

PRECIOUS SEED

INTERNATIONAL



a magazine to encourage the
study of the scriptures, the
practice of New Testament
church principles and interest
in gospel work

'And he gave unto
Moses, when he
had made an end of
communing with
him upon mount
Sinai, two tables of
testimony, tables of
stone, written with
the finger of God',

Exod. 31: 18

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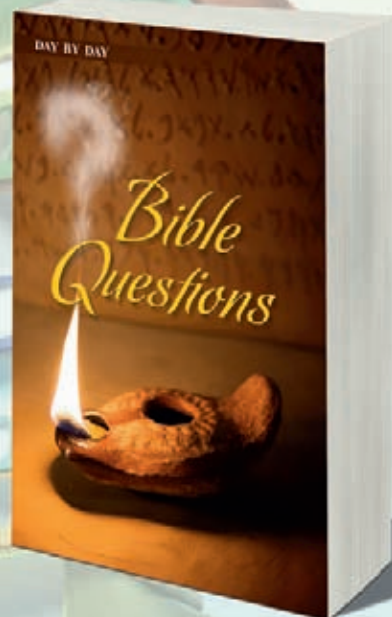
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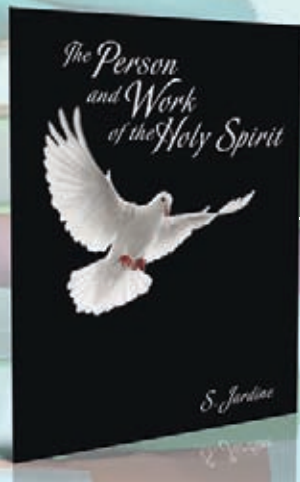
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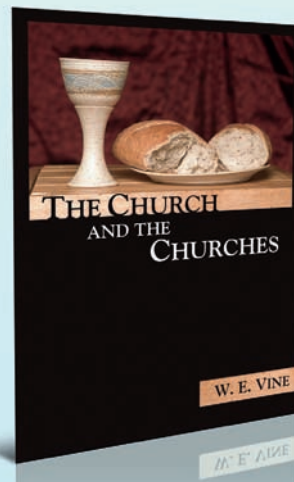


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Book Reviews

By **JOHN BENNETT** and **JOHN SCARBROOK**

Books are available from the publishers shown (or from John Ritchie in the UK or Gospel Folio Press in N. America), and **NOT** from Precious Seed Publications



Opening Up James R. Ellsworth

Paperback, 176 pages. Day One, Ryelands Road, Leominster, England HR6 8NZ. Price £6.00; ISBN 978-1846251658.

The author writes lucidly, divides up the letter helpfully, dealing with a section at a time and following each with relevant questions. His comments are generally helpful.

However, although this is basically an introductory book and one does not expect in-depth analysis, more explanation is needed at times. In considering the terms 'word of truth' and 'engrafted word' in James' first chapter he does not identify them as the gospel, the message of salvation in Christ, and we are left wondering whether he sees them as the Old Testament or as including the Old Testament. In chapter 2 it is disappointing that the difference between the works of Abraham and Rahab and those envisaged in verse 8 is not discussed. This would help younger believers. The last verse of

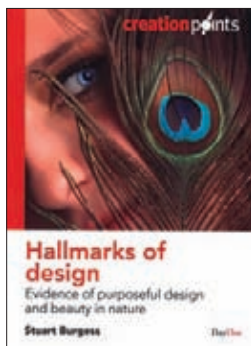
chapter 4 is ignored. In his comments on chapter 5 verses 14-15 he writes, 'The New Testament ideal is a plurality of elders', but he does not enlarge on his use of the word 'ideal'. The clear parallels with the Lord's teaching on the 'Sermon on the Mount' throughout this letter are barely noticed.

More seriously, there are two key areas where, in the reviewer's mind, there are errors of interpretation. The first area is that of the law. He interprets the 'law of liberty', 2. 12, as the Mosaic Law. The writer then proceeds to confuse us by contradicting himself, 'The purpose of God's law is to convict us as transgressors', and, 'The laws of God were given to bring us into glorious liberty', pages 85-86. New Testament teaching, especially Galatians, clearly shows that the law brought those under it into bondage; it is a 'ministry of condemnation', 2 Cor. 3. 9.

The second area is that of the last things. In his consideration of chapter 2 verses 12-13, he refers to the Day of Judgement which will involve all, including believers. He writes, 'The authors of the Bible lived with constant and keen awareness of the reality of that day and we must do the same'. On that day we 'will all fully realize our sins'. Is it not clear that God remembers our sins no more? Where is the blessed hope? The author also expounds the phrase 'last days' of chapter 5 verses 1-3 as the last days of the lives of the rich of verse 1; yet here is a reference to judgement.

Overall, I am unable to recommend this book.

[Our thanks to Bryan Charles, Appledore, Devon, UK, for this review]



Hallmarks Of Design Stuart Burgess

Paperback, 230pp. Published by Day One Publications, PO Box 66, Leominster. HR6 0XB. Price: £8.00; ISBN 978-1-84625-139-9.

The book is subtitled 'Evidence of purposeful design and beauty in nature'. The author, Professor STUART BURGESS, sets out to present a number of clear arguments that nature declares and reveals a Designer. This is accomplished well with the support of the latest discoveries about the complexity and beauty of the natural world.

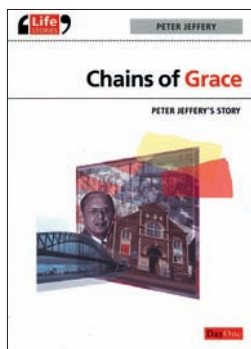
The book describes six 'hallmarks of design' that can be produced only by an intelligent designer: irreducible mechanisms (e.g., the knee joint), complete optimum design (e.g., the albatross), added beauty (e.g., the peacock tail and birdsong), extreme similarity in features (e.g., warning colours and patterns), extreme diversity of kinds (e.g., hummingbirds) and man-centred features (showing that

God designed the earth purposely to suit mankind). BURGESS sets out to describe each hallmark and then seeks to explain its relevance in relation to the Design Argument.

In defence of the Design Argument, BURGESS undoubtedly presents some very interesting examples. The chapters on added beauty in the peacock tail and birdsong are particularly fascinating. For example, nightingales have a musical repertoire of 100-300 songs and don't repeat the same song for at least 70 songs! Some birds can even mimic others or sing matched duets. Burgess argues that the beauty of birdsong is so great that its most important purpose 'is to bring pleasure to the Creator and to man'. The closing chapters are perhaps the most enjoyable of the book. These comprise a discussion of the unique design and beauty of man, the biblical creation account and answer objections to the Design Argument. BURGESS concludes the book by directing evolutionists to the witness of creation; God has done great things we cannot comprehend, Job 37. 5, His attributes in creation are clearly seen, Rom. 1. 20, and this God wants a personal relationship with us, Isa. 45. 18, 21-22!

Overall, this is an enjoyable book which unfortunately is made somewhat difficult to read by its complexity of scientific and technical language. It is evident that the author has tried hard to write in simple, plain to understand, English. However, much of it is still too difficult for the average reader and requires some sections to be read and re-read to fully follow the argument. Despite this, BURGESS has succeeded in presenting a strong case for the evidence of a divine Designer.

[Our thanks to Dan Rudge, Bracknell, UK, for this review]



Chains of Grace Peter Jeffery

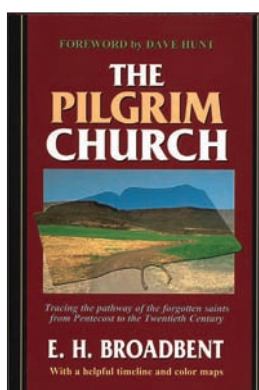
Paperback, 128pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ. Price £6.00; ISBN 978-1-84625-127-6.

The book is sub-titled '*Peter Jeffery's Story*'. In a foreward to the book the author is described as being 'First and foremost . . . an evangelist' and this is an autobiography of his experiences in the service of the Lord. He lived in Neath, South Wales, and was saved at the age of seventeen at one of the Billy Graham rallies in Wembley Stadium, having gone, on his own admission, simply to see the 'famous stadium' and vowing 'I will never become a Christian'.

Following the death of his first child from spina bifida, a daughter just nine days old, both he and his wife felt God was calling him and he subsequently entered a theological college in Swansea to train for the ministry. Following ordination he took up pastorates first in Cwmbran, then Rugby and finally Sandfields,

Port Talbot, each place seeing numerical growth during his tenure. He recounts difficulties he experienced, such as his refusal to baptize infants due to convictions regarding believers' baptism and a refusal to be involved in inter-denominational activities such as 'Mission England', the visit of Billy Graham in 1982. Following the time at Port Talbot he then gave himself to an itinerant ministry which took him to Australia, America and New Mexico, his activities eventually being limited due to failing health. The book concludes with three appendices, the first on 'True preaching'; the second on 'The most hated teaching in the Bible' and the third a list of some forty publications of which he is the author.

This book is an interesting account of a man who has a passion for souls, who sought to live according to his understanding of God's word, who devoted himself to evangelism and Bible teaching and who saw God's blessing on his labours.



The Pilgrim Church E. H. Broadbent

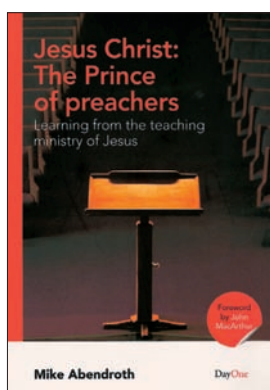
Hardback, 456 pages, Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, ON. L3K 6A6, Canada. Price £19.50; ISBN 978-1-882701-53-7.

First published in 1931, E. H. BROADBENT's *The Pilgrim Church* was warmly received by many in assembly fellowship, not only because of the painstaking research which had gone into the book, but also because of its perspective on Church History. Many earlier works had been written largely from the point of view of the established churches: in such histories, those groups described by Andrew Miller in his *Church History* as 'the silver line of faith' had received scant recognition, often being written off as 'heretics' or 'sectaries'. This author approached church history from an altogether different stance. He was able to show that throughout the Church Age there had always been those who had sought to order their personal lives and corporate testimony according to the pattern laid down in the New Testament. At the time of its publication one reviewer wrote that this work 'had brought a new and

happy realisation that to be associated with those who love to live by the word of God and order their corporate life and worship by the pattern found in the New Testament did not mean participation in a movement of mushroom growth, having no history before the nineteenth century, but privileged us to walk in the steps of a goodly host of God's pilgrim saints who, since apostolic days, have loved and followed divine patterns'.

This book then has a message for saints today. It will set our own labours in a wider perspective and give encouragement to all who seek to maintain a faithful local testimony. To obtain the fullest benefit from this will require the reader to expend time both for reflection and for further study. Such time will be amply rewarded. To quote again from another who was concerned to encourage young people in particular to access this volume, 'It will strengthen their grasp of scriptural church principles, and add to their power to serve their generation in the line of God's will and word'. Could more be said to commend this valuable book?

[Our thanks to Ed Hotchin, Hucknall, Nottingham, UK, for this review]



Jesus Christ: The Prince of preachers Mike Abendroth

Paperback, 172pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ. Price £8.00; ISBN 978-1-84625-108-5.

In his introduction the author observes that while many books have been written on the subject of preaching, few have given attention to the actual preaching of the Lord Jesus. He expresses the concern that, 'The church has exchanged her preaching birthright for a watered-down stew of PowerPoint presentations, drama, methods, slide shows . . .', things, he asserts, that cannot 'fill the person in the pew with . . . sound, meaty doctrine, which is critical for healthy Christian living'. Against that background the reader is invited to consider the ministry of the Lord Jesus viewing Him as the true 'Prince of preachers'.

Within nine chapters attention is given to the priority the Lord placed on preaching, His view of scripture, and the actual content of His preaching, e.g., 'Jesus preached doctrine'; 'As a herald'; 'He preached discipleship' and 'for a verdict'. Each chapter is in three sections: first, an exposition from the Gospels of the theme under consideration; secondly, the practical implications of that teaching for 'pastors, preachers, leaders and elders'; and, finally, a challenge to those who regularly listen to the preaching, to encourage them to desire, expect and give attention to sound teaching. Every chapter concludes with an appendix of authors, articles and websites the writer has quoted, from which it is evident that he has given much thought to, and carefully researched, his subject.

This is an interesting and most helpful book which one hopes will be widely read and used to encourage a return to 'preaching as Jesus preached'.

[Our thanks to Richard Catchpole, South Norwood, London, for this review]



PRECIOUS SEED

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INTERNATIONAL

'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him', Ps. 126. 6.

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EDITORIAL

'He saved others', Luke 23. 35.

There are many times when we are brought back to a particular text or passage of scripture. It may be that the Spirit of God needs to impress the lessons of that portion of the word of God upon us again. It may be that our appreciation of the Saviour has waned and we need to be challenged afresh. Whatever the cause, I have been reminded of the text that heads this editorial.

It was a statement of derision and mockery and yet, as we ponder it, we see in that assessment by the rulers of the people a tremendous testimony to the character and life of the Lord. If there was one word that we might write over the life of the Lord what might it be? While I accept that condensing a life of such beauty, perfection, and glory into one word is impossible, yet a word that would suitably describe so much of the Lord's ministry is the word 'others'.

We might recall the words to Joseph at the Saviour's birth, 'He shall save his people from their sins', Matt. 1. 21. This was the purpose for which He was born and for which He came – to save. The message of the gospel is this: 'God sent . . . his Son into the world . . . that the world through him might be saved', John 3. 17. As we think afresh of the scope of God's salvation may we be galvanized to reach out to the lost, to others. The examples are so numerous, from the relative dregs of society to religious and political rulers, that we know that anyone can be saved if they will but trust the Lord.

Yet, as we live in a world that is obsessed with 'me' and the pursuit of personal goals, it would be good to pause and reflect upon the life of the Lord that was devoted to the will of another and the blessing of others. He came to this world not to pursue His own agenda but to fulfil the will of the Father. Let us never minimize the significance of that voluntary subjection. The one who ordered the worlds to be cast and at whose command the angelic host respond was willing to become obedient to the Father's will that would cost Him so much. What part of our personal agenda do we find so difficult to give up in service for the Lord?

The apostle Paul wrote, 'And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved', 2 Cor. 12. 15. I wonder if there are times when we feel, like Paul, that our labours are not appreciated and our efforts seem fruitless. If we ponder the words above, we might remember that apart from a small band of followers, many of whom were characterized by failure, the Lord's ministry might have seemed to manifest the same difficulties, yet He remained resolute and faithful. His eye was on the Father's assessment, John 17. 4, and sometimes our vision needs lifting above.

In this issue there is considerable change. Four series are concluding – those of Jim Cochrane, Jeremy Gibson, John Salisbury and John Scarsbrook. We are thankful to our brethren for their helpful and challenging material. This issue also sees the commencement of two new series covering areas of truth that are most important for today – prophetic subjects, including a thought-provoking chart, and church truth. We continue to seek the Lord's help and guidance in preparing a magazine that will provide spiritual food for the people of God.

JOHN BENNETT Ministry Articles Editor



We need to remember that marriage is not an end in itself. We need wisdom from God to make our marriages successful.

FUNDAMENTAL STEPS TO

3 WE'RE STARTING MARRIED LIFE

Early Days

The wedding day is over and the happy young couple are settling into the joy of experiencing the long anticipated 'one flesh' relationship that God has provided for them as man and wife. The early days of married life are very special as the couple explore this new relationship as 'heirs together of the grace of life', 1 Peter 3. 7. God recognizes this and He made provision for newlyweds in Israel to spend time together for the first year without the husband being called away to serve his country or engage in official duties, Deut. 24. 5. In this way he could be at home and give his wife the love that she sought.

For Christian newlyweds these are formative days in which they establish their individual roles as husband and wife and their joint role as a married couple. Now is the time to put into practice the ideals discussed during courtship. How important to start as they mean to go on and, by doing so, lay the foundation for a happy and successful family life.

A New Unit

The couple are no longer two single, independent individuals. They are now man and wife, having committed themselves publicly, and in the presence of God, completely and exclusively to each other for life.

They are no longer subject to their parents, as was previously the case, although they will remember the teaching of scripture to 'honour thy father and mother'. Maintaining a good relationship with both sets of parents is most important. In the case of unbelieving parents it is vital not to cut them off. As time goes by, they may become grandparents and should be allowed to play their important role in this wider family circle.

The 'One Flesh' Relationship

God intends that the intimacy of the sexual relationship between husband and wife should be enjoyed, not only for the purpose of producing children but also for pleasure. Proverbs bears testimony to that, exhorting the husband to, 'Rejoice with the wife of thy youth . . . be thou ravished at all times with her love', 5. 15-19. In 1 Corinthians husband and wife are instructed to render to each other their conjugal rights as they no longer have exclusive right to their own bodies, 7. 2-5. They are not to refuse each other their marital rights, and sexual activity must only cease by mutual consent, for the purpose of a season of unhindered prayer, and then be resumed lest Satan bring temptation.

the man and for the man, Eve was Adam's perfect complement, 1 Cor. 11. 9. In their different roles the man is seen as the leader and the woman as the responder. They are different physically, emotionally and psychologically.

By
**JOHN
SALISBURY**
Northampton,
England

The tragedy in Eden was that God's order was reversed as Satan approached the woman and she, assuming a position that was not hers, caused the fall of the human race. Notwithstanding this, God held Adam responsible as head, and so we read, 'as by one man sin entered into the world', Rom. 5. 12, and again, 'in Adam all die', 1 Cor. 15. 22.

These principles are taught in the New Testament – the different roles of men and women in relation to assembly fellowship, 1 Cor. 11. 3-16, and the principles of headship relating to husband and wife, Eph. 5. 22-32.

The Example of Christ

We are introduced in Ephesians chapter 5 to Christ and the church. We see who Christ is. Then, we are shown what He does. He is the 'Saviour' or 'Preserver' of the body, the church. He

demonstrates His love for the church. He 'loved the church, and gave himself for it'. As 'Head of the church' He develops the church by sanctification and cleansing with that day in mind when He will 'present it to himself . . . holy and without blemish'. The church responds by being 'subject to Christ'.

The Role of the Husband

If Christ is 'Head of the church', the husband is 'the head of the wife'. As Christ is the 'Preserver' of the church, so the husband is to be the preserver of the wife. He is to love

Principles of Headship

The principles of marriage were laid down in Eden and have never changed.

God brought together one man and one woman, Adam and Eve. Adam, created in the image of God, was given dominion over all of creation. God 'crowned him with glory and honour', Ps. 8. 5. But he was alone! It was not good that the man should be alone, and so God provided Eve, a help, suitable for Adam. Made of





OWARDS VITAL DECISIONS

LIFE . . . HELP AND ADVICE PLEASE



his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. He will encourage the spiritual development of his wife, as Christ the church. Notice the gentleness involved in the 'washing of water by the word'. This is a gradual development of Christ-likeness in the object of the husband's love. He will 'nourish' her, to provide for her, by the labour of his hands. He will 'cherish' her, to prize her, with all the love of his heart. Whilst it is important for a husband to tell his wife that he loves her, it is far more important that he shows his love by giving himself for her. What an awesome responsibility the husband has in light of God's word!

The Role of the Wife

As the church is 'subject unto Christ', so must 'the wives be to their own husbands in everything'. We note that this does not give the husband the right to abuse his God-given role and treat his wife as if she were in any way inferior to him. Remember, Eve was taken from Adam's side; not his foot, to be trampled on. Not his head, to rule over him, but from his side, to be his equal, his partner. Submission is a sign of being 'filled with the Spirit', v. 18. Submission should characterize all believers, v. 21, and specifically, wives, children and servants in the following verses.

It would be a hard thing for a wife to submit to a husband who is a tyrant. But it will be a happy experience to submit to a husband who loves her as Christ the church. Ultimately, her submission is 'as unto the Lord'. So the wife's attitude to her own husband is her attitude to the Lord. In many cases the wife may be more spiritual than the husband, and she will appreciate that he is going to need her assistance if ever he is to fulfil his God-given role. We see then that there is a dual responsibility in the marriage to achieve the heights of God's expectations.

How wonderful when a Spirit-filled couple are seen exemplifying Christ's

love for the church as they both encourage each other in their role.

Daily Devotions

Daily 'quiet times' are of paramount importance in the lives of God's people. Many young couples have been used to spending time reading God's word and communing with Him in prayer on a daily basis. They will, during courtship, have taken every opportunity to read and pray together, thus forming the habit of a lifetime to be continued as a married couple. But it may be that neither husband nor wife has this background, in which case now is the time to start!

Like all spiritual exercise, this will require discipline. Both husband and wife must decide the best time of day for both of them to engage in these devotions, and they must encourage each other to stand by it. The demands of everyday life and our own temperaments militate against this discipline, but after a while it should become a normal part of daily life. They should decide to read the scriptures systematically.

In 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 7 we have valuable instruction regarding this aspect of married life. Previous verses have described the subjection of the wives, and their godly demeanour, as being 'in the sight of God of great price'. Now the husbands are instructed, 'dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel'. Thus, the husband takes intelligent care of his wife, understanding her personality and seeking her spiritual development. He does not patronize her; he honours her. God encourages us in this exercise by promising a successful, unhindered prayer life, 'that your prayers be not hindered'. What a privilege to enjoy joint daily devotions.

The Home

God wants His people to use their homes for his glory. All believers are exhorted to be 'given to hospitality',

Rom. 12. 13. Home life should be a picture of Christ and the church, a witness to unbelievers, and a help to fellow saints.

Service for God

The acid test as to whether a marriage is 'in the Lord' or not, is the effect that it has on the husband and wife in stewardship of the gift with which the Holy Spirit has endowed them. The married couple can serve the Lord in ways that they could not as single people. Both husband and wife must recognize their respective gifts, and seek to encourage each other in their use. The role of the wife will be as home-maker, in hospitality, in supporting her husband in his ministry, and, as she matures, in teaching younger sisters, Titus 2. The husband must seek to develop his gift, which may take much time alone with God, and only if the wife allows this will it happen.

In the early days of marriage, the young couple may not be sure what their gifts are, so they will need to be involved in all the activities of the local assembly. Involvement in the activities of the local assembly will help in the development of gifts. As time goes by the husband and wife, and the saints in fellowship, will see what those gifts are, and all will benefit from their exercise. If the husband is called to exercise a prominent public role in the service of God, he must always remember that this will never be more important in the eyes of God than his loving and caring for his wife.

In a world where Christian values are being attacked, the Christian home is a very precious thing. May we seek God's guidance and help in maintaining what He has revealed in His word and enjoy the blessings of marriage in the Lord.

JOHN SALISBURY has served as an elder in the Spencer Bridge assembly, Northampton, England for many years, supported by his wife, Wendy. Retired from business, he is active in ministry in the UK. He has two married sons and seven grandchildren.



The interpretation of passages relating to prophecy is a topic liable to generate differences of opinion amongst believers. The views expressed in this article are not those commonly taught or necessarily held by all committee members but they are included here to encourage us all to search the scriptures to see whether these things be so. *Editor*

The Mysteries of the

So what period do these parables actually cover? I suggest they provide a fresh insight, in the light of Israel's rejection of the Messiah, to the time just prior to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, ultimately the tribulation. In the Old Testament, the day of the Lord included both the tribulation and the glorious Messianic kingdom but how these related to each other remained unexplained fully. These parables show how these two components to the day of the Lord fit together. The tribulation era is necessary because of the nation's rejection of their Messiah and immediately precedes the setting up of the kingdom of God. These parables also explain how men respond to the message of the kingdom, not only at the time of the Lord Jesus, but also during the tribulation and what conditions prevail just prior to the setting up of the millennial kingdom – a rapid spread of corruption, an inseparable mixture of godly and ungodly. They climax with the great separation of humanity. They also refer to how precious the whole concept of the kingdom of God is to the heart of God and the great price that He paid for it, the precious blood of Christ. Thus, these parables bypass the church era altogether. And why should they not? The Old Testament prophets leapt over the church period. Why could the Lord Jesus not have done the same here in His predictions about the coming kingdom? That is to say, the church simply is not here – He was dealing with the future kingdom of God, primarily in relation to Israel and their rejection of Him as Messiah.

A large crowd out of every city came to the Lord Jesus Christ and, sitting in a boat, He taught them, Matt. 13. 1, 2; Mark 4. 1; Luke 8. 4. Whether they

realized it or not they were enormously privileged for, 'many prophets and righteous men [had] desired to see those things which [they saw], and [had] not seen them; and to hear those things which [they heard], and [had] not heard them', Matt. 13. 17. But with this opportunity came great responsibility, 'who hath ears to hear, let him hear', 13. 9; Mark 4. 9, 23. God's word measures those who hear it, giving to us what we give to it, 'with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you', 4. 24. And Christ's parables were no exception. Although He used simple illustrations that the people could easily relate to and spoke at a pace they could follow, 4. 33 – an important lesson for all Bible teachers – the parables actually concealed truth from the multitudes while conveying new revelation to the disciples, 4. 11, 12, 34. Israel's leaders had rejected Christ's plain teaching about the kingdom of God and, despite their professed enthusiasm, the crowd would soon follow them, closing their eyes, stopping their ears and hardening their hearts to God's truth, Matt. 13. 14, 15; Isa. 6. 9, 10; cf. Deut. 29. 4. The disciples, on the other hand, had believed the Lord's teaching so far and, because of this, were, in the parables, given further insight into the kingdom of God. Thus, 'whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath', Matt. 13. 12; Mark 4. 25.

Having established the exact time-frame to which these parables relate – the tribulation just prior to the establishment of Messiah's kingdom – and come to appreciate just how difficult they are to understand – the Lord Jesus quietly explained them while alone with the disciples, Matt. 13. 10, 11 – we will now attempt to elucidate the primary meaning of each parable. Since all scripture is

profitable for our learning, we will also endeavour to draw out practical lessons for Christians presently.

Parable 1

The Sower and the soil, Matt. 13. 3-9; 18-23; Mark 4. 3-9; 13-20; Luke 8. 5-8, 11-15.

This first parable is the key to unlocking the meaning of the others, Mark 4. 13. The sower represents the Son of Man, a Messianic title. The seed is the word of God and more specifically the word of the kingdom. Just as the seed was indiscriminately scattered, Matt. 13. 4, the good news of an imminent kingdom of God was preached throughout the land of Israel by the Lord and His apostles and will be preached around the world during the tribulation period, Matt. 24. 14. Mark's mention of single seeds, Mark 4. 4, 5, 7, 8, emphasizes the responsibility that individuals have regarding the message. The four soil types show Israel's response to the preaching of Christ and His apostles and how people will react to the gospel of the kingdom in the future tribulation. In reality, the heart of man does not change in his response to the word, no matter what dispensation he lives in. These four responses could just as easily summarize men's reaction to the gospel in our day.

WAYSIDE: Israel's religious leaders were as hard-hearted as a well-trodden path surrounding a field, where any seed would be quickly trodden down under foot or stolen by birds. It pictures Satan immediately snatching the seed of the word of God from people's hearts. Even today, Satan blinds 'the minds of them which believe not', 2 Cor. 4. 4.

ROCK: People who quickly and joyfully receive the message of the kingdom, but then fall away in the face of adversity, are represented by seed falling into a shallow layer of soil which, lacking moisture and depth, means that the heat of the sun soon



Kingdom of God (3)

scorches and kills it. During the tribulation, intense persecution will turn many from the faith, Matt. 24. 9, 10. Even believers inevitably come up against opposition, Acts 14. 22, and their continuance in the things of God proves the reality of their faith.

THORNS: Excessive anxiety ('cares of this world'), ambition ('lusts of other things') and avarice ('deceitfulness of riches') are all capable of choking the word of God, even in the lives of believers. This stifling influence is portrayed by the thorns. May every Christian constantly guard against these suppressing factors, Prov. 4. 23.

GOOD GROUND: True believers in every generation will attentively listen to, receive, understand, and keep the word of God. And, as a result, out of an honest and good heart, they will patiently bear fruit for God, though to differing degrees. This is symbolized by the seed sown into good ground.

Parable 2

The lamp, Mark 4. 21, 22; Luke 8. 16, 17.

Believers during the tribulation, as at all times, will be expected to shine brightly for God. Just as a light is not hidden under a vessel (symbolizing business life) or a bed (representing ease), neither must Christians allow business affairs or leisure activities to hinder their testimony.

Parable 3

The growing seed, Mark 4. 26-29.

Healthy growth, whether in the natural or spiritual realm, is not usually sudden, but gradual. Those who hear and receive the message of the kingdom will develop spiritually during the tribulation period, just as Christians should today, slowly but surely, develop through regularly feeding on God's word, 1 Pet. 2. 2; Heb. 5. 14. As well as individual growth, there will be steady progress in witnessing during the tribulation period, so that when everything has

developed as fully as God wishes, the harvest will come and the kingdom will be established. As a practical application for today, the fact that growth and fruit is God's prerogative, and all that we can do is sow seed, should take great pressure off our ministry.

Parables 4 and 9

The wheat and the tares, Matt. 13. 24-30; 36-43 and the dragnet, Matt. 13. 47-50.

The persecution experienced during the tribulation will be fierce, causing many to turn from God's truth, Matt. 24. 10. Nevertheless, there will remain an abundance of false prophets, deceiving many, Matt. 24. 11. Only Christ's coming will effectively separate the false from the true. The good seed and good fish



represent the children of the kingdom, genuine believers at the time of the Lord and during the tribulation on earth, who will eventually enter, inherit and 'shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father', Matt. 13. 43. The tares and bad fish stand for the children of the wicked one, whom the angels will sever 'from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire', Matt. 13. 49, 50; Rev. 14. 14-20. Although Christ first came to save, He will come again to judge. And never forget, even now, as during the tribulation, Satan is busy attempting to confound God's work; in this case through counterfeit as an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11. 14.

Parables 5 and 6

The mustard seed, Matt. 13. 31-32;

Mark 4. 30-32, and the leaven, Matt. 13. 33.

Just prior to God's kingdom being established on earth, there will be widespread wickedness, depravity and corruption. The rapid spreading leaven symbolizes this, just as elsewhere in the Bible leaven pictures that which is bad:

Leaven of the Pharisees – hypocrisy, Matt. 16. 6;

Leaven of the Sadducees – disbelief in the supernatural, Matt. 16. 6;

Leaven of Herod – political ambition, Mark 8. 15;

Leaven of un-judged sin, 1 Cor. 5;

Leaven of malice and wickedness, 1 Cor. 5. 8;

Leaven of legalism, Gal. 5. 9.

A concentration of this wickedness will be found in a massive anti-God religious system known as 'Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth', Rev. 17. 5. The large tree, which grows out of the proverbially small mustard seed, with birds (which the Saviour has already taught represent the emissaries of Satan) nesting in its branches, stands for this. Since wickedness spreads quickly, we must ensure that false doctrine and moral depravity are kept outside local churches.

Parables 7 and 8

The treasure and the pearl, Matt. 13. 44-46.

Treasure hid in a field and a pearl have three things in common. They are initially hidden from view. They are exceptionally valuable. And, with time, they usually end up on display. Similarly, during the tribulation period, although the concept of the kingdom of God will be hidden from the vast majority, it will remain exceptionally precious to God and Christ. The price paid was nothing short of the precious blood of Christ, without which the kingdom of God could never be set up. And, finally, after those dark days, with the King in His glory the established kingdom will be manifest for all to see.

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Introduction

The last letters written by the apostle Paul were to Timothy and Titus, the so-called Pastoral Epistles. In them the apostle referred to some twenty-seven people by name ranging from those whom we often hear of elsewhere in the New Testament – such as the Gospel writers Luke and Mark – to those who are named only once, such as Carpus. They were all, for one reason or another, on the mind of the apostle in these last years of his life and studying them should prove helpful to us in assessing our lives and the contribution that we are making to the work of God. This large number of people can be usefully arranged into four groups, as follows (sometimes in conjunction with others, as appropriate):

Those who were a delight to Paul

Timothy, Eunice, Lois
Titus
Luke
Onesiphorus
Aquila and Priscilla (Prisca)

Those who were devoted, dutiful and dear to Paul

Apollos, Zenas, Mark
Artemas, Tychicus, Crescens
Erastus, Trophimus
Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia
Carpus

Those who were a disappointment to Paul

Demas
Phygellus and Hermogenes

Those who were a despair to Paul

Alexander
Hymenaeus
Philetus

Those who were a delight to Paul

Timothy

For details of Timothy's early life, see the section on *Lois and Eunice*.

Timothy was converted through the witness of the apostle Paul on his visit, with Barnabas, to Timothy's home district.¹ A few years later the apostle Paul, during his so-called second missionary journey, arrived in Timothy's hometown of Lystra with his new co-worker Silas, with the purpose of seeing how the believers were faring spiritually, see Acts 15. 36. In the

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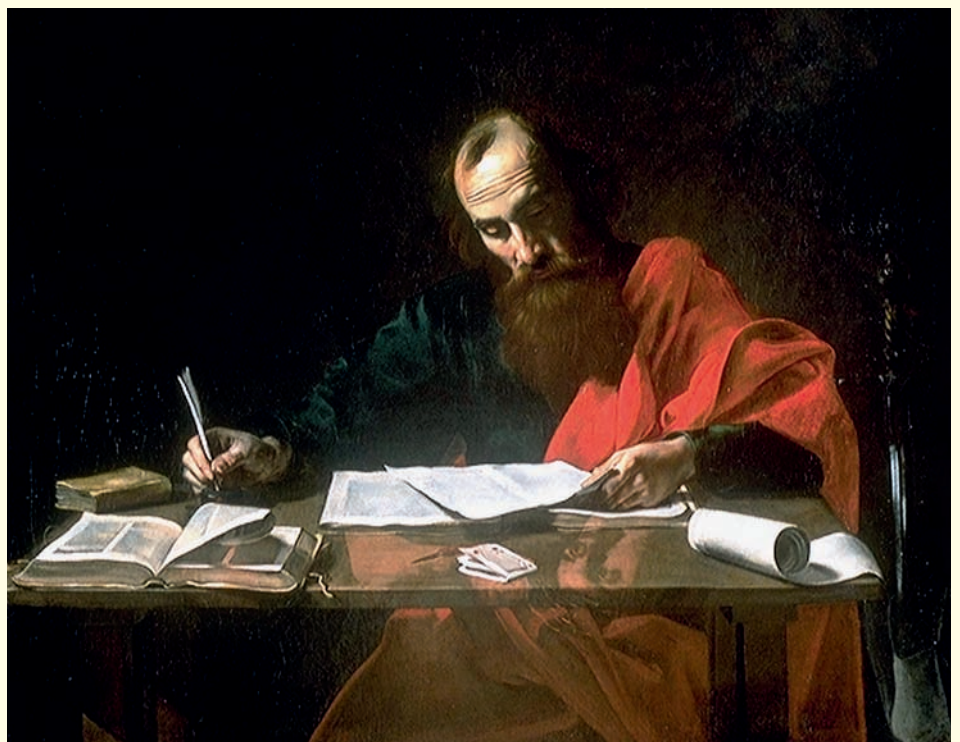
thriving assembly that they found, there was one young man who especially came to Paul's notice. He was Timothy, who was described as 'a certain disciple . . . well reported of by the brethren at Lystra and [the nearby town of] Iconium', Acts 16. 2. Obviously, Timothy was active locally and was beginning to move in wider geographical circles. Paul was very impressed with him, as were the local believers. The prophets in the assembly had pointed out his gift;² the elders in the assembly commended him, 1 Tim. 4. 14, and Paul was sure that it was him particularly that he wanted to go with him, Acts 16. 3, presumably for the same ministry that young John Mark had fulfilled, at least at the beginning of the previous missionary journey, Acts 13. 5.

However, there was a problem, for although his mother Eunice was a Jewess, and Timothy was technically a Jew, he had never been circumcised. For pragmatic reasons, therefore, given that they would have to work among Jews, Paul circumcised him. This must be carefully contrasted with the case of Titus, since, for doctrinal reasons, Paul insisted that he should **not** be circumcised. A careful study of the two

situations will show that there was no contradiction in Paul's behaviour in these cases. Paul was only correcting an earlier fault, probably given that Timothy's father was a Greek, and all the Jews of the district knew this, Acts 16. 3. There was no deep spiritual significance involved, apart from the fact that Timothy was prepared to undergo discomfort for the sake of others, while adding nothing to his personal spiritual standing.

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Timothy's first efforts with the apostle Paul and Silas were involved with visiting assemblies in his own general district of Galatia and Phrygia to deliver the judgement of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem concerning circumcision and the suggested Gentile behaviour that would not upset their Jewish neighbours, 15. 29. He had the joy of seeing the assemblies established spiritually and growing numerically, 16. 4-5. When the work in the districts of Phrygia and Galatia was completed, they moved west. However, the Holy Ghost forbade them to preach in Asia, then, after they arrived in Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but once again they were forbidden, v. 7. Timothy learned that seeing a real





The Pastoral Epistles (1)

need does not necessarily constitute a call to meet that particular need oneself. So, leaving the district, Paul, Timothy and Silas moved further west to the seaport of Troas. There, all became clear when Paul had a vision in which he saw a Macedonian who asked for help, 'Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them', v. 10. They had a new vision and a new companion – Luke. The four set off for Macedonia, which represented Paul's first venture into Europe.

They headed for Philippi, the regional capital, v. 12. There they saw blessing in the gospel and as Paul commented later - in writing to the assembly that was eventually formed - the evangelistic activity of Timothy was well known, 'Ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel', Phil. 2. 22. Later, Paul and Silas were arrested and imprisoned, Acts 16. 19-40, but they were eventually released because they were both Roman citizens. However, they had to leave the city immediately. Paul and Silas moved on to Thessalonica where there was remarkable and swift progress in the gospel, but, as at Philippi, Paul was forced to leave the city. Timothy is not mentioned with them, so possibly he stayed behind in Philippi, maybe with Luke, who is also not mentioned as moving on. It would have given Timothy good experience and the opportunity for the Philippians to know him better and for him to learn to move independently. While Paul and Silas were active in the gospel in Thessalonica and saw much blessing, there is no mention of Timothy or Luke. Paul and Silas moved on to Berea, but opposition followed and Paul is taken from Berea south to Athens for his own safety. Now Timothy comes back into the picture, for we are told that he and Silas stayed on in Berea.

When Paul arrived at Athens, he immediately sent a message back to Silas and Timothy to meet him as soon as possible in Athens. This they did and

they found Paul very concerned about the spiritual state of the believers at Thessalonica. He had tried twice to go himself to Thessalonica, but Satan had hindered him, 1 Thess. 2. 18. Paul then sent Timothy up to Thessalonica, either alone or with Silas.³ In the letter that Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica that Timothy delivered, Timothy was once again well commended. Paul said that not only was he a brother, but a 'minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ', and he went well instructed 'to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: that no man should be moved by these afflictions', 1 Thess. 3. 2-3. Paul had warned them about the tribulation that they would inevitably experience, v. 4, but he wanted to know the state of their faith, v. 5. The devil was active and if he was victorious, Paul knew that his hard labour would have been in vain.

When Timothy returned from Thessalonica and arrived at Corinth – whither Paul had now moved – Silas came with him, Acts 18. 5. They brought good news of the Thessalonian assembly's faith and love and their constant happy memories of Paul and his companions when they had laboured among them. The great relief enjoyed by Paul then stimulated his preaching, Acts 18. 5. The gifts brought from Macedonia also helped practically and relieved Paul from the need to work as a tent maker, 2 Cor. 1. 8-9. During Paul's time at Corinth, both Timothy and Silas (Silvanus) were active in gospel preaching with him, 2 Cor. 1. 19.⁴

Timothy worked with Paul during the latter's three-year stay in Ephesus. At the end of that period Paul sent a number of people on errands. Titus and another brother were sent directly to Corinth to deliver Paul's letter to the assembly there. Timothy and Erastus were sent to Macedonia, Acts 19. 21-22, with the possibility of Timothy later going down to Corinth in Achaia. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul mentions Timothy twice. First, he tells them that

his reason for sending Timothy with the possibility of visiting Corinth was that he might remind them of Paul's universal teachings – 'as I teach every where in every church', 1 Cor. 4. 17 – and commends Timothy as 'my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord'. However, towards the end of the letter Paul wrote, 'Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren', 1 Cor. 16. 10-11. This tells us a number of things. First, Timothy might not actually come down from Macedonia – 'if he come'. Then, we get an insight into Timothy's character, that there was the possibility that, given a hostile reaction, Timothy would be upset. Paul tells them that Timothy worked the work of the Lord as he did, and hence he was not to be despised. All their dealings with him were to be towards him leaving in peace. Paul seems to have expected Timothy to meet him on leaving Corinth, in all probability with Titus and the other brother who would bring news of the reaction of the assembly to the letter. Paul planned to go to Macedonia himself – via Troas where he expected to meet up with Titus and the others – and then travel south to Corinth.

References

- 1 1 Tim. 1. 2, 18; 2 Tim. 1. 2; 2. 1.
- 2 1 Tim. 1. 18, cp. 2 Tim. 1. 6.
- 3 Whichever of these was true depends on how we read 1 Thess. 3. 1, 5.
- 4 After this we hear no more of Silas in the New Testament in connection with Paul, but there is one mention of him by Peter, 1 Pet. 5. 12.

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PRINCIPLES OF POWER

Its Nature and Purpose

Prayer is always an expression of our complete dependence on God, and often also of our urgent need for help and deliverance. But the primary purpose of prayer is to bring our lives into harmony with God's perfect will for the whole of His world, not just our own comfort and convenience. Scripture indicates that deliverance from illness or persecution is not always His will. On the one hand, in the days of the early church, God enabled the apostles to perform miraculous signs and wonders, including the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead, to prove to the Jewish nation the truth of the newly-founded Christian faith. But, on the other hand, Herod was allowed to kill the apostle James early on. Paul left a brother called Trophimus sick at Miletus, and did not attempt to heal him. And, eventually, all the apostles died for their faith in various ways. So when we pray, we need to accept the overriding importance of the sovereign will of God both for the world and also for our own lives. Our truest spiritual blessing lies in recognizing this.

Its Necessity

In the days of the early church the general climate of persecution was against believers and drove them to prayer. Both the Jewish religious leaders and, later, the Roman authorities opposed them. They could not have survived without fervent prayer to God. Although we do not usually see such remarkable signs as occurred then, God still answers prayer for the sick and causes persecutors of believers to release Christians from prison. But perhaps the more comfortable conditions of the Western world have diminished the desire of Christians in these lands to pray, whereas our more persecuted brethren and sisters in the Third world are daily proving the real power of prayer. Let us, therefore, consider our ways, and be wise! For we all need to pray so that we may come to understand and to fulfil God's perfect will for our lives in this world.

General Principles

Firstly, *prayer was offered in the name of the Lord Jesus and acknowledged*

His Lordship in resurrection. Peter healed the lame man in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Acts 3. 6. In Acts chapter 4 the early Christians prayed for boldness in witness and for signs and wonders to be done through the name of God's 'holy servant Jesus', v. 30 JND.

Secondly, *prayer was offered in accordance with the scriptures, using relevant quotations from the Old Testament.* This was certainly the case in Acts chapter 4 verse 25, where the believers quoted Psalm 2 verse 1 to support their interpretation of the recent events surrounding the crucifixion and death of Christ.

Thirdly, *prayer was sometimes addressed directly to the Lord Jesus, but never to the Holy Spirit.* The usual procedure in prayer is to address God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus according to the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit. While it is unintelligent to address the Holy Spirit directly in prayer, since He prompts the believer to pray, it is evidently in order to address our Saviour directly, at least sometimes. Both Stephen and Paul did so at critical moments in their lives; see Acts 7. 59-60 concerning Stephen, and Acts 9. 5-17 concerning both Paul and Ananias.

Particular Characteristics

United. The phrase 'with one accord' occurs a number of times in Acts concerning prayer, especially in the face of persecution. A little more opposition might do us all some spiritual good. It would drive us to the Lord and serve to settle many petty arguments and differences amongst us.

Urgent. In Acts chapter 4 the early church convened an emergency prayer meeting in response to the wrath of the Jewish authorities, as they did also in Acts chapter 12, when Peter was in prison and likely to be executed. What a good example for us to follow in times of crisis!

Unceasing. Whether there was a crisis or not, the early Christians 'continued'





UL PRAYER IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

in prayer. A regular prayer meeting is a 'must' for any assembly that is serious in its mission to the world, or suffering persecution.

Utterly Sincere. Their situation in the midst of foes ensured this. There cannot be hypocrisy in true prayer offered with a sense of deep need for help.

Uninhibited. A confident boldness and freedom of speech marks the prayers in Acts. There is every reason why Christians should approach God's throne of grace boldly today, since Christ has made the way into the holiest of all open to us by His precious shed blood, Heb. 10. 19-22.

Uncomplicated and Understandable. Although we should be reverent and scriptural in prayer, we do not need to pray in a special language using words that are difficult for any hearers to understand, but in simple and direct terms.

Under Control. In Acts chapter 13, the church at Antioch 'prayed with fasting' to ascertain the Lord's will for their lives and future testimony. They were marked by self-denial and self-discipline. Lack of self-control in prayer is no mark of spirituality and receives no answers from God.

Usually offered kneeling. This was certainly the case with Stephen and Paul. Kneeling is a sign of true reverence before Almighty God. Other postures are exemplified in the scriptures, such as lifting up the hands, standing to bless the Lord, or sitting quietly in His presence in adoring wonder. But kneeling is the usual posture advocated for prayer, expressing due humility in God's presence.

Unashamedly offered in any place. In Acts chapter 27, Paul gave thanks for food in the presence of the whole ship's company, believers and unbelievers included. Are we reluctant to own our Lord and acknowledge God our maker in this way when taking a meal in a public place? We should not be ashamed of the One who died to save us.

Unexpectedly answered at times. In Acts chapter 12, the believers who had gathered for urgent and unceasing prayer on behalf of Peter in prison were quite surprised to receive the answer they did, namely, Peter at the door in person, miraculously released from the prison. Do we really pray in faith, believing that God can and will answer our prayers better and sooner than we can either ask or think? He is able to do so, Eph. 3. 20.

Unlimited in its Power. We have already referred to the 'signs and wonders' that marked the early days of

Gentiles seeking after God, living up to the light they each had, from creation, conscience, and possibly some acquaintance with the Old Testament scriptures. Cornelius' prayers to God were heard by Him, as were Lydia's at the riverside, and both these seekers after Him were given an opportunity to hear a clear gospel message concerning Christ from Peter and Paul respectively, and so be saved and included in the church. While it is true that God will not listen to the prayers of a rebellious sinner, He does answer the sincere prayers of seekers after Him who have responded fully to the light they already have.

Its Effect

In a word, the prayers of the early church had a quite dynamic effect on their own lives and circumstances, and on the lives and circumstances of those around them. In Acts chapter 4, verses 31 to 33, 'When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together', they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and so completely controlled by Him, and spoke the word of God with boldness. Further, they were united and quite unselfish about their possessions. And so the apostles were able to give witness concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus 'with great power', and, 'great grace was upon them all'. In chapter 13, the continued prayer of the church at Antioch led to the beginning of the fulfilment of the Lord's great commission to preach the gospel to all nations, in the call and commendation of Barnabas and Paul as missionaries. The prayer meeting in any assembly is its indispensable control-room, power-house, and weapon against all the opposition of our spiritual enemies. And it also changes us who pray. So, 'Pray, brethren, pray!'



the church, to confirm to the unbelieving Jews in particular the truth of Christianity. Today, we do not usually see such physical miracles, although God does sometimes answer prayer in remarkable and inexplicable ways. But the spiritual miracle of the conversion and new birth of a soul is often witnessed. All over the world, people's lives are being transformed by the supernatural power of the word of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. 'His touch has still its ancient power'.

Universally offered and heard. Both Cornelius in Acts chapter 10 and Lydia in chapter 16 were God-fearing

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God has never been involved in prediction or speculation, such actions are the feeble attempts of mere mortals to ascertain the future. In contrast to these deficiencies, James reminds the Council of Jerusalem that, 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world', Acts 15. 18. In Isaiah chapter 46 verses 9-10, God contrasts the impotence and ignorance of the Babylonian gods with His own omnipotence and omniscience, 'I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done'. Because He is omniscient, God often sets out future events as though they had already taken place, and therefore prophecy has been described as 'history written in advance'.

Not only does God know what is going to happen but He is working all things 'after the counsel of his own will', Eph. 1. 11. This doesn't mean that all that will take place is what He wants, for it is very evident that evil will be rampant and Satan will be orchestrating the actions of individuals and nations. However, nothing will take place outside of the boundaries prescribed by God and everything will transpire in

AN INTRODUCTION T

timescales that He has determined. Personalities and leagues of nations will make brief appearances on the world stage and, when they have fulfilled their part in the overall programme, they will be summarily dismissed.

Prime Ministers, Presidents and governments strut about as though they are the masters of their own destiny and have the wherewithal to resolve the world's problems. In their minds, God has been deposed and in His place military, commercial, religious and political powers are deemed to have the answers to lead us to utopia. This hellish mindset is not new for it was the original incentive tantalizingly dangled before Adam and Eve. When the devil came to tempt them, his objective was to segregate them from God and make them believe that they could be as gods, cf. Gen. 3. 5.

From that cataclysmic day, mankind has been alienated from God and has been in perpetual conflict with Him. Amazingly, ever since the advent of sin into the human race, God, the offended party, has desired the forgiveness and salvation of mankind, the offending party. Such was the extent of that desire, He gave His only begotten Son, sending Him into the world not to condemn it but 'that the world through him might be saved', John 3. 17.

Down through the ages, and with tragic eternal consequences, countless millions have sought to live independently of God, establishing a plethora of religions to gratify their thirst for some form of 'spiritual' fulfilment. Instead of accepting his absolute inability to produce his own salvation and accepting God's gracious offer of forgiveness, man has invented ingenious methods to improve and elevate himself. Blinded by the god of this world and self-delusion,

mankind will continue to move ever further from God until the day comes when the ultimate act of blasphemy will be perpetrated – a man will claim to be God. That man will demand global worship and will brook no rival. However, his prominence will be short lived, as the Lord shall consume him 'with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming', 2 Thess. 2. 8.

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We live in a day when chaos and corruption are amassing in the world on a scale unprecedented since the flood. The destabilizing of family life and the erosion of every benign institution are Satan's frenetic challenges to every divine ordinance. Questions that are occurring with increased regularity, particularly amongst unbelievers, are: 'What is going to happen next?'; 'Will man destroy himself and the environment?'; 'Where is it all going to end?' Whilst we should not be smug, it is reassuring to know that 'the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men', Dan. 4. 25. The God who chose us and saved us is the architect of the ages and He has never abdicated His sovereignty nor bequeathed it to anyone else.

In addition to being currently in absolute control, God has precise plans for the future and desires to share them with His people. Those detailed plans are weaved into the very fabric of the word of God from Genesis through to Revelation and are written in such a way that they can be discerned only by the help of the Spirit of God. Whilst they cover a vast diversity of events, locations and personalities, there is one central and supreme character – the Son of God, 'for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy', Rev. 19. 10. The study of the doctrine of last things is termed eschatology. However, to understand the future, it is imperative to begin by examining the past, for they are inextricably linked.

The Bible commences by introducing us to the triune, eternal, omnipotent God who spoke to nothing and nothing became something – it





TO A STUDY OF FUTURE EVENTS

became the heavens and the earth. Throughout creation week, God populated the earth and the heavens with lights, flora, fauna and beings. Most of those beings were 'spiritual'; they were the varied ranks of angelic personalities that moved in God's presence. The other beings were physical and, although vastly outnumbered, for there were only two of them, they were uniquely privileged. Their habitat was to be earth and it was God's intention that they should have dominion over it.

At some undefined point, one of the greatest of those spiritual beings aspired to topple God and take His place as absolute ruler. A huge number of angels aligned themselves behind this coup and hence we read in the Bible of 'the devil and his angels', Matt. 25. 41. Then, Satan turned his attention to earth and the two beings that dwelt there. By means of his guile, he deceived Eve and she ate what God had prohibited. Adam also ate, but not through deception; he was wilfully disobedient.

The consequence of these events was the co-existence of two kingdoms which would engage in continual battle throughout the duration of time. One kingdom is under the domination of Satan and is characterized by darkness; the other is submissive to God and is characterized by light. Satan's kingdom is vehemently opposed to God; it has nothing in common with Him and constantly strives to overthrow His kingdom. The history of the Bible, and all God's plans for the future, focus on this satanic crusade and its fruitless efforts to depose God.

Although I have described this antagonism as a 'battle', we must never think that it is a struggle for God to be in control. If He had so wished, He could have quashed the rebellion at any time. However, He chooses to allow this battle to continue to show to all creatures, celestial, terrestrial and infernal, that neither opposition nor conniving can disturb His peace or thwart His purpose. That purpose is to remedy every single effect of sin and He will achieve it through just one

Man. It was by one man that sin came into the world – and it will be by one Man that order will be restored. That one Man, Jesus Christ, was going to be the seed of the woman, the Son of a virgin and an heir of David. Being aware of this, one of Satan's primary strategies to frustrate God's programme of redemption was to ensure that this promised Seed would never be born and the course of Old Testament history is marked by his relentless but futile efforts to achieve this.

The impact of sin was catastrophic; we refer to it as 'the fall', but it is too appalling for us to comprehend. As for man, his nature changed; he became rebellious and lost his communion with



God. At the same time, his body became subject to corruption and mortality, eventually leading to death. Man has also lost his position of complete dominion over the earth so that at the present time we don't see all things under his control – even the earth itself has been blighted and no longer yields its potential but produces thorns and thistles. Every person born to Adam and Eve, and their subsequent progeny, has a corrupted nature and walks 'according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience', Eph. 2. 2.

For God's purpose to be achieved, and to demonstrate His sovereignty, it is essential that every impact of sin be reversed. The earth will need to be delivered from the curse, mankind will

need to be born again and thus restored to communion with God, the animal kingdom must dwell together in harmony, death must be abolished and Satan has to be removed as the controller of this world. In addition, God's original intention of a man being head and administering everything for the glory of God has to be realized.

There are at least two other divine objectives that have to be fulfilled. Firstly, God has made two unconditional covenants, one with Abraham and the other with David – both of these covenants must be honoured. Secondly, it has been the intention of God from eternal ages that there should be a unique companion for His Son, that companion is to be His bride, the church.

Eschatology focuses on this overthrow of every vestige of Satan's rebellion and man's fall and highlights the fulfilment of God's objectives. Considerable detail is presented to us in the prophetic books of the Old Testament and the book of Revelation, but it is not limited to these sections. Many of the psalms present to us conditions in the Millennial Kingdom and Paul, Peter and other New Testament writers supply vital information relating to the future.

In future issues of this magazine various authors will present fifteen papers, commencing with an examination of Daniel chapter 9 and concluding with a consideration of what is often termed 'The Eternal State'. We recognize that whilst there will be general agreement on the vital aspects of prophecy, it is inevitable that there will be some differences of opinion amongst the readership on certain aspects of the finer detail.

Our prayerful desire is that this series will be edifying and thought provoking to all who read these articles. Above all, we trust it will be honouring to our Lord and Saviour, whose imminent return may result in the series not being completed!

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A TIMELINE OF SOME MAJOR EVENTS OF PROPHECY

Due to the complexity and extent of this subject it has been necessary to limit the amount of detail that has been included in this timeline. For this reason certain events that some might have expected to see have been omitted. It must also be appreciated that some events will overlap but for ease of reading they are shown as occurring within a set period. In most instances, many scripture references could have been selected, but space precluded this.

The chart below should be read from the bottom to the top whereas each sub-division can be read from top to bottom. Similarly, whilst there is a column at the end of the timeline marked Eternal State, strictly speaking this is incorrect as it is perpetual; it always has been and always will be.

Eternal State - Rev. 21. 2-5; The triune God being all in all - 1 Cor. 15. 28		
Seven Year Period	End of Kingdom to Eternal State	Satan released from abyss - Rev. 20. 7-9 The final rebellion crushed - Rev. 20. 9-10 Devil cast into Lake of Fire - Rev. 20. 10 Great White Throne judgement - Rev. 20. 11-15 Abolition of death and hell - Rev. 20. 14 Complete destruction of earth - 2 Pet. 3. 10-11 Creation of new heavens and earth - Rev. 21. 1
	Millennial Kingdom	The 1000 year reign of Christ - Isa. 11. 1-16; Rev. 20. 4 Peace in the animal kingdom - Isa. 11. 6 Longevity of humans - Isa. 65. 20 Abundance of crops - Amos 9. 13 Cessation of war - Mic. 4. 3 A new temple will be located in Jerusalem - Ezek. 41 David will reign for God over Israel - Ezek. 34. 24
	Prior to Kingdom	Satan bound and cast into the abyss - Rev. 20. 1-3 Judgement of living nations - Matt. 25. 31-46 Old Testament saints raised and rewarded - Dan. 12. 1-2; Rev. 11. 18
	At the end of the Great Tribulation	Two witnesses killed, resurrected and ascend to heaven - Rev. 11. 7-12 Destruction of city of Babylon – Rev. 18 Jerusalem on brink of extinction - Zech. 14. 2 Sign of coming of Son of Man - Matt. 24. 30 Armies of world amass at Armageddon - Rev. 16.16 Satan inspires people to fight against Christ - Ps. 2. 1-3 Christ returns and defeats all opposition - Rev. 19. 11-17 Burying of all the dead takes 7 months - Ezek. 39. 12-14 Beast and False Prophet cast into Lake of Fire – Rev. 19. 20
	Great Tribulation	Period is called ‘Great Tribulation’ - Matt. 24. 21 Sounding of the three ‘woe’ trumpets - Rev. 9. 1-21; 11. 15-19 Pouring out of 7 bowls - Rev. 16. 1-21 Jews extensively persecuted - Rev. 11. 2; Rev. 12. 17 Two witnesses prophesy - Rev. 11. 3
	Mid Point of Tribulation	Satan is cast out of heaven - Rev. 12. 9 Man of Sin is killed and resurrected - Rev. 13. 3 Man of Sin claims to be God - 2 Thess. 2. 4 Overthrow of all religion including religious Babylon - Rev. 17. 16 Image of Beast set up in the temple - Rev. 13. 14-17; Matt. 24. 15 People compelled to have mark of Beast - Rev. 13. 16-18 Outpouring of violence against Jews begins - Matt. 24. 16-21
	Tribulation	Opening of the 7 seals - Rev. 6 Sounding of the four ‘war’ trumpets - Rev. 8. 7-12 Jewish Old Testament rituals practiced - Dan. 9. 27 Wars and rumours of wars - Matt. 24. 6-8 Iniquity abounding - Matt 24. 12 Man of Sin gains prominence by peaceful means - Dan. 11; Rev. 6
	Prior to Tribulation	Conflict between Babylon and Egypt – Dan. 11. 5-8 Jewish Temple Rebuilt – Dan. 9. 27 The rise of the Man of Sin – 2 Thess. 2. 3 Sealing of 144,000 Jews – Rev. 7. 1-8 Rise of the Jewish False Prophet – Rev. 13. 11 A covenant made between Man of Sin and Israel - Dan. 9. 27; 11. 22
	Rapture of the Church – 1 Thess. 4. 13-17	
Events on Earth		
Events in Heaven		
Judgement Seat of Christ - 1 Cor. 4. 5 Marriage of the Lamb - Rev. 19. 7		



Greater than the Temple

Matthew chapter 12 verses 1-6

By **WARREN HENDERSON** Rockford, Illinois, USA.

While venturing through ripened grain fields on the Sabbath Day, the Lord's hungry disciples plucked and ate a few heads of grain. Their actions were abruptly challenged by the Pharisees who said, 'Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!' Matt. 12. 2. The Pharisees' accusation gave the Lord Jesus an opportunity to demonstrate to them the blinding effect of religious pride, for they still did not comprehend who He really was. He was not the son of a fornicator, or a Samaritan, or a man possessed by demons; He was their Messiah – the Son of God. The Lord's rebuttal contained one historical illustration and a reference to priestly temple service.

First, the Lord Jesus reminded them of what David and his men had done to alleviate their hunger; they entered the House of God and ate the showbread. Only the priests were allowed into the house of God and only the priests could eat the twelve unleavened cakes, and then only on the Sabbath Day. Yet, David and his men were not punished by God for their actions. Why? It was because David was a righteous man, God's chosen man, who had been rejected by the nation under King Saul's reign. Given their dire and unjust situation, their necessary action was permitted – it would never have occurred if David had been treated properly by Saul. This historical example was chosen for its direct correlation between David and his men and the Lord and His disciples. Just as David's leadership had been rejected by the nation under Saul's reign, the Pharisees had prompted the people to reject Jesus Christ as Messiah. If the Pharisees had received Jesus as their Messiah, His disciples would not have been scavenging for food.

Next, the Lord asked the Pharisees to consider the priests who laboured every day, including the Sabbath, in the temple, v. 5. Even though they profane the Sabbath by killing animals and preparing sacrifices, they were blameless before God. Why? God expected them to work on the Sabbath

in order to offer Him worship on behalf of the nation. Their Sabbath service did not desecrate the temple. Why, then, should the Pharisees criticize the disciples, who were labouring on the Sabbath while in the presence of 'one greater than the temple', v. 6?

What did the Lord mean by this statement? The tabernacle and the temple were merely a heavenly pattern of good things to come, 'But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building', Heb. 9. 11. The kingdom of God had come to the Jews in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and they were rejecting it, that is, its spiritual aspects and its King.

The Lord then addressed the key matter, 'But if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice", you would not have condemned the guiltless', v. 7 NKJV. God is not heartless; He values mercy, compassion, and kindness much more than mechanical rituals and pious traditions. The Pharisees had become uncaring; they valued cold religious forms more than pursuing the heart of God and making Him rightly known among the people as a good and generous God. The Lord emphasized this point by declaring Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath, v. 8. Since He was the One who had instituted the Sabbath, He was the best One to declare its meaning. In both an authoritative and a practical sense, He was doing what the Pharisees had failed to do – display the full merciful and gracious character of God. Yes, there was One standing before them who was greater than the temple – He was the Lord of the Sabbath and the rightful heir to the throne of David.

Is it possible for believers today to fall into the same religious snare which hindered the Pharisees from knowing God? Though Christians understand that the Lord Jesus is their Saviour, they may still suffer from pharisaical pride and misrepresent His character to others. Before leaving the house one afternoon,

I told our very literal-thinking ten-year-old, 'Kelsi, your mother and I will be gone for a little while and we would like you to stay in the house with the doors locked until we return'. She replied, 'OK, Dad'. I continued, 'Kelsi, if our home caught on fire while we were gone would you leave the house?' After a few moments of serious contemplation she said, 'Yes, I think I would'. I said, 'Yes, that is the right answer. We would want you to ignore our instructions, if there were an emergency – we love you and would not want you to burn up with the house'.

Unfortunately, some Christians value symbolic truth and church order to the extent that commonsense would not rule their actions in unusual situations. In the normative sense, symbolic truth, scriptural principles, and God-ordained order should be followed, but in some circumstances there may be weightier matters to consider than form. For example, if a sister noticed that one end of the church building was on fire, there would be nothing wrong with her blurting out a public alarm during a church meeting, although normally she would not be permitted to speak publicly, 1 Cor. 14. 34. If a blight destroyed all the grape vines in a particular area but left ample cherries, would not the church still gather for the Lord's Supper and pass a cup filled with cherry juice instead of the grape juice, Luke 22. 18? Would we expect a local church to disband because there was only one recognized elder remaining in the assembly, Titus 1. 5? Would a man with a bandaged head be prohibited from praying, 1 Cor. 11. 4? In these situations, which is more important? Is not religious form less important than saving the lives of believers, remembering the Lord through the breaking of bread, gathering in His name, and praying to God? However, a Pharisee would value sacred form over all else – no exceptions! We should follow what scripture teaches, but let us not neglect to display God's gracious character to others when unusual circumstances do arise – in so doing we demonstrate to others that we know more about the Lord than just His name and His teachings.

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Philippians: The Joy and Suffering of the Furtherance of the Gospel

Chapter 1: The Gospel's Progress Amidst Opposition and Suffering

Section 1: Verses 1-11 – Introduction: Greetings, Thankfulness, and God's Work in the Saints' Lives (continued)

The Glorious, Immutable Destiny of the Saints

At the same time, Paul also rejoiced in the work that the Almighty was doing in them, v. 6. As the hymn exults,

'The work which His goodness began
The arm of His strength will complete.
His promise is "Yea and Amen"
And never was forfeited yet'.¹

'Here is confidence indeed', another writer concludes, 'Our salvation can no more be forfeited than the Father can break his pledged word to glorify his Son'.² The sovereign omnipotent God, who in His grace began to work in the saints, will not cease until He has completely finished it on 'the Day of Jesus Christ', v. 6. This future day encompasses a number of events, including the Lord's return, and judgement seat. Having called, justified, and sanctified the Christians, He will not fail to glorify them with Himself, Rom. 8. 28-30.

Paul's affection for the Philippian believers is indicated further in the graphic metaphor 'I have you in my heart'.³ They shared in a common grace with Paul, which strengthened them for witness in the midst of persecution and difficult circumstances. Their support aided the apostle in 'the defence and confirmation of the gospel', v. 7. The former word, 'defence', refers to the reasoned arguments they made for the gospel among the lost. The latter term, 'confirmation', assures the reader that the good news also builds up and establishes the saints. In the contemporary scene, there is a definite need for both of these activities. Thank God for Christians who respond to challenges to the gospel, such as evolution, atheism, new age philosophy, 'emergent' deceptions, and false gospels. Not only must unbelievers know that the gospel

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credibly answers all challengers, the believers must also be assured that 'the faith once delivered to the saints' is worth suffering and dying for because it is absolutely true!

The Wise Love that accompanies the Gospel

The gospel produces a love that transcends simple emotion, it is much more than a feeling, as the world supposes. The love produced in believers by the gospel is discerning. It is able to test different things, choosing what is best for God's glory. As VINE wrote, 'Love is not impulsive, as though it were a mere emotion; love is intelligent, and therefore seeks that full and accurate knowledge which enables it to bestow itself worthily'.⁴ Paul prayed that the Philippian saints' love would 'abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ', Phil. 1. 9-10. Believers must not settle for what is good at the expense of what is best. Everything must be evaluated in the light of God's interests and glory.

The gospel also produces righteous behaviour in the lives of those who believe it. They are to be 'sincere' and 'blameless' in their conduct, v. 10. Moreover, by abiding in the True Vine, of whom the Christian message speaks, they produce much fruit, John 15. 1-8. The work of the Son of God in the saints, brings about an astounding ethical change that redounds unto 'the glory and praise of God', Phil. 1. 11. Thus, Christ's labour in and through His people results in His Father receiving His proper honour.

The gospel of the grace of God has a formative effect on Christians. Believers today must return to the principles that are contained within the glad tidings because we are set apart for the purposes and pleasure of God. We must also love and pray for one another in keeping with the example

of the early church. Evangelism, apologetics, and the confirmation of the believers must be activities to which the church of the 21st Century devotes itself. Discernment is at a premium, and we must test all things in regard to their helpfulness or possible impediment to the spread of God's message. Above all, whatever good or ill we experience, we must do so for the glory of our Lord, remembering that He is working within us to produce fruit for His glory. He will not cease until He has completed His good work in us.

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- 2 J. ALEC MOTYER, *The Message of Philippians in The Bible Speaks Today* series; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1984, P. 45. Electronic edition (Logos).
- 3 Greek scholars assert that it could also be rendered 'you have me in your heart', but most translations favour the rendering in the KJV. In my estimation, this translation best fits the context.
- 4 W. E. VINE, *The Collected Writings of W. E. VINE*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. Electronic edition (Logos).

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THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SOME OF OUR LORD'S PARABLES

By **MALCOLM HORLOCK** Cardiff, Wales

(UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, ALL QUOTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE ARE FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION)

6

The Parable of the Unjust Steward.¹

Luke 16. 1-13.² Part 1.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In Luke chapter 16, the Lord raises the subject of a person's attitude to money and wealth.

The chapter is made up largely of two stories: that of 'The Unjust Steward', vv. 1-13; and that of 'The Rich Man and Lazarus', vv. 19-31. Clearly, the Lord regards the way we handle our money as a serious matter. He does not claim that money is evil or sinful in itself, but, in both stories, stresses that possessions and money do carry with them great responsibility, and that the use to which we put them has direct implications for us in the world to come.

On the one hand, the use of money opens up the possibility of eternal reward and blessedness, vv. 1-13, whereas, on the other hand, it exposes a person to great danger and peril, vv. 19-31. On the one hand, money can be a blessing; on the other, it can be a curse.

Both stories start with the same expression, 'There was a certain rich man who', vv. 1, 19. But there the similarity ends, for in nature, audience and substance, the stories are very different.

First, the stories differ in **their nature**. The first (which is the subject of our present study) bears every mark of being a parable.³ But the second most certainly does not. For, not only does one of the characters in the second story have a name ('Lazarus'), a feature not found in any biblical parable, but this story doesn't bear the hallmark of a parable, that of being an *earthly* picture of *heavenly* and eternal realities – as is true, for example, of the stories of the shepherd,⁴ the prodigal⁵ and the steward,⁶ each of which is recorded in the immediate context before. Our Lord's account of 'The Rich Man and Lazarus' is anything but an *earthly* picture, with no less than ten of its thirteen verses transporting us into the realm of the after-life.

Second, the stories differ in terms of **their audience**. The first was spoken primarily for the benefit of the disciples, v. 1, whereas the second was spoken directly for the benefit of the Pharisees, who had simply overheard the first story, vv. 14-15.

And, thirdly, the stories differ in terms of **their substance**. The first is concerned with 'a rich man' and a steward, with the spotlight falling on *the deeds of the steward*. The second is concerned with 'a rich man' and a poor man, with the spotlight falling on *the destiny of the rich man*. The first story reveals the long-term benefit and gain which people can secure for themselves if they use their wealth *properly*. The second story reveals the disastrous consequences and loss which people can suffer if they use their wealth *selfishly*.⁷ The first story ends blissfully in 'everlasting habitations' ('eternal

tabernacles'), v. 9. The second, notwithstanding the rich man's flamboyant lifestyle on earth, ends horrendously in torments and flame where the rich man endures the dire penalty of serving mammon, vv. 24-25.⁸

EXPOSITION

We will consider first the parable itself, which, as I understand the passage, occupies from verse 1 to the middle of verse 8, and then the application which our Lord made of the parable, which occupies from the latter half of verse 8 to verse 13.

The Parable, vv. 1-8a.

1. The Steward's Accusation and the Master's Response

Verse 1. The words 'He also said to His disciples' suggest strongly that the parable was spoken on the same occasion as the parable(s) of chapter 15; that is, that our Lord's audience may well have included many of the tax-collectors who had earlier drawn near to hear Him.⁹ No doubt the lesson which Jesus taught concerning the wise and proper use of earthly wealth, while not relevant only to them, nevertheless was particularly appropriate and relevant to such men, who were exposed more than most to the temptations of dishonesty, covetousness and the hoarding of possessions. We note from later in the same Gospel that it was a newly-converted chief tax-collector, Zacchaeus, who is on record of having said, 'I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold'.⁹

But it is clear from verse 14 that, whereas the first story was not directly addressed to them, the Pharisees were present throughout our Lord's telling of the story. And, if the parables¹¹ of chapter 15 condemned their *pride* and *self-righteousness*,¹² this parable most certainly condemned their *covetousness* and *self-indulgence*. Hence, their scornful reaction in verse 14.

In all likelihood, the 'certain rich man' was an absentee landlord, 'such as were common in Galilee at the time'.¹³ The 'steward' was the person who handled the rich man's affairs, managing both his business and household for him – much as Joseph had been appointed overseer over the house and goods of Potiphar in ancient Egypt.¹⁴ But the steward in our Lord's parable had none of the sterling qualities of Joseph. For, far from his master's estate prospering under his hand,¹⁵ he squandered his master's possessions.

In time the steward's reputation got around, and an 'accusation' was lodged against him. The word translated 'accusation' indicates that the complaint represented a verbal assault, probably brought with hostile intent.¹⁶ The word 'wasting' signifies that the steward was charged with 'scattering abroad' his master's goods,¹⁷ and the tense used by Jesus indicates that this practice was still going on at the time the steward was accused.¹⁸

Verse 2. When we read that the rich man ‘called’ the steward, the word rendered ‘called’ is a different word from that used in verse 5, where the steward ‘called’ each of his lord’s debtors. The word here suggests that the master summoned the steward ‘with a clear or loud voice’;¹⁹ in effect, that he ‘shouted’ for him. And it is not difficult to detect the rich man’s tone of surprise and shock;²⁰ ‘What is this I hear about you?’ – ‘about *you*, the one I trusted so much and with so much’.

In the circumstances, the master felt it necessary that the steward provide him with an accurate account of the current state of his (the master’s) possessions, partly no doubt for the benefit of the steward’s successor. The steward was therefore instructed to close the books forthwith, which action would be, his shocked employer made clear, the last task he would ever perform for him, ‘You can be no longer steward’. To put it bluntly, the steward was being fired.

2. The Steward’s Dilemma and Decision

Verse 3. As did other characters in our Lord’s stories on occasions, the steward spoke ‘within himself’.²¹

‘What shall I do?’ was his question. This was a crucial question in several of our Lord’s parables recorded by Luke. Both the rich farmer of chapter 12 and the vineyard owner of chapter 20 asked exactly the same.²² The farmer immediately resolved to pull down his barns and build larger.²³ The vineyard owner immediately resolved to send his beloved son to seek fruit from the vine-dressers.²⁴ But, evidently appalled at the unexpected and unwelcome turn of events, at first the steward was at a loss how to deal with the situation in which he suddenly found himself.

Clearly, he knew himself to be at fault, for he made no attempt to challenge (still less to deny) the charge which had been brought against him. Nor did he complain, even to himself, of any injustice in his master’s decision. Indeed, as I see it, his recognition that he was to be ‘put out of the stewardship’, v. 4, amounted to an admission of his guilt. He was in no doubt that, even though the process of dismissal was not complete until he had drawn up and handed over the final accounts, the writing was on the wall! The steward knew only too well that the finalized accounts would serve to confirm his removal from office. There was no question; he would shortly be joining the ranks of the unemployed.

The fact that he even mentioned the possibility of begging suggests strongly that the steward had not been stashing away any ill-gotten gains. Either, then, the ‘wasting’ of his master’s goods was due to simple carelessness and incompetence, or, perhaps more likely, the steward had already spent the proceeds of his misappropriations in ‘prodigal living’ – in reckless and dissolute pleasures.

The same word translated ‘wasting’ in verse 1 is used to describe the actions of the so-called ‘Prodigal Son’ in the previous parable.²⁵ But, when, in that parable, it was said of the younger son that he had ‘wasted his possessions’, the reference was to his *own* property. Now, in our parable, when it is said that the steward had been

‘wasting his goods’, the reference is to his *master’s* possessions.

There was no question about it; both the steward’s present situation and future prospects were grim in the extreme. There was less likelihood of the man obtaining a comparable job and position elsewhere than there was of him being struck by lightning! For, given the circumstances of his dismissal, who could he expect ever to trust or employ him?

‘My master *is* taking the stewardship away from me’, were his words. And in many ways there lies the key to the whole parable. For the steward’s lord was *in the process* of doing it. There was therefore a short interval before the steward would actually be out on his neck, but it was very short! Immediate action was called for. But what action?

Quickly the steward reviewed his limited options.

To ‘dig’? No! ‘I cannot’, he told himself. ‘I don’t have the strength’, literally. For the steward was what we might call a white collar worker. Perhaps throughout his business life he had prided himself on ‘calling a spade a spade’, but he certainly didn’t regard himself as built to *use* one! Physical labour and this soft-living steward simply did not agree.²⁶

To ‘beg’ then? To depend on the charity of others? Never! ‘I am ashamed’, he confessed. His pride and self-respect would never let him do that.²⁷ He was in good health and saw no good reason to resort to begging. It was not for *him* to stoop to be a Lazarus!²⁸

In summary, to dig was too strenuous, and to beg was too demeaning. Nor, it seems, did the desperate steward find the prospect of starving to death particularly attractive.

Verse 4. But, as the steward pondered his dilemma, he had a sudden flash of inspiration.²⁹ ‘I’ve got it’, he exclaimed in effect – ‘I am resolved what to do’. The man didn’t need to be told that he *couldn’t* now change *his past actions*, but out of the blue, as it were, he realized that, if he played his game carefully, he *could* change *his future prospects*.

For the rogue had devised a clever scheme which he hoped would see him all right when he was finally shown the door. But there must be no delay; hence the ‘quickly’ (the ‘hurry up’) of verse 6. For the steward had only a terribly brief time left to him, just one very small window of opportunity. Until he turned in the accounting books he was still officially his master’s steward, and, as such, could still act in his official capacity as his lord’s legal representative, with full executive power over his affairs.

And so the actions of verses 5-7, although doubtless unscrupulous and underhand, were within his lawful rights. When he acted as he did, he wasn’t guilty of either forgery or fraud, and exposed neither himself nor his lord’s debtors to any criminal charges.

And so, with the question ‘What shall I do?’ in mind, we can say that, whereas the answer of the rich farmer in

chapter 12 exposed his outright selfishness, and the answer of the vineyard owner in chapter 20 expressed his unfounded optimism, the answer of the steward exhibited his inventive shrewdness.

But, for now, the key expression for us to file away from verse 4 is that which comes at the end of the verse, 'they may receive me into their houses', for this is one of the points to which our Lord returns when He comes to apply the parable in verse 9.

3. The Steward's Ingenious Scheme

Verses 5-7. As time was of the essence, the steward immediately set about implementing his scheme. First, 'he called each one of his lord's debtors to him' (literally); he called them, that is, one by one. His artful aim was to employ his last hours in office, while his master's goods were still within his power, for his own advantage. He determined to put 'every one of his master's debtors' in *his* debt by reducing the amounts by which they were already in *his master's* debt. In this way he could 'feather his own nest' for the future at his master's expense in the present. Because, surely, knowing themselves to be under such obligation to him, these debtors would happily *take him in* when the time finally came that his master *threw him out!*

The Lord Jesus centred the attention of His hearers on two typical cases; the transactions described being clearly understood as representing many others of a similar nature.³⁰

In all likelihood, these 'debtors' were either (i) tenant farmers who had, in writing, guaranteed the master an annual proportion of their produce (such as their oil or wheat) at harvest time, or (ii) merchants to whom the master had sold goods on credit in exchange for promissory notes in their own handwriting. In either case, the written guarantees or promissory notes would have been lodged with the steward as the master's legal representative.

Whatever the exact situation, the steward now handed back to each debtor his own bill or bond, authorising each debtor to substantially reduce the sum specified. The steward may either have invited each to write a new bill, which he (the steward) would then substitute for the original (and higher) one, or, perhaps more likely, have invited each debtor simply to alter the amount shown on the existing bill.³¹

This steward may never have heard sayings such as 'one good turn deserves another' and 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours', but he knew well that he could rely on his favours being returned at the time when he most needed it, which he realized was not very far away! And he knew that the greater the sums he saved the debtors the greater the favours he could expect then.

And we should note that the amounts owed by these debtors were far from small. Indeed, the two debts cited by Jesus were identical (in words at least) to the quantities of oil and wheat which King Artaxerxes of Persia authorised Ezra to claim from the treasurers in Palestine to defray the expenses of the Second Temple

in Jerusalem; namely, 'one hundred cors ('measures') of wheat' and 'an hundred baths of oil'.³²

The 'hundred measures ('baths') of oil', v. 6, was equal to the annual yield of a large olive grove of 150 trees, and the 'hundred measures of wheat', v. 7, was equal to the typical rent for 100 acres (ten times the size of an average family plot).³³ That is, the debtors in the story were not representative of the common people; they were large-scale business clients faced with sizeable business debts.

Based on information provided by Flavius Josephus,³⁴ it has been estimated that the 100 'baths' of oil amounted to over 860 gallons,³⁵ and was worth in the region of 1,000 denarii.³⁶ The steward's offer of a 50% reduction therefore saved the first debtor about 500 denarii – no small sum, being about 18 months salary for a common labourer.

The second debtor owed one hundred measures ('cors', 'homers') of wheat, which would have been worth between 2,500 and 3,000 denarii.³⁷ The steward's offer of a 20% reduction therefore saved this man between 500-600 denarii. Accordingly, although the *percentage* reductions were very different in the two cases our Lord instanced, the *value* of the reductions was roughly the same.³⁸

Presumably, the steward took into account each debtor's circumstances, and therefore the man's ability to repay, not only his master, but also *himself* in due course.

Some scholars have questioned whether the steward was acting in a fraudulent and dishonest manner when he lowered the costs to the various debtors. Three main alternative interpretations have been suggested. Namely, that:

- (a) the steward removed the heavy deferred interest charges which (contrary to God's law) he had formerly added to the original capital debts;³⁹
- (b) the steward chose to forfeit his own commission on the transactions;⁴⁰ or
- (c) the steward, who previously had deliberately overcharged the debtors – planning to pocket the difference between what he *had* charged and what he *should have* charged – renounced his exorbitant profits, without in any way defrauding his master.⁴¹

Interpretations (b) and (c) would mean, of course, that the money which the steward relinquished was his own and not that of his master – that he chose to make a short-term sacrifice in order to secure a greater gain for himself later.

Personally, I favour the traditional interpretation set out in the exposition above. For, as I see it, the Lord's description of the steward as 'unjust' in verse 8 at the very least covers (if not principally refers to) the man's actions in substituting the lesser amounts as owed to his master.

If this understating of the steward's actions is correct, his scheme was devious, dishonest and 'unfaithful' to his

master's interests. But we have to give it to him – it was also *ingenious*. There is no doubt that this scoundrel had his head 'well screwed on', and that he had found a sure-fire way to make 'friends' for himself against the time when he would be out of a job!

As we shall note, God willing, in the article to appear in the next issue, both (i) the steward's 'shrewdness' and (ii) his policy of making 'friends' for himself come in for honourable mention in verses 8 and 9 respectively, and that the need for our Lord's disciples to show contrasting 'faithfulness' to their heavenly Master is brought out in verses 11 and 12.

For now, we simply note the steward's objective, that, by the careful use of goods which were at his disposal for a very short period – goods which were not his own, but his master's – he might secure abundant and lasting provision for himself in the future. As our Lord often said, 'He that has ears to hear, let him hear'.⁴²

To be concluded

Footnotes

- 1 This article, together with that to follow in the next issue, represents an updated and more thorough exposition of this parable than that published in *Precious Seed*, Volume 31, No. 4, July-August 1980 pp. 84-88.
- 2 'There is little question that the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16. 1-13 is one of the most difficult of all Jesus' parables to interpret', D. J. IRELAND, *Westminster Theological Journal*, volume 51, page 293.
- 3 It is possible, however, that (as was very likely in the case of the Parable of the Pounds in chapter 19) some actual incident known to the hearers may have provided our Lord with the background for His parable.
- 4 Luke 15. 3-7.
- 5 Luke 15. 11-32.
- 6 Luke 16. 1-9.
- 7 Not that possessing wealth is, in itself, necessarily wrong. Abraham, who features largely in the second story, when on earth had himself been 'was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold', Gen. 13. 2; cf. Gen. 24. 35.
- 8 'The idea common to both is that of the relation between the use made of earthly goods and man's future beyond the tomb. The steward represents the owner who is able to secure his future by a wise use of those transitory goods; the wicked rich man, the owner who compromises his future by neglecting this just employment of them', F. GODET, *Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel*, Vol. 2, pages 159-160.
- 9 Luke 15. 1.
- 10 Luke 19. 8.
- 11 On the basis of the words 'He spoke this parable to them', Luke 15. 3, some have regarded the three stories of Luke 15 as forming a single parable. But the similar construction in chapter 5 verses 36-39 suggests that each of the stories should be viewed as separate parables.
- 12 It was the complaint and criticism of the Pharisees (together with the scribes) which occasioned our Lord's telling the stories in chapter 15. And there are no prizes for guessing which Jewish sect had sat for the portrait of the 'older son' that closed the story of 'the Prodigal Son', Luke 15. 25-32!
- 13 I. HOWARD MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke in The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, page 617.
- 14 Gen. 39. 5.
- 15 See Gen. 39. 3, 5.
- 16 See W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, article 'Accusation, accuse', B. Verbs, 1. *diaballō*, and I. HOWARD MARSHALL, *ibid.* The verb (διαβάλλω) occurs nowhere else in the Greek New Testament. It is,

however, found twice in the Greek Old Testament, Dan. 3. 8 and 6. 24, with the meaning 'to accuse', in both cases with obvious malice and hostile intent. But the subsequent actions of the steward and his master, together perhaps with our Lord's description of the steward as 'unjust', indicate that, unlike the accusations in Daniel chapters 3 and 6, the accusations against the steward were well-founded.

- 17 This is the word used to describe how 'the sheep of the flock' would be 'scattered', Matt. 26. 31, quoted from Zech. 13. 7.
- 18 'It is no past scattering, but a present, which is laid to his charge', R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Parables*, pages 430-431.
- 19 See W. E. VINE, *ibid.*, articles (i) 'Call', A. Verbs, 8, and (ii) 'Cry', B. Verbs, 7 both articles dealing with the word used in Luke 16 verse 2; viz. φωνέω.
- 20 'This is . . . the expostulation of indignant surprise', R. C. TRENCH, *ibid.*, page 432.
- 21 The Rich Fool, Luke 12. 17, and the Unjust Judge, Luke 18. 4; cf. 'the Pharisee . . . spoke *within himself*', Luke 7. 39 literal translation. Note also the Prodigal Son's extended soliloquy, Luke 15. 17-19.
- 22 Luke 12. 17; 20. 13.
- 23 Luke 12. 18.
- 24 Luke 20. 13.
- 25 Luke 15. 13.
- 26 In the ancient world, digging was regarded as particularly strenuous, and the thought expressed by the steward had become proverbial. (See W. F. ARNDT and F. W. GINGRICH, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, article σκάπτω.) For example, in his comedy 'The Birds', Aristophanes (a Greek playwright of the 5th century BCE) put into the mouth of Sycophant the words 'What can I do? I never learned to dig', when responding to the comment of Pisthetairos, 'You're a strong young lad'. (Lines 1430-1432.)
- 27 *Ecclesiasticus* (otherwise known as 'The Wisdom of Sirach'), an apocryphal work of the second century BC counsels, 'My son, lead not a beggar's life; for better it is to die than to beg', Ecclus. 40. 28.
- 28 Although a different word (ἐπαίττω) is used in verse 3 to that translated 'beggar' in verse 20 (πτωχός).
- 29 'I know' is in the aorist tense and the steward's words can therefore be rendered, 'I knew ('I found out a moment ago') what I can do'.
- 30 Compare the three servants upon whom Jesus focused in His so-called 'Parable of the Pounds', whose use of their 'pounds' (*minas*) was clearly meant to be representative of all ten servants to whom *minas* had been entrusted, Luke 19. 12-24.
- 31 See A. EDERSHEIM, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book IV, chapter XVIII, pages 269-273.
- 32 Ezra 7. 22.
- 33 Craig S. KREENER, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, on Luke 16. 6-7.
- 34 'The bath is able to contain seventy-two sextarii', FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VIII, Chapter II, paragraph 9.
- 35 T. W. MANSON, *The Sayings of Jesus*, pages 291-292; I. HOWARD MARSHALL, *ibid.*, page 618.
- 36 JOACHIM JEREMIAS, *The Parables of Jesus*, page 181.
- 37 I. HOWARD MARSHALL, *ibid.*, page 619.
- 38 'The percentages of debt forgiven differ, but roughly the same amount of money is forgiven in each of the sample transactions (about 500 denarii)', CRAIG S. KREENER, *ibid.*
- 39 The case for this interpretation is argued at length by J. D. M. DERRETT in *Law in the New Testament*, pages 48-77. Compare Exod. 22. 25; Lev. 25. 35-37; Deut. 15. 7-8; 23. 20-21; Ps. 15. 5.
- 40 Proposed by J. A. FINDLAY, *Luke*, in the Abingdon Bible Commentary, page 1049.
- 41 Proposed by M. D. GIBSON, *On the Parable of the Unjust Steward*, *Expository Times*, volume 14 (1902-3), page 334.
- 42 Matt. 11. 15; Mark 4. 23; Luke 8. 8; 14. 35.



A HISTORY OF THE ABERDEEN NEW YEAR CONFERENCES

On 1st and 2nd January 2010 around 220 believers met in New Year Conference in Aberdeen. Over the two days there were four sessions of ministry including one home worker's report. The ministry was provided by Jabe Nicholson from the USA and Alistair Sinclair from Crosshouse, Ayrshire. The focus of the ministry was 'What moved the early church?' and it is clear that the Lord's people felt the challenge. The home worker report was provided by Jim McMaster from Newcastle and focused on his street work among the homeless, and his work with local prisons and detention centres.

The meetings marked the 135th anniversary of the New Year Conferences in the city. That anniversary is, of course, not remarkable or significant in its own right but the longevity of their history and the current attendance figures of these meetings is testimony to God's goodness and the continuing interest of His people in His word.

The conferences began in 1875 and were spawned from what was billed as an annual revival meeting which commenced in Old Rayne in 1871. These 'revival meetings' which ran for some three or four years were instigated by a well-known local preacher by the name of Donald Ross. He was much used by the Lord in what was considered a real spiritual revival in the Aberdeen area in the late 1800's. In order to help and encourage new converts Donald Ross produced monthly magazine publications including *The Northern Evangelistic Intelligencer* which later became *The Northern Witness*, and later still *The Witness*. The revival meetings were another mechanism for believers not only to hear the word but also to enjoy fellowship with other saints. These meetings were held initially on April Fast day – a local holiday, but from 1875 they were held in January and from 1879 have been fixed on the first two or three days of each new year. In those early days the conference spread over three days with one of the main sessions on the third day dedicated to Sunday School and Bible Class

work. This third day was dropped after 1963.

The first conference for which the speakers are identified was 1876 and they were J. A. Boswell of Bedford, Rice T. Hopkins of Birkenhead, J. R. Caldwell, T. Cochrane of Glasgow and Donald Ross (then from Edinburgh). The order of meetings that year was - Day 1 prayer meeting at 10.00 followed by an exhortation meeting from 11.00 to 13.00. Afternoon consisted of a two-hour conversational Bible reading and in the evening a gospel meeting of similar duration. Day 2 consisted of prayer meeting at 10.00 followed by four hours of ministry and a final gospel tea meeting. Such were the numbers attending that final meeting that tickets were issued in advance. Changes in format have been made over the years as need and interest has developed. The introduction of the 'round table discussion' between the invited speakers on the first day being a well received amendment. Sadly, in the late 1900's, the gospel meetings were dropped and at the present time the conference comprises two days with the main focus on Bible teaching.

The 1923 Jubilee Conference was attended by a local journalist who wrote under the pseudonym of 'a listener in'. He wrote, 'Topics for discussion were well selected, the speaking was of a high level providing the hearers with the maximum of instruction of a kind that never fails to prove a potent spiritual tonic. The addresses were

lengthy but not out of place at the season of feasting and there was no tiring out of the audience but an undiminished attention throughout. We had six hours of it finding pleasure and profit in abundant measure; and envying somewhat those who get such fare as a commonplace of their assembly experience. They ought to be giants in the realm of spiritual things if this conference teaching is an example of their ordinary bill of fare'.

The conferences have been held in various locations but for the greater part of the 20th century in Gilcomston Church in the centre of the city with lunch of hot soup and potatoes and sandwiches being supplied each day in Hebron Hall by a willing band of brothers and sisters providing both sustenance for those who had travelled distances and opportunity for enjoyable fellowship. In more recent days the meetings have been held in Victoria Hall, Torry, an ideal venue for current attendance levels – the traditional Scottish pie still features as the tea-time fare.

Numbers have gradually diminished over the years from a starting point of over 1000 to around 700 in the mid 1900's to present levels of around 200. That current number, however, represents a positive development from what was a rather low base at the turn of the century and while the revival of the late 1800's is now a matter of history it is encouraging to see increasing numbers of all ages attending year on year.



Victoria Hall, Torry, Aberdeen



As a former enemy of the Christian community, Paul expresses amazement that he, too, will share in the coming resurrection, 'If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead'. The apostle forcefully confirms his confidence in the coming glory by stating, 'We also eagerly wait for the Saviour . . . who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body', Phil. 3. 20, 21. There is a sense of wonder that overcomes the apostle as he meditates on God's grace that called him into that glory in spite of all that he had done.

About thirty years before, writing to the Christians in Philippi, Paul had a life-changing encounter with Christ. He met Him, he talked with Him and he knew Him. The exceptional thoughts, 'that I may gain Christ', 'be found in Christ' and 'know Christ', that Paul has already shared with his friends in Philippi, do not cancel out the Damascus encounter. Instead, they build on it. The apostle quickly affirms that he has not yet achieved all these aims; he has not yet reached that goal. Yet, there is no doubt that he is running towards that end.

Unfortunately, there are always those who believe they are part of a spiritual elite. Some of them troubled the church in Philippi, forming a group who had 'confidence in the flesh', Phil. 3. 2-4. Paul was once part of that world. The apostle uses very strong language for those who claim to belong to a higher religious class affecting the Christian community negatively. He exclaims, 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! The first term is part of their language to describe those who

Paul, the Runner **THE**

Part V

Text: **Philippians 3. 4-14.**

Unless otherwise stated scripture quotations are taken from *The New King James Version*

disagree with them. Paul knows that, for he once thought that same way.

Although Paul takes us into the mind of God, he is quick to state, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected'. Paul affirms that he has not yet reached the fullness of these wonders related to Christ.

As he moves in that direction, he will not be part of any spiritual elite. But humility has nothing to do with carelessness, drifting, or apathy. In that race, Paul unashamedly declares, 'I

press on'. Just drifting along is hardly acceptable. True spiritual progress is imperative until this earthly life finally draws to a close and we enter the eternal realm.

Gently, the question should be asked, 'How far forward in the race have we run in the last year, the last five years, or the last ten years? With due respect, Paul, because of the unbelievable sufferings he endured, is a battered and scarred old man. Yet, as we read his words, we cannot miss the note of excitement, of expectation, and of longing. Nor can we miss the fact that near the end of his life he is in no mood to just drift along.

There is nothing impersonal about this. Paul is writing out his own very personal thoughts on these matters. He writes, 'I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus

has also laid hold of me'. The phrase, 'to lay hold of' has two principal meanings. First, to lay hold of someone or something literally, with your hands; second, to understand with the mind a concept, a principle, or a thought. Outside of Damascus, the Lord Jesus literally stopped Saul of Tarsus in his tracks. From the transcendent glory, He reached out to Saul. Now, after thirty years, Paul is still doing his best to understand all the implications of why the Lord Jesus laid hold of him. He is definitely not

going to slow down now with the goal in view. Paul knows that regardless of the years we live, there is not sufficient time here to grasp the magnitude of Christ's glory. Yet he runs, in the quest of comprehending as much as he possibly can right now.

Paul was running with passion, for he states, 'One thing I do', that is, I am focusing all my energies on this one thing. This 'one thing' has two parts. First, 'forgetting those things which are behind'. The apostle did not live on memories. Nor is Paul a prisoner of the past, whether of failures or triumphs, a message for all of us who are senior citizens. Second, 'straining toward what is ahead' NIV. Philippians chapter 3 verses 8-11 contains the three elements we have already noticed more than once – that I may gain Christ, that I may be found in Christ, and that I may know Christ. For Paul, these are the blessings of incalculable value that lie ahead. By walking with God now, we are aiming for a heaven that is filled with Christ and His glory. As a result, our lives on earth will be enhanced with purpose, significance, and hope.

It is worth remembering that Paul expresses himself like this while confined to a jail cell. While recognizing his present limitations, no jail cell will hinder Paul from running towards Him. True, this present life is so short and cluttered with obstacles it may seem impossible to really grasp the greatness of the Lord Jesus. Yet the adversities of this short life never





PRIZE

hindered Paul from running towards Him with all the strength of his being. The apostle is running towards the goal with his eyes clearly on the mark. With our eyes on the goal-marker we move in the right direction. What significance does the term 'goal-marker' have for the Christian? Perhaps a good definition would be to focus on those things that help us to go in the right direction spiritually and to continue right on to the end. For example, the importance of God's word in our lives, for it is His word that will keep us from distractions and from stumbling. Similarly, from his own personal experience, Paul exhorts us to 'pray without ceasing', 1 Thess. 5. 17. There is value to assembly meetings, for we are all exhorted not to forsake 'the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some', Heb. 10. 25. We need each other. We need to encourage one another. We add to the list the importance of friends. Paul was not a loner. He lived his Christian life and he worked in God's service surrounded by friends.

To finally reach the goal is to come to the end of life in this world. Paul could almost touch the goal-marker when he wrote to Timothy, saying, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith', 2 Tim. 4. 7. Paul knew his life here was about to end. There would be no more travel, no more preaching and teaching, no more letters. He was reaching the moment of 'the upward call'.

What happens when the race comes to an end? In the Greek games a wooden platform stood near the goal-marker. On the platform was a chair for the judge of the games. When the first runner crossed the finish line, the judge gave his name to the young man beside him and he, in a booming voice, announced the name of the winner to all the spectators. That was the upward call for the winner to climb the steps and present himself before the judge who then gave him the prize, usually a simple crown made of green leaves.

What is the prize? The apostle has written pointedly of three great experiences which he is passionately anticipating, first, to gain Christ, then, to be found in Christ, and, wonder of wonders, to know Christ. Christ Himself, then, is the prize! How beautiful to grasp that in Christ all other possible suggestions about what the prize might be are included. In Christ, and because of Christ, we will be dressed in the perfection of God's holiness forever. We will enter a state of total glory, for even now we 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God', Rom. 5. 2. Because we are in Christ and, because we are united to Christ forever, we never will be in a state of partial knowing again, for, as already noted, we shall know as we have been known.



Paul has great insight into the future, but John may help us as we seek to understand the prize, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is', 1 John 3. 2. To see Him as He is and to be like Him forever truly staggers the imagination! Paul anticipates that day with joy. We begin to understand Paul's passion when, in a modern translation, we read, 'I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize' NLT. Like a runner stretching out to the limit of his powers he is running towards that moment.

What will it be like to see the Lord Jesus for the first time, to see Him as we have never seen Him before? We

ask the question because Paul clearly writes about gaining Him, of being completely found in Him and of knowing Him, not by faith but by sight. The moment will be so personal, so precious, so overwhelming that scholars, commentators and writers usually, perhaps wisely, put down their pens. In that reverent silence the poets dare to go a little further. E. GRIMLEY writes,

O what shall we feel
in Thy presence when first
The visions of glory
upon us shall burst!
Since now our soul longeth
and seeketh for Thee;
O when, blessed Saviour,
Thy face shall we see?

We see Thee, Lord Jesus,
with glory now crowned,
And waiting Thy coming,
in peace would be found;
The visions of glory
have turned all to dross;
For Thee give us grace
to count all things but loss.

As we finish these meditations on Paul's relationship with the Lord Jesus, we remember the Lord asked Peter three times, 'Do you love Me?' John 21. 15-19. Peter answered affirmatively each time. True, he stumbled. In spite of how clearly the Lord Jesus shared with the disciples His imminent death, Peter, like his companions, was not prepared for what happened at Calvary. Yet, Peter proved through many years of committed service to his Lord how much he loved Him. To both author and reader the Lord's question, 'Do you love Me?', is still relevant. Let us answer affirmatively. Let us love Him with commitment and passion. That is the only way to run the race well, a race that will finish with a very personal and eternal encounter with the Lord of glory.

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Matthew chapter 16 marks a watershed in the ministry of the Lord Jesus and the manner in which things would unfold thereafter. The Lord asked His disciples, 'Whom say ye that I am?' Matt. 16. 15. At that point, Peter made that great confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God', v. 16. Upon hearing this confession, the Lord said, 'Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it', v. 18. The Lord spoke of it as being future, 'I **will** build my church'. The church age was a hitherto unknown hiatus in the prophetic programme relating to Israel. The apostle Paul said, 'Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit', Eph. 3. 5.

This promise made by the Lord was realized when the church came into being on the day of Pentecost. Acts describes the historical aspect of that event, whereas the apostle Paul gave its spiritual and doctrinal significance when he wrote, 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit', 1 Cor. 12. 13. In this article, we wish to clarify what is meant by the term 'The universal church, or the body of Christ', and, in order to do this, it will also be necessary to discuss points of contrast with the local church, and the inter-relationship between them.

The character of the universal church

The universal church is a spiritual, intangible, invisible entity, composed of all true believers, irrespective of national and cultural differences, or ecclesiastical affiliation. At the moment of salvation, every believer automatically comes into the good of the baptism of the Spirit, which took place as a once-for-all event in Acts chapter 2, bringing him into the church which is His body – the universal church of God.

Since belonging to the universal church is integral with salvation, one's position in that body is as secure as one's salvation. Belonging to the universal church is unconditional and eternal. Despite the tragic divisions and fractures that have taken place in the church at the local level, it remains true

The Universal Church

that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'. The apostle anticipated that moment when the universal church of God will be united with Him, when he wrote, 'That he [Christ] might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish', Eph. 5. 27.

Points of contrast between the universal church and local churches

Since the universal church, the body of Christ, is an invisible, intangible, spiritual entity, it must have a vehicle through which it can find expression, and, for that reason, the apostles established local churches wherever they went. So, for example, we read about the churches at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, etc. All of these churches were visible, tangible, physical entities, with an historical presence in the world. They were local representations of the body, where members could meet to exercise the functions of the body, and also to practice the apostles' doctrine. Ideally, all members of that body in a locality should be part of the local church in that place, and, indeed, this was the case in the early days of the church. For example, when writing to the Corinthians, the apostle identifies the three entities that were present in Corinth at that time – Jew, Gentile, and church of God, 1 Cor. 10. 32. All were clearly identifiable, and what they represented was known. Unfortunately, in modern days, the church has been rent asunder at the local level by schism and division, and no longer does every member of the body in any one locality meet on the same ground. For this reason, no one group of truly born again believers can claim to be 'the church of God' in an area. However, I firmly believe that assemblies with which I associate would be quite in order to claim to be 'church of God' (without the article), meaning that they bear the character and practice the truth of the scriptural New Testament church locally.

The inter-relationship between the body and the local church

The matter we now wish to consider is the manner in which the truth of the body of Christ finds its expression in the local church. Key areas are as follows:

Holding the head

The coordination of every function of the human body is controlled by the head. We have all witnessed the tragic results where a person has suffered a spinal injury that has severed communication with the head, leaving the person fully or partially paralysed.

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The apostle spoke to the Colossians about this very thing, saying concerning some that they were, 'not holding the Head, from

which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God', Col. 2. 19. Again, writing to the Ephesians, he reminded them that God has 'put all things under his [the Lord's] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all', Eph. 1. 22-23. We must never forget that Christ is the Head of the body, and that no human agency or programme must be allowed to interfere with that vital communication between the Lord and His body, the church.

Togetherness

In John chapter 17, the Lord expresses His desire to the Father for His own, 'That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us', John 17. 21.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, uses the figure of a human body and its members to illustrate the function of the body of Christ. Quite clearly, the correct function of the human body requires that all members be present and functioning in the capacity of the specialism that has been given to them. So also in the local church! One



ch of God

of the main characteristics of the early church was their togetherness. We read, 'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication', Acts 1. 14. *Strong's Concordance* informs us that the phrase 'with one accord', is 'a unique Greek word, *homothumadon*, used ten of its twelve New Testament occurrences in the book of Acts'. This Greek word helps us understand the uniqueness of the Christian community. *Homothumadon* is a compound of two Greek words, one meaning to 'rush along' and the other 'in unison'. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's church.

The writer to the Hebrews gives us this powerful exhortation, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching', Heb. 10. 25. One of the important characteristics of the local church should be its 'togetherness'.

Of course, there are threats to togetherness which, unfortunately, have been created by man. For example, fragmentation of local church exercises on the basis of gender or age, cliques, or para-church meetings that displace the regular local assembly ministry. All of these things are threatening to the expression of the body of Christ.

Mutual love and care

Continuing with his use of the human body as his illustration, the apostle makes the statement, 'That the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it', 1 Cor. 12. 25-26. All of us are aware how that if one member of our body is injured, the body compensates by protecting it from further injury, and relieving it from the normal duties that it may perform until recovery has taken place.

So it must be in the body of Christ also. The apostle wrote, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ', Gal. 6. 2. There is a tender and caring link between the members of the body and, in times of distress, our love for one another should be accompanied by practical expressions of care and by prayer: to have a shoulder upon which to weep at times, to feel the warmth of an embrace, to hear a word of comfort, to be able to share a heavy load, and to know that others care.

Exercising our gifts

1 Corinthians chapter 12 gives us a listing of the many gifts which were bestowed upon the church by the Spirit, some of which were temporary, and others which are permanent. Every believer, without exception, has been given a gift that he or she is required to use for the health and blessing of the body of Christ. A gifted person is not one who exercises his gift only on the public platform. Undoubtedly, that is a gift, and an important one too, but there are many gifts that are just as important and which operate unknown and unseen. For example, there are organs in the human body which are never seen, such as the heart, lungs and liver, and yet if any of these organs begins to malfunction it can mean either severe disability or death. There are many gifts, such as the silent ministries of sisters, and their function is critical to the health and well-being of the body of Christ. If a member does not function, the other members are deprived and endangered. We must exercise our gift, whatever that might be, for the mutual blessing and benefit of the body of Christ.

Summary

Our study has re-examined some valuable truths relative to the universal church of God, the body of Christ, and how it finds its expression in the local church. We summarize as follows.

The universal church of God is a spiritual, intangible, invisible entity, embracing every true believer, independent of race, culture or ecclesiastical affiliation.

The universal church of God, the body of Christ, came into being through the once and for all baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2.

At the moment of salvation, without any further action on the part of the believers, they automatically become part of the body of Christ in an indissoluble link, without further pre-condition.

The body of Christ finds its expression through the personal exercises of the members of the body, and through the corporate exercises of the local church.

WILLIAM BURNETT was born and raised in Scotland, and spent his professional life in the oil refining business. His employer seconded him to Canada in 1972, and he accepted early retirement in 1994. He has been a 'tentmaker' among the assemblies since his late teen years, and now ministers throughout North America, and abroad. He also sits on the board of *Counsel Magazine*, and contributes regularly to various assembly publications. He has recently written a book entitled, *Daniel – Godly living in a hostile world*. He and his wife Beth reside in Oakville, Ontario, Canada, where they are in happy fellowship in Hopedale assembly. They have three married sons, and eight grandchildren.





As a result of seeing secular adverts, two separate groups of believers became exercised about displaying the word of God by the side of motorways. One group attempted using fabric signs but without success. Then an approach was made to a commercial company about costs for using their hoardings, but the price was astronomical.

In the course of time, news spread amongst the saints of our exercise and soon a 40-foot-long trailer, devoid of an advert and situated by the side of the M62 Liverpool to Hull motorway was located. It was in a farmer's field, previously used by a commercial company which had long since abandoned it. The farmer arranged for us to use it to display the scriptures at a cost of £175 per month which we thought to be reasonable, and a trust was formed taking the name of 'Motorway Text Trust'.

The trailer was washed and, as it did not require painting, plastic letters supplied by Bowden Signs of Castleford and Kingston Signs, Peterborough, with much difficulty in breezy weather, were fixed in place. We were delighted with the result as now thousands of drivers passing by would read the words, 'BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YOU WILL BE SAVED'. Site Number 1 was 'up and running'.

We decided to set up a web site and the address was added to our Number 1 site. Shortly after, we began to receive emails and whilst some were critical most were supportive.

Another 40-ft. trailer, situated in an excellent position by the side of the A1 roadway just north of Doncaster, was noticed. The believers who informed us have enthusiastically supported us,



MOTORWAY TEX



prayerfully, practically, and financially. With their practical help we were able to fix two texts on one side of the trailer. The top one said: 'PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD' and, underneath, 'BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YOU WILL BE SAVED'.

The problem of what text to put on the end of the trailer was solved when the wife of one of our Trust members suggested, 'JESUS IS LORD', which we thought provided a nice balance and so, along with our website address, this was put in position. When we discovered that the other side of our display could be seen from a road running at right angles to the A1 the word 'ETERNITY' in large letters was also put in place.

The inspiration for the word 'eternity' came from the example set by a believer in Sydney, Australia. Feeling he couldn't do much for the Lord, he chalked on the pavements ETERNITY at strategic points and people were saved through it, praise God! Now site Number 2 was 'up and running'.

A sample of some of the emails we began receiving are:-

- 1) 'We were greatly encouraged yesterday to see one of your texts on the M62 when travelling home to Liverpool after our church weekend away'.
- 2) 'Travelling recently on the M62 I was thinking how good it would be to see Bible texts on the many billboards; how pleasant it was later that day to see the text on a trailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved"'.
- 3) Two backslidden Christians saw the text, went home and began reading the scriptures again.

- 4) We also received many messages of encouragement from individuals and groups of Christians.

While sites 1 and 2 were operating we were approached by another farmer who had a 40-ft. trailer without an advert on it. He asked if we would like to use it. However, costs were now running at £350 per month – had we enough faith to go forward?

Negotiations commenced with the farmer and a price agreed, a little less than the others, so once again (but now with more experience behind us) we put on the large side of the trailer the text, 'Jesus said, "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE, NO ONE COMES UNTO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME"'. Hallelujah! Site Number 3 was up and providing a further 'Wayside Pulpit'.

This text can be seen on the M62 between junctions 31-30 travelling west. No web address was put on this trailer. Site No. 1 opened 1st October 2007; No. 2, 1st November 2007; No. 3, 22nd January 2008.

We decided to send a newsletter to make known the work and, as a result, the prayer support increased and our financial needs were met. The



T TRUST



database of supporters that we hold now stands at 150. If you would like to receive our newsletters we would be more than pleased to add your mailing address to the list.

When a local bus company began offering space for advertising on the back of their buses at £2 per day we decided to use this channel also to spread God's word. Therefore, since September 2008, people in West Yorkshire have been able to read the text Romans chapter 6 verse 23 on one bus, along with an email contact address.

Further development in the work of the Trust was that we arranged for the word of God to be displayed on the platforms of the railway stations in Leeds and Sheffield. The display panels (1.5 metres by 1 metre), of which there were five, were used to display a text for a period of two weeks. As this proved to be rather expensive, it has not been repeated.

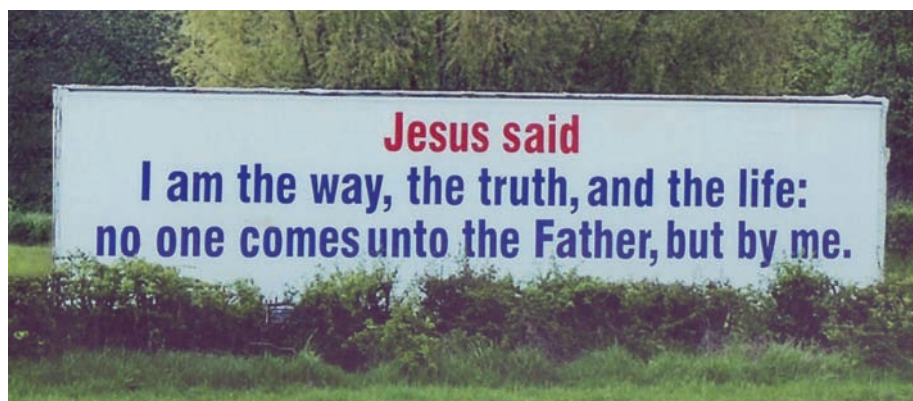
Shortly after our first site was erected, various brethren began to say that displaying the word of God in such a way as we were doing by the side of motorways might be illegal. They also



supplied us with sections of the law relative to the matter. At the end of October 2008 we were notified by the farmers owning sites 1 and 2 that they had been ordered by local authorities to remove the trailers or blot out the words. This order was complied with and we were left with just one site working and that was No. 3. This was the one without a website.

However, through a careful reading of the law, we noted that, following a law case in Derby, the judge stated that a display with only a message on it has yet to be decided if it constitutes an advert. It was under the heading 'Illegal Advertising' that our texts had to be removed. Eventually we got the farmers to permit the restoration of both sites minus the website so that once again all our motorway trailers are bearing witness to the love of God in providing a wonderful Saviour.

DENNIS NOON is in the Airedale assembly, West Yorkshire, England, and is one of the founder members of the Motorway Text Trust. This is his first article for *Precious Seed International*. He can be contacted at: 29 Woodlands Avenue, Castleford, West Yorkshire, WF10 3HR, England.



And God said, let Us make man

That man is unique and distinct from the animal world around him is clearly evident from the first occurrence of the expression found in Genesis chapter 1 verse 26, 'And God said, Let us'. We are made privy to the counsels of the Godhead! It is worth noting what scripture does not say. It does not say, 'And God said, Let me make man in my image'. The words 'let us', speak of **plurality**. Some might suggest that in 'let us', God is speaking to angels. However, that cannot be, for the verse goes on to say 'our image'. Angels are never said be in 'the image of God'. So 'let us' speaks of **deity**. Further, it does not say, 'Let us make man in my image', but rather 'our image'. This would confirm **equality** within the Godhead.

The Hebrew word for man is 'Adam' which simply means 'red'. This is no doubt a strong indication of the colour of our first parents. 'The first created man, Adam, from whom all other humans are descended, was created with the best possible combination of genes . . . as all the factors for skin "colour" were present in Adam and Eve, they would most likely have been mid-brown' – *Where Did the Races Come From?* by Answers in Genesis.

The expression, 'Let us make man' obviously includes Eve too, for we read in verse 27, 'In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'.

So God conferred on Adam the high dignity of being made 'in the image of God'. Many today make strenuous efforts and go to great lengths to gain the grand titles and plaudits of their fellow men, and in the process fail to see that the highest honour of all, already rests upon them – 'made in the image of God'. Some might ask, 'Does man still bear the image of God, for after all he is a fallen creature?' The answer comes in a most definite affirmation! 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man', Gen. 9. 6. 'For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God', 1 Cor. 11. 7.

Creation is completed and crowned with the forming of man, and, as God contemplates His handiwork, all is very good.

[Extracted from *Day by Day – Paradise to the Promised Land* published by Precious Seed Publications]



It is not difficult to understand why God would use a fearless warrior like Othniel, a patriot such as Ehud or the self-effacing Gideon; men who 'subdued kingdoms . . . waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens', Heb. 11. 33-34. Yet, as far as we know, Samson never led an army, did nothing to rally the resolve of the nation and in fact appeared at one time to be an embarrassment to the men of Judah, Judg. 15. 11. His forays into Philistine territory all appear to be motivated by self-interest and undertaken in the energy of the flesh, yet he was recognized as a judge in Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines, 15. 20, and on four separate occasions his actions were attributed to the Spirit of the Lord.

How often could we be accused of underestimating the value of another's service simply because it does not seem to fit into an acceptable mould or conform to an established pattern? Who am I to judge 'another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth', Rom. 14. 4. Without doubt there were failings and weaknesses in the life of Samson from which we can learn salutary lessons, but we must never forget that he merited a place among the heroes of faith!

The record of Samson's life is summed up in four journeys. The first of these took him from his home in Zorah, down to Timnath; a journey motivated by self-will. We then follow him from Ashkelon down to Etam, with only self-interest in his heart. Then, having slain a thousand Philistines in Lehi, he later took his fateful journey to Gaza, seemingly full of self-confidence even though in enemy territory. His final journey saw his crushed and lifeless body taken by the men of his father's house from Gaza back home to Zorah for burial; we note that even his last words were an expression of self-pity!

The fact that God used an individual like Samson to chastise the Philistines is really a sad reflection on the condition of the nation at this period in their history. It would seem that the people at large had come to accept

THE DAYS WHEN THE SAMSON A MODEL

the yoke of their oppressor; there was apparently no particular desire for deliverance, no concern that their condition was a result of departure from God, just a weak acceptance of their situation. In such times, God prepares and energizes men and women of extraordinary calibre to oppose error and to motivate others. History records men like John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Oliver Cromwell, William Tyndale, John Knox and many others who were prepared to stand and, if necessary, fight or die to uphold the light of truth amid the darkness of error in their day.

We followed Samson on the first of his journeys in a previous study and noted how a sovereign God turned what appeared to be the weakness of the flesh in Samson to provide opportunity to oppose the oppressor. At first it would seem that the Philistines of Timnath had no particular reason to fear the arrival of Samson. Such was their confidence in their own domination of Israel that one man apparently just seeking a wife of their people would not cause them undue concern. But they reckoned without Israel's God moving behind the scenes to bring His own purposes to pass. History, both biblical and secular, is littered with the wrecks of empires and the bones of rulers who failed to take into account the God of heaven, or who underestimated His power!

Samson found the occasion against the Philistines which the Lord had intended in the seemingly innocent introduction of his riddle. The Philistines were obviously bad losers, not prepared to play by the rules. They were clearly unaware of the old adage that 'cheats never prosper' and before the week was out thirty of their number lay dead; they had also acquired a formidable adversary. There are very practical lessons for us in these verses with regard to our involvement with the world. The dangers of the unequal yoke are

written large, whether in the matter of a marriage partner or with those deemed to be friends, or 'companions' in Samson's case. Both relationships brought only strife and retribution. We are not called to live monastic lives in our separation from the world, but for a believer to cultivate favour and friendship with unbelievers for purposes other than to win them for Christ will so often result in a compromise of principles.

The Lord Jesus gave instruction for His followers to, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you', Matt. 5. 44. In a day long before these words were spoken Samson's actions were motivated by other considerations. The thirty garments taken from those he slew were to pay off a gambling debt, the foxes released as firebrands in the corn were in retaliation for his wife being given to another and the great slaughter which followed was an act of vengeance for the death of his wife at the hands of her own people!

Samson's next journey took him to the top of the rock Etam, a brief interlude in his life which was possibly the spiritual pinnacle as far as the record of his life is concerned. The Philistines, however, were bent on revenge. They had no intention of allowing him any respite and gathered together a large force on the borders of Judah. How sad it is to see that the tribe ordained for kingship, having mustered a force of some three thousand men, directed their opposition not against the Philistines, but against Samson, their potential deliverer. How like their descendants who, being blessed with a far greater deliverer in their midst, said in their hearts, 'We will not have this man to reign over us', Luke 19. 14, and promptly handed Him over to the occupying forces. Once again, God took a hand. If the men of Judah refuse to challenge the authority of

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JUDGES RULED PART 9

OF INCONSISTENCY – PART 2

the Philistines, the Spirit of the Lord will empower the man whom they despised and rejected. Maybe we could question the wisdom of Samson in taking the jawbone of an ass in view of his Nazarite vow, but on a pragmatic level any available weapon would be welcome when faced with a thousand hostile men! A notable victory was gained which it would appear brought some respite for a number of years, Judg. 15. 20.

Samson's third significant journey took him from the valley of Sorek to Gaza; from the prostitute's house to the prison house! Having briefly antagonised the Gazites by removing their city gates, Samson once more fell for the charms of a Philistine woman. There is no doubt that the adversary knew Samson's weakness and exploited it to the full, as indeed he has done throughout history, causing many good men to succumb to his siren voice and founder on the rocks of temptation. This time it was the infamous Delilah who caught him in her web. The interesting thing is that Delilah made no secret of her purpose in enticing Samson to divulge the secret of his strength. Throughout their dialogue it was Samson who lied! Such, apparently, was his self-confidence that he made light of her efforts to trap him. At the third attempt, however, Judg. 16. 13, Samson lowered his guard and drew her attention to his

hair. At first he deceived her, but then 'told her all his heart'.

To this point Samson had retained the outward appearance of a man separated to God although, as we know, he had already compromised his Nazarite vow on a number of occasions. How careful we need to be to ensure that our character and behaviour as seen by others reflects the true nature of our hearts! The Lord Jesus denounced the Pharisees by quoting Isaiah, 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth . . . but their heart is far from me', Matt. 15. 8. Samson's final capitulation renders him 'like any other man'. But God does not want

you and me to be like any other man or woman! He has a unique purpose for each of His own, as one hymn-writer expressed it, 'There's a work for Jesus, only you can do', E. D. YALE,

Samson was finally brought to realize that in his own strength he could accomplish nothing, only in the power of the Spirit of God would the enemy be overcome; how sad the record of chapter 16 verse 20, 'He wist not that the Lord was departed from him'. Significantly, it was his sight which first caused the problem in chapter 14 verse 1 and many futile attempts had been made to bind him; now blinded and bound, a sorry spectacle of a man once so strong, the journey continued downward to Gaza where he grinds corn in the prison house, the occupation of slave women.

But God is gracious and will not allow the adversary to determine the passing of His servant. The Philistines thought to make sport of Samson, but again they underestimated Samson's God. For only the second time in his career we read that he 'called unto the Lord', but he was heard. The house is brought down and the sad epitaph written, they 'which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life'.

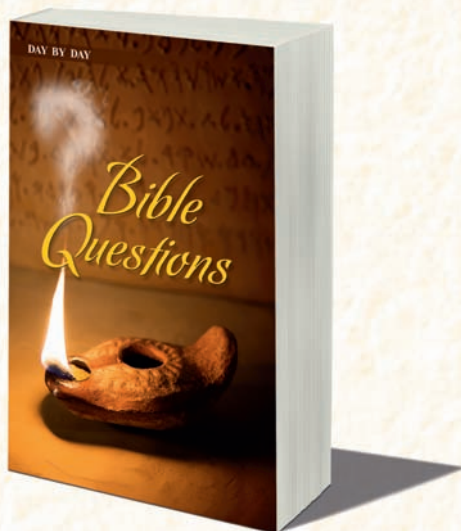
Samson's final journey marks the only occasion when he went 'up'; all else was a downward path. His brethren carry him to his burial between Zorah and Eshtaol, exactly the place where he started from, Judg. 13. 25. Is that a solemn warning to others that it is possible to engage in a lifetime of activity and yet make little or no spiritual progress?



JOHN SCARSBROOK is the Secretary to the Precious Seed Trust



OUR THREE NEW PUBLICATIONS ...



Day by Day Bible Questions, edited by Ken Totton

The Day by Day series has proven its value as an aid to study and meditation in the scriptures, and has been well received by the Lord's people. Encouraged by this, we are delighted to announce our latest title, *Day by Day Bible Questions*. Each daily meditation focuses on a significant scripture question, that is, a question actually asked in the Bible, and provides an exposition and an application. Many of the questions of the Bible are ordinary enough, but beyond these lie the big questions of life and existence, issues of identity and purpose, 'Who am I? How did I get here? Why am I suffering?' Instinctively, as believers we turn to the word of God for answers and we are not disappointed! 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?' Ps. 8. 4, is a reminder of our lowliness, yet also of our incredible human dignity and destiny in the purposes of God, forfeited in Adam, yet to be realized in union with Christ, the Last Adam.

It has been observed that in many fields of human endeavour success depends largely on asking the right questions. As FRANCIS BACON put it, 'A prudent question is one-half of wisdom'. From Genesis to Revelation the questions of scripture form a wonderful storehouse for our meditation and instruction. We find much to challenge, inform, inspire, and comfort, for truly 'the things written aforetime were written for our learning'.

This new book contains a careful selection of questions which instruct, challenge, and edify. As would be expected there is

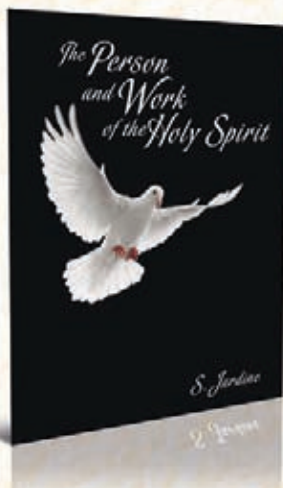
considerable prominence given to the questions of the Gospels, but famous and important questions are considered throughout the Bible by an international team of contributors. Thus, the reader is presented with a rich digest of teaching, with an emphasis on personal and practical application. We issue this thirteenth title in the series in the prayerful hope that the pithy questions of the Bible will prove a real stimulus towards a deepening of spiritual understanding and increased devotion to the Lord.

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit – Samuel Jardine

The Lord Jesus described the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit as 'another Helper' for believers, John 14. 16. In fact, the witness of the Holy Spirit in the world, and His gracious indwelling of the church and the individual Christian is the defining feature of the present era. Do we not yearn to recapture something of the illumination and mighty empowerment of the Spirit that was so characteristic of the early church? If so, the teaching of scripture relative to the Holy Spirit – His Person and work – should be of fundamental interest to every Christian.

Samuel Jardine was an able expositor of the word of God and was well equipped to guide us into the Bible's teaching on this vital subject. Following a consideration of the Spirit's personality and deity, He traces the works of the Spirit in the inspiration of scripture and the incarnation of our Lord. Prominence is given to considering the Holy Spirit's mission in the world, and His work in the believer and the church.

A particularly attractive feature of the book is the author's comprehensive consideration of the *symbols* used in scripture to bring out the fullness of the Spirit's Person and activity – water, oil, a dove, seal, earnest, wind, etc. Originally published by Precious Seed under the title *Floods upon the Dry Ground*, the book has been completely reformatted and given a more



explicit title, to appeal to a new generation of readers.

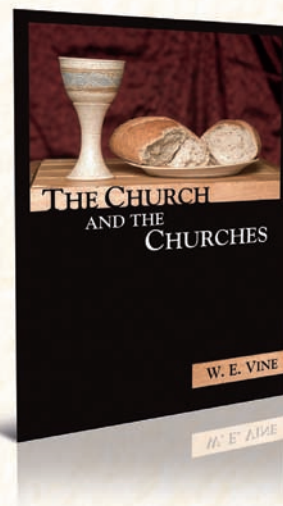
Here is an accessible book from which every believer can profit. Mr. Jardine's treatment will not only instruct your mind, but delight your heart as he unfolds the loveliness of the Spirit's Person and operations.

The Church and the Churches – W. E. Vine

The writings of the late William E. Vine are valued highly by students of the scriptures. His *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* has been an indispensable handbook for decades. As his *Collected Writings* show, he also left a very significant legacy of commentaries and other works that have stood the test of time. Prominent

among these is the title *The Church and the Churches*, which Precious Seed Publications is delighted to publish in a re-formatted edition.

The passage of time since its first publication has in no way



diminished the importance and relevance of this work. Every believer in our Lord Jesus is a member of the body of Christ, and should enjoy the fellowship of a local church. Vine's treatment is in two parts. First, he unfolds the truths of the universal church, including its relationship to the kingdom of heaven. In the second section of the book he focuses on the local church in a series of vital topics: the Lordship of Christ, spiritual gifts, baptism, reception, church discipline etc.

It is encouraging that in recent times believers from a variety of backgrounds are re-examining their practices in the light of the biblical teaching on the church, so it is hoped that the availability of this concise book will have wide appeal. All who are prepared to let the New Testament guide and govern their practices can profit from it, and new believers especially should be encouraged to acquire a copy. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches', Rev. 2. 7.



REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK

ENGLAND

Surrey

The assembly at Manor Road Evangelical Church, **Guildford**, held a holiday Bible club in February. Twenty-two children were present on the Monday increasing to thirty-three on the Tuesday and thirty-eight on the Wednesday. As in previous years, there was a great team of helpers including five from the Young People's Group. A core team of four had prepared well and their enthusiasm throughout the week brought a great response from the children.

The attention of the children during the two talks each morning was a delight to see and the saints are praying that they will all store up God's word in their hearts and be aware of its application in their lives. Many of the children learned the memory verse (Colossians chapter 1 verse 16) perfectly and were made aware that everything was created by and for the Lord Jesus. There was a good turnout of parents for the prize-giving on the Wednesday and they were most appreciative of the time their children had enjoyed.

Devon

The very small assembly in **Appledore** continues a work among overseas pupils from a local day and boarding school. Most of the pupils have come from Hong Kong. The main contact is on Friday evenings when dinner is provided, (almost invariably including rice), and then there is a time of singing and Bible study. The students listen well for an hour and are keen to practice their English in answering and asking questions. The evening is finished with Chinese tea. For the last three years, one or two have come regularly to the Bible class on the Lord's Day. Chinese Christian literature is passed on from time to time, including Bibles. Some stay at weekends or half-term in the home of a couple in the meeting. Assistance with their studies, university applications, interviews, is also given. Currently five attend regularly, with

one other occasionally. The saints also keep in touch with eight others who used to be at the school, but have moved to UK universities or other schools. Literature and notes on the Bible are sent to some weekly, and passages and verses almost daily to others. The saints have also met the parents of two; one German, one Chinese. Only one of the students so far, has arrived in UK with a definite testimony. Currently, a further three are believers, two of whom wish to be baptized, but have encountered parental opposition; three others have professed salvation. Prayer would be valued, especially for the sister in the meeting who carries the responsibility for the entertaining.

Staffordshire

The Living Word Postal Bible School based in Stoke-on-Trent had a stand at the **Staffordshire and Birmingham Agricultural Show** on 27th and 28th May. The exhibition had panels



illustrating the material available, the process involved and the opportunity available to young people. A team of fourteen workers were present on each day. Emmaus Courses were also included – to cater for an older age group. A simple competition was offered to young people passing the stall and approximately eighty children were contacted in this way on each of the days. Opportunity was taken to chat with the parents as the children were completing the competition. Other passers-by were offered gospel literature and while there were some who declined, many others were happy to receive it. Soon after the weekend a number of application forms were received.

The assembly at **Winshill** had a week of children's meetings with Robert Plant. He had the opportunity of going into a number of schools throughout the week taking assemblies and spoke

to a total of twelve hundred children. He was given a welcome at all the schools that the assembly had spoken to and some have shown an interest in having the Ayrshire Bible Exhibition, which is planned for November. As far as meetings in the hall were concerned the number of children attending was not large but numbers were greater than those who would normally attend. Payer would be appreciated for the Lord's blessing upon the seed sown.

Gloucestershire

The combined Cheltenham and Gloucester Easter Conference was held in Bethany Gospel Hall, **Cheltenham**, and included reports from India and Wembley from Nitish Patel and an insight into the work in and around Liverpool by Stephen Baker. The conference concluded with searching and challenging ministry from Alan Gamble as to the importance of keeping the assembly Christ-centred.



SCOTLAND

Perthshire

Jack Hay has continued to visit schools: St Ninian's (**Perth**), **Abernethy**, and **Muthill**. In particular at Muthill, this is the only opportunity that many of these young people have to hear anything of a spiritual nature. Recently, a young male temporary teacher at Muthill said that he found that his class there knew much more about the Bible than where he had been teaching at Dunblane.

Caitness

Stuart McGahie and Dan Gilles had a series of gospel meetings in **Wick**. A number of locals attended, some of them very needy, and some are still going to the regular meetings.

Lanarkshire

During the month of March the assembly at High Parks Gospel Hall, **Hamilton**, had two weeks of children's meetings with Robert Plant. The numbers attending varied but there



High Parks Gospel Hall

was a core who attended nightly and showed a keen interest in listening and learning the memory text. The assembly also hosted the Ayrshire Bible Exhibition during the first week of the children's work. Over three hundred children from various schools in the town visited the exhibition along with their teachers; all showed a keen interest. Robert was able to visit several schools during the fortnight to take the school assemblies. This was much appreciated by teachers and pupils. During these activities much seed was sown in the hearts of many young folks.

West Lothian



West End Gospel Hall, West Lothian

The assembly in West End Gospel Hall, **Whitburn**, held two weeks' gospel meetings in April/May with Blair Martin and Paul McCauley and the series was entitled 'ETERNITY . . . WHERE?' Taking advantage of the fact that during the General Election many posters would be put up, the believers put posters on lamp posts in the town, distributed tracts, and placed adverts in the local press and in local supermarkets.

The meetings on Lord's Day were held at 4pm to encourage families that the

assembly had built up contact with to come along and as a result twelve unsaved adults, one backslider and seventeen children attended on the first Lord's Day.

Throughout the week they were greatly encouraged with at least three or four unsaved in each night and although they are not aware of anyone making a profession of faith, about twenty-four unsaved adults were in the hall over the three weeks with one particular family continuing to come on subsequent Lord's Days.



WALES



Poplar Road Gospel Hall

In recent years the assembly at Poplar Road Gospel Hall, **Tredegar**, has seen numbers plummet to only four saints in fellowship – two brethren and two sisters – and, often due to ill health, only the two brethren would be in attendance at the meetings. These two brethren refused to 'close the door' and one brother did all the preaching during outreaches into the local geriatric hospital and a neighbouring old people's home. In the last six months the Lord has graciously increased the number in fellowship in the assembly to seven. Prayer is made regularly and the gospel faithfully preached. They have also enjoyed much blessing from the ministry of God's word, with much needed encouragement. There has been an increase in the numbers of visiting

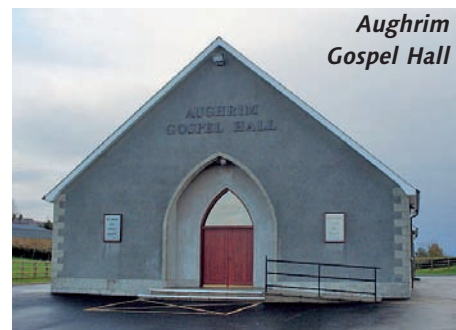
saints at these meetings as well. They also have had times of informal fellowship with a tea, singing and epilogue which have been of great blessing, drawing them to each other in love. At Christmas, one hundred and forty-four Christmas card invitations were distributed to the homes nearest to the hall and they saw twenty-one attend the Carol Service as a result. One gentleman has continued to come on a Sunday night for the gospel meeting.

Since Christmas, the believers have given out five hundred texted calendars again to those homes close to the hall, as well as a thousand tracts and they are now waiting on the Lord as regards recommencing a children's work which although ceased only five years ago had seen twenty-five youngsters attending the gospel meeting.



NORTHERN IRELAND

County Londonderry



Aughrim Gospel Hall

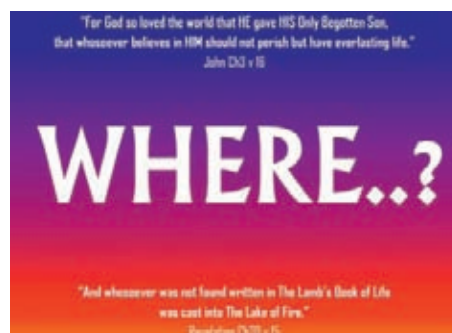
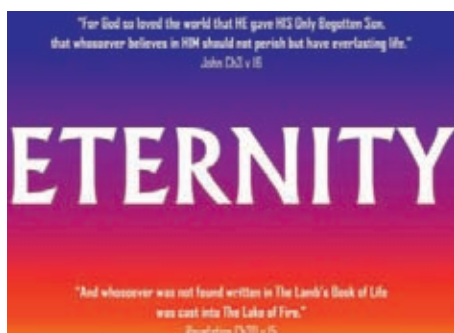
The assembly which meet at Aughrim Gospel Hall in **Castledawson** had the privilege of two weeks of meetings with Professor David Gooding. The subject was 'Approach to God; lessons from the ancient Jewish tabernacle'. They were illustrated with a model and PowerPoint slides. Good numbers were in attendance every evening from a wide range of church backgrounds. The assembly also held its Annual Conference in March where Drew Craig and Neville Chambers gave challenging and practical ministry.



REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

County Limerick

Over the past two years the assembly





Desmond Complex

has been using the new community centre (Desmond Complex) for its kids club; it is a great facility and central to the town. They have felt the need to move to a larger place to accommodate the youth work which was started last winter. They had thought of moving it to the Desmond Complex, but knew that it would be added expense for the assembly. After discussing with everyone it was agreed that the Lord seemed to be leading them to move into the Desmond Complex. Having set an amount they were prepared to pay and the days the centre would be needed, they found all their requirements agreed to, and in addition they were told to use the centre's cups, plates, coffee, tea, etc., as this was all part of the price.

Pray that as this move is made the assembly will see more come in from the community and that the work will grow.

This year at Easter they held a Kids Club for the first week of the holiday. Thirty-seven children were taken out for the week. The club ran from 10am to 1pm each day. It consisted of games, crafts, snack, singing, memory verse, Bible story and a quiz. The children all seemed to enjoy themselves. On the Friday, parents were invited and it was good to see thirteen turn out. After the club, tea and coffee were provided and there was some time to chat with the parents. All the comments were positive and all said they would send their kids along to the regular club. How good to know of thirteen new homes reached with the gospel!



Armenia

The work on the house purchased in **Dvin** for the meetings is progressing well. It is a joy to see and to watch the local brethren plan out and oversee the work and the building should be ready for use by August/September, God willing.



Street in Dvin where the new hall is situated.

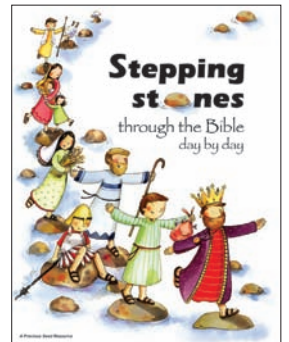
Eveta, who was mentioned in our last issue, continues to grow in the Lord. Continue to pray for Yasha and Argam, the two brethren there, who need teaching and help in the scriptures so that they can be a help to those around them all so recently saved. Belita and her daughter Varsig were saved last year and Wendell Webb had the great joy of speaking at their baptism on the 7th May.

Wendell also had ministry meetings with the saints in **Yerevan** as well as in the village of Dvin. The believers were very receptive to the word spoken. One meeting was on the subject of baptism and, as on other occasions, there were unsaved and unbaptized present. One family we might pray for is Samuel's - his wife and daughter are not baptized. This family were saved some time ago but Samuel and his wife think that because they were 'baptized' as infants, believer's baptism is not necessary. Armene, their daughter, sees the truth of believer's baptism and wants to obey the Lord. Some nights after the meeting while visiting the home, it emerged in discussion that the mother now has a clearer understanding of the truth, and thankfully the father is also more open to further discussion. Hopefully soon he will see that it is the Lord's command for him too. Samuel is the

brother of an elder in the assembly at Artur.

Cyprus

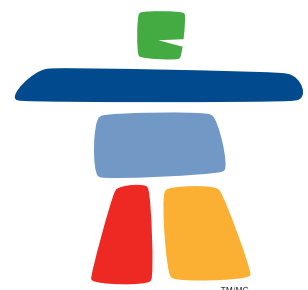
From the Logos School, **Limassol**, comes a report of the way in which PSP book *Stepping Stones* is being used. They say, 'Some time ago, Logos School was given a very generous gift of multiple copies of *Stepping Stones*, a beautifully illustrated Christian daily devotional book, especially for children. We are glad to report that these books are being put to good use. One mother remarked that her son will not go to sleep until he has read the daily message. Another girl



uses her book every night, reading the daily message along with the relevant Bible passage. This is particularly pleasing as she is from a Muslim background and has trusted Christ as her Saviour. She would not normally be permitted to have a Bible in the house, but her mother allows her have one because she needs it for her school lessons.'

Canada

After a two-week period, the Winter Olympics in **Vancouver**, the Olympic torch went out. The next time it will be lit will be in preparation for the London games in 2012. During those two weeks there were believers who took the opportunity of taking the gospel to many people. Below are a couple of



vancouver 2010





16th Avenue Gospel Chapel

reports which should encourage us and, for those in the UK, give us some cause for thought as 2012 approaches.

Peter Daley writes, 'An opportunity arose for my 16-year-old daughter, Sarah Anne, and I to travel from the State of Montana to Vancouver, British Columbia. This was in order to join a number of believers in an evangelistic outreach during the 2010 Winter Olympics on the downtown streets.

Every afternoon we would get together at 16th Avenue Gospel Chapel and travel from there in the Chapel van to downtown Vancouver. We were organized into teams of two or three and then walked to different locations. The streets were teeming with thousands of people and it was not difficult to engage some who were just sitting or standing around. We usually started with a question like, 'What do you think of the Olympics?', and then gradually transitioned onto spiritual things. We often were able to leave a booklet or a CD with the persons involved. Two of the conversations seem to illustrate the responses that we had. One was a negative response. The other was positive.

The first example was a conversation with an older lady who was sitting by herself on a bench by the side of a busy street. I sat down near her and started a conversation. She was from Vancouver and had some negative things to say about the Olympics. I noticed that her language had some 'bad words' as well. We started talking about spiritual things and when she found out that I had come from 600 miles away to talk to people about these things she became very upset and her language deteriorated even more. She said that she could not understand why a person would come to Vancouver and waste his time talking to people about 'religious matters'. Our conversation deteriorated to the point that I had to leave. I

thought about it afterwards and asked myself, 'Was it worth it to come all that distance in order to do tell people about the Lord Jesus?' My answer was two-fold. I believe that the Lord would encourage this type of evangelism. Was he not travelling through Samaria when he spoke to the woman at the well?, John chapter 4. The other thought was that one never knows the result of a conversation. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts, John 16. 8, and we have to leave the response with Him.

The second example was a conversation that I had with a young man. We talked for about 20 to 30 minutes and were able to discuss the gospel and his need to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He listened well and did not seem to be in a hurry to go. We finally parted and I remember his last words were, 'Thank you, I feel much better now'. Hopefully he will read the material that was given to him and come to know the Saviour.

I'm so thankful that my daughter and I took the time to go and share – only eternity will reveal the results.'

Peter's daughter, 16-year-old Sarah, encountered challenges such as,

'When you say that God loves you, it's correct, because God is essentially you. So when you talk about God's love, you are, in essence, speaking of self love.'

'I don't care about God, I don't care about His love, I don't care about heaven or hell, I don't care about YOU! What I do care about is that people like you would leave me alone and stop trying to force all your ideas on me!'

'I hope I'm going to heaven, but I don't really know for sure if I am or not.'

'God? Yeah, I believe in God. Just like I believe in Santa Claus! I mean, it's about as likely that either one exists!'

'That's so great that you've found something that works for you! I think I'll just keep believing what I believe, and you can go ahead and believe whatever you want!'

This is a sample of some of the

responses encountered when sharing the gospel with people during the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. With the large amount of negative or apathetic responses, it was good to know that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the actual convicting of people. We were just planting seeds!

A friend and I had the opportunity to talk to a homeless man who had put his trust in Jesus very recently. He was still not entirely sure if he was saved though, so we were able to share 1 John chapter 5 verse 13 with him, 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life'. We went away from that conversation feeling so joyful and blessed! All the discouraging aspects of being rejected pale in comparison to the joy I feel after having a good conversation with someone who is actually open to the gospel!

The night that the Canadian hockey team won against the Swiss team in overtime, downtown was in an uproar! They projected a video onto one of the skyscrapers of the girl who won gold in speed skating. The uproar that resulted drowned out my Dad's conversation with a man desperately in need of the Saviour. It was interesting to see the contrast. On one hand was a huge crowd of people yelling at a picture on a cement building, waving their nation's flags and celebrating athletic speed, strength and skill; on the other hand, two men deep in a quiet conversation about the One who died to save the world. The One who crossed cultural and national barriers. The One who said, 'Blessed are the meek'. Long after the gold medallists from the 2010 Winter Olympics have been forgotten, the power of Jesus' blood will still be saving souls!

Encouraging and challenging! Will there be some families preparing to serve together in London in 2012?



A WORD FOR TODAY

(sediyya), ambush, malice (aforethought)

(sedek), be just, righteous ; justify,
do justice, declare righteous`

(shb), be yellow/copper

The Semitic word-group known as the *ts-d-q* family from which the Hebrew word *sedek* arises, generally relates to individual behaviour (right conduct) or some form of implied status (being right) derived from a recognized standard. DAVID HILL states that this standard may be religious, ensuring that the correct sacrifices are made, Deut. 33. 19, or in some contexts simply linked with everyday practices such as the proper use of 'balances' or 'weights', Lev. 19. 36; Deut. 25. 15; Ezek. 45. 10.¹

Other family words, such as *sedaqah*, *sedeq*, *sadaq*, refer to 'righteousness' or 'justice', and in the Old Testament these terms are mutually inclusive. Thus *sedek* referred to one who was considered 'righteous' and who pursued a 'just' cause.² Jacob uses it in Genesis chapter 30 verse 33 when he asserts that his right conduct would stand him in good stead for the future. Similarly, in Genesis 38 verse 26, Judah recognizes that Tamar's behaviour was more just (or virtuous) than his own immoral conduct, cp. 1 Sam. 24. 17-18; Ezek. 16. 52. Such texts highlight the importance that the Bible places on right conduct and the issue of justice. This should not surprise us as God reveals Himself in the Old Testament as a God of righteousness who administers justice, Gen. 18. 25; Deut. 32. 4. LEON MORRIS, commenting on Jeremiah chapter 8 verse 7, states that judgement is as natural to the Lord as the movements of the birds are to them.³

Thus, if God was essentially just there was the expectation that this would encourage and motivate Israel to act in a similar way in its dealings with others, Hos. 14. 9. Proverbs chapter 21 verse 3 suggests that even prescribed sacrifices were less important to God than justice. What God required from His people was that they should do justice, love goodness and walk humbly (wisely) with their God, Mic. 6. 8.⁴ Many of the Old Testament prophets are therefore highly critical of Israel's lack of right behaviour and their inability to act in a just way, e.g., note Amos' invective against Israel in Amos chapter 2 verses 6-11.

Linked to God's justice was the idea of divine retribution for those who were socially unjust and failed to obey God's law, see Lev. 26. The *lex talionis* (law of retaliation) principle defined justice, but at the same time limited the punishment for the guilty party to an exact equivalent, Exod. 21. 22-25; Lev. 24. 19-21; Deut. 19. 16-21. The law required that the punishment should fit the crime, and its implementation prevented blood feuds and vigilante groups taking the law into their own hands. In fact, vengeance was prohibited under the law, Lev. 19. 18. Interestingly, our Lord did not challenge the basic principle of limited retribution, Matt. 5. 38. At this time, however, this principle had been turned around and instead of being restrictive it was being used to determine how far someone could retaliate without breaking

the law. What our Lord does in Matthew chapter 5 verses 38-42 is to seek to change the mindset of individuals and show that there is a much better way than even limited retaliation. This is, for the individual who has been wronged, to show kindness and generosity to the person who has committed the wrong, even accepting more injury to one's person.

But underpinning this just and right behaviour was the relationship between judgement and justification. Critically, in legal proceedings, when judgement was pronounced it would 'justify the righteous and condemn the wicked', Deut. 25. 1. So, justification in the Hebrew mind was directly bound up with the resolution of a dispute by judicial process, e.g., Ps. 51. 4; Isa. 43. 26. Conformity to God's

standard meant a righteous status for the individual who was then declared justified. This is what Abram experienced in Genesis chapter 15 verse 6 where he gained acceptance with God by being declared righteous, not by anything that he had done, but through faith which responded to God's grace, cp. Phinehas, Ps. 106. 30f. What MARTIN LUTHER centuries later would describe as 'the righteousness of another, instilled from without'.⁵

Generally, the Septuagint (LXX) uses the *dik*-word-group to translate the Hebrew *ts-d-q* family, and the Greek word *dikaioo* is a close dynamic equivalent of the Hebrew verb *sedek*. Both the Greek and Hebrew words mean 'to justify' in the forensic sense of 'declare righteous', or 'treat as just'. These Greek words are used almost exclusively in the New Testament in Romans and Galatians where we find Paul's unqualified commitment to forensic justification. Limited space, however, prevents us from fleshing out this topic.

In terms then, *sedek* is important in emphasizing that we serve a God of justice and righteousness who expects conformity to His standards. He acts with steadfast love in defending the rights of those who are powerless to help themselves, Isa. 61. 6; Jer. 9. 24. This must be significant in a contemporary world that is controlled by a free market economy where individuals are often unfairly treated and disadvantaged. If we have therefore gained acceptance with God by grace through faith then let us never fail to act as those who love righteousness and hate injustice so that 'justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like an everlasting stream'.⁶

For further reading/study

Introductory

MORRIS, LEON, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*

Advanced

HILL, DAVID, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms*

MCGRATH, ALISTER E., *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*

Reference

¹ *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms*, p.84.

² Most will be familiar with Old Testament names such as Melchizedek (Gen.14.18) and Adonizedec (Jos. 10.1), where the Zedek-part (the transliterated form is *sedeq*) means the Lord or King is righteous.

³ *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, p254.

⁴ R. Simlai once said, 'Six hundred and thirteen precepts were communicated to Moses . . . Micah came and reduced them to three'.

⁵ *Two Kinds of Righteousness* (1519).

⁶ Amos 5. 24.

MORE STUDY WEBSITES

It would be difficult to do justice to the vast range of study materials that are available on the web. Like books, different resources suit different methods of study – some like subject surveys and topic outlines and others like detailed word studies.

The list of sites given is not intended to be comprehensive. It is an indication of what is available to those who are interested and, in most cases, discerning. Anyone seeking to use on-line resources needs to be aware that few sites can be guaranteed as wholly orthodox or safe doctrinally. It is incumbent on all to compare scripture with scripture to ascertain the accuracy of what is written by those who seek to expound the truth of God.

<http://www.newble.co.uk/writers/>

This site contains selections from the works of a number of noted authors from the last two centuries. If you are searching for access to an extensive library of so-called 'Brethren' writers you will find this a frustrating site. However, there are some classics from the pen of writers like Sir Robert Anderson, Thomas Newberry, and F. C. Jennings, among others.



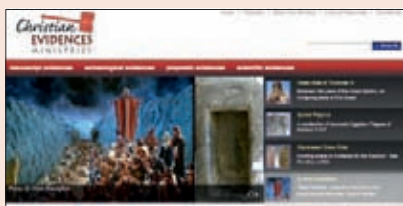
<http://www.johnlennox.org/>

For those who want material by this foremost apologist there are a number of videos that can be viewed on-line. For many, coming across an apologist who really knows what he is talking about in both religious and scientific fields is refreshing and vital. This site could be a help to many, partly because of the manner in which Dr. Lennox approaches his subjects as well as the subjects he tackles.



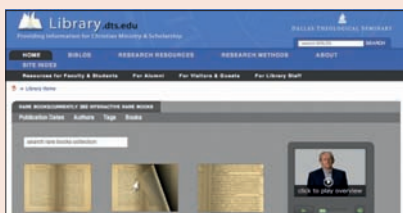
<http://www.christianevidences.org/>

The main aim of this site is to provide reasons for believing the Bible. When confronted with strident atheism in a school or college context and knowing that the Christian faith stands or falls on the reliability of the Bible, it is important to have evidence which demonstrates that the scriptures are a thoroughly trustworthy source of truth. Much of the information on this website has college or high-school students in mind.



<http://www.rarebooks.dts.edu/>

This is the repository of the Dallas Theological Seminary and is a growing collection of rare books that they are uploading to the Internet. At the time of writing the site did not contain more than 300 books but it would be worth visiting to check what is available and how the project is progressing.



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Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

Pagan police win the right to take time off for festivals

Pagan police officers have been given the right to take days off to celebrate festivals where they leave food out for the dead and take part in 'unabashed sexual promiscuity'. The Pagan Police Association has been officially recognized as a 'diversity staff support organization' by the Home Office.



It means chief constables cannot refuse pagan officers' requests to take official religious holidays, which will be given the same respect as Christmas for Christians, Ramadan for Muslims and Passover for Jews. There are thought to be about 500 pagan officers - including druids, witches and shamans.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1276921/Pagan-police-win-right-time-festivals.html>

Catholics asked to help fund Pope's UK visit

Roman Catholic churchgoers are being urged to help meet a shortfall of more than £3m in funding for Pope Benedict's visit to the UK. The Church has asked them to put at least £1m in a Sunday collection - largely to pay for three big open air masses at which the Pope will preside.

Because this is a state visit by Pope Benedict XVI, the bulk of the cost is being borne by the UK government. The Papal visit will cost £15m, not including extra policing and security. The Church's share of the cost is £7m, and with slightly less than half of it raised, congregations are being asked to contribute via the collection plate. Most of the money will be spent on three open-air masses which the Church says could attract up to 400,000 people in total. One of the masses will form the high point of the Pope's visit - the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman at Coventry Airport on 19 September.

Secularist groups have criticized the use of taxpayers' money to fund the visit of a religious leader.

Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8699108.st>

Charges dropped against Christian who preached 'homosexuality is a sin'

The street preacher charged with public-order offences for saying homosexuality is a sin has had his case dropped after his plight was highlighted by *The Mail on Sunday*. Dale McAlpine was arrested by police who claimed his comments to passers-by had caused offence. But the Crown Prosecution Service has decided not to pursue the charges as there is insufficient evidence.

Mr. McAlpine, 42, said, 'This is a victory for freedom of speech. I hope we are not going down the road towards a police state and the thought police. I can't wait to get out on to the streets again and preach the word of God.' He is now taking legal advice over suing the police for wrongful arrest.

Mr. McAlpine, who earns about £40,000 a year in the energy industry, had been handing out leaflets and talking to passers-by about his Christian beliefs in the centre of Workington, Cumbria, last month. In conversation with one woman, he listed a number of sins from the Bible, including adultery, drunkenness and homosexuality.

He was then approached by Police Community Support Officer Sam Adams, who said he was gay and a liaison officer with the local homosexual community - and who warned him he could be arrested for making homophobic remarks. Mr. McAlpine denied he was homophobic but said that as a Christian he did believe homosexuality was a sin. Three uniformed officers then arrested him. After seven hours in a cell, which he spent reading the Bible and singing hymns, Mr. McAlpine was charged by a Senior Crown Prosecutor with offences under the Public Order Act 1986.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1278664/Charges-dropped-Christian-preached-homosexuality-sin.html>



Bits & Bobs

100th Anniversary of Florence Nightingale's death

Florence Nightingale was born in Italy on 12 May 1820 and was named Florence after her birthplace. Florence and her sister Parthenope were both taught at home by their Cambridge University educated father. Florence was an academic child, who loved her lessons and found studying easy, while her sister excelled at painting and needlework.

In 1837, Florence had what she described as her 'calling' - the voice of God calling her to do His work, but at this time she had no idea what that work would be.

In 1851, Florence Nightingale went to Kaiserswerth and undertook three months nurse training, which enabled her to take a vacancy as Superintendent of the Establishment for Gentlewomen during Illness at No. 1 Harley Street, London, in 1853.

In March 1854, Britain, France and Turkey declared war on Russia. The allies defeated the Russians at the battle of the Alma in September but reports in *The Times* criticized the British medical facilities for the wounded. In response, Sidney Herbert, the Minister for War, who knew Florence Nightingale socially and through her work at Harley Street, appointed her to oversee the introduction of female nurses into the military hospitals in Turkey.



On 4 November 1854, Florence Nightingale arrived at the Barrack Hospital in Scutari, a suburb on the Asian side of Constantinople, with a party of thirty-eight nurses. Initially, the doctors did not want the nurses there and did not ask for their help, but within ten days fresh casualties arrived from the battle of Inkermann and the nurses were fully stretched. The 'Lady-in-Chief', as Florence was called, wrote home on behalf of the soldiers. She acted as a banker, sending the men's wages home to their families, and introduced reading rooms to the hospital. In return she gained the undying respect of the British soldiers.

In November 1856, Miss Nightingale took a hotel room in London which became the centre for the campaign for a Royal Commission to investigate the health of the British Army. When Sidney Herbert was appointed chairman, she continued as a driving force behind the scenes.

By 1860, the Royal Commission had resulted in an Army Medical School, greatly improved Army barracks and hospitals, and the best Army statistics in Europe. During the decade from 1862 her main concerns were the health of the Army in India and the state of Indian public health, the development of irrigation and the system of land tenure.

For her contribution to Army statistics and comparative hospital statistics in 1860, Florence Nightingale became the first woman to be elected a Fellow of the Statistical Society.

In 1865, she settled at 10 South Street, Mayfair, in the West End of London and apart from occasional visits to Embley, Lea Hurst and to her sister at Claydon House she lived there till her death.

In recognition of her hard work Queen Victoria awarded Miss Nightingale the Royal Red Cross in 1883. In her old age she received many honours, including the Order of Merit (1907), becoming the first woman to receive it.

Florence Nightingale died at home at the age of 90 on 13 August 1910 and, according to her wishes, she was buried at St Margaret's, East Wellow, near her parent's home, Embley Park.

(This is a edited version of an article which can be found at <http://www.smsc.org.uk/resources/features/florence-nightingale.htm>)

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FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

Mount Sinai, or mount Horeb, is reckoned by many to be a 7497ft (2285m) peak situated in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula. It is one of many arid peaks in the area. However, some suggest that mount Sinai is actually located in Saudi Arabia and so to pinpoint the location of the mount Sinai of the Bible is a matter of debate. For Christians, the mention of mount Sinai conjures up the image of a quaking, smoking mountain covered in a dark cloud where the Lord descended in fire, and of course according to Exodus chapter 19 verse 18 this is exactly what happened. Jehovah was once again reminding the children of Israel that He was a God to be respected and obeyed. It was during this time that God gave to Moses two tables of stone with the ten commandments engraved upon them written 'with the finger of God', according to Exodus chapter 31 verse 18. These commandments were designed to help the children of Israel live correctly before a Holy God and to escape His punishment.



Although we live in a day of grace and truth through the Lord Jesus Christ, we do well in keeping these commandments and other commandments that God has laid down in His word. May the words of the Lord Jesus in John chapter 15 verse 10 be an encouragement to us, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love'.

Question Time

CONDUCTED BY **RICHARD COLLINGS**

QUESTION

In light of the truth of election, is it right to pray for the salvation of a specific individual?

ANSWER

Ever since the first century there have been many doctrinal controversies that have divided the people of God, but few have caused more discord than that relating to the subject of election. Therefore, it is highly probable that many readers will hold a different viewpoint to that being stated here. Of one thing we can be sure, the problem doesn't derive from what the Bible teaches, but from our interpretation of that teaching.

In the timeless ages before the foundation of the world, when there was no one but God, nowhere but the third heaven and nothing except the manifestation of divine characteristics, God made choices. In the majesty of His own sovereignty, and by means of His foreknowledge, He picked out of the masses of humanity specific individuals. As a result of the death, burial and resurrection of His Son those thus chosen were certain to be saved and will, one day, be in God's presence 'holy and without blame', Eph. 1. 4. There are several verses that could be presented to establish the fact that election relates to specific individuals, including, Acts 13. 48; 1 Thess. 1. 4; 2 Thess. 2. 13; and 2 John 1, 13.

In harmony with the foregoing, there is another line of truth set out in the scriptures, that of man's personal responsibility and accountability to God. No one will be damned because they were not chosen, but they will be judged because they did not obey the gospel. That is why Peter writes, 'What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?' 1 Pet. 4. 17. Although eternal life is available to everyone, many will miss this free gift, not because they were not elected, but because of their carelessness. For this reason the question is asked, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord', Heb. 2. 3.

Even a cursory reading through the New Testament will indicate that God demands a response from mankind to the 'good news'. This emancipating message is a commandment to be obeyed, Acts 17. 30, it is a promise to be accepted, Acts 2. 39, it is truth to be depended on, 1 Tim. 1. 15, and it is a power to be experienced, Rom. 1. 16. Even though sinners are 'without strength', Rom. 5. 6, and 'dead in trespasses and sins', Eph. 2. 1, through the convicting energy of the Holy Spirit unbelievers are required to comply with the terms of the gospel. Failure to do so places man in the position of being without excuse.

One day, the offer of salvation will be withdrawn for ever and divine judgement will fall on the ranks of godless humanity. Legions of people, small and great, will be consigned to eternal perdition. These unrepentant souls shall be cast into the lake of fire and will be judged 'according to their works', Rev. 20. 12. Their doom is not the consequence of being overlooked by a sovereign God, but is the consequence of their sinful works.

Because we are finite beings it may not be possible for us to harmonize these two lines of truth, but the *apparent* contradiction is due to the limitations of our minds. That God sovereignly elects, and that man is personally responsible, are dogmas that do not need to be reconciled for they have never been at variance within the mind of God. We, therefore, have to acknowledge both and act accordingly. As a result, we should respond to the injunction to preach the gospel everywhere, Mark 16. 15, and to pray 'for all men', 1 Tim. 2. 1-4.

That it is right to pray for the salvation of people in general is beyond question, for we have a definite example of it in Romans. Writing to the Christians in Rome Paul states, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved', Rom. 10. 1. If we are exhorted to pray for all men, and as Paul prayed for a specific segment of mankind, it cannot be wrong to pray for a specific individual. Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him the Holy Scriptures from his earliest days, are we to suppose that neither of these godly women prayed for his salvation?

I would be amazed if any readers of this article who are parents, grandparents, or near family of unbelieving relatives have never felt the need to pray for the salvation of their loved ones. Furthermore, if it is wrong to pray for the salvation of a particular person would it not be equally wrong for an individual to pray for their own salvation? As we look at the tenor of New Testament teaching it does not present the electing purposes of God as negating the need for the gospel to be preached, the servants to be enabled and prayers to be made for the unbelieving.

Maybe a burdened mother or father will be reading these lines, longing for their family to be saved. Take courage; continue in your praying, 'For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved', 1 Tim. 2. 3-4.