lord Jesus Christ], being **delivered** by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death', Acts 2. 23. Also, Romans chapter 4 verse 25 expands the thought, telling us that our Lord 'was **delivered** up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification'.

Finally, as we close this meditation on the Lord's deliverance, let us remember Romans chapter 8 verse 32, which reads, 'He [the Father] who did not spare His own Son, but **delivered** Him up for us all [to ignominy, torture, and death], how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?'



Ezekiel the Seer

THE GLORY OF GOD DEPARTS

Part 2

By **GRAEME ANDREWS** Wallingford, England

Ezekiel is a chronological masterpiece; the twenty-two years of Ezekiel's prophetic career are recorded in 'one of the most complete chronological systems in . . . the Old Testament'.¹ Fourteen months have elapsed since he first encountered the glory of God. Chapters 8 to 11 constitute the prophet's second vision, occurring in Ezekiel's home during a visit from a delegation of elders, 8. 1. He would have still been conducting his daily drama of lying on his right side, 4. 6.

Vision one was bewildering; a glimpse of the glory of God left Ezekiel prostrate, 1. 28. However, the prophet was also likely left with unanswered questions. Had God abandoned His temple and Jerusalem? Vision two answers such questions, and, by chapter 11, the departure of God from Jerusalem is confirmed.

In language reminiscent of the first vision, Ezekiel is transported in spirit to Jerusalem.² God grants the prophet a **live** screening of events occurring some 1,000 kilometres away. What he witnessed would quash notions of an early return from exile. Ezekiel's cohort of exiles had 'been captive almost six years . . . [they] may have looked for an early end to their exile. Instead, they were told that the inhabitants of the homeland had grievously persisted in their sins'.³

Chapter 8 – A polluted sanctuary

Chapter 8 starts a new section, having a different literary genre from chapters 6 and 7. However, there is continuity in the message with the oracles that preceded it. DUGUID states, 'it would not be inappropriate to say that Ezekiel 8-9 depicts in visionary form what Ezekiel 7 stated in oracular style'.⁴

The second vision of Ezekiel begins with a 'shocking panorama of the

nation's idolatry'.⁵ No other chapter describes the nation's idolatry so comprehensively; men and women are involved, the leadership of the nation is involved, and nowhere was spared from idolatry. Furthermore, no type of idolatry was off limits. How sad this must have been for this priestly man, 1. 3. Previously, he demonstrated concern for ritual purity, 4. 14. The sight of the temple defiled and desecrated must have broken his heart; how much more it was breaking God's heart.

There is an escalating gravity in the sights witnessed:

- Abomination 1; 8. 3-6. The image of jealousy, which provoked the Lord.⁶ Our God is jealous and will not accept equality with pagan idols.
- Abomination 2; vv. 10-12. The image of animals, secretly worshipped.⁷
- Abomination 3; vv. 13, 14. Women weeping for Tammuz, the Babylonian nature god.
- Abomination 4; vv. 15, 16. Twenty-five men worshipping the sun, having turned their backs on God.⁸

Such abominations prove that the people of God were attracted to a variety of idolatrous practices, wanting to be like the nations around them. Their crimes were **spiritual** but also **moral**, they had

'filled the land with violence', v. 17. Furthermore, they had a **casual** and contemptuous attitude to God. He had become irrelevant. They dismissed His omnipresence and omnipotence; twice we hear the refrain 'the Lord seeth us not', v. 12; 9. 9. Perhaps when John writes, 'keep yourselves from idols', we should recall that idolatry and worldliness are closely linked.⁹

Chapter 9 – A purged sanctuary

The only positive theme in this bleak chapter is the existence of a remnant, namely those who mourned over the abominations, v. 4. Our faithful God is acutely aware of those who maintain fidelity to Him during rampant apostasy.

The scene plays out with six men enacting divine judgement. The city will be purged of idolators, and Jehovah declares clearly, 'begin at my sanctuary', v. 6. Alongside the six men, there is another distinct individual, whose appearance and apparatus are portrayed.¹⁰ He seems to be the leader of the group and came not just with judgement but also with mercy. He inscribes a mark on the foreheads of certain individuals, in a reversal of what will take place during the tribulation. In Revelation chapter 13, the mark of the Beast is placed on the forehead. This brand becomes associated with their demise, Rev. 14. 9, 10.¹¹ However, the opposite is true in Ezekiel's vision. Here, the mark applied was for their preservation; none were exempt save this company, 'come not near any man upon whom is the mark', 9. 6.¹² Seeing the judgement unfold, Ezekiel cries out in deep concern for his countrymen, asking whether anyone will survive God's fury, v. 8. The response revolves around the righteousness of the slaughter rather than any reference to the remnant, vv. 9, 10. Ezekiel will question the Lord concerning the remnant again in chapter 11 verse 13 and on this occasion the Lord will respond directly. We must wait on the Lord for His answer, which will come at an appropriate time.

This chapter reminds us of two

biblical themes:

1. 'Judgment must begin at the house of God', 1 Pet. 4. 17.
2. God always preserves a faithful remnant, see 6. 8; 9. 6.

Chapter 10 – A vacated sanctuary

This chapter consists of:

1. The refining holiness of God.

The main character of chapter 9 is summoned to take coals from between the cherubim and scatter them throughout Jerusalem, indicative of God's holiness refining and purifying Jerusalem, 10. 2.

2. The radiant glory of God.

Ezekiel elaborates on the chariot throne of God.

3. The removal of the presence of God.

God abandons His sanctuary slowly, gradually, perhaps even reluctantly. In chapter 8 verse 6, the Lord gave notice that He was going to vacate the temple. In chapter 10 verse 3, God rises for judgement, His presence located at the threshold of the sanctuary. Next, in verses 18 and 19, God's chariot moves to the temple's east gate. Finally, by chapter 11 verse 23, the glory had officially vacated the temple, now located over a mountain to the east of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is 'Ichabod', the glory has departed.¹³ At the end of Ezekiel's great drama, we are grateful for another vision, another sight of the east. In chapter 43 verse 2, the glory triumphantly returns from this direction.

Chapter 11 – A dispersed sanctuary

After a further insight into the **condemnation** of the religious leaders, vv. 1-13, the Lord issues **comforting** words, vv. 14-21. The vision **concludes**, vv. 22-25, with Ezekiel returned to his home to share the message of God.

In general, in the Old Testament we think of the presence of God as localized, especially in the tabernacle or the temple. It was to Jerusalem that devout Jews would make their tri-annual pilgrimages, Deut. 16. 16. God's comforting message points to an exceptional

Old Testament period wherein God manifests His presence to Israel in a dispersed manner, perhaps slightly akin to a New Testament local church experience. In verses 14 to 16, God 'pointed to the exilic community as the future hope of the nation. Those back in Jerusalem demeaned the exiles, thinking that they . . . were heirs to the Promised Land (vv. 14-15). They apparently thought they had an edge on the exiles because of their access to the temple. The Lord had indeed scattered the exiles among the nations, but He had not abandoned them (v. 16a). He would be a 'sanctuary' to them, even in the foreign countries in which they lived (v. 16b). The metaphor indicates that one need not be in Jerusalem to have access to God's presence'.¹⁴

Strengthening the exiles, God promises:

- A little **sanctuary** in foreign lands, v. 16. In exile, 'the privilege of approaching Jehovah in the ordained manner was denied them. But even in their exile, God proved Himself, in a small measure, a sanctuary to them. Their relationship to Him was still preserved and He was to be discovered to some extent in the houses of worship they had established'.¹⁵
- **Reassembly** from foreign lands, v. 17. Exile was not permanent.
- **Purity** when returned from foreign lands, v. 18.
- **Unity** among the people, v. 19.
- **Spirituality** among the people, v. 19. Previously they had a 'stony heart', dead and unresponsive. But God would grant them life, 'a heart of flesh'. This, combined with the indwelling Spirit, would guarantee spirituality never previously exhibited.
- **Conformity** to the will of God and full enjoyment of covenant blessings, v. 20.

The last few blessings enumerated will have their realization under the new covenant during the Millennium. What a blessing it is that Christians enjoy similar spiritual blessings presently.

Endnotes

- 1 RALPH ALEXANDER, *Everyman's Bible Commentary: Ezekiel*, Moody Press, 1976, pg. 5.
- 2 Cp. 8. 1, 3 and 1. 1, 3. In both instances the 'hand of the Lord' seizes Ezekiel, and he has 'visions of God'. Furthermore, in chapter 8 the prophet immediately encounters the chariot throne of God again as per the first vision, v. 4. The reference to 'visions of God' would seem to indicate that Ezekiel was not physically or literally transported to Jerusalem. See also chapter 11 verse 24 which ratifies this understanding.
- 3 CHARLES LEE FEINBERG, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*, Moody Press, 1982, pg. 49.
- 4 IAIN DUGUID, *NIV Application Commentary: Ezekiel*, Zondervan Academic, 1999, pg. 130.
- 5 MARK ROOKER, *Holman Bible Commentary (Volume 17): Ezekiel*, Broadman & Holman Publishing, 2005, pg. 83.
- 6 The most comparable usage of this Hebrew term pertained to the 'image of Asherah' which King Manasseh had erected, 2 Chr. 33. 7, 15 (rendered 'idol'); cp. 2 Kgs. 21. 7. While Josiah had removed such forms of idolatry during the spiritual revival he led, his efforts may have been reversed after his death.
- 7 The other detestable forms of idolatry are practised in the open. Why is there an element of secrecy here? Animal worship suggested that this was not Babylonian in origin; it was more likely Egyptian. Therefore, the most sensible conclusion was that this private idolatry was required as 'the gods of the Egyptian pantheon would have been offensive, perhaps even illegal under Babylonian rule'. LAMAR EUGENE COOPER, SR., *New American Commentary: Ezekiel*, Broadman & Holman Publishing, 1994, pg. 122.
- 8 The gravest of sins takes place in front of the temple entrance itself. The twenty-five men would have likely been priests as only they were permitted in this environ of the temple complex; thus reprehensible idolatry has permeated even into God's priesthood.
- 9 1 John 5. 21.
- 10 Cp. 9. 1, 2. It has been suggested by some commentators that the six men are angelic beings. Considering the degeneration of leadership in Judah, it seems unlikely that there are seven individuals that God could commission to perform this function. Indeed, the actualization of this judgement is delivered by the Babylonian army, which may explain why the men come forth from the north gate, v. 2, north being the direction from which Babylonian armies would approach Jerusalem. These angels supervised or inspired the Chaldeans to carry out the purpose of God.
- 11 See also Rev. 20. 4. Those loyal to God will not take the mark of the beast.
- 12 Cp. Rev. 7. 3.
- 13 1 Sam. 4. 21.
- 14 ROBERT B. CHISHOLM, JR., *Handbook on the Prophets*, Baker Academic, 2002, pg. 244.
- 15 FREDERICK A. TATFORD, *Dead Bones Live: An exposition of Ezekiel's prophecy*, Ritchie, 2012 reprint, pg. 66.

THE 'I AM' STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE

2. NEW TESTAMENT

By **MERVYN WISHART** Belfast, Northern Ireland

(1) To the Samaritan woman at the well, John 4. 26

The Lord Jesus was travelling from Judea on His way to Galilee. Wearied with His journey He sat resting on the well outside the city of Sychar. At midday, a woman from the city came to draw water.

As she approached, she could see the figure of a man sitting on the well. She would later invite the men of the nearby city to meet Him saying, 'Come, see a man', v. 29.

As she drew nearer, she recognized by His clothing that He was a Jew. She was surprised when He spoke to her, asking for a drink of water. She said, 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans', v. 9. The Lord spoke to her about living water and told her if she would drink of that water she would never thirst again. Immediately, she said, 'Sir, give me this water', v. 15. He replied, 'Go, call thy husband, and come hither'. The woman said, 'I have no husband'. Jesus said to her, 'Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband', v. 17, 18. The woman said, 'Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet', v. 19. The woman changed the subject and asked which place should be the centre for worship. Is it mount Gerizim, recognized by the Samaritans, or Jerusalem, the centre of worship for the Jews? She said when Messiah comes, who is called Christ, He will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, '**I that speak unto thee am he**', v. 26.

When the woman told the men of the city of the stranger she had met, she said, 'Come, see a man,

which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?' v. 29. Many of the Samaritans of that city came to meet Him and believed on Him because of her testimony, v. 39. Many more believed on Him because of His own word; they said, 'we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world', v. 42. What a progression there was in the woman's understanding of who the stranger was that she met at the well that day. She recognized Him first as 'a man', then as 'a Jew', then as 'a prophet', then as 'the Messiah'. She listened to the men of the city of Sychar who said He is 'the Christ, the Saviour of the world'. She had a sixfold revelation of who He was condensed into three words, '**I... am he**', v. 26.

(2) To the Jews in the temple, John 8. 19-25

(a) responding to their question
'Where is thy Father?' v. 19

Jesus answered, 'Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also'. The only way to the Father is by the Son. He said, 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me', John 14. 6.

'I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: **for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins**', 8. 24 [emphasis added]. Every person has inherited a sinful nature at birth, 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned', Rom. 5. 12. David wrote, 'in sin did my mother conceive me', Ps. 51. 5. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves', 1 John 1. 8. No sin can ever enter heaven, Rev. 21. 27; Ps. 5. 4.

These Jews were in the temple at Jerusalem, in the treasury, bringing tithes as God's law required. They took pride in the fact that they could trace their ancestry back to Abraham, 'We have Abraham as our father', Matt. 3. 9 NKJV.

It was to these religious Jews that the Lord spoke the solemn words of warning, 'Ye shall die in your sins', repeated three times in these verses, John 21, 24. The tragic result of a person dying in their sins is that 'whither I go, ye cannot come', v. 21. Heaven's door is closed against them. The Lord stated the reason clearly, 'if ye believe not that **I am he**', v. 24.

There are only two spiritual conditions in which it is possible to die, (1) To 'die in your sins', vv. 21, 24. How solemn the thought, to die with sins not forgiven. To be separated from God and to bear His wrath forever. How wonderful is the glorious alternative, (2) To die in the Lord. At some point on the journey of life we have forged a link by faith with the Saviour. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord', Rev. 14. 13.

The vital matter the Lord is teaching is that all depends for this life and for the life to come on our relationship to Christ, believing who He is, what He has done, and where He now is. This can be called the 'tripod' of the gospel, three cardinal truths, each indispensable.

What think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your
scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him;
As Jesus appears in your view,
As He is beloved or not,
So God is disposed to you,
And mercy or wrath is your lot.
[JOHN NEWTON, 1725-1807]

(b) responding to their question
'Who art thou?' John 8. 25

'Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, **then shall ye know that I am he**', v. 28 [emphasis added]. Here, the subject is **identification**. The

identity of the Lord Jesus was established beyond doubt at the cross. The man who stood closest to the cross, the centurion, stated, 'Truly this man was the Son of God', Mark 15. 39. Matthew chapter 27 verse 54 speaks of those that were with him who feared greatly. They also said, 'Truly this was the Son of God'. There are two other passages in John's Gospel which speak of the Lord Jesus being lifted up in crucifixion. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up', John 3. 14. Here the subject is of **salvation**. 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life', v. 15. 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me', 12. 32. Here the subject is **attraction**. It is the ability of the One who was lifted up on the cross to attract multitudes of men and women to Himself because of Calvary. The Lord was clearly indicating what would be the manner of His death. 'This he said, signifying what death he should die', v. 33.

(3) To the disciples in the upper room, John 13. 19

The treachery of Judas Iscariot was foretold in the Old Testament, Ps. 41. 9. In the upper room when only the disciples were present, the Lord said, 'I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up

his heel against me . . . one of you shall betray me', John 13. 18, 21. The Lord did not quote the words, 'in whom I trusted', as He knew full well the agreement Judas had made with the chief priests, Matt. 26. 15. Peter announced after the resurrection, 'Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas', Acts 1. 16.

The Lord foretold what Judas would do in fulfilling Psalm 41 verse 9, but also the fulfilment of the Lord's own words to His disciples in the upper room. He spoke with the same authority and veracity as the Old Testament and on that basis the disciples must believe that He is the Son of God, that **I am He**.

The greatest proof of His identity was His resurrection. He said, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up', John 2. 19. The angel at the tomb said, 'He is risen, as he said', Matt. 28. 6.

(4) To the 'band of men' in Gethsemane

'He went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples', John 18. 1. It was there He prayed, 'Not my will, but thine, be done', Luke 22. 42. It was there that He said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death', Matt. 26. 38. It was there that 'his sweat was as it were great drops

of blood falling down to the ground', Luke 22. 44.

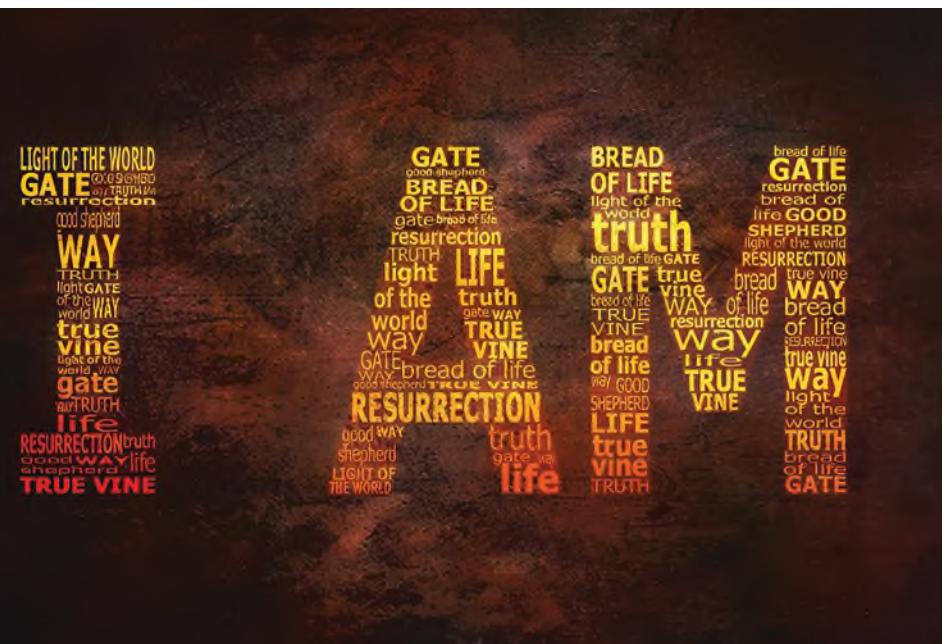
Through the evening darkness appeared the glimmer of lights carried aloft by the approaching throng. **Judas** knew the place, often he had accompanied the Lord and the other disciples but now, for a few paltry pieces of silver, he became 'the traitor', Luke 6. 16, his name stamped forever on the page of infamy. He 'was guide to them that took Jesus', Acts 1. 16. He was the **leader** of the group. Then, there was the **captain**, then the **officers** of the Jews, followed by a **band of men**, John 18. 3, 12. Matthew says a **great multitude**. They carried lanterns and torches and weapons, consisting of swords and staves. What a show of force to arrest the Lamb of God, Matt. 26. 47.

Then there were those who sent them, the **chief priests and elders** of the people; they kept their distance but bore the ultimate responsibility for this dastardly deed.

Judas said, 'Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast', Matt. 26. 48. He kissed the Lord Jesus, the door of heaven, but sadly it was a kiss of farewell; he would never enter in.

The Lord was the first to speak, He said, 'Whom seek ye?' They said, 'Jesus of Nazareth', John 18. 4, 5. He said, '**I am he**'. Those words would be repeated twice in the brief conversation which followed. As soon as he said, **I am He** they went backward and fell to the ground, falling forward, prostrate before the great '**I am**', v. 6. There is a day coming when 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father', Phil. 2. 10, 11.

When they stood up again the Lord repeated the question, 'Whom seek ye?' John 18. 7. Again, they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Jesus answered, 'I have told you that **I am he**: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way', v. 8. His words convey the wonder of what He had come to do, to give Himself that others might go free.



NEHEMIAH

A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

By **TOM MERRIMAN** Carmarthen, Wales

Part 8
Chapter 5

The rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls was not without difficulty. Having considered some of the external troubles faced by the people because of their enemies in chapter 4, internal challenges come to light in chapter 5.

This is nothing new. After a series of victories, David praised the Lord who 'had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul', 2 Sam. 22. 1. But it was not long before 'Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel', bringing the displeasure and judgement of God, 1 Chr. 21. 1-7.

Following the opposition faced by the early church from outside, Acts chh. 2-4, problems from within began to emerge. The language used by Peter of Ananias suggests a diabolical attempt to undermine the work of God. Satan filled the heart of Ananias, who, together with Sapphira, lied about the size of their gift. They were immediately and severely judged, for they had lied to God, Acts 5. 1-11. Chapter 6 also records discontent between believers.

Paul warned the elders of the Ephesian church against grievous wolves entering in, before adding, 'also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them', Acts 20. 29, 30.

Assemblies today are not immune from internal difficulties. Outward opposition may be overcome, yet inward concerns can still present themselves. Old Testament examples and New Testament teaching help to prepare us against Satan's devices, and many Epistles include teaching that addresses internal issues.¹

Nehemiah's challenge, vv. 1-5

Some family members took up a night watch against the enemy

around Jerusalem, leaving households under pressure. A food shortage led to concern for children's welfare, leading some to mortgage their property to buy corn. Others had borrowed money against their land and vineyards to pay the king's tax. Yet the complaint was 'against their brethren the Jews', and the problem was widespread – it was 'a great cry'. Solidarity and mutual care ought to have characterized God's people. Instead, brethren were adding to one another's burdens. The victims said, 'our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children', yet they were being forced into slavery with no prospect of release.

Despite pressures faced by the early church, 'the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul'. Not regarding their possessions as their own, those who had means to do so sold what they had and the funds were distributed according to individual need, Acts 4. 32-35. But as the numbers grew, discontented Greek-speaking believers spoke out against their Hebrew brethren 'because their widows were neglected' in the daily distribution of goods to the needy. These concerns were not dismissed by the apostles, and suitable men were appointed to oversee the work, 6. 1-6.

In his first Epistle, Peter addressed his readers as 'strangers scattered', 1 Pet. 1. 1 – a heavenly people living in an adverse world. As God's people, they still had a responsibility to submit to worldly authorities, even if they proved obstructive. Some servants worked for unreasonable

masters. There were wives who had been converted subsequent to marriage, who wanted to live for God and witness to their husbands. Having offered exhortation, encouragement, and example, Peter added a message to the saints as a whole. They were to support one another through the difficulties, 'Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous', 3. 8.²

The New Testament has numerous examples of such unity, sympathy, tenderness, and humility. When it was known that brethren in Judea faced a time of famine, the elders of Antioch entrusted Barnabas and Saul to carry relief to them – 'every man [gave] according to his ability', Acts 11. 28-30. Timothy was to charge the materially rich to 'do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate', 1 Tim. 6. 18. In the same Epistle, Paul also gave guidance to local assemblies in the administration of widows' needs and encouraged consideration for the practical assistance for those 'who labour in the word and doctrine', 1 Tim. 5. 17 – likely at the cost of time that could otherwise be spent providing for themselves. In respect of giving, Paul used Israel's collection of manna as an illustration. Although gathered in different proportions, when shared out there was sufficient for all. Making application, he said, 'I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality', 2 Cor. 8. 13-15. There may be times to give, and others to receive.

In addition to spiritual and family responsibilities, believers today face many pressures; civil, work-related, financial, physical, and more, inevitably leading to strain. Rather than compound one another's burdens, may we look for opportunities to offer relief where possible. 'Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works', Heb. 10. 24.

Nehemiah's contention, vv. 6-13

Hearing of the oppression amongst God's people, Nehemiah was filled with righteous indignation, v. 6. A great work was underway, but this was a matter that could not be neglected; another instance where the people mattered to him as well as the place. Angry as he was, Nehemiah was not rash, acting in high emotion – 'I consulted with myself', v. 7. and serious thought enabled him to approach the problem with principled reasoning to convince the offenders to change their ways.³

Nehemiah's reaction reflected God's disposition; guidance for hard times was enshrined in the law. Underlying the behaviour expected of God's people towards each other was an important principle. Since they had once been delivered from slavery, they were to extend compassion to others in need, Exod. 22. 21. As to their fellows, the instruction was clear, 'If thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest . . . ye shall not oppress one another', Lev. 25. 14. But these had been taking advantage of their poor brethren, 'Ye exact usury [lending on interest], every one of his brother, Neh. 5. 7. This oppression was explicitly forbidden.⁴ Should one be left without their raiment (their last layer of protection), God said, 'it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious', Exod. 22. 27.

Understanding this principle, Nehemiah rebuked the guilty nobles and rulers, and gathered together a company of witnesses against them. How could they bring into slavery again those who had been redeemed? What sort of testimony did this present to the world around? It was a compelling case, v. 9.

In contrast, Nehemiah and his companions had actually been lending food and money to those in need, some of which must have been going straight into the pockets of those exacting interest, v. 10. It had to stop immediately – 'even this day! Furthermore, any property that had been taken was to be returned, together with any interest payments

and produce. Taking an oath from the offenders that they would rectify matters, Nehemiah added a solemn warning to deter any from reneging on their promise, v. 13.

Through the kindness and love of God toward us in our need, we were delivered from the slavery of sin. Thus, a principle of compassion to those in need is established – especially to our brothers and sisters in Christ. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith', Gal. 6. 10. The Apostle John wrote, 'whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' 1 John 3. 17. And since Christ has paid our great debt, how can we hold anything against our fellows as though our debtors?⁵ As Onesimus returned to Philemon, converted, Paul encouraged Philemon not to hold the outstanding debt against him (he could not afford to pay it). And he was to receive him back 'not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved', Philem. 16. Saints should be 'kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you', Eph. 4. 32. The Lord Jesus said, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another', John 13. 35.

Nehemiah's conscience, vv. 14-19

The example set by Nehemiah gave him the moral authority to instruct others.⁶ There had been an established principle that governors of Judah were to be given supplies by the people in lieu of their position and service. However, Nehemiah's principles were not taken from former practices, but from those he learned of God. In view of the burden already being faced by the people, he chose to forego the tradition, despite being responsible for the provision of 150 Jews and rulers as well as any others who came to his table from the surrounding district.

Verse 14 indicates that for twelve years Nehemiah held to this principle. Later, he was able to

reflect on his governorship as a period in which he had never required the people's provision. Yet it seems that God ensured a daily abundance. Prayerfully, Nehemiah looked back with a clear conscience before God.

Samuel is an earlier example of a man who maintained the same principle. The people witnessed, 'Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand', 1 Sam. 12. 4. No-one was able to question his motives. Paul also chose to forego the right of provision from the hand of the Corinthians in return for spiritual service. The Lord had 'ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things', 1 Cor. 9. 14, 15. When criticized, he was able to claim that 'when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man'. The Lord had provided for him by other means, 'for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself', 2 Cor. 11. 9. When the Philippian church sent Paul aid, he replied, 'I have all, and abound'. Acknowledging their gift and sacrifice, he assured them, 'my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus', Phil. 4. 18, 19.

John framed the Lord's commandment⁷ as a compelling exhortation, 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another', 1 John 4. 11. May we, like Nehemiah, steadfastly hold to this God-given principle.

Endnotes

- 1 2 Cor. 2. 11.
- 2 Strangers, 1 Pet. 1. 1; 2. 11; subjects, 2. 13; servants, 2. 18; spouses, 3. 1; saints, 3. 8.
- 3 Cp. A sober-minded overseer should 'be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers', Titus 1. 8, 9.
- 4 Exod. 22. 25; Lev. 25. 35-43; Deut. 23. 19, 20.
- 5 See also Matt. 18. 21-25; 1 Cor. 6. 7, 8.
- 6 Cp. Jesus taught what He first demonstrated, Acts 1. 1.
- 7 John 15. 12.

THE 'LOOKS' OF THE LORD JESUS

By **MALCOLM HORLOCK** Cardiff, Wales

[All quotations are from the New King James Bible unless otherwise stated]

Part 1

Introduction

The Gospels have much to say about the occasions when Jesus saw and looked at people. It was enough for the Lord to see them and their need. This was sufficient in itself to draw out His feelings of compassion and love.

Sometimes, this was true of **large multitudes**, concerning both their (i) physical and (ii) spiritual needs.

Both Matthew and Mark introduce their accounts of the feeding of the five thousand men¹ with the similar expression: 'Jesus went forth and **saw** a great multitude and was moved with compassion on them'.² But there the Gospel writers part company:

(i) For his part, Matthew then adds, 'and **healed** the sick'.³

(ii) For his part, Mark then adds, 'because they were as sheep having no shepherd, He began to **teach** them many things'.⁴

But though we read of our Lord looking with considerate eyes on vast crowds, more often we read about His reaction to **individuals or small groups**, when the needs which He saw (a) stirred His emotions and (b) triggered various words and/or actions.

Six ways in which individuals or small groups benefitted from Jesus' looks

1 Some received the benefit of His power

Consider three individuals who Jesus 'saw'; (i) one at a city gate, (ii) one in a synagogue, and (iii) one by a pool in Jerusalem.

(i) At the city gate of Nain, Luke 7. A dead man was being carried out for burial; he was 'the only son of his

mother, and she was a widow'.⁵ In one sense all the widow had in the world was in the open coffin.⁶

There were a lot of people present – 'a great crowd . . . with him' and 'a considerable crowd . . . with her'. But '**when the Lord saw her**', he had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'.

His great heart throbbed with compassion for the bereaved lady and, therefore, He touched the bier to stop the bearers. He then said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise'. And, when the young man sat up and spoke, Jesus gave 'him to his mother'⁷ and 'all . . . glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people"'.⁸

(ii) In the synagogue, Luke 13. A woman was there with a 'spirit of infirmity', bent double for eighteen years, completely unable to straighten herself.⁹ Doubtless, the dear lady had shuffled her way that day to the synagogue to take her place in the women's section there.¹⁰

'When Jesus saw her' He called her to Him and said . . . "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." . . . He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight,¹¹ and glorified God'.¹²

But the ruler of the synagogue did not 'glorify God'! He was indignant!¹³ It was the Sabbath! He did not address Jesus directly but preached a sermon to the synagogue congregation, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day'.¹⁴

The Lord responded, 'Hypocrites [in the plural because, clearly, the synagogue ruler was representative of others and spoke for them], does

not each of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it away to give it drink? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham [indicating her faith in God and her genuine piety], whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?'¹⁵

(iii) By the pool of Bethesda, John chapter 5. It was another Sabbath. Lying by the pool was a man who had been sick¹⁶ for thirty-eight years. '**'When Jesus saw him lying there**', and knew that he had been in that condition for a long time . . . said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"¹⁷

The Lord knew that it was, indeed, 'a long time' that the man 'had been in that condition'; for, when the man had been taken ill, He (the Lord) had been still in heaven!¹⁸

On the face of it, His question may sound rather odd to us. We may feel like saying, 'Of course, the man would have wanted to be healed'. But the man can hardly have been blamed if, by now, he had given up all hope of ever being well again; he had suffered countless disappointments, 'I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me'.¹⁹ Our Lord's very question conveyed a promise of help.

Yes, Jesus knew all about the man . . . but the man knew nothing about Jesus. When the Jews objected, 'It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed [mattress] . . . who said to you to take up your bed [mattress]?'.²⁰ the man responded that he did not even know His name!²¹ Had he lived today, the man who that day experienced the healing power of Jesus could have sung with truth and great depth of meaning the closing lines of the first verse of BRYN and SALLY HAWORTH's hymn, 'What kind of love is this':

'What kind of love is this,
A love I've never known;
I didn't even know His name.
What kind of love is this?'

The fact that the man was unaware

of the identity of his gracious and powerful benefactor is evidence that it was not the man's faith which had brought about his healing.

Following the sign-miracle, our Lord quietly slipped away and blended into the crowd.²² Apart from His likely desire to avoid unnecessary and premature confrontation with the Jews, it was 'just like Him'²³ to meet a need and then to move on, not waiting for any credit, praise, or recognition.

As the prophet Isaiah foretold of God's perfect Servant, 'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street'.²⁴ Free from any self-advertisement or craving for the limelight, the Lord Jesus ever sought to avoid the publicity which His healings naturally attracted.

2. Some received the benefit of His sympathy

Think of Mary of Bethany. 'When Jesus saw her weeping', we read, 'and the Jews who came with her weeping', He groaned [“was deeply moved”, possibly in anger]²⁵ in the spirit and was troubled'.²⁶ Many Jews had come to comfort and console Mary and her sister²⁷ and had followed Mary when Martha had summoned her privately ('The Teacher has come and is calling for you') because they thought she had gone to the tomb to weep.²⁸

Falling at Jesus' feet,²⁹ Mary exclaimed, 'If You had been here, my brother would not have died'.³⁰

Personally, I do not understand her words (or the identical words spoken by her sister, Martha)³¹ to imply any criticism of the Saviour for His earlier absence. Mary must have realized that, even if Jesus had left immediately when He received the message, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick',³² from her and her sister, He could not have reached Bethany before their brother's death. He would, inevitably, have arrived two days too late to prevent Lazarus from dying by His bodily presence!

If, therefore, Mary was expressing any recrimination with her exclamation, she must have been directing that recrimination, not at the Lord, but at herself and at Martha for not notifying Him earlier! They were certainly not voicing any criticism or rebuke of Jesus, as if they were saying, 'Why ever did you dawdle for those two days!' For my part, I read Mary's words simply as a general expression of regret and sadness.³³

However we interpret Mary's words, there is no mistaking the significance of our Lord's action. Although He knew (i) Himself to be 'the resurrection and the life'³⁴ and (ii) that He was shortly to raise Mary's brother from the dead, He shed tears³⁵ – tears which led the Jews then present to acknowledge, 'See how He loved him [Lazarus]'.³⁶ Yet His tears tell us that He loved, not only Lazarus, but Mary and the Jews also; He shared their grief and sorrow.

Endnotes

- 1 'Beside women and children', Matt. 14. 21 KJV; cp. Matt. 15. 38.
- 2 Matt. 14. 14 lit.; Mark 6. 34.
- 3 Matthew's account is here: Matt. 14. 14-21 lit.
- 4 Mark 6. 34 lit.
- 5 Luke 7. 12 KJV.
- 6 'The term for bier . . . is used only here in the New Testament and refers to an open coffin, a plank, where the shrouded and anointed corpse lay', DARRELL L BOCK, *Luke 1:1-9:50 (Baker Exegetical Commentary)*, Baker Books, comment on Luke 7. 14.
- 7 Compare the action of the prophet Elijah, following the raising of another only son of a widow, who 'delivered him to his mother', 1 Kgs. 17. 23.
- 8 Luke 7. 14-16.
- 9 Luke 13. 11.
- 10 'Having arrived, she takes her place in the back of the auditorium, and, of course, on the side where the women sat', WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN, *Luke: New Testament Commentary*, Baker Books, comment on Luke 13. 12, 13.
- 11 She could look up for the first time in eighteen years!
- 12 Luke 13. 12, 13. This woman was one of seven cases in the Gospel of Luke where people 'glorified God'; Luke 2. 20; 5. 25; 7. 16; 13. 13; 17. 15; 18. 43; 23. 47.
- 13 Greek word, ἀγαπάτεω; cp. the use of the word in Matt. 20. 24; 21. 15; 26. 8.
- 14 Luke 13. 14.
- 15 Luke 13. 15, 16 (literal translation).
- 16 Seemingly suffering from paralysis.
- 17 John 5. 6.
- 18 See, 'Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age', Luke 3. 23 ESV.
- 19 John 5. 7 ESV.
- 20 John 5. 10, 12.
- 21 John 5. 13.
- 22 John 5. 13.
- 23 With an eye to W. L. STONE's hymn, 'It's Just Like Him', the refrain of which reads:
"It's just like Him" to take my sins away,
To make me glad and free,
To keep me day by day;
"It's just like Him" to give His life for me,
That I might go to heaven and ever
with him be'.
- 24 Isa. 42. 2 KJV.
- 25 See C. K. BARRETT, *The Gospel of John*, SPCK, pp. 398, 399; LEON MORRIS, *The Gospel according to John* NICNT, Eerdmans, pp. 556, 557; D. A. CARSON, *The Gospel according to John*, Apollos, pg. 415.
- 26 John 11. 33.
- 27 John 11. 19.
- 28 John 11. 28-31.
- 29 We meet Mary of Bethany only three times in the Gospels and each time she is at the feet of Jesus, Luke 10. 39; John 11. 32; 12. 3. This is the central of the three occasions when we find her at His feet.
- 30 John 11. 32.
- 31 John 11. 21.
- 32 John 11. 3.
- 33 For further details, see at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/195>.
- 34 John 11. 25.
- 35 John 11. 35. A different word is used to describe the 'weeping' of Jesus than that used to describe the 'weeping' of both Mary and the Jews in verse 33.
- 36 John 11. 36.

DAN CRAWFORD (1870-1926)

'Konga Vantu', the 'gatherer of the people'

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

Daniel (Dan) Crawford was born on 7 December 1869¹ in Gourock, a town on the south bank of the Firth of Clyde, twenty-eight miles west of Glasgow, Scotland. His father, Archibald, was the captain of a schooner based on the River Clyde. Sadly, Archibald Crawford died of tuberculosis when Dan was only four years old. However, God was watching over young Dan, because, although he too was later diagnosed with tuberculosis, he made a full recovery.

Educated at the local school, he left at the age of fourteen, without any higher education, to work first as a clerk in a solicitor's office, but soon afterwards as a bookkeeper for a painter and decorator.

Under his widowed mother Mary's influence, he was a devout Free Church of Scotland family, and as a teenager Dan had already become a Sunday-school teacher in Gourock Church. However, at that time he had begun to attend gospel meetings in a local Gospel Hall, and having been convicted of his need of salvation, was converted in May 1887, and was baptized four months later.

He became an avid reader of his Bible, and of good books written about it. He also became very concerned for the souls of others, and he started preaching the gospel. At the young age of eighteen, he gave up his job and became an evangelist, living by faith in total dependence on God to provide for all his needs, which was to be true for the rest of his life.

In September 1888, Dan Crawford met the Scottish missionary Frederick Arnot, who had just returned from two years in central Africa (now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo) where he had founded the Garenganza Evangelical Mission. It

was through Arnot's influence that Crawford was challenged to take the gospel to 'the dark continent'. So, in March 1889, nineteen-year-old Dan, plus a dozen others, left for Africa under the leadership of Arnot. Dan eventually arrived at Bunkeya in Garenganza (now Katanga) in November 1890.

At that time there was a scramble for territory by the various European colonial powers. Among them were the British who were trying to convince the Garanganzi king Msiri to allow his kingdom to become a British Protectorate,



but he refused. However, in late 1891, a Belgian Expeditionary force arrived, annexing the kingdom into their Congo Free State and killing king Msiri.

In the aftermath of the killing and the massacre of Msiri's warriors, the 10,000-odd population of Bunkeya fled into the bush. Crawford moved to the western shore of Lake Mweru and established a mission there. The Congo Free State's agents' brutality caused many to flee for safety to Crawford's new mission, which was the origin of his African nickname 'Konga Vantu', meaning 'gatherer of the people'. Crawford also persuaded many chiefs to give up their slaves, whom he took into his mission. He also adopted many orphans to stop them being sold as slaves. In 1893, he had to move to a better site near the Luanza River, where it flows into Lake Mweru. There the more fertile land was able to support a greater number of people. The village, called Luanza, became a large settlement, over a mile wide in places. In his early twenties, Dan had taken on the responsibility of looking after so many displaced persons.

Although based in Luanza for the rest of his life, Crawford travelled extensively in the area, evangelizing and immersing himself in the local languages and cultures.

Despite originally insisting that missionaries were best unmarried, Dan married Grace Tilsley of Bath, UK. She travelled out to marry him in 1896. They had one surviving child, a son called Lyndsay, born in 1900.

Despite the absence of any higher education, Dan was able to master Greek, Hebrew, and various African languages, translating the Bible into the Luba dialect, a difficult Bantu language that has nouns with twelve genders and verbs with thirty-two tenses! By early 1926 he had completed the final revision of the entire Bible, and it was at the printers. He had said that, if he were to die, he wanted to pillow his head on the Luba Bible!



KATANGA

Sometime during the night of May 29, 1926, having turned awkwardly, he knocked the back of his hand against the shelf near his bed. He thought little of it at the time, but the next day he noticed swelling and inflammation of the minor wound. Gangrene set in very quickly and the infection continued to spread rapidly up his arm. He slipped into a coma and died on June 3rd, 1926, at fifty-seven years of age.

Dan Crawford's grave is fittingly in a cemetery on a high hill overlooking his town of Luanza. He had requested that his body be buried as that of an African – wrapped in a blanket and then with a grass mat. However, his body was also placed in a roughly made wooden coffin.

We would say today that Crawford was 'a bit of a loner', with whom

many co-workers found it difficult to work. However, he was at his best trudging through the African countryside, studying African languages and seeking to better understand African customs and traditional rule.

During his thirty-seven years of service, Dan Crawford only returned to Britain once, from 1911 to 1915, during which time he also visited the United States and Australia to report on the Lord's work in Africa.

The two great literary legacies Dan Crawford left were, first, the Bible in the local African dialect, and secondly his books *Thinking Black: 22 Years without a Break in the Long Grass of Central Africa* (1913) and its sequel *Back to the Long Grass: My Link with Livingstone* (1923). These books would afterwards become recommended reading for Europeans following in his footsteps into the African interior.



Endnote

1 A number of publications give 1870, probably due to the late registration of his birth.

Reflections on the Cross

Part 5 Power: priests, Pilate and people

By **ERNEST ABBOTT** Singapore

The death of the Lord on the cross was, among other things, the result of a power struggle. We can see three main players in this power struggle, each with a single purpose: to see the Lord crucified.

Perhaps the most prominent people in the struggle for power were the religious leaders of the day – the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests. These groups with their mutual animosity came together in the crucifixion. At an early stage in the Lord's ministry, the Pharisees and Herodians consulted with each other on how they might destroy Him.¹ Here was a religious group and a political group joining together in a common cause. We can view the debates between the Lord and the religious authorities. The people liked the teaching of the Lord, 'for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes', Mark 1. 22; cp. Matt. 7. 29. The religious leaders saw their power over the people slipping away from them. Just six days before the crucifixion, on what is commonly called Palm Sunday, while the Lord was receiving the praises of the crowds, the Pharisees say, resentfully, 'Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him', John 12. 19.

When the Lord was before Pilate, the religious leaders put pressure on him not to release the Lord by accusing Him of a political offence, and, if Pilate did not acquiesce to their demand, then the implication would be that he was not a loyal Roman, John 19. 12.

The struggle for power, or what the religious leaders saw as power, comes to a head in the cross. Here, it seems as if the power of the religious authorities had triumphed. They had the Lord where they wanted Him. This troublesome rabbi who challenged them in their teachings

and interpretations of the law and prophets, Matt. 22. 29, who pointed out their hypocrisy, 23. 27, was dealt with effectively and finally, or so they thought.

Next, we come to Pilate, the Roman governor of the troublesome Jewish province. In Pilate, we see a man who has the whole power and authority of the Roman Empire behind him. Yet, when it comes to dealing with the Lord, he is powerless. In his interrogation of the Lord, Pilate claims, 'I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee', John 19. 10. These are bold claims indeed. And, under other circumstances, these claims would no doubt hold true. After the cross-examination, Pilate, finding no guilt, was willing to release the Lord, Luke 23. 20, but he found that he was unable to do so. The claim of power proves empty.

The common people are also shown to have a degree of power when it comes to the cross. We may have got used to the shows of 'people power' in the 1980's, with the fall of the Marcos government in the Philippines, and the Eastern Bloc, and the Berlin Wall. This is nothing new for there



was an expression of 'people power' in the crucifixion of the Lord. The main example of this power is when Pilate wants to set the Lord free. It is the cries from the crowds of 'Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas', Luke 23. 18, and, 'Crucify him, crucify him', v. 21, that prevailed over the might and authority of Rome. Try as he may, Pilate could not defeat this power for 'the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed', v. 23. Truly, the people had power of a kind, and exercised that power.

The cross of Christ challenges all human concepts of power. In our three thumbnail sketches, we see that power is associated with might, strength, or force in attempting to achieve one's own ends. What do we see in the cross? We see God's strength shown out in weakness. Human power is transient, often lasting no longer than the leader who holds it. We see God's power as eternal. We see human power as fickle, as in 'people power'. We see God's power as firm, established, unmoveable, Ps. 18. 2.

It may look as if the priests, or Pilate, or the people were exercising their power, but we find that it was Christ who was really in control and exercising His power. Only the Lord could say about His life, 'No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again', John 10. 18. Pilate was reminded that his power and authority was a given one, 19. 11. The Lord's power is because of who He is. Looking at the Lord hanging on the cross, He seems powerless, whereas He displays great strength and power. What was not seen by those at the cross was that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself', 2 Cor. 5. 19. Man does not have power to save himself; salvation is in the cross of Christ. To a fallen, perishing world 'the preaching of the cross is . . . foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God', 1 Cor. 1. 18. The Lord is the power of God and the wisdom of God, v. 24. We should view all power in the light of the cross.

Endnote

- 1 Mark 3. 6; Matt. 12. 14; cp. also John 11. 47.

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED

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Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the February issue of YPS.

The start of the year is the time when many of us 'restart' our Bible reading plans – how is it going for you? It is good at any

time to encourage ourselves, to 'give attendance to reading', 1 Tim. 4. 13, every day.

I hope that you find the articles in this issue to be enjoyable and a blessing.

Andrew Dutton

Seeing the world through a biblical lens – biblical masculinity

STEPHEN G. BAKER, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

In recent articles, we have discussed God's creation of human beings at the beginning of time. When describing this act of creation, God states, 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, created he him; male and female created he them', Gen. 1. 27. This statement makes it clear that God did not create two identical people but rather two unique individuals with many similarities. Thus, masculinity and femininity are not products of human social structures but are part of God's design. Both men and women were created to reflect different aspects of God's nature. In the case of men, this includes strength, wisdom, protection, and love.

One significant issue in 21st-century Western civilization is the lack of identity that many people feel. The Creator's intention was for men to embrace their identity as men. It's important to clarify what I mean, as historically some men have exhibited chauvinism, aggression, arrogance, and excessive assertiveness. Genesis chapter 3 verse 16 hints at these traits as consequences of sin entering the world.

To truly understand what God means by masculinity, we need to read scripture carefully. Masculinity does not imply a lack of feelings or emotions, nor does it mean that a man should be aggressive, proud, or hard-hearted. Such behaviours are often the result of sin and diverge from God's original intentions for men.

The scriptures indicate that a man should embrace adventure (as seen in the stories of David, Samson, etc.), possess the capacity to work hard, and use his physical strength for the purpose of providing for and protecting his family, 1 Tim. 5. 8. Provision is not limited to financial means; it also includes emotional, spiritual, and relational support. A biblically masculine man takes responsibility for his family's well-being and nurtures their growth. To fulfil this role, a man needs strength. Joshua chapter 1 verse 9 commands,

'Be strong and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God will be with thee whithsoever thou goest'. Biblical masculinity involves trusting God in the face of fear and leading others with confidence grounded in the Lord.

Masculinity is not a justification for oppression or rudeness. Instead, it is the God-given capacity to embrace adventure, remain steadfast in difficult situations, and demonstrate the strength and skill that God has bestowed upon men, 1 Cor. 16. 13. This call to vigilance and courage is not about physical dominance but about spiritual resilience. Men are encouraged to stand firm in truth, defend righteousness, and lead with conviction. It is crucial to note that this does not imply that men are better than women, but that men are distinct from women, 1 Cor. 11. 8-12. The Lord Jesus exemplified humble masculinity, as described in John chapter 13, when He washed His disciples' feet – a task reserved for servants. True masculinity follows Christ's example by serving, protecting, and uplifting those in one's care.

Paul's exhortation in 1 Timothy chapter 6 verse 11 provides a blueprint for masculine virtues, 'But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness' NKJV. These traits, often overlooked in modern portrayals of masculinity, are central to the biblical model. Gentleness and endurance are not signs of weakness but indicators of spiritual maturity.

In our next article in this series, we will explore femininity. As I conclude, I want to remind all males reading this article that they possess unique capacities and abilities that differ from their female counterparts. It is essential to use these characteristics wisely, for the glory of God, and for the good of others.



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 Version

Uzziah and his pride

The ages of kings when their reign began are interesting. Joash and Josiah were seven and eight years old respectively. Manasseh was twelve. By comparison Ahaz, at twenty, was practically a pensioner! Uzziah was sixteen. He was very young and inexperienced. However, youth should never be a barrier to service for the Lord, 'Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity', 1 Tim. 4. 12.

From the start Uzziah did that which was right before the Lord, 2 Chr. 26. 4. He sought the Lord, v. 5, or he set himself to seek the Lord. He did this in several ways:

- He took the instruction of Zechariah, v. 5.
- He went to war with God's enemies, v. 6.
- He built strong cities in their land, v. 6.
- He built towers in Jerusalem and in the wilderness for watchmen to spot threats, vv. 9, 10.
- He built wells, v. 10.
- He built a strong military, v. 11.

There are a number of positive lessons to learn from Uzziah:

- Experience matters – we should always be willing to learn from those who have walked this road before.
- The world, the flesh, and the Devil are all at enmity with God. We should declare war on them. If not, we can be sure that they will defeat us.
- We have no choice but to live in the world. We must be well-defended from its attacks.
- Our enemies are sly and subtle – always be watchful.
- We should never take our refreshment from the world – our source of refreshment is the One who gives 'living water'.
- The weapons of our warfare are spiritual. God has given us His armour, 'be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil', Eph. 6. 10, 11. Much could be said about these verses, ultimately our best defence is God Himself, a knowledge of His word, and regular communication through prayer.

Uzziah was very successful:

- God helped him, v. 7.
- His enemies honoured him, v. 8.
- He became very strong.
- He had large herds, farms, and vines.

BUT – often a terrible word in the Bible

'But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, to his destruction', v. 16. He became 'full of himself', entering the temple to burn incense – that was a job for the priest. When the priests withstood him, Uzziah became angry. As they watched, leprosy entered his forehead. He was banished from the temple, the palace, even the city. Uzziah died a leper. He was buried, not



in the kings' tomb, but in the kings' field. What a fall from grace, all because of pride.

Pride is listed as one of the great causes of sin in the world, 1 John 2. 6, the Lord says it comes from within and defiles a man, Mark 7. 20-23, and it is in the list of 'deadly sins' that the Lord hates, Prov. 6. 17. Pride is essentially self-worship, taking what is God's and bestowing it on ourselves. Pride should never be in our thinking. There are a number of causes of pride including:

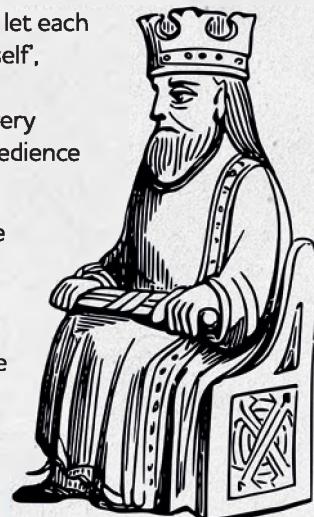
- **Knowledge, 1 Cor. 8. 1:** Knowledge puffs up. As we increase in knowledge of the word of God our knowledge must not induce pride. Instead, it should lead to humility as we increase in appreciation of God.
- **Wealth, 1 Tim. 6. 10:** The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. At times, it causes us to be 'haughty', leaving others feeling less worthy. Wealth is not a reason to glory, 'What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?' 1 Cor. 4. 7.
- **Good looks, Isa. 3. 16-18:** There is nothing wrong with being attractive. A problem arises when a person's attractiveness becomes a source of pride to them. We live in a day when it seems that, for many, the only thing they have in their favour is their appearance. If you are a good-looking person, the Lord bless you, and may you use your good looks to God's glory rather than yours, and may your beauty be that which is within.
- **Lack of understanding of the Lord, Prov. 8. 13:** 'Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate'.

Pride exalts self, it should always be our ambition for only the Lord to be exalted, Isa. 2. 11. Pride causes division, Prov. 16. 18, and disgrace, 11. 2, and is opposed by God, 3. 34.

How do we avoid pride?

- **Love:** 'Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up', 1 Cor. 13. 4.
- **Lowliness:** 'In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself', Phil. 2. 3.
- **Likeness to Christ:** 'bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ', 2 Cor. 10. 5.

It's easy to see where Uzziah's pride came from. Let's determine not to follow that path. Isaiah knew who glory should be ascribed to, 'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple', Isa. 6. 1. Do we appreciate the glory of the Lord?



Christian basics – spiritual gifts

ANDREW DUTTON, NORWICH, ENGLAND

'They are gifted' is a term often reserved for talented musicians and artists or successful sports personalities. The phrase refers to natural abilities that very often are supplemented with hard work and dedication.

'They are gifted' also refers to Christians, not a select group, but every believer in the Lord Jesus, not in the sense of natural abilities, but spiritual gifts. We can and should use the natural abilities that we have in service for the Lord, but there is a very important principle that each one has received a spiritual gift, 1. Cor. 12. 1; 1 Pet. 4. 10, DAVID NEWELL said helpfully, 'Spiritual gifts ... are enablements given by God through the Holy Spirit to all believers so that they can effectively function in the body of Christ'.¹

Difference of gifts in the body

Paul teaches the Corinthians that Christians make up 'one body', 1 Cor. 12. 12, 'not one member, but many', v. 14. Just as the human body needs many body parts to function in harmony, all believers need to work together using their different gifts as God has 'set ... [them] in the church', v. 28, for the benefit of each other, and to the glory of the Lord.

Distribution of gifts

In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul indicates that the Lord Jesus, who has 'ascended up far above all heavens', v. 10, has given men, 'some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ', vv. 11, 12. The emphasis here is on the individuals, using different gifts given by the Lord to benefit the people of God. Other teaching emphasizes the gift itself, 'do the work of an evangelist', 2 Tim. 4. 5. The point is that God 'works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills', 1 Cor. 12. 11 NKJV.

Development of gifts

Writing to Timothy, Paul encourages him to 'neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee', 1 Tim. 4. 14. This instruction can be applied to all of us as believers. We must not abandon or be careless with our spiritual gift. We need to work hard at it. All gifts require us to 'study to shew thyself approved unto God ... rightly dividing the word of truth', 2 Tim. 2. 15; this instruction to study and understand the word of God isn't just for the Bible teacher! Paul also tells Timothy to 'endure afflictions', when doing 'the work of an evangelist', 4. 5. Just as natural abilities require hard work and dedication, so do spiritual gifts!

Practical points to note

In considering your spiritual gift, the following points may help you:



- Through prayer, commit to God and be serious about your spiritual gift.
- If you are unsure what your gift is, pray about this too. Ask the Lord for help in finding ways to serve Him. As a result, you may develop a special interest in some works – we sometimes refer to this as being 'burdened'.
- Be open to serve the Lord in a variety of ways, and work hard at the things that you commit to do.
- Consider the guidance of older believers. When I was young, I adopted a principle of trying to do anything that I was asked to do by an older believer, and this helped me identify the areas of service I was fitted to.
- Preparation is required. Paul spent three years being prepared by God for service, Gal. 1. 15-18.
- Realize that gifts need to be used to be developed.

¹ D. J. NEWELL, *Letters to a New Believer*, Ritchie, pg. 131.

Saints' CVs: Amy Carmichael

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

AMY CARMICHAEL 1867-1951

Amy Beatrice Carmichael was born into a prosperous Victorian family in Millisle, County Down, Northern Ireland. She was the eldest of seven children. Amy trusted the Lord at an early age.

She was always sympathetic to people in need. As a teenager, she encountered the 'shawlies' – rough, working-class girls in Belfast who could only afford cheap woollen shawls rather than proper hats. She was instrumental in setting up and running the Welcome Hall, an outreach mission to these girls where they could hear the gospel message and see the love of God in action through the kindness of believers.

Amy moved to Manchester, England, with her mother and younger sisters when the family fell into poverty, shortly after the death of her father. Here she became involved with the Keswick movement, meeting influential leaders like Hudson Taylor and F. B. Meyer. Amy felt an urgent call to missionary service. In 1893, she sailed for Japan as the first missionary to be supported directly by the Keswick Convention. However, poor health forced her to return after little more than one year.

Following a brief visit home, she left for the South of India in 1895 and remained in that country for the next half a century. Amy learned to speak and read the Tamil language fluently. She observed, humorously, that if God could make a donkey speak, then He could teach her another language.¹ Following the example of Hudson Taylor, she integrated with the community by adopting their local dress and food.

Amy travelled around villages teaching women and children about the Bible. The biggest problem she encountered was the prevalence of idol temples, where young girls would be 'married to the gods', effectively sold into immorality, similar to first-century pagan practices.

Amy began rescuing temple children, protecting them from this terrible life of abuse and slavery. She encountered severe persecution, including at one stage being accused by the authorities of kidnapping children. Eventually, Amy set up a residential centre for young people in Dohnavur, Tamil Nadu state. The Dohnavur mission which she founded remains in operation today.² Children affectionately called her 'Amma', which means mother in the Tamil language. Although she had left her family behind in Britain, Amy enjoyed the friendship and loyalty of many children at Dohnavur.

She was a prolific author, publishing over thirty books. Many of these were written after a serious accident in 1931 which left her with limited mobility. Her primary audience was back home in Britain, as she informed them about the remarkable spiritual need in India. However, she never solicited funds directly; like Müller and others, she always looked in faith to the Lord for

provision
of her
needs. The
Dohnavur
Fellowship
runs on identical
principles today.

Carmichael was a gifted poet, producing many striking devotional works. Some of these have been set to music as hymns, such as *Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God*.³

From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices, weakenings,
Not thus are spirits fortified,
Not this way went the Crucified;
From all that dims Thy Calvary,
O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire;
Let me not sink to be a clod;
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.

She also wrote a meditative commentary on 1 Corinthians chapter 13, entitled *If: What Do I Know Of Calvary Love?*⁴ Some of her challenging statements are shown below.

'If I can easily discuss the shortcomings and the sins of any; if I can speak in a casual way even of a child's misdoings, then I know nothing of Calvary love'.

'If my interest in the work of others is cool; if I think in terms of my own special work; if the burdens of others are not my burdens too, and their joys mine, then I know nothing of Calvary love'.

'If I covet any place on earth but the dust at the foot of the Cross, then I know nothing of Calvary love'.

Amy Carmichael is buried at Dohnavur in India; by her own request, there is no headstone to mark her grave. There is a statue of Carmichael in Belfast, as well as a blue plaque in her birthplace of Millisle. However, her powerful legacy consists of the many children rescued from temple slavery and her stirring devotional writings.

¹ FRANK HOUGHTON, *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur*, SPCK, 1959, pg. 96.

² See: <https://dohnavurfellowship.org>.

³ AMY CARMICHAEL, *Toward Jerusalem*, CLC, 1989.

⁴ AMY CARMICHAEL, *If*, CLC, 1992



The person and work of the Holy Spirit

Part 1 Introduction

By **TIM COLTMAN** Winshill, England

We must recognize that in dealing with the subject of the Holy Spirit, we do so with reverence, for we are on holy ground. When speaking of any of the Godhead, we cannot refer to any as being inferior or relegate them in our thinking.

The first point to make is that the Holy Spirit is a real person and not just a force or influence. The question is asked of Ananias, 'why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?' Acts 5. 3. We cannot lie to a force or an influence! We have that emphasized for us, for the scripture goes on to say, 'thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God', v. 4.

The word 'trinity', although not mentioned in scripture, denotes a truth clearly taught throughout the word of God. When thinking of a member of the Godhead, we are speaking of one that is not part God, but is God, in essence wholly God. It is not that they are part Father, part Son, and part Holy Spirit.

For example, we often refer to deity in terms of essential attributes. Words such as 'omnipresent' (present everywhere), omniscient (all knowing), and omnipotent (all powerful) are used.¹ These aspects are true of the Holy Spirit because He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. We note also that the three members of the Godhead are mentioned together in scripture.²

The subject of the Holy Spirit is so vast in scripture. He is mentioned in all but three of the New Testament books, and spoken of from Genesis³ to Revelation.⁴ Indeed, without the Holy Spirit we would not have the scriptures, 'for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost', 2 Pet. 1. 21.

There are also many different titles

of the Holy Spirit in the word of God, some of which tell us of His attributes, His work, or His person. As to His attributes, He is described as the Spirit of truth, of wisdom, of life, and of holiness. Of His work, He is described as the Comforter. As to His person, He is spoken of as the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God.⁵

The promise and coming of the Holy Spirit

The Lord speaks of His going to the Father, and that He would send another Comforter, 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter', John 14. 16. And He goes on to tell us who that will be, 'even the Spirit of truth', v. 17, and in verse 26 it is confirmed for us, 'the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost'.

The word 'Comforter' is a translation of the word *parakletos* meaning One who is called alongside to help. It is also the same word that is used in 1 John chapter 2 verse 1, 'If any man sin we



have an advocate [same word] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous'. Notice how the Lord speaks of sending 'another Comforter', John 14. 16. Whenever this word 'another' is mentioned in scripture, it is either used of 'another of a different kind' or 'another of the same kind'. The Lord is speaking, and what He says is, 'I will send another [of the same kind] Comforter'. One of the Godhead.

The coming of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Acts. This book is full of the Holy Spirit and could be described as 'the Acts of the Holy Spirit'. This coming of the Holy Spirit was a once for all act on the day of Pentecost. The Lord had ascended back to the Father, and fifty days after the resurrection the Holy Spirit comes. 'Pent' means fifty. Luke records this for us in Acts chapter 2.

This event is pictured in the Feasts of Jehovah, Lev. 23. The Passover speaks of Calvary. The Feast of Firstfruits speaks of the resurrection, and then the Feast of Weeks comes fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits.

The coming of the Holy Spirit also signified the birth of the church, 'they were all with one accord in one place', Acts 2. 1, and were filled with the Holy Spirit. As we continue these studies, we will see that the Holy Spirit was involved in every aspect of us coming to Christ. John chapter 16 verse 8 tells us that He convicts the world of sin. It was as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit that we came under the sound of the gospel. Now, as believers, we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us.

What a tremendous subject, but also what a challenge as we think of one of the Godhead dwelling within us as believers!

Endnotes

- 1 When the word begins with 'omni' we have the thought of 'all'.
- 2 Heb. 9. 14; Matt. 3. 16, 17; 28. 19.
- 3 'And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters', Gen. 1. 2.
- 4 'The Spirit and the bride say come', Rev. 22. 17.
- 5 John 14. 17; Isa. 11. 2; Rev. 11. 11; Rom. 1. 4; John 14. 16, 26; 15. 26; 16. 7; 2 Cor. 3. 17, 18; for example, Gen. 1. 2; 41. 38; Rom. 8. 9; Eph. 4. 30.

DIVERSITY

Part 2

The assembly – diversity of gift but unity of operation Part 1

by **ANDREW WILSON** Queensland, Australia
[All quotations are taken from the New King James Bible]

The New Testament pictures the church, not as a monarchy (with one person in charge), nor as a democracy (every sheep with an equal vote), nor as a pyramid-like hierarchy ruled by bishops and archbishops, but instead, as autonomous churches governed by a plurality of leaders (variously called elders, overseers, or shepherds) and an every-member ministry.

The New Testament picture of church life is not that of a cult (uniformity but little diversity), nor a multicultural society (lots of diversity but no shared unity). Instead, it involves unity and diversity. This unity and diversity is particularly connected in the New Testament with the use of spiritual gifts. Here we will look at three of the four passages that deal with this topic.

Romans: mutual acceptance
The Epistle to the Romans has been called ‘the cathedral of the Christian faith’,¹ and ‘the most profound book in existence’.² It is the first of the New Testament letters, both in place and importance. In it, the apostle sets forth in systematic fashion the doctrinal truths of the gospel: Gentiles and Jews have all sinned, and justification by God’s grace through the redemption in Christ is available to all who believe in Him.

Yet Romans is motivated by practical concerns too, one of which is unity among Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul writes this letter as he sets out on his journey to Jerusalem with a gift for the poor saints there, Rom. 15. 25. His hope is that this demonstration of Gentile generosity will bind the Jewish and Gentile wings of the church together. Chapters 9 to 11

also speak to this problem, showing that God has not abandoned the nation of Israel, for one day ‘all Israel will be saved’, 11. 26. Gentile believers should not boast against Israel in its present unbelief, nor should Jewish believers give up hope for their nation.

The same message of acceptance, despite differences, is seen in the last main section of Romans chapters 12 to 16. In chapters 14 and 15, Paul writes about Christians who have differences of opinion. Some ate meat whereas others only ate vegetables; one person felt that certain days were special, but others considered every day alike. Paul tells these strong brothers (who felt they had liberty in such disputed matters) and weak brothers (who were more strict) that they must accept one another without judging or despising each other, because Christ died for both. We should ‘receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things’, 14. 1; we should ‘receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God’, 15. 7.

Romans chapter 12 commences this last section of the letter by highlighting the attitudes required for believers to live in unity. In view of the mercies of God, we should offer our bodies as living sacrifices for God, our ‘reasonable service’, v. 1. This service is characterized by humility that produces unity, vv. 3-5. Paul uses the metaphor of the body with many members and goes on to speak of the diversity of our spiritual gifts, vv. 6-8. A lifestyle of humble service should also be seen in living wholeheartedly for God, vv. 9-13, and in selflessness, vv. 14-21. Paul’s treatment of

spiritual gifts in this passage emphasizes the fact that each one has a gift, and that a wide variety of different gifts exists: prophecy, ministry (serving), teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and showing mercy.

D. BARNHOUSE writes, ‘A great error in our modern way of doing things is to expect one man to possess all the gifts for leadership. Thus, a church may have several hundred members but only one pastor. He is supposed to be able to preach, comfort, and so on. In fact, of the eight gifts mentioned in our text (Rom. 12:6-8) seven are usually considered to be the function of the ordained minister, while the eighth is the function of the congregation. And what one gift is left to the congregation? It is that of paying the bills. Something is out of order here. Someone may ask if I am suggesting that laymen should preach. Without question, when a layman has a grasp of the Scriptures he should exercise his gift and preach at every opportunity. The growth of laymen’s movements is significant and is a step in the right direction – back to the New Testament way of doing things’.³

The message of mutual acceptance, despite our differences in gifts, nationality, or opinions on secondary matters, has been summed up in the saying, ‘In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity’.⁴

Ephesians 4: mutual edification

Unity and diversity is also one of the main themes of Ephesians. The apostle is concerned that Jews and Gentiles, who have both been brought near to God by the blood of Christ, 2. 13, should live together in unity in the church.

Ephesians shows us that our unity and diversity as believers is based on the same unity and diversity in the Godhead. Thus, in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 to 6, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing by God the Father, while verses 7 to 12 teach

that the blessings of redemption, forgiveness, and an inheritance are 'in Christ', and these blessings are applied through the work of the Spirit, vv. 13, 14. Paul's great prayers in the Epistle are also both Trinitarian, particularly in Ephesians chapter 3 verses 14 to 19, where Paul prays that they might be 'strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . . that you may be filled with all the fullness of God'.

The importance of unity despite our diverse spiritual gifts is seen in chapter 4 verses 1 to 16, the first matter to be dealt with in the practical section of the letter. These verses balance 'the unity of the Spirit' ('one body . . . one Spirit . . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all', vv. 4-6), with every-member gifting, 'but to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift', v. 7. In verse 11, five important gifts are listed – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Then, seven purpose statements follow, starting in verse 12 with 'for the equipping [or perfecting] of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ', and culminating in verse 16 with 'according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love'.

Traditional interpreters have taken verse 12 ('perfecting the saints', etc.) to refer to the work of the ordained clergy, while others more recently see in it the church leader as a spiritual 'coach' who equips the saints (principally by his exposition of scripture on Sundays), leaving the saints in turn to do the more humdrum work of ministry. However, this passage does not demarcate a division of labour between the clergy who preach and the laity who do the rest. Instead, it balances the two truths that all God's people are to use their spiritual gifts to mutually edify the body, yet there are also some spiritual gifts (those listed in verse 11) which are more important in the building-up of the church. The church is to be a

collaborative unity, with all involved in full-time Christian service.

J. STOTT writes, 'What model of the church, then, should we keep in our minds? The traditional model is that of the pyramid, with the pastor perched precariously on its pinnacle, like a little pope in his own church, while the laity are arrayed beneath him in serried ranks of inferiority. It is a totally unbiblical image, because the New Testament envisages not a single pastor with a docile flock but both a plural oversight and an every-member ministry'.⁵

1 Peter 4: mutual encouragement

Peter draws a contrast between the Christian's former behaviour among the pagans with life in the new Christian community. The Christian should no longer 'live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God', v. 2. Instead of 'doing the will of the Gentiles', v. 3, by living in debauchery, the believer is instead encouraged to 'have fervent love for one another', v. 8, 'be hospitable to one another', v. 9, and minister spiritual gifts to one another, v. 10. Having left the world behind, the Christian enjoys fellowship in a new spiritual family. The 'one another' commands emphasize the New Testament's message of mutual encouragement, for despite our many differences we all need each other.

Peter envisages a mutual encouragement society. His picture of an ideal church involves every member no longer thinking of themselves but using their spiritual gifts to serve one another, loving fervently, and showing hospitality much like the early church, Acts 2. 44-46.

Peter reinforces the truth taught elsewhere in the New Testament that each believer has received a gift by which we may serve others, 'as each one has received a gift, minister it to one another', v. 10. Here there are two broad types of gifts – speaking and serving gifts, 'If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone

ministers [i.e., serves], let him do it as with the ability which God supplies', v. 11.

S. SHORT wrote, 'This verse [1 Peter 4:10] is one of several which emphasizes that there was a pronounced element of mutuality in the preaching within the New Testament churches; in other words, that there was no "one way traffic" here (as with a 'pastor' addressing his congregation), but a "two way traffic". What the Bible shows is that in the churches of the Apostolic period, the Christians admonished one another, taught one another, edified one another, exhorted one another, and ministered to one another'.⁶

Those with serving gifts are encouraged to use them with all the strength which God supplies. Not everyone has a speaking gift, and (thankfully) people who do not have the gift of teaching usually steer clear of trying to exercise a gift they do not possess. However, this passage does not try to exclude people from speaking, either by insisting that preachers must be appointed or ordained or have some educational qualification. After all, who would have thought that a fisherman like Peter would become the chief public spokesman for the Messiah? There are times and occasions when we must all speak up for Christ.

How does the New Testament describe the use of these diverse spiritual gifts in the church gatherings? We will see in the next article.

Endnotes

- 1 FRÉDÉRIC LOUIS GODET, *Commentary on Romans*, Kregel.
- 2 SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, *Table Talk*, pg. 252.
- 3 DONALD GREY BARNHOUSE, *The Measure of Your Faith*, Bible Study Hour Broadcasts, Book 69, Evangelical Foundation, Inc., 1957, pg. 21.
- 4 RUPERTUS MELDENIUS, *Christian Unity*, 1627.
- 5 JOHN R. W. STOTT, *The Message of Ephesians*, BST, IVP, 1979, 1989, pg. 167.
- 6 STEPHEN S. SHORT, "The Ministry of the Word", *The Witness*, Feb. 1965, pp. 45, 46.

Words at the Cross

By **MERVYN WISHART** Belfast, Northern Ireland

Part 8

'And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost', Luke 23. 46.

The first and the final sayings of Christ on the cross were addressed to His Father and are recorded only by Luke.

At the beginning of His public ministry, He prayed. Others who came to John's baptism confessed their sins, but He had no sins to confess and instead He prayed, Luke 3. 21. This, the last saying of Christ on the cross, was a prayer to His Father. His ministry began and ended with prayer.

Psalm 31 verse 5

These last words spoken before He died are a quotation from Psalm 31 verse 5. He died with a quotation from scripture on His lips. The psalm was written by David who, although the anointed king, was persecuted and badly treated. How much more was Christ mistreated, rejected, despised, and crucified outside Jerusalem! We note the word the Lord **added** to the text and words which He **omitted** from it. David said, 'into thine hand I commit my spirit'. The Lord Jesus prefaced the text with the word 'Father', expressing a relationship that David could not claim. David spoke of Jehovah as Shepherd but not as Father. Our Lord's adoption and use of these words on the cross have endowed them with a special meaning far beyond David's original intent.

How fitting is verse 1 of the Psalm, 'In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust'. When the Lord was on the cross, His enemies said jeeringly, 'He trusted in God', Matt. 27. 43. The Lord Jesus committed His spirit to the care of His Father. The words which the Lord omitted when quoting the text were 'Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth'. He had come to redeem others and had no need to be redeemed Himself.

When Stephen, the first recorded martyr, was being stoned he said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit', Acts 7. 59. His life was taken from him. He was not given a choice.

Holy Ground

We stand on holy ground when we consider those sacred moments which immediately preceded the death of Christ at Calvary. John tells us of His penultimate cry from the cross, 'It is finished', John 19. 30. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each inform us that this cry was 'with a loud voice', Matt. 27. 50; Mark 15. 37; Luke 23. 46.

John's account of the order of events is clear: He received the vinegar; He cried, 'It is finished', with a loud voice; then He said, 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit'. Then, He bowed His head and gave up the spirit. He was always in complete control of events: the bowing of His head was His last purposeful action prior to His death. His life on earth was a life of activity. He went about doing good. The last verse of John's Gospel says, 'And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written', John 21. 25.

Of the countless actions of the Lord during His lifetime the most significant was the bowing of His head on the cross.

klinō

'When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave

up the ghost', John 19. 30. The word *klinō* which is translated 'bowed' here is rendered elsewhere in various ways which are rich in meaning when related to our text.

We will consider how it is translated in three other passages.

1. When seeking to dissuade would-be followers, who had not stopped to consider the cost of discipleship, the Lord Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head', Matt. 8. 20. The words 'to lay' are a translation of the word *klinō*. The one for whom no room was found and who had on earth nowhere to lay His head, at last bowed His head upon His own breast and commended His spirit to His Father.

Here we are reminded of the circumstances of poverty into which the Lord Jesus was born and in which He lived, 'for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich', 2 Cor. 8. 9. When He bowed (*klinō*) His head on the cross, His shame, His suffering, and His humiliation were forever past.

Soon, His body would be gently taken down from the tree by Joseph and Nicodemus. With a mixture of myrrh and aloes, they would prepare His body for burial, and lay it in the rock-hewn sepulchre donated by Joseph of Arimathaea. He was guarded by angels, one at His head and another at His feet, and the words of Isaiah were fulfilled, He was 'with the rich in his death', Isa. 53. 9.

2. Concerning the heroes of faith who turned to flight the armies of the aliens, Heb. 11. 34, the same word *klinō* occurs. The words 'turned to flight' are a translation of *klinō*.

When the Lord Jesus bowed His head on the cross it was a visible sign of a great victory won, enemies being put to flight, and every foe defeated. 'And having

spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it', Col. 2. 15.

The believer enters into the good of the victory won at the cross, just as the children of Israel shared in David's victory when Goliath was slain in the valley of Elah, 1 Sam. 17. Paul reminds us that 'we are more than conquerors through him that loved us', Rom. 8. 37.

'How hast thou triumphed, and triumphed with glory,
Battled death's forces, rolled
back every wave!
Can we refrain then from telling
the story?
How thou art victor o'er death
and the grave?'
[H. D'ARCY CHAMPNEY]

3. Another occurrence of *klinō* is where it is rendered the day is 'far spent', Luke 24. 29. When the Lord bowed His head, it brought to an end His day of service on earth. What a day it was: from early boyhood, when His first recorded words were 'I must be about my Father's business', Luke 2. 49, until at last He could testify to His Father, 'I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do', John 17. 4. He was the perfect servant of Jehovah. Every moment of every day was filled with busy service for God. He was the only servant who could truthfully say, 'I do always those things that please him', John 8. 29.

A voluntary death

The death of Christ was in every respect a voluntary death. In Leviticus chapter 1 verse 3, the offeror who brought a burnt offering was obliged to offer it 'of his own voluntary will'. The Lord Jesus said, 'I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again', John 10. 17, 18. Death had no claim upon Him as it has over every other person.

We die because we cannot help it; God's appointed time has come. How different was the death of Christ. The word used by Matthew is 'Jesus . . . yielded up the ghost', 27. 50. The word rendered 'yielded up' is 'to send away', as a king would dismiss someone from his presence. His death was not only voluntary, in that He allowed men to crucify Him, but voluntary in the absolute sense. He was in control until He bowed His head and breathed His last.

He did not die of exhaustion. He did not die from 'natural causes'. He died of His own volition. AUGUSTINE, in the fourth century, said, 'Not against His will did the Saviour's spirit leave the flesh, but because He would, and when He would, and how He would'.¹ LUTHARDT wrote, 'As little as we can understand Jesus' entrance into bodily life by way of natural law. So little can we his exit from it'.² There is mystery here beyond our understanding.

At the ninth hour, the darkness receded, and the light shone forth once more. The Lord Jesus suffered in the darkness, but as He died the light shone again.

How amazing that He who bears the name 'the Prince of life' died to bring life to others, Acts 3. 15! Samson's greatest triumph was in his death, Judg. 16. 30. So it is with the Lord Jesus, when He bowed His head and dismissed His spirit, at that most precious moment atonement was made. His greatest victory was won.

Not Guilty

His death answered both of the charges brought by the Jews against Christ.

The first charge was blasphemy, John 19. 7. The Jews answered him, Pilate, 'we have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God'. The Centurion, who stood nearer to the cross than anyone else, when he 'saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God',

Mark 15. 39. He was **not guilty** of blasphemy.

The second charge was insurrection, 'the Jews cried out, saying . . . whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar', John 19. 12. Pilate wrote a title and fixed it over His head on the cross, 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews'; He was **not guilty** of insurrection, Matt. 27. 37.

It is remarkable that at the cross both of these charges were refuted, each from an unexpected source. Nathanael's confession embraces both. He said, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel', John 1. 49.

The bowing of His head as an act of worship

Abraham's servant when he came to the home of Rebekah, 'bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord', Gen. 24. 26. The returning exiles with Nehemiah, 'they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord', Neh. 8. 6. When the Lord Jesus bowed His head on the cross it was the highest act of worship ever rendered to God on earth.

What do we learn concerning God in this final saying from the cross? He is the God to whom we can entrust every aspect of our lives. Peter wrote, 'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator', 1 Pet. 4. 19. In words again from Psalm 31, may we be content to say, 'My times are in thy hand', v. 15.

Our times are in thy hand,
Father, we wish them there.
Our life, our soul, our all, we leave
Entirely to Thy care.

[WILLIAM FREEMAN LLOYD]

Endnotes

- 1 J. C. RYLE, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John*, Volume 3, Clarke and Company, pg. 364.
- 2 C. E. LUTHARDT, *St. John's Gospel described and explained according to its peculiar character*, Legare Street Press, pg. 298.

TITLES OF JEHOVAH 6

JEHOVAH ROHI

THE LORD MY SHEPHERD

By **ANDREW WARE** Melbourne, Australia

As David sat down to compose the twenty-third Psalm, what was on his mind? Was it memories of cold nights huddled with his flock, cool mornings on the green grass, scorching summer afternoons as he led them looking for water, or encounters with predators seeking a lamb to eat? Whatever shepherding experiences he recalled, as he reflected on the Lord's activity in his own life, he would write, 'The Lord is my shepherd', v. 1.

With some caution, we address this title of Jehovah, which is not only well known, but has been deeply loved and a great encouragement to God's people for centuries. We truly can have nothing new to say; instead let this serve perhaps as a reminder of things long enjoyed. *Jehovah Rohi*, the Lord my Shepherd,¹ is a wonderfully personal and comforting title, for 'no other name of Jehovah has the tender intimate touch of this name'.² Although Psalm 23 is the only place where the title occurs, the scriptures ring with it, and the Lord Jesus clearly applies this title to Himself, John 10. 11.

Shepherds and shepherding imagery are consistent themes running through both testaments. Many individuals, especially in the Old Testament, were shepherds; Abel is the first to be identified as 'a keeper of sheep', Gen. 4. 2. There are many others, including Abraham, Isaac, Rachel, Jacob, his sons, Moses, and, of course, David.³ This is perhaps not a surprise. After all, the patriarchs were nomads – 'pilgrims on the earth', Heb. 11. 13, both physically and spiritually. Their very lifestyle was one that lent itself to shepherding. Once the people of Israel were settled into the Land, ancient societies revolved around that which the land could supply, and this included the wool, hides, and meat from well-tended sheep, so the shepherd was an indispensable member of society.⁴ For this reason, it seems fitting that

our God would link Himself with this concept of one who is integral to the fabric of life.

Psalm 23 – the pattern for the Shepherd

David knew what it meant to be a shepherd, and there are two things a good shepherd gives his flock – provision and protection. The psalm traces something of these two themes in its description of *Jehovah Rohi*.

First, there is provision in verses 1 to 3 – indeed, 'I shall not want', v. 1, indicates that there is no lack of any provision from this Shepherd. As a shepherd would provide food and water to his flock, so this Shepherd provides nourishment, refreshment, and rest 'in green pastures ... [and] beside the still waters', v. 2. Similarly, He provides restoration of the soul, and guidance to and in the 'paths of righteousness', v. 3. Lest we think that this is somehow all centred on the sheep, we are reminded that He is the Lord, and it is 'for his name's sake', v. 3. He is the one who gets the glory!

The emphasis then turns to protection in verse 4, for in the 'valley of the shadow of death' He is present – 'Thou art with me'. It is at this point that the pronoun changes; in verses 2 and 3 the Lord is 'He', now in the latter part of the psalm it is 'thou'. Isn't it often in life that it is in the valley that the One who is the Shepherd, is experienced more

personally as my Shepherd? So, despite the difficulties that we may face, we too can say, 'I will fear no evil', v. 4, for He will never leave us or forsake us, Heb. 13. 5.

David knew what it was to protect his flock. He could say to Saul before going out to face Goliath that when he 'kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb ... I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth', 1 Sam. 17. 34, 35. So there is comfort to be found in the shepherd's skilful use of his 'rod' and 'staff', v. 4, and we see there is correction as well as protection. After all, 'whom the Lord loves He corrects', Prov. 3. 12 NKJV; He protects us from ourselves as well as our enemies.

The psalm ends with a return to the theme of the Shepherd's provision for His people. First, a table of fellowship made ready, even 'in the presence of ... enemies' against whom the Shepherd is providing protection, v. 5. There is also a supply of oil, to soothe and heal, along with an overflowing cup to refresh and gladden, v. 5, perhaps picturing the provision of the Holy Spirit, and the word of God.⁵ Goodness and mercy 'all the days of my life' are prepared, v. 6, as is a place 'in the house of the Lord for ever', v. 6. What a Shepherd, who leads His flock all the way through this world and then on to eternal rest.

Other Old Testament Passages

Although the 23rd Psalm is the most direct and concentrated portion of the Old Testament dealing with the theme of the Lord as Shepherd, there are other passages where it is found. We can only touch on a couple of these.⁶ The 80th Psalm begins with the cry, 'Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel', identifying Him as the one who leads 'Joseph like a flock', Ps. 80. 1. He it is whom Isaiah, looking to a future day, identifies as the One who will feed 'his flock like a shepherd', who 'shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young', Isa. 40. 11.

Shepherding is also used

metaphorically in the Old Testament for those who were to act with protection and provision for the people of God, and the failure of these men stands in contrast to *Jehovah Rōhi*, the divine Shepherd who never fails. Jeremiah chapter 23 outlines condemnation against shepherds' who had failed: they 'destroy and scatter the sheep', who have 'driven them away, and not attended', Jer. 23. 1, 2. Tellingly, the Lord calls them 'my flock', v. 2; despite human failure, God was their faithful, unfailing Shepherd. Verse 3 points forward to a time when this Shepherd will 'gather the remnant . . . back to their folds', NKJV. Though these words are directed towards Israel, we have the comfort that God does not change, and that He who was faithful then, is faithful still.

Jehovah Rōhi in the New Testament

Is it any wonder then that when our Lord Jesus was born the first



recorded visitors to see Him were the shepherds who were 'abiding in the field', Luke 2. 8? Given the prominence of shepherds and shepherding in the scriptures, there could hardly be a more suitable group to visit the infant Christ, for here was none other than the One 'who will shepherd My people Israel', Matt. 2. 6 NKJV.

When we come to the New Testament, the title *Jehovah Rōhi* finds its full meaning and glory – for when the Lord Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd', John 10. 11, the claim of the divine title ('I AM'), linked to the idea of 'shepherd' is a clear allusion to Psalm 23. In four passages in the New Testament, Christ is directly identified as Shepherd, each throwing further light on the description in the psalm. These will need to suffice for our consideration, though there are several other passages picturing Him as Shepherd.⁸

The Lord, my Shepherd is the good Shepherd. In John chapter 10, He identifies Himself as the 'door of the sheep', v. 7, and the 'good shepherd', v. 11. Just as with Psalm 23, He is a Shepherd who provides, for the flock 'shall go in and out, and find pasture', v. 9. So too, does He protect the sheep from the 'thieves and robbers', v. 8, and from 'the wolf', v. 12. There is not only protection from these dangers, but ultimately from sin itself, for He said, 'I lay down my life for the sheep', v. 15. Moreover, the Shepherd who died to save the sheep, also keeps us – for no one is able to 'snatch them out of My hand', v. 28 NKJV.

The Lord my Shepherd is also the 'great shepherd', Heb. 13. 20, 21. The benediction of the Epistle to the Hebrews is a reminder that the 'the God of peace . . . brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus', v. 20, NEWBERRY MARGIN. He is One who has been through the 'valley of the shadow of death', Ps. 23. 4. Indeed, He has been through it and out of it. He now is 'that great shepherd of the sheep'. Here, the writer's prayer for his audience is that God would make them 'perfect in every good work to do his

will', Heb. 13. 21, echoing David's phrase, 'He leads me in the paths of righteousness', Ps. 23. 3 NKJV.

The Lord my Shepherd is 'the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls', 1 Pet. 2. 25 NKJV. We were 'going astray' but now have returned to Him. We were lost but now are found, and it was He who found us. This is pictured most graphically in the parable recorded in Luke chapter 15 – the Lord Jesus Himself is the Shepherd who goes out looking for the sheep, vv. 1-7. Peter goes on, for He is also the Overseer – the One who searched and looked for the sheep is now looking over, and out, for His flock, just as a good shepherd would. We are never out of His sight, or beyond His care, for 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them', John 10. 27.

Finally, the Lord my Shepherd, is the Chief Shepherd. 1 Peter chapter 5 is the last of the references to the Lord Jesus as Shepherd. The context here is instruction given to elders, and, in verse 2, Peter's exhortation is for them to 'shepherd . . . serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly . . . [and] eagerly', NKJV. These under-shepherds were to behave like the Chief Shepherd providing for and protecting the flock. The encouragement and challenge for them is that when He 'shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory', v. 4. That there is reward for those who shepherd like *Jehovah Rōhi*, indicates not only the preciousness of the 'flock of God', v. 2, but that ultimately it is for 'his name's sake', Ps. 23. 3.

Endnotes

- 1 The 'is' of English translations ensures the phrase makes sense in translation. It will be omitted in this article, as we are considering this as a title.
- 2 N. STONE, *Names of God*, Moody Press, 1944, pg.139.
- 3 Gen. 13. 7; 26. 20; 29. 9; 30. 35; 37. 12; Exod. 3. 1; 1 Sam. 16. 11.
- 4 'Shepherd', *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, Lexham Press, 2016, accessed via Logos Bible software.
- 5 J. M. FLANIGAN, *What the Bible Teaches: Psalms*, Ritchie, 2011, pg. 99.
- 6 See, for example, Pss. 77. 20; 78. 52, 53; 106. 9; 107. 7; 136. 16.
- 7 In the KJV this is 'pastors'; the English word is just an adoption of the Latin for 'shepherd'.
- 8 For example, Matt. 9. 36; 25. 31-46.

The life and times of Elisha⁶ Naaman – true and false greatness

By KEITH R. KEYSER Gilbertsville, USA

As Syria's commanding general, Naaman seemed to have it all. He was described as 'great and honourable . . . in the eyes of his master', and by his valorous skill led his nation to victory, 2 Kgs. 5. 1.¹ His greatness was restricted by one expression: 'but a leper'. This terminal malady was both disfiguring and defiling; truly, it was his implacable enemy. As FEREDAY explains: 'Other foes trembled before him; to this foe he was a helpless victim'.² What were his heroic accomplishments, if he could not even defeat something within his own body? His experience is representative of life in this fallen world. Sin taints all human lives and mars even mankind's most outstanding achievements. Greatness is only realized by God's gracious saving power which liberates from sin.

Surprising providence

The Almighty sometimes uses catastrophes to upset circumstances so that His word might spread. Stephen's martyrdom and the subsequent persecution indirectly led to Saul's conversion and the establishment of the church at Antioch.³ Similarly, during one of Syria's lightning raids, a young Hebrew girl was kidnapped and became a slave to Naaman's wife. This was not an uncommon occurrence in antiquity – life was hard, sometimes violent, and often short. Instead of becoming embittered at her mistress, she winsomely served her. Her diligence eventually provided an opportunity to witness to her. The girl's statement not only promised healing but also hinted at a past incident of healing recorded in the scriptures, 'If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy', 2 Kgs. 5. 3. The word rendered 'heal' in her wish was previously used in Numbers chapter 12 verses 14 and 15 to refer to Miriam's healing and congregational restoration after her disciplinary case of leprosy.⁴

This celebrated warrior might

have discounted this as a girl's imagination, but her genuine care obviously spoke to him. His response also indicated his desperate search for a cure. When Naaman told the Syrian king, he offered to reach out to Israel's king on his commander's behalf. The general then collected an enormous gift and departed for Samaria with a caravan of servants.⁵ It all began with a mere slave girl, faithfully testifying to her boss. She was one of the many 'weak things' that the Lord employs to confound this world's wise and mighty, 1 Cor. 1. 27-31. One writer challenges us, 'Never underestimate the power of a simple witness, for God can take words from the lips of a child and carry them to the ears of a king'.⁶

Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown

On receiving the King of Syria's missive, his Israelite counterpart cynically dismissed it as a thinly-veiled attempt to renew hostilities between the two countries – reminiscent of a previous episode in their recent history, 1 Kgs. 20. 1-11. Ironically, a slave girl knew more than two monarchs; she sent Naaman to Samaria to meet the

prophet. Sadly, it did not even occur to Israel's ruler that he could access the living God through Elisha's miraculous ministry. He tore his clothes, showing his inability to help the general in his plight. DAVIS points out that 'the king is the epitome of the unbelieving, unseeking attitude of Israel. He, as no other, should set the tone for the people of God. Probably, however, he reflects their attitude. He lives life without recourse to God. He is king of a people who have been at least part of the covenant nation; he should therefore be seeking God in such dilemmas. He, like the nation, has the name of Israel but not the faith of Israel'.⁷ The seer sent word that the seeker should come to him for healing, saying, 'Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel', 2 Kgs. 5. 8.

Pride, religion, and true faith

When Naaman's entourage arrived at his door, they received a surprising welcome. Instead of greeting him personally, Elisha sent a messenger, prescribing a sevenfold dip in the humble Jordan River. This was an affront to the great man's pride and to his preconceived notions of the miraculous. MACLAREN diagnosed his attitude thus, 'Naaman wished to be treated like a great man that happened to be a leper; Elisha treated him like a leper that happened to be a great man . . . The whole question about his treatment turns on this, Whether the important thing is his disease or his dignity? He thought it was his dignity, the prophet thought it was his disease'.⁸ WHYTE agrees with this assessment, 'But, leprosy and all, Naaman was still a very proud man; for all the leprosy in the world will not make a proud man meek and lowly in heart . . . because the prophet's counsel did not fit in with Naaman's prejudices and his sense of his own importance, he was wroth at Elisha, and went home, leprosy and all, in a rage'.⁹ He furiously recounted his grievances, saying, 'He will surely

come out **to me**' [my emphasis]. He also expected him to call on the Lord's name and gesticulate in an impressive manner. A casual survey of modern television 'faith-healers' shows that when it comes to spiritual trickery, showmanship never goes out of style!

Thankfully, his servants spoke reason to their master, and he repently decided to lower himself into the Jordan – in his view, a far cry from Damascus' mighty rivers, vv. 12-14. Despite his initial incredulity, after the seventh dip, he was completely healed. The gospel that began with a young girl's testimony, ended with Naaman's skin being restored to a childlike condition. This miracle was a glorious picture of regeneration. The believing sinner is born again, John 3. 5-8, and becomes 'a new creation' in Christ Jesus', 2 Cor. 5. 17. MOODY details the process of his repentance and faith, 'First he lost his temper; then he lost his pride; then his leprosy. That is generally the order in which proud, rebellious sinners are converted'.¹⁰

It was a chastened Naaman who returned to Elisha's door. There was no further need for Elisha to keep his distance – the Syrian knew that it was God who healed him, not the Hebrew prophet. Moreover, Naaman was grateful, rather than inherently great. He was a humble and thankful believer, who now promised to exclusively worship the Lord, 2 Kgs. 5. 17. For his part, the prophet declined a gift from the healed man. Elisha would do nothing that would diminish God's glory or imply that His grace came with financial strings attached.

Naaman asked for Israelite soil so that he could establish an altar to Jehovah and also asked for pardon in entering the idol Rimmon's temple and seeming to prostrate himself while assisting the king. He would not be syncretizing but would merely be physically bowing as the monarch leaned on his arm. Elisha gave no word of rebuke to this 'baby believer', but offered a parting blessing, 'Go in

peace', v. 19, thereby wishing true peace on the new convert. Possibly the prophet did not want to overburden his conscience so early in his pathway as a follower of his God. Rather, he wanted Naaman to grow in his convictions as led by the Lord.¹¹

Muddying the gospel waters

The sad epilogue to the story came when Gehazi deceitfully asked Naaman for some of the gift that Elisha refused. He was not the last person to cloak covetousness in spiritual garb, and stands in an infamous train of apostates who chose immediate material riches in favour of the heavenly reward that comes from faithfulness.

Achan, Judas Iscariot, Ananias, and Sapphira all committed this category of sin. By contrast, Paul pursued the opposite course in his service for God, carefully guarding his ministry against any suggestion of mercenary motives, 1 Thess. 2. 3-12.

After his return, Gehazi's duplicity was instantly exposed by his master in these sobering words, 'Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants?' 2 Kgs. 5. 26. It was clearly not the time to settle down and enjoy the good life, as if all was well in Israel. They were divided from the southern tribes and were estranged from the Lord by rampant idolatry and immorality. The times called for a pilgrim lifestyle, exhibiting holiness and consistent dependence on God. Paul later addressed the Corinthian believers in a similar vein, 1 Cor. 4. 8-13. For his misrepresentation of the gospel, Gehazi and his posterity were judicially afflicted with leprosy. The Gentile who was afar off was cleansed, and the Jew near to the Lord's blessings was cursed. Even today one must never tamper with the good news, Gal. 1. 6-9.

Salvation's terms

During his first recorded sermon in the Nazareth synagogue, the Lord Jesus enraged His audience by citing Naaman's healing, Luke 4. 27. They did not understand that

greatness lies in humbly submitting to God, who sent His Messiah 'to preach the gospel to the poor', v. 18. Moreover, they did not consider themselves poor, nor as far off as a Gentile enemy! 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' eluded them because of their religious and nationalistic pride, Matt. 5. 3. How different from Gentiles like the centurion, who demonstrated true faith in Christ, Matt. 8. 5-13. In the same way, if modern people are to be cleansed from sin, they must repent and trust the Saviour, who died and rose again for them.

Endnotes

- 1 Jewish tradition held that he was Ahab's slayer, 1 Kgs. 22. 34, JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities* 8. 414; The Targum on 2 Chr. 18. See T. R. HOBBS, *2 Kings*, Word, 1985, pg. 63.
- 2 W. W. FEREDAY, 'Elisha, the Prophet', accessed here: <http://www.stempublishing.com/authors/fereday/ELISHA.html#a11>
- 3 Acts 8. 1-3; 9. 1-9; 11. 19-26.
- 4 MORDECHAI COGAN and HAYIM TADMOR, *II Kings*, Yale University Press, 2008, pg. 64.
- 5 'By contrast, Omri paid two talents of silver for the land upon which he built the capital city of Samaria, 1 Kgs. 16. 24. Six thousand shekels of gold was the equivalent to the annual earnings of 600 workers. Naaman was prepared to pay a lavish amount for his restored health'. TODD BOLEN, *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, 2015, pp. 597, 598.
- 6 WARREN WIERSBE, *Be Distinct*, Victor, 2002, pp. 36, 37.
- 7 DALE RALPH DAVIS, *2 Kings*, Christian Focus, 2005, pp. 88, 89.
- 8 ALEXANDER MACLAREN, *Expositions of Holy Scripture: 2 Samuel-2 Kings* 7, Logos Bible Software, 2009, pg. 363.
- 9 ALEXANDER WHYTE, *Bible Characters: Ahithophel to Nehemiah*, Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, n.d., pg. 113.
- 10 D. L. MOODY, *Men of the Bible*, Fleming H. Revell, 1898, pg. 50.
- 11 'God's servants are not "directors of conscience", but ministers of His Word. To have sanctioned it would have recognized idolatry. To have forbidden it would have put Naaman under a yoke to Elisha. It was for Naaman to decide whether he could do this thing and be at "peace"'. E. W. BULLINGER, *The Companion Bible*, Vol. 1, Faithlife, 2018, pg. 496. W. H. LEWIS, agreeing, says, 'So Elisha was satisfied for the present with having gained the citadel of Naaman's heart, and expected that he would gradually yield in everything to the truth'. Quoted in JOSEPH S. EXELL, *The Biblical Illustrator: II Kings*, Fleming H. Revell, n.d., pg. 113.

MALACHI

‘I have loved you’, Mal. 1.2

By **JEREMY HOLIFIELD** Deri, Wales

When writing to Timothy, the Apostle Paul predicted that in the ‘last days’ men would have ‘a form of godliness’ but deny ‘the power thereof’, 2 Tim. 3. 1, 5. This was the case in the last days of the Old Testament record of Israel’s history. There is much to be learned therefore from Malachi’s ministry as we, like him, live in the closing days of an era.

It is likely that Malachi ministered approximately 100 years after the Jews had returned to Jerusalem from the seventy years of exile in Babylon, about eighty years after the Temple was rebuilt, and after Nehemiah had finished rebuilding the walls around the city.

It may be the case that he was called to action in the period when Nehemiah had returned to the court of King Artaxerxes in Shushan, Neh. 13. 6, 7. During that time, and in the absence of his governorship, Israel’s society degenerated. Those who should have restrained the moral and spiritual declension were guilty of sponsoring it. The succeeding governor was more exacting than the self-denying Nehemiah, cp. Mal. 1. 8 with Neh. 5. 14, 15. The priests, whom the Lord says through Malachi, formerly ‘did turn many away from iniquity’, Mal. 2. 6, now ‘caused many to stumble’, v. 8.

Upon his return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah witnessed the malpractice that Malachi denounced. The Lord’s complaint, ‘ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi’, v. 8, resonates with Nehemiah’s lament that priests like Eliashib and his son Joiada ‘have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites’, Neh. 13. 29. It is plausible, therefore, that what Haggai and Zechariah had been to Zerubbabel and Joshua, Malachi was to Nehemiah.

A commendable analysis is offered

by BROWN in *The Bible Book by Book*, that is helpful in grasping the flow of Malachi’s writing:

- A nation which has forgotten God’s love, 1. 1-5
- A priesthood which ignores God’s law, 1. 6 - 3. 15
- A remnant which honours God’s name, 3. 16 - 4. 6.

The atmosphere in which Malachi delivered his message is reminiscent of our day. The enthusiasm that characterized former generations, the liberated remnant who returned from captivity in Babylon, had given place to spiritual indifference and lethargy. The freshness and vitality with which they reinstated their God-ordained system of religion had morphed into torpor and ritualism by Malachi’s time.

There are two prevailing characteristics in Israel’s condition that are discernible in this prophecy, namely cynicism and formalism. These traits continued to evolve over the 400-year interlude between the Testaments and appeared in the Lord’s day in the form of the Sadducees (cynicism) and Pharisees (formalism). Such attitudes are prevalent today, and sadly, are all too often true of the people of God. We need to guard against displaying these behaviours.

Cynicism

The style of this book is most unusual. In the fifty-five verses of the prophecy there are twenty-seven questions. These are posed by Malachi, Israel, or God Himself. Often a question is responded to with a question. Despite man’s protestations, ultimately it is God who has the last word. He inevitably does. Of the ten questions uttered by Israel, eight of them respond to God’s assertions by expressing contemptuous disbelief at God’s assessment.

Eight Cynical Questions

- ‘Wherein hast thou loved us?’ 1. 2
- ‘Wherein have we despised thy name?’ 1. 6
- ‘Wherein have we polluted thee?’ 1. 7
- ‘Wherefore?’ 2. 14
- ‘Wherein have we wearied him?’ 2. 17
- ‘Wherein shall we return?’ 3. 7
- ‘Wherein have we robbed thee?’ 3. 8
- ‘What have we spoken so much against thee?’ 3. 13

Two Sceptical Questions

The other two questions spoken by Israel reveal scepticism rather than a genuine desire for enlightenment.

- ‘Where is the God of judgment?’ 2. 17
- ‘What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?’ 3. 14

What temerity to question God’s considered opinion as if it were not true.

Let us be clear, God has never objected to questioning. He anticipates, indeed encourages it as being a legitimate method of learning. Witness how at the institution of the Passover remembrance He says, ‘when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son’, Deut. 6. 20, 21. What is reprehensible is when the question is asked in such a way that it reveals that the person is in denial of the assertion or betrays that they already have a closed mind and are not prepared to consider the reasoning. The questions from Israel recorded in this book are presented in this way.

Examples of their cynical attitude are:

- Cynicism regarding their sacrifices, 1. 7-12
 - ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible’, v. 7 – an ‘anything will do for God’ kind of attitude!
 - ‘His meat, is contemptible’, v. 12 – a ‘not anything will do for me’ kind of attitude!
- Cynicism regarding their statutes, 2. 7-9

- Decreasing appreciation of the Law of God by the priests – ‘the priest’s lips should keep knowledge’, v. 7
- Discrimination applying the law of God by the priests – ‘been partial in the law’, v. 9
- Cynicism regarding their separation, 2. 10-16
 - The sin of unequal yoke – ‘married the daughter of a strange god’, v. 11
 - The sin of unlawful divorce – ‘the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously’, v. 14
- Cynicism regarding their service, 3. 14
 - Slight upon the character of God – ‘It is vain to serve God’
 - Sceptical about the compensation of God – ‘what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?’

May we guard against developing such cynicism toward God and His requirements of us.

Formalism

With cynicism prevailing, their maintenance of Judaism became mere religion. What once was characterized by exuberance, cp. Ezek. 3. 11, had become lifeless formality.

By the time of Malachi’s writing, the nation was trying to revive and maintain a religious system that was 1,100 years old. They falsely presumed that they were bringing sacrifices, making offerings, keeping ordinances and observing feasts in the way the law required them to do. But these were merely repetitious rituals and were devoid of the reality of their privilege. The Lord’s injunction against them was ‘ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name’, Mal. 2. 2. The routine had become mundane.

There is the danger that through repetition of tasks, formalism can develop. We in the church belong to an order that is 2,000 years old. Yet, in reality, we have only one event that is required of us with repetitious regularity. It was the practice of the early church ‘upon the first day of the week . . . the disciples came together to break bread’, Acts 20. 7. Let us ever remember ‘as often as ye eat this

bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come’, 1 Cor. 11. 26. God preserve us from this becoming a formal ritual, and may we preserve the form of remembering Him in the way first enacted by our Lord in the Upper Room.

Their ritualism was also an exercise in hypocrisy. They were ‘solemn’ at their feasts, Mal. 2. 3, and ‘walked mournfully before the Lord’, 3. 14. This persona of piety was only superficial. The Lord commands them to ‘take heed to your spirit’, Mal. 2. 16. The teaching of the Saviour instructs us not to be preoccupied wholly with how we ‘appear unto men’ but rather be conscious that our Father ‘seeth in secret’, Matt. 6. 16-18.

It is evident that in ritual they realized an opportunity to profit thereby. ‘Neither do you kindle fire on my altar for nought’, Mal. 1. 10, suggests that they were mercenary in their attitude to the Lord’s service, and sought to exploit for gain what should have been treated as an honour. And this at such a time as they were defrauding God of ‘tithes and offerings’, 3. 8. Such a temptation presents itself in our day. Paul and Peter both warn of engaging in the Lord’s work simply to make a profitable living. Being greedy of ‘filthy lucre’ should not be our motivation to serve, 1 Tim. 3. 3, 8; 1 Pet. 5. 2.

Remedy

Malachi presents that this situation will only be remedied by the coming of the Lord. Cynicism will be quelled ‘when he appeareth’, Mal. 3. 2, and formalism will be eradicated by ‘offering in righteousness’, v. 3.

Without question, the first coming into the world of Messiah, ‘the messenger of the covenant’, v. 1, is predicted by Malachi. The other ‘messenger’ who was sent to ‘prepare thy way’ for Him is unequivocally identified by the Lord Jesus as being John the Baptist, Luke 7. 27. Therefore, the one John directed men to ‘behold’ must be ‘the Lord’ that Malachi said would come.

However, the Lord’s first coming into this world did not have the full effect Malachi predicted. Of the One he said

they should ‘delight in’, Mal. 3. 1, the assessment of the nation was, ‘there is no beauty [in him] that we should desire him’, Isa. 53. 2. Consequently, the refining, purifying, and purging of His people Israel remains to take place. This will be at the second coming of the Lord to His earthly people. Of that future appearing, the Lord says, ‘I will come near to you to judgment’, Mal. 3. 5.

Just as He ‘suddenly’ came the first time, so He will be ‘swift’ as the executor of divine justice when He returns in a coming day, vv. 1, 5.

The fulfilment of Malachi’s prophecy of the Lord’s first advent was appreciated by those who were ‘waiting for the consolation of Israel’ and ‘all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem’, Luke 2. 25, 38. This fact gives great assurance that the as yet unfulfilled aspects of his prediction will also come to pass as he recorded.

Prior to the Lord’s predicted second coming to earth, we fix our gaze heavenward ‘from whence also we look for the Saviour’, Phil. 3. 20. As we await ‘the Lord himself’ to ‘descend from heaven’ when we ‘shall be caught up’ to ‘ever be with the Lord’, 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17, let us remember that on that occasion He will kindle ‘a refiner’s fire’ so to speak. Only on that occasion it will not be to deal with our sinful condition. That was purged in the crucible of Calvary. Rather, it will be to ‘try every man’s work of what sort it is’. Let us learn lessons from Malachi’s ministry and endeavour to avoid cynicism and eradicate formalism so that we ‘shall receive a reward’ in that day, 1 Cor. 3. 13, 14.

It is encouraging for us to read that despite the national malaise there were those that the Lord thought of as His jewels. They were those who were counter-cultural and ‘feared the Lord [and] spake often one to another . . . [and] thought upon his name’, Mal. 3. 16. May we similarly resolve in these last days, when men are ‘lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God’, 2 Tim. 3. 4, to be those who ‘love him, because he first loved us’, 1 John 4. 19.

Towns and cities in the life of the Lord JERICHO

By JOHN BENNETT Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

Part 11

Today, the modern city of Jericho is located on the West Bank of the Jordan River. It was captured by the British in 1918 towards the end of the First World War and was part of the British-mandated division of Palestine at that time. Upon the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, it was part of the state of Jordan but after the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel occupied Jericho until 1994. At that point, the town was relinquished to the Palestinian Authority. Even in relatively recent times, it has had a chequered history. But what made Jericho important historically was that it was known as a city of palm trees, because many springs made the city a natural oasis.

A place of defiance

The ancient city had massive walls – walls built for military defence, Josh. 24. 11; Heb. 11. 30. As the children of Israel came to the edge of the Promised Land, this walled city stood in their path. It was a fortress city, closed to allcomers, standing in defiance of the invader. The statement it made was simple and clear – you shall not enter here! God had promised His people that they should dwell again in the land, but the people of the land said, ‘No’!

But it was not just the people of Jericho that stood in defiance. Jericho was a symbol, a statement of the will of the people of the land. So, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Gergashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites stood together. The number of tribes and people were considerable. The city walls seemed impregnable. What could the nation of Israel do against such opposition?

The Bible puts it simply. The children of Israel walked around the city for seven days before, on the seventh day, they sounded the trumpets and shouted. That’s all that it took, because God was in it! He defeated Jericho and opened the way into blessing. The children of Israel placed their faith in God and He accomplished the victory!

If we move onwards some 1,500 years, the Lord Jesus now passes through the town. What comparisons and contrasts can we note as we have read through this account? Was it still a place of defiance? That might be a strong term, but we notice that the Lord Jesus ‘came to Jericho: and . . . he went out’, Mark 10. 46. What happened in the town? As far as the biblical account is concerned, nothing.

Notice, too, that there was ‘a great number of people’ there. A crowd was following the Lord Jesus. There were many, no doubt, carried along by the throng, but how many were blessed that day? The Saviour of sinners was there in their midst but what did they do? Nothing! But what was their attitude to this poor man sat beside the road? Were they interested in Bartimaeus? Did they want him to come into blessing?

No. They told him to stop trying to intervene. Stop trying to delay the departure of the Lord. They did not seem to want a blessing themselves, and they did not want Bartimaeus to have one either.

But Bartimaeus was not to be put off. He knew his need – ‘have mercy on me’, he said, v. 48. He knew who could satisfy his need

– ‘Jesus, thou Son of David’. Now was his moment. In that crowd that followed the Saviour on His journey from Jericho to Jerusalem, how many got saved? As far as the biblical records goes, only Bartimaeus. It is an interesting parallel. As the children of Israel came to Jericho some 1,500 years earlier and destroyed it, the biblical record is equally clear, ‘By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not’, Heb. 11. 31.

The Saviour had come and gone, and the majority just carried on with their lives – it was defiance, silently ignoring the opportunity of blessing and eternal life.

A place of disobedience

As the children of Israel took Jericho and destroyed it, their leader, Joshua, made a profound statement. As the city that had stood in defiance of the purposes of God and the people of God was now rubble, he said that any man who tried to rebuild it would come under the judgement of God. He issued the warning, ‘Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it’, Josh. 6. 26.

Sadly, some 500 years later, Hiel the Bethelite, did exactly what Joshua had told the people not to do – he rebuilt Jericho! It is rather descriptive of human nature. We see a notice – ‘Do not touch – Wet paint’. What do we immediately want to do? Touch it! It is our natural propensity to disobedience, which the Bible calls ‘sin’.

We come now to Luke chapter 19. We have fast forwarded some 900 years from the time of Hiel the Bethelite. The city is rebuilt and back to a bustling metropolis of its day and, some might say, things have changed significantly.

However, we notice first, that ‘Jesus entered and passed through Jericho’, v. 1. But in that journey the Lord meets Zacchaeus, ‘the chief among the publicans’, v. 2 – the chief tax collector.

Whilst tax collectors have never been popular people, in the time of the Lord Jesus they were particularly hated. They had chosen to work with the occupying forces of the Roman Empire. Many would say that they were traitors, working for the enemy. If that was not bad enough, most of them were corrupt and took more in taxes than was needed to pay the Romans in order that they might get rich themselves. This was Zacchaeus – ‘he was rich’, v. 2.

But Zacchaeus’ life was about to change. Intrigued by the fame of this man Jesus, he made his way to see Him. What he had not anticipated was the size of the crowd. Being a relatively little man, he could not see, and he could not get near the Lord. He came up with a plan – climb a tree. That way he could see but not be seen. He could avoid the crowd and get a better view than most and he could do it discreetly. No one need know he had been there – they would be preoccupied with the town’s important visitor.

What Zacchaeus had not appreciated was that he could not hide from the Lord Jesus. But more

than that. Even if he had been visible in the tree, why would the Lord Jesus want to stop just to speak to him?

Jericho was a defiant town – one that had stood in the way of God’s purposes and plans for blessing. Jericho had been a disobedient town – built in defiance of the will of God. However, on this day when the Lord Jesus passed through it became a place of blessing in salvation.

The Lord Jesus came to seek out and save those that were lost. Amidst the defiance and disobedience of Jericho, there were those He brought into blessing and salvation from sin – Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus. They were people at the opposite end of life’s economic spectrum – one a beggar and the other extremely rich. Yet both needed God’s salvation. It does not really matter where we may sit upon the social or economic spectrum of life, we all need God’s salvation but thankfully, it is available to all.

A place of disbelief

‘And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah

doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send’, 2 Kgs. 2. 15, 16.

Elijah had gone up to heaven, but these sons of the prophets were not convinced. They knew that Elijah was gone. They could see that Elisha had taken up the ministry of his master, but these men would not believe it. In spite of the evidence, they remained in unbelief.

Notice what they said. We have fifty strong men who will go and look for Elijah. We don’t really believe that he has gone to heaven. Perhaps God has just thrown him into some valley, dispensed with him as if dispensing with him like something worn out.

What a challenge for all of us. If we are to get saved, it is by faith and faith alone. We have to take God at His word and believe Him.



SEED SOWERS UK AND EUROPE TRUST

John 3.16 in Every Home

By **ANDY MULLAN** Birmingham, England

'The sower soweth the word', Mark 4. 14

The logo of *Seed Sowers* is of the sower scattering seed from his bag. In our technological era, marketing is increasingly targeted, but in the Parable of the Sower we see widespread dissemination of seed with little thought for where it falls. The reason is that, like the wind, the work of the Holy Spirit prior to salvation, cultivating heart-soil into 'good ground' cannot be seen, John 3. 8. The vision of *Seed Sowers* – John 3. 16 in Every Home – aims, therefore, to sow seed widely across towns and cities, villages and counties, where the light of gospel testimony has, in many places, faded to a flicker. In these areas, the Spirit is still active, and there are individuals with concern for their souls, but who will take the life-giving word of God to them?

The goal of *Seed Sowers* is thus two-fold. First, to provide seed that can be sown – a beautifully presented A4 text of John chapter 3 verse 16 with accompanying gospel message on the reverse. And second, to provide opportunity, especially to a younger generation, to be involved in gospel witness. This has been the DNA of *Seed Sowers* from its inception in Canada, forty years ago. Having had the idea from seeing tumbleweed drop thousands of seed in minutes as they blow across the prairie, Ross Vanstone organized teams of believers to spend a week of their holidays moving from community to community, placing the original, iconic Seed Sower text in every home along the way. Blessing was known and the work grew into the United States, Mexico, and then to the UK.

Since 2009 – when the *Seed Sower Trust* was set up – the priority of the work has been to distribute in line with the original model.



John 3:16 in Every Home

From small beginnings, the Lord has blessed the work. In the last few years, we have been able to arrange distributions in many parts of the UK and Ireland – from Ayr to Exeter; Londonderry to Bandon; Birmingham to Northampton – with between 10-20,000 homes reached at each event. Results are mixed, and it is natural to want a measure of success, but we remind ourselves that it is 'God that giveth the increase', 1 Cor. 3. 7. Our duty is to faithfully sow the seed, and, for Jim McMaster, Stephen Harper, and myself as Trustees, that remains our focus.

Nevertheless, packed behind the Seed Sower text, we like to have a very clear free Bible offer. On average, we receive one Bible request per thousand texts distributed, but, on occasion, the Lord encourages. In Coventry (May 2025), the saints at Church Street gave out eighty-four Bibles, followed by a further fifty-two responses in Bangor, Northern Ireland (June 2025). Of course, numbers are not everything. In Londonderry (April 2023), the Seed Sower text came to Chris, just as he thought about getting a Bible. When Clifford Law called with the Bible, he found a man with a genuine interest in salvation.

The reverse of the Bible offer will be an invitation, often to gospel meetings or a Bible exhibition, though the assembly in Exeter

(August 2024) had forty-five people respond to a gospel tea invite. In Northern Ireland, the Origin Bible Exhibition has been used as regular follow-up. In South Belfast (September 2024), the saints at Lower Windsor Avenue were encouraged to see a lady come to the exhibition and then continue regularly. Back in the Midlands, it has been a delight to see many assemblies consistently labouring together in Coventry, Rugby, North Leigh, and Northampton. Each of these events was followed by gospel meetings. At Upper Hill Street, Coventry (June 2024), local brothers continued for four weeks, with the joy of salvation. Lauren did not live in the area but saw the text and invite when visiting a friend, and being concerned for her soul, came and trusted Christ.

We find the Seed Sower texts also encourage believers, and, at times, this leads to the assembly being built up. This was true of the memorable distribution in Seville, Spain (September 2023), and we pray will be similarly seen in Winchester (July 2025), where it was a joy to help a small assembly. We do value your prayer for this work: for the events themselves, for the Lord's ongoing blessing on the word sown, for the encouragement of saints and the building up of assemblies to the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To conclude, the saints in Bath, planning their seventh distribution, testify that the blessing has been 'seeing so many young people finding *Seed Sowers* an accessible way to do outreach, giving them a real desire to be engaged in the Lord's work. Then, just the profile that such a significant distribution gives to the assembly in the city with some good contacts forthcoming'.

If you would like to be kept informed, join the *Seed Sowers UK Updates* WhatsApp group by scanning the QR code. We would love to see you at an up-coming event, DV, details of which can be found on our website: www.seedowersuk.org.



Question Time

QUESTION

Is Capitalism Biblical?

ANSWER

Capitalism is an economic system in which private individuals or businesses own the means of production and operate for profit. It is characterized by free markets, competition, and limited government intervention. Prices, production, and the distribution of goods are determined by supply and demand, and success is often tied to personal initiative and market performance.

Capitalism is often contrasted with socialism, where the means of production are typically owned or regulated by the state or collectively by the public. It is also contrasted with communism, which seeks a classless, stateless society where all property is communally owned and there is no private ownership. Historically, because communist regimes such as the Soviet Union and Maoist China promoted state atheism and persecuted religious institutions, some assume that capitalism must therefore be more aligned with biblical values. But is this really true?

In the Old Testament, the economic system established by God for Israel was both fair and compassionate. It encouraged enterprise and hard work while also providing safeguards for the whole society, especially for those who were economically disadvantaged. There were built-in checks and balances to prevent greed and the accumulation of power through monopolization.

This is beautifully illustrated in the book of Ruth. The backdrop of the story is the divine law that every family in Israel had a God-given inheritance, a specific portion of land entrusted to their care, Lev. 25.¹ This arrangement encouraged families to steward their land faithfully and productively. In Ruth chapter 2, we see Boaz working diligently during harvest time, overseeing a team of labourers who were probably paid by him. His example shows that God blessed enterprise yet also protected family inheritance. Every fiftieth year, the Year of Jubilee, the land would return to its original owners, Lev. 25, thus preventing long-term monopolization of land. From this principle, we can reasonably infer that massive corporate monopolies, like those of modern multinational giants, which can suppress smaller enterprises, run counter to God's intentions for a balanced and just economy.

Moreover, the Old Testament law ensured provision for the poor. When Ruth gleaned in Boaz's fields, she was benefiting from the instructions requiring landowners to leave the edges of their fields unharvested and allow the poor to glean from what remained, Lev. 19. 9, 10.² On one occasion, Ruth gathered about an ephah of barley,³ a significant amount for one day's

Conducted by
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labour, Ruth 2. 17. This system upheld human dignity. It helped the poor through opportunity and effort, rather than fostering dependency, which can occur in socialist or communist systems. In contrast, modern capitalism often emphasizes material gain, personal achievement, and sometimes a ruthless pursuit of profit. While it can reward initiative, it may also foster greed, inequality, and neglect of the vulnerable.

The New Testament offers crucial guidance for believers navigating a capitalist system today. The Lord Jesus warned, 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth', Luke 12. 15. The parable of the rich fool followed, of a man who built larger barns to store his wealth, only to die that night, having stored up treasure for himself, but nothing for eternity. This parable challenges us to examine whether our wealth is being used for ourselves or for God. Later, Jesus said, 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations', Luke 16. 9. Here, 'unrighteous mammon', NKJV, refers to worldly wealth, which is often tainted by unjust systems, selfish ambition, or exploitation. Even when legally obtained, money can easily become a tool for pride or injustice if not handled with spiritual integrity.

Yet the Lord Jesus did not command us to avoid money entirely, but to use it faithfully. He posed two questions, 'If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?' Luke 16. 11, 12. The wealth we manage belongs to God. If used wisely to support the gospel, care for others, and serve His people, it becomes an eternal investment.

In conclusion, while capitalism contains elements that can align with biblical values, such as stewardship, labour, and personal responsibility, it also bears dangers that scripture clearly warns against, such as greed, oppression, and trust in wealth. A biblical approach calls us to use whatever resources we have in the fear of God, for the good of others, and with a view toward eternal reward, Matt. 6. 19-21.

Endnotes

- 1 This law provides the context for stories such as Naboth's vineyard, 1 Kgs. 21, and the daughters of Zelophehad, Num. 27. 1-11.
- 2 Other verses demonstrating God's care for the poor are: Deut. 15. 7, 8; 24. 14, 15; and Prov. 14. 31.
- 3 Roughly 22 litres or 8-10 kilogrammes.

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'All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea', Gen. 14

PS
Magazine

**'All these were joined together in the
vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea',
Gen. 14. 3**

The salt sea, perhaps better known as the Dead Sea, is a landlocked lake between Israel and Jordan, the lowest body of water in the world, lying some 1,300-1,400 feet (400 metres) below sea level. It is situated between the hills of Judea in the west and Jordan in the east and measures approximately fifty miles by eleven miles. The main inflow of water to the salt sea is from the River Jordan.

The waters of the Dead Sea are extremely salty, but also rich in sulphates, bicarbonates, magnesium, and potassium. Because of the high density of saline, the water keeps bathers buoyant but also excludes all forms of life except bacteria and plants that can grow in alkaline soil.

Starting from our text, the sea features in many biblical accounts from Abraham, to David, and into New Testament times. The context is one of warfare between Chedorlaomer, and the kings that allied with him, and various peoples who rebelled against his rule. Into that fray the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela entered in the vale of Siddim, but it ended in defeat and the capture of 'Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom', Gen. 14. 12.

Much might be said of the sad and downward route taken by Lot. His visual assessment of the well-watered plain of the Jordan, his choice, the pitching of his tent toward Sodom, and his eventual position of influence in that city are a reminder of where submission to the lusts of the flesh will take us. What appeared so good became a place of bitterness, frustration, and vexation.

For Abraham, his portion was the fellowship and blessing of Melchizedek. May we seek and enjoy the fellowship of one who is our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

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