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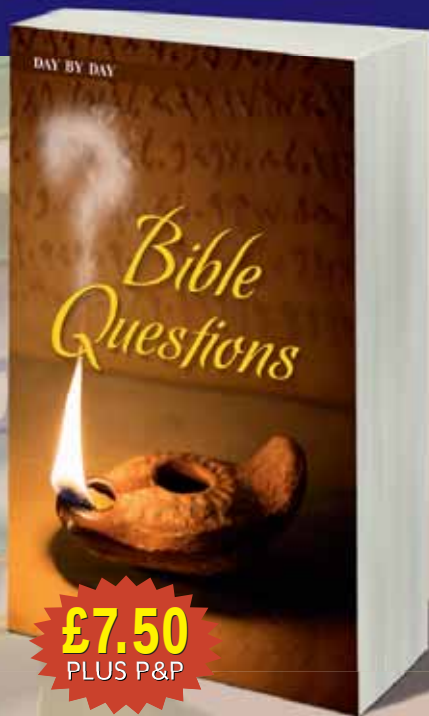
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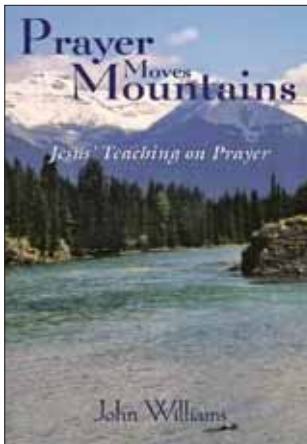
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Book Reviews

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 Canada), and **NOT** from Precious Seed Publications



Prayer Moves Mountains John Williams

Paperback, 110 pp, Published by Guardian Books, Ontario, Canada. ISBN 978 1 55452 339 9.

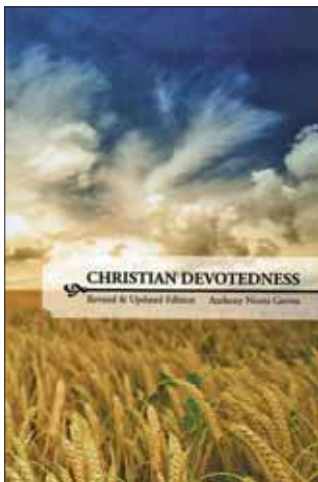
The sub-title of this book is 'Jesus' Teaching on Prayer', and the publisher's note describes this work as 'an easy-to-understand exposition of Jesus' teaching' on this subject, which 'challenges us "to practise the presence" in all of life's circumstances, and to enjoy the blessings of listening and talking to God'.

In accordance with the sub-title, the author takes his reader through those passages in the Gospels which record the Lord's teaching on prayer and those which record His own prayers. Gently and carefully he draws out the lessons from each passage of scripture. The work is leavened with apposite quotations from other writers, as well as with verses from hymns. There is also advice on how to structure prayer life. At first glance it would be easy to see this book as being aimed primarily at young believers (the book is dedicated to the author's grandchildren), but that would be to misunderstand the author's purpose. Quotations from

scripture and questions appended to chapters 1-10 will encourage all readers to venture more deeply into this vital subject. Quotations are mainly from the NIV. Care is required with these; for example, at page 97, Mark chapter 9 verses 28-29 is quoted from that version, which, in spite of considerable manuscript support, has chosen to omit 'fasting'.

The virtue of this book is that it has gathered together in relatively small compass the Lord's teaching and example on the subject of prayer. But the whole emphasis of this work is not so much to teach about prayer as to encourage the reader to do it, addressing the need for preparation and discipline in this regard. After all, practising prayer is the important thing. Perhaps the disciples realized this when they said, 'Lord, teach us to pray'.

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



Christian Devotedness Anthony Norris Groves

Paperback, 54pp. Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, ON, Canada L3K 6A6. Available in UK from John Ritchie Ltd. Price £2.99. ISBN 978 1 89711 797 2.

Most readers of *Precious Seed International* will be familiar with the name of Anthony Norris Groves, missionary to Baghdad and India. This is a revised and updated edition of the second version of a book originally published in London in 1829 and included in a biography entitled *Anthony Norris Groves*, by G. H. LANG.

Believing the words of the Lord in Matthew chapter 6 verse 19, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth', are to be taken literally, MR GROVES expounds the practical implications of this, especially in connection with a believer's possessions, salary and wealth. He expresses a conviction that 'early Christianity owed much of its power to the . . . disciple's open public display of their love'. Something he saw as being the product of the 'surrender of themselves, their property, time and talents to Christ'. He develops his

theme around two basic principles, the first, 'The only acceptable way to live the Christian life is by deliberate and continual self-denial', the second, 'Because God is our Heavenly Father, we ought to ask Him only for our every need, and rely on Him alone for every provision', principles that the author himself had sought to live by. MR GROVES considers the meaning of the Lord's exhortation not to lay up treasure on earth the way it was understood and implemented by the apostles, and how the truth of it is emphasized in the New Testament. He strongly asserts that a Christian should not save his money but rather use it in the cause of Christ and that it is a grave mistake, with potentially serious spiritual consequences, for believers to store up wealth with the sole object of leaving an inheritance for their children. Biblical passages are frequently quoted, the majority of which are from the New King James Version. There are a few printing errors, some of which require the reader to work out for himself exactly what the writer means!

It is stated in the preface that George Muller likened the reading of this book to a 'second conversion' and that Hudson Taylor and Amy Carmichael were greatly influenced through reading it. In the overtly material age in which we live, the message of this book is timely and very challenging.

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



R. B. Jones – Gospel Ministry in Turbulent Times N. Gibbard

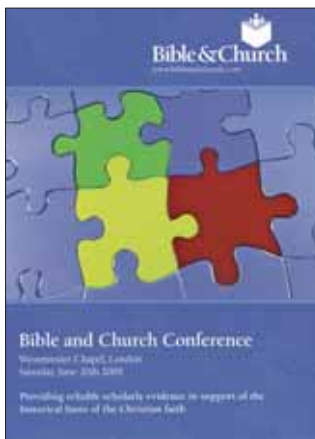
Paperback, 232pp. Published by Bryntirion Press, Bridgend, CF31 4DX, Wales. ISBN 978 1 85049 231 3.

In the first part of this book the author gives an extremely well researched and fairly detailed account of Jones' life. He focuses on: his time as a Baptist minister in four churches, all in the Baptist Union, in South Wales; the establishing and running of a Bible Training School; his editing of a Welsh magazine *The Evangelist* for many years; his involvement in the Welsh Revival of 1904-5; his support for a Gospel van in South Wales (called 'The Evangelist's Chariot'); his involvement in the Keswick-in-Wales convention; and his journeys elsewhere, including North America and Latvia, in the cause of the gospel. The writer deals with problems which occurred at times resulting from his occupying a ministerial position, the churches belonging to a religious organization, the founding of a Bible School, etc. Some aspects may cause us to ponder: in an age when education was limited, his messages lasted an hour or more. The writer's thoughts here are few.

In the second part, 40% of the book, the biographer seeks to evaluate Jones' service. We need to remember that biographers are not infallible. He defends Jones from criticisms by Murray, written in 1982, claiming he misunderstood some of his teaching. However, he himself criticizes Jones for his too detailed teaching of, and emphasis upon, the Second Advent. His pre-millennial views, such as may be found in the pages of this magazine, are not defended. GIBBARD criticizes Jones for being dogmatic in this area. Yet he states, 'all the blessings of David are to be applied to the church, in Christ'; 'there is no justification for separating the church and Israel, as RB does'; his literal interpretation of the 1,000 years is "doubtful". He does not appear to support Jones' uncompromising insistence on the baptism of believers by immersion and that 'sprinkling is a sin because it sets aside the ordinances of Christ'.

It is ironic that what the writer praises and criticizes Jones for would, at times, produce the opposite response for some readers. The reviewer's overall impression is of a man who was an indefatigable worker, to whom principles were vital, and being a follower of Christ a serious business.

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



Bible and Church Conference 2009 Peter Williams, Dirk Jongkind, Simon Gathercole DVD; 138 minutes; Tyndale House, 36 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge, CB3 9BA, England. Price £17.50.

This DVD is a visual record of three lectures given at Westminster Chapel, London in June 2009. As the cover of the DVD states, 'Society is being bombarded with misinformation about the Bible. This DVD brings together experts who expose false claims about the New Testament and show how it can be trusted'.

DR PETER WILLIAMS tackles the subject of 'Have we got the history right?' He marshals evidence from non-Christian writers of the time, including Tacitus and Pliny, showing how the quick spread of Christianity would conflict with the argument that much of the Bible is based upon legend. Similarly, using a statistical analysis of the names of the time and the test of corroboration, he shows there is a remarkable correlation with the names in the scriptures, and that the records in the different gospels about the feeding of the 5000 dovetail remarkably well.

He concludes by summarizing some of the answers to the argument of the sceptics that the message of Christianity is an invention.

DR DIRK JONGKIND's subject is 'Have we got the text right?' Do we have reliable access to what the writers originally wrote? He cites the accusations of three critics, the most recent being Roger Bolton's article for the BBC on Codex Sinaiticus. JONGKIND provides a number of arguments for the reliability of the text: (1) the quick spread of Christianity would make deliberate copy errors more difficult to reproduce generally; (2) the fact that very old documents exist – there are no 'dark ages' when invention may have occurred; (3) we have large numbers of quality manuscripts providing a vast amount of evidence which also helps us to establish what formed part of the original scriptures. Although the argument takes careful following, his treatment of the issues surrounding the copying of the text is extremely helpful.

DR SIMON GATHERCOLE looks at the issue of Gospels included in the canon of scripture and the so-called 'other Gospels' which were not included. He looks at the Gospels of Thomas, Mary, and Judas, showing the radical differences between these manuscripts and the teaching of the New Testament. He points out that the record of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John can be relied upon because of: (1) the geographical specifics; (2) their presentation of the true humanity of Christ, one who demonstrated His love towards needy sinners; (3) they contain the record of eye-witnesses who lived through the period of the Lord's ministry. These specifics are absent from the other so-called Gospels.

Clearly, not all will see the need of such material, particularly that presented by DR GATHERCOLE, but those who do will find this DVD compelling for the way the speakers handle their subjects and provide evidence that will support the faith of many. As the New Atheism gathers momentum and a secular society generates greater scepticism about the Bible, it is helpful to be able to rest on the accuracy, reliability and truth of what God has conveyed to His people down through the ages of time.

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**'We . . . shall be caught
up together with them in the
clouds, to meet the Lord in the air',
1 Thess. 4. 17**

This is the first issue of the magazine for a new year. As the first month of that year may well have passed we might have settled into the pattern of our daily lives and have forgotten the imminence of the Lord's return. Equally, these are regarded as words that are so familiar to believers as to be neglected reading for many. How important, then, to remember that the Lord is coming! Maran-atha!

We might ponder the inclusive nature of this call. It will affect every true believer in Christ. Those that have died will be raised. Those that are alive will be 'caught up'. In another context, the Lord reminded His own that one sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the Father knowing. Such is the Father's attention to detail. Thus, it is inconceivable that a believer should be neglected in this call to home and glory.

Think too of the power exhibited in the event. We 'shall be caught up'. W. E. VINE describes the use of the word thus: "to snatch or catch away," is said of the act of the Spirit of the Lord in regard to Philip in Acts chapter 8 verse 39; of Paul in being "caught" up to paradise, 2 Cor. 12. 2, 4; of the rapture of the saints at the return of the Lord, 1 Thess. 4. 17; of the rapture of the man child in the vision of Revelation chapter 12 verse 5. This verb conveys the idea of force suddenly exercised'. There is no power on earth or in the heavens that can prevent this event from taking place. The believer's hope is secure!

It is worth considering that the scene of the union of saints and Christ is 'in the air'. This is Satan's domain, for he is 'the prince of the power of the air', Eph. 2. 2. There can be no greater display of the victory of the Saviour than to gather His own together in that sphere where the adversary is supposed to reign. Satan, powerless to intervene, will behold the Lord united with his blood-bought bride as they proceed on to glory!

I note too that the verse emphasizes 'together'. There are times in family and assembly life when there is a degree of strain in relationships. Events from the past resurface to remind of hurt and bad feeling. Human nature is such that we cannot forget. The blessed point of this reunion in the air will be that old things will be truly 'passed away'. Fellowship that an event on earth has broken will be restored in that day, for our eyes will be fixed upon the Lord.

The real nub of the verse is found in this, 'to meet the Lord'. It is Peter who writes, 'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory', 1 Pet. 1. 8. If that is the believer's portion now, what will it be when we 'meet the Lord'? Does this prospect thrill our souls as it should? It may be today!

In this issue we continue our series on prophetic subjects dealing specifically with the events surrounding the rapture. We commence a short series to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible and the impact it has made upon believers and unbelievers alike. As we continue in this work until the Lord come, may He be pleased to bless such endeavours for His glory.

Note: The November article 'The Long-term care of a loved one' was written by Allan Cundick of Ash Vale.

JOHN BENNETT
Ministry Articles Editor



THE

Rapture

This article considers

details revealed in scripture of the event often referred to as the Rapture. It is the sudden removal of God's people from earth to heaven.¹ We will see that the Rapture is also associated with resurrection and the two truths are often seen together. We will concentrate on the event itself more than its timing, which will be dealt with in more detail in a future article seeking to establish the case for the so-called pre-tribulation rapture.

By **ALASTAIR SINCLAIR**
Crosshouse, Scotland.

seashore at Galilee, all paint a picture of the embryonic New Testament church separate from Judaism. In the other Gospels, the Lord speaks to the same disciples about His return to earth and the end times, but in John we will see He speaks instead of taking them to heaven.

John chapter 7 verses 33-34

Here, talking to the Jews, the Lord tells them He is going to His Father and they cannot come. This will be referred to again in John chapter 13.

John chapter 10 verses 16 and 27

In His teaching re the Good Shepherd the Lord tells the Jews of 'another flock' and that they will 'hear His voice'. In between, He speaks of His resurrection.

John chapter 11

This is no doubt the climax of the Lord's public ministry. This seventh sign mirrors the first one. In Cana of Galilee, at the behest of His mother and for the benefit of a bride, He accelerated nature by turning water into wine. At Bethany, at the behest and for the benefit of two more women, Mary and Martha, He now reverses the effect of nature by raising and restoring a decomposing corpse. This goes further than His two previous resurrections where the dead were either on their deathbed or on the way to burial; here it is an out resurrection from among the buried dead. Throughout this chapter the first inkling is given of new truth to be further revealed in the New Testament letters. In verses 11-14, 'sleep' is three times referred to in relation to Lazarus, although the Lord also makes it clear he was 'dead'. Sleep, of course, is temporary and always subject to imminent awakening; it is used specifically of dead saints. In verses 20-27 the Lord has a discourse on resurrection with Martha. It is evident she knew of 'the resurrection of the last day', Dan. 12. But the Lord now reveals new truth. He declares that He

As Paul indicates, this event is 'a mystery', that is, something not previously revealed, and it is important to move in chronological order from the Lord's teaching and Paul's earlier letters to the Thessalonians.² It is very significant that most of the earliest references to the Rapture are found in the Lord's teaching recorded in John's Gospel. It is very distinct from the other Gospels with much of its content, including six of the eight miraculous signs, not recorded elsewhere. Its extensive coverage of the Upper Room discourse and omission of the Sermon on the Mount and Olivet discourse also distinguish it. The eight signs involve five in Galilee, an area with Gentile association, which result in adulation and three in the area of Jerusalem which result in opposition. These three involve a man impotent for 38 years, a blind man, and a decomposing corpse. These clearly depict a Jewish nation which in early days wandered impotently for 38 years in the wilderness and, after centuries of disobedience, were now spiritually blind and dead. The Upper Room ministry in chapters 13-17 outlines the beginning of much New Testament church truth, including the indwelling of the Spirit, the unity of His people, love for one another, being in Christ, hatred from the world, and the believer's eventual removal from this earth. This, along with the location of the 'upper room', separate from the Jews, as with the similar circumstances after the resurrection, and the subsequent removal to the



- IT'S DETAILS

is the 'resurrection and the life', and, when He 'comes', not only 'he that believeth in me, though he were dead, (like Lazarus) yet shall he live' but also the prospect is raised that 'whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die'. Here is surely not only a reference to spiritual life but the first direct revelation of the possibility of an event where some are raised from the dead and others removed from its potential grasp. This is the Rapture. The Lord then goes on to demonstrate this imminent out resurrection by specifically calling with a loud voice, or shout, for Lazarus to 'come forth' from among the dead, to which he immediately responds. Notice also throughout the chapter how often Jesus is referred to as 'coming' or 'he came', thus emphasizing that this passage illustrates His future coming.³

John chapter 13 verses 33-36

Here, the Lord refers to John chapter 7 above and informs the disciples that they also cannot go with Him now, but unlike the Jews **they** will follow the Lord where He is going afterwards.

John chapter 14 verses 1-3

The Lord immediately follows this with the first explicit reference to the Rapture as the answer to distress with the prospect of the Lord coming not to reign on earth, but to remove His own to His Father's house and His presence.

John chapter 17 verse 24

This verse concludes the Upper Room ministry by confirming the promise made at its beginning, above. In His final request to His Father the Lord Jesus declares His desire that all who will subsequently believe on Him 'be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory'. Again, this indicates a scene in heaven not on earth.

John chapter 21 verse 22

Here, the Lord allows for the possibility that the writer of the Gospel could live until the Lord's coming, thus indicating an imminent event.

Now, having seen the 'seed plot' for the Rapture in John's Gospel, the

details can be found in the Epistles of Paul.

First Thessalonians

This is one of the earliest New Testament letters. It is written to a young church of relatively new converts and repeatedly refers to the Lord's coming to encourage them.⁴ In chapter 4 verses 13-18, Paul deals with their concern that some of their company had died and may, in some way, miss out as a result. This is the prime passage on the Rapture and builds upon John chapter 11. For example, the dead saints, like Lazarus, are three times described as 'asleep' or those who 'sleep in Jesus' and once called the 'dead in Christ'. As indicated in John chapter 11, the Lord's coming not only raises the dead but removes His living saints without death. The Lord descends from heaven but only to the air, not to the earth. The saints are then taken to His place rather than He coming to theirs.⁵ The 'shout' causes 'the dead in Christ to rise first', just as the 'loud voice' raised Lazarus. The Archangel is rarely found in scripture, but where he is it is in relation to spiritual warfare in the aerial heavens (contending for Moses' body, Jude 9, and assisting Gabriel, Dan. 10. 13). How fitting, then, that the archangelic voice of the Lord clears the way for His people to 'meet the Lord in the air'. Satan is described as the 'prince of the power of the air' but the Lord tells us concerning His church, 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'. The third aspect, 'the trump of God', is the call home and corresponds to 'so shall we ever be with the Lord'. Well might this truth cause us to 'comfort one another with these words'!

2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 1-12

This also concerns the Rapture but more specifically deals with its timing so will be considered in the next article.

1 Corinthians chapter 15

This is primarily about the subject of resurrection but, as already noted, this truth is often combined with the Rapture. In verses 20-28 the apostle

outlines a sequence of events involving: Christ's own resurrection; His 'coming'; the raising of those that sleep; Christ reigning; putting an end to death; and establishing God's eternal state. In verses 35-50, Paul establishes the truth that we will need changed bodies for heaven and, in verses 51-58, He reveals the previously hidden 'mystery' of how we will get these new bodies. Some will get them by resurrection but 'we shall not all sleep', so how will the living be fitted for heaven?⁶ Well says Paul, 'we shall all be changed'. This will take place 'in a moment' and its timing will be 'at the last trump', no doubt the 'trump of God', 1 Thess. 4. 16.

We have already seen that the Rapture is a truth to counter distress and bring comfort. Paul concludes here by reminding us that the truth of the Rapture should also cause us to 'be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord'. The 'twinkling of an eye' is also mentioned, 1 Cor. 15. 52, and perhaps more light is cast on this by other passages. Paul tells us these changed bodies will be 'like unto His glorious body', Phil. 3. 20-21, and John confirms 'we shall be like him', adding, 'for we shall see him as he is', 1 John 3. 2. The Lord will appear, in the twinkling of our eye we will 'behold his face in righteousness', 'see him as he is', and be transformed into His likeness. God willing, this will be considered in a future article.

Endnotes

- 1 As indicated particularly by the Lord Jesus in John's Gospel and in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians and First Corinthians.
- 2 1 Cor. 15. 51.
- 3 This event is followed by a scene in chapter 12, where Lazarus sits at supper with the Lord. The parallel passages in Matthew and Mark suggest that Simon the Leper, no doubt cured of leprosy, is also present. So we see the Lord sharing His presence with one who slept and one who was changed.
- 4 See 1. 10; 2. 19; 3. 13; and 5. 23.
- 5 As with John chapters 14 and 17. Notice also the Lord's threefold call and the threefold response in verses 16 and 17.
- 6 As revealed in John chapter 11 and 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

ALASTAIR SINCLAIR is in fellowship with the assembly at Crosshouse, Ayrshire, and is active in oral ministry throughout the UK. He writes regularly for assembly magazines and is married with a family. He works in the IT industry.





If Rehoboam had obeyed the letter of the law, then Abijah would never have been king! The laws of inheritance, given in Deuteronomy chapter 21, clearly stated the rights of the firstborn where a man had more than one wife. The son of a preferred wife was not to inherit the portion of an older son born to a wife who had fallen out of favour. Abijah had older brothers and was himself the son of Maachah, the third of Rehoboam's eighteen wives, the daughter, or more likely, granddaughter of Absalom, 2 Chr. 11. 18-22. So, as a result of his father's partial affections, Abijah succeeded to the throne on the death of Rehoboam.



It is characters such as Abijah who cause some believers to almost despair of understanding the seeming complexities of the books of Kings and Chronicles and move on to rather clearer waters in their daily reading. To explain what we mean, consider the following details: In 1 Kings chapter 14 we are introduced to the son of Jeroboam, who is also called Abijah, and dies as a child. In the same chapter we read of a prophet called Ahijah. Then we come in chapter 15 to the son of Rehoboam who, to make things more difficult, is called Abijam in 1 Kings and Abijah in 2 Chronicles! We then discover that his mother's name is given differently in the two records and, to complete the confusion, in 1 Kings nothing good is recorded of him, while in 2 Chronicles nothing directly bad. But, don't give up when you come to a section of the word of God like this one; remember our God is not the author of confusion and there are no contradictions in the inspired word. With careful and prayerful study and by comparing scripture with scripture, you will be able to unravel the apparent difficulties; you will enjoy the scriptures more, and discover important practical lessons for your blessing and benefit.

It may be that the key to understanding the significance of Abijah's life and achievements is found in the seeming ambiguity of the record. His life and reign were marked by inconsistency; but before

we reflect on the record of scripture regarding Abijah, we would do well to spend a few moments considering his mother. We have already noted that she was the grand-daughter of Absalom and it would appear that she inherited something of his rebellious spirit. We learn this not from the record of Abijah, but from that of Asa, the son who succeeded him. Maachah is recorded as also the mother of Asa. Again, this may well be grand-mother, or it may be that Abijah's wife, Asa's mother, died young in years and Maachah fulfilled the mother's role. What we do know for certain is that she was an idolater, 1 Kgs. 15. 13, and Asa took steps to eradicate her influence when he came to power.

Bearing this in mind we turn our attention again to Abijah and draw the conclusion that because he lacked the example of a godly mother, 'he walked in all the sins of his father', 1 Kgs. 15. 3. What a responsibility it is to nurture and raise a family through those early formative years when lasting impressions are made. But what a privilege it is, given that responsibility, to be able to seek daily guidance from the Lord in order that right decisions are made.

No doubt home and parental influence had a significant bearing on the young Abijah, but the Spirit of God identifies the underlying problem, 'his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God', there was something lacking. 'Not perfect' means incomplete and what he lacked was that vital link with his God, that desire to walk in the right way. Although he was descended from David through both his parents, a perfect heart is not hereditary, individual responsibility must be faced.

We note, however, that Abijah's tenure of office was dependent on the Lord's appreciation of David, 1 Kgs. 15. 4. What a gracious God we have, how often do we stop to consider that maybe some of the blessings we enjoy come to us because of the faithfulness of those of a past generation, those who kept the lamp of testimony burning when few in number and weak of frame?

Abijah was assured of a continuing line of succession to 'establish Jerusalem', the place where the Lord's heart and eyes were centred, 2 Chr. 7. 16.

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In 1 Kings chapter 15 verse 5 the Spirit of God continues to bear testimony to David as one who 'turned not aside . . . all the days of his life', then He adds 'save only in the matter of Uriah'; a note of warning to emphasize the far-reaching effects of sin. Abijah was of the fourth generation and sadly neither his father Rehoboam nor his grand-father Solomon had given much of a lead in moral integrity. The word of God would remind us of our proneness to failure, our need to remain watchful. In the history of the ten tribes, how often are we reminded of the sin of Jeroboam which blighted and polluted the generations that followed?

The record of Abijah in 1 Kings closes with a brief summary of his reign which was characterized by constant strife. The relentless feud with Jeroboam and the northern tribes was a persistent feature of his life while his father lived, and this continued throughout his own three-year reign until his death. Jeroboam was an Ephraimite, Rehoboam was of Judah, they were of the same kin, yet they were adversaries. It is sad to



think that friction between brethren can be perpetuated and even passed on to the next generation without resolution.

When we turn our attention to 2 Chronicles chapter 13, a rather different picture emerges. There is no record of Abijah following in 'the sins of his father', but rather, almost the whole of the narrative is taken up with just one day in his life, a day when a great victory was won, 'because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers', 2 Chr. 13. 18. It has been a feature of battles down the course of history for the army general to address his troops with encouraging words just prior to engaging the enemy. In Abijah's case this was done not only to strengthen the resolve of his own forces, but from a vantage point and with enough volume to challenge and intimidate the much larger force of Jeroboam. Abijah's well constructed oration was based (as with all good preachers) around three points. First, he challenged the validity of Jeroboam's authority by reminding him that the whole kingdom rightfully belonged to David and his descendents. This was confirmed by 'the Lord God of Israel', by an unchangeable, incorruptible, 'covenant of salt', a perpetual promise, v. 5; Jeroboam was just a usurper. Secondly, he reminded the ten tribes that the true priesthood of Israel belonged to the line of Aaron and the only acceptable offerings were those associated with the altar and order appointed by the Lord. Jeroboam had surrounded himself with false people, v. 7, false gods, v. 8, and a false priesthood, v. 9. Thirdly, Abijah

reveals the main weapon in his armoury, 'God himself is with us for our captain', v. 12, and because of this he concludes, 'ye shall not prosper'.

Such fine words would have done credit to Hezekiah or Josiah in their day, but coming from a man who 'walked in all the sins of his father', they seem strangely hollow. Idolatry was still rife even in Judah and the legacy left to Asa, the son of Abijah, was 'altars of strange gods . . . high places . . . images and groves', 2 Chr. 14. 3. If our words are to carry weight, then our life must show evidence of reality. Good practice must always go before, and accompany, good preaching! All that Abijah said was true, but it was totally lost on Jeroboam! While Abijah was rallying his troops, Jeroboam was laying plans for the battle! A detachment of soldiers was moved surreptitiously to the rear of Judah's army. An ambush was laid which doubtless would have won the day, with Abijah needing to fight on two fronts. But Judah, instead of trying to outmanoeuvre their adversary, 'cried unto the Lord', and, remembering the promise of Numbers chapter 10 verse 9, 'the priests sounded with the trumpets'. Surely there are lessons here for us. When the adversary seems to surround us, when 'the enemy shall come in like a flood', Isa. 59. 19, we have a sure defence and well proven armour, Eph. 6. 11-18.

The Lord, ever true to His word, enabled Judah to accomplish a remarkable victory against overwhelming odds. It was a mortal blow to Jeroboam; he never recovered strength again in the days of Abijah. How sad that the nation, and indeed we in our present day, so often fail to appreciate the vast resources at our disposal in times of need.

Abijah, on his part, followed the family tradition of multiple wives and, although the record of his life is brief, we can be sure that the inspired chronicler has written all we need to know about him. The rest of his career is lost to us in the writings of the prophet Iddo, 2 Chr. 13. 22.

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He began to speak...

He longed to preach the gospel to every creature and spent hours distributing tracts and visiting the slums. He said later, 'When I was quite young I used to go down to the slums of London. I would go into a common lodging-house on a Sunday night dressed in a frock coat and a top hat, and I would stand there with a New Testament in my hand and preach and preach, and be very much surprised that the people did not listen to me. Then I discovered why they would not listen, and I got hold of the oldest suit I could borrow, and in that suit I placed the sum of 4d., and in the evening I went with the rag-tag and bobtail of the district to that lodging-house where 200-300 men were to sleep for the night. I sat where they sat, and the fleas that bit them bit me; and the same crawly things that crawled on them crawled on me. I spent some nights in that dreadful chamber silently listening to their needs and woes. Then, at six o'clock one morning, when they were getting their breakfast, I arose and began to speak to them, and now I found there was not the slightest difficulty in getting their attention. I had sat where they sat, generally for about nine wakeful hours, and I understood exactly how dirty they were, how the seas of life were buffeting them, and they were perfectly willing to listen to a man who had sat where they sat'.

The greatest day in our history was when it pleased God to draw closer to us than He had ever done before. After 40 centuries of dwelling in cloud and thick darkness, it pleased God to come closer to us. But He didn't send His Son to start preaching some code: when our Lord went into the business of redemption, for 30 years He never said a word of public ministry. For 30 years He sat where they sat and learned their thoughts and experiences. For 30 years He knew hunger, weariness, poverty, and the shadows and cares of that little home, and, when He had learned all these things, then He opened His mouth and began to speak. And the world has been listening ever since.

[Extracted from *The Collected Writings of Harold St John*, published by Gospel Tract Publications, Glasgow, Scotland].





EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a short series on this very needy and practical area of elders. It is designed to emphasize the spiritual nature of this work and how we need to encourage younger men to be exercised about the responsibility of caring for the flock of God locally.

THE ELDER AS A

blood,⁵ and, similarly, Peter echoes the very same strain.⁶

Feeding the flock is one of the important responsibilities of shepherds. It is suggested that this goes far beyond the arranging of speakers to fill the platform, and demands that the local overseers must be actively involved in ministering food convenient to the flock. Hence, the need for the qualification of the elder that he should be 'apt to teach'.⁷ Of course, this does not mean that all the elders must be orators, but they must be biblically taught, and capable of expressing the truth of God to the flock. Not only so, but this must not be confined to platform ministry. The apostle reminded the Ephesian elders, 'I have taught you publicly, and from house to house'.⁸ The 'house to house' ministry is perhaps one of the most neglected exercises of the day. Speaking personally, my spiritual growth and development owes much to the

mentoring received from a very capable teacher in our assembly who took me under his wing in early teenage years, and he, privately and consistently, taught me each Friday night of the year. He was investing in a future he would never see, due to advancing years.

PROTECTING THE FLOCK

Paul, in giving his final address to the Ephesian elders, also warned them of dangers that would assail the flock, not only from without – the grievous wolves – but also from within – 'of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things'.⁹ Jude, in his short epistle, also tells of certain men who have 'crept in

unawares . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ'.¹⁰ So, there is a defensive role to be played by the elders to ensure that the flock is protected from false teachers and ungodly men, and this can be done only through applying biblical standards when receiving into fellowship. Reception into a local assembly is a serious matter, and, perhaps, not taken seriously enough in our day. When a person is seeking fellowship from some other church or evangelical group, it is important that the elders should examine such a one in relation to his or her views on doctrinal matters, matters of church order, etc., and to bring scripture to bear. We cannot be too careful at this stage. Jude speaks about 'ungodly men, denying our Lord God' who had arrived in fellowship. Evidently, they had deceived the elders, and the elders had not been diligent enough whilst interviewing them prior to reception. Of course, whilst reception is one of the first lines of defence, there are many obvious areas where the elder must take up a defensive role and stand between the flock and error.

EXERCISING HOSPITALITY

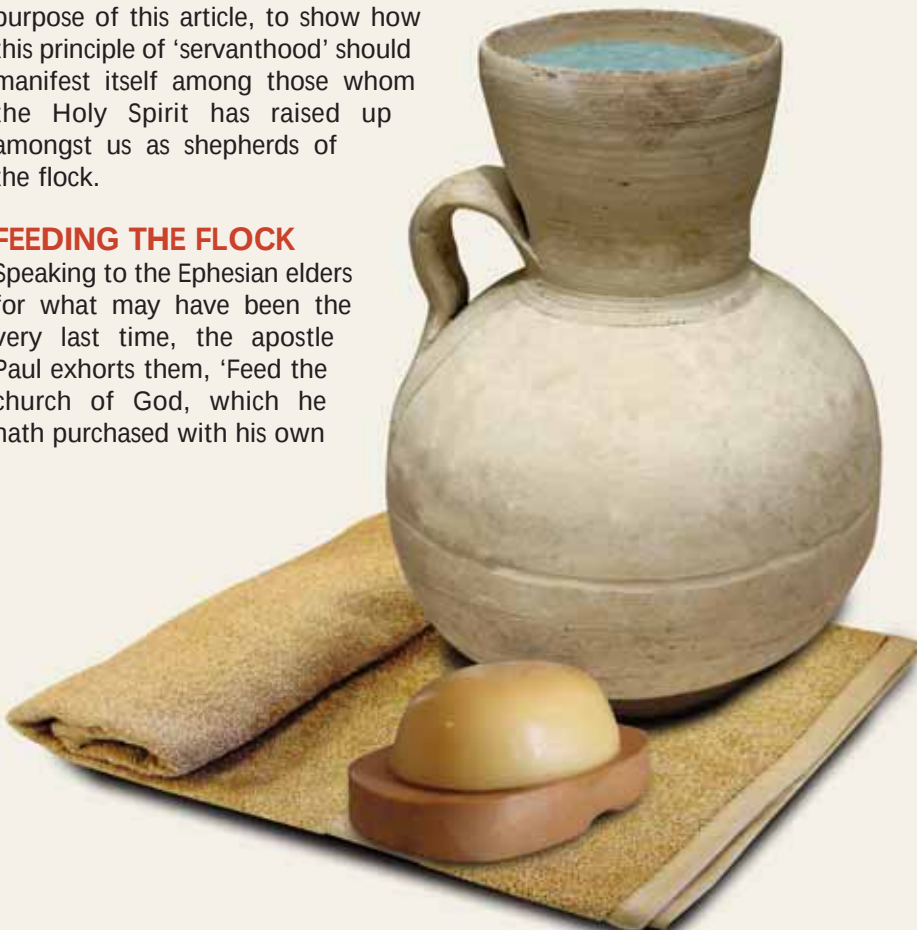
One of the qualifications given for elders is 'must be . . . given to hospitality'.¹¹ This is an important ministry and its value is often

In Matthew chapter 20, the Lord was asked by the mother of two of His disciples whether, in the coming Kingdom, one could sit on His right hand, and the other on His left.¹ In consequence of this request, the Lord drew attention to the fact that in the Gentile world, princes exercise dominion over others, and they, in turn, have those who exercise authority over them.² The Lord then said, 'But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant'.³ Indeed, the Lord Himself was the greatest exponent of this principle. The apostle Paul, writing to the Philippians, reminded them that the Lord Jesus 'made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross'.⁴ Therefore, it is the purpose of this article, to show how this principle of 'servanthood' should manifest itself among those whom the Holy Spirit has raised up amongst us as shepherds of the flock.

FEEDING THE FLOCK

Speaking to the Ephesian elders for what may have been the very last time, the apostle Paul exhorts them, 'Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own

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SERVANT

underestimated. When an elder's door is always open to visitors, whether by invitation, or casually, the benefits to the local church can never be overestimated. It is often during such casual moments of fellowship that hearts are unburdened, needs made known, and concerns expressed, that otherwise might never have surfaced, and where they can be resolved without recourse to more formal means. Matters that might have festered and gone unnoticed until a crisis erupted can be quietly and kindly dealt with to the furtherance of the peace and unity of the assembly. The exercise of hospitality is one of the great gifts that the Lord has given to the church, and we need to exercise it conscientiously in the assembly.

MAINTAINING CHURCH ORDER

Elders in every local assembly are obligated to operate in accordance with scripture. We cannot risk turning to the latest methods of the secular or religious world, evangelical or otherwise, in dealing with Church matters. Here are some critical areas:

Maintaining the proper roles of male and female in Church capacity

It is most important that we do not allow the liberalism of the world we live in, to put aside the God-given instructions relative to the different roles of male and female in the local assembly. Modern thinking, even in so called evangelical circles, is that such differences were only a reflection of the culture of the times when 1 Corinthians was written and that in our culture, being different, we can afford to ignore these matters.

Such thinking makes it important that teaching is given by elders regarding the scriptural authority behind the different roles of men and women, and to show that they apply whatever the culture. Also, teaching regarding scriptural headship is most important showing the why and wherefore of our assembly practice, which requires the men to uncover their heads, sisters to cover their heads and maintain silence in the assembly.

Exercising Discipline in the Local Assembly

One of the most difficult moments in the life of any elder is when matters arise that demand the exercise of discipline in the assembly. It is here that things can go so tragically wrong, and where the response can vary from ignoring the problem, and hoping it will go away, as was happening for example in Corinth, or going to the opposite extreme of harsh, legalistic discipline. The application of biblical standards is never more urgent than in this case, first to determine the type of offence committed, and then to apply the appropriate, biblically specified, discipline. There are no less than six types of offence described in scripture, with clear instructions as to what should be done in each case.¹² It is absolutely vital that those who are local elders should be familiar with these instructions and, for the health and safety of their assemblies, to be prepared to endure the pain of implementing them. The exercising of discipline is never easy, but it is absolutely essential.

Of course, all discipline has recovery in mind, and should never be carried out in a vindictive spirit. Even in the most severe case of fornication, the apostle Paul, after commanding the Corinthians to excommunicate the guilty one,¹³ later, since he had repented, exhorts them to bring him back, and to embrace him and to confirm their love to him, lest he be overcome with much sorrow.¹⁴ The important thing is repentance, because where there is no repentance there can be no recovery.

TRANSMITTING THE TRUTH TO THE NEXT GENERATION

We close our study by speaking about this critical area of eldership. Paul refers to it in his Second Epistle to Timothy when he wrote concerning the truth he had received, 'The same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also'.¹⁵ As years advance, one becomes increasingly conscious of the burden to transmit truth, and to do for others what was done for us. We appeal to every elder to practise the critical art of mentoring promising young men, and to make it

one of the chief goals in their advancing years and to do so with urgency. The nature of the New Testament church requires that truth be transmitted from generation to generation with integrity. The future of assemblies rests upon this vital ministry, and we must take steps to make it happen. We dare not neglect this critical task. A generation of excellent, spiritually-orientated young people is coming up, and they will require to be advanced quickly to take the places of a lost generation in our assemblies. These young people are keen, and we must prime them with sound, solid biblical teaching, and give them opportunity to exercise their abilities in public, where God has given them that gift.

References

- 1 Matt. 20. 20-21.
- 2 Matt. 20. 25.
- 3 Matt. 20. 26-27.
- 4 Phil. 2. 7- 9.
- 5 Acts 20. 28.
- 6 1 Pet. 5. 2.
- 7 1 Tim. 3. 2.
- 8 Acts 20. 20.
- 9 Acts 20. 29-30.
- 10 Jude 4.
- 11 Rom. 12. 13; 1 Tim. 3. 2.
- 12 Refer to booklet *Church Discipline*, by W. H. Burnett.
- 13 1 Cor. 5. 13.
- 14 2 Cor. 2. 1-11.
- 15 2 Tim. 2. 2.



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If you were to make a list of the things that you habitually do, and the places you regularly visit, any who subsequently read it would be able to glean certain facts about you. Such a list would not only reveal what you do and where you go, but, along with that, the things that you give priority to, and the company you keep, providing the reader with an insight into your character and interests. In the Gospels there are a number of verses that draw attention to things that regularly featured in the life of the Lord Jesus.¹

Christ and the synagogue, Luke 4. 16

'And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up; and **as his custom was** he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read'.

Even a superficial reading of Luke's account of the visit of the Lord to the synagogue at Nazareth suggests at least three things about the Saviour, namely that He was a man of the **Synagogue**, 'he went into the synagogue', a man of the **Sabbath**, 'on the sabbath day', and a man of the **Scriptures**, 'and stood up for to read'. It is the first of those that we are particularly concerned with, not only the fact that He went into the synagogue but also Luke's additional comment, 'as his custom was'.

While the temple at Jerusalem figured prominently in His life,² and He would later say, 'I sat daily with you teaching in the temple', Matt. 26. 55, the synagogues of Galilee feature prominently during the years of public ministry. The Lord said, 'I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort', John 18. 20, a number of His miracles were performed in connection with visits to synagogues.³

In Luke chapter 4, the evangelist notes that it was at Nazareth that the Saviour 'had been brought up', and, against that background, says it was

'As his custom

'his custom', on the Sabbath day, to be found in the synagogue, where the devout Jews would meet together. Thus, we have an insight into one feature of the earlier hidden years of the Lord Jesus, regular attendance at the synagogue. Is there a similar consistency with us in connection with the assembly gatherings? It is recorded of the early believers that, 'they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers', Acts 2. 42. Sadly, we are in days when it is not unknown for some believers to be present only at the Lord's Supper, and for others to be spasmodic even in attendance at that. Such absenteeism isn't usually something that happens overnight but is the outcome of an ongoing process over a lengthy period of time, the product of a diminishing interest in the word of God, and a decline in the priority that we give to assembly activities. Are we as keen now, as we were a few years ago?

Jonathan, anticipating the absence of David from a gathering for the Jewish feast of the new moon, said, 'Thou shalt be missed, for thy seat shall be empty'. Is that likely to be said of us? Is it our 'custom' to be found gathered with the saints? Again, we should not miss the

general setting in Luke chapter 4, the reference to the 'power of the Spirit', v. 14, and the words of the Saviour, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me', v. 18. So, this attendance in the synagogue was the conduct of a Man moving in the power of the Spirit of God.

Christ and His service, Mark 10. 1

'And he arose from thence and cometh into the coasts of Judaea, by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, **as he was wont**, he taught them again'.

We have already seen that the Lord taught in the synagogues and in the temple, but His preaching wasn't limited to these places. He taught by the seaside, Mark 2. 13, in the villages, 6. 6, and in desert places, 6. 34. It is a picture of One who took every opportunity to instruct the people in the truth of God.

Between the end of chapter 9 and the commencement of chapter 10, Mark omits several months in the ministry of the Lord. For details of those we need to refer to Luke chapters 9-18 or John chapters 7-11. The words of Mark, 'he taught them (i.e., the people) again', indicate that in those preceding months the Lord had spent time alone with his disciples, that he had avoided the crowds, in order to spend time in instructing them, but, in Mark chapter 10 verse 1, He returns to teaching the people. In His commentary on the Gospel of Mark, D. E. HIEBERT⁴ observes that it is instructive to compare this verse with the parallel account in Matthew chapter 19 verse 2, 'And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them'. Matthew, who in his Gospel focuses our attention

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was



upon the teaching of Christ, notes at this point that the Lord did miracles. Whereas Mark, who in his Gospel focuses our attention upon the works of Christ, not only mentions that He 'taught' the people, but also that this was a regular feature of His ministry.

Mark has already spoken of **the character** of the Lord's teaching, that, in the synagogue at Capernaum, 'they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes', 1. 21-22. He has indicated **the compassion** that lay behind the teaching, 'And Jesus when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things', 6. 34. Now we see **a continuance** in teaching, as the people again resort to Him. Is that a pattern with us? When did you last speak to a person about the things of God? Peter wrote, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear'. 'Meekness' towards the one asking the question, 'fear' or reverence towards God, conscious that we do not deserve such a hope, 1 Pet. 3. 15. Is there such a readiness with us? Paul exhorted Timothy to 'Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season', and again, 'Do the work of an evangelist (or evangelism)', 2 Tim. 4. 2, 5. Do we seek to seize and make opportunities to speak for the Lord, speaking when it is expected and welcome, and also when it is not expected and not necessarily welcome? Or, is it that the opportunities come to us and we allow them to pass us by? The Lord Jesus 'saw much people'; have we an eye to the mission field around us, the multitudes without Christ and in need of the gospel? The Lord viewed them 'as sheep not having a

shepherd', helpless, without food, with no one to guide them. Is that how we view the multitudes? Mark tells us that viewing the multitudes thus, 'He was moved with compassion', His heart was stirred, 'and he began to teach them many things', 6. 34. Have we lost the vision for evangelism, no longer stirred by the plight of the multitudes? Have we become so cold and hard in heart that we lack compassion for those who are perishing? When did you last pray 'lead me to some soul today, O teach me Lord just what to say'?

Christ and supplication, Luke 22. 39

'And he came out, and went **as he was wont**, to the mount of Olives: and his disciples also followed him'.

No careful reader of the scriptures can fail to appreciate the position that the Mount of Olives occupied in the Lord's life. It was here He looked out over the city and wept, Luke 19. 41. Here, He taught the disciples, Matt. 24. 3. From here, He ascended to heaven, Acts 1. 12, and it is to these mountains the Lord will yet return at His manifestation in glory, Zech. 14. 4. To this place, Luke says, the Lord Jesus was wont to come. Gethsemane, the location of which Luke speaks, was at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and a place of which John also says, 'Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples', a place for fellowship with them and for communion with His Father, 18. 2. But of all His visits to that place, this occasion is surely to be numbered amongst the most sacred and touching, as He withdraws from the disciples in

order to pray alone with His Father. The Lord had said to the disciples 'when thou prayest enter into thy closet', Matt. 6. 6, but there was no such 'room' for the Lord Jesus, He withdrew to a garden. What lessons for us as we view Him there, a place of **separation**, 'withdrawn from them about a stone's cast', v. 41; of **submission**, 'not my will but thine be done'; of **sustenance**, 'an angel from heaven strengthening him', and a place of **sincerity**, 'being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly', v. 44. Do we have a place to which we can withdraw for prayer and fellowship with God, one that bears witness to our submission to, and earnest pleadings with God? Wasn't the parable of the Unjust Judge with the 'continual coming' of the widow spoken by the Lord to the end that 'men ought always to pray and not to faint', Luke 18. 1? Didn't Paul write to the Thessalonians, 'Pray without ceasing', 1 Thess. 5. 17? Is there a consistency with us in regard to prayer? It is, we must admit, the easiest thing to neglect in our spiritual life even though we know how vitally important it is for our spiritual well-being and development. There was no such failure in the life of the Saviour. May there not be in ours either.

These, then, were regular features in the life of the Lord. Let us see to it that they are characteristic of us also.

References

- 1 The writer wishes to acknowledge that the theme of this article was first suggested to him, many years ago, by a helpful paper, published in the *Believer's Magazine*, November 1966, pp. 41-43, as part of a series entitled *The life of Christ* by JAMES NAISMITH.
- 2 Luke 2. 49; John 2. 15; Matt. 21. 12.
- 3 See Luke 4. 33; 6. 6; 13. 13.
- 4 D. E. HIEBERT, *Mark, A Portrait of the Servant*, p. 236.

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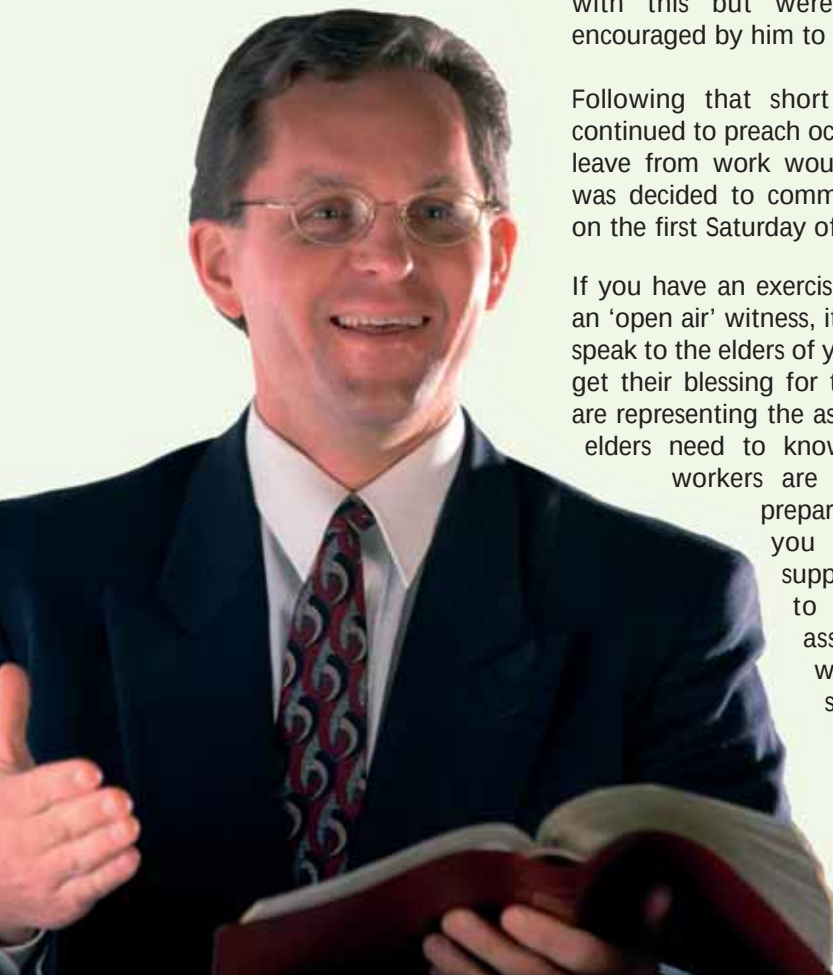


Introduction

'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature', Mark 16. 15. It is with this commission from the Lord Jesus Christ in mind that we mention the opportunity that there is to preach the gospel in the 'open air'. The word for preach that is used in the verse is interesting – it is the Greek word *kerusso* which has the idea of being a herald, such as the town crier. The primary arenas for preaching in the New Testament were public places, see the example of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem, John 7. 37-43, Peter on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. 14-40, and Paul at Mars Hill, Acts 17. 22-32. Therefore, we see that preaching the gospel message in the 'open air' has a basis founded solidly on scriptural principles.

Preaching in this way can:

- Reach the lost who have no intention of coming to a conventional gospel meeting;
- Reach believers who are not already gathering with you;
- Enable your assembly to develop a greater presence and impact in your community;



OPEN-AIR PREA

- Be the starting point for a New Testament assembly in a place where there is currently no testimony.

While this article deals with our experience in commencing an 'open air' witness in Kirkby-in-Ashfield, it is our desire to encourage others to get involved in this avenue of evangelism.

Commencing the work

Our exercise for this gospel work started from a report given by a brother of a similar work done in Manchester and Liverpool; as an assembly we had desired to increase our efforts in evangelism to reach more lost souls in the town. A special week of gospel work was arranged and a brother was invited to take the meetings in the evenings as well as preach in the town centre during the day. The writers agreed to assist the evangelist with this but were unexpectedly encouraged by him to preach as well.

Following that short campaign we continued to preach occasionally when leave from work would allow, but it was decided to commit to preaching on the first Saturday of each month.

If you have an exercise to commence an 'open air' witness, it is important to speak to the elders of your assembly to get their blessing for the work – you are representing the assembly and the elders need to know that suitable workers are used and due preparations made. If you have their support it is useful to let the whole assembly know what is planned so that prayer can be made for this new outreach. This would also be an opportunity to g a t h e r f e l l o w

saints who have a desire to take part and support the work. Clearly, it is assumed that you will have at least one brother taking part who is gifted to preach the gospel publicly.

The next step would be to find a suitable location in which to preach. From the examples in the scriptures given above, we see that the gospel was preached where people were gathered and somewhere where the preacher's voice would be heard. Paul preached at Mars Hill, a place where learned men would gather. We chose a square in the very middle of a pedestrianized town centre away from the noise of road traffic.

By

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and

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England

It was the apostle Peter who said that we needed to submit to those who are placed in authority by God, 1

Pet. 2. 13-14, and whilst preaching on public property is in most cases permissible by UK law, it is prudent to get permission from the authorities in charge of your prospective preaching location before commencing a work. There may be certain regulations that they have to uphold. For example, when we commenced our work, the local Town Centre Manager wanted to know if we planned to use loudspeaker equipment and requested that we contact the police officer in charge of the town centre in advance of preaching. With an open and clear relationship in place a good testimony is maintained and local authorities may look more favourably on your future outreach plans.

At first the open-air preaching was held quarterly on a Tuesday but work commitments have meant that Saturday was the best day so the first Saturday of each month was chosen. The reason that those days were selected is to coincide with the town's market. We found that on other days there were not as many passers-by.

How to preach

Every preacher has a different style. Here are some suggestions and guidelines that we have found useful.

CHING

Pray before and after you go out to preach.

Preach loud and clear

- Avoid shouting, this tires your voice and can be seen as confrontational to people who are near to you.
- You'll be surprised how far your voice carries, particularly in urban locations.
- Preach concisely for 5-10 minutes at most.
- Most people within hearing range will be passing by, most will not wait around to listen so it's vital that you get the message across succinctly.

Preach simply and understandably

- At best, most of your listeners will have a sketchy knowledge of the gospel so you will need to deal with the essentials of the gospel, God, our sin, Christ's death, repentance and faith, etc.
- Quote the word of God; it is 'quick and powerful', Heb. 4. 12, and 'faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God', Rom. 10. 17.
- Explain what you mean by key words such as faith, forgiveness, grace, and avoid using unnecessary jargon that only believers would be expected to understand.
- Poor preparation leads to poor performance in the open air. You do not want to be caught off guard, making up the message as you go along, as this does not put you, or your assembly, in a very good light.

Take literature with you, for instance:

- Tracts advertizing your meetings
- Good general gospel tracts
- Bibles and New Testaments, John's Gospels
- CDs of gospel messages

If there is a group of you going out in the open-air work then, whilst one is preaching, the others can be distributing tracts and speaking to people who are listening or those who are seated in the area. For example, we preach near an area where people can



be seated, and so speaking to individuals can give further opportunity to share the gospel.

Open-air preaching can be done in a variety of ways:

- Simply standing up and preaching is appropriate for most locations and occasions as people pass by without stopping. They will hear the message as they approach and as they depart.
- Preaching with visual aids, such as text cards or diagrams can help give you a structure to your message and help your listeners to remember what you have said. Make sure your visual aids are of good quality and legible.

Ideally, you would like people to stop and listen to you; they will then hear more of your preaching. If a crowd gathers you can create a dialogue with them by asking and answering questions like the apostle Paul did, Acts 17. 2; 18. 4, 19.

Make sure that you have some answers prepared for any questions that might be asked, for example

- Why do babies die?
- What evidence is there that there is a God?
- How can you prove what you are saying?

These questions can often help you to develop your message and you can use questions as a way of developing the gospel. The most important point in this section is to preach in a manner befitting the word of God, without causing offence to people by the manner in which you preach.

Follow-up work

Once you have concluded preaching, the work continues. Follow up work can include:

- Collecting names of people that have spoken to you or others with you. These names can then form a list for the assembly to pray intelligently. Ask any individuals if they have any matters that they wish you to pray for. We had this experience after a prayer meeting when a car pulled up outside the hall and the daughter of a contact asked us if we could pray for her mother who had cancer. This gave opportunity for further witness.

It is good to have a regular time in the open air so relationships can be developed and further contacts made.

As has been mentioned before, prayer is vital for any endeavour in the gospel. A prayer meeting before the work, and after, is essential.

You can use the open air work as a way of advertising any events that your assembly may be having such as special meetings.

Open-air witness can lead to other work in your location such as door-to-door work and gospel campaigns as you can then use the list of contacts that you have made to form a basis for the work.

If, God willing, there are souls saved as a result of the open-air witness then you need to ask the question, 'Is the assembly ready to teach those souls and answer their questions?'

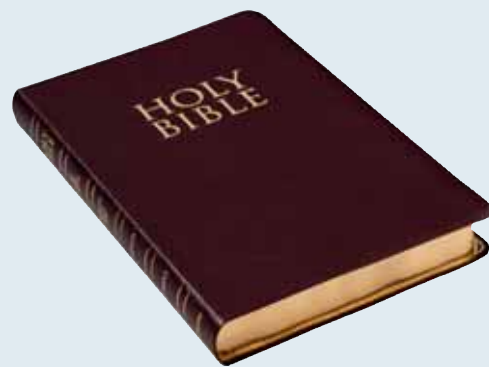
It is our desire to encourage others with regard to gospel activity in your locality. We need to remember that time is short and there are many souls heading for a lost eternity. It is our responsibility to reach them with the message of the good news of salvation in Christ.

ANDREW BENNETT is and Alastair Rodger was in fellowship in the assembly in Kirkby-in-Ashfield. They have been active in gospel witness in and from their own assembly and in other assemblies locally. Owing to a change of job, Alastair Rodger is now in fellowship in South Norwood, London.



EDITOR'S NOTE: Our thanks to Jim Paul for issuing a timely call to evangelism, to have a personal desire to reach the lost, and to present to them the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A PLEA FOR THE GOSPEL



In the last decade there has been a sad move away from the preaching of the gospel in many assemblies. This decreased activity can keep our gospel hidden to them that are lost. The mandate given to the disciples by the risen Lord was evidently continued in the early churches. In Romans chapter 1 verse 15, Paul says, 'I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also'. In the Philippians he commends them for their fellowship, furtherance, defence of the gospel and rejoices that Christ is preached! He praises them for holding forth the word of life. Let's look at a few aspects regarding it.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

It is a Divine Revelation

In Galatians chapter 1 verses 11-12, Paul makes known 'the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ'. Peter, in response to the Lord's question, 'Whom say ye that I am?' answered, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God', Matt. 16. 15-16. This testimony brought a response from the Saviour, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in heaven', v. 17. Jesus elevates the message to a higher level for it did not come from earth but from heaven itself.

It is a Declaration of Truth

1 Corinthians chapter 15 gives us the doctrine of the resurrection, beginning with these words, 'Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved', vv. 1-2. John, in his first Epistle chapter 1, brings to us the eternal Word of life which was manifested to them in that He was seen, heard and handled by them. John goes on to say, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with

the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ', 1 John 1. 3.

It is a Mystery Unfolded

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written to make all men (mankind) see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. That mystery was made known by Paul, receiving grace to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Jew and Gentile would be brought together into one body! No world leader has ever accomplished reconciliation by removing the barriers between Jew and Gentile, so making peace. Through the death of our Lord on the cross peace has been made, and both can live harmoniously in one body, the church.

It is the Counsel of God

Paul, gathering together the elders of Ephesus in Acts chapter 20, brings before them his life and testimony. He opens his heart to reveal to them how he kept nothing back that was profitable for them. He says, 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God', v. 27. Within the framework of his teaching he preached publicly and from house to house 'repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ', v. 21. By this he fulfilled the charge committed to him and he was free from the blood of all men.

It is Good News

The most common interpretation of the gospel is that it is good news! Is there not a need to hear some good news today? Of all the words ever spoken there is none so sublime, so simple, so solemn, or as sweet as the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is true for the saint and, particularly, for the sinner searching after God. This article is not looking solely at its content but the great need to reach out to the lost and preach it!

WHY SHOULD WE PREACH THE GOSPEL?

Before He left this world the Lord Jesus gave His disciples a royal command to fulfill. To those men He gave the commission to preach the gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria then unto the uttermost part of the earth. What an amazing responsibility; and we are indebted to them for the commitment to do what He

asked them to do. He promised to be with them unto the end of the age! Dear saints, we have not come to the end of that age yet! So are we continuing to carry on with the task until it is completed?

We should preach because the need is great! In 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 3-4 we read, 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost'. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 2 we find that for mankind the time is short and, in 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 9, the Lord 'is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance'. What a plight the human race is in; they are like sheep without a shepherd. The Lord, looking upon them in that lost condition, was moved with compassion. Have we grown so cold in heart towards them that are perishing that we have we ceased to be touched by their sad and hopeless condition?

Another reason is we have a debt to pay! Paul, in Romans chapter 1 verse 14, says, 'I am a debtor both to the Greeks (Gentiles), and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also'.



PREACHING OF THE

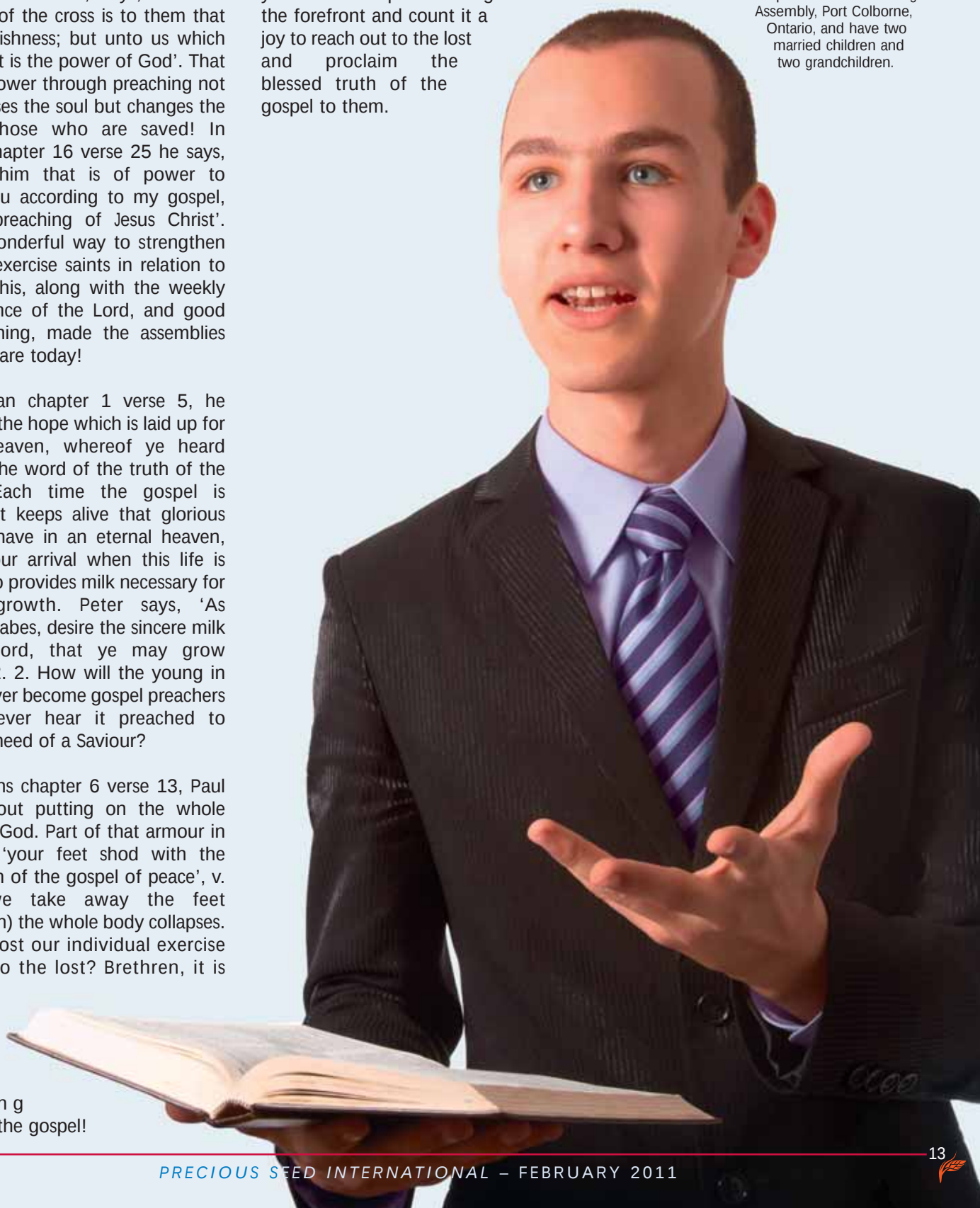
Finally, consideration of gospel preaching is given as to its impact on the lives of the saints. Gospel series/campaigns have had profound effects on assembly life. Some of the blessings received when the gospel is preached in this way are given in scripture. Paul, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 18, says, 'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God'. That dynamic power through preaching not only cleanses the soul but changes the lives of those who are saved! In Romans chapter 16 verse 25 he says, 'Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ'. What a wonderful way to strengthen faith and exercise saints in relation to the lost. This, along with the weekly remembrance of the Lord, and good Bible teaching, made the assemblies what they are today!

In Colossian chapter 1 verse 5, he speaks of 'the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel'. Each time the gospel is preached it keeps alive that glorious hope we have in an eternal heaven, awaiting our arrival when this life is over. It also provides milk necessary for spiritual growth. Peter says, 'As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby', 2. 2. How will the young in the faith ever become gospel preachers if they never hear it preached to sinners in need of a Saviour?

In Ephesians chapter 6 verse 13, Paul speaks about putting on the whole armour of God. Part of that armour is having 'your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace', v. 15. If we take away the feet (foundation) the whole body collapses. Have we lost our individual exercise to reach to the lost? Brethren, it is a serious thing to remove the foundation by stopping preaching the gospel!

Finally, it brings a sense of unity and purpose to the local assembly. 'Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel'. Paul, in Galatians chapter 2 verses 4-5, contends with those false brethren for this reason, 'That the truth of the gospel might continue with you'. Let us keep those things in the forefront and count it a joy to reach out to the lost and proclaim the blessed truth of the gospel to them.

JIM PAUL and his wife, Elizabeth, were commended to full-time service in 1981 by the Broxburn assembly in Scotland. In 1991 the assemblies at Bridlewood and Rideauview, Ottawa added their commendation to serve the Lord in North America in preaching the gospel and ministering the word of God. Along with itinerant preaching Jim is involved in camp work, hospital chaplaincy, children's work and, for many years, in prison ministry. They are in fellowship with the Portal Village Assembly, Port Colborne, Ontario, and have two married children and two grandchildren.





Editor's Note: This is the first article in a short series that commemorates the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the scriptures. Each article seeks to highlight features of this much loved and much used translation of the Bible.

400 years on, and looking forward: the Authorised (King James) Version

By **MARK FENN** West Hill, Ontario, Canada

2011 marks the 400th anniversary of the publishing of the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible.¹ The first edition of the KJV was issued in the year 1611, following many years of labour by God-fearing scholars. It all started following the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 when it was decided that the existing Geneva Bible, used by the established Anglican Church, should be thoroughly revised. However, further revisions of the KJV were issued in 1629, 1638, 1762 and 1769, the latter under the editorship of Dr. Benjamin Blayney. So when people speak of using 'the 1611', this is only true in a general sense, in that the first edition of the KJV was issued in that year.

Formal translation method

One great strength of the KJV is that its translation method is generally formal and accurate. Whilst a more paraphrastic type of Bible version might, on the surface, score highly in terms of readability, it does leave the reader somewhat at the mercy of the paraphraser's interpretations. From the born-again believer with a high view of the verbal inspiration of scripture, to the secular academic reader seeking a record of a straightforward wording of key Bible passages, the KJV often commends itself as a version which was prepared with a serious attempt to convey in translation the actual words of the Greek and Hebrew originals. Its sentence structure might sometimes seem more laborious than those of, say, *Time Magazine* or a tabloid newspaper, but if the reader is aware that the translators will have been attempting to convey the flow of language in the original, then they may rest assured that the effort of reading the KJV carefully is very worthwhile.^{2,3}

It may be added that there are some contemporary editions of the KJV (which in a strict sense might not qualify as KJV editions at all) such as the New King James Version which have retained a basic commitment to a formal approach to translation.

Memorable cadence of its language

It would be hard to deny that the

language of the venerable KJV is in many passages noteworthy for the dignified and memorable nature of its wording. In the English language the linguistic quality of the KJV is especially striking, and well-known passages can be committed to memory with relative ease.

Multiple opinions – but thankfulness should prevail

One of the forceful arguments in favour of the KJV is the fact of its widespread use, especially in North America. Without doubt we should be thankful for the signal blessing which God has been pleased over 400 years to put upon the use of the KJV in its various editions, however they may be exactly defined.

Although many people in assemblies use the KJV, it is accurate to say that where there is an emphasis on the New Testament truths of the local assembly, and whenever anyone comes into fellowship in a local assembly and is encouraged to use the KJV, they will almost immediately be given clear advice or definite warnings about the meanings of a range of words in the KJV. The very fact that assemblies exist as autonomous companies of the Lord's people, and manifest distinctives as to their composition and functioning according to a New Testament pattern, makes it inevitable that young believers will be exhorted and warned regarding a range of church-related words translated in a certain way in the KJV. Examples of words in the KJV about which clear advice is often given include: 'bishop', 'deacon' and 'pastor'.

Looking forward

It is probable that other, truly born-again believers in the year 2011 will be commemorating the 400th anniversary of the first edition of the KJV; but it must also be remembered that some of those believers will be identified with church practices which differ greatly from those indicated by the meaning of key words, both outlined above and others also. Thus, for the KJV to be used as some sort of overriding criterion for fellowship is in itself not a sound notion, even though in

many ways the KJV is a very trustworthy and sound version of God's word.

However, we may look forward in confidence to continued use of this very reliable Bible version in English, but may our hearts ever be mindful in joyful anticipation of the day when faith will give way to sight and His people be raptured to meet our Lord Jesus Christ in the air! 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus', Rev. 22. 20, is a heartfelt cry not limited to a translation in a single language!

Notes and references

- 1 Hereafter abbreviated 'KJV'. Even the abbreviation can cause controversy. Some people, mainly in the British Isles, strongly prefer 'AV', others, usually in North America, strongly prefer 'KJB', for 'King James Bible'; others, more generally, use 'KJV'; inevitably the use of one term or another will be the cause of inadvertent disappointment to those vehemently exercised otherwise.
- 2 Robert P. Martin, in his *Accuracy of Translation*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992, has studied the sentence structure in various New Testament passages in a number of modern versions – some of them paraphrases – in comparison with that of the KJV. Readers need to be aware that in some modern paraphrases of the Bible well-known New Testament passages have been divided into up to ten times as many sentences as the KJV has, as Martin demonstrates; one is left to wonder just how much of the flow of language and the thought connections from the original have been lost.
- 3 There have been useful studies of the way in which the KJV translators went about their work. For example, Ward S. Allen and Edward C. Jacobs, in their *The Coming of the King James Gospels*, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1995, have examined the careful way the translators used their sources, both in terms of the Greek original and going back to Tyndale's New Testament. In fact, David Daniell, in his *Introduction to Tyndale's New Testament*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989, has demonstrated something of the extent to which a very sizable proportion of the KJV was derived from the work of William Tyndale. A more general article about the qualities of the KJV, including information about its translation method and its textual basis, is: G. W. and D. E. Anderson, *The Authorised Version: What Today's Christian Needs to Know About the Authorised (King James) Version*, Article 75, London, England: Trinitarian Bible Society. The following article by C. P. Hallihan, which includes an historical background timeline, gives a background to the Hampton Court Conference: 'Kings and Puritans, Bishops and Bibles: The Hampton Court Conference, January 1604', *Quarterly Record*, No. 566, January - March 2004. (These most recently-cited writers, above, and others also, from the Trinitarian Bible Society have made available various similar articles).

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The Parable of the Pounds.¹ Luke 19. 11-27. Part 1.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The previous two articles focused upon the Parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke chapter 16 verses 1 to 13. There we learned something of our responsibility before God in connection with the money and the possessions with which He has entrusted us. Here, in the so-called Parable of the Poundsⁱ in chapter 19 verses 11 to 27, we learn something of our responsibility in connection with the opportunities for service with which He provides us.

The Context

The Parable of the Pounds was spoken either in or near Jericho when our Lord, with set face, was pursuing His way to His suffering and death at Jerusalem. It forms the last section in Luke's lengthy account of our Lord's last journey there,² and highlights His servants' stewardship in the interval between the time of His departure and the time of His return, when He will evaluate all service rendered for Him.

The section is framed by the opening words of verse 11, 'Now as they heard these things, He spoke', and the words of verse 28, 'When He had said this', which latter words introduce the following section.

Luke records the parable immediately after the account he gave of the conversion of Zacchaeus at Jericho in chapter 19 verses 1 to 10. Indeed, Luke links the two sections closely together. Having recorded our Lord's words to Zacchaeus in verses 9 and 10, he opens our section by saying, 'As they heard (literally, 'as they were hearing') these things, He spoke another parable'. One scholar has noted that 'the present participle [*hearing*]' suggests that the preceding sayings are still ringing in their ears or being turned over in their minds'.³ It was therefore as 'the multitude is still pondering this word'⁴ that Jesus told the parable.

And what had Jesus said to Zacchaeus which still occupied the people's attention? Luke tells us that 'Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"'. In the compass of this single sentence the Lord twice referred to the salvation of the lost.

It could be argued, therefore, that one function of the Parable of the Pounds is to draw attention to the faithful and industrious service which the Lord expects of every one who has come into the enjoyment of the salvation which He bestows. Such a connection could be summed up neatly in the much-used pithy saying, 'saved to serve'.

But, whether or not the Holy Spirit intends us to make such a connection, verse 11 states very plainly our Lord's reason for telling the parable; namely, 'because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of

God would appear immediately'. And the reference which Jesus made to 'salvation' in the house of Zacchaeus may well have played a part in fuelling that expectation. We will consider this in the exposition below.

The historical background

The theme of a rich man leaving his servants in control while he is absent is quite common in the parables of our Lord which Luke records.⁵ But, as we shall note in the exposition, in this instance there are several close parallels between: (i) the framework of the parable; and (ii) certain events which took place at the time of our Lord's birth, events which we know had clear associations with Jericho itself. I refer to the actions and experiences of Archelaus, one of Herod the Great's fifteen children⁶ and Herod's principal named heir. The close correspondence between the history of Archelaus and several of the details in the parable suggests strongly that our Lord deliberately chose the (then) well-known events of some thirty years before as the framework for His parable.

Comparison with the Parable of the Talents

Some short time later the Lord told a separate parable which has several features in common with the Parable of the Pounds. This is the Parable of the Talents, recorded in Matthew chapter 25 verses 14 to 30. But even a casual reading of the two parables highlights a number of important differences between them.

(a) We can hardly fail to note, for example, the different occasions on which our Lord spoke the two parables. The first, the Parable of the Pounds, was spoken as our Lord made His way to Jerusalem, whereas the second, that of the Talents, was spoken sometime after He had entered Jerusalem. Again, as we have noted, the Parable of the Pounds was spoken in or near Jericho, whereas that of the Talents was spoken on the Mount of Olives.⁷

(b) The Parable of the Talents concerns a man with *three* servants to whom, when he took a journey, he entrusted *varying large sums of money*.

The Parable of the Pounds concerns a man of high birth with *many* servants, to ten of whom, when he 'went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom', he entrusted *identical small sums of money*.

(c) In the Parable of the Talents, the faithful servants *multiplied their unequal sums of money in the same proportion*, and thereby secured for themselves *identical 'rewards'*; namely, their master's glowing commendation, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'.

In the Parable of the pounds, the faithful servants *multiplied their identical sums of money in differing proportions*, and thereby secured for themselves *differing 'rewards'*, corresponding precisely to the gains they had made.

(d) In the Parable of the Talents, the Lord made it clear that



persons with little ability, if they prove themselves faithful in the use of that which the Lord has entrusted to them, will receive the same reward as others more gifted than themselves. For God will take each person's abilities into account when providing him or her with opportunities to serve Him,⁸ and will take full account of how those opportunities have been used when His servants each 'receive back' in respect of what they have done while in the body.⁹

In the Parable of the Pounds, the Lord made it clear that different degrees of faithful labour will yield different degrees of recompense.

EXPOSITION

Verse 11. The gospels present two main aspects to the Kingdom of God: (i) the present form, entered by repentance, faith and the new birth, and (ii) the 'future outward form'.¹⁰ These aspects are sometimes labelled the 'now' and the 'not yet' aspects of the kingdom.

The future form of the kingdom, its appearing and manifestation in power, will be established when the Son of man sits on the throne of His glory and takes the reins of universal government. It is this aspect which is in view here.

When Jesus spoke the parable, He was making His way to Jerusalem ('the city of the great King'¹¹), and it was commonly believed, by both the crowds and the disciples, that He was going there to establish that glorious kingdom. The hopes of the people ran high that 'the kingdom of God would appear immediately'. It was for this reason that James and John, with their mother's support, had made their play for the thrones on either side of our Lord's.¹²

But the Lord knew – and had only recently taught the twelve again¹³ – that He was going to Jerusalem, not to reign, but to die. Had James and John grasped what it would mean to be either side of Him then, they would certainly not have coveted such a place!¹⁴

And the Lord knew that He would be ascending from the vicinity of Jerusalem to heaven to receive a kingdom which would not be established on earth for some long time to come. 'Christ was going away to heaven to receive the kingdom from God there – not about to take it from man now and in this world'.¹⁵

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit links the telling of the parable very closely with the story of Zacchaeus. To Jericho's chief tax-collector our Lord had declared, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham'.¹⁶ Salvation had *now* come, at least to one house. Did this mean that the kingdom in its consummated form had – or was about to – come? Did this mean that Jesus, the Messiah, was about to be given 'the throne of His father David' by the Lord God, thereafter to 'reign over the house of Jacob forever'?¹⁷

The Lord told His parable to dispel any such expectation. For although 'salvation' had indeed then come to *the house of Zacchaeus*, 'salvation' will not come to *the house of Israel* until His second advent – until the time spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, 'Say to the daughter of Zion, Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him'.¹⁸

We should note that on no occasion did our Lord rebuke anybody for expecting such a kingdom. For example, although He criticized James and John for their selfish ambition in seeking places at His right and left hand, He said nothing to correct their assumption that He would one day sit on His throne in His manifested kingdom.¹⁹ Neither, prior to His ascension, did He correct His disciples' concept of a future kingdom for Israel; He simply rebuked their unwarranted curiosity as to 'the times and the seasons' which the Father has appointed by His own authority.²⁰

At this point, Jesus and the disciples were leaving Jericho, en route to Jerusalem, a distance of no more than seventeen miles away. 'Jewish tradition indicated that "the kingdom of Yahweh Sebaoth ("the Lord of hosts") would be revealed over Jerusalem"'.²¹ So it is hardly surprising that the proximity of Jerusalem aroused great excitement both in the people and in the disciples. 'Their expectation was of the immediate manifestation of the Kingdom of God in power'.²²

Verse 12. Note the verbal connection of 'kingdom' between verse 11 and verse 12: 'they thought the *kingdom* of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a *kingdom* and to return"'. In this way, the Lord Jesus made it clear, (i) that He would first need to go far away to 'receive' the 'kingdom', (ii) that He would 'return' after an interval (during which His servants would need to exercise both patient waiting and active working), and (iii) that then – but only then – would 'the kingdom of God . . . appear'. Over against the expectation of those around Him, our Lord's parable therefore 'predicts an interval of waiting and trial . . . the Messiah is conceived *not as coming but as going*'.²³

And there can be little doubt that the Lord employed a well-known historical incident – connected in part with Jericho – as the backcloth and framework for His story.

Herod the Great had died a little over thirty years earlier, having fathered many sons. Of these, Archelaus was one of the more fortunate, more fortunate certainly than three of Herod's other sons, who, along with several other key members of Herod's family, were murdered by their insanely jealous father.²⁴ In a probably apocryphal story, the emperor Augustus is reported to have wisecracked that it was safer to be Herod's pig (Greek *hos*) than his son (Greek *huios*)!²⁵ If true, Augustus was clearly aware that, although Herod was an Idumean by race, he lived as a Jew and so avoided eating pork.

Archelaus was cited in Herod's final will as ruler of Judaea and Samaria, and shortly after Herod's death, he left *Jericho*²⁶ to go to Rome (the 'far country') to push his claim, and (so he hoped) to have his father's will confirmed by Augustus Caesar and thereby 'receive his kingdom'.

JOSEPHUS records how, in Herod's final testament, he 'granted the kingdom to Archelaus',²⁷ but that Archelaus 'would not . . . take upon him either the authority of a king, or the names thereto belonging, until Caesar, who is . . . lord of this whole affair . . . confirm the succession'.²⁸

It is likely that our Lord's story, spoken in or near Jericho, would have come alive to His disciples because, when



Archelaus returned from Rome, having 'come into Judea, he . . . magnificently rebuilt the royal palace that had been at Jericho, and he diverted half the water with which the village of Neara used to be watered, and drew off that water into the plain, to water those palm trees which he had there planted'.²⁹ Although we may not necessarily accept the suggestion that 'Archelaus had rebuilt the stately royal palace of Jericho, *under the very shadow of which the Speaker and the crowds were perhaps standing*',³⁰ there can be little doubt that our Lord's hearers would have made the connection with Archelaus. Indeed, the aqueduct which Archelaus had constructed ran alongside the road by which our Lord and those with Him left Jericho on their way towards Jerusalem.

Verse 13. 'So he called *ten of his servants*'; not 'called his ten servants' as rendered by the King James Version. As a claimant to a kingdom, the nobleman (literally, 'one well-born') would have had very many servants.³¹ As far as the interpretation of the parable is concerned, of course, God gives present opportunities for service to all His people.

'He . . . delivered to them ten minas'; one mina to each servant, that is. 'The mina was a Greek coin worth 100 drachmas'.³² According to the Jewish apocalyptic Book of Tobit (chapter 5 verse 14), a drachma was paid as a daily wage.³³ One mina was the equivalent therefore of little more than three months wages. The relative smallness of the amount stands in contrast to that which was delivered to each of his three servants by the man in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25. There were 60 minas in a single talent of silver.

In Matthew chapter 25 it is implied that, between them, the three servants were entrusted with the absent master's whole fortune; he 'delivered his goods ('his substance', 'his possessions') to them'.³⁴ Whereas here in Luke 19 the nobleman's purpose in committing a relatively small sum to each of the ten servants was clearly to test their industry and faithfulness during his absence. Evidently, in doing so he aimed to establish whether or not they would prove themselves worthy of being allocated jurisdiction over the cities in his kingdom when he returned. There is, however, no suggestion that they realized this was what was in his mind.

'Do business till I come'. The nobleman gave clear and precise instructions to his servants, requiring each to employ his mina in trading (the basic meaning of the word translated 'do business').

I suspect that being entrusted with a capital sum of only three months wages meant that each of the servants faced the challenge, not only of energetic and demanding activity, but of humble and commonplace activity. For they would be operating, not as top-notch merchants with vast sums to invest, but as modest small-time traders.

There is no evidence of which I know that when Archelaus left Jericho for Rome he acted in any way similar to the nobleman in the parable by committing small sums of money to any of his servants as a means of testing their business and administrative capabilities.

Yes, it is true that, before he set out to Rome to seek Caesar's confirmation of his succession to Herod's kingdom, Archelaus did undertake to 'make abundant

requitals, not to the soldiers only, but to the people, for their alacrity and goodwill to him, when [Caesar] should have given him a complete title to the kingdom'.³⁵ But, as JOSEPHUS very realistically observed when recording this promise in another place, Archelaus merely 'pretended to do all things so as to get the goodwill of the multitude to him, as looking upon that goodwill to be a great step towards his preservation of the government'.³⁶ This incident therefore provides no counterpart whatever to the central role played by the minas in our Lord's parable.

Verse 14. 'But his citizens hated'³⁷ him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us". Historically, Archelaus was detested by the Jews, having, in a Jewish uprising immediately following his father's death, felt compelled to slay 3,000 of their number.³⁸ It was hardly surprising therefore that the Jews dispatched a delegation to Rome to plead with Augustus for freedom from the reign of Archelaus, preferring to come under direct Roman rule.³⁹

The record of JOSEPHUS shows how closely this detail in the parable accords with those events of thirty years before.⁴⁰ 'Archelaus . . . had new sources of trouble come upon him at Rome . . . for an embassy of the Jews was come to Rome . . . Now the number of the ambassadors that were sent by the authority of the nation were fifty, to which they joined above eight thousand of the Jews that were at Rome already . . . Now the main thing they desired was this: That they might be delivered from kingly and the like forms of government, and might be added to Syria, and be put under the authority of such presidents of theirs as should be sent to them'.⁴¹

The statement of the delegation in the parable, 'We will not have this man to reign over us', doubtless echoes the desire of the Jews in the days of Archelaus that they be freed from any 'kingly' form of government of their own and that they be brought under direct Roman rule.

It would be difficult not to see the close parallel between this stated desire (made on behalf of 'the nation') and the response which the Jews and their chief priests made a few days later when, with reference to our Lord, Pilate declared, 'Behold your King!' The Jews then 'cried out', we read, 'Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!' And when Pilate replied, 'Shall I crucify your King?' the chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar!'⁴²

And yet there was one obvious difference. For, in the case of Archelaus, there was at least some justification for the Jews' hatred. But, in contrast, the Lord Jesus could say, in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, 'They hated me without a cause'.⁴³

But, given that the delegation was sent *after* the nobleman had left to 'receive for himself a kingdom', it may well be that our Lord had in mind rather the fierce hostility shown by the Jews towards His apostles and the early church following His ascension. That is, that the persecution of believers throughout the period covered by the Book of the Acts was in effect the 'embassy' which the Jews sent 'after Him', rejecting His claims and making it clear that they did not want Him as their King. 'Thus the Jews, when Peter sets their sin before them, and declares to them that if they repent, Jesus would return, and with Him the times of refreshing,⁴⁴ reject the testimony, and, so to say, send



Stephen after Jesus⁴⁵ to testify that they would have nothing to do with Him'.⁴⁶

But there is no suggestion in our Lord's parable, of course, that the plea made by the delegation would prove successful, as events had proved (in part at least) in the case of Archelaus. For, in the event, Archelaus was not granted the whole of Herod's kingdom; Caesar 'gave the one half of Herod's kingdom to Archelaus, by the name of Ethnarch . . . Idumea, Judea, and Samaria, were parts of the ethnarchy of Archelaus'.⁴⁷ 'But as for the other half, he divided it into two parts, and gave it to two other of Herod's sons, to Philip and to Antipas'.⁴⁸

Verse 15. Having filled in the details of (i) the Receiving of the Kingdom, and of (ii) the Return of the Nobleman, this verse sets the scene for (iii) the Review of the Servants. Whereas, as we have seen, the first two of these events have a basis in historical fact, the third does not. This, the Review of the Servants, is introduced by our Lord to pinpoint the situation which will face His followers when *He* returns, bringing His reward with Him, 'to give to every one according to his work'.⁴⁹

God willing, in the next issue, we shall consider: (i) what happens to the three servants who are singled out for mention by our Lord; (ii) the significance of the minas (in particular the significance of the transfer of one of the original minas from one servant to another); and (iii) the meaning of the tantalizing words which Jesus put into the mouth of the nobleman, 'From him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him'.

To be continued

Footnotes

- 1 The title 'The Parable of the Pounds', made familiar to many by the King James Version, should more literally be 'The Parable of the Minas'. But, on account of its very familiarity, I retain the common title for the purpose of these articles.
- 2 The record of our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem stretches from the closing section of Luke chapter 9 to the middle of Luke chapter 19. Luke inserts several travel notices into his narrative of the journey; between the 'bookends' of Luke chapter 9 verse 51 and chapter 19 verse 28, see Luke 9. 53, 56; 13. 22; 17. 11; and 18. 31.
- 3 I. HOWARD MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke in the New International Greek Testament Commentary series*, page 703.
- 4 N. GELDENHUYS, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (NICNT)*, page 474.
- 5 See also Luke 12. 35-38, 42-46; 20. 9-19.
- 6 The names of the fifteen known children, together with details of their mothers can be found at http://www.livius.org/he-hg/herodians/herod_the_great02.html
- 7 Matt. 24. 3.
- 8 'To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability', Matt. 25. 15.
- 9 2 Cor. 5. 10 (literal translation).
- 10 DAVID GOODING, *According to Luke*, page 300.
- 11 Ps. 48. 2; Matt. 5. 35.
- 12 Mark 10. 33-35; cf. Matt. 20. 20-21.
- 13 Luke 18. 31-34; cf. Matt. 16. 21; 17. 22, 23; 20. 17-19.
- 14 See Mark 15. 27-28.
- 15 W. KELLY, *Introductory Lectures on the Gospels*, on Luke 19. 11-27. Compare the words of J. G. BELLETT, 'The Lord has gone to the distant heavens to transact many things. One of these is to receive for Himself a kingdom. In Daniel 7 you see the nobleman in the distant country'. (Quoted from *Notes from Meditations on Luke*.)
- 16 Luke 19. 9.
- 17 See Luke 1. 32-33.
- 18 Isa. 62. 11. (The words, 'His reward is with Him' are appropriated by the Lord Jesus in Rev. 22. 12.)
- 19 Matt. 19. 28; 20. 21.
- 20 Acts 1. 6-7. Note also the key word 'now' in our Lord's words to Pilate concerning His kingdom, John 19. 36.
- 21 LAURIE GUY, *Tyndale Bulletin* 48.1 (1997), page 126.
- 22 G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, *Parables and Metaphors of our Lord*, page 218.
- 23 WILLIAM MANSON, *The Gospel of Luke*, page 212; italics mine.

- 24 The three sons were Alexander, Aristobulus IV and Antipater III. The fate of these three sons is noted briefly in 'He shall be called a Nazarene', *Precious Seed*, 1986, Volume 37, Issues 4 and 5.
- 25 In the fourth century, the Roman philosopher Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius commented, 'When he (Augustus) heard that Herod king of the Jews had ordered boys in Syria under the age of two years to be put to death and that the king's son was among those killed, he said, "I'd rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son"', Macrobius, *The Saturnalia*, Book 2, Chapter 4, Paragraph 11. (Available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/9713913/Macrobius-Saturnalia-trans-P-Davies>.)
- 26 It was at Jericho that Herod died: FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, Chapter VI, Paragraph 5, and Chapter VIII, Paragraph 2; FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Wars of the Jews*, Book I, Chapter XXXIII, Paragraph 6. Archelaus attended his father's funeral there before setting out for Rome.
- 27 JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book XVII, Chapter VIII, Paragraph 1.
- 28 JOSEPHUS, *Wars*, Book II, Chapter I, Paragraph 1.
- 29 JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book XVII, Chapter XIII, paragraph 1. SCHÜRER links Archelaus's magnificent palace reconstruction scheme with his blood descent from Herod, who was famed for his many impressive building projects, 'Archelaus as son of Herod engaged upon great building enterprises. The palace at Jericho was restored in the most magnificent style', E. SCHÜRER, *History of the Jewish People*, Volume 1, Part 2.
- 30 H. D. M. SPENCE, *Luke in the Pulpit Commentary*.
- 31 For the Lord's use of ten as a representative number in a parable compare the 'ten virgins' of Matt. 25. 1.
- 32 I. HOWARD MARSHALL, *ibid.*, page 704.
- 33 The Greek 'drachma' was equivalent in value to the Roman 'denarius'. For the value of a denarius, see the comments on Luke chapter 10 verse 35 in my exposition of the Parable of the Good Samaritan on the centre pages of *Precious Seed International*, Volume 64, Issue 2, 2009, and the latter section of footnote 22 in my exposition of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard on the centre pages of *Precious Seed International*, Volume 65, Issue 1, 2010.
- 34 Matt. 25. 14.
- 35 JOSEPHUS, *Wars*, Book II, Chapter I, Paragraph 1.
- 36 JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book XVII, Chapter VIII, Paragraph 4.
- 37 The word 'hated' is in the imperfect tense, in contrast to the aorist tense of the word 'sent'. The use of the imperfect tense denotes the continuous and ongoing hatred of the nobleman's citizens for him.
- 38 JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book XVII, Chapter IX, Paragraphs 1-3.
- 39 The Jews were determined at all costs to frustrate Archelaus's desire to 'reign over' them; 'According to Nicolaus of Damascus, the Jewish delegation was willing to consent to Antipas' rule if direct Roman rule was impossible', HAROLD W. HOEHNER, *Herod Antipas*, page 27.
- 40 Archelaus arrived at Rome in the summer of 4 BC, received his 'kingdom' in early or middle November, and returning to Palestine shortly after. See HOEHNER, *ibid.*, pages 33-39.
- 41 JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book XVII, Chapter XI, Paragraphs 1-2. A parallel account is given in JOSEPHUS, *Wars*, Book II, Chapter VI, Paragraph 1.
- 42 John 19. 14-15. 'This was going way beyond merely rejecting Jesus. They were now repudiating Israel's messianic hope, including the messianic kingdom, and rejecting Yahweh's sovereignty over their nation', THOMAS CONSTABLE, Notes on John 19. 15.
- 43 John 15. 25, quoted from Ps. 69. 4. The expression 'their law' clearly covers the Old Testament scriptures in general; cf. John 10. 34; 12. 34. That is, their 'own scriptures condemn their position', D. A. CARSON, *The Gospel according to John*, page 527. The expression 'without a cause' translates a word signifying 'gratuitously, as a gift'; compare its use in Romans chapter 3 verse 24, where it is translated 'freely'.
- 44 Acts 3. 19-20.
- 45 Acts 7. 57-60.
- 46 J. N. DARBY, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, Luke chapters 19 and 20.
- 47 JOSEPHUS, *Wars*, Book II, Chapter VI, Paragraph 3.
- 48 JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book XVII, Chapter XI, Paragraph 4. Archelaus is mentioned by name in the New Testament only in connection with our Lord's birth. We read concerning Joseph that, 'when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee', Matt. 2. 22. (Together with Perea, Galilee had been allotted by Caesar to Antipas.) For the relevance of these details (together with the crucial last minute change made by Herod to the terms of his will) to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, see the articles 'He shall be called a Nazarene', *Precious Seed*, 1986, Volume 37, Issues 4 and 5.
- 49 Rev. 22. 12.



THESE FORTY YEARS (1969 – 2009)

On the 30th of September 2009, approximately 220 believers from the six assemblies around Botswana, came to Serowe to commemorate forty years of assembly testimony in the country. The six assemblies are located in Gaborone, Serowe, Francistown, Palapye, Selebi-Phikwe and Maun. The following provides a brief history of the development of assembly testimony in Botswana as seen through the eyes of one of the local brethren – Dr. Kgosi Mompoti from the Francistown Assembly.

'Despite some early evangelical activity it was not until the late 1960's that assembly testimony was established in Botswana. God had laid his hand on Jim and Irene Legge from Cowdenbeath in Scotland who, after initially seeking to serve the Lord in Angola, were redirected to Botswana and they arrived in the country in 1969 and settled in Serowe. Much of Jim and Irene's initial outreach centred around regular medical clinics in the surrounding area

Under God's providential care I met Jim and Irene in April 1973. I had been saved from a life of ignorance, sin and fear of witchcraft through the preaching of a young evangelist from South Africa who had visited my school in 1972. However, the truths regarding assurance of salvation and the eternal security of believers had not been impressed upon my mind at that time and consequently I had doubts about my salvation. I was also interested in getting to know about baptism, but this had not been explained to me. Thankfully, my concerns were immediately addressed when I met Jim and Irene, who in true Priscilla and Aquila fashion expounded to me the way of Christ more perfectly. It was a great joy when, in December 1973, together with another brother, Mr Lekoko, I was baptized and received into fellowship in the Serowe assembly. The assembly began with seven believers. These included a brother who used to drive three hours to the meetings and Mavis Medupe – the first convert of Jim and Irene's work.

Gospel outreach activities in neighbouring villages such as Mabeleapudi resulted in others, such as Ivan and Lenyora Mbangiwa, trusting the Lord and many of these early believers were in attendance at the anniversary conference.

During the early 1980's Jim and Irene began monthly visits to Gaborone for Bible study with a small number of believers who lived there.

It was at this time that Dr. Clark Logan and his wife Hazel arrived in Serowe from

Northern Ireland. They lived in Serowe for two years learning Setswana and helping in the medical work that Jim and Irene had commenced.

In February 1984 Clark and Hazel moved to Gaborone and finding a few believers there, their house became like Priscilla and Aquila's home - neighbours were invited to meetings in their home and outreach extended to prisons and other parts of Gaborone. A number of others trusted the Lord at this time. The Lord provided a plot of land in Broadhurst, a hall was erected and the assembly met there for the first time in July 1987.

Today there are gospel activities in neighbouring villages with a regular weekly visit to Mochudi for children's and adult meetings. A further hall has been constructed in another area of Gaborone and outreach continues in both locations among adults and children. Joy Griffiths from Eastbourne, joined the Logan's in 1990.

In 1985, Ian and Rebecca Rees arrived in Serowe, having been commended from Bath. For two years they too were in Serowe learning the language before leaving for Francistown in July 1987. There they opened a small bookshop and started a children's meeting. They were joined by a number of believers who had moved from Serowe and on the 12th June 1988 the assembly was established. In these early days a number were saved including Peter Marewa – one of our able gospel preachers – and a young sister Ontiretse who later married brother John Bandy who was commended to service from Milton Keynes assembly in England and arrived in Botswana in June 1999. The assembly benefited much from the ministry and fellowship of David and Helen McKillen, who lived in Francistown for four years before moving to Cape Town in October 2009.

In 1989, Levi and Abigail Zulu arrived from Zambia. They initially settled in Gaborone but soon moved to Selebi-Phikwe. Simultaneously, Albert Horan, originally from Northern Ireland and who worked in a Technical College in Gaborone, was also transferred to that town. Soon a meeting of believers started in the Zulu's home, where they began to break bread. Later, a plot of land was granted and a temporary shelter was built in 1992. The Zulu's returned to Zambia in 1995 but John and Margaret Rutter, who were commended from Bath, moved to Selebi-Phikwe to help in the work. In 2006, Bryan and Johanna Jenkins were commended from Wales to the work in Botswana and they also settled

in Selebi-Phikwe. There are currently around fifteen to twenty believers meeting in the assembly there.

In 1991, Sid and Karen Halsband were commended to the Lord's work from Canada. They settled in Gaborone for a while, learning Setswana. In April 1992, however, Sid became seriously ill and had to go back to Canada. Through the mercy of God, he recovered, and in 1993 they returned, eventually settling in Maun in the north of the country. A Zambian brother, Dan Nguluka, was already preaching the gospel there and there were a few believers who came from Seronga (north of Maun) for schooling. Selelo and Jane Motlaleselelo later joined these believers in 1994. The assembly started to break bread in May 1995. The Lord graciously provided a plot of land and the gospel hall was opened and dedicated to His service in March 2008.

Colin and Christine Raggett were commended from Manchester in 1992 and settled in Serowe for several years to learn the language and to help in the work there. In 1997 they started adult and children's meetings in Palapye about forty kilometres from Serowe, eventually moving there in October 1999. The gospel work grew and eventually a number trusted the Lord and the saints began breaking bread in August 2000.

The Lord has graciously sustained His work in Botswana over the years, and hearts are still being exercised regarding the work here. In December 2007, the believers in Serowe had the joy of welcoming Franklin and Jenny McIlroy, who were commended to His service from Northern Ireland. They have recently moved to Maun to assist in the work there in view of brother Sid Halsband's continuing health problems

These forty years have been a testimony of God's faithfulness. The period has seen six assemblies planted, zeal in the gospel has continued, and many children are reached with the gospel through Sunday schools, children's meetings and school access for literature distribution. Most assemblies are engaged in prison work. There has also been good teaching in the local assemblies as well as support in ministry from visiting brethren who come to Botswana from time to time.

The Lord's servants have faithfully laboured. It is our prayer that the years ahead may be characterized by maturity and development of spiritual gifts among local brethren who should be able to take the gospel to other parts of Botswana and to continue to edify the Lord's people'.





In this section of the letter Paul turns from his own circumstances to consider those of the Philippian saints. They are to demonstrate the reality of the gospel by their lifestyles whether or not he returns to them as he expected, vv. 25-26. He describes this manner of life using a familiar term from their city's privileged political position: 'conversation' in the KJV is from a verb that originally referred to behaviour as a citizen.¹ As one writer explains, 'As citizens of a heavenly realm . . . they are called not only to accept the benefit of this gospel but also to model their lives according to the pattern laid down therein . . . They are to be true to their membership of that new city "which has Christ for its king, the gospel for its law, and the Christian as its citizen", (Benoit).² Regardless of where one dwells, Christians are 'strangers and pilgrims', 1 Pet. 2. 11; this world is not their home. They live for a city and a country that are heavenly, Heb. 11. 13-16. Consequently, they ought to live differently from the lost whose aspirations are tied to this present age alone. Believers' conduct is to mirror the values of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their words and deeds must adorn the good news that they preach.

United we Stand, Divided we Fall

Regardless of whether he comes to them or not, the apostle wants to hear of their united testimony and labour for the Lord. Verse 27 sets the tone for the passage by beginning with the word 'only'. MOTYER points out its significance, 'The force of the word "only" is tremendous, as if Paul had said, "This one thing and this only". Nothing else must distract or excuse them from this great objective; it must be their all-embracing occupation whether Paul was there or not'.³ He exhorts them to stand fast and to strive; both of these activities are essential among Christians.

They are to 'stand fast in one spirit with one mind', v. 27. While some reputable commentators see this as a reference to the Holy Spirit, the parallelism of the verse seems to indicate the human spirit, defined thus by W. E. VINE, 'Whilst the spirit, in this use of the

Philippians: The Joy and Suffering

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

Section 3: Chapter 1. 27 to Chapter 2. 5

Exhortation to live worthy of the gospel amidst suffering and to embrace the mind of Christ

word, denotes the sentient element in man, that by which he perceives, reflects, feels, desires . . . here it stands for purpose, aim'.⁴ Of course, the Holy Spirit's work produces this steadfastness of spirit, so the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. The second phrase 'with one mind' rounds out the portrayal of the inner components of human beings. MOTYER clarifies the meaning, saying:

'[It] refers to the sphere of the affections and moral energies. It points to what we feel about things and how we react to them. It raises the question of what things we consider valuable and what constitutes a worth-while objective in life . . . In other words, Paul is calling them to *unanimity*, a oneness of emotion, decision and ambition'.⁵

Their inner thoughts and desires are to be unified as far as the truth is concerned. To be disunited poses a serious impediment to the labour that they are next called to do.

Combat among a Band of Brothers

'Striving' was a word that originally referred to an athletic contest. Some translate the phrase 'striving side by side' ESV. It speaks of a tremendous effort that is also marked by unity. They were to strive together for 'the faith of the gospel' – that body of doctrine that is believed by the saints.

Christianity requires exertion. One cannot sit on the sidelines in defending the gospel, nor is its proclamation an occasional hobby. The first-century church saw growth because they were unified in the Lord and diligently strove to work and witness for Him. The modern Western church often lacks genuine spiritual advancement because of the absence of such unity, as well as some believers' unwillingness to expend themselves in the Lord's service.

The difficulty of standing for Christ and striving for His gospel is further evidenced by the mention of 'adversaries', v. 28. Where God is working, Satan and his loyalists will oppose. Consistent Christians will not win any popularity contests in the world where Christ was crucified. The beautiful thing is to remember that he writes 'in nothing terrified' – 'in nothing' translating a double negative in the Greek, meaning 'by no means'. Unity in Christ gives courage to the combatants. As the saints wage war, they do so shoulder to shoulder, clad in the spiritual armour that the Captain of their salvation provides and strengthened with His power in the inner man.⁶

The opposition of their enemies only confirmed two spiritual realities: the genuineness of the Philippians' faith and eventual salvation in the Lord; the lost condition of the adversaries.



ring of the Furtherance of the Gospel **Part Five**

The correspondence between faith in Christ and persecution is well documented in scripture. The Lord Jesus describes the sifting between religious lost people and afflicted saints.⁷ The seemingly pious synagogue leaders would cast out His disciples; others would murder believers in the name of religion (a crime that is a daily occurrence in parts of the modern world). Rather than have them suppose that suffering is indicative of divine displeasure, Paul actually speaks of it as a gracious gift from God, Phil. 1. 29. One commentator summarizes the teaching of verses 29-30 in these words:

‘Thus just as Paul was more concerned about the advancement of the gospel than about his own imprisonment (1. 12-14) . . . and just as he was more concerned that Christ be magnified than that he live or die, so the Philippian Christians should concern themselves with conduct worthy of the gospel in the midst of their own time of testing’.⁸

The Lord’s Resources for unified Suffering and Striving

In chapter 2 verse 1 Greek scholars point out that ‘if’ is not conditional, but rather speaks of a definite reality. It carries the force of ‘since’ in modern English.⁹ Therefore, this word begins the list of resources that God provides for the believer for suffering and striving for His sake. First, there is ‘consolation in Christ’. VINE brings out the nuance of the phrase, ‘Here the context, both preceding and following, points to the meaning encouragement, the kindling of spiritual activity, as in Hebrews chapter 6 verse 18 RV’.¹⁰ ‘Comfort of love’ is similar, but emphasizes tenderness towards them through love.

The ‘fellowship of the Spirit’ provides further assurance, for He unites them together and enables them to withstand the onslaught of their enemies and trials, 2 Cor. 13. 14. Lastly, he brings ‘bowels and mercies’ before them. These phrases were originally anatomical terms, but came to speak metaphorically of the innermost feelings and emotions. The implication of this list is that in the midst of their difficulties, they have tremendous spiritual resources to call upon. They have no excuse for not being unified. Rather, he encourages them to complete his joy by being ‘likeminded’, v. 2. IRONSIDE’s remarks are pertinent on this expression:

‘It is very evident that Christians will never see eye to eye on all points. We are so largely influenced by habits, by environment, by education, by the measure of intellectual and spiritual apprehension to which we have attained, that it is an impossibility to find any number of people who look at everything from the same standpoint. How then can such be of one mind? The apostle himself explains it elsewhere when he says, “I think also that I have the mind of Christ”. The “mind of Christ” is the lowly mind. And, if we are all of *this* mind, we shall walk together in love, considering one another, and seeking rather to be helpers of one another’s faith, than challenging each other’s convictions’.¹¹

Christians are to be united in emotions (‘the same love’), will (‘being of one accord’), and thinking (‘of one mind’). Surely the first phrase refers to God’s love which teaches the saints to love. The second phrase emphasizes that our desires and opinions are to be conformed to the divine will. The last phrase links the believers back to the common body of truth known as the

faith. We are to agree to follow God’s way, loving what He loves, and thinking His thoughts after Him.

Conversely, nothing is to be done through ‘strife or vainglory’, v. 3. Instead, Christians are to ‘esteem others better than themselves’, or, ‘regard one another as more important than yourselves’ NASB. Verse 4 explains that they are to look out for another by considering how each one’s spiritual advantages may be helped along by mutual effort. We are indeed to be our brother’s keeper!

References

- 1 Compare chapter 3 verse 20 for its noun form; NKJV, NAS, ESV and most others render it ‘citizenship’ in that passage.
- 2 RALPH P. MARTIN, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Vol. 11. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Electronic edition (Logos). Comments in brackets are mine.
- 3 J. ALEC MOTYER, *The Message of Philippians*. The Bible speaks today. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984. Electronic edition (Logos).
- 4 W. E. VINE, *Collected Writings of W.E. Vine: Philippians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson (electronic edition, Logos), 1997.
- 5 Bibliographic info. same as note 3. Comments in brackets are mine.
- 6 Eph. 6. 10-18; Col. 1. 11; 2 Tim. 4. 17.
- 7 ‘These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me’, John 16. 1-3.
- 8 FRANK THIELMAN, *The NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan (electronic ed. Pradis), © 1995, p. 95.
- 9 For a parallel instance of this grammatical phenomenon see Colossians chapter 3 verse 1.
- 10 Same biblio. as note 4.
- 11 H. A. IRONSIDE, *Notes on the Epistle to the Philippians*. Loizeaux Brothers (electronic ed. Logos): Neptune, NJ, 1922. Kent adds: ‘Of course, this was not a command for unity at the expense of truth. It assumes that “the same thing” is also “the right thing”’.

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The Assembly as the House of God

– Its Dignity, 1 Tim. 3. 15.

The first use of the expression 'house of God' is in Genesis chapter 28 verse 17 where Jacob, having slept and dreamt, awoke to the realization, 'This is none other but the house of God'. It was marked by the presence of God.

The house of God in the New Testament is the residence of God among His people. We acknowledge His presence in the midst whenever we gather in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word translated 'house' is used in verses 4, 5 and 12 in the sense of 'household'. Elders and deacons are responsible for the running of their domestic households. They regulate what goes on in their homes. This experience fits them for taking care of the assembly. The 'house of God' figure teaches us that this is the place where God resides and that our behaviour is subject to the regulation of God through the elders.

It is also expressive of relationships; the elders and deacons are dealing in the home with family, that is, wives and children. Similarly, the house of God includes those who are related to us spiritually and all related to the Lord. In Matthew chapter 12 verses 48 to 50, the Lord asks, 'Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? . . . Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven the same is my brother, and sister, and mother'.

The house of God is where God abides, elders administer, and all are bound together in affectionate relationship.

The Assembly as the Pillar

– Its Testimony, 1 Tim. 3. 15.

Metaphors of the

In the quotation 'the church . . . the pillar and ground of the truth', two architectural figures are brought together to identify the role of the assembly relative to 'the truth', that is, the revealed mind and will of God in His word.

As a pillar, the assembly bears the weight of the edifice of truth. The Greek word *stulas* indicates that which supports weight: load-bearing.

A pillar in scripture was also a landmark. People should know where to go in order to discover

pillar at Bethel. The assembly bears testimony to the faithfulness of God in preserving 'the truth' up until this present moment of time.

The ground, *hadraioma*, is the buttress that supports the pillar. The assembly should be both the beacon of the truth and the bulwark of the truth.

By
JOHN GRIFFITHS
Port Talbot,
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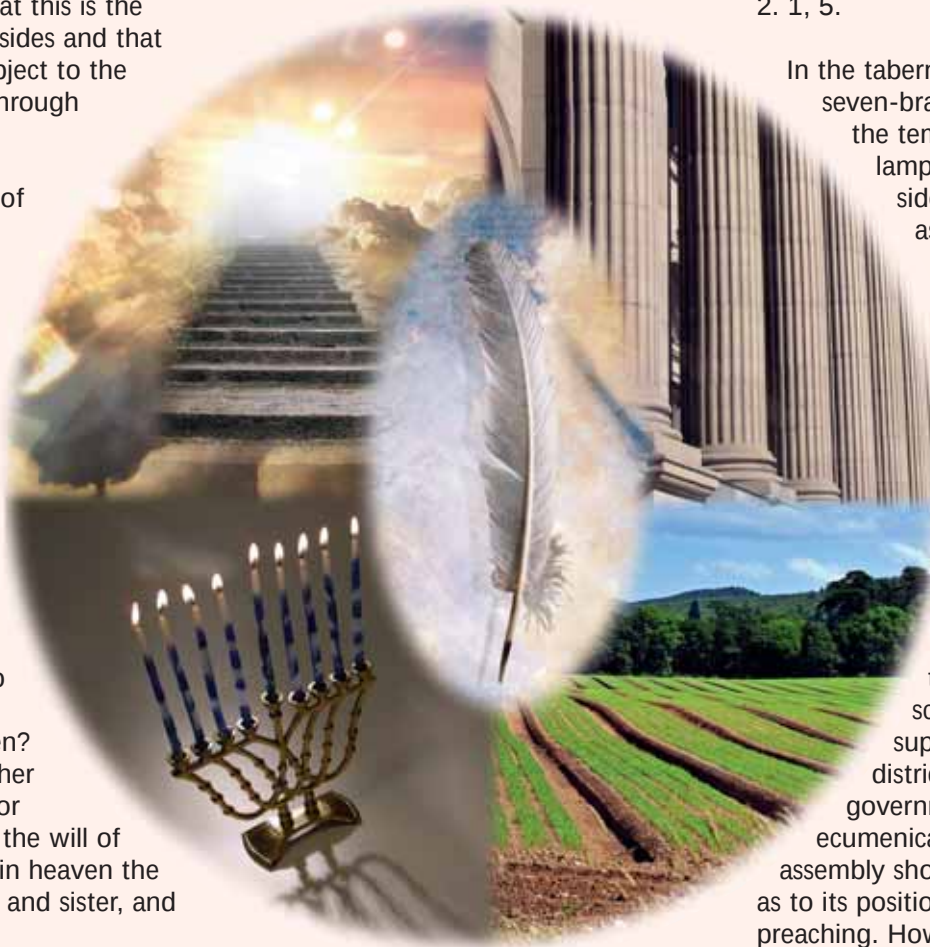
Is your local church spreading the truth and supporting the truth?

The Assembly as the Lampstand

– Its Autonomy, Rev. 1. 12, 20; 2. 1, 5.

In the tabernacle there was one seven-branched lampstand; in the temple there were ten lampstands (five on each side), but every assembly is represented by a single, separate lampstand. Each assembly stands on its own base and is autonomous. No assembly has jurisdiction over another. Any similarity is based on the use of a common text book, the Bible. The scriptures do not support any ideas of a district oversight, central government or ecumenicalism. Ideally, the assembly should be self-sufficient as to its position, practice and preaching. However, this does not rule out the inter-fellowship of assemblies.

The stars/lampstands indicate a night scene, the period of Christ's physical absence when moral and spiritual darkness prevail in our world. The use of seven assemblies



'the truth', that is, to the assembly which is seeking to be obedient to the New Testament pattern.

A pillar was also a testimony to what had taken place at a given location, for instance, Jacob raised a





Church

illustrates completeness and fullness of testimony and the practical teaching contained in them is suited to the needs of assemblies today.

The material of which they are made, gold, speaks of the glorious nature of the assembly 'purchased with his own blood', and its exceptional value to God. If only we valued the assembly aright!

The lampstand gave light by burning oil. The power of testimony in the assembly is totally dependent on the Holy Spirit (oil being a type of the Holy Spirit). The light from the lampstands is illuminating the person of the Lord Himself. Our testimony in this dark world of sin is to make Christ visible.

Christ in the midst of the lampstands is the One whose appraisal enables Him to say, 'I know'. Nothing escapes His gaze – service, suffering or motives.

Each lampstand is intended to reveal the glory and autonomy of the assembly testimony – how is your assembly doing?

The Assembly as the Field

– Its Husbandry, 1 Cor. 3. 9.

Paul and Apollos are planting and watering whilst looking to God to give the increase, that is, the fruit. Where is the scene of their labours? In a cultivated field! This equates with the local assembly at Corinth. The word for 'husbandry' indicates a cultivated or tilled field and can be used equally well of a vineyard or garden. Old Testament passages will help to fill out the brief reference here: for example, the field, Ruth 2. 2; the garden, S. of S. 4. 12; the vineyard, Prov. 24. 30.

The lesson being taught is that the sphere of my labour for the Lord should be in the context of the assembly. Labour implies hard graft and causes a sweat to be raised. Am I committed in this way?

The Assembly as the Epistle

– Its Authenticity, 2 Cor. 3. 2, 3.

The opening paragraph of chapter 3 presents us with contrasting teachers, the true and the troublesome. Paul counters the false accusers by making it clear that the troublesome teachers have only a letter of commendation from Jerusalem to support their claims. He and his fellow-workers, on the other hand, can point to the Corinthian assembly and say, 'Ye are our epistle' or letter of commendation!

Enshrined in his heart, they are the public proof positive of the genuineness of his claims to apostleship and the service of God. They are Paul's epistle, as he was the instrument used in planting the Corinthian assembly. They are also 'the epistle of Christ' in that they are the living testimony to the work of Christ in their hearts and lives. The language Paul uses would enable the Judaizing party to see the superiority of the grace of God over the law, of the new covenant over the old. The commendation is:

Not on parchment but on their hearts;

Not for a clique in the church but for all to see;

Not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God;

Not written in cold, unfeeling stone but in hearts which are warm and alive;

Not part of the old covenant but of the new one.

The assembly is the living, visible evidence, for all to see of the work of Christ in the heart and the work of God's servants who planted it. What kind of commendation does your assembly offer to the Saviour who purchased it, and the servants who planted it?

Reference

- 1 The field is not the world in this passage as it is in the parable of Matthew chapter 13.

JOHN GRIFFITHS is an elder in the assembly at Port Talbot, Wales. He ministers the word of God throughout the UK. This is his first article for *Precious Seed International*. He is a retired headteacher.

Accursed of God

By **JACK HAY** Perth, Scotland

How amazing that the Lord Jesus should be 'made a curse for us'! The threat of judgement hung over every lawbreaker, Gal. 3. 10, and the penalty had to be executed. To redeem His people from that threat, He became accountable and bore the promised wrath. To make that obvious, His death involved Him being 'hanged on a tree', Acts 5. 30. Thus, He was 'made a curse for us', Gal. 3. 13, for 'cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree'.

The background to the title is the stubborn and rebellious son, Deut. 21. 23. City elders would hear the parents' complaints, and then there was the stoning. As a further indignity, the offender could be hung on a tree. We never read of it happening! Hophni and Phineas were tolerated, 1 Sam. 3. 13, Absalom was pampered, 2 Sam. 13. 39, and the prodigal was pardoned, Luke 15. 20. The Son of God was neither stubborn, 'I delight to do thy will', Ps. 40. 8, nor rebellious, 'I was not rebellious', Isa. 50. 5: nor was He disobedient for He was declared to be 'obedient unto death', Phil. 2. 8. Approachable and sociable, He came 'eating and drinking', Matt. 11. 19, but He was no glutton or drunkard, and yet He was hung on a tree.

Treason or treachery occasioned the hanging of the chief butler, Ahithophel, Haman and Judas; deservedly, the curse came upon them. The Son of God was loyal, kind and true, and yet He was made a curse. Though He was never stoned at the city gate, He was taken there, for He 'suffered without the gate', Heb. 13. 12. Rulers at the gate were hostile, Ps. 69. 12, as were the drunkards, at the opposite end of the social scale. Unlike the offender of Deuteronomy chapter 21 verse 23, He was hung *alive* on the tree. We worship as we ponder His willingness to experience such physical anguish, but, especially, the fact that He became a curse 'for us'.

Extracted from *Day by Day Divine Titles* published by Precious Seed Publications.





Personalities in the Pastoral Epistles (3)

Those who were a delight to Paul: **LOIS and EUNICE** (continued)



Eunice and her mother Lois lived in Lystra in southern Galatia (modern-day Turkey). They were Jewesses, but, by the time we read about them, Eunice had married a Greek and had a grown-up, but uncircumcised, son called Timothy, Acts 16. 1. According to Old Testament teaching, Eunice should not have married a person who had no interest in the things of God.¹ The fact that Timothy was not circumcised might indicate that his father's permission was withheld, thus demonstrating his antagonism to spiritual truth. However, there seems to have been a concession with regard to Timothy's name, which means 'honouring God'.

However wrong Eunice might have been with regard to not marrying a Jew, it seems that the birth of her son

By
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Timothy reminded her of her obligations and, although not circumcising him, she does ensure that he had a spiritual name and that he, as soon as possible, got to know the Old Testament, probably with his grandmother's encouragement. As Paul said to Timothy much later, 'From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures', 2 Tim. 3. 15. The scriptural injunction to Jewish children was 'Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father', Prov.

4. 1. However, as the father seems to have had no interest in spiritual things, the mother fulfilled the obligation to 'teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up', Deut. 11. 19. The end result was that Timothy could eventually say

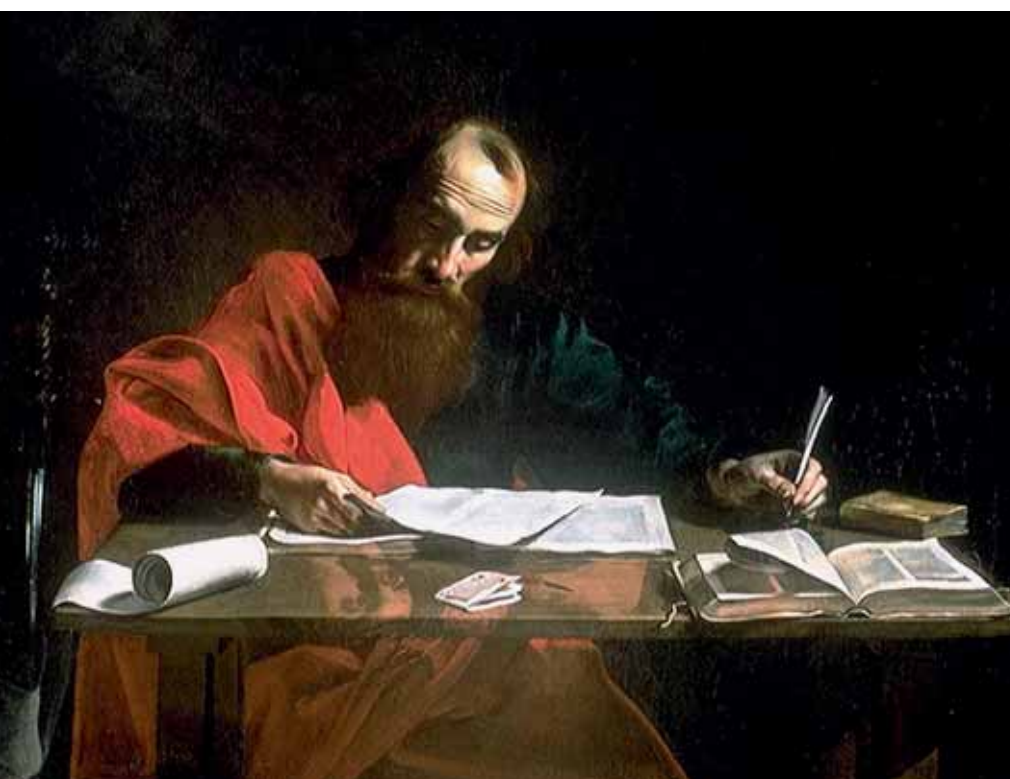
with the psalmist, 'O God, thou hast taught me from my youth', Ps. 71. 17. Eunice and Lois were probably converted during Paul and Barnabas' first visit to Lystra, on the so-called first missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas then travelled east to Derbe, but visited Lystra again on their return journey, Acts 14. 6, 21. Eunice and Lois were converted before Timothy, 2 Tim. 1. 5, who therefore might have been converted on the return journey. However, by the time Paul and Barnabas left Lystra, they knew for sure about the real and sincere (unfeigned) Christian faith of Lois, Eunice and Timothy.

The lesson we should learn is that, even if we have made mistakes, it is possible to do what we can to rectify them, with the Lord's help. What a great support she and her mother would have been to Timothy, who was commended as a disciple and well reported of by the local Christians, Acts 16. 1-2. Even though she would lose his company, Eunice was no doubt delighted that God was using her son in His service and that he was living up to his name and 'honouring God' when he went along with the apostle Paul as a helper in the work, v. 3.

Reference

- 1 Deut. 7. 3; Josh. 23. 12-13; Ezra. 9. 2; cp. 2 Cor. 6. 14.

HOWARD BARNES spent his working life in scientific research - latterly as a research professor in the University of Aberystwyth, Wales. He now spends his time preaching and teaching at home and abroad. He also writes extensively and has a special interest in speaking in schools. He is in fellowship in the assembly at Westhoughton, England.





The Good Shepherd in Action Part Two

The climax of that scene following the death of Lazarus, John chapter 11, is that divine eyes shed human tears! It was but a foretaste of the 'strong crying and tears', Heb. 5. 7, that were to be His lot. Amazingly, He then cries with a loud voice after prayer to His Father; 'Lazarus, come forth!' John 11. 43. With the hymn-writer, we might join in our worship now, 'Death could not keep its prey, Jesus my Saviour. He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord'. This episode was a precious foretaste of the certainty of His own resurrection when He would become the firstfruits of a mighty harvest.

It is not surprising, therefore, that we find the good Shepherd as guest at the table of the united family in Bethany in John chapter 12. What a reunion that must have been! For a visitor to that supper, who was not familiar with the previous events, to be told that the man Lazarus, sitting there in perfect health and looking as he always had been, was, in recent times, dead and decaying for four days in a tomb would have been extremely difficult to believe. But this is a demonstration, however limited, of what abundant life in Christ brings. Not only satisfying in the present, but the assurance of being like Him and seeing Him as He is for all eternity, sinless and deathless. We listen to His own assurance, 'Because I live you shall live also'. As we join in spirit in the celebrations in Bethany, we could say that it is not only a house of **feasting**, but also a house of **favour**; their Lord was present. This makes it a house of **fellowship** too; full family relationships have been restored. But soon it would be a house of **fragrance**! Let us observe it again as though we had been there, 'Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment', v. 3. There is every possibility that John, the recorder of the incident, and the other disciples were present. We should note verse 2, 'Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him', a clear indication that others, unnamed, were present. As they all eventually left the home that day, the fragrance that permeated their clothes would travel with them. This begs the question, how is it with us? Indwelt by the Holy Spirit, assured of the Lord's continual presence, are we spreading abroad the fragrances of love, gentleness and goodness, to mention but a few of the graces available to us, as we walk and work in a polluted world?

We conclude this study with a brief reference

By
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to the following chapter 13. In one sense, we move from a consideration of the actions of the good Shepherd to that of the great Shepherd, Heb. 13, demonstrating a foretaste of His present ministry, washing the feet of His disciples. Recently, I have pondered the implication of verse 12, 'So after he had washed their feet'. Twelve pairs of feet! How long it would take their Master to do this is uncertain, but possibly at least one hour, and on His knees! What devotion! I wonder, too, what the inner thoughts of the disciples were as they waited their turn. We certainly know Simon Peter's reaction and the profound lessons we learn from it. But what of Judas? It seems clear from the context that he had his feet washed. Perhaps, as it took place, he did not fully realize the implications of what was to follow. It was only after receiving the sop, v. 27, that Satan entered into him and propelled him relentlessly to the betrayal of the One he had followed for over three years and, beyond the betrayal, to suicide. What an awful end! From the intimacy of 'heaven' in the upper room to the eternal darkness of a lost eternity!

Looking at this event, what practical lesson can we learn? We recognize that while the laying aside of His garments speaks of His humility and grace in incarnation, it surely directs our minds to the right hand of the Majesty on high where He ministers to us with intercession and advocacy; intercession for the frail ability of our humanity, and advocacy when we sin and truly confess it. There is, however, the underlying truth of cleansing from the defilements of the way on a continuous basis. We ask ourselves, what did their Master mean when he counselled, 'If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should also do as I have done to you', vv. 14-15? How can we in some way fulfil His command in this present day? As we reflect on all that He, the great Shepherd of the sheep, has done and is doing for us, perhaps we could begin by picking up the telephone, writing and sending a letter or knocking on a believer's door and doing a little bit of 'feet washing'.

DREW CRAIG has for the last 35 years been in the assembly formed in Brooklands, Dundonald, Belfast, which commenced as an outreach from the Gospel Hall in Dundonald. The Lord has blessed the work with many conversions and baptisms over the years and during this time Drew has been occupied with preaching, teaching and shepherding in the assembly.





facebook

– a good thing or a bad thing?

By **JIM ARMSTRONG**
Stevenston, Scotland

The medium of social networking has taken the on-line community on a journey most would never have imagined. Twenty years ago, when we started to discover the Internet on our dial up connections, little did we know just how much could be done and accessed from a PC anywhere in the world.

Our reach and influence, as a result of applications like Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, etc., is extensive. They are a window into what we think is important and what we spend our time on – a window which means our lives are on public display all the time.

So, is this a good thing or a bad thing? Before I attempt to answer this question let me pick up on the dangers. There are two key risks. The first is a matter of personal testimony and its effectiveness and the second is about associations and the damage these can do.

Personal Testimony

There is nothing more damaging to Christianity than someone saying they are a follower of the Lord Jesus but their life and pursuits tell a very

different story. Each of us has a great opportunity to witness for Christ every day by what we do and what we say. Unfortunately, if our hearts and minds are on other things we will be just like the salt that in Matthew chapter 5 had lost its saltiness. If I am living for self, it is not my Facebook page that is the problem. If my ambitions are elsewhere my page will simply reflect this. Perhaps my page is more honest than the life I try to show when I attend meetings!

Associations

For any individuals seeking to live for Christ and using Facebook, this is a key area that needs constant attention. Anyone I have as a 'friend' has access to my home page. They could leave an unsavoury photograph or comment and this is there for others to see and read. Three things are important in relation to this:

- i) I control who my friends are on my page.
- ii) I can delete anything that I do not agree with.
- iii) The privacy and control settings on Facebook allow me to restrict what can be done.

If you are using Facebook make sure you are familiar with your page security and workings. Also check your page at least daily and remove anything that may damage your testimony.

So what are the good points about Facebook?

As you read this article you may be asking yourself this same question! Let me take you back to Matthew chapter 5 verse 16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven'.

If there was ever a day where this world needs to see individuals allowing Christ to shine through their lives it is the day in which we live. If the lost and

needy of this world see Jesus in my life, in my words, in my ambitions, in my Facebook page this is a good thing, not a bad thing.

Over the last year or so I have used Facebook for personal witness and evangelism. It has allowed me to fulfil the following:

For meetings we hold in our assembly, I can invite as many as 200 each time to the meeting. In some meetings where others have taken up the invite and passed them on, as many as 500 have been given a personal invite.

It has allowed me to make contact with past friends and witness to them using verses and personal invites to things. It also allows me to endorse my witness to colleagues at work as they read my page and see the things I am involved in.

It allows me to quote God's word on their pages on a regular basis. If we believe that faith comes through the word, I can't think of anything more valuable.

Over the last year I know of scores of people who have attended my assembly as a direct result of invites to meetings through Facebook.

So let me go back to the question. Is Facebook/social networking a good thing or a bad thing? The answer will depend on your viewpoint. If you are leading a double life, I think it is a very bad thing – it allows you to further damage your testimony. If you are unsure of the technology and how social networking works you should probably avoid it. If you are comfortable with how Facebook works and you are seeking to witness where you can, it is a powerful medium that allows you to 'let your light shine before men'.

JIM ARMSTRONG is in fellowship in Townhead Christian Fellowship in Stevenston, Scotland. He works in a bank and is married to Elma.



So, You want to be Contemporary?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Is all change good? It is hoped that this article will help us to consider what is worldly and therefore inappropriate in the context of the spiritual.

Society and culture seem to be in a process of constant change. To be contemporary and in step with the times is almost to be dated, because very soon change will come, especially in a culture which denies absolute truth and believes all is relative. Styles of clothing change from season to season. Advertising and sales feed on change. The message is that one must keep up with the times and the latest trends. To appear old-fashioned is a cardinal sin. But, is all change good?

Many such changes may be largely cosmetic, but who wants to drive a car that looks old? Ethical values are changing, fuelled by a philosophy of relativism. Society used to frown on divorce; marriage was honourable and should be preserved. A sexual liaison outside of marriage was condemned. Abortion and homosexuality were viewed as criminal acts. That which was once abhorred by decent society is now accepted and legal. Similarly, churches are under pressure to change and to become contemporary.

The roles of men and women are being changed. Women are now being ordained as ministers and priests. Some parts of Christendom are even ordaining homosexuals and lesbians to be their spiritual leaders. Music is changing; many churches now have disposed of their hymn books and sing choruses and catchy ditties, accompanied by 'contemporary music' and a rock band. It is felt that to attract people a church must become flexible, flowing with the tide of contemporary thought and practice. But, is all change bad?

Ahaz became a king in the southern kingdom of Judah about 735 BC, reigning in Jerusalem near the temple of the Lord. 'He . . . reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem and did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father', 2 Kgs. 16. 2. He chose idolatry and the vile customs of the heathen around him, even to the abominable practice of child sacrifice. Yet, he still wanted to worship in the temple and be religious. He was surely open to being contemporary and in step with the times. Ahaz went to Damascus to meet with Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, a rising world power. While there, he saw an altar

By **DONALD L. NORBIE** Greeley, Colorado, USA

that caught his eye; it was beautiful and more up-to-date than the altar in the Lord's temple. After all, that altar was more than 200 years old, hardly contemporary! 'And King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the design of the altar and its pattern according to all its workmanship. Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus', 2 Kgs. 16. 10-11 NKJV.

Ahaz now began to worship at the new altar. He still kept the old altar, but moved it aside. The new altar was now the one used for sacrifice and offering; it was the centre of attention. The old altar was still kept as a museum piece, a memento of the past, but it was no longer functioning. He also made other modifications to the laver and the items used in worship. He was determined to modernize things!

It is instructive to read the divine view of this activity. God pleaded with His people through the prophets, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers', 2 Kgs. 17. 13 NKJV. Yet they persisted in their rebellion against the Lord and God finally judged them. In time, both the northern and southern kingdoms were destroyed.

One might wonder, what does this have to do with the churches today? The human heart is the same and there is always the desire to fit in with the world, to be modern and contemporary. The world has its altars and religions but our God has laid out a different path for His people. The standard for our worship, ethics and life-style is not to be contemporary society. The church is to be different, to be salt in a decaying culture, to be light in a world of moral darkness.

God is unchangeable and His word reflects His immutable character. Let believers then look to God's word for guidance and direction in life. The moral conduct God desires is the same in every age. Abortion is always wrong; sex outside marriage is sin. Sexual perversion in its varied forms is always an abomination to God; it is contrary to nature, Rom. 1. 26-27.

God is holy and He desires His people to be holy. His instructions for the churches are 'the commandments of the Lord', 1 Cor. 14. 37. The different roles of the sexes are clearly laid out, 1 Cor. 14; 1 Tim. 2. The apostolic churches emphasized four

activities in their meetings: teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer, Acts 2. 42. Like the four legs of a chair, they are all needed for strength and stability!

The Lord's Supper must have a central place with opportunity for brethren to lead God's people in worship, functioning as priests in God's assembly, 1 Pet. 2. 5. The early churches also emphasized the preaching and teaching of God's word. Good teaching will inform people about the nature of God, the blessings of salvation and the character God desires in His people. From teaching will flow fellowship, times of rich, fervent worship, praise, and earnest prayer. Good teaching will be followed by exhortation to obey God's word. How important that the churches stress the need for teaching!

It is not always a good sign if an assembly decides to organize the time, appointing men to take part. It can be an indication of spiritual deadness. Some have now relegated 'worship time' to a few minutes at the close of the preaching service. Where is the exercise of heart on the part of God's people? Is the clergy system coming into assemblies in some areas? People expect a church to have a 'pastor' and will be attracted to such a group. The question is asked: shouldn't we conform to the successful churches with large congregations? We might call them 'pastor', 'resident worker', or 'teaching elder' but the work is the same. Is it a confession of spiritual laziness on the part of the saints?

Ahaz chose to modify the worship of God in the temple. He was impressed with the contemporary worship around Israel. As companies of God's people, we need to get back to the scriptures and to seek to emulate the fervency and simplicity of the early churches. This is not to advocate human tradition, which can be equally deadening, but there must always be a fresh study of God's word and an eager submission to it. Beware of becoming contemporary; it will soon become outdated. God states, 'But on this one I will look, on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word', Isa. 66. 2 NKJV.

DONALD NORBIE is in fellowship with the assembly in Greeley, Colorado, and is a commended full-time worker. A regular contributor to *Precious Seed International* and other assembly magazines, his ministry is widely appreciated throughout North America and the UK.





Community Outreach on the West Coast of Canada

By **DAVID CHESNEY** Langley, BC, Canada

Vancouver and the surrounding communities on the west coast of Canada form a diverse multi-lingual society. A recent article in the *Vancouver Sun* noted that – ‘Many high schools have student populations speaking more than 75 non-English languages at home - Four out of ten of Metro Vancouver’s 2.1 million residents now belong to a visible minority - Student bodies at UBC, SFU and Kwantlen Polytechnic (the three main universities) are roughly 70-per-cent visible minorities - Scores of ethnic newspapers and TV stations report in dozens of Languages’. Langley is currently home to over 100 Karen refugee families from Thailand. All this makes it particularly challenging to reach out into the community with the gospel. At the Langley Gospel Hall, in addition to our regular meetings and door-to-door visitation, various successful avenues for presentation of the gospel are now used.

ESL (English as a Second Language)

English lessons are provided on Tuesday evenings from September to May. Normally, between six and fifteen people come each night, sometimes more. Apart from language instruction and social interaction, a clear simple gospel message is presented. Over the years several have been saved and one or two have been added to the assembly.

Community Events

Each summer we set up a 10' x 10' tent booth at the Canada Day and International Day celebrations in Langley. These are two-day events attended by thousands of local residents. We are able to hand out over 500 gospel



literature packages, in up to twenty different languages at each event. We are fortunate to have in the Vancouver area the International Bible House Publishing Society (an assembly-based ministry) and they supply us with good Christian literature in many different languages. Their website is at <http://www.ibhgospel.com/>. The tent incorporates a special Kids Zone which we constantly try to update to make it as informative and interesting as possible. Last year the zone included a hands-on interactive story of creation while this year it featured a walk-in model of Noah’s Ark which proved a real success

Kids Day Camp

A week of special children’s programmes is held each summer. This year was particularly successful due to the hard work and imaginative approach of our younger members. Over one hundred children came with an average daily attendance of about seventy children and parents. These contacts are followed up with invitations to Sunday School and

special events throughout the year.

Pacific National Exhibition (PNE)

Langley also assists along with other local assemblies in the Vancouver Gospel Tent at the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE). This major event is held in Vancouver for seventeen days in August with over 800,000 in attendance. Spearheaded by Dave Smith of the Deep Cove assembly, this work has been carried on faithfully since 1973 and has borne much fruit in contacts made, souls saved, additions made to the local assemblies, and even in assemblies planted elsewhere.

One remarkable example is that of David Seed who was faithfully witnessed to by David Smith at the PNE for several years. David was eventually saved; his wife Rosa who came from Puerto Vallarta was also saved. Rosa’s mother came to visit, and was saved. As a direct result Rosa, David Smith, his wife Nina, and David Alves went down to Puerto Vallarta. There, helped by Doug Reid, a missionary from Costa Rica, house meetings were held. More souls were saved and so great an interest kindled that David Alves and his wife Lois were commended to the work in Mexico. Their labours were blessed and an assembly was formed in Puerto Vallarta one year to the day from the first meeting there. Branching out of that original work another thirteen assemblies have been planted throughout Mexico.

The great commission has never been changed, ‘Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel’. Here, on the west coast of Canada, we don’t have to go very far. The world has come to us.





REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK



ENGLAND

Devon

The Gospel Hall at **Teignmouth** has been in existence for almost 200 years. It is quite a small assembly, with approximately fifteen attending the Breaking of Bread service each Lord's Day. The majority of the saints are elderly. However, they are still actively maintaining the assembly principles contained in the word of God.

There is a youth club held every other Friday with mostly young boys attending, a number of which show a keen interest in the scriptures and some also attend the annual Kingfisher Christian Camp at Cheddar. A couple of the youngsters also attend other Bible Study weekends organized by the Kingfisher Christian Trust throughout the year. The youth club has also been a useful tool in encouraging other adults into the Chapel, and, on occasions, there have been more adults present than children. It is great to see everybody listening with interest to the epilogues/gospel message given at each session.

Other activities taking place at the Chapel on a weekly basis include: a devoted number of sisters and occasional visitors taking part in a sewing and crocheting group, called the 'Sew & Sew's'. The work undertaken during these sessions is for the eventual benefit of the mission field, and the assembly supports a number of missionaries on different continents. Once a year, on the first Saturday in May, a Missionary Conference is held and the work that has been undertaken by these ladies is on display for all the visitors to see. There is also a Coffee Morning held every Tuesday as an outreach to encourage others into the Chapel, hopefully to befriend and to share the gospel. Tuesday afternoons see a group of ladies meet for the Ladies Hour, where a visiting speaker will preach the gospel.

On Wednesday evenings a Ministry and Prayer Meeting is held. The first

Wednesday of the month is dedicated to a Missionary Prayer Meeting. A visiting speaker attends the other Wednesdays in the month, and each year, for approximately six months, set topics are studied.

Recent courses have been, 'The Basics of the Faith' and, 'Eschatology – Things concerning the last days'. October saw the start of a series on 'Aspects of the Tabernacle in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ'.

Their Annual Conference was held on the first weekend in September and David West ministered on the Saturday, and again on the Sunday and Monday.

In the last twelve months the assembly has been encouraged by a small number of unsaved from time to time joining the Gospel Meetings on a Lord's Day afternoon. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will work in these individuals and that lives will be changed forever.

Cornwall

A follow-up report from the saints at **St. Austell** reads, 'In the Lord's goodness we were able to open the new building to the public for a week before the actual Opening Meetings. We saw a good response from many of the neighbours and passers-by who had seen the building slowly take shape. The opening for believers was on Saturday 20th September and a full hall of saints from Devon and Cornwall, as well as elsewhere, was evidence of the sincere and godly concern of many for the work. It was a Thanksgiving and Dedication Meeting the theme of which was 'The joy of the Lord shall be your strength', Neh. 8. 10. Roy Hill gave some challenging and suited ministry which was much appreciated. The following Monday was used as an evening outreach

Seymour Gospel Hall's new building



meeting to all the contractors and professionals involved in the project and friends and neighbours. Even the local Chief Planning Officer was interested enough to attend. The hall was full again and very useful contacts made.

The following months have seen all the four youth and children's works well supported and interest maintained from some local believers as well as unsaved people. One mum from the Parent and Toddlers group has been saved and a Bible Teaching meeting arranged weekly for several of the other mums that have requested further help in finding out what the Bible teaches. The Mayor of St. Austell requested a visit as she had seen and admired the building as she passed by. This resulted in both her and several of her staff staying for almost an hour to talk with us and to view the new facilities.

There is one more payment to be made for the contract to be completed financially and so we thank the Lord for His faithfulness according to promise to meet the need as it has arisen. We are indebted to the faithful generosity of so many believers who have given so sacrificially to see the project through. We anticipate some baptisms and additions to the assembly in the days to come. Praise Him'.

Yorkshire

The 15th annual residential Yorkshire Bible Study Week was held at Sneaton Castle Centre, **Whitby**, with Ian Jackson responsible for conducting the meetings. Excellent Bible Readings on Romans chapter 8 and ministry on the Red Sea and Jordan crossings were helpful and challenging to the group of around 100 believers from all parts of the UK and some from Canada. The warmth of fellowship was also greatly appreciated.

Somerset

The Gospel Hall in **Pensford** (www.pensfordgospelhall.org.uk) has taken a special interest in the children who attend the local primary school. Some years ago they contacted the charity 'Bibles for Children' and





sponsored a colour Bible for every child in the school. As an ongoing commitment each year since then, the children joining the school are presented with a copy of the Bible and those leaving at the end of the year are given a Rainbow Bible. This year the Bibles were presented at the school by Philip Veater of the assembly and there was opportunity for a short message about the Bible and its message of salvation. The believers at Pensford welcome the opportunity of getting Bibles into homes in the village and pray that the work will be blessed of God. Others who might be interested in doing a similar work should contact Bibles for Children at www.biblesforchildren.org.uk or telephone 01761 471169.



Some of the children with their Bibles.

The work at the **Coleford** assembly, near Bath, continues steadily. In October they held a week-long 'Children's Special' for an hour each evening. This again saw good numbers attending. Please pray that the seed sown on these occasions will result in a harvest in the lives of all who heard the gospel. The series ended with a prize-giving and family service to which a number of the parents came.

The weekly outreach of the Carers and Toddlers continues with twenty or so mothers coming and the recent extension to the hall, which virtually doubled the size of the facilities, has helped in facilitating the expansion of this work. There is a great need for further helpers - sometimes the three sisters involved find it difficult to cope. Some of the children attending have been introduced to the Sunday school via this work.

The Ladies Meeting continues with ten to fifteen ladies from the local area coming along each week.

A Friday Club for youngsters over 10 years of age is held on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Fridays in the month; this has seen an increase in interest with a young lad making a profession and being keen to

attend other meetings. One of his friends is also showing interest.

The assembly has a slot on local radio for a short message - a young brother in the meeting takes responsibility for this. Special outreach activities are also announced. Literature distribution continues regularly, with invitations to the meetings - always accompanied by a short gospel message on the reverse of the leaflet. Please pray that these messages will be read by all who receive them.

Hertfordshire

In **St. Albans**, Peter Mead has recently led six sessions entitled 'Training for Preachers'. The main aims were to improve the preaching and general communication as well as to encourage good quality feedback on preaching. Topics covered included picking the right passage and studying it effectively, identifying the main idea of the text and building a bridge to your audience. There was also an opportunity for two people to preach each evening and to receive detailed feedback.

Staffordshire

The Ayrshire Bible Exhibition was at the Gospel Hall, **Winhill**, for two weeks in early November. A number of schools were invited and the exhibition was moved into other schools to enable children from a range of classes to visit. Robert Gibson was assisted by believers from the assembly in taking groups of youngsters around and, although there was a surprising degree of ignorance about the Bible, it was encouraging to see so many children exposed to the word of God and taking gospel material away with them.

The exhibition was open during the evening of November 2nd and a few people from the village attended.

Peter Brandon (Bedford) was with the believers at **Trent Vale**, Stoke-on-Trent, in October for a few meetings. There was an encouraging attendance, including quite a number that had been contacted and transported by local believers. The gospel was faithfully and powerfully preached and there was a genuine sense of the work of the Spirit of God in the lives of a number who attended. Please pray for fruit in the salvation of souls.

Nottinghamshire

A further week of gospel activity was held in **Kirkby-in-Ashfield** during October. Stephen Baker (Liverpool) was the evangelist, with support from the local believers. It was encouraging that a week of fine weather enabled an open-air gospel to be preached in the town centre precinct every day and over 2,500 tracts to be distributed around the doors. A number of new contacts were made and there was a pleasing response to the Senior Citizens' Tea. However, no one from the town attended the meeting in the hall, although there was good support from neighbouring assemblies.

On the Saturday some of the young people from the local assemblies supported the outreach in the town and a further witness was borne. The opposition that had been experienced in previous days was not present on the Saturday because of the larger numbers present.

Prayer would be valued as the small company of nine believers explore other ways of getting the gospel to sinners in the town, including the use of a market stall with free literature available.

Gloucestershire

The assembly at Bethany Gospel Hall in the Hesters Way Estate, **Cheltenham**, held their Annual Conference Weekend in October. There was a time of thanksgiving with reflection and rejoicing in God's faithfulness in the afternoon and the evening ministry from Ken Rudge and Ceri Reese.

Sussex

The third weekend in September was the 6th annual **Eastbourne** Young People's Weekend. The weekend starts with a time of fellowship on the Friday evening and then continues all day Saturday with Bible Studies in the morning and afternoon followed by a Bible Reading, which is open to all, on the Saturday evening. This year just over sixty young people studied 'Fulfilling the will of God in your life'. Ian Jackson was the speaker and the areas covered included, 'Being filled with the knowledge of His will', 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification', and 'He that doeth the will of God abideth forever'. The evening Bible reading was in Titus



Eastbourne Young People's Weekend.

chapter 2 and dealt with 'Adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things'.

London

The believers at **Clifton Hall, South Norwood**, were encouraged as they held meetings in October. Using a large wall chart, the meetings went through the dispensations and, although it was a gospel outreach, the local believers also found it helpful. Whilst, initially, numbers attending were not great, on the Sunday a man came in, called Anthony, who said he had been attracted by the title of the leaflet *Big Questions*. He said that there are some big questions in life and that is why he had come. He seemed quite interested and came again on Monday and Tuesday. A sister recently received into fellowship, after many years of backsliding, brought her eighteen-year-old son. This sister also brought a friend, Marsha. Another lady came after being contacted the day before while receiving tracts outside the hall. The two young sons of a couple in the assembly were present; the saints are not sure if either of them is saved. Another man, who has attended the ministry meeting for many years, attended every evening; again, the saints are not sure where he stands in relation to eternal life.



The believers at **Inverurie** have recently had great joy in commending to full-time work, Graeme Smith and his wife. Graeme is a teacher who, eighteen months ago, started to work

two days per week bringing the gospel to children in primary schools in the North East of Scotland. They felt that the Lord was calling them to full-time service and, in fellowship with the assembly, commenced full-time service in August 2010. They take school assemblies, Bible Alive and similar studies, camp work and children's meetings and have been well received by the schools in the area.

The assembly in **Peterhead** held a series of gospel meetings with Jack Hay and a number of townspeople heard the gospel as well as folks connected to believers. A few schools have been visited too, as part of the ongoing programme of school visits undertaken by the assembly.

Moray

This is the third year that Stephen Baker has been in **Lossiemouth** to visit the schools and it is encouraging each year to hear how well his visit goes down with both staff and young folks alike. Our dear sister Liz Tait works hard to organize everything with the schools. This year Stephen was mainly in the High School speaking to teenagers; a job not for the faint-hearted but he coped well, and the Head of Religious Education not only expressed his appreciation but hoped that Stephen would visit again next year. Please pray that such work will prove fruitful not only in souls being saved but also being added to the local assembly. Stephen also visited **Forres, Cullen and Lossiemouth** for a report and ministry in the evenings and this was very encouraging to all who attended these meetings. The small assembly at Lossiemouth appreciate the hard work

that Stephen puts in each time he comes.

Lanarkshire

The months of May through to September 2010 saw the believers from High Parks Gospel Hall and Low Waters Gospel Hall in **Hamilton** working together in the Town Square, preaching the gospel every second Lord's Day. This has the full permission of South Lanarkshire Council and it has been the privilege of the saints to do this for well over ten years. Many gospel tracts have been distributed and some interesting conversations have taken place. Permission has been applied for to go out again in 2011, DV. Please remember this in prayer as they wait for a reply



The inaugural Young People's Bible Study Day at **Deri** was held on the first Saturday in July. Eric Parmenter dealt with the topic, 'Your Adversary the Devil', over three sessions, with break-out times during the afternoon. Over one hundred attended from as far afield as Yorkshire, North Wales, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire, Buckinghamshire, Somerset, Dorset and Cornwall. On Friday evening a barbeque was held at the local Country Park where some were camping for the weekend. Children's meetings were run in parallel to allow families to attend. Many commented on how useful the event had been. The assembly at Deri were grateful for good help from saints in the region in making the day a success.



Gospel meetings were also held at Deri during the first two weeks of November with Paul McCauley of Belfast. Previously, the assembly, with the help of young people in the region, had delivered nearly 10,000 invitations and offers of a free Bible to the





surrounding villages. Unsaved were in on over forty occasions to hear a clear gospel. Four assemblies were conducted in the local Primary and Comprehensive schools, with up to 130 children and teachers present.



Co. Cork

The assemblies in Co. Cork have had a busy month of November in ministry and gospel. Roly Pickering had meetings in **Skibbereen** at the beginning of the month and then so did Phil Coulson. Leslie Craig had children's meetings there also. Roy Hill had a series of meetings in **Bandon** and Michael McKillen had a week of children's meetings. Gilbert Stewart had a series of meetings in **Cork** city. These meetings were all well attended and the believers were encouraged and challenged.

These three assemblies co-operate to organize the St. Patrick's Day conference which has been held for many years in Bandon Grammar School. This year the dates are from 16-20 March and the expected speakers are Stephen Baker and Roy Hill. The main day is the 17th when there is a Bible Reading and two sessions of ministry. The other dates have meetings in the evenings. Many believers from throughout Ireland and some from the UK usually attend and a warm welcome is extended to all the Lord's people.

Newcastle West

Sheena is a single mother, a contact from one of the summer shows. She came over to the Ultimate Decision tent and said she was interested in the fellowship. She is a believer and has three children, her husband passed away a few years ago. At the moment her interest is for her children and she comes out on Sunday morning for the family service and Tuesday for the Kids Club. Please pray that she will desire to be in fellowship soon.

Sam and Mavis are a couple from Ghana and have started coming to the meeting over the past couple of months. They are believers who had been attending a Methodist church about thirty minutes from Newcastle

West. While they have been coming along they have not yet asked to come into fellowship. Sam is an architect, but due to the down-turn in the building industry in Ireland, he lost his job, along with his work permit. At the present time he is fighting deportation orders which have now been extended until January. His lawyer has applied for long-term residence as they have been here five years. Pray that all these details will get worked out and they will be able to stay in Ireland.

Karolina, is the daughter of Adam and Ewa from the fellowship. During the summer Karolina was over for a couple of months from Poland. Before she came, her mother told Colin Burnett she wanted to get baptized, at that time he said he would talk with her when she arrived. It turned out that she was saved after her first visit to Ireland three years ago. That was the first time she had heard the gospel, and, on return to Poland, accepted the truth of the gospel for herself. She has a wonderful testimony of God's goodness and dealings with her over these three years. Her biggest concern is for her grandparents, with whom she is living. She had wanted to come to Newcastle West but said, 'I have too many people to reach with the gospel back in Poland'. We would love to have her in fellowship, but it is evident God is using her in Poland. When she was here she asked for prayer for a friend from university. She was back in Poland only a few weeks when Colin Burnett received an e-mail telling of her friend's salvation. Ewa and Adam have another daughter Kamila (13) who is not saved yet; do pray for her, that she will be saved soon.

The children's work has re-started. It has been good to see most of the kids from last year come back as well as a few new ones. As the weeks are passing the attendance of some of the new ones has dwindled, which has been the pattern over the years.

Newcastle West Town Centre



Gibraltar

We have recently heard that whilst for many years the believers have felt rather isolated due to the geographical and political situation, all that has changed - from a maximum of ten visitors in 2009, they have had fifty visitors in the first six months of 2010. They are grateful to God, and the exercise of the saints in the UK. Surely a reminder to us of the value of having fellowship together!



MISCELLANEOUS

Note

In 2008, Andrew Griffiths wrote an article which appeared in the Reports section of *Precious Seed International* setting out the requirements of all churches (including assemblies) to register with the Charity Commission; previously churches have been exempted from such registration but have nevertheless been considered to be charitable. This registration process is now under way but for churches whose annual income is more than £5,000 but less than £100,000, registration is not likely to be necessary until 2012.

Following the Finance Act 2010, the Revenue requires all charities, including churches who claim Gift Aid, to be a registered charity. Should a church be in the process of registering with the Charity Commission, the Revenue will deem that church to be satisfying the requirements of the Finance Act 2010.

Due to the timetable originally set by the Charity Commission, many churches are not required to register until 2012, but now extra pressure is being put on them by the Revenue. The Charity Commission and Revenue advise that where a church has yet to register with the Charity Commission, because of the Charity Commission's own timetable, and still claims relief under Gift Aid, the church would not be considered to be in default.

Should there be any confusion or doubt, Andrew recommends that the church secretary or treasurer contact the Charity Commission for clarification and guidance.

A WORD FOR TODAY

(Shama') agree, discern, hear

(Shema') hear, obedience, report

(Shamar) guard, keep, keeper

One of the remarkable features of the Bible is the way in which God uses simple words to convey the most profound truth. This point is effectively demonstrated by the single Hebrew word *shema* (English = 'hear'), which provides us with a central theological text in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4-9.

The basic Hebrew words for 'hearing' from which *shema* is derived, have a wide range of semantical meanings. We 'hear' the voice of cattle, Jer. 9. 10, the noise of different human emotions, Ezra 3. 13, or the sound of musical instruments preceding worship, Dan. 3. 7. More importantly, this family of words is frequently used to reinforce an instruction so that individuals give *careful attention* to what is being proposed, e.g., heeding God's word, Isa. 46. 3, or advice from parents, Prov. 1. 8. What is being stressed in these contexts is that hearing means obeying and doing, Ps. 18. 44. By extension, this principle is the *single* most important feature of the associated word *shema* that begins the great confessional statement of Israel found in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4-9, which starts with the call to 'hear' – '*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord*'. Thus the Hebrew word *shema* has become the common term – the capital letters single it out (SHEMA) – given to this text. It reflects the covenant obedience required of Israel, and its recitation is a binding legal act in which individuals pledge their commitment to God's word. Such is the import of this pledge that parents teach it to their children before they go to sleep each night, cp. Prov. 6. 20-22. It is the last utterance that Jews hope to say before they die.

It is possible to translate Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 4 in at least two different ways:

The Lord *is* our God, the Lord alone
The Lord our God – The Lord – *is* one

The first emphasizes that God alone is Israel's God; the second emphasizes the unity and uniqueness of the God that they serve. The first confirms the general teaching of Deuteronomy that Israel should not only be obedient to the covenant, but also show exclusive loyalty to the Lord, Deut. 13. Paradoxically, the assertion that the Lord was exclusively Israel's God did not deny the existence of other gods. Unfortunately, Israel's spiritual infidelity is well documented, reminding them of their covenant relationship with the one true God, and of the punishment for their failure to comply, see Isa. 3. 12-15.

This interpretation of the word *shema* is also emphasized in the New Testament. When the Lord Jesus was once asked by a scribe to state which was the most important commandment, Mark 12. 28, He replied by citing the opening two lines from the SHEMA, Deut. 6. 4-5 (LXX). He added a second commandment, '*You shall love your*

neighbour as yourself', Lev. 19. 18, and subsumed these texts into one great commandment. CRAIG EVANS suggests that the Lord used one of Hillel the Elder's seven rules for interpreting scripture – 'general and particular, and particular and general'.¹ So when the Lord replies that the greatest commandment ('the general') is to love the Lord with all one's heart, Deut. 6. 4-5, and to love one's neighbour as one's self, Lev. 19. 18, He had summed up all of the 'particular' commandments.

By

**BRIAN
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Newton Abbot,
England

The second translation above suggests that the oneness of God is not only a fundamental Jewish confession, it is also the first commandment, Exod. 20. 3. The Hebrew word for 'one' (*ehad*) in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 4, is the ordinary Hebrew numeral. The SHEMA therefore stresses that God is all on His own, not merely first among gods, but omnipotent, and thereby denying the existence of other gods. Monotheism forms part of the teaching of the New Testament, especially the apostle Paul, e.g., 1 Cor. 8. 4; Gal. 3. 20; 1 Tim. 2. 5. In 1 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 6, Paul expands on the scope of Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 4, and sets in apposition the one God, the Father and the one Lord, Jesus Christ as being both uniquely God. GORDON FEE describes this as an extraordinary Christological moment, where Paul offers a deliberate Christian restatement of the SHEMA.² The first aspect of the SHEMA is the command to hear, v. 4, but the second is the command '*to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*', v. 5. The command to love is predicated on Israel's commitment to God's law, Deut. 5. 10.

'Love' here is equivalent to obedience and loyalty, and matters to the extent that it is expressed through concrete action, not emotion or through mere sentiment, but something that is worked out in a practical way through keeping God's commandments. As Israel had been loved by God, Deut. 7. 6-8, so this love was to be reciprocated. In Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 6-9, Moses provides a basic practical framework in which obedience and loyalty to God could be expressed in daily life, and ultimately transmitted to successive generations.

Making this confession of faith was not enough, though. To love God meant obeying His commandments, and being loyal to Him. For us as believers today, it is not sufficient simply to *hear* God's word; we must obey it and live by it, Jas. 1. 22-25. If this was the requirement under the old covenant, then how much greater should our response be when we *hear* His voice and seek to obey His word under a new covenant, John 14. 15; 15. 10, 12, ratified by the blood of Christ, Heb. 9. 24-28?

For further reading/study

Introductory

The Bible Knowledge Word Study Series.

Advanced

Deuteronomy in the New Testament, Ed by STEVE MOYISE.

References

- ¹ *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*, p.219.
- ² *Pauline Christology*, p.89.

Online Missionary News

Since the internet provides such a rapid and global communications network, it can be useful for obtaining up-to-date news of gospel outreach and Christian testimony from all over the world. Several online sources for missionary information are listed below.

In my experience, the easiest and most informative news comes directly from missionaries themselves. Most workers list an email address in their contact details. If you are interested to support particular missionaries in prayer, use their websites, email them directly and ask to be added to their email list for news and prayer updates.

For a more general overview, there are several mission support organizations that supply news from missionaries on their websites.

<http://www.echoes.org.uk/>

The Echoes website is highly attractive and full of useful information. There is a prayer section, where you can click on any part of a world map and see relevant prayer points for that area, supplied by local believers. Additionally, there is information about 'global disasters' and practical ways to provide support. These details are updated regularly. The current *Echoes of Service* magazine is available to browse directly on the website, along with an archive of back issues.



<http://www.interlink.org.uk/>

The Interlink website focuses primarily on mission workers from Scotland, where the organization is based. Latest missionary news is prominent on the front page of the website, with links to further details, older news and a downloadable 'Prayer Points' leaflet. Again, the prayer information is updated frequently.



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

Christian Missions in Many Lands is, according to the front page of its website, 'a missionary service organization ministering to brethren assembly missionaries from the USA and other countries'. There is a 'News and Prayer' section, with plenty of details about such activities as the post-earthquake relief effort in Haiti supported by believers.



<http://www.wycliffe.org>

Wycliffe translates the Bible into minority languages around the world. They have an extremely attractive website, although the 'current prayer requests' section is quite hard to find. A fresh prayer request is posted every day, relating to the spiritual and practical needs of translation teams in various countries. There is an option to receive daily prayer requests by email. The Frequently Asked Questions section of the website summarizes the vital need for prayer, 'The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results', Jas. 5. 16 NLT.



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Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

Most under-35s have not heard of the King James Bible

More than half of young adults have never heard of the King James Version of the Bible, according to a new survey. The influential translation, which will celebrate its 400th anniversary this year, is believed to be the biggest-selling book ever produced. But a new poll has revealed that 51 per cent of under-35s have never heard of the King James Bible, compared to 28 per cent for those over the age of 55. A spokesman for the King James Bible Trust, which commissioned the poll, said, 'There has been a dramatic drop in knowledge in a generation. Yet this is a work which was far more influential than Shakespeare in the development and spread of English'. These opinions were echoed by Labour MP Frank Field, who said, 'It is not possible to comprehend fully Britain's historical, linguistic or religious development without an understanding of this great translation'.

Work on the King James translation began in 1604, at the request of James I, and carried on until 1611. A team of forty-seven of the best Bible scholars of the day worked on translating the text into English, and the King James translation became the version read by many English speaking nations.

Last October, BBC Radio 4 revealed that it is planning to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible by devoting a Sunday to readings from its text. The commemorative event, will last for seven hours, broken up into twenty-eight readings, each of which will be fifteen minutes long. According to reports the readings will be selected from 'the most powerful stories in the Bible', and each of them will begin with an introduction explaining its literary significance.

Earlier last year it was revealed that the Royal Mail is planning to commemorate the anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible with a series of special stamps. The commemorative stamps, which are due to be produced this year, have been prompted by numerous requests from members of the general public.

Source: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/most-under-35s-have-not-heard-of-the-king-james-bible/>



Scottish Parliament rejects assisted suicide Bill

The Scottish Parliament has overwhelmingly rejected a Bill to legalize assisted suicide in Scotland. MSPs were given a free vote on 1st December 2010, allowing them to vote according to their consciences rather than along party lines. The End of Life Assistance Bill was crushed by 85-16.

Gordon Macdonald, of the 'Care Not Killing Alliance', said it was a fantastic result and a 'victory for the most vulnerable in our community'. In rejecting the controversial legislation, he said MSPs recognized that legalizing assisted suicide would 'seriously endanger public safety' and had instead given a ringing endorsement to palliative care. 'The sheer magnitude of [the Bill's] defeat should settle this issue in Scotland for a generation', he said. 'The key argument that decided this vote and the similar votes in the House of Lords in 2006 and 2009 is a simple one. The right to die can so easily become the duty to die. Vulnerable people who are sick, elderly, or disabled can so easily feel pressure, whether real or imagined, to end their lives so as not to be a burden on others. Parliament's first responsibility is to protect the vulnerable and that is what they have voted to do today'.

The controversial legislation would have made Scotland the first part of the UK to legalize assisted suicide if it had been successful. It proposed granting any person above sixteen years old, who was terminally ill and found life intolerable the right to ask for assistance in ending their lives.



Source:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/scottish.parliament.rejects.assisted.suicide.bill/27178.htm>

It's time to ditch Winterval and remember Christmas is about the birth of Christ, declares minister

Council chiefs were urged by the Government to celebrate the 'Christian basis' of Christmas.

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles said that 'politically correct Grinches' should not be allowed to obscure the fact that it is a festival to mark the birth of Christ. He called for the likes of the Winterval festival of the 1990s - which combined secular and inter-faith religious elements - to be consigned to the 'dustbin of history'.

'We should actively celebrate the Christian basis of Christmas, and not allow politically correct Grinches to marginalize Christianity and the importance of the birth of Christ. 'The war on Christmas is over, and likes of Winterval, Winter Lights and Luminous deserve to be in the dustbin of history'. He said that despite the current economic difficulties, it was not in councils' interests to 'play Scrooge' by cutting down on the Christmas festivities. 'It is in councils' financial interests to draw shoppers to their town centres at Christmas given the benefits of packed car parks to councils' coffers', he said. 'Shoppers want to see Christmas lights, Christmas trees, carol services and nativity scenes, and councils should not hesitate in supporting them'.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1333626/Forget-Winterval-Merry-Christian-mas-urges-Pickles.html>



Bits & Bobs

Harry Potter

As the latest Harry Potter film hits cinemas, one writer is warning Christians that something sinister lurks beneath the wizardry and hocus-pocus.



Steve Wohlberg, the author of the new book *Exposing Harry Potter and Witchcraft: The Menace Beneath the Magic*, strongly advises against seeing it. He said the trend toward witchcraft, vampirism, and occultism among teens has rapidly increased since the Harry Potter craze began in 1997. Written by J. K. Rowling, the Harry Potter series explores sorcery, witchcraft, and Wicca. He outlines his discoveries of evil themes in the series. 'The more I read the books, the more I realized how spiritually dangerous the material is', he said. 'Even though it's fiction there is a lot of reality woven in it. My warning is that Harry Potter is a major contributor to Wicca'. Wohlberg also argues that although Rowling claims that there are Christian themes in the seven-part series, the author is being used as a channel for evil.

Wohlberg has seen the negative effects of the fantasy novels and films on young people. In his book, he gives several personal accounts of people who have dabbled in witchcraft specifically because of Harry Potter. Teenagers, he explained, are vulnerable to these themes because they are fascinated with the message that magic gives you power. He gives accounts of teens at bookstores on the day of the release of a new Harry Potter book, describing how they have 'the book in one hand, and a wicca book in the other'.

Wohlberg wants to remind them of a greater power. 'God has power far superior to witchcraft - power of love and eternal life', he said. Wohlberg has published more than twenty-five books denouncing the Harry Potter series as well as the Twilight series - another wildly popular novel series among youths. The author emphasized the role that parents must play in assisting their children to steer away from the culture of witchcraft and cults. He cited Proverbs chapter 22 verse 6, 'Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it'.

Source:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/harry.potter.magic.or.menace/27112.htm>

King James Bible Trust's YouTube Bible

The YouTube Bible is the King James Bible Trust's ambitious project to create a complete reading of the King James Bible on YouTube. Readers will comprise of actors, sportsmen and women, musicians, politicians and most importantly YOU could choose a chapter to record and read.



More information at

<http://www.kingjamesbibletrust.org/community/the-youtube-bible>

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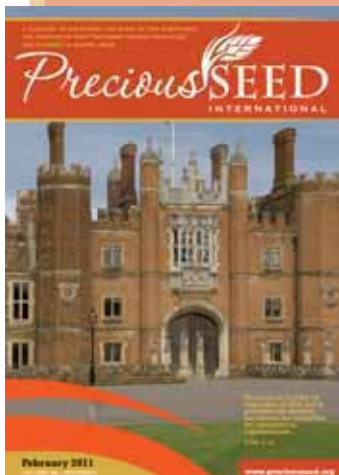
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Front Cover illustration:

Hampton Court originated in the 11th Century but the magnificent palace that can be seen today is a far cry from what was essentially a large barn! It was in the 14th Century that royalty first came to Hampton Court and kings and queens often frequented the palace buildings. Henry VIII even married two of his wives there! It was in the year AD1604, that James 1 called a conference at Hampton Court to commission the 'King James version' of the Bible. After years of translation work the 1611 edition was finally published and was the beginning of a translation that has meant so much to millions of believers around the world.

We owe a lot to these faithful translators who through subsequent revisions have given us a version of the Bible that is unique, beautiful in its language and thoroughly trustworthy. 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 tells us that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. The King James translation of the Bible allowed English-speaking people who could not understand

the inspired texts to read and unlock truth for themselves. Over the centuries men have laid down their lives for translations like this, so that we today can have the Bible at our finger tips and thus the means to bring profitability into our lives as we read the wonderful word of God. Let us continue to do so more and more.



Question Time

Conducted by

RICHARD COLLINGS

QUESTION

Why do I find it hard to spend time in prayer?

ANSWER

It is reputed that Frances Jane Crosby wrote over 8000 hymns, one of which contains the verse, 'O the pure delight of a single hour that before Thy throne I spend, when I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God I commune as friend with friend'. Although we may have sung these words many times, perhaps most of us would have to admit that spending 'a single hour' in prayer is not something we have engaged in very often.

Another well known and much loved hymn was written by Joseph Scriven, a Dubliner who emigrated to Canada. Scriven's life was blighted by tragedy, and on hearing of his mother's serious illness he wrote a poem to comfort her. The opening lines of that composition are, 'What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear, what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer'. None of us would demur with the truth expressed by the poet, for it is an inestimable privilege to have direct access to God, yet it is a privilege we sometimes neglect.

Were we to be invited to have audience with some prominent person, or be summoned to appear before royalty, the probability is that the event would invoke excitement, coupled with a degree of apprehension. Nevertheless, the sense of occasion, prestige and favour bestowed upon us would fill our thoughts for days in advance of the appointment. How much greater, therefore, should the prospect of drawing near to God in prayer enrapture these hearts of ours. The greatest of men are finite and mortal, yet we can enter the august presence of one who is infinite, immortal and omniscient and call him 'our Father' – so why do we find it hard to spend time in prayer? There are several possible causes for this struggle, but we will focus on just a few in this response.

One of the primary reasons why we find it hard to devote time to prayer is that there is nothing about it that appeals to the flesh. I do not wish to denigrate the following forms of service, but there are times when speaking at ministry meetings or engaging in gospel preaching can be appealing to us naturally as they generate an element of self-attention. However, praying is personal and solitary, there is no visible audience and it brings no plaudits from other people. Prayer and self-seeking are mutually incompatible, it is a spiritual exercise that affords no form of gratification to our fallen natures and hence we may struggle for that very reason.

Prayer also requires effort. As we read through the Bible we discover that words associated with prayer include 'fervent', 'labouring', 'more earnestly', 'without ceasing', and 'exceedingly'. To display this spiritual vigour, it is essential that we nourish the 'inner man' through regular reading and meditating upon the word of God. Just as our bodies require food to sustain us physically, so likewise we need to feed upon the milk and meat of the scriptures that we may develop spiritual vitality and thereby exert more energy into our praying.

Praying is also different to 'saying our prayers'. The Lord said of the scribes that they 'make long prayers', Mark 12. 40, and in many religions today adherents engage in long sessions of prayer. Regrettably, these practices are little more than the constant repetition of set 'prayers' and are far removed from the Bible's concept of what prayer is. Is it possible that our prayer time, if we maintain one, might have degenerated to a routine of asking the same things for the same people on a daily basis? A lack of freshness and the uttering of hackneyed phraseology reduce our awareness of the awesome honour that is ours of being able to approach the Almighty; therefore, it is not surprising that we don't thirst for it as we should.

In concluding, I want us to move from the negative issues that have occupied us thus far and focus on something positive. Recently, I have been observing one of the planets and noted how it has outshone all the other luminaries in the southern night sky. As we gaze, and marvel, at such majesty we ought to be inspired to get alone before the one who put it there. The psalmist wrote, 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth . . . Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast', Ps. 33. 6-9 NKJV.

What a favoured people we are. We can 'draw nigh to God', our fellowship is 'with the Father', we have the right to enter the holiest with boldness and, at the throne of grace, we 'may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need', Heb. 4. 16. He is our God and 'is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think', Eph. 3. 20. Joseph Scriven was right – it is a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!