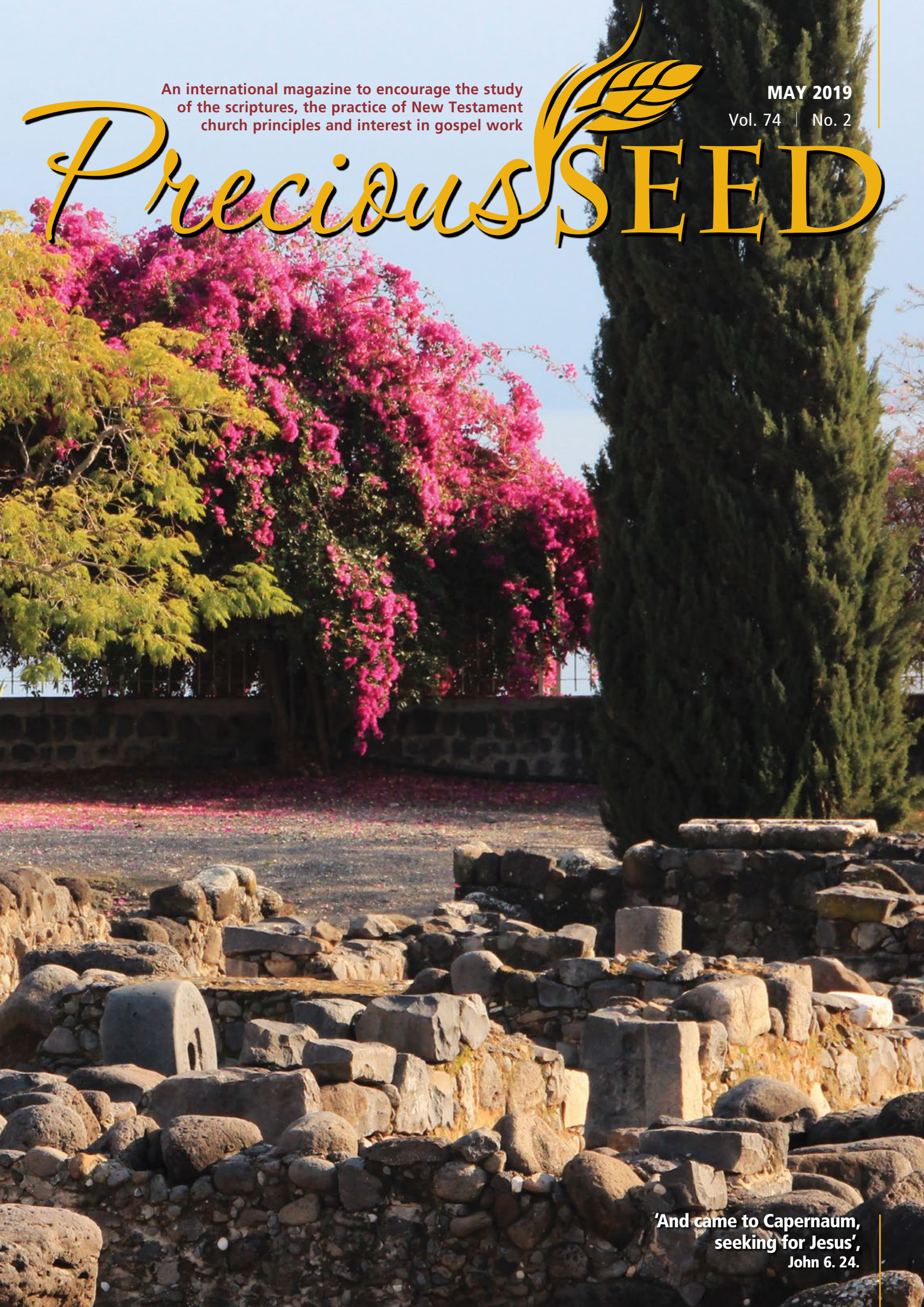


An international magazine to encourage the study
of the scriptures, the practice of New Testament
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MAY 2019

Vol. 74 | No. 2

Precious SEED



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seeking for Jesus',
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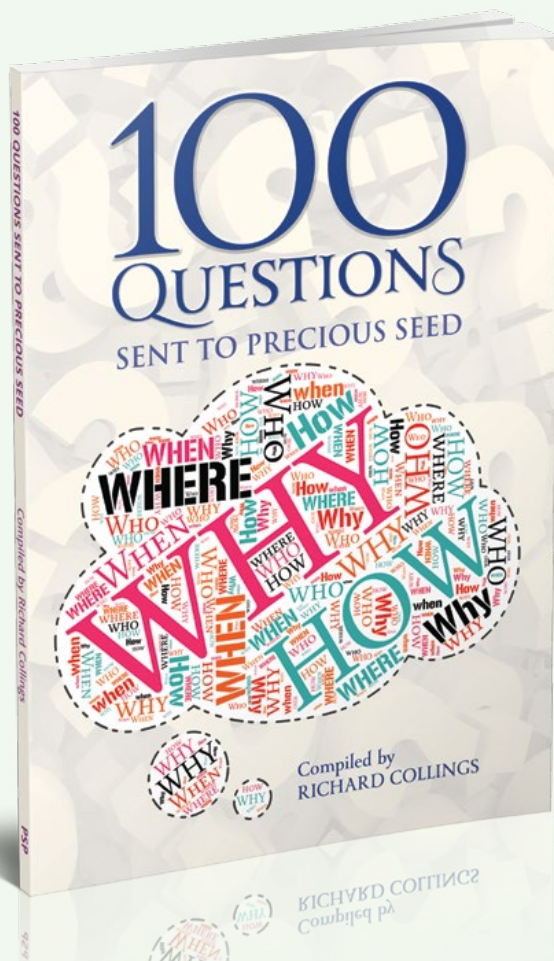
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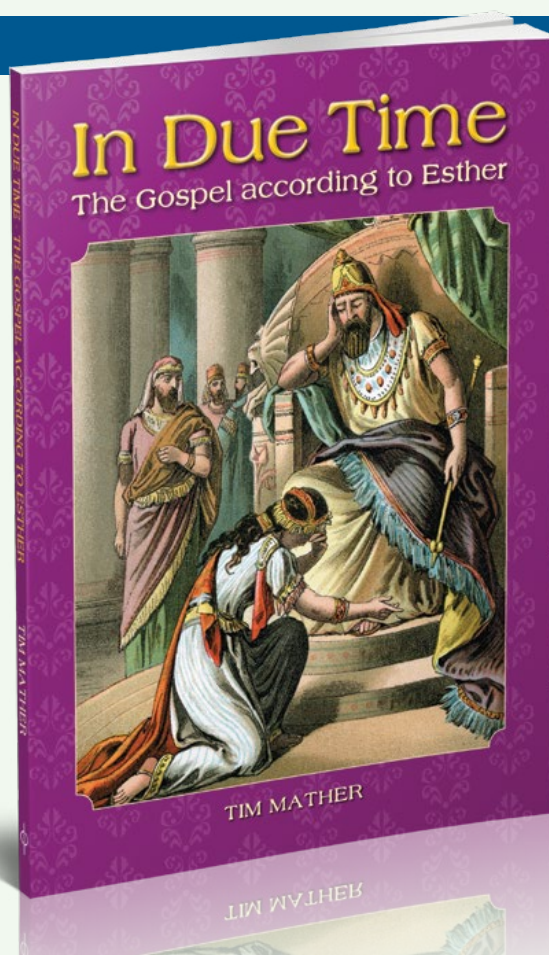


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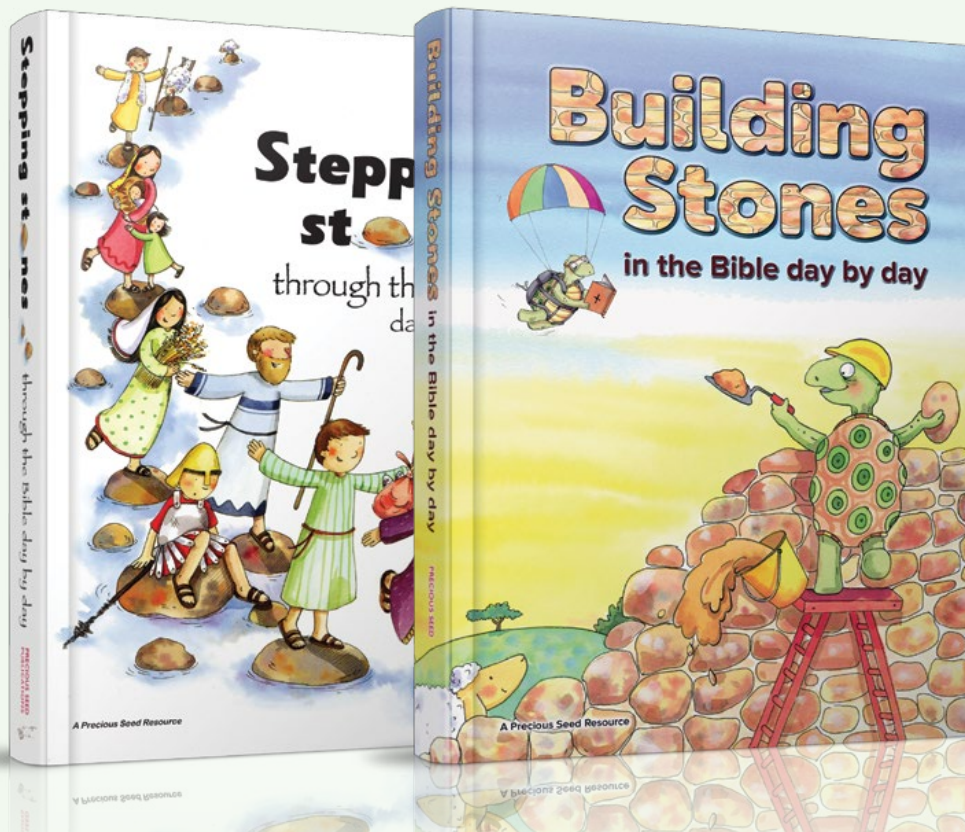
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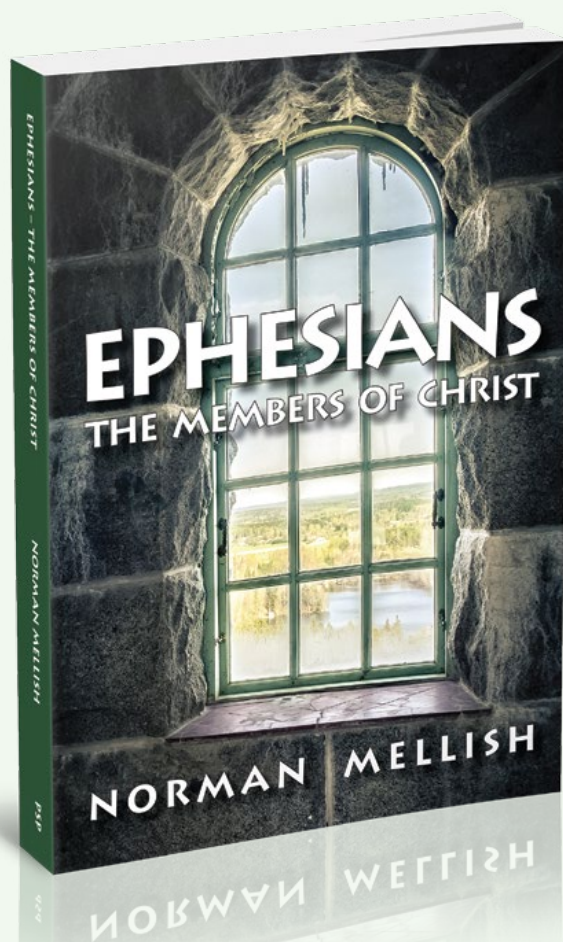
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‘Jesus ... touched him’, Mark 1. 41.

Here we have the unclean in the presence of the clean, the true Nazarite from Nazareth, v. 24!

Trace His steps in this chapter and note how the impeccable Christ moves in different life scenes yet remains separate from sin and sinners, vv. 14-34.

He walks along the Galilean shore, a place where fishermen plied their trade, a world of commerce and business, vv. 14-20. Does His walk there compromise His holiness? Clearly not! He moves into that sphere with the sole purpose of calling others out of it. The pull of that world had no pull on Him. A world where nets, designed to snare, never entangled Him. His holiness was never compromised in that sphere; His movement through it brought deliverance to a few who ‘went after him’, v. 20.

He is seen in the synagogue, vv. 21-28. For the Jews, this was the centre of their religious life. However, in that place the evil one had his emissaries present and what was intended to be a house of prayer, was infiltrated by unholiness and uncleanness, v. 23. As the greatest of teachers taught that day, He was evidently

apart from all others in His authority, both in His teaching and works, but it was His unique character, ‘**the Holy One of God**’, that was attested to by the unclean spirit. In a sphere of tainted religiosity, He emerges uncontaminated by it, and again His movement through it brought deliverance to a soul.

What about home life? He moves into a home where sin was bringing its sadness and stress, vv. 29-34. Yet, note His grace, ‘He came and took her by the hand’. Did His encounter with the ravaging effects of sin weaken or taint Him? Not one bit! Watch, as by evening time ‘all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many’. Luke notes, ‘All they that had any sick ... brought them ... and he laid hands on every one of them, and healed them’, Luke 4. 40.

There is another scene in the chapter which might give a clue as to where the Saviour drew His strength, Mark 1. 35. He rises ‘up a great while before day’, and ‘departed into a solitary place, and there prayed’.

‘Morning by morning Thou didst wake,
Amidst this poisoned air;

Yet no contagion touched Thy soul,
No sin disturbed Thy prayer’.
MACLEOD

Now, in the presence of the Clean One, kneels a begging, unclean one, and, with confidence in the ability of the Saviour, he casts himself upon His willingness, ‘If thou wilt, thou canst’, v. 40.

What will the perfect Nazarite do? For, as demonstrated in the case of Nazarites of old, touching the unclean always mediated uncleanness to the clean. But not with this One! ‘He ... touched him’, v. 41, and without compromising His own purity, He reached out and touched the unclean to bring undeserved cleansing. He was untouched, but not unmoved, by sin! Let’s be thankful that such a One reached out to touch us and rejoice in the impeccability of the One who ‘was made sin for us’.

It is with appreciation to those who have spent time in writing the articles in this issue that we commend it to you in the prayerful hope that it will bring honour to Him.

SANDY JACK
Ministry Articles Editor

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The Messianic Psalms

PSALM 118

By **PHIL COULSON**, Forres, Scotland.

The setting of the Psalm

In its position as the last of the 'Messianic Psalms', and also the last of the six 'Hallel Psalms', Psalms 113 to 118, Psalm 118 demands our particular interest. The Messianic references in the psalm are clear, especially in verses 22 and 26 where the Millennial glory of the Lord Jesus is in prospect. Many of the earlier psalms portray the deepest sufferings and anguish of Christ, but this, the last of them, ends the series as it began; 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion', Ps. 2. 6. Christ, therefore, is seen as enthroned both at the beginning and the end of the 'Messianic Psalms'.

Throughout the Book of Psalms there are songs whose individual themes contribute to a wider view by forming clusters, often trilogies. Amongst the more memorable trilogies are Psalms 22 to 24 and 132 to 134; Psalm 118 closes another trilogy. The thought of millennial glory for the Old Testament saints concludes Psalm 116, but the next psalm, remarkable for its brevity, is the song of Gentiles praising God that 'his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endures forever', v. 2 NKJV. From our viewpoint as New Testament believers, we can see in Psalm 117 the setting aside of Israel, of whom there is no mention in the psalm, and a reflection of the Church age in which Gentiles praise God for merciful kindness that comes to us at no expense to God's truth which 'endureth for ever'. Once the Church has been taken to heaven at the rapture, God will resume His dealings with Israel and, by means of the tribulation period, effect the repentance and restoration of the nation. That restoration is the subject of Psalm 118.

Finally, regarding the setting of the psalm, it concludes the six-song series that, beginning with Psalm 113, is known as the 'Egyptian Hallel'. These songs recall Israel's deliverance from the bondage of

Egypt and are sung during the course of the annual Passover memorial feast. The concluding verses of Psalm 118 portray the fulfilment of God's purpose in bringing the nation out of the toil and suffering of Egypt into their promised rest. It is very probable that this was the 'hymn' sung by the Lord Jesus and His disciples before they went out 'into the mount of Olives', Matt. 26. 30; Mark 14. 26.

The structure of the Psalm

There are a number of valid ways in which Psalm 118 might be divided into sections but, broadly, there are three prominent themes. The first section, covering verses 1 to 4, is about **thankfulness**; the second, verses 5 to 18, is about **trial**; the third, in verses 19 to 29, is about **triumph**.

In verses 1 to 4, **thankfulness** is expressed by three companies: Israel as a nation; the house of Aaron – the priesthood; them that fear the Lord – probably a reference to the faithful remnant, the godly element of the nation, cp. Mal. 3. 16. In each case the word 'now' is used, indicating that thankfulness is imperative as the result of a particular event.

Verses 5 to 18, dealing with **trial**, help us to understand the circumstances that have provoked the call to

thankfulness in verses 1 to 4. Whilst features of Israel's suffering through the ages can be seen, the culmination of all their sorrows will be the future tribulation period, referred to by the prophet Jeremiah: 'Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble', Jer. 30. 7. It is of note that throughout this section of the psalm the first-person singular is used; 'I', 'me', and 'my'. Such is the shared experience and grief of the nation that they are viewed as a single entity, fused together in their collective suffering. That singular identity was also seen in the days of their suffering in Egypt, when God told Moses to 'say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me', Exod. 4. 22, 23. The thought of plurality in unity is confirmed by the wording of verse 20, where the word 'righteous' is plural, thus meaning 'righteous ones'.

The third section of the psalm, verses 19 to 29, is full of praise, blessing and joy. The reference to the Lord as 'The stone which the builders refused', v. 22, is well known, and it was quoted by Him when He said to the chief priests and the elders, 'Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder', Matt. 21. 42-44. The ultimate **triumph** of Christ is the theme of this section.

The singing of the Psalm

It is possible that this psalm was sung when the foundation of the new temple was laid, after the Babylonian captivity of Judah. Ezra records, 'And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving

thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid', Ezra 3. 10, 11. It must have been wonderful to listen as 'they sang together by course' - a reference to what is otherwise known as 'antiphonal singing'. A solo voice would have sung, 'O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good', and the company would have responded by singing, '[For] his mercy endureth for ever'. The soloist would continue 'Let Israel now say', and the company would sing again '[For] his mercy endureth for ever'. Read through the psalm and, where you find repetition such as, 'in the name of the Lord will I destroy them', you will be able to imagine the antiphonal singing of this lovely psalm.

The significance of the Psalm

One of the great confirmations that the Bible is the word of God is the way in which its writers dealt in detail with matters beyond their human comprehension. From our viewpoint, as those who not only have the complete canon of scripture, but are also indwelt by its divine interpreter, the Holy Spirit, we can

see significance and meaning in the Old Testament writings that was hidden, in the wisdom and purpose of God, from the very men who were used to record divine truth. Thus, we understand that in all the catalogue of suffering endured by Israel over centuries, no event has yet seen the fulfilment of Psalm 118. There is a period of intense persecution and suffering on the nation's horizon that will make their past horrors almost pale into insignificance. That time was referred to by the Lord Jesus in His 'Olivet Discourse', 'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be', Matt. 24. 21.

Psalm 118 sees the reaction of the nation to its divine deliverance from the terrible ordeal that will threaten its very existence. In verse 5, an appeal had been made to the Lord when the nation found itself hemmed in on every side. The word 'distress' can also be rendered 'straits', and that might be the better word since it is in contrast with 'a large place'. The nation will call, and God will answer in deliverance.

In that future time of sore persecution, the godly remnant of

Israel will be left in no doubt that they are being divinely preserved. That realization will embolden them, and the courage of faith is reflected in the language of verses 6 to 12 of our psalm.

Verse 13 reveals the genuine contrition of a famously arrogant and intractable nation: collectively, the people say, 'Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall'. Recognizing the hand of God upon them in corrective judgement, Israel will acknowledge that their fall from the eminent position God had originally given to them had been on account of their sin and rebellion. Perhaps, in those days of great tribulation, godly Israelites will read Paul's words and take heart, 'I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?' Rom. 11. 11, 12.

In verses 14 to 21 the nation sings of its deliverance - a song reminiscent of that led by Miriam after Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The future song, however, will be from a nation that has not only been delivered physically from its enemies, but has also been spiritually and morally restored to its God. Verses 22 to 25 show that the Messiah they crucified after His first advent has now been acknowledged and received and, as a result of their true repentance, Israel has come into all the good of the promised New Covenant.

Verse 27 is probably a reference to the first Passover memorial that the nation will keep after the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wonderfully restored, Israel will function as 'a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation' - God's original intention for them when the Old Covenant was forged at Sinai, Exod. 19. 6.

The psalm ends with praise, and thanksgiving for the goodness and mercy of God. It is the endless song of the redeemed of the Lord.



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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

Part 6

The man with leprosy, vv. 40-45

As this first chapter draws to its close, it is interesting to look back upon the service of the perfect Servant and to see what He has accomplished. The demoniac in the synagogue, the multitude of diseased and possessed folk, and, here, the leper all come into contact with the Saviour. It would appear that Mark collects together the hopeless cases. The demoniac had remained undiscovered, until the Lord came. Those that were brought to Simon Peter's house had not found a cure, until the Lord came. Those, of that same multitude, that were possessed with demons were not delivered until they found the Lord. Finally, Mark tells us of this leper, a man beyond the care and cure of normal medicine – until he meets the Saviour.

The attitude of the leper, v. 40

The approach of this leper to the Saviour is most instructive. It displays a man of considerable appreciation in respect to the person of the Saviour. Mark tells us that he came and knelt down to the Lord. Here is an action that acknowledges that the Saviour deserves worship. His words, 'Thou canst make me clean' tell us that he recognized the Saviour's ability to cure and cleanse him of this terrible disease. It was an expression of faith, as well as a testimony to the character of the Lord.

The leper's appreciation of the Saviour's greatness is coupled with his recognition of his own need. He was:

- Desperate: 'there came a leper to him, beseeching him'. Luke tells us that he was full of leprosy. Thus, beyond all human help he implores the Saviour to

intervene with a miracle. ST. JOHN comments, 'This man knew that he was too bad for priest or people but hopes that he was not too bad for Christ'.¹

- Undeserving: 'if thou wilt'. He could not ask on the basis of merit, or as a worthy cause. He recognized that any cure could only be accomplished as a consequence of the unmerited favour of the Saviour. He comes, humbly, to ask for help. WUEST comments, 'There are two words in Greek meaning to be willing, to desire, *thelo*, a desire that comes from one's emotions, and *boulomai*, a desire which comes from one's reason. The first is used here. The leper appeals to the tenderheartedness of the Messiah'.²
- Unclean: 'thou canst make me clean'. He appreciated that his need was to be cleansed. He was constituted ceremonially unclean and this, effectively, banished him from human society. He recognized that the need was individual, personal to him, and without reference to any others.

The affection of the Saviour, v. 41

It is only Mark that tells us of the compassion of the Saviour, 'Jesus, moved with compassion'. This glimpse of the heart of the Saviour tells us of His pity for the plight of this man. Although others may be affected by the sight of a man in the grip of this loathsome disease, the Saviour was moved not just to pity him but also to effect his cleansing and cure. HIEBERT observes, 'the verb moved denotes not only a pained feeling at the sight of the suffering but also a yearning to relieve it.

Doubtless deeply conscious of the social ostracism that his leprosy had brought upon him, Jesus' warm touch moved the man's heart and assured him of the true love of Jesus for an outcast like himself'.³

Love without words or action is not love at all, but an open sham. However, the Lord demonstrated His affection. He 'saith unto him, I will; be thou clean'. The man's faith in Christ was rewarded with the cleansing he sought!

The action of the Saviour, v. 41

A man who was a leper and therefore constituted ceremonially unclean, was automatically banished from human society. All contact both physical and social was forfeit and he either lived alone or amongst a colony of other lepers.

A further demonstration of the love and affection of the Saviour came by His touch, He 'put forth his hand, and touched him'. He did not need to touch to effect the cleansing and cure. Mark will tell us in the next verse that the spoken word was what brought that cleansing. The touch was the evidence that the Saviour had wrought the cure and that by it the leper was brought back into human society once more – restored to the fellowship of his family and friends. WUEST comments, 'The first kind touch of a human hand that leper ever experienced, was the gentle touch of the Son of God'.⁴

The accomplishment of the cure, v. 42

Mark's words are in keeping with the tenor of his Gospel. He tells us, 'as soon as He had spoken, immediately'. The cure was:

- Immediate – 'immediately'. He did not need to wait, for as soon as the Saviour spoke the cleansing came. Neither was the cleansing gradual in its emergence. It was immediately obvious that things had changed.
- Complete – 'the leprosy departed from him'. What the Saviour said was accomplished in full. He had said, 'be thou clean', and this was what was effected. The use of

the words, 'departed from him', also signify the completeness of the change. There was no trace of leprosy remaining. He was completely separated from the disease.

The advice of the Saviour, vv. 43, 44

The language of these verses is very strong and means that the leper would be left in no doubt as to what was required of him. As to the reason for the charge given to the cleansed leper, COLE suggests, 'Christ never desired men to be drawn to follow Him simply in hopes of material and bodily benefits to be obtained from Him'.⁵ The Saviour gave clear command to the leper as to what he should do:

- Stay silent – 'see thou say nothing to any man', v. 44. He was not required to publish his cleansing. This was not a priority but fulfilling the requirements of the law was.
- Show himself to the priest – 'shew thyself to the priest', v. 44. This was the personal duty of the leper and the Lord stressed it as such. If the cleansing that he had received were to be officially recognized then the leper must first go to the priest. This was what the law required and this action would mean the leper could be received back into society officially and ceremonially.
- Sacrifice in keeping with the law – 'offer for thy cleansing', v. 44. The true expression of the reality of his cleansing and of gratitude to God for the cleansing was to be made through sacrifice. This requirement of the law was to be kept as a clear statement to the company of priests that the Messiah had come.

From the verse that follows, it would seem that the Saviour knew what the leper would do and sought to instruct him as to the right path – the path of obedience.

The announcement of the leper, v. 45

In disobedience to the Saviour's



command, the leper went out and published abroad the cleansing he had received. HIEBERT describes it as an aggressive action. It was not a single act but a continuous proclaiming, blazing abroad the fame of the Saviour. The outcome of this activity was that 'Jesus could no more openly enter into the city'.

This error of the leper had a detrimental effect in two respects:

- It hindered the Lord's ministry – 'could no more enter into the city'. It was not that His entrance into one city was barred but that He was not able to enter any city because He would be mobbed by the populace.
- It focused upon the healing ministry rather than the preaching – 'they came to him from every quarter'. The Lord said that He had come to preach, v. 38. This was His purpose, but the testimony of the leper placed stress upon the healing that had been accomplished in support of the message. Sadly, people came to the Lord to find the solution to their physical need and neglected the greater spiritual need that they had.

There are practical applications in this incident. Whilst the

cleansed leper acted in gratitude and his actions may be wholly understandable – he wanted others to know – he failed to consider that he was violating the express command of the Lord. How important that our zeal to tell others about the Saviour does not lead us to act contrary to His revealed will. Zeal in service does not excuse disobedience.

The result of the man's disobedience in reporting his cure produced a rush to the Lord as a miracle worker and, as a consequence, He could no longer enter the city. It brought His synagogue ministry to an abrupt halt. There are many today who detract from the true gospel by offering a ministry of so-called healing and the concentration upon the physical leaves the spiritual and eternal need unresolved.

The Lord had given this leper the desire of his heart. The true gratitude of the leper's heart should have been demonstrated in obedience and worship, but the account here indicates neither. How sad, but what a lesson for us – the Lord must have His portion first!

Endnotes

- 1 ST. JOHN, *op. cit.*, pg. 33.
- 2 WUEST, *op. cit.*, pg. 40
- 3 HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 59
- 4 WUEST, *op. cit.*, pg. 41.
- 5 COLE, *op. cit.*, pg. 64.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Part 5

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

The majesty of Christ in new creation, 1. 19-23

A great day for the universe is yet to dawn when the Lord Jesus reconciles 'all things unto himself', v. 20. It will effectively be a new creation! Millennial conditions will be the order of the day. The mournful groaning of the present universe will be gone, Rom. 8. 22. 'The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose', Isa. 35. 1; the arid mountains will be harvested, Ps. 72. 16; the ferocity of the animal kingdom will be gone, Isa. 11. 6; and children will have a childhood once more, 'And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof', Zech. 8. 5 – paradise will be regained!

However, it doesn't come without a cost; 'in the body of his flesh through death', v. 22. The death of Christ was the necessary price paid for the corresponding result that creation will be redeemed and rejoice. But not creation only – 'and you', v. 21 – what a blessing! We who were 'enemies . . . by wicked works' are to be reconciled as well and presented 'holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight'! The concept could only have been conceived by a loving God!

The balance and symmetry of the previous paragraph is then replicated in this section and it all focuses on Christ.

His relation to God, v. 19

It is not surprising that a reconciled universe with a reconciled people is going to elicit the pleasure of the Father. It is surely even less surprising, however, that the Father's pleasure is focused on the Son who is going to implement the reconciliation, v. 19. His pleasure in His Son is not something new. He has already made His pleasure known at His baptism and at the transfiguration; Mark 1. 11; Matt. 17. 5. This pleasure was not

made known publicly through the (mainly) silent years of the ministry of Christ in Nazareth but could not remain unarticulated on His entry to public ministry.

The fullness, *pleroma*, of the Christ has already been displayed in creation – it is now to be displayed further in new creation, cp. 2. 9. All the resources necessary; the totality, 'all' – in abundance, of the divine attributes, dwell – are 'at home' – in Him. The uniqueness of His person is thus unequivocally affirmed – verily God (the unfolded fullness of divine perfection at home in Him) and at the same time truly human.

His relation to new creation, v. 20

The new title

A new title is necessary to suit the new conditions. While it is not specifically stated in the text, it is surely appropriate to call our Lord Jesus in this section by the unique title of **the Reconciler**. The need for reconciliation implies a condition of enmity and dis-peace. The subject is treated at length in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 18 to 21, where it is clear that the requirement is for man to be reconciled to God; not God to man – 'be ye reconciled to God', v. 20. Reconciliation was initiated by God and accomplished for God in the death of Christ as will become clear, Col. 1. 22. The result is that He has laid the righteous basis for enmity to be removed and for peace to be known.¹ Four aspects of reconciliation have been suggested; individual, Col. 1. 21, 22; corporate, Eph. 2. 16; national, Rom. 11. 15; millennial and universal, Col. 1. 19, 20.²

The important prepositions

As before, the six prepositions in verse 20 are of fundamental importance. Indeed, it should be emphasized

in passing that the doctrine of New Testament prepositions is well worth detailed consideration. Three of the prepositions translated in the KJV as 'through', 'by' and 'by' are all *dia* [through] and indicate the necessary means through which reconciliation is effected.

In the first case it is 'through the blood of His cross'. This is the bond of peace. Death is essential to reconciliation, 'when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the **death** of his Son', Rom. 5. 10. In this verse, Col. 1. 20, it is by His '**blood**'. In Ephesians chapter 2 verse 16, it is by His **cross** that reconciliation is effected, 'by the **cross** the enmity between Jew and Gentile has been slain (not annulled)'.³

Also, twice over we read '**through Him**' RV, i.e., it was through Himself as the necessary sacrifice involved – it was effected by Christ – no other had the necessary qualification. But it was also unto [*eis*] Himself as the ultimate objective – His millennial glory was in view when 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea', Hab. 2. 14; Isa. 11. 9.

The comprehensive effect

The phrase 'all things' which was used five times in verses 16 to 18 is used again to indicate the comprehensiveness of the reconciliation to be effected 'through the blood of His cross'. A further two prepositions are used (see RV again) to indicate the results of the reconciliation. It will affect 'things in [*epi* = upon] earth' and 'things in [*en*] heaven'. Three observations are apposite. First, the order is important – earth comes before heaven in contrast to verse 16. The earth has to be reconciled to heaven not the reverse! Second, it is things upon the earth and in heaven. This is interesting. All upon the earth will benefit – animate and inanimate, Isa. 11. 6; Rom. 8. 19-23; but note the omission of 'things under the earth' in contrast to Philippians chapter 2 verse 10. Things 'under the earth' will acknowledge His lordship but never experience His reconciliation, cp. 2 Pet. 2. 4 and Jude 1. 6. Third, the omission of any reference to angelic

beings is telling. Reconciliation is not necessary for 'holy' angels and not possible for 'fallen'!

His relation to the Church, vv. 21-23

The appropriate title is again that of **the Reconciler** but not now in relation to creation, but in relation to the Church.

The condition requiring reconciliation, v. 21

The verse opens with an affirmation that it is persons and not sins that require reconciliation, 'and you'. As indicated above, this is why the apostle says, 'be **ye** reconciled to God', 2 Cor. 5. 20. The source of the problem is clearly indicated; it is internal. The mind is noted as the seat of the enmity. The apostle desires a different focus for the believer's mind in chapter 3 verse 2, 'set your mind on things above', RV. The evidence of the need was expressed generally in their alienation and becoming enemies and externally in their activity, by [*en* = in] wicked works – this was the sphere of their movement and the external manifestation – the result not the cause of the enmity.

The activity effecting reconciliation, v. 22

The incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus was necessary to effect it. It was 'in the body of his flesh through death'. The evident reference to the incarnation, 'the body of his flesh' was a further blow to the Gnostics, cp. John 1. 14. Death would not have been possible apart from His incoming, Heb. 2. 9. Creation was brought into being by a word; reconciliation required death!

The purpose in the reconciliation, vv. 22, 23

In these verses the purpose of the reconciliation is seen to be twofold: to present and to provide the platform for perseverance.

The first purpose is 'to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight'. It is not immediately clear who is doing the presenting and for what purpose. It may be the Father, v. 19, or the Son, v. 22. Perhaps in the immediate context it is the latter. What then is



the purpose? Is it as a sacrifice, or as a bride, or for the purpose of assessment at the Bema – perhaps as a bride?⁴ Whatever the purpose, the desire is that we may be 'holy' [internal, cp. 'your mind'], 'unblameable', without blemish, as was true of the offerings, and 'unreprouvable', no charge to be brought, 'before him' RV.

The second purpose is that we may persevere, 'if ye continue', v. 23. This perseverance is not expected without an adequate and objective basis. It is founded on 'the faith', the objective body of truth as found in the reliable and inerrant scriptures of truth; 2. 7, Jude 1. 3; and a gospel that gives 'hope'.⁵ Continuance is always the proof of reality. 'If the gospel teaches the final perseverance of the saints, it teaches at the same time that the saints are those who finally persevere – in Christ'.^{6,7} The nature of the continuance is seen as being 'grounded', on a solid foundation, and 'settled', steadfast, fixed to a rock (positive), and 'not moved away' in a gradual process from 'the hope of the gospel' (negative). Thus, there is a need for a habitual exercise of subjective faith. This has to be focused on Christ, who is 'the hope of the gospel'.

The result of the reconciliation will thus give a true appreciation of the gospel as the basis of faith. That faith was based on hearing, 'which ye have heard' and led to conversion's day, Rom. 10. 17. It was an honour to participate in what was 'preached to every creature which is under heaven' or 'in all creation under heaven' RV, and should still be a delight to enjoy. It had changed the apostle and made him 'a minister'. What Christ did for him, He can do for us. It can change us as well and, based on that reconciliation, give us an authoritative base for further divine service.

Endnotes

- 1 See Rom. 5. 10; 11. 15; 2 Cor. 5. 18, 19 for the former and verse 20, 'having made peace' for the latter.
- 2 J. M. DAVIES, *Prison Letters The epistles to Colossians and Philemon*, Precious Seed Publications, 2008.
- 3 A. LECKIE, *Ephesians in What the Bible teaches*, John Ritchie Ltd, 1983.
- 4 Rom. 12. 1; Eph. 5. 27; Jude 1. 24; Rom. 14. 10-12; 1 Cor. 3. 10-15; 2 Cor. 5. 10.
- 5 Cp. 'the hope laid up for you in heaven', 1. 5; 'the hope of glory', 1. 27.
- 6 F. F. BRUCE, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- 7 See John 8. 31; 15. 4, 7; Heb. 3. 6-19.

The Son of God His Eternality

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newton Abbot, England.

Perhaps the first question we should ask ourselves is what we actually understand by the word eternity or eternal in relationship to God? At its most basic level, we mean that God in His essential being has existed forever and has no beginning or end. This means, then, that He can act outside of any human dimension without restriction or constraint by anything so that in Paul's words, He is, 'over all, God blessed for ever. Amen', Rom. 9. 5. If we wanted a more theological definition, then BERKHOF states that 'The infinity of God in relation to time is called His eternity. The form in which the Bible represents God's eternity is simply that of duration through endless ages, Pss. 90. 2; 102. 12; Eph. 3. 21'.¹ So the next question for us to answer is whether we can legitimately argue from the Bible that Jesus pre-existed as the Son of God prior to His incarnation? Does the Bible support the eternal Sonship of Christ, and has the Son existed eternally as God?

In our view, the Bible is unequivocal on this matter and Christ's eternity, or eternal Sonship, can be established from texts such as – and there are many more – John chapter 3 verse 16, Galatians chapter 4 verse 4, Hebrews chapter 1 verses 2 to 4 and 8, and 1 John chapter 4 verse 14. If we take the verses in Hebrews chapter 1 as an example of this confirmation, we find that our Lord is referred to as the radiance of God's effulgent glory and the exact representation of God. These statements underpin the eternal Sonship and deity of Christ, and as O'BRIEN makes quite clear, 'Further the passage describes the movement of the Son from his **pre-existence** [my emphasis] to his sharing in humanity and exaltation, a progress similar to that in other so-called hymnic passages'.² The Apostle Paul makes a similar statement in Philippians chapter 2 verse 6 where he confirms the eternal pre-existence of the Son of God when he uses the expression, 'who being [or existing] in the form of God'. Notice the context of this statement is in relationship to the preceding verse and the word 'who' in verse 6 points to Christ. As LOH and NIDA state, 'The word rendered "being" is not

the common Greek word for "being," but it denotes one's essential and unchangeable nature. The participle is either present or imperfect. In either case, it signifies a continuing state, so it is best rendered he always had, or "was his from the first" NEB'.³ No one, of course, could exist in the form of God who was not God.

But perhaps the one book in the New Testament that majors on the eternal pre-existence of the Son is the Gospel of John. Here there is an abundance of texts that support this claim. For example, the expression 'the only-begotten (Greek = *monogenes*) of the Father' found in the prologue to John's Gospel, chapter 1 verse 14 KJV,⁴ has been variously translated as 'the Father's only Son' NEB; 'the One and Only who came from the Father' NIV; 'as of a father's only son' NRSV; 'the only Son from the Father' ESV.⁵ The Greek word *monogenes* is used in the Septuagint (LXX), *inter alia*, to describe the daughter of Jephthah ('She was his only child') in Judges chapter 11 verse 34. Similarly, in the New Testament, the word is used to refer to the only child of the widow of Nain, 'the only son of his

mother', Luke 7. 12, and to Isaac being the 'only begotten son' of Abraham, Heb. 11. 17. CARSON suggests that despite the efforts of some to restore the rendering of the underlying expression to 'only-begotten', in his view the meaning of the term *monogenes* is closer to that of the NIV translation, i.e., 'the One and Only'.⁶ This being so, the expression should be interpreted as meaning that the beloved Son was uniquely Son of God *eternally* without any notion that His divine being was derived from the Father. Significantly, as another scholar has pointed out, 'the term "Logos" and the term "only-begotten" are applied to the same person without any suggestion that there is a period of time in which one term would not be applicable'.⁷ Later in the same chapter John again refers to the only-begotten Son when he tells us that 'No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. He has declared Him', 1. 18 NKJV. Observe how accurate John's words are about Christ. He does not state that the Son was in the bosom of God but 'in the bosom of the Father'. Hence the Son is fully qualified to declare or interpret the Father because of the unique and eternal relationship that has always existed between them as Father and Son.⁸

Moving further into John's narrative we find in chapter 3 verse 17, chapter 5 verse 23 and chapter 10 verse 36, texts that declare that the Father sent the Son into the world; therefore, it must follow that the Son pre-existed before incarnation. In fact, what is of significance in John chapter 10 verse 36 is that in the dispute with the Jews over His claim to be the Son of God, they accused Him of blasphemy, and were preparing to stone Him. They insisted that He was merely a man, but the Lord, with absolute authority, responds by declaring that His claim to be recognized as the (eternal) Son of God was two-fold. He had been consecrated by the Father and sent by Him into the world.

In chapter 8, John again records a dispute between Jesus and the Jews over the question of what it meant to be children of Abraham. At the end of this discourse, in verse 58, Jesus makes an astonishing claim

that He had existed before Abraham was born. This is undoubtedly a claim to Him being the pre-existent Son of God. GRUDEM comments in this immediate context, that 'It is also indicated in Jesus' bold use of a present tense verb that implies continuing present existence when he replied to his Jewish adversaries, "Before Abraham was, I *am*" (John 8: 58). This statement is itself an explicit claiming of the name of God, "I AM WHO I AM" from Exodus 3:14, a name that also suggests a continual present existence: God is the eternal "I AM", the one who eternally exists'.⁹ Similarly in John chapter 12 verse 41, the text of Isaiah chapter 6 is applied by the writer to Jesus as the glory of God, i.e., to His eternal Sonship.¹⁰ In part of the Upper Room discourse in John chapter 17 verse 5, Jesus makes another clear reference to His eternal pre-existence as the Son of God. In His dialogue with His Father, He refers to 'the glory which I had with thee before the world was'. So, the Son is asking the Father to enable Him to return to the glory which He as the eternal Son shared with the Father before creation.

In Revelation, Jesus states, 'I am Alpha and Omega' the beginning and the ending saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty', Rev. 1: 8. Similar claims are made by Him in chapter 21 verse 6 and chapter 22 verse 13. These texts reflect statements made in the Old Testament relating to God Himself, e.g., Isa. 41: 4; 44: 6, and as BEALE writes, 'The God who transcends time guides the entire course of history because he stands as sovereign over its beginning and its end'.¹¹ Thus, if Jesus pre-existed time, which is the conclusion one must draw from His assertions in Revelation, then it is a claim to His eternity.

The eternity or eternal Sonship of Christ has been the subject of a considerable amount of debate in church history. Novation of Rome (AD 200-258) is probably the first writer to argue that as fatherhood is integral and essential to God's being, then if God was always God, then He was always a father, and so the Son pre-existed eternally. Origen (AD 185-254) had earlier made the timeless, thus eternal, generation of the Son

a key factor in his system. Much has been made of this idea of the eternal generation of the Son, but the danger, of course, in holding to this idea is that one **could** impute to it the notion that the Son had a beginning prior to incarnation. Provided one accepts that the term 'only-begotten' does not relate to an event in time or past eternity, then it has some use in talking about the eternal Sonship of Christ but should be used with caution.

Whilst it is important to appreciate the historical development of Christology in the Patristic and later church periods, it is still **no** substitute for engaging with the biblical text.

Therefore, it is very important for Christians to maintain the eternal Sonship of Christ. The consequences of denying this dynamic truth is to 'disparage the authority that attaches to the Person of the Son of God'.¹² We therefore believe that Jesus Christ is the *eternal* Son of God, very God of very God, begotten not created, being of one substance with the Father. We fully endorse Peter's confession in Matthew chapter 16 verse 16 that Jesus is the Son of the living God.

Endnotes

- 1 L. BERKHOF, *Systematic Theology*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971, pg. 60.
- 2 PETER O'BRIEN, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, pg. 47. Many scholars suggest that Hebrews chapter 1 verse 3 is in fact a hymn in honour of Christ similar to other New Testament hymn structures such as Philippians chapter 2 verses 5-11; and Colossians 1 chapter 1 verses 15-20.
- 3 LOH and NIDA, *A Translators Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, Helps for Translators series, United Bible Societies.
- 4 The RV of 1881 follows the KJV, but has the following marginal note, 'Many very ancient authorities read *God only begotten*'.
- 5 Other references to Christ as the 'only begotten Son/of the Father' can be found in John 3: 16; 1 John 4: 9.
- 6 D. A. CARSON, *The Gospel According to John*, Apollos, pg. 128.
- 7 T. C. HAMMOND, *In Understanding Be Men*, IVP, pg. 101.
- 8 The Greek word for declare is *exegeomai* (English = exegesis). It was used in Greek writing of the interpretation of things sacred and divine, oracles, dreams, etc.
- 9 W. GRUDEM, *Systematic Theology*, IVP, pg. 169.
- 10 Cp. Acts chapter 7 verse 55 where Stephen sees 'the glory of God, and [better rendered "even"] Jesus standing at the right hand of God'.
- 11 G. K. BEALE, *The Book of Revelation*, William B Eerdmans, pg. 199.
- 12 T. C. HAMMOND, *op. cit.*, pg. 101.



What does the Bible tell us about the future? Part 4

'I will come again'

By **RICHARD COLLINGS** Caerphilly, Wales

Introduction

Whilst all believers should be longing for the coming of the Lord, many of us may not be so enthusiastically waiting for the judgement seat of Christ that immediately follows it. This event is something that all believers will face and the way we live now should be governed by the conscious realization that we each will have to give account. It was this realization that motivated and controlled how the Apostle Paul served, 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him', 2 Cor. 5. 9, 10.

Who is going to be judged?

This review is inclusive, for every believer will be there, but it will be carried out individually for the verse in 2 Corinthians continues, 'that **every one** may receive the things done in his body'. We will not appear there as part of a family or as part of an assembly congregation but as individual servants before their Lord.

When will it happen?

In writing to the church at Corinth the apostle states, 'judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts', 1 Cor. 4. 5. This assessment follows on directly after the rapture and as such it is salutary to think that it can happen at any time.

Who will be the judge?

The judge is the Lord Jesus; hence it is called the 'judgment seat of Christ'. Therefore, our service is going to be reviewed by One who Himself became a servant. He took upon Himself the form of a servant but, unlike you or me, He was an unfailing servant. He did not bow His head and dismiss His spirit on the cross until He had said 'it is finished' and that is why long before He came, Jehovah could say of

Him 'behold my servant . . . he shall not fail', Isa. 42. 1-4.

How grateful we should be that our life and service is not going to be reviewed by each other. We only have partial knowledge and we are prone to some degree of bias. Thankfully, instead of our prejudices determining the outcome of the review the one who will judge 'is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have shewed toward his name', Heb. 6. 10.

What will be judged?

Our Lord will not sit on a throne as He does when He judges the nations at the close of the tribulation, and as He does when He judges the wicked dead at the end of time. The judgement seat is not a throne and therefore we will not be there as subjects before a sovereign. This is not a judicial trial where a penal sentence will be handed down for there is no possibility of those who have been justified being condemned.

However, we shall appear before this judgement seat as servants before their Lord and He will hold us to account for the way that we have lived and served. His assessment will not be judicial but it will be

governmental – and that is no different to how He deals with us now from time to time. There are four primary matters that will be reviewed; we shall consider each briefly.

1 My contact with my brethren, Rom. 14.

In the church at Rome there were differing viewpoints on certain matters, resulting in the believers judging one another. Two specific matters are highlighted by Paul; he refers to matters of diet and the observance of days. Within the church there were Jewish converts who may have found it difficult to relinquish some of their former dietary restrictions and observances of feast days. Paul describes these people in verse 1 as being 'weak in faith'. On the other hand, Gentile converts would not have had any such inhibitions and felt free to eat whatever they wished; they also regarded every day as being of equal import unto the Lord.

These differences created tensions. The weak were judging those who didn't share their scruples and therefore were guilty of exercising a prerogative that wasn't theirs. On the other hand, those who had liberty were despising or being critical of those who didn't enjoy such liberty. Paul's objective was to impress upon both parties that they were equally at fault and he reminds them that none of them will sit on the judgement seat of Christ but all will stand before it.

Perhaps we judge others over insignificant matters, failing to discern between a personal preference and a biblical principle. Maybe we treat contemptuously those who have a tender conscience, classing them as being too legal. How many upsets and needless divisions have been caused in companies of God's people because of our failure to live with one another in a spirit of forbearance. May we seek grace to be humble in spirit and to receive (or accept) one another just as Christ also received us.

2 My contribution into the building, 1 Cor. 3.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul focuses on Christ's assessment of the work of the Bible teacher. He

uses three metaphors to describe a local church, a cultivated field and a building in verse 9, and a temple in verse 16. In describing the church as a field, he refers to his planting and Apollos watering and both activities were done by teaching. Notice that no reward is given for increase in the field for God gives the increase, the reward is given for effort.

However, in the building reward is not given for effort but for the quality of the teaching, the teacher has to 'take heed how he builds'. Six materials are listed in verse 12 and the distinction between them is stark. Three are of value; they are the gold, silver and precious stones. Three are of little or no value, the wood, hay and stubble.

At the judgement seat the work of the teacher will be reviewed, and Paul uses another metaphor, fire, to make that point. Teaching that is contrary to the word of God and would defile an assembly will be burned and the teacher suffers loss. Teaching that passes the test will bring reward for the teacher.

By application, we might extend these details to every aspect of service each of us render to God. Whilst effort is commendable, it is not enough, for, I might be busy in doing that which will not meet with the Lord's approval. Our responsibility is to appraise what we do by the touchstone of the Bible.

3 My conscience about my behaviour, 1 Cor. 4.

Paul begins the chapter by stating that far from being a party leader, as some were making him, he was a servant and a steward. As a servant, he took instructions from the Lord, and as a steward he administered divine things on behalf of the Lord. He points out, in verse 2, that the primary duty of a steward is to be faithful, and that issue is critical to understanding what follows. The subject matter of verses 1 to 5 is faithfulness as a steward, not competence as a preacher or conduct as a person.

There were those in Corinth who were being judgmental of Paul's faithfulness, but, in verse 3, he dismisses that. It

mattered not to Paul whether the church at Corinth or any human court formed a judgement on him; in fact, he wasn't even able to fully assess himself in relation to this issue.

All human judgement is subjective, even Paul's in relation to himself. Although he was not aware of any personal deficiency, he would not justify himself for he may have made an incorrect assessment, and so he says in verse 5, 'judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts'.

The 'hidden things of darkness' may not mean evil things but matters not public, things done that no one knows about. The 'counsels of the heart' refers to my motives. Thus, the first phrase relates to what I have done, the second to why I did them. One day my faithfulness as a steward will be fully examined. What I have done and why I did it will be exposed with reward being given only for what has met with the master's approval.



4 My conduct in my body, 2 Cor. 5.

As already stated, one of the things that motivated Paul was the prospect of appearing before the judgement seat of Christ and receiving the things done in the body. The time is coming when we shall all 'appear' before the judgement seat. The word 'appear' means 'made manifest' so that what we have done in our bodies is going to be manifested to us by the Lord and we shall 'receive the things done in the body'.

The word 'receive' conveys the thought of 'receiving back'; it is a recompense. Then Paul adds, 'whether good or bad' and the word 'bad' means more than what was just worthless. The Lord will reveal to me what He saw, nothing escaped His attention and I shall be recompensed for it. What was bad will be exposed and burned up and I shall suffer loss of the reward I could have had. This is salutary; how much of what I have done will I see burned up?

The judgement seat is a place of reward

Whilst it is challenging to think that we are going to be reviewed, we must also remember that the judgement seat is a place of reward. There are crowns to be won and positions in the kingdom to be earned, and these will be given to us at this review. The last reference to the judgement seat is an indirect one but it is connected to this thought of being rewarded. In Revelation chapter 22 verse 12 the Lord says, 'behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be'.

Conclusion

So, we each must make a choice. We can either live for now and lose later or live for Christ now and be rewarded eternally. This is something that CHARLES THOMAS STUDD came to appreciate when he wrote:

'Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in "that day" my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgement seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last'.

An Assembly of the Lord's people
will be a people among whom ...

HEADSHIP IS EXPRESSED

By **PHIL COULSON** Forres, Scotland.

Part 2

Headship in principle

When we speak of 'headship' we are describing a form of control and order that is unique. It is a principle of government that not only originates with God, but also displays how the three distinct persons of the Godhead, entirely equal in their attributes, eternality and essence, all work in harmony to fulfil divine purpose. The Son is seen as being obedient to the will of the Father, and the Holy Spirit to the will of the Son, John 8. 29; 16. 7. Indeed, Paul wrote 'the head of Christ is God'. Clearly, submission in the pursuit of divine order denotes neither subservience nor inequality.

Headship in creation

In the creation of man, when God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness', Gen. 1. 26, He instituted an order of things on earth that reflected the order of heaven. God's regent on earth would work according to the same principle as that observed by God Himself. There is no mention in Genesis chapter 1 of there being male and female in the animal kingdom. There must have been both, of course, because of the divine design for procreation, but the words male and female are first used of the human race. The design, therefore, was to fulfil something more than merely the spread of the species. Indeed it was, for, as Christ is to God in obedience to His will, so the woman was to be to the man. The divine order for exercising dominion in creation was that as Christ submits to the will of God, the man would submit to Christ, and the woman would submit to the man, 1 Cor. 11. 3. The Lord Jesus said, 'My meat is to do the will of him that

sent me', John 4. 34, so, if each one in the chain of headship is marked by that degree of submission, it means ultimately that the woman, in submitting to the man, is fulfilling the will of God. The presumption is that the woman should be able to submit wholeheartedly to the will of the man, because he, in turn, is in full submission to the will of Christ.

Headship illustrated

If we have been blessed with a healthy body and all its faculties, we need only a few moments to observe what headship is in operation. As I type this article, my thoughts are being expressed in words that my hands are producing via a keyboard. The various members of my body are working in a coordinated way to achieve the desired purpose. If, through some problem, my hands did not respond to the requirements of the head, what could my head do about that? It is not able to enforce its will on my hands – it depends on their cooperation through the properly functioning components of my body. Your body, and mine, has an incredible capacity, and requirement, for the harmonious submission of every part to the head. Whilst the body provides a clear demonstration of what headship involves, we would look in vain if we sought to find the principle displayed in any administration of man's invention. Whether in business, civil order or the military, the idea of all workers being equal in rank, and performing their tasks in a spirit of submission, is manifestly impossible. People are naturally insubordinate and rebellious. Therefore, a 'pyramid' structure of administration is necessary, where

each person has a boss, and each boss has a boss, until, at the top of the pyramid, there is a CEO or some such executive. That 'top-down' system of government reflects the principle of lordship, where obedience is both demanded and enforced.

Headship and lordship are different

A scriptural illustration of the distinction between lordship and headship can be found in the Lord's own words. As He spoke to the disciples in the upper room, the Lord Jesus said to them, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments', John 14. 15. This is the language of lordship, signified by the word 'commandments'. A little later, the Lord said 'If a man love me, he will keep my words', 14. 23, and this is the sentiment of headship. In acknowledgement of Christ as Lord, His people must keep His commandments. In acknowledgement of Christ as Head, they will keep His words. Commandments are unequivocal instructions that demand obedience, but words (sayings) are the expression of one's thoughts and desires.

Headship and its glory

Both headship and lordship have glory associated with them. In the case of lordship, that glory lies in the ability to impose its demands. Thus we read of the Lord Jesus that, as a consequence of His self-humbling and obedience to the extent of death, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father', Phil. 2. 9-11. Praise God, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! Proud and mighty men will be made to acknowledge that the One they despised is, indeed, Lord. But the glory of headship does not lie in the **imposition** of authority. Rather, its glory is displayed in the voluntary submission of those who

acknowledge its authority. If a wife refuses to acknowledge the headship of her husband voluntarily, there is nothing he can do to enforce it. As soon as headship is enforced it becomes lordship, and the glory of submissive obedience is lost.

Headship overthrown

The principle of headship, instituted in creation and practised by Adam and Eve before the Fall, was the divinely ordered relationship between the man and the woman. The man tenderly and genuinely cared for the needs of the woman who was his help, and she joyfully submitted to his guidance and his will. It was a failure to observe headship on the part of both Adam and Eve that allowed sin to enter into the world, and one of the consequences of sin was that headship became rivalry, and an onerous burden to both the man and the woman. For her part in the Fall, God told Eve, 'thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee', Gen 3. 16: there would henceforth be a natural inclination for the woman to usurp the role and authority of the man. He, in turn, would oppose that natural instinct in the woman by using his (usually) greater strength to impose his rule upon her. The harmony of headship would henceforth be lost in the struggle for supremacy of will.

Headship observed

How lovely it is for the believer to view the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church which is His body, when He prostrated Himself in the garden of Gethsemane and prayed, 'Abba, Father . . . not what I will, but what thou wilt', Mark 14. 36. In Him, whose Head is God, is displayed the voluntary submission that is the essence of headship. Now, all who are in Christ have the responsibility to surrender their will to Him as Lord, Rom. 12. 1, and also to recognize Him as Head, in keeping with the order God has ordained.

Headship in the local assembly

There are seven particular references to the headship of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. One is found in the first letter to the Corinthians,

three in the letter to the Ephesians and the remaining three in the Colossian Epistle. The emphasis in Ephesians is on the relationship of the Head to the body; in Colossians the responsibility of the body to the Head is in view, and in Corinthians the subject is the recognition of the



Head in the local expression of the body, the assembly. If we look in vain for the principle of headship in the institutions of men, the one place where we should find it observed is in every local company of Christians gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In such companies, God's desired order should be taught, loved and obeyed. It is clear from Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 35, that there are two distinct spheres in which headship is exercised: 'at home' and 'in the church'. In fact, the distinction is slightly obscured in the English translation, because the wording in Greek is the same: 'in the home' and 'in the church'. 'In the home', the man is head, and for that reason the woman is free to speak and need not cover her head. However, 'in the church' the headship of Christ is to be displayed by the uncovered head of the men, the covered head of the women, the leadership of the men in the spiritual exercises of the company, and the silence of the women.

It should be noted in 1 Corinthians 11 that three distinct glories are spoken of. In verse 7 we read of the 'glory of God' and 'the glory of the man', and in verse 15 there is 'a glory to her'. Seeing it is the case that the gathered company is being observed by angels, v. 10, it is important that only the 'glory of God' be on display. It follows, therefore, that the other two glories must be veiled. 'The glory of the man', represented by the physical head of the woman, is veiled by her long hair, but that very covering is 'a glory to her'. In covering one glory, another has been introduced, so it must also be covered. Hence the requirement for a suitable artificial covering which, depending on culture, availability and affordability, might be anything such as a hat, veil or sari. The important matter is not the style of the covering but, rather, the intelligent use of one. In that simple and dignified way, the woman has a positive ministry to both angels and men, complementing the symbolism of the uncovered head of the men. Thus, divine order is observed, angels are instructed, Eph. 3. 10, and God is honoured.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel

JUDAH

By **LLOYD STOCK** Bury St. Edmunds, England

In the introduction to this series we noted that along with Joseph, Judah dominates Jacob's closing discourse in Genesis. We also noted the chronicler's words, 'Judah prevailed over his brethren', 1 Chr. 5. 2. Chronicles majors on Judah, and if we consider that in a Hebrew Old Testament it is last in order, we get a clear sense that the whole of the Old Testament is framed, from beginning to end, with a focus on this tribe. Once again, God's sovereign hand is at work.

The prevailing patriarch

The beginnings of God's work with the tribe in Genesis are somewhat concealed in a narrative which children's story books focus on – God's deliverance through Joseph. A more careful reading though, observes God slowly manoeuvring Judah into place. In this series we are looking at the tribe, not the man, so we can but point the reader to go back to the text to have this confirmed.¹

All of these developments in the story deserve far greater treatment than we can provide here, but it is not difficult to see the gradual emergence of a leader. Judah had a shaky start, but, ultimately, he prevails over his brethren.

The prevailing people

The first improbable thing about Judah is their name. Judah means 'praise'. Leah felt her inferiority deeply and her elation at Judah's birth comes from nowhere. Perhaps for a moment she stopped craving her husband's affections, settled in the realization that she did at least have God's favour. What an attractive thing this is. May this be an encouragement to us. That amidst circumstances which would otherwise crush and depress, we might say, 'Now will I praise the Lord', Gen. 29. 35.

And this is the signature of the tribe. Against the odds, defying convention, out of nowhere, again and again, Judah prevails. Is this not true of all those saved by grace? We are overcomers, those who defy the odds and the wisdom of this world to find, ultimately, that by God's sustaining grace we will prevail. And since we prevail, then God prevails too. Praise God indeed!

The prevailing progeny

As we scan the rest of the Old Testament, we can see this signature time and again. Think, for instance, of David's selection as king. Of course, Jacob had spoken about the sceptre not departing from Judah in Genesis chapter 49 verse 10, implying they would be the ruling tribe. But David was not the obvious choice, at least in human terms. Samuel said of Jesse's oldest, 'surely the Lord's anointed is before him', but the Lord's anointed was not to be found amongst those in the line-up, 1 Sam. 16. 6. He would be

found out in the fields, amongst the flock. He would be found in the one who slew Goliath, was hounded by Saul, lost everything at Ziklag, and the great-grandson of an equally unlikely marriage in Ruth and Boaz. These are all stories which would be the stuff of legend if it wasn't for the fact they are in God's word. Are you faced with adverse circumstances, are you on the precipice of hopelessness – do not forget that one of the hallmarks of the faithful is that against hope, they believe in hope, Rom. 4. 18. It was precisely a recognition of our own hopelessness that brought us to faith in the first place, and, apparently, the life of faith is one in which we are frequently made to face our need, face our finiteness and cast ourselves upon the God of the impossible, Luke 1. 37.

We should not be surprised, then, to learn that God had Judah out in front when journeying through the wilderness. He chose them to lead the effort after Joshua's campaigns. Caleb, one of only two faithful spies, Othniel, Daniel and Nehemiah, were all Judahites to name a few. The tribe's exploits in the land meant that the Southern Kingdom simply became known as 'Judah', and whilst the Northern Kingdom lost its identity, Judah prevailed, spilling over into our New Testament, as Judea.

The prevailing Prince

If we had not already become familiar with the remarkable story of Judah prior to the New Testament, it is all there in the genealogy of Matthew chapter 1. The line to Christ was precariously close to being extinguished at times in the past – but only humanly speaking. Psalm 2 makes it patently clear that God's King is set in Zion. This world's future is firmly in the hands of the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open' the affairs which God has set in store, Rev. 5. 5. That word 'prevailed' is the story of the book of Revelation, appearing seventeen times throughout and, because of Calvary, it is the story of our lives too, 1 John 5. 5. Praise God!



Endnote

- 1 Gen. 29. 35; 37. 26, 27; 38. 1-30; 43. 8, 9; 44. 14, 16, 18-34.

Herod's Temple

By **JEREMY GIBSON** Derby, England

One of Herod's most ambitious projects, started in 20 BC, was rebuilding the Jewish temple at Jerusalem. Much to the relief of the Jews, within two years the House was finished, its bright marble walls being built upon a foundation of gigantic stones, weighing up to 600 tonnes.¹ The entire site took forty-six years to complete, John 2. 20, with enormous stones ranging from two to fifty tonnes forming great retaining walls to support the temple plateau which measured 140,000 square metres, or eleven football pitches. Upon this platform the surrounding temple complex, which could hold more than 200,000 people, was constructed.

Until AD 70, Herod's temple was a central focus of the Jewish religion; a gathering point for the nation. When the Jews accused Stephen of speaking 'blasphemous words against this holy place', and then charged Paul with profaning the temple, they showed how much they had come to value it, Acts 6. 13; 24. 6. During its short life, both the Lord Jesus and the early Christians bore witness to Israel in the temple's precincts, 5. 19-42. Christ predicted its destruction and viewed it as a picture of His own body, in which resided 'all the fulness of the Godhead'.² Of course, He was infinitely greater than the temple, Matt. 12. 6.

In this article we shall move from the inner sanctuary outwards to the surrounding colonnaded porches and relevant surrounding areas, tracing references to Herod's Temple in the New Testament.³

The House

As in the tabernacle and Solomon's temple, a veil separated the holy place from the holy of holies. At the time of Christ's crucifixion, God completely rent this veil.⁴ This signalled free access into His presence, while at the same time exposing the absence of the Ark of the Covenant and the Shekinah glory. This glory, which had initially filled Solomon's temple, 1 Kgs. 8. 10, 11, but

later left it, Ezek. 10. 18, was never present in Herod's holy of holies, although when at forty days of age Christ was presented to the Lord, the glory of the God of Israel had, in a sense, returned, Luke 2. 22.

Outside the veil, yet within the holy place and on the right side of the altar of incense, Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, 1. 8-21. Attached to the outside façade of the House were gold sheets that gleamed brightly. The Saviour referred to these when rebuking the Pharisees, 'Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor', Matt. 23. 16.

The Court of the Priests (1)

Immediately outside the House was the courtyard where priests daily sacrificed upon an altar of unhewn stones, Matt. 12. 5; Heb. 10. 11. The Pharisees wrongly assumed that this altar could be disassociated from its sacrifices, Matt. 23. 18. During the Feast of Tabernacles, *Sukkot*, when the morning sacrifice was being prepared, a priest brought water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam. Having passed through the Water Gate (2) to the sound of three trumpet blasts, the priest poured this water into a silver basin which channelled it downwards to the base of the altar. It was during the Feast of Tabernacles, 'in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink', John 7. 37. As a baby, Christ may have been presented to the Lord at The Gate of Firstlings (3), Lev. 12; Luke 2. 22-24.

The Court of the Women (4)

Two steps downward from The Court of the Priests was a 16½ foot, narrow strip called The Court of Israel. This led to the Nicanor Gate (5), beyond which was a fifteen-step staircase to The Court of the Women. During the Feast of Tabernacles, Levites stood on these fifteen steps, singing the fifteen psalms of degrees,

Pss. 120-134. Jewish men and ritually clean Jewish women were permitted to enter The Court of the Women. At its four corners were four chambers, one of which was The Chamber of Lepers (6). When the Lord Jesus told a healed leper to show himself to the priest, the current policy, never having been enacted, was to wash in The Chamber of Lepers and then stand before The Nicanor Gate.⁵

The walls of The Court of the Women had a colonnaded covered area within which were thirteen trumpet-shaped money chests; this was The Treasury. The Saviour probably alluded to the shape of these receptacles when He said, 'Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men', Matt. 6. 2. Into one of these chests the poor widow cast her two mites, Mark 12. 41-44; Luke 21. 1-4. Into another Mary placed the monetary value of two turtle doves, 2. 22, 24. It was during this visit to the temple, probably in The Court of the Women, that Simeon held Christ, and Anna prayed and spoke about Him, vv. 25-33, 36-38. The Court of the Women also contained four enormous candelabras. Standing there during the Feast of Tabernacles, the Saviour exclaimed, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life', John 8. 12, 20. He was obviously comparing Himself to these great light sources.

The Court of the Gentiles (7)

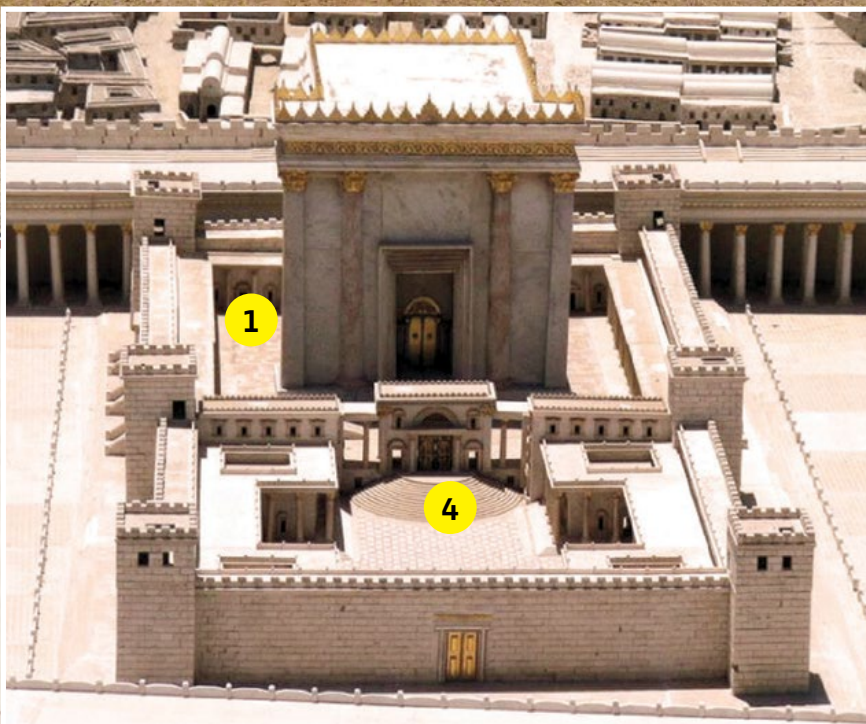
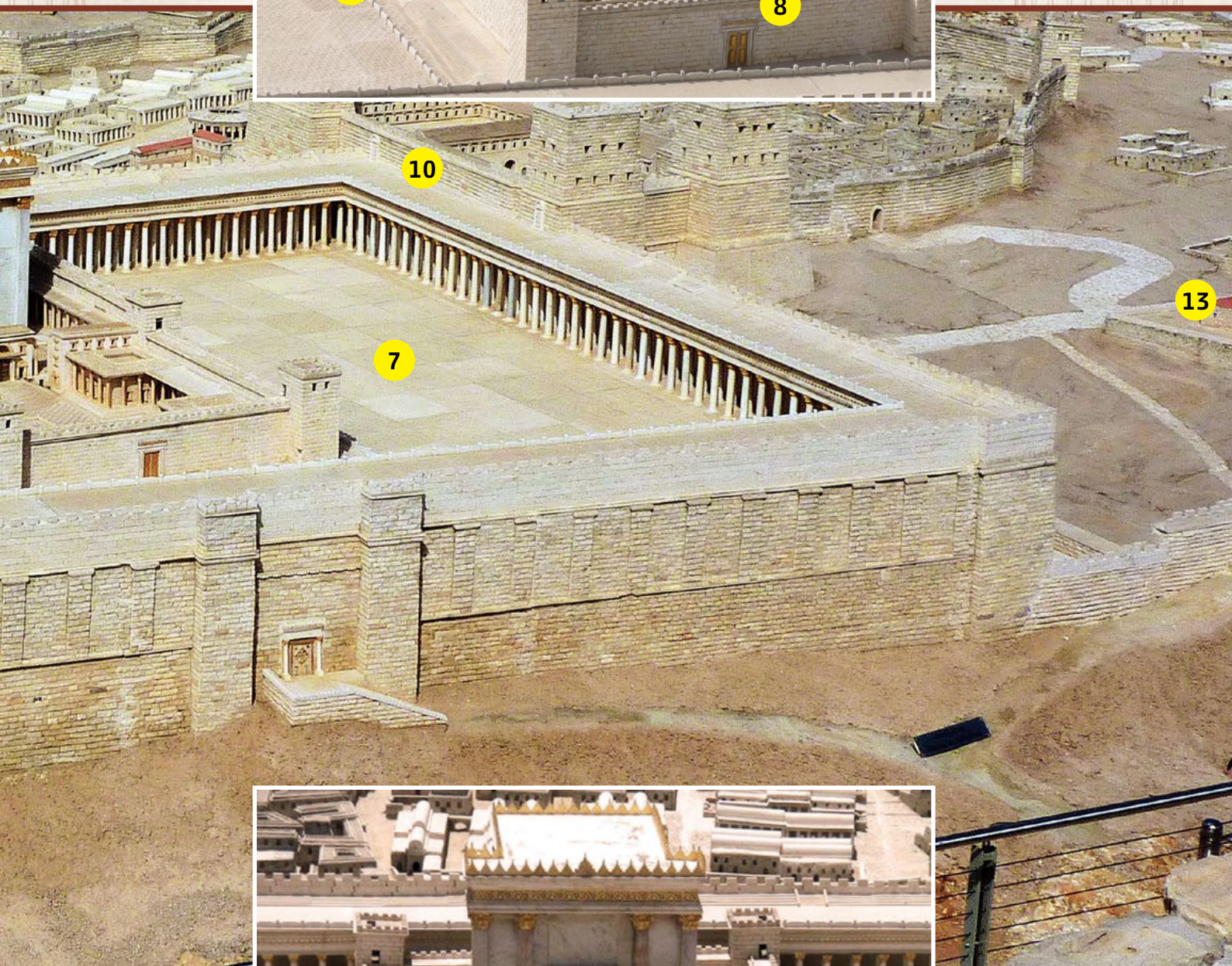
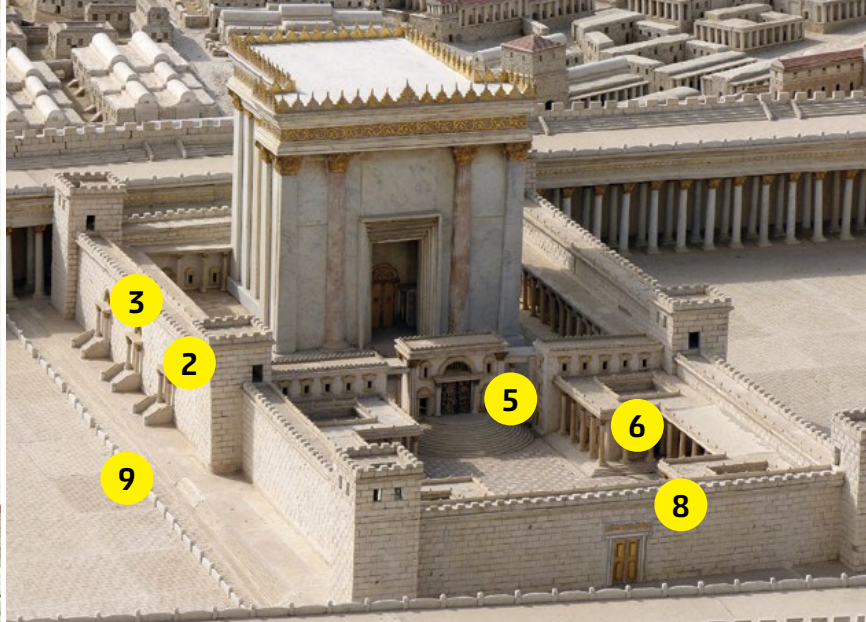
The eastern entrance to The Court of the Women was The Beautiful Gate (8), where Peter and John healed the lame man, Acts 3. 2. This large brazen gate, which took twenty men to open and close, secured the temple from intruders. After descending a fourteen-step staircase there was a 4½-foot high marble balustrade (9), beyond which was The Court of the Gentiles. Gentiles were forbidden from crossing this partition towards the House. Paul probably had this barrier in mind when he wrote to the Ephesians that Christ 'is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us', Eph. 2. 14.

Herod's Temple in the life of the Lord



LEGEND

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The Court of the Priests | 8. The Beautiful Gate |
| 2. The Water Gate | 9. The Balustrade |
| 3. The Gate of Firstlings | 10. Fort Antonia |
| 4. The Court of the Women | 11. Solomon's Porch |
| 5. The Nicanor Gate | 12. The Royal Portico |
| 6. The Chamber of Lepers | 13. The Pool of Bethesda |
| 7. The Court of Gentiles | |



The Court of the Gentiles, with its variegated marble paving, was the largest area within the temple complex. It was here Jews and Gentiles freely mixed, the Lord Jesus delivered much of His teaching and, at the beginning and end of His public ministry, exposed the unashamed extortion of the money changers.^{6,7} Adjoining the north western corner of The Court of the Gentiles, and linked by a tunnel, was The Fort Antonia (10), named after Mark Antony, Herod's Roman patron. The lack of military intervention on each occasion the Lord Jesus cleansed the temple, in contrast to the rapid response when Paul was apprehended as recorded in Acts chapter 21 verses 30 to 32, may indicate supernatural intervention.

Lining the Court of the Gentiles were colonnaded porticos, whose roofs were supported by massive Corinthian pillars. These porches became popular meeting places

and it was probably in one of these covered areas that at the age of twelve, the Lord Jesus talked to the doctors, Luke 2. 46. Solomon's Porch (11), 'the only remnant of the Temple built by the wise King of Israel', stretched the entire length of the eastern side of The Court of the Gentiles.⁸ It was as Christ walked in Solomon's Porch, the Jews challenged Him, 'How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly', John 10. 23. Solomon's Porch is also where the early Christians met, and the apostles performed confirmatory miracles.⁹

The most impressive porch was The Royal Portico (12). Running most of the length of the southern wall, it may have been built on the site of Solomon's stables, 1 Kgs. 4. 26.¹⁰ At the far eastern end of its roof, which was supported by 162, 50-foot high columns, there was a 450-foot drop to the Kedron Valley below. This may have been the wing of the temple

from which Satan tempted the Son of God to cast Himself, Matt. 4. 5; Luke 4. 9. The pool of Bethesda (13), where the Lord Jesus healed the impotent man, lay by the sheep gate just beyond the northern end of the temple complex, John 5. 2, 14.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/12/herod/mueller-text>.
- 2 Matt. 23. 38; 24. 1, 2; Mark 13. 1-4; Luke 21. 5, 6; John 2. 19-21; Col. 2. 9.
- 3 Unless otherwise stated, historic details relating to the Temple and its Service are from A. EDERSHEIM, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services, Updated Edition*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- 4 Matt. 27. 51; Mark 15. 38; Luke 23. 45.
- 5 Matt. 8. 4; Mark 1. 44; Luke 5. 14.
- 6 Matt. 21. 23; 26. 55; Mark 11. 27; 14. 49; Luke 19. 47; 20. 1; 21. 37, 38; 22. 52, 53; John 18. 20.
- 7 Matt. 21. 12-16; Mark 11. 11, 15-18; Luke 19. 45, 46; John 2. 13-22.
- 8 A. EDERSHEIM, *op. cit.*, pg. 22.
- 9 Luke 24. 53; Acts 2. 46; 5. 12-18.
- 10 A. EDERSHEIM, *op. cit.*, pg. 21.



DO NOT BE CONTENT

By **SAM TAUFEEK** Toronto, Canada

The Bible instructs us to be content, Heb. 13. 5; 1 Tim. 6. 8, as a content heart is a thankful heart that can enjoy satisfaction and happy fellowship with the Lord, Phil. 4. 11.

However, the Bible also warns us about becoming content with our spiritual state. The closing exhortation of Peter is to, 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ', 2 Pet. 3. 18. We all know natural and biological growth. For this kind of development, we need good and healthy food, water, exercise and immediate attention to signs of abnormalities. Growing spiritually is not much different; we need spiritual food and drink and to exercise ourselves unto godliness, 1 Tim. 4. 7.

But there are also differences between biological and spiritual growth. Bodily growth will stop at a certain stage but spiritual growth should continue until we meet the Lord face-to-face, 2 Cor. 4. 16; Eph. 4. 13. The Bible states more about spiritual growth than bodily growth because it is easier to miss the signs of slow or diminishing spiritual growth. When our bodies need nourishment, we feel hungry and thirsty. Spiritual things are not as clear to everyone. Early signs of slow spiritual growth are not easy to notice; later on, the situation could be devastating, Heb. 5. 12-14.

Let us try to diagnose the factors that can hinder and even stop our spiritual growth, based on the scriptures.

Philippians chapter 3 is a good place to start. In **verses 1 to 7**, Paul warns of the danger of having confidence in the flesh. In **verses 8 to 10**, Paul tells us of his desire, above all things, to know the Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul wrote this Epistle, his knowledge pertaining to the Lord Jesus was considerable, but he knew that there was much more to learn of Christ, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge', Col. 2. 3. In **verses 11 to 13**, Paul is not occupied with the achievements and failures of the past. There is a starting point in every believer's journey with Christ,

but our eyes should be looking towards the finishing point. Our best example is our Saviour; He was always looking beyond current events, 'for the joy that was set before him', Heb. 12. 2. In **verse 14**, Paul says more about the finishing point, 'I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'. Paul mentions the calling of God ten times in his Epistles.¹

Sometimes we reduce the calling of God to two major events, salvation and eternity with Him, but forget about what we've been called to between the start and finish. For what is God calling each of us during our life on earth? We need to seek enlightenment from God to see His wonderful and glorious plan, Eph. 1. 17-19.

In Hebrews chapter 6, all are encouraged to 'leave the principles' and 'go on unto perfection'. There is a lot of wisdom and knowledge hid in Christ. He will reveal all to us if we have the desire to study His word and diligently seek these treasures.

In John chapter 14 verse 21, the Lord Jesus said, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me . . . and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him'. Obviously, and from the sequence of events in the verse, the



Lord is not talking about salvation. This is a promise given to a believer who has the Lord's commandments, is keeping them and is loving the Lord. The Lord will fulfil the desire of such a believer's heart, that he may know him, Phil. 3. 10.

A student in any educational institution cannot advance by just reviewing the principles he knows. Learning new things is essential and requires the right attitude, desire, effort and time. Whilst it might seem restful to stay where we are, that comes with many dangers, Deut. 1. 6; 2. 3.

Equally, teachers of the word of God might be tempted to review principles, which may be helpful, but there is always much more to learn. Paul exhorts Timothy and us to, 'Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in **all things**', 2 Tim. 2. 7. As all knowledge is by the grace of God, Peter instructs us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

New believers, as 'newborn babes', are instructed to 'desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby', 1 Pet. 2. 2. This is the starting point. Believers should not remain at that stage, Heb. 5. 12, 13. Earthly parents become very concerned when their children are not showing signs of normal growth. Our heavenly Father has no joy in seeing His children stationary and missing the many blessings that He has for them.

What then are the vital elements of spiritual growth? We believe they are sincere desires to set aside sufficient time to diligently study God's word and to persevere in prayer. Finally, to make note of what you have learned and seek to put it into practice.

May the Lord help us all to press on with a desire to enjoy all the Lord has for us and preserve us from spiritual complacency.

Endnotes

- 1 Rom. 11. 29; 1 Cor. 1. 26; 7. 20; Eph. 1. 18; 4. 4; Phil. 4. 14; 2 Thess. 1. 11; 2 Tim. 1. 9; Heb. 3. 1. This assumes that Paul wrote Hebrews. Peter also mentioned 'your calling', 2 Pet. 1. 10.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF REVELATION

Chapters 21 and 22

By **ALAN SUMMERS** Mayfield, Scotland

Part 1

In this article I examine the chronology of chapters 21 and 22 in the book of Revelation. The article is in two parts. This first part considers the contextual issues and the second look at specific factors that assist in determining the chronological sequence.

The subject is worth writing about. If chapters 21 and 22 are one unfolding narrative, then this section contains a wealth of information about the eternal state; a subject about which scripture is largely silent. If on the other hand its treatment of the eternal state is confined to the opening verses of chapter 21, then the remainder of chapter 21 and 22 provides an insight into an aspect of the Millennium about which scripture is otherwise silent; namely the idea that there are two 'Jerusalem's' in the Millennium. One on earth and one over the earth.

In summary, there are two bodies of opinion as to the chronology of these chapters. One body of opinion interprets chapters 21 and 22 as a description of the eternal state. Another body of opinion accepts that chapter 21 opens with an account of the eternal state, 21. 1-8. Thereafter it is said John reverts to the Millennium. Before weighing up these alternatives, it may be helpful to make some general remarks about events at the end of the Millennium.

The context

In chapter 20, John describes the Great White Throne; the last great judgement of human history. In the course of it he notes that 'the earth and heaven fled away' from the face of the Judge. 'And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven

fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works', vv. 11, 12.

In this account, earth and heaven are personified as fugitives from the 'face' of the One on the throne. The establishment of the throne causes creation to react in terror and flee. That the words 'the earth and heaven fled away' are not to be understood exclusively as a metaphor, is evident from the opening verse of chapter 21. It states that the earth and heavens have 'passed away'. These words describe the same event. In Revelation chapter 20 verse 11, the departure of the creation is described as a 'flight'. Revelation chapter 21 verse 1, describes the same event in concrete terms. There it 'passes' away. The word 'flee' conveys the impression that the creation is seeking to evade its fate. By contrast, at the start of the Millennium scripture describes creation as rejoicing, e.g., Ps. 96. 11; Rom. 8. 21. The phrase 'fleeing away' captures two ideas. First, it suggests the speed of creation's demise. The old creation does not shuffle off the stage of history but is gone in a moment. Second, it suggests the terror of the judgement. 'Fleeing away' implies that creation fears the judge. But while creation flees away

'the dead small and great' are unable to flee the judgement of God. The dead are judged before the throne. Since judgement in John's writings is committed to the Lord Jesus by the Father, the One from whose face creation 'flees' is evidently the Lord Jesus Christ, John 5. 22. Hence, it is clear that the Great White Throne is a judgement that occurs at the end of the first creation but before the new creation is brought into being. It is a judgment that occurs after the cessation of the first creation but before the formation of the new creation.

Peter provides more detail of what happens to the old creation in 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 10, 'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up'.

The demise of the old creation is accompanied by apocalyptic explosions of noise and the effusion of intense heat. As Peter makes clear, this destruction has a moral dimension. Not only is the physical universe dissolved but its works are burned. In other words, the realm in which sin has thrived for aeons is judged as those who have committed the sins have been judged.

Some argue that the old heavens and earth are annihilated. If this is so then the miracle of the first creation is reversed. It was a creation *ex nihilo*, Heb. 11. 3; Rom. 4. 17. According to this view, God miraculously makes creation disappear [destruction *ad nihilo*] and then performs another creation [another creation *ex nihilo*]. Others point out that the destruction of the world ['perish', 2 Pet. 3. 6] by the flood did not mean that it was annihilated. Hence, it is argued, the old world could be destroyed without the necessity of its annihilation. Although the cataclysm of the Flood is scarcely to be compared with the dissolution of the elements described in 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 10, this is a fair point and requires Peter's wording 'pass away', 'melt' and 'burned up' to be read more carefully. For those, like

myself, who are reluctant to think that the work begun in Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 should end with a massive 'scrappage scheme', the idea of a re-born, rather than recreated earth and heavens is attractive. In truth, however, there is no express statement on the subject and both views are respectable ones to take.

It is worth noting that the language used to describe the new creation closely resembles the old. As there were heavens in the old creation, so there are heavens in the new creation. As there was an earth in the old creation, so there is an earth in the new. The new 'heavens' should not be confused with the 'heaven of heavens' in which God dwells, Deut. 10. 14; 2 Chr. 2. 6. 'Heaven itself' is eternal and uncreated, Heb. 9. 24. If God is eternal, His dwelling place is eternal. The created universe has a realm we call outer space. These are the astral heavens or the starry heavens. Then there is the realm we call the sky that is the aerial heavens in which birds fly and clouds float. This is the atmosphere of earth.

John then describes the new creation with the words that commence chapter 21, 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away'.



As these words indicate before, John sees the new heaven and new earth; the first heaven and first earth have already passed away. These are stupendous words. They show that the universe that now is, will be brought to an end. But out of the ashes of the old world a new world emerges.

The interpretation

With the scene now set, I turn now to the purpose of the article. There is a debate as to whether Revelation chapters 21 and 22 are one unfolding narrative describing the new earth and new heaven, or a description of the Eternal State followed by a description of the Millennium.

As a preliminary matter, it should be noted that these chapters are not a continuous account of future events. Revelation contains various parentheses addressed to the readership. From the end of part of chapter 20 verse 5 through to verse 8 is such a parenthesis in which God addresses the readers saved and unsaved alike. Likewise, there is a conclusion, 22. 6-21. The question therefore is whether the remaining parts of chapter 21 and 22 are continuous narrative or not. Some consider that after briefly touching on the Eternal State, 21. 1-5, John devotes the major part of this closing section to a description of the Millennium, 21. 9-22. 5.

Before examining this hypothesis, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is evidence pointing in both directions. The aim is therefore to establish which hypothesis raises the least difficulties and to examine whether the passages in question can be harmonized.

General considerations

It should be noted, first, that Revelation is a chronological book. The book begins with the church age, chapters 1 to 3, and then speaks of the 'things which must be hereafter', 4. 1. John then describes the tribulation in chapters 4 to 18. This section is the longest in the book even though it covers a relatively short period of time. He then writes of the return of Christ in chapter 19. Thereafter he describes the Millennium in chapter 20, then turns to the Eternal State, 21. 1-5. If Revelation describes the Eternal State in chapter 21 verses 1 to 5 and then goes back to the Millennium in verses 9 to chapter 22 verse 5, John would not be following the chronological order that has hitherto marked the prophecy. While there are recapitulations in Revelation (sections where John re-covers material in more detail), there are no other flashbacks from one age to another. The dispensation of the church is not referred to in chapters 4 to 18, nor is the tribulation referred to after the return of Christ in chapter 19. If the section from chapter 21 verse 9 to chapter 22 verse 5 is a flashback from the Eternal State to the Millennium, this would be inconsistent with the scheme of the prophecy.

Second, it should be noted that the purpose of the book is to glorify Christ and magnify God. It is suggested that the natural terminus of such a book is to end with Christ on the throne and God ruling over the new creation. If this section is a description of the Millennium, John ends the prophecy with a description of an era that ends in the rebellion of mankind and Satan. This might be thought a surprising way to end an account of the ages to come.

To be continued.

Character Studies in the Book of Proverbs

The Talebearer

By **JOHN SCARSBROOK** Killamarsh, England

Part 6

Man is by nature an inquisitive being. There is, of course, nothing intrinsically wrong with that. It is a God-given attribute, which helps us to learn and develop through life and to acquire the knowledge that is necessary to enable us to function as God intended. We can, however, misuse the faculties which God has given, and we recall it was the pursuit of 'knowledge' beyond that which was permitted, and at the instigation of the adversary, that first brought sin into the world, Gen. 3 .5.

We have already noticed in our studies in the Proverbs, that the use or abuse of knowledge often determines the respective characters of the wise man and the fool – how they each handle the things which they 'know'. On our journey through life, we acquire all sorts of knowledge in a variety of ways. A great deal is accumulated in an encyclopedic manner and stored in the memory. We also learn many things that can be used in a beneficial way for ourselves and others. Or we can use knowledge gained, in a malicious and damaging way to the detriment of all concerned.

The character before us in this present study is neither a new nor an endangered species! When the Levitical law was given, included in those instructions for the daily walk of the people of God was a clear prohibition. 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people', Lev. 19. 16. This 'first mention' sets the tone for the kind of behaviour we can expect from those who engage in this activity. We observe this character 'going up and down', flitting from one to another like a restless fly. Trying to find an ear prepared to listen to some snippet, some story, often embellished and usually unedifying, regarding another believer. Notice too, the talebearer of Leviticus was 'among' the Lord's

people. Not a stranger but one of the family, a brother, a sister, well-liked and accepted. Quite often the centre of attention, regularly invited to the homes of others, yet sowing discord among the people of God. Rather like the unregenerate Athenians who 'spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing, Acts 17. 21. Or those in 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 13 who 'learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not'. The context is that of 'younger widows', but sadly, the admonition is appropriate to all – brethren and sisters!

It would seem the warning of Leviticus was timely, if sadly unheeded by some, since the wise man of Proverbs saw the need to challenge his audience on account of the same pernicious behaviour. In chapter 11 verse 13, the talebearer is seen as one who lacks integrity. He, together with another, has been told of a matter in confidence – something to be retained as a subject for private prayer. The man 'of a faithful spirit' behaves impeccably. The matter is concealed, shared only with the Lord, a burden carried for another. Without doubt, he will receive a blessing. The talebearer takes a different route.

Instead of heading for the throne of grace, he immediately charts his course in the direction of another believer. With a self-important air, and with lowered voice, he betrays the confidence of his friend. The damage done is irrevocable. Words spoken cannot be recalled. Of course, he has made it clear that what has been revealed is in complete confidence! He will then seize the first opportunity to tell another, but this time it is a slightly decorated version of events!

We are told that a man, or a woman, is known by the company they keep. In chapter 16, there are principles for godly living clearly set out by the wise man. There are a number of characters here that have occupied our attention in previous studies. However, in verses 27 to 29 a rather unsavoury group is found who, sadly, have no ear for the wisdom given. Here we find the ungodly man, the froward man and the violent man. But wait – who is that standing between the froward and the violent in verse 28? It is none other than the talebearer, but here in this present company he has disguised himself, he will not act openly, he is just a whisperer. A word in the ear of another, a knowing glance, a raised eyebrow. It is enough to cause doubt and suspicion until his objective is achieved, and he succeeds in driving a wedge between those who were good friends. It is interesting to note that in Romans chapter 1 verse 29, the whisperer is found in exactly the same kind of company as in Proverbs chapter 16; he will gravitate to his own kind. How sad that sometimes the features seen in this character are even in evidence among the people of God!

Our next encounter with the talebearer is in chapter 18. In this chapter a number of characters are speaking, and we are reminded of James chapter 3 where the tongue, its use and misuse, comes under scrutiny. In verses 6 and 7 of Proverbs chapter 18, the fool is heard expressing opinions in his usual manner, loud, ignorant and provocative. Nobody is taken in by him, it is all too obvious what he is. In verse 8, however, the talebearer

speaks. His approach is far more subtle. His words are well chosen and well directed, sharp and incisive. He knows exactly what to say to inflict the most hurt, to have maximum effect. How often have such words resulted in private tears and silent misery as they ‘go down into the innermost parts’?

In chapter 18 verse 8, and in chapter 26 verse 22, where the words are repeated, it has been suggested by some that the word ‘wounds’ could better be translated ‘dainty morsels’.¹ A search through STRONG’S *Concordance* and *O.T. Word Studies* by SPIROS ZODHIATES, found no particular support for the change, but if there is merit in it, then it throws a different light on the verses above. It shows the talebearer imparting some particularly ‘tasty’ details, readily received by the listener, savoured and enjoyed, ready to be passed on at the first opportunity.

There are just two more encounters with this man in the Proverbs. The first is in chapter 20 verse 19, which gives us an insight into his mode of operation in order that we may be on our guard. Then finally in chapter 26 verse 20, where we are instructed in how to deal with this offensive individual.

Secrets and the confidences of others are this man’s stock-in-trade. Without access to these he is rendered ineffective. So, how does he persuade others to confide in him? Chapter 20 verse 19 gives the answer. He flatters them! He tells them things that they like to hear, he appeals to their pride. This may go on over a period of time until the trap is fully prepared. The unsuspecting victim is taken in; surely this man can be trusted, and he is so caring, so sympathetic. However, no sooner is the confidence gained than it is betrayed. The wise man’s counsel is simple and apposite, ‘meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips’. Don’t get involved, don’t be taken in, and, most of all, don’t tell him anything.

There is a need for discernment among the people of God. We must be able to distinguish between those who have a genuine interest in our

well-being, who share our burdens, strengthen our hands and carry our confidences to the grave. While there are others who simply wish to make merchandise of our circumstances.

The final glimpse of our character is in chapter 26 verses 20 to 22. The wise man envisages a situation ‘where there is no talebearer’. He draws an analogy between a fire, fuelled by wood and coals, and strife fuelled by the talebearer’s nefarious art. To put out the fire or remove the strife, take away that which each feeds upon. How much bitterness and division

would be avoided among the people of God if the talebearer was denied access, if ears were closed to his or her words? If we made it our ambition to promote only that which was of positive good in our brethren and sisters, if our conversation was more of Christ and less of each other, maybe the talebearer would be unable to operate amongst us.

Endnote

1 RV, NIV.



Paul the Priest The Presence of God

By **STEPHEN FELLOWES** Skibbereen, Ireland

Part 2

On two occasions in the Epistles to the Corinthians the apostle Paul describes the church of God at Corinth as 'the temple of God', 1 Cor. 3. 16; 2 Cor. 6. 16.

The word 'temple' naturally takes our minds back to the temple of Solomon, or possibly the post-captivity temple of Zerubbabel, or forward to Ezekiel's great millennial temple. However, when we look a little closer at the word used in the Corinthian Epistles, we discover that it carries the basic idea of 'shrine' or 'sanctuary', as adopted by YOUNG in his literal translation and NEWBERRY in the margin of his Bible uses the term, 'inner temple'. These renderings give us a very sound basis to connect the teaching of Paul with the principles that are established in the books of Exodus and Leviticus relative to the tabernacle and the priesthood, principles with which every priest was fully acquainted.

The words of Jehovah to Moses in Exodus chapter 25 verse 8, 'Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them', reveal a striking parallel with those of Paul when addressing the church of God at Corinth, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' 1 Cor. 3. 16.

Every Israelite would have been aware of the significance of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place, and if the common people were aware, how much more were the priests conscious of the significance of the presence of God in their midst! After all, this was to be their sphere of service; their lives were governed by a keen sensitivity to the character of the God who was present amongst them, the God who said, 'ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy', Lev. 19. 2. The priest's life was one which in every sense was linked with 'the holy place and the most holy', Exod. 26. 33.

Paul reminds the Corinthian saints, and, by extension, reminds us all, of the need for an awareness of these same issues in an assembly setting. An oft-repeated statement in the First Epistle to the Corinthians is the expression, 'know ye not?' This is not to be understood as Paul's revelation of something they didn't know, something new to them, but rather it is the reminder of that which they should have known and should have continually kept before their minds.

The apostle highlights the need for an awareness of **their position** when he says no less than three times in the two letters, 'Ye are the temple of God' and 'which temple ye are', 1 Cor. 3. 16-17, and again, 'ye are the temple of the living God', 2 Cor. 6. 16.

What a stark contrast is this glorious standing with that which they once held when they were defiled and stained by the filthiness of sin, 1 Cor. 6. 9-11. God in His wondrous sovereign grace moved and they came under the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. The result was their being called out of this world and brought together to compose the 'church of God at Corinth', a holy entity in a defiling scene, the very temple of the living God, 1. 2. How

significant is this title used by Paul: 'the living God', the God who is alive and active in their midst, not like the dead, lifeless idols of an idolatrous world but the living God abiding in the midst of His temple – the sanctified company of His people!

Are we really conscious of what we are? Are we sufficiently in touch with the dignity, gravity and purity of our position in the local assembly? Have we got our spiritual bearings? What a preservative it would be if we ever kept before us that we are the temple of the living God!

Next it is our awareness of **His presence** that is mentioned, 'the Spirit of God dwelleth in you', 1 Cor. 3. 16, and again, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them', 2 Cor. 6. 16.

At the end of the book of Exodus, after Moses had meticulously followed the divine directions, we read these striking words, 'the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle', Exod. 40. 34. The next book begins with Jehovah speaking unto Moses 'out of the tabernacle of the congregation', Lev. 1. 1. God had presented Himself in the midst of His people.

How simple and yet how profound a truth this is. It should never be taken for granted. We can glibly cite Matthew chapter 18 verse 20, 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them', without considering that to be gathered in His name means to walk according to that name, to honour it in our lives in every aspect. Just as Moses acted 'according to all that the Lord commanded him', Exod. 40. 16, so the prerequisite for the conscious enjoyment of His presence is willing obedience to His word.



Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in the assembly and in chapters 12 and 14 he develops the operations of the same Holy Spirit in the up-building of the local company. His authority, sovereignty and sensitivity are all to be considered as we move in priestly capacity in the divine presence.

In the second letter, it is the distinctive nature of the assembly that His presence signifies, 'what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?' Although the context of 2 Corinthians chapter 6 is separation from unbelievers, v. 14, nevertheless the principle is clear, the temple of God is a separated company, cut off from all that is represented in an idolatrous world.

The priest of old would never have dreamed of putting a foot outside of the divine centre; his understanding was that there was one exclusive place where Jehovah dwelt. Can we learn from him the same conviction in a day where much is being compromised as to the uniqueness of the gathering? When the danger of fraternization with denominationalism is a real danger, it is well to ask oneself the question 'Why are we here?' Hopefully, the only answer is – 'because He is here!'

Further, a weighty consideration follows, **the price** of playing fast and loose with His presence, 'If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are', 1 Cor. 3. 17.

Such language is strong, but we ought not to lose the force of it. Some feel that it could not be said of a believer being one whom God would destroy, but surely the principle is far-reaching, highlighting the

possibility of **any** person defiling the temple of God!

This demonstrates God's holy jealousy for His own honour. We see it also in operation in Acts chapter 5 with the discipline of Ananias and Sapphira who played the hypocrite before the Lord. In a priestly context we recall a day of most solemn consequence, where the fire of Jehovah slew the two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Lev. 10. They offered 'strange fire before the Lord which He commanded them not', v. 1. Such reckless disobedience and indifference to God's honour and authority! God **must** act and He did, immediately and impartially. How touching that the scripture records of their father, 'and Aaron held his peace', v. 3. MACKINTOSH says, 'he could only bow his head in silent awe and reverent acquiescence'.¹

One fears a casualness in the Lord's presence. We want happy gatherings but never at the expense of holiness. The Lord help us all to walk humbly.

Finally, and as a foundation to all these matters, we must have an awareness of **the purity** of the sanctuary, 'for the temple of God is holy', 1 Cor. 3. 17.

Holiness is the hallmark of the book of Leviticus, and indeed the subject features heavily in the book of Exodus as well. We have seen how the Jewish priest was linked with the 'holy place', wore 'holy garments' handled 'holy things', and was anointed with 'holy anointing oil'.² In short, he lived and moved in a sphere where holiness was the great guiding principle in every matter.

Holiness is not optional in the believer's life, rather it is essential and paramount. Paul exhorts the

Corinthians to 'cleanse [yourselves] from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God', 2 Cor. 7. 1. The maintenance of the holy character of the sanctuary of God's assembly is dependent upon the diligence of each member to pursue the perfecting of holiness in his or her life. The word 'perfecting' denotes an ongoing, continuous exercise, it reminds us of the need of effort and commitment with divine help to reach the goal. It does not come naturally, the flesh hates holiness. The world is more geared than ever to corrupt and defile the child of God, and the devil, of course, is always active. What, then, is the secret to keeping ourselves pure? How can we possibly pursue this worthy cause?

Paul's answer is to do so 'in the fear of God'. A fear of grieving Him will serve as the great preserving force in our lives. May our spirits join in the hymn writer's sentiment when she said:

'Lord, I desire to live as one,
Who bears a blood-bought name,
As one who fears but grieving Thee,
And knows no other shame',
BANCROFT

As we consider these things, may we be enabled by His grace and motivated by His fear to tread carefully and to act reverently in the Lord's presence, to free ourselves from all casualness and undue familiarity because 'holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever', Ps. 93. 5. May we say with devoted hearts as David said, 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth', 26. 8.

Endnotes

- 1 C. H. MACKINTOSH, *Notes on the Pentateuch*.
- 2 Exod. 28. 4, 29; 30. 25.



TANZANIA

A land of many opportunities to serve the Lord

Compiled by **STEPHEN DAVIES** Tanzania, from contributions from missionary colleagues

The start of Christian missionary endeavour in Tanzania can be traced back to the 1860s, but it was not until the 1950s that the first footprints of assembly-commended missionaries were seen with the arrival of the Dalton brothers and their spouses. Not wishing to encroach on the work of other mission groups, particularly in the north, their initial survey identified 'six open doors in eastern Tanzania where there was no effectual evangelical testimony'.¹

From early starts in the far south of the country through medical work, the work grew as more missionaries arrived, particularly from assemblies in Germany, in response to Dudley Dalton's vision of 100 missionaries for Tanzania. British and German missionaries, in fellowship together under the registration of Christian Missions in Many Lands (Tanzania), worked with a medical emphasis, the British based at Kilwa and the Germans at Mbesa. However, due to their differing *modus operandi*, the work of each group expanded in different directions, the Germans evangelizing across Southern Tanzania, and the British moving up the east coast to Dar es Salaam, and eventually becoming focused on the Northern regions of Tanzania. Over the past sixty years, much of Tanzania has been evangelized, assemblies established, and national believers called into the work of serving the Lord.

The purpose of these articles is to give the reader a flavour of what the Lord has done and is doing now in this vast country of opportunity, through a vastly reduced number of assembly-commended missionaries. While some centres of mission work may no longer be in operation, the focus remains on reaching the people with the gospel of the Lord Jesus through an array of opportunities as given and directed by the Lord.

Mbesa Mission Hospital was founded in 1959 by CMML(T) German Section in response to the conditions set by the chief of Mbesa, a Muslim, for the missionaries being granted permission to stay in the region. The hospital soon became known as a place where someone not only received treatment but was shown love and compassion, alongside the word of God. Although local chiefs took a vow that none of them nor their clans would accept the 'new religion', the love of Christ 'sneaked' into some hearts and, before long, people were being saved and baptized. Within the growing hospital, the German doctors and leading staff used prayer, devotions (transmitted through loudspeakers) and showing evangelistic films (with translation) to combine the gospel through deeds with the gospel through words. Thus, the message went into many villages through returning healed patients and, slowly but surely, villages opened up to evangelistic outreach. Today, New Testament assemblies, registered as Kanisa la Biblia (Church of the Bible) are well established across Southern Tanzania. Since July 2017, the 100-bed Mbesa Hospital no longer has any expatriate residential doctors and is going through a change in personnel and structure but with the Lord's help and the involvement and commitment of local believers, there is every reason to be positive

that it will continue to be a place where people in need will experience physical and spiritual healing.

Tanzania is almost four times the size of the United Kingdom. Literacy levels are low, poverty is widespread and rural assemblies, often very small, are primarily composed of those living by subsistence. The assemblies are scattered far and wide, offering few opportunities of fellowship with others, or receiving Bible teaching that is enjoyed and valued by those in the developed world. Visits from the few remaining missionaries are infrequent. Many elders are untaught in the scriptures, making the believers susceptible to error and the weakening of their testimony. Against this background, in 1970 **Nanjoka Bible School**, Tunduru, was established by German missionaries in the South to help teach local assembly elders and new believers to understand the word of God through short courses and seminars – some of the believers were converts from Islam. The provision has grown over the years and now offers residential courses, whereby believers are not only taught the word of God but equipped with tools for further study for themselves, so that having been taught they can then teach others. The gospel continues to reach local communities every week, through outreach teams from the Bible School and many have found the Lord during such outreach campaigns. The Bible School is under the responsibility of national believers.

In 2000, British Section missionaries received a request to commence a Bible School in the North of the country to enable students, from all the local churches in the country, to increase their knowledge of the Bible and its application to daily living. So, **Berea Bible College**, Moshi, was born. Courses were arranged to fit with farming seasons, costs heavily subsidized so that there was no barrier to attendance and travel fares refunded to equalize the opportunity for students to come from far away. As levels of education and literacy have improved so has access to this type of study. Initially, four short courses were offered for three months

per year, but later the syllabus was modified to be completed in just the one year of full-time study. Teaching was undertaken by local missionaries, national evangelists and church elders. Subjects include Old and New Testament studies, Mission, and the Church, so that the students leave with a greater ability to serve the church. A major emphasis is to train up effective leaders who will go and teach/preach in their own home assemblies. The outcome is that scores of students are better equipped and enabled to use the whole Bible for ministry. It was determined by the local missionaries that the ministry of running the Bible School would be handed over to local believers, who were trained, equipped and enabled to continue the work after they had retired. This ambition was fulfilled in 2015 when the Tanzanian principal and the teaching staff took over total responsibility for the work.

There are local initiatives too. **The Disciples of Jesus** school was started in March 2014, in Kigoma town, in Western Tanzania. Using the Kigoma Town assembly buildings, a one-year Bible certificate programme is offered with fifteen courses covering the major doctrines, a survey of the Bible, and other courses related to the Christian life. In addition to classroom time, there is daily Bible reading with notetaking, scripture memorization and ministry trips to the villages.² The school has three full-time teachers and uses some guest teachers. Four students graduated in the first year, four in the second and eight graduated at the close of 2017. The desire and aim is to give believers a good foundation in God's word so that they might be equipped to better serve Christ.

In 1975, **Nazareth Vocational Training School** was founded in Mbesa, and came as a logical consequence of an orphanage run by CMML(T) missionaries. By providing such a facility, the children could stay on until adolescence because, apart from government primary education, there was nothing else in this restricted area.³

It was felt important to give young

people a reason to stay in the area, a good foundation for their lives, including a strong emphasis on biblical teaching in word and deed. The reasoning was that if these young people didn't have to go away to get educated (and never come back again), some would stay and the Christians among them would continue to be useful to the church. From the very start, the church was involved and, although open for everybody, one main target group for Nazareth was the church youth.

In an area of extreme poverty, led by Tanzanian professional craftsmen, Nazareth serves sixty-five students, largely from the local area in Southern Tanzania. These students receive three years of training as carpenters, automotive mechanics, metal workers, or electricians and finish with a government licensing examination. Nazareth provides an unparalleled opportunity to receive solid vocational training and teaching in the Christian faith.

Likewise, for the girls, 'Bethania', a domestic school for tailoring, cooking and a lot of general education around family (including, for some, to learn to read and write) was set up with the same purpose and focus as Nazareth. Today, former Nazareth students are all over the country, many of whom are active in youth ministries, church leadership and some now send their children to Nazareth.

In support of missionary work in Tanzania, **Kanisa la Biblia Publishers** (KLBP) was established by the German Section to provide literature for the people within the Swahili-speaking world, so that they were able to read, understand and teach what they had learned from the Bible and apply it to their lives. This also included aiming for low prices in order to make literature available to all who need it. The first books published were *Panorama ya Biblia* (*Panorama of the Bible*) and *Imani yetu Ndiyo Ushindi* (*Our Faith is Victorious*) in 1980, closely followed, 1986-1990, by the translation of DONALD FLEMING'S *The New Testament Speaks* and *The Old Testament Speaks* into a fifteen-volume complete Swahili

Bible Commentary.⁴ In 1993, KLBP moved to the capital city Dodoma, in Central Tanzania, in order to ease distribution, and from their new premises the above fifteen volumes, revised and updated, were published as one volume, *The Bridge Bible Commentary (Biblia Inasema)* in 2000.⁵ KLBP are working on the *Believers' Bible Commentary* by WILLIAM MACDONALD. The translation of the New Testament is finished, but more time and effort are needed to correct and prepare everything, together with the footnotes and alternate readings of the Bible texts.⁶ Together with the publication of many gospel tracts and booklets, KLBP have just finished a series of eighteen books *Masomo Bunifu ya Biblia (Creative Bible Lessons)*, a Sunday School curriculum spread over eight years. It emphasizes thorough Bible teaching by repeating important Bible truths in three different ages groups. This programme is supported by visual aids and a training programme for teachers. The biggest challenge is making this publication affordable. Prayer would be appreciated for future publishing projects, for improvement in KLBP's online presence, for handing over to local staff, and for new workers in the field of revision, translation and design of new publications of books and e-books.

Endnotes

- 1 F. A. TATFORD, *That the World May Know*, Volume 6, Echoes Publications, pg. 289.
- 2 Classes meet on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays from 4-6 p.m. (with about 45 minutes of sports time following class time). Many of the students are studying in high school and one man is employed, but they can all make it by that time in the afternoon.
- 3 Restricted because of the fighting for independence in neighbouring Mozambique.
- 4 This was accompanied by a translation of the *Bridge Bible Dictionary (Kamusi ya Biblia)* by the same author, in 1995, as an essential reference book.
- 5 Amongst other important publications are *Wito wa Viongozi wa Kikristo (Calling Christian Leaders)* – JOHN STOTT), *Uongozi wa Kiroho (Spiritual Leadership)* – J. OSWALD SANDERS) and *Mtumishi mwaminifu wa Yesu (True Discipleship)* – WILLIAM MACDONALD).
- 6 Currently the office is staffed by two nationals, one missionary, and one volunteer for a year.

Assembly Work and Testimony in Romania

By **PAUL WILLIAMS** Romania

'As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country', Prov. 25. 25.

Country profile

Romania is the largest country in South East Europe and is slightly smaller in area than Great Britain. It has dramatic mountain scenery and a coastline on the Black Sea. It is usually very hot in summer and quite cold in winter.

A brief history

The Romans conquered the Romanian's ancestors in AD 105 and after the Romans withdrew around AD 271, Slavs, Saxons, Turks, Magyars and Tartars migrated to the region, conquering, annexing territory and mingling with the population. Until the 19th Century, there were three separate principalities: Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania. These were united into a single country called Romania in December 1918. At the end of the Second World War, Romania was occupied by Russian troops. Under Communist rule it was transformed from an agricultural to an industrial nation. Many people moved to towns for work and, as a result, assemblies significantly increased numerically in towns and cities.

After the overthrow of Communism in the revolution of December 1989, economic reforms caused massive unemployment and uncertainty. Romania joined the European Union in 2007, following which substantial foreign investment has taken place. New jobs have brought stability and prosperity for some, but others still struggle to survive. The infrastructure has greatly improved. The pace of change has accelerated and large numbers of people have emigrated because of very low wages in contrast to Western Europe. This has opened up opportunities for Romanian believers to evangelize their own people and other nationalities in the countries they have moved to.

The current population of 19.1 million (84% Romanian, 6% Hungarian, 3% Romanies) is projected to decrease

to 15.2 million by 2050. Religious adherence traditionally runs along ethnic lines, with the majority of Romanians being of the (Eastern) Orthodox Church (86%) and 4% Roman Catholic. Some of the 1.4 million Hungarian-speaking people living in Western Romania attend Catholic and Hungarian Reformed Churches. There has been a large German influence, mainly Lutheran, in Transylvania. By the Black Sea there are some Turks and Tartars who are Muslim. A significant Romany population is spread throughout the country and they are increasingly responsive to the gospel. Such assemblies are keen on Bible teaching and reach out to their own communities with the gospel.

Beginning of Assembly testimony

In 1899 an English missionary, E. H. Broadbent (1861-1945), was returning from Russia and visited Constanta and Bucharest. He saw the great need for the spread of the gospel and the establishment of assemblies. On the main street, Calea Victoriei, in the capital Bucharest he prayed with tears for the nation. On returning to England, he promoted prayer for Romania and the need for gospel workers to visit. His article was translated into French and published in Switzerland. A Swiss brother, Francis Berney (1869-1939), read the article and was called by God and commended to work in Romania. He and Charles Aubert arrived in Bucharest with their families in September 1899. Initially, they met in Berney's house and the meetings were in French. The first Romanian-speaking assembly was planted in Bucharest in November 1901 and the first German-speaking assembly was planted in the city of Sibiu in 1909 by the German missionary Karl Wägner. In Transylvania, the gospel was first preached in the German-speaking communities and, later, in the Romanian-speaking communities.

The assembly in Râșnov was planted by E. H. Broadbent himself, who, with Francis Berney, spent several months in the area between 1902 and 1903. The missionaries were involved in Bible teaching in different areas.

Foreign missionaries were expelled in 1909 as a result of pressure from the Orthodox Church leadership. Several Swiss believers took up jobs in Romania and were involved in gospel preaching and Bible teaching. Romanian believers devotedly took the gospel to many towns and villages and new assemblies were established and the work developed. The first Hungarian-speaking assembly was planted in Cluj in 1931.

1945-1989

At the end of the Second World War, the godless system of Communism dominated Eastern Europe until 1989. During these years, believers from Great Britain and other countries visited to refresh and encourage the faithful and courageous Romanian believers, both practically and spiritually, in their very difficult circumstances. There was a great shortage of Bibles, Bible study books and commentaries. This may be the main reason why assemblies were weaker in Bible teaching than they are today. However, some literature was brought into the country and brethren studied the scriptures in secret. Open-air evangelism was not allowed but a major flood in 1970 and a huge earthquake in 1977 clearly spoke to the nation and souls were saved.

1990-2018

The revolution in December 1989 and the fall of Communism resulted in significant changes. New opportunities arose for concentrated evangelism and there was impressive numerical growth. There were 270 assemblies in 1989, today there are over 700 and the number of believers in these assemblies has doubled. There are twenty-one Hungarian-speaking assemblies, one German-speaking and the rest are Romanian-speaking. The extent of the work and God's power in the gospel can be seen in that there are more assemblies gathering to the Lord's name in Romania than in the rest of Eastern Europe.

Christian radio stations have been established in key cities providing access to Bible teaching and the



message of salvation. Some Christian schools have opened, providing a good education and also a spiritual input into young lives.

Our first visit to Romania was in August 1990, when we travelled with Martin and Margaret Baker, from our commending assembly in Cheshunt. After eighteen visits, we moved to Romania in May 1996 commencing language-learning and adapting to the culture.

Assemblies today

Growth has slowed down but there is still considerable outreach in public buildings and tent campaigns, with a good interest being shown and a response to the gospel by people from a variety of backgrounds, including some priests. Assemblies are seeing blessing in the gospel, especially through personal evangelism. Special occasions, such as baptisms, also provide excellent opportunities in the gospel and halls are always packed. Baptisms in rivers draw large crowds from the local area. One memorable occasion was witnessing the baptism of thirty-three believers in the River Siret in Mărășești. It is most encouraging to hear of, and to visit, newly planted assemblies resulting from the sacrificial labours of Romanian evangelists, working in pioneer situations, visiting homes door-to-door.

Growth, however, is much more than numbers. There is a need for spiritual depth, maturity, stability and a deepening understanding and application of God's word. Over the years, the Holy Spirit has raised up and prepared gifted Bible teachers to build up the assemblies. Godly elders seek to minister to various needs and guide a new generation of believers in a rapidly changing world.

Working together with local elders and believers, the sovereign Lord has wonderfully opened up different avenues of service over the years.

Gospel tent work – a suggestion from an evangelist in the north of Romania led to the purchase of a tent for gospel outreach in May 2008. Through that vision for evangelism, which has grown in the hearts of believers in different parts of the country, the work has expanded and there are now thirteen tents in Romania and one tent in the Republic of Moldova. Last summer, tents were pitched 150 times in 141 towns and villages, motivating a younger generation of workers to get involved in God's work. Souls have been saved, baptized and added to local assemblies and Sunday Schools have been strengthened or commenced in areas where there was no outreach to children or young people.

Bible teaching – it is a privilege to be invited to take all-day Bible studies and series of ministry meetings, together with other Bible teachers throughout the country. There continues to be a need for expositional and systematic Bible teaching. Please pray for spiritual dividends as time is invested in the younger generation, as well as in believers of all ages, teaching them systematically from the scriptures and guiding and encouraging them in the Lord's work. Bible teaching is long-term, not short-term, and there are no short-cuts.

Website and Bible correspondence course work – in the early days, after the revolution, a website called 'Search the Scriptures' was set up, providing sound gospel and Bible teaching material. Many visitors

from different countries accessed the website and requested Bible courses and Christian literature. Although interest is declining, as people have less spare time, prisoners are studying the scriptures by this means and some have been saved. Believers have developed Bible courses for children and young people, both online and by post, and a good interest is still being shown. There are many devoted believers working amongst children and teenagers on a weekly basis.

Bible Exhibition – after working together with Romanian and British brethren, a Romanian Bible Exhibition (RBE) was completed in 2013. The aim of the RBE is to communicate the gospel and fundamental Bible truths using eighteen panels and five display tables. It has been used in hired public buildings, Christian schools, and large shopping malls and provides a good opportunity for younger and older believers to work together.

Literature work – translating and printing good gospel and Bible teaching material has been undertaken by different believers over many years. During the last twenty-five years, we have been occupied in printing Bible commentaries, Bible teaching books and booklets, Bible study courses, as well as books for children, gospel tracts and booklets. Very large quantities of gospel literature are distributed by individual believers where they have openings, by evangelists and by local assemblies in gospel work, at the Bible Exhibition and at tent meetings. Literature is also used by Romanians working in the Republic of Moldova and Western Europe. Christian literature written by Romanian believers is also available.

Commended workers – as a nation, Romanians are deeply indebted to those who brought the gospel to them and they are now taking it to others, serving the Lord overseas in places like Malawi, Niger, India, Peru and Mongolia.

The Lord of the harvest continues preparing His workers for future service in Romanian assemblies. It is important to remember that it is the Lord's work and it is the sovereign Lord who has worked and continues to work to His praise and for His eternal glory.

WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newton Abbot, England

Yeshimon (desert, wilderness)

Yeshu'ah (deliverance, salvation, help)

Yesod (foundation)

When our Lord met the woman at Jacob's well and told her that 'salvation is of [or better rendered "from"] the Jews', John 4. 22, He was not indicating that all Jews would be saved, but, rather, referring to the part that Israel had played in the revelation of salvation to the world.¹ This revelation of salvation is rooted in the Hebrew noun *Yeshu'ah*, which is used extensively in the Old Testament to describe God's strength and power to deliver in salvation as in Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 15, where the narrative states that Jeshurun not only forsook God but 'lightly esteemed the Rock, or Mountain, of his salvation'.² In Isaiah chapter 25 verse 9, it describes the deliverance that comes from death to those who put their trust in the Lord. In the vast majority of Old Testament occurrences of the word *Yeshu'ah*, God acts on behalf of others to bring about their salvation. Even when men are used as the instruments of salvation, it is still God's work that is paramount, e.g., Judg. 7. 2.³ The word has a wide range of meanings to express this act of salvation so that it can mean 'to receive help', 'deliver', 'come to one's aid', or 'bring salvation'.

One of the earliest patterns evident in the Old Testament, especially in relation to Israel, is that deliverance, or salvation through divine intervention, comes as a result of their cry to God for help, Exod. 14. 10-13. Moses describes the event at the Red Sea as seeing 'the salvation of the Lord', and as the Lord fighting for Israel, vv. 13, 14. During the period of the Judges, the word is used extensively of the acts of individuals such as Othniel *et al.*, who delivered their people from oppression, Judg.

3. 9, 10; 6. 14, 15; 10. 1; cp. 2 Kgs. 13. 5.⁴ When Israel later demanded a king because they wanted to be like the nations around them and moved from a theocracy to a monarchy, God permits the appointment of Saul as the saviour or deliverer of His people, 1 Sam. 9. 16. Notice again the emphasis that is placed upon the deliverance that God effects in salvation rather than by any human achievement when David rebukes Goliath, 1 Sam. 17. 46; cp. Zech. 4. 6. The Psalmists are full of praise to God not only because He is the source of their salvation, but also for the fact that it is only through His mercy that salvation can be commanded, Pss. 3. 8; 44. 4; 119. 174.⁵ MCKNIGHT states that the 'images of salvation and deliverance abound in the book of Psalms, with the root for "save" (ys) appearing in almost half the psalms'.⁶ This leads one to conclude that the God of the psalmist is the God of salvation, 51. 14.

The imagery of salvation is reflected in the Psalms and elsewhere in the Old Testament: The 'Rock of . . . salvation', Deut. 32. 15; cp. Luke 1. 69; 'O thou that savest by thy right hand', Ps. 17. 7; 'Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever', 28. 9; The 'cup of salvation', 116. 13; The 'helmet of salvation', Isa. 59. 17; cp. Eph. 6. 17.

For the psalmist, salvation can only be found in God alone, Ps. 62. 1, and deliverance from sin implies being washed, 51. 2, 7, and receiving a new heart created by God, v. 10. This, then, presupposes that a state of forgiveness must follow, 85. 2. No wonder the psalmist pauses after this statement!

The prophet Isaiah makes much of the concept of divine action in chapter 59 verses 1 and 2, where he reveals that God's salvation can only be effective when human sin has been removed.

Further in the same chapter, God is seen as putting on the clothes of righteousness, salvation, vengeance and zeal, vv. 17, 18. As MOTYER puts it, 'When the Lord dons this clothing he is publicly revealing what he is. But he is also declaring what he intends to do and that he is able to do it. It is a work which will display and satisfy his righteousness, save his people, repay his foes and be carried through to completion by the driving motivation of divine zeal'.⁷ Daniel, in his narrative concerning Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, forcibly reminds us that the God 'whom we serve is able to deliver us', 3. 17, much to the world's bemusement!

In the Septuagint (LXX), the Hebrew root word for salvation *Yeshu'ah* is often translated by the Greek word *sozo* and its cognates. Again, it assumes the idea of saving or preserving from death, Gen. 19. 17; Jer. 31. 6, or the process of attaining salvation, Prov. 11. 31,⁸ as in Genesis chapter 47 verse 25, where the people of Egypt acknowledge that their lives have been saved through the intervention of Joseph. The word is also used by Jonathan in 1 Samuel chapter 14 verse 6, where he asserts that God is 'not straitened to save by any or few' LXX. The LXX also translates the word as 'peace offering', *ta soteria*, in Exodus chapter 20 verse 24, which suggests that one of the outcomes of salvation is peace with God through sacrifice. But God saves not simply on the basis of human need, but because of His own gracious character as evident in Isaiah chapter 37 verse 35, where He indicates that He would save Jerusalem from the Assyrian hordes primarily 'for mine own sake'. Salvation belongs exclusively to God, Isa. 45. 22, and there can be no other one who effects salvation, 43. 11. It is this picture of a coming Saviour that is captured by the prophet Zechariah, chapter 9, and becomes the prophetic thrust for New Testament revelation.

The Greek word used in the New Testament for 'salvation' is *soteria*, a linguistic derivative of the verb

soizo. According to MOULTON AND MILLIGAN, *soteria* 'is common in the papyri in the general sense of "bodily health", "well-being", "safety"', and suggests that 'this may be compared with the usage in Acts 27. 34 and Heb. 11. 7'.⁹ However, the principle application of *soteria* in the New Testament is on all fours with the usage in the Old Testament. Again, it has a variety of meanings including deliverance, Phil. 1. 28, preservation, v. 19, safety and ultimately complete salvation, v. 6. Salvation is presented as the present possession of all true believers, and the future salvation that they will enjoy with Christ, 1 Thess. 5. 8, 9; 2 Tim. 2. 10. But this doctrine of salvation¹⁰ is intrinsically linked to 'a deliverer (*soter*)'¹¹ the Messiah, the Lord',

Luke 2. 11 NEB. GIRDLESTONE observes that 'the word *Yasha* to save (a cognate of *Yeshu'ah*), which generally answers to the Greek *soizo* has given a name not only to Joshua, but to Jesus, who should save his people from their sins'.¹²

The New Testament sets out how this great salvation can be acquired through the person and work of Christ alone.¹³ Therefore, it is incumbent upon all those who receive this salvation to make others aware of this message of salvation, Acts 28. 28, because the time is short, 2 Cor. 6. 2; Jas. 4. 14.

'Outcasts of men, to you I call.
Harlots, and publicans, and thieves!
He spreads his arms
to embrace you all;
Sinners alone his grace receives;

No need of him the righteous have;
He came the lost to seek and save'.

CHARLES WESLEY

For further reading/study

Introductory

'Salvation' in ROBERT S. GIRDLESTONE, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 124-126.

Advanced

'Salvation and Deliverance Imagery' in TREMPER LONGMAN III and PETER ENNS (ed.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament – Wisdom, Poetry and Writing*, pp. 710-714.

Endnotes

- 1 Notice the difference here with Jonah chapter 2 verse 9 where the source of salvation is emphasized not the outworking of it.
- 2 Rather, 'the Rock who delivered him' who protected him from danger', *The JPS Commentary - Deuteronomy*, pg. 306.
- 3 Eliphaz also concurs when he states that God, 'saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty', Job 5. 15.
- 4 The English title of the book of Judges does not convey the main role of this group of individuals. Their judicial function was very limited as they were specifically commissioned by God to be 'saviours' or 'deliverers' of their people, Judg. 2. 16; cp. Neh. 9. 27.
- 5 WILLIAM P. BROWN states that 'to make a "joyful noise to the rock of our salvation" is to affirm the sovereignty of the "King above all gods" (95:1,3)'. *Seeing the Psalms – A Theology of Metaphor*, pg. 29.
- 6 TREMPER LONGMAN III and PETER ENNS (ed.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament – Wisdom, Poetry and Writing*, pg. 710.
- 7 J. A. MOTYER, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, pg. 491.
- 8 Note how this text is then applied in the New Testament in 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 17 to 19.
- 9 J. H. MOULTON and G. MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament - Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources*, pg. 622.
- 10 Often referred to as the doctrine of Soteriology from the Greek verb *soizo*.
- 11 The Greek honorific title *soutera tou kosmos* = Saviour of the world, which is applied to Jesus in John chapter 4 verse 42 (see also 1 John 4. 14) was also used by Roman Emperors. An acknowledgement of Jesus' claim would therefore have immediate consequences for the early church. Notice too that the title bestowed upon Joseph by Pharaoh in Genesis chapter 41 verse 45 (Zaphenath-paneah) can also mean 'Saviour of the world', but this referred to a deliverance from hunger not to a deliverance from sin.
- 12 R. S. GIRDLESTONE, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pg. 124.
- 13 Luke 2. 30-32; John 10. 9; Rom. 1. 16; 1 Peter 1. 9-12. *hagios* – BAUER, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*.



Book Reviews



Can science explain everything?

John C. Lennox

Paperback, 127 pages, Published by The Good Book Company, Blenheim House, 1 Blenheim Rd, Epsom, KT19 9AP, UK. ISBN: 978-1-784984-11-3

Those familiar with the name JOHN LENNOX will be encouraged to know that he has written another book. However, for those who plodded through *Gunning for God or God's Undertaker*, this shorter volume may provide slightly easier reading. It has to be acknowledged that Lennox's writings are for thinkers – those who are not satisfied with glib phrases and stock answers to life's complex questions – but, as a consequence, the arguments he lays out require concentration. They are not bedtime reading!

This latest volume seeks to tackle the issue of science and the Bible by showing 'that there is a different way of looking at things that is more rational, more sensible, and more wholesome than the all too familiar alleged conflict between science and religion'. Chapters include:

How did we get here: from Newton to Hawking; Mythbusters 1: Religion depends on faith but science doesn't; Mythbusters 2: Science depends on reason but Christianity doesn't; and Miracles: a step too far? amongst others.

Although there is plenty of carefully reasoned and compelling material in this book, one of its strengths for the general reader is its use of apt and telling illustrations. This reviewer now sees the making of a cup of tea, Aunt Matilda's cake, and $1+1=2$ in a whole new light! Whilst not all will be altogether happy with LENNOX's section of Genesis chapter 1, he does make the telling statement, 'if scientists had taken the biblical perspective seriously at an earlier date, they might well have searched for evidence of a beginning before they did'.

One of the most useful aspects of this book is that it is an excellent piece of gospel literature. Tackling many of the arguments for science and against the Bible and showing them to be superficial and, often, illogical, it moves towards its climax in a chapter entitled The personal dimension. Stripping away many of the so-called reasons for unbelief, this book lays out the evidence for the resurrection and the implications of that fact for us all. It stresses that the claims of Christ and the Christian gospel require an answer. LENNOX concludes, 'To fail to get to know him [Christ] is to miss life's ultimate purpose and joy'.

This book is recommended. Buy it and give it to any thinker and searcher after the truth!



The Ten Commandments

Craig Munro

Paperback 105 pages. Published by John Ritchie Ltd, 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland, KA3 1RH. ISBN: 978-1-912522-21-7

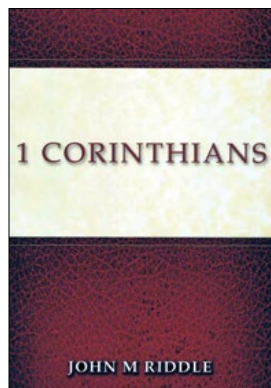
This book is the first in a planned series by Craig Munro under the general heading '10-1', dealing with numerically identified subjects, e.g., The nine Beatitudes, the eight Kingdom Parables, etc. All will be familiar themes to most readers but set in an easy-to-read format which could be used to advantage in Bible Class teaching as well as for private study. Each chapter ends with a space for the reader to add their own notes and the subject matter is summarized at the end of the book. A topic of this nature inevitably requires a broad array of scripture references to establish the truth being explained. Mercifully, these are given as footnotes, rather than constantly breaking up the narrative as in many other publications.

The author explains the purpose of the Ten Commandments given to Israel, before expanding upon each commandment in turn. Each of the first five commandments are shown to emphasize responsibility towards God in view of a particular intrinsic characteristic of His deity, while the latter five call attention to the responsibility of man, both towards God and to his fellow man for the good ordering of society.

The author is careful throughout to emphasize that, although the commandments have no legal claim upon the believer as a result of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, they do have a very practical voice for the Christian and important

lessons for daily living. Attention is also given to the wider implications of certain commandments, e.g., stealing and bearing false witness, matters which could be overlooked with just a cursory reading of the basic commandment.

This series should prove to be a welcome addition to the bookshelves of young and not-so-young believers.



1 Corinthians John M. Riddle

Paperback, 352 pages, Published by John Ritchie Publishing, 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland, UK. ISBN: 978-1-912522-42-2

As the back cover of the book indicates, the content of this book is 'the substance of Bible Class discussions held at Mill Lane Chapel, Cheshunt', the author's home assembly.

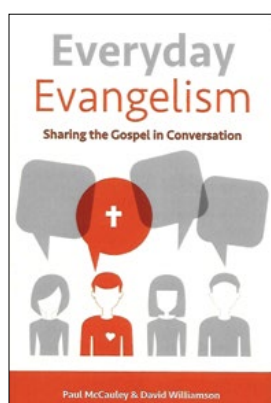
However, such a comment should not be taken to suggest that the material is in any way superficial or lightweight. Those familiar with RIDDLE's oral ministry will expect a similar level of attention to detail in his written ministry, and they will not be disappointed. Similarly, it is apparent immediately that the author has consulted and refers to a plethora of other material to compile this book – eight authors/speakers in the first chapter! Perhaps, there

lies one failing in the book and that is the lack of a bibliography.

At times, 1 Corinthians is a distressing Epistle. Riven by division, riddled with carnality, reckless in morality, and receptive of error, these believers might appear to be beyond rescue. What is remarkable is the painstaking way in which Paul address the issues systematically and thoroughly. RIDDLE adopts the same approach in this exposition. Although there are strong measures needed to tackle matters in Corinth, Paul manifests genuine concern and affection for those to whom he writes. Similarly, the author approaches many

contentious passages with grace and warmth. He states his view, without unnecessary occupation with the alternatives, supports it with evidence, and leaves the reader to consider it.

This book is highly recommended as a valuable tool in understanding this crucial and very practical Epistle. It contains very helpful outline material, a clear analysis chapter by chapter, and detailed exposition that will reward careful study. Finally, the author has synthesized the many sources of help on the Epistle and selected the helpful, informative, or summative contributions of others.



Everyday Evangelism – Sharing the Gospel in Conversation

Paul McCauley & David Williamson

Paperback, 336 pages. Published by John Ritchie Ltd, 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland KR3 1RL. ISBN: 978-1-912522-45-3

Books on the subjects of effective evangelism and Christian apologetics are not in short supply. Many of these emanate from the United States and have gained acceptance to a greater or lesser degree among those desiring to engage in reaching out to their community with the gospel. This book, by two evangelists from Northern Ireland, is based on their own practical experience in meeting and communicating with people from all walks of life, and challenging the present-day rising tide of atheism, apathy and animosity in an increasingly secular society.

The first part of the book is written by David Williamson under the general heading 'Tactics'. First, he considers the whole purpose of evangelism, then he evaluates the subject under a number of headings from 'Making Conversation', to 'Preaching Christ'.

Using illustrations from his own encounters with individuals, David outlines appropriate answers to a variety of situations. At one stage I was afraid that too much emphasis would be placed on formulated responses to anticipated questions, and the suggestion of different types of questions recalled memories of sales seminars and role-play situations. I found that replies learned by rote seldom equated to the question asked. However, the main content is positive and practical. The advice and guidance found in this book could be used to advantage by all believers in communicating the gospel.

The second part of the book under the heading 'Apologetics' is written by Paul McCauley. In this section, the writer faces up to the negative attitude experienced by many who would seek to engage with unbelievers in

the fundamental truth of scripture. Paul deals with five main subjects which attract sceptical responses when introduced into a conversation. These are scripture, science, suffering, salvation and the Saviour. Each in turn is dealt with in the clear light of scripture and with the benefit of first-hand experience.

One other point I would make is in respect of footnotes. These are obviously essential and welcomed in recording scripture references and the accreditation of written sources. However, there are quite a lot of occasions where comprehensive explanations are given in respect of statements made. Many of these would have fitted quite comfortably and advantageously into the body of the text, rather than to be relegated to a smaller and fainter font which diverts the reader's eye from following the argument of the narrative.

ISHBOSHETH

The man who remained silent because of fear

By **GEOFF GORDGE** Llanelli, Wales

Ishbosheth, 'Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David', 2 Sam. 2. 10. His name means 'man of shame' and he was originally called Eshbaal, 1 Chr. 8. 33. He was the youngest of King Saul's four sons, his siblings being Jonathan, Malchi-Shua, and Abinadab.¹ It has been suggested that the Jewish chroniclers changed his name because his original name sounded too much like the name of the god Baal, the idol worshipped by the Canaanites.

Ishbosheth was born around 1047 BC and there is some controversy as to when he became king.² Some experts state that he became king when he was aged forty, while others believe he was between thirty-two and thirty-three. However, the scripture is clear that he was forty years old when he began to reign, 2 Sam 2. 10. King Saul, the first king of the nation of Israel, died with his three other sons in a battle against the Philistines at Mount Gilboa, 1 Sam. 31. 2. Whether or not Ishbosheth escaped from the Philistine slaughter or was not present at the battle is not known.

As the only surviving son of King Saul and under the Hebrew laws of inheritance, Ishbosheth became king with the full support of his uncle, Abner, 14. 50. By this time the northern kingdom of Israel was in ruins and there was no city that would acknowledge the rule of the house of Saul. Thus, Abner took Ishbosheth to the city of Mahanaim and there stated the right of Ishbosheth to the throne, from where he ruled for two years. Abner's reasoning behind his setting up of Ishbosheth as king of all the tribes of Israel except Judah, was to

grab power after the demise of Saul. Over an extended period of time, exactly how long we do not know, the conflict between the houses of Saul and David continued, but with David gradually becoming stronger.

It is in 997 BC that we get the first mention of Rizpah, one of Saul's concubines. Rizpah, who was a Hivite, is the subject of an accusation by Ishbosheth that Abner had had a physical relationship with her, 2 Sam. 3. 15. Whether there was any justification for the accusation is doubtful, but relations between Abner and Ishbosheth soured and, as a result, Abner stated that he would now give all the house of Israel over to the control of King David, vv. 6-9.

Later in the same chapter, v. 14, we read that David demanded of Ishbosheth that he 'deliver to me my wife Michal'. Michal was Ishbosheth's sister and King David's first wife. As Michal had



helped David to escape Saul, he in retaliation gave his daughter Michal to be another man's wife. Ishbosheth sought to reverse that by telling Abner to take Michal from her present husband and give her back to David. Whether or not Michal was happy to return to David does not seem to have troubled Ishbosheth. It would not be long afterwards that Joab murdered Abner.

2 Samuel chapter 4 opens with the fact that when Ishbosheth heard that Abner was dead he lost heart, knowing that the man who had supported him, albeit for his own reasons, was gone. He now knew that his reign was over, and his position untenable. Indeed, the whole of the northern kingdom of Israel was greatly concerned, for they knew that it was Abner's strength that gave them protection, not Ishbosheth's. In fact, it was not long after that Ishbosheth was murdered by two military leaders while sleeping in his own bed. This led to Israel's leaders ultimately making David king over both Israel and Judah.

What can we learn today from the divinely recorded exploits of Ishbosheth? He seems to be a man of few convictions, a weak man who relied on others, particularly Abner. He trusted in man rather than put his faith in God. The danger of such an action became clear when Abner stated his intention to give the kingdom to David, yet Ishbosheth said nothing, 'because he feared him', 2 Sam. 3. 11. The challenge comes to us; are we men and women of conviction, with courage to stand for those convictions? Or are we prepared not to allow the fear of men to inhibit our actions, Prov. 29. 25? Can we say with the Psalmist, 'In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust', Ps. 31. 1? Ishbosheth used his sister as a political pawn, having no feelings for her. The challenge of the Lord remains, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another', John 13. 35.

Endnotes

- 1 1 Chr. 8. 33; 9. 39.
- 2 Date according to Ussher, JAMES USSHER, *Annals of the World*.

Question Time

Conducted by
Richard Collings

QUESTION

Is it essential that an assembly should convene a weekly gospel meeting?

ANSWER

Throughout the United Kingdom, and probably in many other countries, it has been the custom for assemblies to hold a weekly gospel meeting. This practice has continued for decades and, generally, the meeting has been scheduled for a Sunday evening, although in more recent times that is no longer the case in many places. There is no doubt that, through the years, significant numbers of people, of every age group, have come to know the Lord through this meeting and I am sure that it would be the prayer of all readers that further blessing will derive from this service.

Holding a weekly gospel meeting does have benefits. It provides the assembly with a focal point to which they can invite contacts they have made to come and hear the good news of God's salvation. It affords an opportunity for people living in the locality to know that at a specific day and time they will be able to get in touch with the assembly members or attend a Christian service. Although it is not an inevitable outcome, there is the possibility that the regularity of the weekly meeting may also help focus the saints on the need to reach out to the lost.

Whilst there are these, and other possible benefits, there are also potential drawbacks to this well-established and time-honoured custom. Due to its frequency, there is the possibility that our familiarity with the meeting has resulted in it becoming a routine. Without wishing to appear critical, we can attend the meeting 'on autopilot' because it has become such an ingrained habit, although this attitude is not limited to the gospel meeting but can apply to other aspects of assembly life.

It is also true that an assembly can develop the mindset that by having a fixed weekly gospel service it has fulfilled its obligation to conduct some form of evangelical effort. Where that attitude prevails, it is likely that there will be no other gospel activity, and, in such instances, it should come as no surprise to see the gradual numerical decline and ultimate cessation of that company.

With the spiritual indifference and increasing lack of any regard for God that now prevails, for example, in the United Kingdom, it is not uncommon in many areas for no unbelievers to be present at the gospel meeting. In other

instances, there may be the usual handful attending who have done so for years and who seem to have become totally acclimatized to the message, such that it has no apparent impact upon them. Frequently, preachers are heralding a message of repentance and salvation to people who were converted long before the preacher was born.

However, the question focused on whether it is **essential** for an assembly to convene a **weekly** gospel meeting to which the direct answer has to be an unequivocal 'no'. This response is not likely to meet with widespread agreement and one reason for that dissent is that we have bestowed upon the weekly gospel meeting a status it is not given in the New Testament. Our response to the general situation should not be the fear of discontinuing 'the Sunday night meeting' but of a principled re-examination of the word of God.

As I examine the scriptures, I cannot think of any precept, practice or principle in the New Testament that mandates we must have a weekly gospel meeting. In many places, it might be prudent to do so, but we should not make this binding everywhere because the word of God does not. Good practice or personal preference might be laudable and often the right thing to do but that is very different from being 'thus saith the Lord'. Where we have no mandate within the word of God, we must not allow our practices to become principles, but be willing to review and, where necessary, change or discontinue them.

An assembly can have a strong gospel testimony without a weekly gospel meeting. Each one will need to assess their local circumstances and evangelize in the light of that. In some instances, this may mean they have more than one gospel meeting per week, in others it may mean they convene a gospel meeting at intervals that vary.

One of the spiritual gifts still extant is that of the evangelist, Eph. 4. 11. Whilst this gift is limited to certain people so that we are not all evangelists, there is a responsibility for all believers to be evangelical; thus, Paul exhorts Timothy 'do the work of an evangelist', 2 Tim. 4. 5. Maybe, if more of us responded to this exhortation we might find that the weekly gospel meeting, should we have one, would be far more effective than it currently is.

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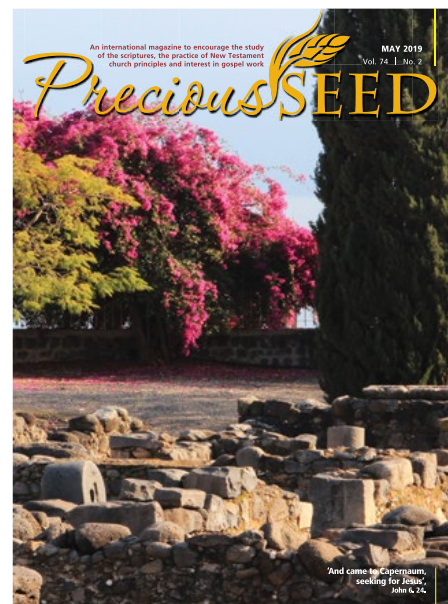
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'And came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus', John 6. 24.

The ruined site of the village of Capernaum, modern site name 'Tell-Hum', is located close to the River Jordan on the north-west side of the Sea of Galilee. Its Semitic name means 'village of Nahum', and many scholars have tried to link the village to the place where Nahum the prophet was born. It was a fishing village, although referred to in the Bible as a city of Galilee, Luke 4. 31, relatively close to Nazareth and founded during the time of the Hasmoneans. There may well have been a customs post located on the outskirts of the village, Matt. 17. 25, which identified the demarcation line between the lands of Philip and Herod Antipas. It was here that Matthew, a customs official, was possibly called to follow the Lord, Matt. 9. 9; Mark 2. 14, and Capernaum was the home of Peter and Andrew, Matt. 8. 14. As far as the world was concerned, the village or city was not a particularly significant place, but it became universally famous as the place where our Lord came to reside with His family, Matt. 4. 13; John 2. 12 – it was literally His 'own city' – and where His main Galilean ministry took place. It was here that He performed many miracles, e.g., the healing of the centurion's servant, Matt. 8. 5-13, Peter's mother healed with others, vv. 14-17, and the man sick of the palsy, Mark 2. 3-12. It was here that He pronounced a number of woes upon various towns and cities, including Capernaum itself. Surely, the partial fulfilment of that woe lies in the current ruins of the village, Matt. 11. 23, 24? For Matthew thought, 4. 13, the import of the move to Capernaum was also prophetic as the village lay in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim, and His move would fulfil Isaiah chapter 9 verses 1 and 2. But our headline text, John 6. 24, reminds us that individuals still have the opportunity to seek and find the Saviour. May they continue to do so, not on the basis of material gain, but for the spiritual food that brings eternal life, vv. 26, 27.

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