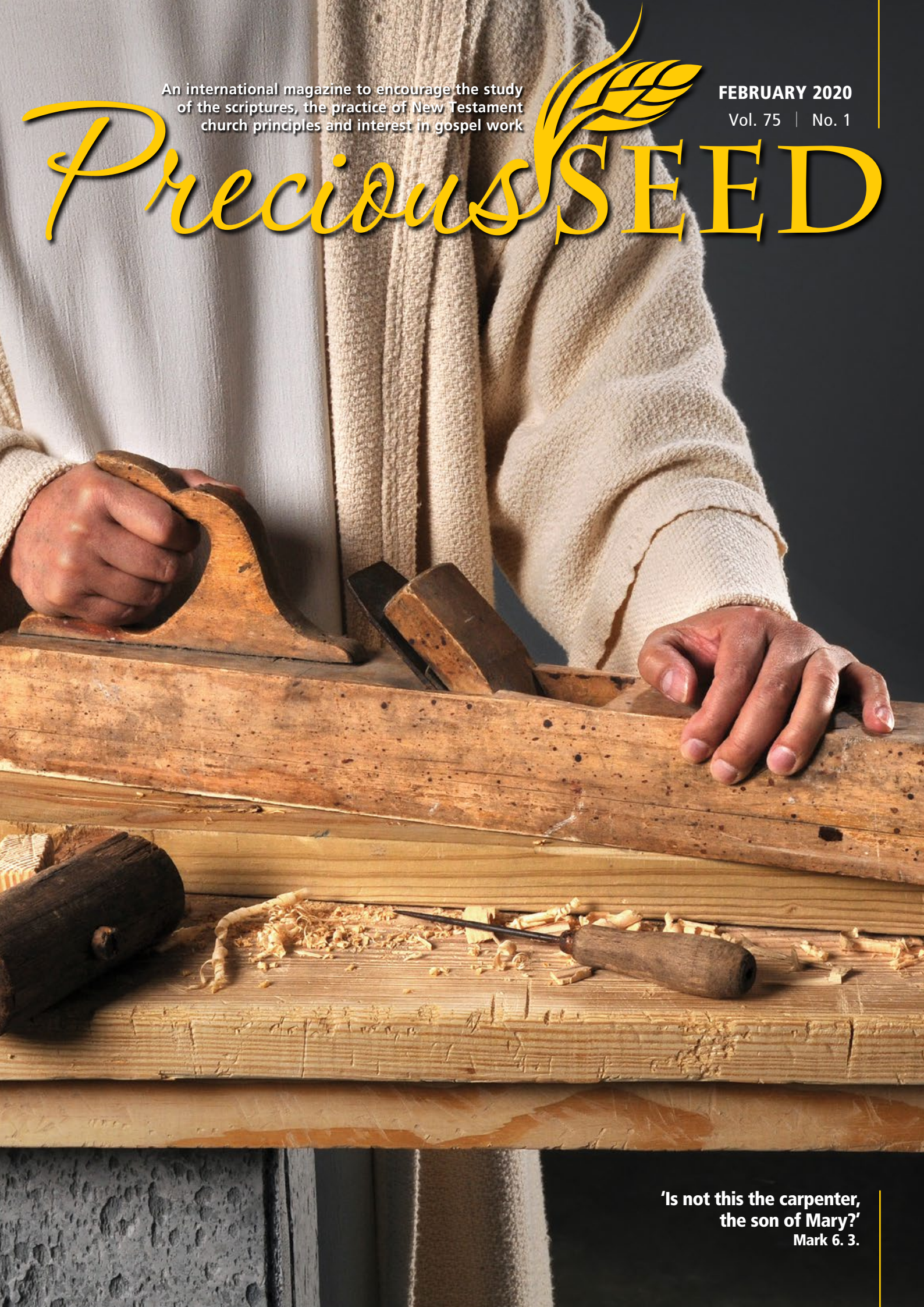


An international magazine to encourage the study
of the scriptures, the practice of New Testament
church principles and interest in gospel work

FEBRUARY 2020

Vol. 75 | No. 1

Precious SEED



'Is not this the carpenter,
the son of Mary?'
Mark 6. 3.

BOOKS ORDER FORM

Please complete this form and send with your card details to:
Precious Seed Publications, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK.

Please send the following:

NEW BOOKS AND SPECIAL OFFERS

- ☐ Precious Seed Vol. 5.....@ £8.50
- ☐ Christ and His Apostles@ £3.00
- ☐ Living in the Promised Land@ £3.00
- ☐ Church Doctrine and Practice (Revised)@ £9.50
- ☐ The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit (Samuel Jardine)@ £2.00

DAY BY DAY SERIES

- ☐ Bible Characters.....@ £7.95
- ☐ Bible Commands.....@ £7.95
- ☐ Bible Promises@ £7.95
- ☐ Bible Questions.....@ £7.95
- ☐ Christ and His Apostles@ £3.00
- ☐ Christ Foreshadowed@ £7.95
- ☐ Divine Titles@ £7.95
- ☐ Living in the Promised Land@ £3.00
- ☐ Moments with the Master@ £7.95
- ☐ New Testament.....@ £7.95
- ☐ Old Testament.....@ £7.95
- ☐ Pictures and Parables@ £7.95
- ☐ Paradise to the Promised Land@ £7.95
- ☐ Prayer.....@ £7.95
- ☐ Psalms.....@ £7.95
- ☐ Through the Bible@ £8.95

BOOKLETS SERIES

- ☐ 1 John (Albert Leckie).....@ £7.50
- ☐ Ephesians, The Members of Christ (Norman Mellish).....@ £7.50
- ☐ Ezekiel (Fred Cundick)@ £3.95
- ☐ First Corinthians (Malcolm Horlock)@ £8.50
- ☐ Israel's Wilderness Journeys Viewed Prophetically (J. M. Davies) .@ £4.50
- ☐ Notes on Galatians and Philippians (W. Trew)@ £4.50
- ☐ Philippians (Keith Keyser)@ £5.50
- ☐ Prison Letters – Colossians and Philemon (J. M. Davies).....@ £4.95
- ☐ Prophetic Profile (G. B. Fyfe).....@ £5.50
- ☐ Revelation and Future Events (E. W. Rogers)@ £4.50
- ☐ Romans – Chapters 1-8 (Albert Leckie)@ £5.50
- ☐ Spiritual Renewal (Frank Holmes, et al.)@ £5.50
- ☐ Serving and Shepherding (Ken Morris)@ £3.95
- ☐ The Church and the Churches (W. E. Vine).....@ £5.50
- ☐ The Levitical Offerings (John Boyd).....@ £3.95
- ☐ The Local Church (J. H. Large)@ £4.50
- ☐ The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit (Samuel Jardine)@ £2.00
- ☐ The Tabernacle and the Offerings (Albert Leckie)@ £6.50
- ☐ The Glory and Power of God (Jeff Brown).....@ £5.00
- ☐ Truth and Training in Titus (Stephen Baker)@ £6.00
- ☐ Word for Everyday (Brian Clatworthy)@ £8.50

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- ☐ Building Stones **SPECIAL OFFER**@ £8.00

GENERAL SERIES

- ☐ Church Doctrine and Practice (Revised)@ £9.50
- ☐ Footprints Nurture Course (Ken Rudge), make your own multiple copies @ £15.00
- ☐ The Minor Prophets.....@ £7.95
- ☐ New Treasury of Bible Doctrine@ £12.00
- ☐ 100 Questions sent to Precious Seed (R. Collings)@ £7.50

OLD TESTAMENT OVERVIEW SERIES

- ☐ Vol. 1. Beginnings by Richard Catchpole@ £7.50
- ☐ Vol. 2. Laws for Life by Keith Keyser@ £7.50
- ☐ Vol. 3. Settling in the Land by John Scarsbrook@ £7.50
- ☐ Vol. 4. Kings and Prophets Part 1 by Simon Sherwin@ £7.50
- ☐ Vol. 5. Kings and Prophets Part 2 by Colin Lacey@ £7.50
- ☐ Vol. 6. Lessons for Life by Warren Henderson@ £7.50
- ☐ Vol. 7. Coming back from Exile by Malcolm Davis@ £7.50

NEW TESTAMENT OVERVIEW SERIES

- ☐ New Testament Overview in one Volume@ £10.00
- ☐ New Testament Overview (Romanian edition).....@ £9.00

ARCHIVE SERIES

- ☐ Precious Seed Vol. 1.....@ £10.00
- ☐ Precious Seed Vol. 2.....@ £8.50
- ☐ Precious Seed Vol. 3.....@ £8.50
- ☐ Precious Seed Vol. 4.....@ £8.50
- ☐ Precious Seed Vol. 5.....@ £8.50

DECAPOLIS PRESS

- ☐ Prove it by Paul McCauley@ £8.50
- ☐ New-song singing by David Brauch.....@ £6.50
- ☐ In Due Time by Tim Mather@ £6.50
- ☐ Galatians, The Merits of Christ by Norman Mellish@ £7.50



TOTAL ORDER £

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CHEQUES IN PAYMENT FOR BOOKS

Postage will be added at cost as the order will be processed online.
You may also order on the website www.preciousseed.org, or by email secretary@preciousseed.org, or by posting this form.
UK customers can place an order by phone on 01142 511700. This will be available on Tuesdays and Thursdays ONLY. Please have your card ready when you call.

Overseas orders can be processed through the online shop with postage added at cost. Alternatively, check with our international distributors to see if they have copies available.

CARD DETAILS

Card Type: (Visa or Mastercard. Please circle which one)  

Card Number

Expiry Date Security Code

☐ I consent to PS retaining my data to process my order/s.

Cardholder's Name

MAGAZINE ORDER FORM

Please tick the appropriate box below and send to the address above.

- ☐ I enclose a gift towards the work of the magazine.
- ☐ Please put me on the mailing list to receive *Precious Seed International*.
- ☐ Please amend the number of copies of the magazine I receive from to

Please be aware that PSP has no full-time staff. We will attend to and deliver your order as soon as possible, so please be patient.

Name

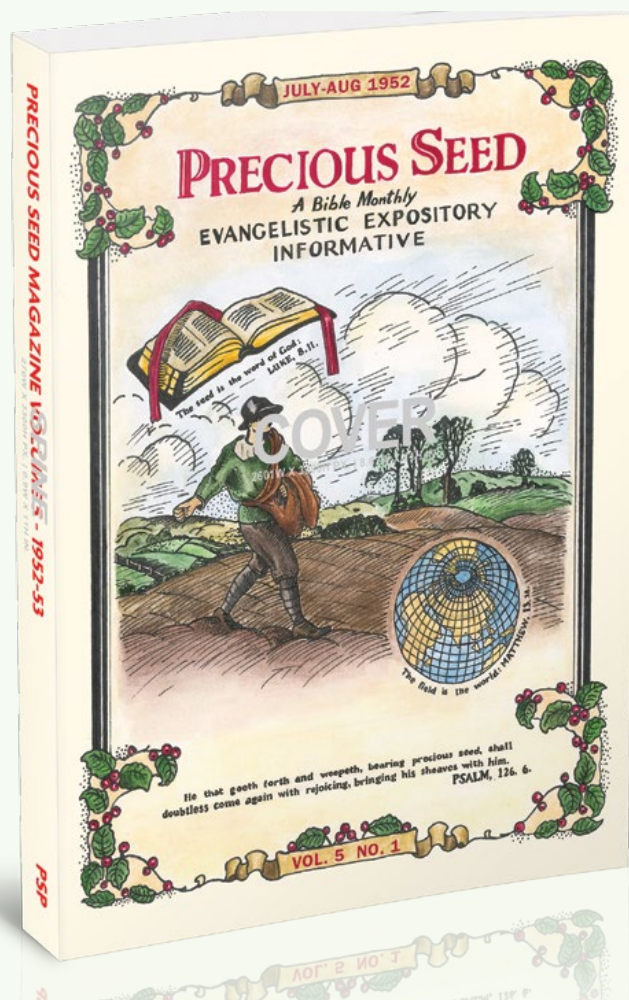
Address

Post Code/Zip.....

Telephone Number.....

Email address

NEW MATERIALS AND CONTINUING

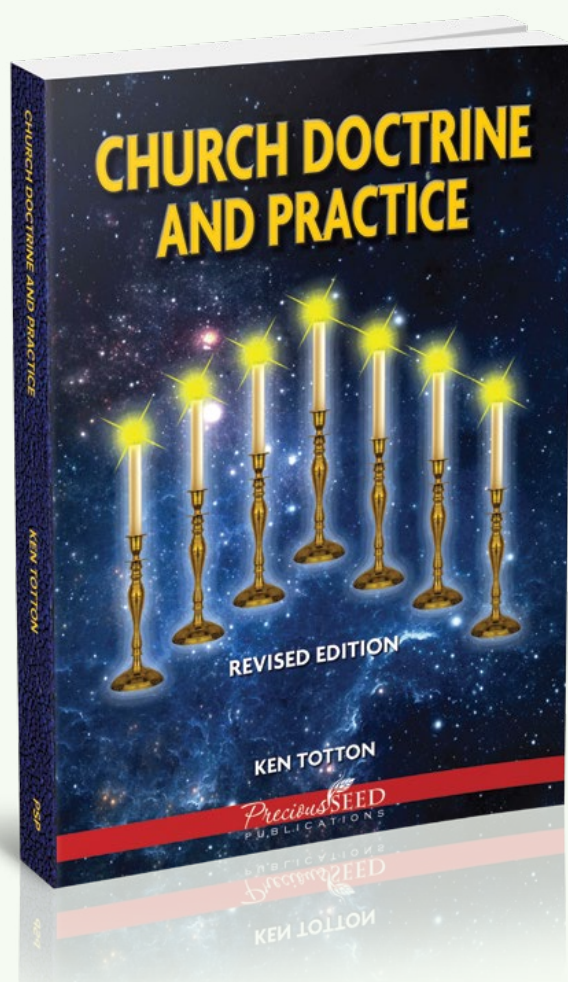


Following the interest in Volumes 1 to 4 from the Precious Seed archive, we have decided to print Volume 5.

This book covers the years 1952-53 and the reports section alone is a fascinating history of gospel outreach from Cornwall to Shetland. With expository material, such as that on the Pastoral Epistles by W. E. Vine, together with practical and devotional articles, it is also the same eclectic mix of papers that will be a blessing to the reader.

Get your copy now.

£8.50 per copy
plus postage at cost.



Every Christian should be concerned to learn and obey the New Testament's teaching in respect of the church.

Warmly welcomed when first published, Church Doctrine and Practice has now been fully revised to include further biblically focused doctrinal and practical teaching.

Major sections include the church (both local and universal), unity, baptism, fellowship, worship and prayer, spiritual gifts, service, elders, and discipline. New additions strengthen coverage of leadership, gospel outreach, and a variety of pastoral topics.

This book challenges us to return to apostolic practice, and suggests many practical ways of both sharing the gospel and building up the churches of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

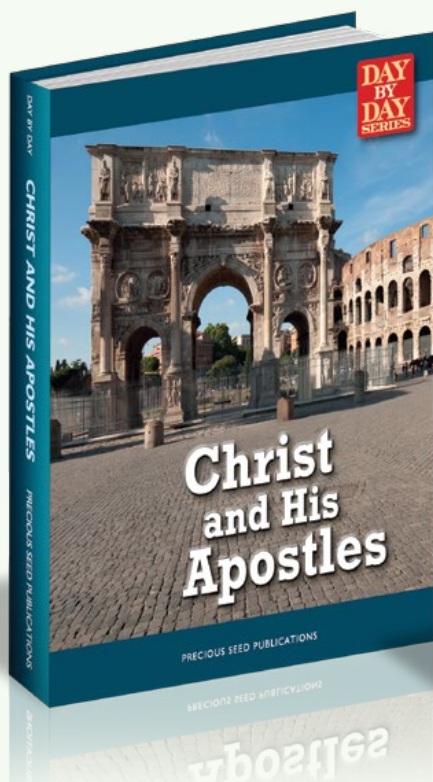
A companion volume New Treasury of Bible Doctrine is also available from Precious Seed Publications.

This book, and its companion volume, are also available in North America and Canada from Steers Christian Supplies.

You can order copies at the special price of

£9.50 per copy
plus postage at cost.

OFFERS FROM PRECIOUS SEED

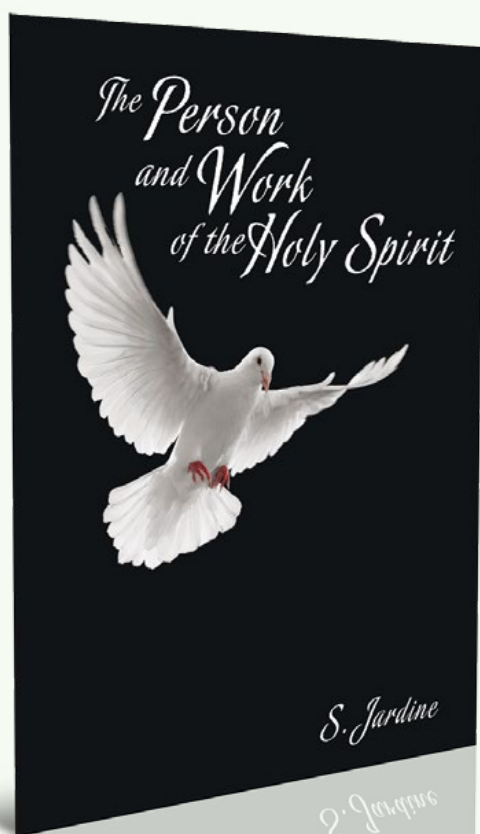
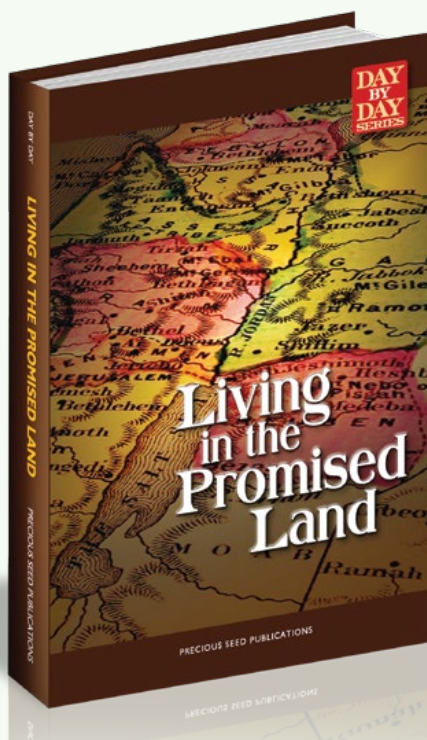


Christ and His Apostles will take you through the New Testament in a year, offering a programme of readings as well as a meditation for each day.

Living in the Promised Land covers the Old Testament from Joshua to the end of 2 Chronicles and provides the same programme of daily readings and comment.

As part of a clearance of some of our warehouse stock, we are now able to offer these two volumes at a special price of:

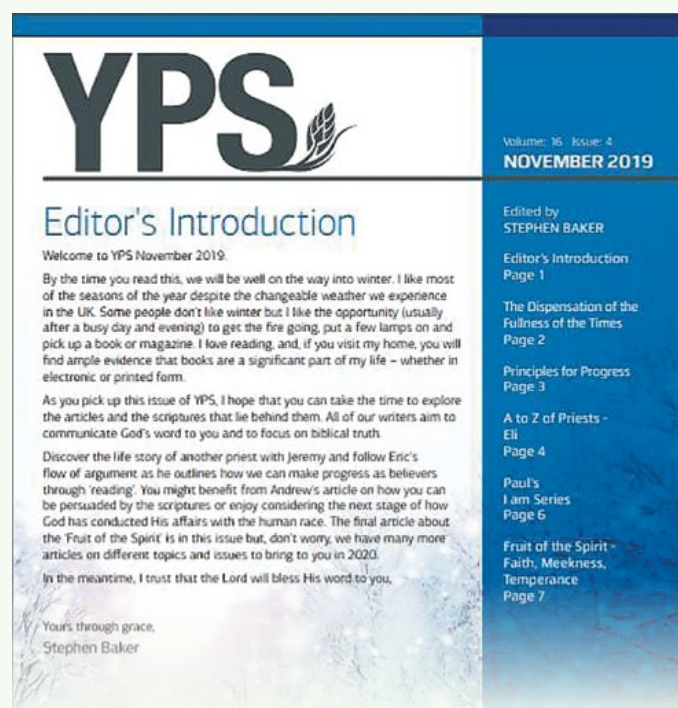
£3.00 per copy plus postage at cost.



This book is divided into two sections: Spirit statement; and Spirit symbol. Overall, it is an excellent treatment of its subject and one that is practical and devotional in character.

Now available at less than half-price, order your copy for just

£2.00 per copy plus postage at cost.



If you have younger believers in your assembly – whether young in years or young in the faith – have you introduced them to YPS? Edited by Stephen Baker, this eight-page magazine contains a similar mix of doctrinal, devotional and practical articles but in shorter and sharper format. It restates timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and seeks to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live.

If you would rather give it out separately from the main magazine, order your copies by email to the secretary – address on the back of the main magazine.

'Be thankful unto him, and bless his name', Ps. 100. 4.

As we move into another decade, 2020 sees the 75th anniversary of the first publication of *Precious Seed* magazine and, on behalf of the current Committee, we readily acknowledge the kindness and faithfulness of the Lord. For the vision and the endeavours of all those who have been involved in the work of writing, editing and publishing the magazine, sometimes at considerable personal expense, we express our thanks.

Much has changed in our world and society since 1945 and, indeed, among assemblies of the Lord's people, but the need of believers is still best met in the resources given to us by a gracious God: the Spirit, the scriptures and the saints.

What kindness on God's part to impart the Holy Spirit to every individual who places faith in Christ! Without His indwelling presence

there would be no spiritual life within, no spiritual power to live, and no security for the future, Rom. 8. 9-11; Eph. 4. 30. As the Lord Jesus Himself declared, that indwelling presence enables an insight into the inspired word of God and He would teach us 'all things', John 14. 26. How blessed we have been to have had access to this unparalleled book, which has been the unshakeable, and totally sufficient resource for all the people of God down through time, 17. 17! It is interesting to note that after the mention of Mnason of Cyprus in Acts chapter 21 verse 16, the title 'disciple' is not used again in the New Testament. Instead, the title used becomes 'saints', and in his address to Agrippa, as the apostle recounts his story, he describes those who he 'shut up in prison' as 'saints'; those who he once viewed as subversives, he now affectionately calls 'saints'! He had come to appreciate their value as those who were precious to

God and the subject of God's eternal purpose, Eph. 1. 18. It behoves us to value believers as such, and to grasp something of the intended purposes that God had in linking us all together as saints – that we may be able to 'comfort them which are in any trouble', 2 Cor. 1. 4.

As we launch into the coming year, it is the prayer of the Committee that we should be marked by a dependence on the Spirit of God, dedication to the word of God, and devotion to the people of God. If in any way this issue of the magazine encourages that, then we, like those who have contributed to it over the last seventy-five years, will ascribe it to the goodness and mercy of the Lord, Ps. 23. 6.

SANDY JACK

Ministry Articles Editor

Contents

The Messianic Psalms

Psalm 72 2
By RICHARD CATCHPOLE

An Assembly of the Lord's people will be a people among whom ... – Part 6 4
By STUART SCAMMELL

The Epistle to the Colossians – Part 8 6
By WILLIAM M. BANKS

The Sacrifice of the Son – Part 1 8
By KEITH R. KEYSER

The Gospel of Mark – Part 9 10
By JOHN BENNETT

What does the Bible tell us about the future? 12
By IAN JACKSON

The Twelve Tribes of Israel – Gad 14
By LLOYD STOCK

What is God's plan for my life? 15
By SAM TAUFEEK

'We are leaving' 16
Anon

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2 – The marks of a true messenger 18
By PETER DAVIES

Old Testament Women who appear in the New Testament: Lot's wife 20
By JOHN SCARSBROOK

Handley Moule: His life and legacy 22
By HOWARD BARNES

Angola 24
By BRIAN HOWDEN

The only One who always delivers and doesn't disappoint 26
By DAVID BRAUCH

Characters in the early years of the Lord: Anna 28
By MICHAEL WILKIE

Word for Today IBC
By BRIAN CLATWORTHY

Book Reviews Inside Back Cover Flap
By JOHN SCARSBROOK

Question Time Outside Back Cover Flap
By RICHARD COLLINGS

PULL-OUTS**Nehemiah**

By MALCOLM DAVIS
and JONATHAN BLACK

YPS

The Messianic Psalms

PSALM 72

By **RICHARD CATCHPOLE** South Norwood, London, England

Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul asserted, 'He must reign', 1 Cor. 15. 25. Although denied by a-millennialists, the One whom men rejected and crucified at His first coming is appointed to have a throne and a kingdom in the very scene of His rejection. God has determined it; the scriptures testify to it, and in Psalm 72, His reign of righteousness and peace is graphically described.

In the Hebrew Bible, the Psalms are divided into five books corresponding to the five books of the Pentateuch. Psalm 72 concludes the second book, that section of the Psalms which begins with Psalm 42 and corresponds to the book of Exodus. The second book of Moses, Exodus, concludes with the glory of God filling the tabernacle and thus it is no accident, but a mark of divine inspiration, that Psalm 72 concludes on a similar note, looking on to the golden age of Messiah's kingdom when 'the whole earth [will] be filled with his glory', v. 19.

The superscription to the Psalm

'A psalm for Solomon', although the margin says, 'A psalm of Solomon'. If the first title is correct, this is a psalm written by David for the instruction of Solomon and likely written at the very end of David's life. If, however, the writer was Solomon, then here is a son giving expression to and wanting to see realized, the desire and longings of his father's heart, v. 20. Either way, it is evident that the initial subject of the Psalm was Solomon himself and although the substance was in some measure realized in his reign, for its total fulfilment, it awaits the reign of 'a greater than Solomon'; the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The sections to the Psalm

The psalm begins with a **petition**,

'Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son', v. 1. In verses 2 to 17, it opens out into **prophecy**, as the writer anticipates the fulfilment of his request and its delightful consequences.¹ It concludes in verses 18 to 20 with a note of **praise** to the One who will bring it all to pass.

The subject of the Psalm

The Person who reigns: 'the king/ the king's son', v. 1. Because of Adonijah's attempt to claim the throne for himself, Solomon was anointed king while David was yet alive.² If the psalm was written by David in those latter days, Solomon in his own right bore the title of 'king' but, equally, when viewed in relation to David himself, he was 'the king's son' and as such the rightful heir to the throne. Needless to say, this distinction is but a reflection of the personal greatness and glory of the 'greater than Solomon', Matt. 12. 42. In the glory of His person as the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus has an inherent right to rule; He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. But, equally, relative to His manhood, as the seed of David, He is the rightful heir to David's throne, Luke 1. 32.

The principles that characterize His reign

vv. 1-4. The psalmist requests two things: 'Give the king thy judgments', embracing the prerogative and liberty to act as judge; and give the king 'thy righteousness',

embracing the integrity and wisdom to exercise that authority righteously. Both things will be found with the Lord Jesus. In reference to the prerogative and liberty to act, Psalm 2 verses 7 to 9 records, 'the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'. In regard to His integrity and wisdom, note Isaiah chapter 11 verses 2 to 5, 'the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins'.

His reign will be marked by justice and equity, 'Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness'; His sceptre will be a 'sceptre of righteousness', His millennial capital, Jerusalem, 'the city of righteousness'.³

Four distinct groups of people are mentioned in verses 2 to 4 of Psalm 72: 'Thy people', who will enjoy righteous government, v. 2; the 'poor', i.e., the afflicted and oppressed, who will find justice and vindication, vv. 2, 4; the 'children of the needy' or 'the destitute', those who are the most vulnerable in society, these will be delivered and avenged, v. 4; the 'oppressor', who will be broken in pieces and crushed, v. 4. Here is a King with whom there will never be any failure or injustices.

Righteousness will issue in something else: peace. Isaiah says, 'the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever', Isa. 32. 17. In Psalm 72, the writer says, 'The

mountains shall bring peace to the people', v. 3. The mountains of Israel are especially in view, from which, in former days, invaders often descended. In that day, there will be no conflicts but 'an abundance of peace', v. 7. Today, men measure the security of their kingdoms by the strength of their military capabilities but in that coming day it will be measured by the security that allows boys and girls to play in the street, 'the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof', Zech. 8. 5.

The permanence of His reign,

vv. 5-7. The section ends much as it begins. The idea in verse 5, 'They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure', is that they shall fear God day and night throughout all generations. Then, in verse 7, there will be an 'abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth', or literally, 'until the moon is not', again emphasizing its abiding character. In between, we have two important statements. The first describes the initial effect of Christ's coming, especially upon the Jewish nation ravaged in tribulation days, 'He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth'. The picture is of grass that has been cut down and is ready to wither beneath the hot eastern sun unless refreshed by rain. The second statement asserts that, under the reign of this righteous king, righteous men will flourish, and the nations will prosper and expand, v. 6. All preceding kingdoms have risen, flourished, and declined, but not this one.

The perimeters of His reign,

vv. 8-11. It is recorded of Solomon that, 'he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt', 2 Chr. 9. 26. Great king though Solomon was, there were limits to his kingdom; but not to Christ's. Psalm 72 verse 8 says, 'He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth', or literally, 'land', and no doubt Israel's inheritance is specifically in view. But the Psalm then opens out to embrace nomadic tribes, 'those that dwell in the wilderness'; the subjugation of enemies who formerly opposed Him,

'his enemies shall lick the dust'; the most distant gentile kings, 'kings of Tarshish and of the isles', and the most opulent kings, 'the kings of Sheba and Seba'. He will have universal dominion, for 'all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him', v. 11.

The proficiency of His reign,

vv. 12-15. These verses speak of 'the needy', 'the poor', and 'him that hath no helper', those who are often the victims of injustices and are all too frequently ignored and forgotten in the corridors of power, but not with this King. Because of the beneficence of His reign, some will express their appreciation in the gifts they bring to Him, others in their prayers for Him. Daily shall men praise Him, not only for what He does but also for what He is in himself.

The prosperity of His reign,

v. 16. The earth will enjoy abundant fertility, 'There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon'. The top of mountains and deserts are not areas that men currently cultivate, but in millennial days these areas, once barren, will be fruitful. Whereas today there is an emphasis upon industry, in that day, with the curse removed, the focus will be upon agriculture.⁴

The pre-eminence of the ruler,

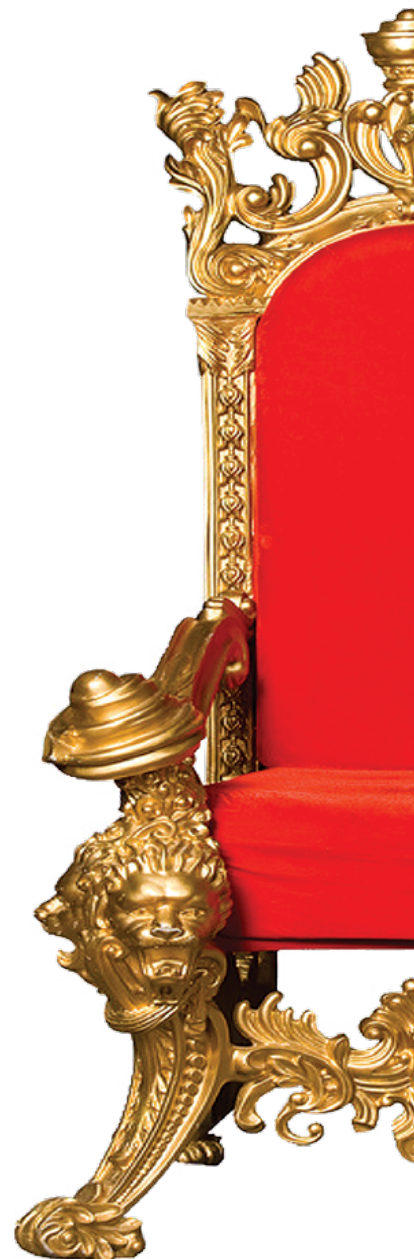
v. 17. 'His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun' or 'while the sun shines His name shall be perpetuated', i.e., 'shall produce fresh progeny' or 'send forth new shoots'.⁵ In that day, the promise God gave to Abraham, 'in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed' will be fulfilled, Gen. 12. 3, men 'shall be blessed in him', v. 17. All nations shall call Him 'blessed', acknowledging Him to be the author and the source of their salvation and prosperity. Two different Hebrew words are translated 'blessed' in this verse. The second one could be translated 'felicity' or 'happiness', conveying the pleasure that Messiah Himself will find in the blessing of men.

The prayers of David ended,

vv. 18-20. Having been occupied with the King of divine appointment and

the delightful character of His reign, the heart of the psalmist overflows in gratitude and praise to the One who will bring it all to pass, blessing God for what He does and what He is, vv. 18, 19.

All David desired for his seed, his throne and his kingdom, will be attained in Christ; David's 'prayers are ended', he need not ask for anything more. Does all that we desire likewise focus upon Christ occupying the throne and being pre-eminent?



Endnotes

- 1 Note the repetition of the word 'shall' thirty-one times in verses 2 to 17.
- 2 1 Kgs. 1. 5-40.
- 3 Isa. 32. 1; Heb. 1. 8; Isa. 1. 26.
- 4 Isa. 35. 1, 2; Amos 9. 13; Mic. 4. 3, 4; Rom. 8. 19-21.
- 5 W. KAY, *Psalms*, 2nd edition, Rivingtons, 1874, pg. 230.

An Assembly of the Lord's people will be a people among whom ... THE GOSPEL IS SOUNDED OUT

By **STUART SCAMMELL** Cardiff, Wales

Part 6

The activities of the apostles were surely motivated by their appreciation of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The more they understood about who He was and what it was that He had done for them, the more that stimulated their love for Him to grow. John expressed this in 1 John chapter 4 verse 19, 'we love him, because he first loved us'.

John also teaches us that we should express our love for our Lord and Saviour by keeping His commandments, John 14. 15. He preceded that statement in John chapter 13 verse 34 with a 'new commandment . . . that ye love one another' and in the next verse we are told that this obedience will identify us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our obedience to Him is not optional or selective. The fact that we call him 'Lord', should indicate that our lives are directed by His will. In Mark chapter 16 verse 15, the Lord Jesus calls on His disciples, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature'. This means that we should be a people from whom the gospel is sounded out.

Over many years I had been all too aware that we were very good at preaching the gospel to those that knew it well and were in the good of it. However, I had been increasingly challenged as to how to reach out to those that had never heard the gospel message. The Apostle Paul did not have the privilege of a comfortable Gospel Hall or any similar facility in which to organize his meetings. In Acts chapter 17 verse 17, we read that he met with Jews to reason through the gospel

in the synagogue and, to those that happened to be there, in the market place. This may have been, in a paradoxical way, a great advantage. When we are faced with difficulty or opposition, then, just as in nature the hedgehog rolls into a ball or a rabbit looks to his burrow for protection, we can often retreat to a place of safety.

The Lord did not command us to stay in our Gospel Halls and preach the gospel but to 'go into all the world and preach the gospel'. It is true that there are examples in the scriptures of those that came to the Lord Jesus, one famous example would be Nicodemus in John chapter 3. However, the Lord certainly visited people in their need when maybe they were not seeking Him. In the next chapter, the Lord Jesus came to a city of Samaria and engaged a lady in conversation. It is very evident from the recorded dialogue that this lady knew her life wasn't right but was doing little or nothing about it. As I try to engage with people on the streets, very often I meet people just like this! They know things aren't right, but they don't know where to turn.

In Romans chapter 10 verse 14, the Apostle Paul is teaching us about Israel rejecting the gospel; while

doing this he reminds us of a simple lesson that should be obvious to us, 'how shall they hear without a preacher?' We often think that others will do it, the gifted ones, the brave, the ones that God calls, yet, in 2 Timothy, Paul reminds Timothy that he, though not an evangelist, should be doing the work of one. It is the challenge that we all need to face up to. How do we tell others the greatest news we have ever heard? How do we tell others of the person that has changed our lives? How do we tell others of His love and work that has changed our eternity?

The answer for each one is personal and the Lord Himself will reveal to us the sphere that we should serve Him in.

Personally, the Lord revealed to me very clearly that some of my time was to be devoted to serving Him in prisons and on the streets. There are many more experienced and gifted than myself. However, I have come to understand increasingly that God calls, God equips, and God gives you just what you need to face each circumstance. There is a massive lack of reapers for the 'plentiful harvest'.

We often hear of a land that has turned its back on God, and, to some extent, that has to be true as we see laws being passed that are contrary to the word of God. However, when talking on the streets to people, it is also true that we have a rudderless generation that know that life seems empty and I often hear the phrase, 'there is something missing'. Stress levels for some are off the scale, many are struggling with money issues, many are reaping the lack of morality in their lives and drugs are wreaking havoc in so many lives today. Many in the world are asking, 'What is it all about?' or even, 'Where is God?'. What we cannot do is sit back in our comfortable halls and lament that they won't come in.

So, what should we do? I had the great privilege of standing on Mars Hill not so long ago. There I thought how Paul chose his words carefully



yet told a consistent message, preaching the gospel appropriately using what was around him. The unknown God is where we are at with this generation. Every time we don't speak out, when we are not willing to do a certain work, we are in danger of handing territory to Satan.

Last Christmas I stood in the main street of Cardiff and preached. I had the title on the board, 'The Way in a manger', and used John chapter 14 verse 6 where the Lord Jesus states, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me'. A man listened for about five minutes. After I had finished, he walked up to me and shook my hand. He thanked me for what I had just said. The man was around forty years old. The next thing he said astounded me. He told me that he knew Jesus had something to do with Christmas, but until that day he had never understood what! At first I wondered if he was joking. He was not. Generally, Christians have been quiet for too long. The

greatest message has got lost in the trivial messages of man. We must be bolstered by the fact that we have a God-given commission to 'Go . . . into all the world and preach the gospel'. The call couldn't be a higher one. The commission is one of great dignity as it is from God.

What stops us being obedient? This is a challenging question. Maybe, for many, it is that they are out of practice. When I was a boy, we would often go to gospel campaigns and there would be more gospel outreach activities than maybe there are today. As opposition grows or efforts see less fruit, it should be that we look to redouble our efforts rather than shrink away from the challenge.

It is true for most assemblies that in this generation we have seen fewer saved than in previous generations, and we must remember that Lamentations chapter 3 verse 26 teaches us that it is the 'salvation of the Lord'. But we are told to be the sowers and the

farmer that sowed no seed would then be astounded to see a bumper crop.

As people who have met in Gospel Halls, we should be a people synonymous with sounding out the gospel and as God's people we should want to be obeying our Lord Jesus Christ and 'going'!

As we go and sound out the gospel in different ways to reach different echelons of society, we remember that it is for the 'whosoever'. What we are actually doing is teaching others, the younger believers coming through, that it is their reasonable service and that the gospel can be effective in the lives of those around us.

When we see the full effects of the gospel, those that are saved, baptized and then, in time, added to the assembly are a massive encouragement to us. Over recent years in the assembly in Cardiff, we have seen a number saved, many of them have been baptized and are now in fellowship. When they gather with us, maybe for the first time, to break bread, it is wonderfully uplifting. The reality of having those with us that God has saved is encouraging. Hearing a male taking part, thanking God for His Son and that He died to be his Saviour, is a delight, not just to God, but to the believers who sounded out the gospel to him.

So, as God's people, we need to look for avenues that God would take us down to reach people for His glory and their salvation. We, of course, do not just strike out on our own; we need to be before God in prayer asking for direction, operating in His strength and exercising wisdom in the literature we use, and title and format of meetings we convene.

We should also be ready to live out the gospel in front of those that we encounter. The vast majority of the generation before us do not read God's word but they do read our lives. Only if our lives are right will they turn to us in their crises and want the joy and peace that we have through Jesus Christ.



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

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

Part 8

	The caution	The character of the intruder	The method adopted	The answer – Christ is the answer in each case
vv. 4-7	'Lest any man'	The clever deceiver	Beguiling 'with enticing words', v. 4.	'Christ Jesus the Lord', v. 6 'faith in Christ', v. 5 'walk ye in him', v. 6 'rooted and built up in him', v. 7
vv. 8-15	'Lest any man'	The vain philosopher	Spoiling 'through philosophy and vain deceit', v. 8.	'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily', v. 9 'after Christ', v. 8 'in him', vv. 9, 10 'in whom', v. 11 'by . . . Christ', v. 11 'with him', vv. 12 (twice), 13
vv. 16, 17	'Let no man'	The legal judge	Judging in 'meat . . . drink . . . holyday', v. 16.	'The body is of Christ', v. 17
vv. 18, 19	'Let no man'	The idol worshipper	Worshipping 'of angels', v. 18.	'Holding the head', v. 19

Editor's note: The table above corrects the version printed in the previous issue.

Warnings and answers, 2. 4-19 (continued)

The vain philosopher, vv. 8-15 – spoiling 'through philosophy and vain deceit'

In the last paper, we concluded our discussion on the first major warning and noted the dangers in this second. It is essentially motivated by cosmic powers that control the world; basically, it is intellectualism with unhealthy motivation.

It was shown that the answer is again to be found in Christ, with three significant antidotes to the philosophical troulbers: the supremacy of Christ, vv. 9, 10; the significance of their baptism 'with him' based on a new circumcision, vv. 11, 12; and the total triumph of Christ at Calvary, spoiling the controlling powers behind the pagan philosophy, and publicly shaming their empty illusions, vv. 13-15. The powers of evil are totally defeated. The first antidote was considered in the last article. The latter two are considered here.

The appeal to their baptism based on a new circumcision, vv. 11, 12

The essential lesson is that they mustn't depend on the flesh any more, in contrast to the vain philosophers, but rather on their link by baptism to Christ. If baptism was to be a reality there must first be the cutting off of the flesh.

The circumcision envisaged links them with a new dispensation, 'in whom', v. 11. It is an additional (to the three we saw last time in verses 5 to 7) intrinsic link with Christ, 'in whom also ye are circumcised'. However, the nature of the circumcision is distinctive; it is 'made without hands'. It is clear that this is not the literal circumcision that was given as the basis of the covenant to Abraham in Genesis chapter 17 but rather a spiritual circumcision as, for example, indicated in Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 16, 'Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked', cp. Jer. 4. 4. The true nature of this circumcision is detailed in Romans chapter 2 verses 28 and 29, 'For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly;

neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God'. Elsewhere, Paul could say, 'For we are the circumcision . . . and have no confidence in the flesh', Phil. 3. 3. The physical act is now superseded (it was restricted to males!) and a new sign given in Christian baptism, v. 12.

The result of the circumcision is clearly indicated, 'putting off [divesting] of the body of the flesh', v. 11 JND. This means divesting and discarding acts associated with the old life. The word 'body' has the idea of wholeness or totality as used, for example, in the term 'the body of truth'. Here it means the full gamut of fleshly activity (the totality of carnal and evil propensity in self). It can be compared to the 'body of sin' in Romans chapter 6 verse 6. Note that the word 'flesh' in the New Testament can mean the physical body, humanity or inherent evil – here it means the latter.

The sphere of the circumcision is indicated at the close of the verse, namely, 'by [*en* = in as the sphere of its operation or basis of its effectiveness] the circumcision of Christ'. This, of course, has no reference to the literal circumcision of the Lord as an infant of eight days; it is figurative of His crucifixion. The idea, therefore, is that of 'the inward cleansing brought about by His death, resurrection, and indwelling presence in those who are united to him by faith'.¹

In verse 12, the apostle now applies the lessons from their spiritual circumcision. The evidence of their death to sin, i.e., 'divesting the body of the flesh', is now seen in their burial, 'buried with him in baptism'. Since only dead people are buried, their participation in Christ's burial (aorist tense indicating their participation – in the purpose of God this has already been accomplished) is setting the seal on His death and ours, cp.

Rom. 6. 3, 4. Thus, there is death to sin, to self and to the world.²

The evidence of new life is seen in the fact that we are ‘risen with him’. Baptism is seen here as death, burial and resurrection, cp. 3. 1; Eph. 2. 6. The power to effect this in the life of the believer is seen in the balance of the verse. What God has done for Christ He has done for us. In our case there is a necessary expression of faith in the operation (*energeia*, power) of God. Thus, the power of God is the subject of faith and is available for the believer to walk in newness of life, cp. 3. 1. The evidence of that divine power has been displayed in the resurrection of Christ, cp. Eph. 1. 19, 20. His resurrection was also a display of the glory of the Father, Rom. 6. 4, ‘The glory of the Father demanded it and the power of God performed it’.³

The triumph of Christ, vv. 13-15

In this third section, giving the antidote to the illusory philosophers of verse 8, the apostle shows that the subtle controlling powers behind their pagan philosophy have been totally conquered. The Colossian believers, and we too, have been linked ‘with him’ in His triumph!

There were, however, two conditions requiring transformation for this link with His triumph to be effective. They were ‘dead in . . . sins’, and part of the ‘uncircumcision of . . . flesh’, i.e., symptomatic of the condition of Gentiles, cp. Eph. 2. 1, 11, 12. Transformation was necessary, and it was effected; they were ‘quickened together with him’, sharing in new life with Christ. Note the repetition of the intimate link ‘with Christ’. This quickening took account of their ‘dead’ condition. The interesting development should be noted: in verse 20, ‘dead [**died** JND] with Christ’, cp. Rom. 6. 8; in verse 13, ‘**quickened** together with him’; in verse 12, ‘**risen** with him’, all aorist tenses.

While the quickening took account of their first condition requiring transformation, there

was still the need to account for their ‘uncircumcision’. This was answered in the forgiveness of all trespasses, v. 13. These trespasses are explained in verse 14 as ‘the handwriting [word found only here and meaning a legal signed document] of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary [used only twice in the NT; on the other occasion translated “adversary”] to us’. The ‘legal demands’ [ESV] of the law are seen as the signed acknowledgement of an accumulated ‘mountain of bankruptcy’ incurred by violating the law and cancelled by His death.^{4,5}

The twofold method adopted to effect forgiveness is, first, by ‘blotting out’ the ‘mountain of bankruptcy’ so as it can no longer to be seen; ‘out of the way’; the slate is wiped clean. This is the private aspect known by the individual. The second method is by ‘nailing it to his cross’. This is the public aspect seen by others. It is an ‘act of triumphant defiance’; the accusation against His people is made public, as His was, to show their liberation from bankruptcy and bondage.⁶

The final triumph of Christ is seen in verse 15 as the spoiling of ‘principalities and powers’. Thus, the controlling powers of those who were bankrupt are totally defeated, and that publicly, He ‘made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it’, ‘stripping them of the armour in which they trusted, and held them aloft in his outstretched hands, displaying to the universe their helplessness and his own unvanquished strength . . . the shameful tree has become the victor’s triumphal chariot, before which his captives are driven in humiliating procession’.⁷

The ultimate triumph of Christ is thus affirmed and He shares it with us, cp. 2 Cor. 2. 14, ‘God . . . always causeth us to triumph in Christ’. There is no need for the Colossians to listen to the vain philosophers; they, and we, have someone far superior who has destroyed their motivating power!

The legal judge, vv. 16, 17 – judging ‘in meat . . . drink . . . holy day’ – ritualism

The apostle now seems to be addressing Judaizing teachers still wanting to maintain the legalistic requirements of certain Old Testament restrictions with respect to food and holy days. However, there was no place for these restrictions in their new resurrection life. Note the ‘therefore’; their practice was to be determined by the doctrine just enunciated, not to be called into question by legalizers.

The questions addressed, v. 16

The subject of food and drink was one of serious consideration at that time.⁸ There was the necessity for consideration of the tender conscience of a weaker brother and the permission of liberty – think of the weak. On the other hand, in the question of food there was the need to avoid legality. To others, the question of festivals was important – holy days (annual, e.g., the Day of Atonement); new moon (monthly) and sabbaths (weekly).⁹

The reality affirmed, v. 17

The apostle asserts that restrictions relative to meat and drink and the matter of festivals were looking forward as ‘a shadow of things to come’. However, the reality was Christ – He was the substance.¹⁰ The term ‘of Christ’ indicates that the members of ‘His body’, the church, enjoy the reality; there is no need to indulge in the shadow!

Endnotes

- 1 F. F. BRUCE, *The epistle to the Colossians*, William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- 2 Rom 6. 11; Gal. 6. 14; Gal. 2. 20; Col 2. 11.
- 3 A. LECKIE, *What the Bible teaches – Ephesians*, John Ritchie Ltd 1983.
- 4 cp. Exod. 24. 3 for the Jew and Rom. 2. 15 for the Gentile.
- 5 F. F. BRUCE, *The epistle to the Colossians*, William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 cp. Rom. 14. 3; 1 Cor. 8-10; 1 Tim. 4. 2, 3.
- 9 See, e.g., Lev. 16; Num. 10. 10; 28. 11-15.
- 10 See John 1. 45; 5. 46; Heb. 8. 5.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE SON

Part 1

By **KEITH R. KEYSER** Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania, USA

In a world that doubts God's goodness, Christ's sacrifice stands as the historic proof of divine love, grace, and righteousness. His propitiatory death undergirds the believer's justification, sanctification, and eventual glorification. It also manifests the appointed way of salvation by grace through faith, thereby rejecting mankind's meritorious schemes of salvation. It reveals the truth about God: He is incomparably holy and loving. It also exposes humans as utterly lost without His intervening deliverance. God demonstrated His love for humanity and His commitment to justice by sending His Son to the cross, Rom. 3. 23-26; 5. 8. A preacher once declared, 'In the cross of Christ I see the love of God working out through passion and power for the redemption of man. In the cross I see the light of God refusing to make any terms with iniquity and sin and evil. The cross is the historic revelation of the abiding facts within the heart of God'.¹ To understand both God and man, therefore, one must grasp the significance of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary.

Painting a realistic picture of humanity

Humanity's desperate condition is graphically portrayed in the Old Testament sacrifices. Sin's entrance into the world was met by divine judgement and later by grace. After exposing their sin and bringing them to confess it, God pronounced judgement on Adam and Eve; the penalty was spiritual and physical death. Afterwards, He provided them with skins to cover their shame. These clothes imply animal death; the beginning of bloodshed to atone for sinners. CHAFER remarks, 'Few types are as complete as this. God undertakes for man; the imputation of sin to a substitute is implied; and the covering of the sinner is revealed'.² Sin is so costly that it brings about the slaying of a sacrificial victim. The penalty must be carried out on a substitute before humans could come near their holy Creator.

Cain and Abel were taught to come near God with an offering, Gen. 4; Hebrews chapter 11 affirms that Abel offered

a sacrifice of the flock 'by faith', v. 4. Since faith is a response to revelation, this suggests that they were instructed in the proper approach to their Maker. Noah, Abraham, and the patriarchs continued to draw near with burnt offerings, Gen. 8. 20, 21; 12. 7.

National sacrifice, international Saviour

Sacrificing an unblemished lamb was central to Passover, Exod. 12. 1-13. After the exodus, Israelite lives revolved around bringing the prescribed sacrifices for worship, thanksgiving, and atonement. Leviticus chapters 1 to 7 spell out the five major categories of offering: 1. the burnt offering; 2. the grain offering (also known as the meal or meat offering); 3. the peace offering; 4. the sin offering; 5. the trespass offering. The Israelites were repeatedly reminded of sin's high cost by the ritual slaughtering of birds, bulls, sheep, and goats.

The burnt offering showed the divine requirement of the totality of the sacrifice. He wants us to love Him

with all our heart, soul, and mind, Matt. 22. 37. The bloodless grain/meal offering demonstrates the purity of life that He requires. The peace offering brings God and the offeror together in reconciled communion. The sin and trespass offerings were similar, with the latter emphasizing restitution. As WIERSBE explains, 'The trespass offering emphasized the *damage* done to others by the offender, while the sin offering emphasized the offender's *guilt* before God'.³ GOODING asserts that these offerings collectively show the Most High's holy requirements, as well as demonstrating the comprehensive nature of Christ's person and redemptive work, saying, 'The very fact that God provided a number of different sacrifices with different characteristics for the ancient Hebrews shows the wealth that there is in our blessed Lord – that it takes all these prefigurements, pictures and prototypes to adequately illustrate his ministry, person and sacrifice'.⁴

The types' inadequacy

Despite the ubiquitous offerings in Israelite life, they often hardened their hearts against God; they did not use the rituals for their intended spiritual purposes. In the eighth century BC, for example, the Almighty complained concerning them, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood', Isa. 1. 11-15. He expressed similar disdain through the later prophet Malachi, Mal. 1. 7, 8. Israel went through the motions without displaying true faith.

The New Testament's first mention of sacrifices is a negative citation of first-

century Judaism's empty practices, Matt. 9. 13, showing that the Jews were of the same stripe as those faced by the former dispensation's prophets. They missed the point of the sacrifices, and thought that their conformity to ceremonial statutes would curry favour with God. Despite their blindness, the Lord Jesus proceeded to fulfil all the Old Testament types, prophecies, and shadows. The forerunner, John the Baptist, marked Him out as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world', John 1. 29. He was the true Passover who died as a sacrifice for sin, 1 Cor. 5. 6-8. Hebrews chapter 10 verses 5 to 7 contrast His death with those of the Old Testament victims, 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God'.

The fullness of Christ's sacrifice

In contrast with Judaism's offerings, His sacrifice was:

1. Spotless

Just as the Passover lamb was ceremonially unblemished, even so Christ was morally perfect. He was absolutely impeccable in His Father's eyes in life and death. Yet as the substitute, He became 'sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him', 2 Cor. 5. 21.

2. Solitary

The Lord Jesus presented Himself as

an offering that only He could give. Psalm 49 says, 'None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)', vv. 7, 8. But the Son of God, uniquely uniting full deity and perfect humanity, could offer a sacrifice of infinite worth that paid for human sins.

3. Sufficient

Christ is the true Boaz, Ruth 3. 18, a strong kinsman-redeemer who restores what He did not steal, Ps. 69. 4, and pays the debts of humanity. Only the Son of God could offer the satisfactory payment for sin; only He could become the propitiation for the sins of the world, 1 John 2. 2. No one else could accurately say, 'I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do', John 17. 4, or, 'It is finished', 19. 30. Hebrews chapter 10 verses 11 to 14 confirm the completion of His sacrificial work, in contrast to the Old Testament system, 'And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified'.

4. Sublime

Christ's sacrifice fulfilled the typical teaching of the Old Testament offerings. His life was given sacrificially for God's glory and man's eternal good, and it reconciled the Creator and His

creatures, Col. 1. 21, 22. It robbed death of its sting and enabled God to judge sin justly, while just as righteously justifying sinners who believe in Jesus, Rom. 3. 21-26.

The cumulative effect of His once-for-all sacrifice was to open the way into God's presence. GOODING joyfully declares, 'We can now do what Israel's high priest could never do. He could enter only the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle on earth; every day of our lives we can enter the immediate presence of God in heaven'.⁵ This access stemming from Christ's death is expressed in a well-known hymn:

'Rent the veil that closed the way
To my home of heavenly day,
In the flesh of Christ the Lord,
Ever be His name adored!'⁶

Considering the perfect nature of Christ's sacrifice, one should worship the triune God who planned and executed salvation's immense work. BONAR expresses it well, 'O perfect sacrifice, what is there that a sinner, burdened with guilt, and weary of the evil within him, does not find in Thee? Peace for trouble, liberty for bondage, righteousness for unrighteousness, fulness for emptiness, holiness for pollution, rest for weariness, light for darkness, life for death – all, all in Thee!'⁷

Endnotes

- 1 G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, 'The Purpose of the Advent', in *The Westminster Pulpit*, Vol.1, Wipf & Stock, 2012, pg. 323.
- 2 L. S. CHAFER, 'Soteriology', in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 104.413. Jan. 1947, DTS, 1947, pg. 21.
- 3 WARREN WIERSBE, *Be Holy*, 'Be' Commentary Series, Victor, 1996, pg. 25 [Italics original]. Another adds: 'The names of these offerings, guilt-offering (trespass-offering) and sin-offering, are the names of the offences for which they are to atone, 'āšām ("guilt") and ḥaṭṭā'āt ("sin")'. R. J. THOMPSON, 'Sacrifice in the Old Testament', *New Bible Dictionary*, IVP, 1996, pg. 1041.
- 4 DAVID GOODING, *Prepared For Glory: A Myrtlefield House Transcript*, Myrtlefield Trust, 2019, pg. 29.
- 5 DAVID GOODING, *An Unshakeable Kingdom: The Letter to the Hebrews for Today*, Myrtlefield House, 2013, pg. 185.
- 6 R. C. CHAPMAN, Hymn: 'Oh my Saviour Crucified'.
- 7 HORATIUS BONAR, *The Christ of God*, Robert Carter & Brothers, 1874, pg. 80.



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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

Part 9

As we continue in the Galilean ministry of the Lord, we come to:

The concern of John's disciples, vv. 18-22

Within this third section of chapter 2, we see that the meal that Levi had organized was also a point of concern for the disciples of John. Mark's account does not specify exactly who asked the question, but Matthew's account clearly attributes it to the disciples of John, Matt. 9. 14. They had been brought up on the austerity of John's ministry and found the Saviour, in the words of the scribes and Pharisees, 'eating and drinking with publicans and sinners'.

Their inquiry, v. 18

Their basic enquiry was, 'Why do . . . thy disciples fast not?' Whether the question was fuelled by the antagonism of the Pharisees, or not, cannot be ascertained from the verses. What seems clear is that they were fasting at that time.¹ Although there was no specific requirement in the law, other than on the Day of Atonement, these disciples had voluntary fasts at least twice a week.² It seemed incongruous, at best, for the Lord and His disciples to be feasting on the day that they were fasting.

The Lord's ministry in Matthew chapter 6 teaches that fasting, like personal prayer, was to be a private matter. It was not to be done with a desire to draw attention to the one fasting, 'that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret', Matt. 6. 18. This did not fit with the practice either of the disciples of John or of the Pharisees.

The Lord's inference, vv. 19, 20

The Lord answers their question

with a question of His own, 'Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?' v. 19. This indicates the Lord in His character as the Bridegroom and His disciples as the Groom's attendants. It also portrays a scene, not of sadness and sorrow for sin, but of joy in the presence of the Saviour. This was essentially the Baptist's witness in John chapter 3 verse 29, 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice'. WIERSBE comments, 'Our Lord had performed His first miracle at a joyous marriage feast, John 2. 1-11. Now He was inviting people to come to the wedding!'³

But in these statements of the Saviour, there was also the clear testimony that 'the bridegroom shall be taken away', v. 20. There is no room for doubt, 'the days **will** come'. The Lord knew that and did not hide it from His disciples. The words also indicate that the taking away would be by violent means.⁴ He knew the way in which the opposition of men was moving and what would be the ultimate outcome of that hatred. That day would be the moment for His disciples to mourn. HIEBERT comments, 'When His removal has become a sad reality their resultant sorrow will provide a proper occasion for fasting as the appropriate expression of their true feelings'.⁵

The Lord's illustrations, vv. 21, 22

In these two illustrations used by the Lord, He shows that the old system and teaching were past and done. The forms and rituals of Judaism could not be mixed with the gospel. The two are incompatible. What the Lord brought was not something that could be built into the old but

that which was altogether new and dynamic.

In the first illustration of the garment, Judaism is portrayed as something old and worn out by use. It has been weakened to a point where it cannot be repaired or improved. To add in the new, the unshrunk piece of cloth, would be to destroy the old cloth. The lesson is that the new cloth cannot be sewn into the old; the gospel cannot be bound into Judaism.

In the second illustration, the new wine symbolizes the joy and power of the gospel. New wine cannot be contained in old bottles or wine skins. They do not have the flexibility or elasticity to contain it. Equally, Judaism cannot contain the Christian faith. One is based upon the observance of laws and rituals, whereas the other is based upon faith in Christ. A double loss would ensue, as the bottles and the wine are both lost.

This brings us to the last section within chapter 2.

The cornfields and the Sabbath, vv. 23-28

As the Lord and His disciples went through the cornfields, this event opens a section that deals with incidents on the Sabbath. In the first chapter, 1. 21, the Lord had delivered the man possessed of an unclean spirit. Here, the plucking of the corn from the corn fields, and then, 3. 1-6, the man with the withered hand healed on the Sabbath, are a combination of actions which draws out the opposition and hatred of the Pharisees.

The accusation of the Pharisees is clear from verse 24, 'Why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?' The law stated that on the Sabbath day they were not to do any work, Exod. 20. 10. The definition of what is meant by work is not given in this instance. There was only scriptural instruction given pertaining to various situations that could arise, particularly in respect to a man's animals. To fill this perceived void in the regulation of the law, the Pharisees had developed

their own additional 'laws'. These had become handed down and enshrined in tradition, carrying equal weight as the law in the minds of the Pharisees. What the disciples were being accused of was reaping the corn and threshing it with their hands. VINCENT comments, 'The offence given the Pharisees was the preparation of food on the Sabbath'.⁶ COLE adds, 'it is very noticeable that they were not able to bring anything against Jesus personally, not even the most trivial charge of breach of the ceremonial law'.⁷

The Pharisees pressed their case. On the significance of the word 'said', HIEBERT states it 'is in the imperfect tense; they continued to press their objection'. Whilst the Pharisees thought the disciples guilty, they desired to hold the Lord responsible for the actions of His followers.

The Lord again poses a question that gets to the heart of the problem. Was their interpretation of the law of God appropriate and justified? Whilst the Lord could have mentioned the beast that had fallen into a pit that could be got out on the Sabbath without breaking Sabbath regulation, He chose to deal with the case of David. The beast in the pit could be rescued in order to preserve its life. David went into the temple and asked for the shewbread and did so to preserve life. The Lord's words were, 'when he had need and was an hungered', v. 25. The compassion and care of David for his followers was emphasized. However, the law that David broke was not pertaining to the Sabbath. It was a serious violation of that which was set aside as holy and for the priests alone. What was David's punishment? On this, scripture is silent.

We might note that the Lord takes the Pharisees up on their own charge. They had accused the disciples of that 'which is not lawful', v. 24. The Lord says of David that he 'did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat', v. 26. The present case raised by the Pharisees was an interpretation of the law. The other was a definite violation of the scriptural law. How much more serious was David's case!



There is a significant parallel in the example that the Lord uses. The eating of the shewbread by David and his followers was brought about because he was being hunted by Saul. Saul had vowed to kill David and the rejected king sought sustenance from the House of God. The Lord was the rejected King in the midst of the people and the Pharisees were, in their turn, planning His death.

It is sad to see that what God had provided for the rest and blessing of men had been turned, by the Pharisees and other religious leaders, into something that was a burden. The law had provided evidence of the humanitarian and compassionate grounds upon which the law of the Sabbath could be legitimately broken. A strict, legalistic interpretation was in total opposition to this principle, 'the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath', v. 27. But more than this! The Lord teaches that the interpretation of what is and what is not lawful on the Sabbath is not the prerogative of the Pharisees and scribes but of the Lord Himself, 'the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath', v. 28. WUEST comments, 'The word [also or] "even" points to the Sabbath as so inviolable in the

eyes of these formalists who strained out a gnat and swallowed a camel'.⁸

Sadly, the scourge of legalism did not cease with the Lord's death and resurrection. Believers can add to the scriptures today. It may be for what are claimed to be good reasons, but taking an unflinching stand on principles that are not underpinned by scripture is a dangerous and potentially destructive approach. Indeed, such are not often biblical principles. They are little more than personal preferences and preserving them becomes a burden to the saints. May the Lord enable us to preserve biblical principles but also seek the welfare and blessing of His people.

Endnotes

- 1 Other translations give this sentence as: 'The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting', NKJV, JND. That an actual fast was taking place is also indicated by the RV and ESV.
- 2 See COLE, *op. cit.*, page 71, *et al* on this point.
- 3 W. WIERSBE, *Be diligent: Mark*, David C. Cook, Logos software resource.
- 4 See JOHN D. GRASSMICK, *op. cit.*
- 5 D. E. HIEBERT, *op. cit.*, pg. 78.
- 6 M. R. VINCENT, *op. cit.*
- 7 A. COLE, *op. cit.*, pg. 72.
- 8 K. WUEST, *op. cit.*, pg. 61.

What does the Bible tell us about the future?

The Church and the Millennium Part 6

By **IAN JACKSON** Eastbourne, England

The Millennium

The millennium, the one thousand year period of Christ's manifested reign, is described in the New Testament as:

'the regeneration'; descriptive of a new state of things in which everything shall be brought into conformity with His will, Matt. 19. 28;

'the times of restitution of all things', in which everything which has broken down in man's hand will be restored in Christ's hand, into which the Father has given all things, Acts 3. 21; John 13. 3;

'the dispensation of the fulness of times', which will be the last of the series of 'times' which have constituted human history and in which everything will be under one head, even Christ, Eph. 1. 10;

'the reconciliation of all things' in which everything in heaven and earth (though not things under the earth) will be reconciled unto Himself, Col. 1. 20;

'the world [aion] to come' which stands in contrast to 'this present evil world' [aion], Heb. 2. 5; Gal. 1. 4.

The age to come has been put in subjection to man, rather than angels, Heb. 2. 5. Angels shall then be servants who will carry out the righteous judgements of the saints, 1 Cor. 6. 3. The administration of that millennial age is pre-eminently in the hand of Christ, the heir of all things, Heb. 1. 2, but it is also in the hand of saints, as linked with Him. At this present time, in anticipation of the exercise of His dominion in the age to

come, when all things will be seen to be under His feet, He is now crowned with glory and honour, 2. 9.

In Revelation chapter 20 verse 4, three companies of people are seen connected with the heavenly side of that kingdom, who 'reigned with Christ a thousand years'.

- There are those on thrones, the twenty-four elders, who are seen now not so much in relation to worship in heaven, as in Revelation chapter 4, but in relation to the administration of the earth.
- A second company consists of saints who, in the first half of the tribulation period, were beheaded for the word of God and for the testimony which they held as to the coming of Jesus, Rev. 6. 9-11.
- The third company consists of saints who, in the second half of the tribulation, do not bow to the beast or receive his mark, 13. 15-17, refusing to share in either his political or religious interests.

The church is included in the first of these companies. When our Lord is revealed from heaven, 'he shall come to be glorified in his saints', 2 Thess. 1. 10, and 'admired in all them that believe'. The church shall then reign over the earth with Christ, from a heavenly location. Saints of this church age 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God', Rom. 5. 2, knowing that He is 'bringing many sons unto glory', Heb. 2. 10. These references to 'glory' are not to be limited to heaven; they speak of all that we shall share with Christ in the glory of His manifested

kingdom. Our Saviour spoke of this when He said, 'And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one', John 17. 22. In a distinct manner, the church shall share in the manifested glory of Christ.

In Revelation, there is an unbroken chronology from chapter 19 verse 1 to chapter 21 verse 8. This covers the marriage of the Lamb, the coming again of Christ as the warrior king, the binding of Satan, the millennial reign, the final rebellion of Gog and Magog, the great white throne and the eternal state. Then, from chapter 21 verse 9 to chapter 22 verse 5, John describes the character of the church in the period of the millennial kingdom.

Under the figure of a city, which in scripture represents not only a system of social life but also the activity of government, John describes the bride of the Lamb in governmental and millennial blessing. The angel said to him, 'I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife' and shewed him 'that great city, the holy Jerusalem', Rev. 21. 9, 10. It seems clear, therefore, that the city is not to be thought of as literal but in this book of signs, it is that which declares the character of the church at that time.

In Revelation chapter 21, the city is twice seen by John coming down from heaven; as to its sphere, and from God, as to its source. It is in contrast to mystery Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. The origins of that city are in man, Gen. 11. 1-9, its sphere is the earth and it is developed in the latter days by Satan. In verse 2, 'the holy city, new Jerusalem' comes down 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' following the judgement of the Great White Throne; this is connected with eternity. In verse 10, however, the bride, the Lamb's wife, is seen as 'that great city, the holy Jerusalem' coming down after the Judgement Seat of Christ. This is connected with the millennium. It has often been pointed out that she is called the Lamb's 'wife' at the beginning of the millennium but His 'bride' a thousand years later. Nuptial joy never diminishes for the Lamb and His bride.

The city has the throne of God and of the Lamb, 22. 1. It is one throne, symbolic of the public, millennial government of God, of which this whole passage speaks. The church is associated with God in the government of the millennial world. God, supreme, reigns in might and majesty and the Lamb in grace and meekness administers the power and authority of the throne.

The number 'twelve' is a number closely connected in scripture to the thought of administration and is prominent in connection with the city. It has **twelve gates**, signifying the perfection of administration on earth. **Twelve angels** are at the gates, servants waiting to do the bidding of the saints in their administration of the world. On the gates are the names of the **twelve tribes of Israel** who, in the millennium, will be judged by the **twelve apostles of the Lamb**, Matt. 19. 28, whose names are inscribed in the **twelve foundations**, which are **twelve pearls**. Its equal length, breadth and depth is **twelve thousand furlongs**, so that the city is foursquare. From whatever angle you look at it it is perfect and complete, signifying the fact of the unity, perfection and symmetry of the church in glory. The tree of life 'bare **twelve fruits**', yielding her fruit every month.

That throne upholds and strengthens the city and from it proceeds a river of fullness of life and gladness. This river of blessing is always flowing through the heavenly city and, as with all else there, it is bright as beautiful crystal. There will be no more curse. Biblical history has seen many curses, but in the heavenly city, the church, there will be not be any curses, nor the ill effects that accompany them. His servants shall perfectly serve Him. They shall see His once-marred face and be marked as belonging to Him by having His name in their foreheads.

The millennium provides the opportunity for God to display His glory publicly to the world. The city, the church, has the glory of God, v. 21. 11, and radiates it to all the world. This is not the essential glory of God, which no man can look upon and live, but is that glory which He is able to

share. Her 'light', or her 'shining' was 'like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal', v. 11. The jasper stone is mentioned three times in connection with the city, in verses 11, 18 and 19. Perhaps the jasper and the other precious stones, mentioned in connection with the foundations speak of the communicable glory of God known by the church.

The city has no temple, v. 22, because the 'Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it'. A temple in a city has always implied that some would be nearer than others to God but this is not so in the holy city. The Lord God Almighty, in His unrivalled greatness, has acted and ruled throughout history, working all things according to the counsel of His own will; He is now revealed in glory, by the Lamb, equally in every part of the huge city of gold. It is a temple city in which all shall serve in the immediate presence of God and His glory.

The light of the sun and the moon is not required because of the glory of God. He is the source of the city's light, whilst the Lamb is the lamp of divine glory, diffusing that light through every part of it. Darkness is dispelled, for there is 'no night there',

v. 25. Remarkably, the church will be the medium of that light to the world. The city shall be one great body of glory and light, having glory that shall never fade and light that shall never grow dim. The nations of the saved will walk in its light, and kings and nations will bring their glory and honour to it, vv. 24, 26. The rule of the heavens is, therefore, acknowledged in that day.

There is no defilement in that city, nor anything that makes either an abomination or a lie, v. 27. Only those are there whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. They shall reign unto the ages of the ages, for so long as Christ is on the throne. The millennial kingdom is set up on earth to manifest the fulfilment of the counsels of God, but His reign over all creatures, being eternal in its character and independent of change, shall never cease.

'And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me', John 17. 22, 23.



The Twelve Tribes of Israel

GAD

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

Regrettable contention

In the order of birth that we have been following from Genesis chapters 29 and 30, the next son after Naphtali is Gad. 'When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife', Gen. 30. 9. The last time we thought about Leah's children, she was praising God. It seems that it didn't take much for that joy to fade. She will not mention God again until He graciously provides Issachar some time later.

Just how long it took for her to take this drastic course of action we cannot be certain. In all probability she wouldn't have waited long. Although the list in Genesis chapters 29 and 30 appears to be following a steady sequence, there is room in the text for thinking that the various pregnancies and births may have coincided. Some readers will be aware that several commentators hold to this view.¹ The expressions regarding 'when' Rachel and Leah became aware of their barrenness opens up this possibility. This would also explain how despite Leah's period of barrenness, thirteen children were born to Jacob in seven years, including Dinah. The point to ponder is whether the order of names is chronological, or more designed to highlight the intense struggle between the two matriarchs. It should never cease to amaze us that God graciously worked amidst it all to work His purposes out.

Remarkable capability

As you scan scripture to survey the history of the tribe of Gad, one of the things that particularly marks them out is capability in warfare. Moses refers to the tribe as a crouching lion, '[tearing] the arm with the crown of the head', Deut. 33. 20. He also implies that they may have taken a leading role in battles, 33.

21; cp. Num. 32. 29; Josh. 4. 12. The Chronicler speaks of eleven Gadite warriors who dug in with David when he was on the run from Saul. They are described as 'men of might', 'men of war', having the 'faces of lions . . . swift as the roes upon the mountains', 1 Chr. 12. 8-15. Today, we would call them special forces, highly capable individuals prepared for the most challenging assignments. Scripture has left these, and other similar accounts, on record and we do well just to ponder the harsh realities of battle expected of the people of God. Lives were on the line in order to work out His purposes. What about you and I? Whether it is the battle for truth, 2 Tim. 2. 3, the battle for souls, 2 Cor. 5. 20, or the battle for devotion, Gal. 5. 17, what do we really know of these things? How much are we contending for them?



Inevitable conflict

We noted when looking at Reuben that his tribe settled east of the river Jordan. Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh joined him and Gad's western border ran the length of the Jordan. These were lush plains, ideal pasture grounds for the tribes' flocks and herds. Ideal for other peoples as well; ideal for the Ammonites who occupied the territory east of Gad. Sure enough, the Ammonites spent eighteen years relentlessly oppressing the tribes in the Gilead region, cp. Deut. 3. 12, 13, reaching and crossing the plains of Jordan, Judg. 10. 7-9. Yet they were only able to do so because God permitted it on account of the wickedness of His people. We are reminded that God's people are never truly vulnerable when walking in His will. But the flesh is always hungry for territory; there is an inevitable battle going on for our devotion and we must strive to remain single-hearted towards our God.

Favourable conclusion

Within Gadite territory, an important place was fortified under Jeroboam's reign. It was Penuel, where Jacob had prevailed with God. Jacob clearly saw a little of himself in Gad, for his closing words to his son were of his tribe being overcome, 'but he [Gad] shall overcome at the last', Gen. 49. 19. Despite Gad's exploits in the land, they ultimately abandoned the one who fought for them. They fell with their trans-Jordanian comrades when Assyria rose to power. They were truly overcome and they have yet to recover. There is a nod to them in New Testament times, with the city of Gadara, in what would have been Gadite territory. But today, their territory falls under the Kingdom of Jordan. Israel may contend for the territory, but it will take God to see to it that Gad, like all Israel, shall finally prevail. Praise God that though we are sometimes overcome, though we do sometimes fall, we will ultimately, by God's grace, overcome at the last.

Endnote

- 1 For instance, see C. F. KEIL and F. DELITZSCH, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*.

An overview of Nehemiah

By **MALCOLM DAVIS** Leeds, England

Introduction

The Book of Nehemiah is named after its main character and its opening words. In Old Testament canonical lists, it has been classified as a historical book. It is the natural sequel to the Book of Ezra. In both Hebrew and Greek Bibles of the earliest centuries, Ezra and Nehemiah were treated as one book. Their separation into two books can be traced back to the Latin Vulgate Bibles.

Purpose of the book

The Book of Nehemiah continues the theme of the preceding Book of Ezra, namely, the historical account of how the Lord sovereignly accomplished the gradual restoration of a remnant of Jews to their Promised Land, after their seventy years of exile in Babylon. In this restoration there were three stages altogether. First, in 536 BC Zerubbabel led a contingent of nearly 50,000 returnees, who rebuilt the temple at Jerusalem. Then, in 458 BC Ezra led back a much smaller group of 2,000 Jews to reinstruct the remnant in the commandments of the law of the Lord, and to regulate their lives according to it. Now, thirdly, in 445 BC, the Lord moved the Persian king, Artaxerxes I, to allow Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem with a further small group of exiles. This was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, which had been almost totally destroyed by their surrounding enemies, and to reinstruct the returnees in spiritual and moral matters. The account of the reconstruction of the city, and the restoration of the Jews' spiritual life is, as in the Book of Ezra, a very chequered one, but one that was eventually marked by a measure of success and the Lord's blessing on His people. The book demonstrates how the Lord raised up and used mainly one man to accomplish His purpose in the return of the exiles, although during part of the process of restoration Ezra again became involved in teaching the word of the Lord to the people.

Analysis of the book

Chapters 1-2: The events which led to Nehemiah's appointment as Governor of Judah, and his initial survey of the damaged walls of Jerusalem, 445 BC.

Chapter 1: Nehemiah learns about the conditions of the Jews in Jerusalem, and then prays for the city.

Chapter 2: Nehemiah obtains permission from Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem, then surveys the damaged walls privately at night.

Chapters 3-7: The rebuilding of the walls is finished in fifty-two days.

Chapter 3: List of people who rebuilt the walls.

Chapter 4: Opposition encountered, Nehemiah's prayer, and the rebuilding continues.

Chapter 5: The problem of debt resolved.

Chapter 6: More opposition encountered, but the wall is finished.

Chapter 7: List of all returnees with Zerubbabel.

Chapters 8-13: The reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, 444-432 BC.

Chapter 8: Ezra reads and explains the law of God, then the Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated.

Chapter 9: Confession and covenant made by the priests and Levites.

Chapter 10: List of those who sealed the covenant.

Chapters 11-12: List of priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel, followed by the dedication of the walls.

Chapter 13: The reforms of Nehemiah, including the expulsion of foreigners from the temple, the renewing of support for the Levites, the enforcement of Sabbath-keeping, and the annulling of mixed marriages.

Dates and historical setting of the book

445 BC Artaxerxes I permits Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem as Governor of Judah to rebuild the city walls.

444 BC The reforms of Ezra.

432 BC The reforms of Nehemiah after his return from a period away from Jerusalem in Babylon.

All these events are recorded in Nehemiah, which is a primary historical document for them.

The Book of Nehemiah records the third return of Jewish exiles from Babylon to the Promised Land, that is, after both Zerubbabel and Ezra. Artaxerxes I's royal edict was issued in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of that king, see chapter 2 verse 1. It authorized Nehemiah to come to Jerusalem for the first time to repair the damage which the city had sustained. This has been demonstrated to be 14th March, 445 BC. Nehemiah's second coming to Jerusalem, after his later brief visit to Babylon, was 'in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes', or about twelve or thirteen years later than this, see chapter 13 verse 6. This was 432 BC. Therefore, Nehemiah could not have written this book before about 430 BC, but probably soon after then, since the unhappy events of chapter 13 were evidently still fresh in his mind when he wrote the record of them. Thus, this book is the latest of the historical books in the Old Testament. Esther, which follows it canonically, is to be dated in the reign of Ahasuerus, otherwise known as Xerxes I, who ruled the Persian Empire before the time of Nehemiah, but after the time of Zerubbabel. Esther is to be dated between the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The latest prophetic book in the Old Testament, Malachi, was probably written about the time of Nehemiah's reforms, or a little later, because it reflects conditions among the returned remnant, very similar to those which Nehemiah found in Jerusalem when he returned from his visit to Babylon.

Author

Most commentators agree that Nehemiah himself was the author of the book that bears his name, since much of it is autobiographical, being

CHARTING THE SCRIPTURES

NEHEMIAH

by Jonathan Black

Revivals

(1) UNDER ZERUBBABEL
THE ALTAR & FOUNDATION

(2) UNDER HAGGAI & ZECHARIAH
BUILDING RESUMED & FINISHED

(3) UNDER EZRA
REVIVAL OF THE LAW/ HOLINESS

REV



DANIEL

Message - Reconciliation
Confession of one man
on behalf of the nation

ESTHER

Message - Reversal
Commitment of one woman
from the nation

EZRA

Message - Revival
Construction of the altar and
revival of the nation

ZECHARIAH

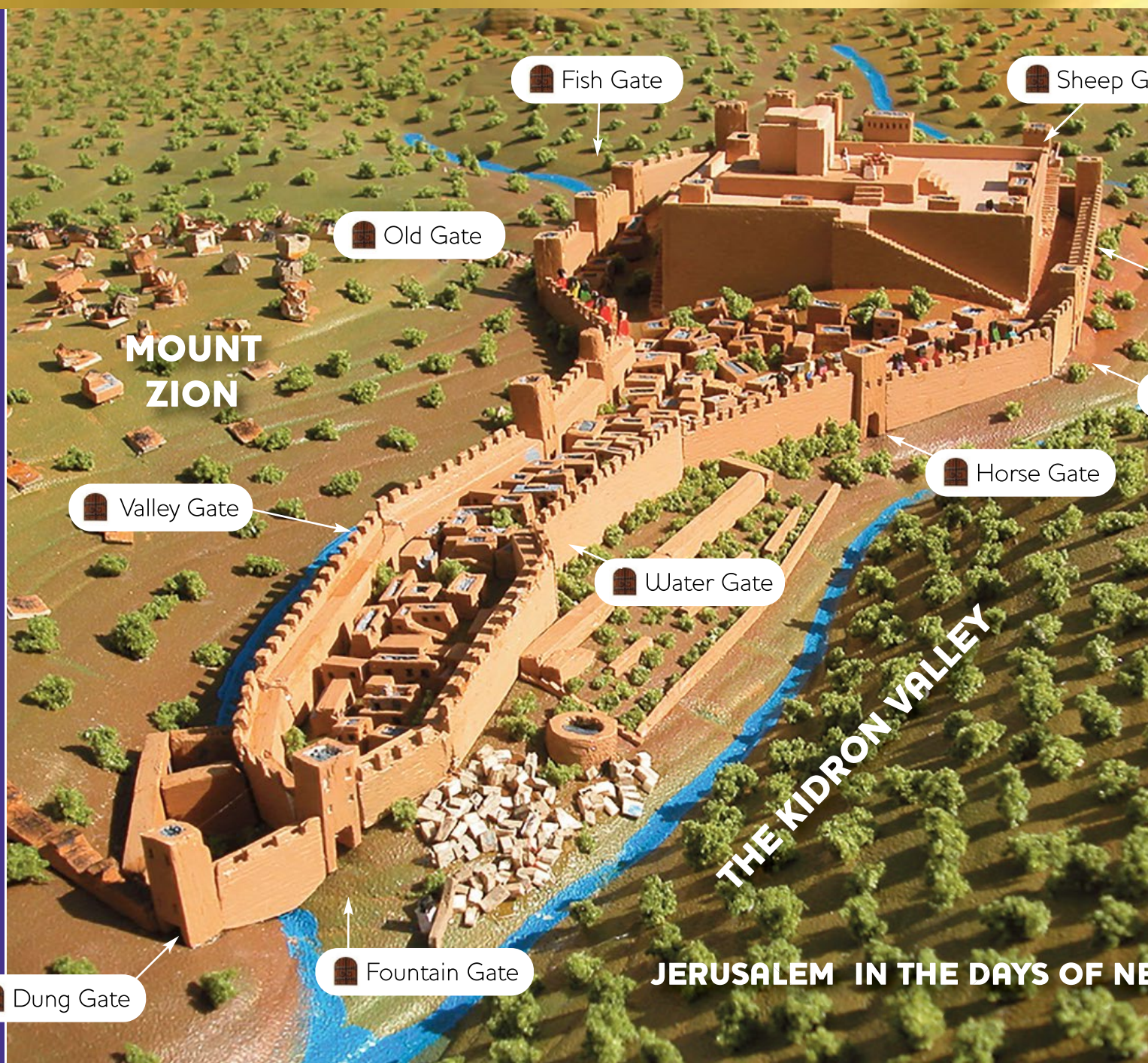
Message - Revelation
A communication of the
future of the nation

HAGGAI

Message - Rebuking
Consider the ways
of the nation

A SON 1.1 | A SERVANT 1.11 | A SURVEYOR 2.13 | A SOLDIER 4.16 | A BUILD

The book of Ezra



'For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates;

Key words: Work, repair, build, walls, gates, prayer **Writer** Nehemiah

(4) UNDER NEHEMIAH
FESTIVAL OF WALLS, GATES & WORD 'the people had a mind to work', Neh. 4. 6

ARTAXERXES I | **XERXES II**
Third return under Nehemiah 444 BC **3** Events in book of Neh. (445 - 425 BC)
450 425 400

Nehemiah
Rebuilding walls - Renewing worship

MALACHI
Message - Responsibility
Contempt for the sins of the
nation chosen by God

DER 4. 23 | A GOVERNOR 5. 14



ate
Inspection Gate



East Gate

Nehemiah - 'consolation of Jehovah'

Nehemiah Historically

Nehemiah closes the gate on Old Testament history. A contemporary of Malachi, it is followed by 400 years of silence.

Nehemiah Prophetically

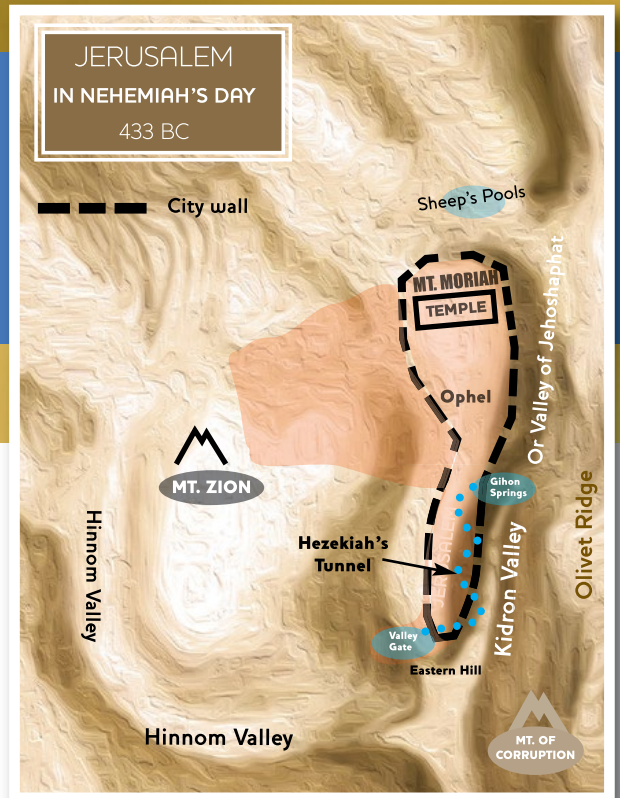
Nehemiah opens the gate of Daniels 70th week prophecy, starting with Artaxerxes' command to rebuild the city, 2. 6.

Nehemiah Archeologically

Sanballat, Johanan and Nehemiah are all mentioned in the Elephantine papyri found in Egypt relating to those Jews who ran from Chaldeans to Egypt.

Nehemiah Spiritually

Nehemiah is an example of what God can do when people have a mind to work according to the word of God and is a lesson on leadership and how to deal with opposition.



'the Lord loveth the gates of Zion!' Ps. 87. 2



**OPPOSITION
TO THE WORK OF GOD**

Zerubbabel
#Rehum

Haggai / Zech
#Tatnai and co.

Ezra
#Jonathan & Jahaziah

Nehemiah
#Sanballat & Tobiah

Spiritual lessons from the gates

The Sheep gate – Starting at the altar

The Fish gate – Sustaining the appetite

The Old gate – Seeking the old paths

The Valley gate – Sight of recovery

The Dung gate – Sorting our rubbish

The Fountain gate – Spirit of renewal

The Water gate – Scriptural refreshing

The Horse gate – Strength and exaltation

The East gate – Saviour's return

The Inspection gate – Saints review

Ch 1-6 Rebuilding the ruined city
security, walls and gates

Ch 1 – His supplication for the people

Ch 2 – His survey of the city walls

Ch 3 – The strengthening of the walls and gates

Ch 4 – Their stand against opposition from without

Ch 5 – The shake up of the people from within

Ch 6 – The subtilty of the enemy must be withstood

Ch 7-13 Restoring returned citizens
service, worship and government

Ch 7 – The showing of the register by genealogy

Ch 8 – The sense of the scriptures proclaimed

Ch 9 – The sealing of a covenant with prayer

Ch 10 – The service of the house is priority

Ch 11 – The settlement of the people

Ch 12 – The sanctification of the wall

Ch 13 – The separation of the people

he hath blessed thy children within thee', Ps. 147. 13

written in the first person, see chapters 1 to 7, and chapter 12 verse 27 to chapter 13 verse 31. The intervening part of the book, which is written in the third person and largely concerns Ezra, could easily have been incorporated into the record by Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's name means 'the comfort of the Lord', while his father's name, Hachaliah, means 'the darkness of the Lord'. Certainly, Nehemiah's book tells how the Lord ministered comfort through him to his people, the Jews, following the long dark night of discipline that they had endured during their seventy years of exile in Babylon. Judging from the name which his parents gave him, perhaps we may gather that Nehemiah was brought up in a godly home. Certainly, at the beginning of the book, we find him enjoying a very favoured and responsible position in the king's court, as the latter's cupbearer. His circumstances in exile were comparatively comfortable. But Nehemiah was a true believer whose heart was really with his afflicted brethren in his home city of Jerusalem. He was a man of God, filled with the Spirit of God for the task which he most desired to accomplish. Therefore, when king Artaxerxes I gave him the opportunity to express his deepest desire for his fellow-countrymen, he took it with both hands, in complete dependence on God for the ability to do it. He was permitted to relinquish his role as the king's cupbearer for a time, in order to become the Governor of Judah and oversee the reconstruction of Jerusalem with his people's help.

At every stage of the work, he turned to his God in prayer, which punctuates the whole book. He had a very personal knowledge and appreciation of the Lord. He was not afraid of hard work and was an inspiring leader of his workforce. When confronted with opposition, whether from his enemies or his fellow-Jews, he stood courageously, firm and immovable from his task until it was completed. He grieved deeply over the sins of his people and their distresses. His fear of God saved him from the fear of man. In his dealings with his countrymen he was transparently honest, just and fair, an exemplary leader of men. He was committed to enforcing the

commandments of scripture, cost what it may, and showed no partiality towards those who were breaking the law of God and required disciplining. His ability to organize the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem in fifty-two days was remarkable. Finally, it is noticeable that he gave all glory to God for the success that he achieved. A truly remarkable servant of God, whom we should emulate today!

The book's message for today

If the primary message of the book of Ezra is that of the restoration of the people of God from the results of their sinful ways and consequent divine discipline, then the primary lesson of the book is the need to re-establish their shattered testimony before the world around and reconstruct their spiritual life of worship and service. The reconstruction of Jerusalem's protecting wall was absolutely necessary to separate the Lord's people from the heathen nations around them, and their unhelpful influences. Only after this line of separation had been rebuilt could the Lord's people once again worship Him acceptably and serve Him effectively.

A further lesson of the book is that the Lord Himself will sovereignly raise up suitable leaders to assist their fellow-saints in this work of reconstruction. Without such leaders, believers will tend to revert to their old sinful ways, which brought them into such distress and disgrace even before the world.

Every saint today should seek to emulate the characteristics of Nehemiah himself. All of us need to live our lives in the atmosphere of constant prayer and dependence on the Lord's help and guidance day by day. Unlike Old Testament saints, Christians now have the Holy Spirit of God living permanently within them. Only He can enable us to become exemplary workers for our God, like Nehemiah in his day. May we yield our lives to Him in consecrated service every day of our witness here on earth!

[Extracted from *Coming Back from Exile* – Volume 7 of the Old Testament Overview series published by *Precious Seed Publications*]



Chairman's Notes

In the November 2019 notes, I commented on the significant changes that had taken place in the year, some more noteworthy than others! Perhaps, as we face 2020, we should do so with the expectation that 'he that shall come will come, and will not tarry', Heb. 10. 37. What a glorious prospect!

As the editor has indicated, 2020 is the 75th Anniversary of the launch of the magazine in September 1945. As we enter that seventy-fifth year, we welcome a new member to the Trust. Andrew Dutton, of the New Costessey assembly in Norwich, Norfolk, should be no stranger to readers of YPS in particular. With us all, I am sure he would value your prayer support as he commences the work.

We have also been asked to draw the attention of our North American readers to a change of address. Those who wish to support the work of the magazines and publications by contributing through the Truth and Tidings Gospel Trust facility should now contact them at:

Precious Seed International
c/o Truth & Tidings Gospel Trust
USA
37177 White Tail Court
Farmington Hills
MI 48335

This replaces the previous address.

JOHN BENNETT
Chairman and General Editor

What is God's plan for my life?

By **SAM TAUFEEK** Toronto, Canada

Hebrews chapter 11 is known as the chapter of faith. The word 'faith' appears thirty-two times throughout the book of Hebrews, and twenty-four of those occasions are in chapter 11. In brief, the passage outlines three aspects of faith: its foundation; its decisions; and its results. While we know that our spiritual foundation is our faith in God and His promises, this faith should dictate our decisions, which, in turn, will determine results.

By faith, Abraham decided to leave his home with no predetermined destination, leading to many generations being blessed by God. Moses' faith directed his decision to leave Egypt, leading to the furtherance of God's great plan and the freedom of a nation. Through faith, Rahab decided to receive the Israelite spies, sparing both her and her family from certain death.

From an outside perspective, these decisions were not reasonable. In fact, they would have been seen as downright foolish. The three men of Judah decided it was better to go into a furnace than disobey God. Daniel decided that the lion's den was better than his safe government job.

In life there are big decisions and small decisions but I don't believe there are unimportant decisions. I had to make a big decision when I decided to leave the Middle East, risking the life of myself and my wife; however, my daily decisions in my peaceful new home country may not be less weighty.

David wrote, 'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom', Ps. 90. 12. When we number our days, we discover that even the longest life is quite short when compared to the span of history; however, even extremely short lives have eternal impacts. Thus, all decisions are important since they will impact upon the numbered days that were given to us by God.

How, then, can I know the plan of God so that I can make the right decisions, decisions that will bring glory to our Saviour? Romans chapter 12 is very relevant and useful when handling this difficult topic.

The will of God is 'good, and acceptable, and perfect', v. 2, but we each need to 'prove' that personally, that is, test it by experience. Paul can't prove for me, and I can't prove for you. It has to be a personal experience. This raises the question as to how we prove the will of God for ourselves.

The passage suggests the first step: 'present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God', v. 1. Most of the choices we are going to make in our lives can be influenced by either the flesh or the Spirit. We cannot please God if we are still living for this world. The flesh can be a great hindrance against knowing and obeying the will of God. Our wisdom in Christ is totally different from the wisdom of this world, Rom. 8. 9-13.

The second step is to think about our 'reasonable service', v. 1. Is the Lord Jesus Christ and His glorious work at the centre of our thinking, as this will affect all of our service? It is the only way that such service can be acceptable to God, despite how unreasonable such decisions may seem to those around us.

The third step flows from the

previous one – 'be not conformed to this world', v. 2. The world's standard view is that all service for God is ludicrous, because the people of the world go by sight and sense; the believer should go by faith and the Spirit. I have no doubt that if Abraham had shared with those around him his desire to leave his place and head towards an unknown destination, he would have been ridiculed.

Similarly, the fourth step is, 'be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind', v. 2. Since the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2. 14, our minds need to be renewed by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. We need the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened by the word of God before we can prove and understand the will of God. For example, naturally, it is considered wise to avoid decisions and choices that would lead to pain and suffering; however, in the Christian life, suffering does not mean a bad decision was made. Suffering may be part of the plan of God to make us perfect, stablished, strengthened and settled, 1 Pet. 5. 10.

If we want a life that is pleasing to God, it is important to understand His big plan for us: to be conformed to the image of His Son, Rom. 8. 29. We should not rush into decision-making, but take time to be led by the Lord. We should be ready to happily accept any redirection or correction to our path whilst seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, Matt. 6. 33.



'We are leaving'

ANON

Editor's Note: The subject matter of this article is not an easy one; however, in the reflections of those who have personal experience of reaching out with a spiritual care to help in this area, there is much for us to consider and learn. I am sure that it will be understood by our readership why this article is anonymous. Much of the work of a shepherd in such circumstances must be done quietly and anonymously. We do pray that as this article is read, and the very honest thoughts and feelings are shared, there will not only be an increased awareness of such difficult issues, but a deepening exercise amongst believers to prayerfully support the work of true shepherds among the Lord's people.

This article is submitted with the prayerful desire that it may help and encourage parents who have experienced, or who will experience, a situation similar to that which follows. Whilst trying to give as clear a picture as possible, details are deliberately vague so as to preserve the anonymity of the family as much as is possible.

My wife and I had the inestimable privilege of being brought up by parents who loved the Lord, who taught us the scriptures and who were in assembly fellowship. When we married, we resolved that if we should be entrusted with children of our own we would follow the example we had been set by our parents. After some years the Lord graciously blessed us with children and, despite being conscious that we did not make the perfect parents, we sought to bring them up in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord'. Equally, we felt that it was important that we invested time and effort in giving them a balanced upbringing so that they would mature into socially adept people who could relate to their peers as well as those of an older age group.

They, like Timothy, were taught the holy scriptures from their infancy and each made a profession of salvation before they had reached secondary school age. Each day

we had our family Bible time and, in addition, the children did their own Bible study using an excellent course designed for those of their age group. Thankfully, it was never a problem to get them to attend the various meetings of the assembly, not only in our hall but those in neighbouring assemblies also. A two-hour conference session can be a marathon stint for children so we would make a point of dropping into a favourite eating place on the way home, or giving them some other treat as a reward for their endeavours.

Our home was a place of laughter and fun, and we did all that we could to maintain a close bond with the children. Although life was busy, and the pressures of bringing up a family presented its fair share of challenges, we had so much cause to be thankful for the way things were progressing. However, at different times and in different ways the world began to exert its influence and my wife and I observed a noticeable drop in the interest our family were taking in spiritual things. Their willingness to attend meetings slowly but surely declined, and their own Bible studies dropped off. Eventually, I concluded that the family Bible time was counter-productive and any insistence that it continued was only creating a measure of

resentment rather than stimulating spiritual vitality.

I recall clearly the moment when one of the children told me that they no longer wished to go to any of the assembly meetings. When challenged as to the reason for this decision I was told that they wanted to see what the world had to offer. Despite this, they assured me that their salvation was not in doubt; they were certain they were saved. The other children continued to come with us to the assembly for a few more years but, in the process of time, each of them decided to leave. None of them had ever been in fellowship so it was not a case of leaving the assembly but rather a discontinuation of attending the meetings.

To our great sadness we watched the family move further from the Lord, and get more involved in the pleasures of the world. All our cherished hopes of being a family united in the joys of the Lord evaporated, and I was left to reflect on the way I had brought them up. Various questions and regrets entered my mind. Had I been too restrictive or too strict? Had I insisted on an orthodox conformity to certain preferences about which I could have been more tolerant? Just where did it go wrong? I knew that each had made their own decisions and, as adults, they were now responsible for their lifestyle choices, but I could not help questioning my failures as a father. More than once I have wished I could wind the clock back and just do some things differently.

Never once did we feel that taking them to meetings, having the daily Bible time at home, supporting other assemblies, and encouraging them to do their own Bible study was unbalanced or unreasonable. I had no regrets concerning the amount of time I spent with the family as they were growing up, for I was not an absent dad. My wife and I spent countless hours playing with the children, going to the beach, having family picnics, meeting up with friends and having a day in the countryside, etc. Yet, despite our

best efforts, it all seemed to be in vain; spiritually they were nowhere.

Many of our friends had the joy of seeing their own children getting baptized and coming into assembly fellowship. Be assured, we were genuinely pleased for them, but it only added to my sense of failure and frustration. It is at those low moments of doubt and self-appraisal that resentment can creep in. Seeing your family give up, or, at best, hold lightly to the values that you laboured to instil in each can be so disheartening, and love can give way to hardness. The danger I was conscious of was that of distancing myself from the children. On a spiritual level we had less and less in common, and it would have been relatively easy to let them pursue their interests and for me to focus solely on the assembly and other aspects of the Lord's work.

Mercifully, the Lord gave my wife and I the grace to help us through the times of doubt, resentment and sadness. We were both convinced that it was vital that we continued to treat the children with love, and to keep the bond of friendship between them and us from being undermined in any way. Whilst they remained in our home, there were standards about which we were not prepared to compromise, yet we wanted them to be assured that our relationship and affection for them was not going to be jeopardized by the spiritual breach that now existed.

At this point it is necessary for me to highlight that each of the family still insisted that they were saved and never at any time did they show disrespect or contempt for those things we had taught them. In fact, they appreciated the way they had been brought up, and we shall be forever thankful to the Lord for this. Even though they had no desire to attend any meetings, they were always happy to chat to anyone from the assembly if they met them in the home or outside somewhere.

Burdened about their spiritual welfare my wife and I prayed earnestly for the Lord to bring

about either a work of salvation or restoration in each of the lives of the children. Friends of ours also shared this concern, and their prayers for the family were a great encouragement. Very recently, I met an old brother living in another part of the country and he said to me that he prays for our family every day. I was shocked, for I cannot recall ever having a private conversation with him, nor did I know him that well.

Today the family are grown up, married and have children of their own. Bit by bit the Lord has been working in the lives of each of our children, even though it has not been an easy path for them. We do not want to elaborate on details but it is a joy to report that there have been significant changes in the attitude, behaviour and spiritual condition of each. The word of God is read in their homes, and they teach it to their children. We can talk freely with each of them about the things of the Lord and they will contact us asking for prayer about various matters as well as assuring us of their prayers on our behalf. They are not all in an assembly but each of them are part of a Christian fellowship in the various localities where they live.

I want to close by referring to a few things that many readers may not be able to relate to nor accept. However, if you have not experienced the sadness of seeing your family go away from the Lord it is understandable that you may find the following comments strange, but please bear with me.

If I could have chosen in advance a pathway for my family, it would not have been the one they have trodden. However, this has not only been a 'learning curve' for them but for my wife and I also – me in particular. Had it been that each of the family had got saved, baptized, joined an assembly and lived a life of devotion to the Lord, there is a real possibility that I may have taken some credit for that. I might have thought that because I brought up the family in the right way their spiritual success was down to me

and I may well have been proud of what I had done.

If our children had always been in assembly fellowship, there is a real possibility that I may have had a wrong attitude towards those who do not share my convictions relative to church truth. My awareness of Christians who meet in various different churches would have been very limited and my opinion of them would have been prejudiced by ignorance. I am so thankful to the Lord for those who have supported and prayed for my family and shown much Christian grace, even though there would be some aspects of doctrine about which we might have little in common.

If our family had not lived as they have, we would not be able to empathize with others who have had similar, or far worse, challenges and disappointments. The Lord has had to soften our hearts and has given us some sense of care for others whose children are away from Him in the 'far country'.



1 Thessalonians Chapter 2

The Marks of a True Messenger

By **PETER DAVIES** Swansea, Wales

Introduction

The church in Thessalonica was a model church, so blessed in its worship and witness – a light from God in a dark place. They were a company of believers whose lives had been revolutionized by the power of God; seen, not only in their conversion, but also in their continuance. A people of vision and vitality, with a faith so positive, love so practical and hope so real. What a wonderful fellowship they shared together, the kind of fellowship the Lord would have us enjoy and share. When we think of a church like this, we must, of course, ask ourselves, how did such a work as this begin? Who sowed the seed and laid the foundation? What was the secret of their success? The answers are found in this chapter and we would do well to take note and follow the example given. We know that it was teamwork, for it was Paul and Silas and their helpers, Timothy being one of them. And when Paul is writing here, he is not just writing of himself, but he includes his fellow workers. Note the references to 'us' and 'we'. A team evidently of one mind and one heart, and now we are going to see that mind expressed, that heart revealed. What did they think, how did they feel, when they approached this pagan city?

Their trials, vv. 1, 2

First, he reminds the saints of what they already knew: they had to pay a price to bring God's message to Thessalonica. They had come from Philippi where they had been publicly flogged and cast into prison. It was only the mighty overruling of God that brought about their release, but these messengers were not put off by the hostile reception and they pressed on to Thessalonica where they came up against more opposition. In fact, unbelieving Jews tried to cause trouble for them by stirring up the whole city against them, so much so that the Christians advised them to leave, fearing for their safety, Acts 17. 10. Theirs was the experience of many trials, but they did not give up, they did not lose heart. We know so little of suffering for Christ's sake, and yet how soon we become discouraged. The trials that come our way are sent to prove us, test the genuineness of

our faith and our trust in the Lord. Consider the effect these trials had on these godly men.

Their testimony, vv. 2, 3

'We were bold in our God'. They did not come in fear and trembling because of what they had suffered previously, rather they experienced a fresh boldness and were given a new courage. They found the Lord poured His strength into them, so that they could carry on with their ministry with renewed enthusiasm in the battle against the forces of evil and gain a great victory too.¹ It was not a failure but a success. The church that was planted there was a demonstration of this. The blessing and the power of God was abundantly evident among them. Let us learn the lesson that God alone is the source of our strength in the conflict that we face; He alone is the secret to real success.

Their trust, vv. 4-6

In verse 4, he speaks of themselves as being put in **trust** with the gospel – being entrusted with it and given responsibility for it. It had been given to them not to keep to themselves, but to preach. But the apostle felt the responsibility not only of preaching it but also of the way in which it was preached. God's message must be communicated in a God-honouring way. So many today feel that as long as the gospel is shared with others, the way in which it is shared is immaterial. Not so, for this is a sacred trust that has been committed to us. Notice verse 3, the appeal 'was not of deceit' – it was not based upon error, not intended to lead astray, or divert people from the truth; 'nor of uncleanness' – no impure or unworthy motive; 'nor in guile' – not to draw them after Christ under false pretences. I fear that we are not honest at times, when we present the Gospel in a way that gives the impression that to trust Christ is the end of all our problems and difficulties, and that the way thereafter will be easy. Sometimes we are in danger of making it sound as if the world and Christ were not all that far apart – that would not be true to the trust that has been committed to us. Let us beware of making the message of God plausible and pleasant to the ears of the unbelieving. 'We speak; not as pleasing men, but God', v. 4. The objective is not to be popular with men but to be pleasing to God; nothing for self-glory, personal gain or advantage but all for His glory.

Their tenderness, vv. 7, 8

Perhaps we would be tempted to say that such men, so exact, so zealous for truth and reality, must be hard men, but note the gentleness, v. 7. Tenderness is required of a nursing mother with a suckling baby; care and attention are given to the dependent and defenceless child as she provides for its every need and protects it from every ill. They did everything in their power to promote strong and healthy spiritual growth, watched over and cared for the believers and ministered to every spiritual need. Love was expressed in sacrificial service. Does such compassionate care and Christ-like concern humble us? Would to God we loved, as they loved, seeking the good of others.

Their travail, vv. 9, 10

‘For labouring night and day’, v. 9; not a moment to call their own. They did not spare themselves. As God’s servants they had the right to make demands upon these young converts. They could have expected them to support them materially, but they did not. If, then, they were not supported, how did they live? They worked with their hands; they carried on their trade; they made and sold tents so that they could pay their way. Physically, mentally, as well as spiritually they threw themselves into this work of church-planting and building. Why such effort? ‘Because ye were dear unto us’, v. 8.

Their training, vv. 11, 12

Converts had to be prepared to stand on their own when the missionaries had moved on. I like the comparison that is used here, ‘as a father doth his children’. Previously, the comparison was a caring mother, now it is a counselling father. They were mother and father to these babes in Christ. Observe that this training was given in two ways. First, by example, v. 10, and then, by exhortation, v. 11. They were given the model as well as the message! They lived lives separated to God, ‘holily’ – their conduct showed that they were devoted to God. Furthermore, they were fair and honest in their dealings at all times, ‘justly or righteously’. They also lived their lives so carefully so that there was nothing wrong which they could be accused of – ‘unblameably’. By example, they taught these converts that their motives should be pure, their methods should be right

and their manner of life should be irreproachable.

They had a balance in their teaching. There was the stimulating word – ‘we exhorted you’; the soothing word – ‘and comforted’; and the searching word – ‘charged’. All this was essential to their training. It is interesting to observe the phrase ‘every one of you’. It appears this was not just a ‘platform’ ministry but a personal ministry. There is a work for each one of us to do! The purpose of this ministry is described in verse 12, ‘that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory’, reminding us of the dignity and destiny of our calling.

Their thanksgiving, vv. 13-16

In his writings we often find the apostle giving thanks to God. Are we characterized by thanksgiving? We ought to be. What is the cause of his thanksgiving here? ‘Because . . . ye received it [the word of God] not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God’. They were not just hearers of the word but doers, receiving it into their hearts. That living word worked effectually and powerfully in their lives, causing them to turn from idols to God. Would it not be wonderful to see the word of God working more powerfully in our lives? It will if we not only hear it but allow the Spirit of God to work in us as we obey His word. Paul and his fellow workers were so thrilled to see the word of God in their lives that they gave ‘thanks without ceasing’. He gave thanks that, in spite of the persecution they were suffering, they were pressing on faithfully, and tells

them of the suffering and opposition that the churches in Judaea were experiencing to let them know that they were not alone in their sufferings. In verse 15, he reminds them that the Lord Jesus, in whom they had trusted, also met with the hatred of the world, even to death.

Their trophy and triumph, vv. 17-20

Was there to be a reward for these dedicated servants of Christ? Was it to be a success story in the end? Would they triumph and win the prize? The answer, without hesitation, to all of these questions is certainly ‘yes’! Paul treasured the memory of their fellowship and reflects on their hurried parting as they were forced to make a quick getaway from the city because of the bitter opposition, though separated only in body but ‘not in heart’. He tells them how time and again he had tried to return but had been hindered by Satan. But, if Satan can hinder and frustrate our fellowship now, there is coming a day when all will be changed! ‘For what is our hope . . . Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?’ We long to see you now, he says, but our greatest longing, our earnest expectation, our exhilarating joy, is the prospect of seeing you then, when He comes. Seeing you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming – that will be the culmination of our hope and the consummation of our joy; the crowning of all our labours. As if it wasn’t just enough to say it once, Paul says it again in the last verse, ‘ye are our glory and joy’. They have brought the messengers honour, not dishonour; given them joy and not sorrow. As converts, that should challenge us. The writer to the Hebrews calls us to consider the outcome of our lives when he writes, ‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you’, 13. 17. Are we living today to bring joy in that day?



Endnote

- 1 See verse 1, ‘For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain’.

Old Testament Women who appear in the New Testament

LOT'S WIFE

By **JOHN SCARBROOK** Killamarsh, England

We do not know her name, her age, her appearance or her family background. All we know is that she passes before us briefly on the page of both Old and New Testaments as a salutary warning, simply known as Lot's wife.

Lot's wife does not make an Old Testament appearance until Genesis chapter 19 verse 15, when the two angels, sent by God to destroy the cities of the plain, are urging Lot to take his wife and two daughters out of Sodom, before the imminent destruction falls.

We have no clear indication to determine the place Lot's wife knew as her home. What we do know is that Lot, the nephew of Abram, journeyed with him from Ur of the Chaldees. When Abram went down into Egypt and later returned, Lot followed. Strife then ensued between their relative herdsmen, resulting in a parting of the ways. Abram graciously offered the choice of direction to Lot, suggesting that he might consider the left hand, westward toward Bethel, 'the house of God'. It would seem, however, from the narrative, that Lot dismissed that opportunity and 'chose him all the plain of Jordan', a decision which would cost him the loss of everything. In Genesis chapter 14, Lot is taken captive by a confederate army; there is no mention of his family, just 'his goods'. Since the next mention is in chapter 19, where he is found living in Sodom with a family of at least six children, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that his wife was in fact a resident of that city. If that is so, it would, at least, provide some explanation for her reluctance to leave, bearing in mind also that most of her family were still there and perished in the overthrow.

If we had no New Testament confirmation that Abraham was a man of faith, it would not be difficult

to draw that conclusion from the record of Genesis. If, however, we lacked the testimony of Peter regarding Lot, we would be left wondering if the man had any virtues at all. Peter tells us that Lot was just, or righteous, one of few so designated in scripture. Whilst 'dwelling among' the inhabitants of Sodom, he was offended daily by their behaviour and manner of life which he deemed to be 'filthy', 2 Pet. 2. 7, 8; the question must arise in any rational mind, 'Why on earth did you stay there, Lot?'

As Abram's nephew, Lot would no doubt have been somewhat younger than the man of faith with whom he left the idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees. Perhaps it would not be overly ungenerous to suggest that Abram provided a 'prop', or at least some moral and emotional support for the younger man. Sadly, the experience in Egypt left an indelible mark on Lot's mind which determined his choice of the plain of Jordan within sight of Sodom. Before long he had abandoned his tent, the characteristic mark of a pilgrim, and was found dwelling in the corrupt city. The opening verse of chapter 19 would suggest that Lot had become involved in the administration of Sodom as he 'sat in the gate'. It may be that he thought he could be an influence for

good within the city. Such was the depth of depravity, however, that the stench had reached up to heaven and judgement must fall.

In Luke chapter 17, the Lord Jesus faced a demand by the Pharisees regarding the kingdom of God, v. 20. Knowing that it came from hearts with no genuine desire for instruction, the Lord gave them a suitably enigmatic reply. He then turned to His disciples and explained to them the circumstances which would precede and accompany his yet future return in glory. In order to emphasize that His coming would suddenly break upon an unsuspecting world, He drew, by way of illustration, upon two historical events, thus stamping His authority on the early chapters of Genesis, so disparaged by many of the world's academics and theologians. The first was that of Noah. Those days were characterized by unbelief, in spite of the efforts of the 'preacher of righteousness' who, for some one hundred and twenty years, sought to warn the men of his day of coming judgement. Ignoring the overtures of mercy extended to them, they immersed themselves in the daily round of life, eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.

The second example was that of Lot. Those were days of moral depravity, thinly veiled beneath a façade of normality. They ate and drank, bought and sold, planted and built. But no veneer could hide the reality from the all-seeing eye of God. It is a significant tribute to the longsuffering of a God who is 'not willing that any should perish', that, knowing the grievous nature of their sin, He would still say, 'I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it . . . and if not, I will know', Gen. 18. 21. He then commissioned two angels to take the journey to Sodom, while He lent a sympathetic ear to Abraham's entreaty. There is no reason to believe that Abraham ever visited Sodom; he didn't need to, in order to know its wickedness. His plea for the city is, however, a masterpiece of intercessory prayer. The question is

often asked, 'Why did Abraham stop at ten righteous, when the Lord had so graciously responded to his repeated requests?' It may be that the man of faith considered the possibility that Lot had at least influenced his own family. We know that Lot and his wife had two unmarried daughters. He also had at least two married daughters since Lot spoke to his sons in law, plural, making a total of eight. The angel made reference to his sons, again plural, so a minimum of ten in the family overall. The tragedy is that although Lot spoke to members of his family and warned them of coming destruction, he seemed to them 'as one that mocked'. The loss of his testimony now followed his loss of security, in leaving Abraham, and of his liberty in becoming subsumed in Sodom's society.

Lot awoke the following morning to the insistent voices of the angels, urging the family to escape without delay. Incredible as it may seem and in spite of what he had already seen and been told by the angels, Lot lingered! With no time for delay, the angels physically removed Lot and his family from the city with instructions to 'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee . . . lest thou be consumed'. But, even then, Lot was inclined to remonstrate with the heavenly messengers. It almost beggars belief that, faced with the certainty of judgement revealed in the scriptures, men and women today find every excuse imaginable to resist, ignore, oppose and contradict the word of God.

Utter destruction rained down upon the cities, the plain, the inhabitants and everything that grew. Then comes the 'but'; Lot's wife looked back, an act of disobedience to the express command of the angels. Here is a woman who stands on the page of history as a solemn warning. She was privileged to be married to the only righteous man in Sodom. She was the object of direct angelic attention. She even held an angel by the hand and experienced the mercy of God. Yet she perished because her heart remained in Sodom! Her intention to flee was overcome by her reluctance. The traditional location of the cities of the plain, at the south end of the Dead Sea,

remains a desolate, uncultivated, arid land. Saline outcrops mark the shores of the lifeless water. The relentless desert sun beats down on this most inhospitable place where Lot's wife remains entombed, a pillar of salt, a monument to all ages of the folly of disobedience to the word of God.

The closing scene of Lot in the book of Genesis records the totality of his loss. Added to the loss of his security, his liberty and his testimony, he has now lost his family and ultimately his dignity. All issued from one fateful decision when he 'chose him all the plain of Jordan'; how careful we need to be!

It is surely significant that, in a book where genealogies and life spans are meticulously recorded, there is no record of the death of Lot. It almost seems that the Spirit of God has omitted this detail in order to

emphasize that the lessons learned from the life and experiences of this man and his family are a warning to succeeding generations. There is much on the very surface of our society which is guaranteed to inflame the fleshly nature and believers are not exempt. The corruption of Sodom held Lot and his family in its depraved grip, even if only as observers. The Apostle Paul will later write, 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret', Eph. 5. 11, 12.

But the Lord Jesus must have the last word. To emphasize the need for awareness, preparedness and to hold with a light grasp the things of this world, He simply warned His hearers to 'Remember Lot's wife'; never forget Lot's wife; be constantly recalling Lot's wife – 'Almost, but lost'!



HANDLEY MOULE

His life and legacy

By **HOWARD BARNES** Westhoughton, England

Introduction

Handley Carr Glyn Moule (1841-1920) was an evangelical Anglican academic and theologian, writer and poet, who, for the last twenty years of his life, occupied the prestigious position of Bishop of Durham.

As a measure of the acceptability of his teaching, readers can check for themselves that Moule has been favourably cited about twenty-six times over the years in this magazine; in *Believer's Magazine* four times; while in *Assembly Testimony* magazine there are twenty-two quotations from his writings. At the same time, individual authors, such as W. E. VINE and JOHN PHILLIPS, were very happy to quote from his works, especially citing his accurate translations from the Greek. On the *Stempublishing* website, we read his name seven times; for instance, A. J. POLLOCK generously called him 'the saintly bishop' and quotes approvingly his statement that, 'When the Lord Jesus became a living and unutterably necessary reality to me, I remember that one of my first sensations of profound relief was, HE [*the Lord Jesus Christ*] absolutely trusted the Bible. Although there are things in it inexplicable and intricate that have puzzled me much, I am going, not in a blind sense, but reverently, to trust the Book *because of HIM*'.

His life and career

So, who was this man, known familiarly as Handley Moule? He was born into a very interesting family as the eighth and final son of Henry Moule (1801-1880), an inventor, and the vicar of Fordington, Dorset, UK for over fifty years. Handley Moule's brothers, George Evans Moule and Arthur Evans Moule, were missionaries in China, and another brother, Charles Walter Moule, was president of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Two more brothers, Horatio Mosley Moule and artist Henry Joseph Moule, are chiefly remembered as friends of Victorian novelist Thomas Hardy, who was well known to the Moule family. Interestingly, Moule's grandnephew, C. F. D. Moule, was Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge for twenty-five years, from 1951 to 1976. Apparently, just

like his great-uncle, he became known affectionately as 'Holy Mouley'.

Moule was home educated before entering Trinity College, Cambridge in 1860, where he became a multi-medallist. He was elected a Fellow of Trinity College in 1865, and, for a while, was an assistant master at Marlborough College before he was ordained into the Anglican ministry in 1868. From 1867, he was his father's curate at Fordington, Dorset, with a stint of five years as Dean of Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge, 1873-1877. In 1880 he became the first principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and then, in 1899, he became Norrisian Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, until his eventual promotion to be Bishop of Durham, succeeding the famous B. F. Westcott, in September 1901.

William Hoste (1861-1938), the one-time editor of the *Believer's Magazine* (1931-1938), was a theology student at Cambridge University and a member of the Church of England when Handley Moule was at the height of his influence at the university. While Hoste eventually left the Church of England, having seen New Testament assembly truth, he had, by then, obtained the basis of his well-known careful exposition.

Moule was an Honorary Chaplain to Queen Victoria from December 1898 until her death in January 1901, then an Honorary Chaplain to Edward VII for a couple of months until he was appointed bishop of Durham. In December 1901, he received the higher doctorate, Doctor of Divinity (DD), from the University of Durham.

His conversion

Most important for us is to go back and consider the circumstances of his conversion in 1866. Many years later Moule remembered – in his own words – 'that glad day' when he was 'permitted to realize the presence, pardon and personal love of the Lord, not reasoned, just received'. During his 1866 Christmas vacation, he wrote to his father, describing what had happened. 'I was able to find and to accept pardon and peace through the satisfaction of the Redeemer, as I had never done before; and to feel a truth and solid reality in the doctrine of the Cross as I have ever been taught it at home'.

Moule's literary output

Moule was a prolific writer, eventually authoring over sixty books and pamphlets. His published works, still often quoted today, include:

- *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1894
- *Secret Prayer*, Thomas Whittaker, New York, 1895
- *The Epistle to the Ephesians, with Introduction and Notes*, University Press, Cambridge, 1888
- *Colossian Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness from St. Paul's*

Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, A. C. Armstrong and Son, New York, 1898

- *Ephesian Studies: Expository Readings on the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians*, 1900
- *Philippian Studies: Lessons in Faith and Love from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 1900
- *The Old Gospel for the New Age, And Other Sermons*, 1901
- *The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans*, 1902
- *Messages from the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Elliot Stock, London, 1909

Anyone using the Online Bible, eSword or any similar Bible study aids will probably have downloaded *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*. So many of the contributions in that series are, in fact, the work of Handley Moule.

Moule and the Church of England

Handley Moule was essentially the last of the well-known galaxy of Victorian English evangelical Anglican star Bible scholars. Among these were J. B. Lightfoot (1828-1889), J. C. Ryle (1816-1900), Dean Alford, B. F. Westcott (1825-1901), as well as the greatest Greek scholars of the day, C. J. Ellicott (1819-1905), F. W. Farrar (1831-1903), and Christopher Wordsworth (1807-1885). Most were bishops and many were professors at Oxford or Cambridge at some time in their careers. By 1900, it was said of Handley Moule that he was 'the most influential member of the evangelical party in the Church of England', and he was outspoken in his condemnation of the effects of liberalism and Catholicism.

Becoming Bishop of Durham was very special to Handley Moule. While on holiday in Switzerland in 1901, Handley Moule was called to become the eighty-fifth bishop of Durham. The office was one of personal interest to him because Nicholas Ridley, after whom Ridley College in Cambridge was named, had been designated to be bishop of Durham but 'received first the martyr's crown'. Moule's Cambridge teacher, Joseph Barber Lightfoot, had been bishop of Durham from

1879 to 1889. Lightfoot was followed by Brooke Foss Westcott, a man called by Moule 'a saint, as true a servant of the Lord and of his brethren as the great Culdee St. Aidan'.

He told the people of the Diocese of Durham, 'I need and seek your prayers. Ask for me especially . . . a real effusion in me of that grace of the Spirit whereby Christ dwells in the heart by faith; a strength and wisdom not my own for my pastorate, and for the preaching of Christ Jesus the Lord; and a will wholly given over for labour and service at our Master's feet'.

His wider activities

When the American editors of the seminal *The Fundamentals* series of evangelical publications wanted someone to write the very important article on *Justification by Faith*, they turned to Moule and got a clear and concise chapter on this fundamental doctrine. Three million copies of the four-volume series were issued by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles in 1917. This is where the much used and misused word 'fundamentalist' comes from.

When Sir Robert Anderson needed an authoritative preface for his important book *The Bible and Modern Criticism*, he asked Handley



Moule, who wrote, 'To Him, tempted, teaching, suffering, dying, risen, "it is written" was a formula of infinite import . . . But all the more is [Anderson] in the right when he analyses with the utmost rigour the flaws in the modern analysis of the Book, and calls reverent attention to the mysterious facts of its organic structure, and gives us both precept and example for an always deepening study'.

Moule was also active in the Keswick movement and was one of the inaugural speakers at the first Keswick Convention.

Handley Moule's lasting legacy

Amazingly, you can read every one of Moule's sixty or so books free online at:

<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/>. Of course, anyone reading his writings intelligently will be able to sift out the few statements made which arose from his position in the established church of those days. Having done that, readers will then be able to benefit greatly from his thoroughly evangelical scholarship.

We can do no better to end our consideration of Handley Moule's life and legacy than by quoting from his important work *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*:

'We have "received the reconciliation" that we may now walk, not away from God, as if released from a prison, but with God, as His children in His Son. Because we are justified, we are to be holy, separated from sin, separated to God; not as a mere indication that our faith is real, and that therefore we are legally safe, but because we were justified for this very purpose, that we might be holy . . . The grapes upon a vine are not merely a living token that the tree is a vine and is alive; they are the product for which the vine exists. It is a thing not to be thought of that the sinner should accept justification – and live to himself. It is a moral contradiction of the very deepest kind, and cannot be entertained without betraying an initial error in the man's whole spiritual creed'.

ANGOLA

By **BRIAN HOWDEN** Camundambala, Angola

Angola's recent history is marred by the quest for absolute power, which cost the lives of so many and set the country on a downward spiral which is proving to be massively difficult to arrest, despite six years of peace. The legacy of communism lingers on in the hearts of many and also in the mindset of those in power. A nominal democracy exists at best, which militates against the attempts of those who want to open Angola up to tourism and the changes that would demand. We have been actively involved in the work of the Lord here for twenty-four years, and the frustrations of the people have not changed in that time; no hope of employment for the majority, even with a university education. There is a day-to-day fight for survival, a literal hand-to-mouth existence eked out in a culture marked by jealousy and the demands of the extended family, and certainly no help from the state. No water and no electricity is the lot of the vast majority and, what's more, no hope of ever having these facilities in their homes. We count it a privilege to share with the people what their life in Angola is like, and, even though we clearly have so much more than they have, it is humbling to hear believers weekly in the prayer meeting thank the Lord for calling us and that we are prepared to share their lives with them in the heat and hardship of life here.

Those who wish to know how the work of the gospel began in this so-called 'Beloved Strip' must read *Angola Beloved*,¹ but dwelling on past triumphs of the gospel really can produce a romantic impression of missionary work and be quite misleading in present-day Angola. We live in the little village of Camundambala consisting of perhaps 200 homes, just six miles from the town of Saurimo. The village sprang up as a result of the mission station that was started here in 1938, and it was much larger in the 1950s, but the wars of 1975-2002 changed that.

The local assembly at Camundambala, with which we have been in fellowship since 1997, is growing numerically and a good number of believers are developing spiritually. We have several local men who are clearly gifted in preaching and teaching the word of God. Progress has been made, but it has been slow and we can trace

that slowness back to the inability to read and to comprehend what is read. The ability to read is a great blessing which, perhaps, we take for granted in the West, but here, locally, we have had to prepare the ground and create the conditions to enable children to be taught to read. Reading informs, instructs, communicates, and motivates and when someone is saved by God's grace and the Holy Spirit indwells them, the scriptures are a very real revelation to the hungry soul.

In 2005, just a couple of years after the end of the war, the elders of the assembly at that time had the vision to recommence a primary school that had existed before the war, but, in their poverty, they could never have started the work. So, we built our first classrooms with mud bricks. The locals did what they could and we, as missionaries, did our part. Ruth Hadley laboured tirelessly to get the school established and now, fifteen years

later, we have modern classrooms, over 600 pupils and some really committed Christian teachers. But more importantly, we have a new generation of young people who can read, and many of these are now in assembly fellowship and reaching out in evangelism in the surrounding villages. We are thankful for the small band of committed teachers that we have, many of whom are believers from the local assemblies in Saurimo. Our role is purely supportive and the day-to-day running of the school is in the hands of nationals who follow the Angolan state curriculum. We simply seek to supply the needs of the school, from furniture and exercise books to paying the wages of those who are not covered by the government. It is a rewarding task, especially seeing many of the young people from school attend the assembly gatherings.

The main need in Angola today remains the same: a consistent public presentation of Bible truth, coupled with the patience needed to work with smaller groups of men who are able to study the Bible, helping them to grasp its truths and to encourage them to teach others. This is essential for the work to develop healthily, rather than be dependent on missionaries. It is slow, but we are thrilled to see it work here locally and praise the Lord for the privilege of seeing New Testament principles work in our generation.

We have been able to maintain six separate Bible studies each week: on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays at 7pm with believers from the assembly here at Camundambala; Saturdays at 9am and 2pm with

Debbie and Brian Howden





young men from two assemblies from Saurimo; and then Sundays at 5pm with another group of young men from Camundambala assembly. There are many more that want to start studies in Saurimo, but, at present, time does not permit. We are thankful though, that two brothers from Camundambala assembly are taking on responsibilities and leading two Bible study groups with local young people, which is a great help.

Literature is a massive part of our commitment here in Angola, and we are so very thankful for the work of the Angolan Literature Fund, which, through the generosity of the Lord's people, goes a long way to meeting the enormous literature needs in the country. With more young people having an opportunity to go to school and learn to read, there is an increasing need for literature. The big challenge we face is the distribution of literature to areas beyond, approximately 100 km from our points of distribution, but, together with a few committed national believers, we do what we can. Generally, it takes about two years for us to get through 15,000 Portuguese Bibles and there is a constant call for Bibles in national languages too. Through the work of the Literature Fund we have been able to maintain a good supply of Bible study aids, a variety of good commentaries and daily reading books.

We run a small printing work in the capital and in Saurimo, where, using high speed duplicators, we can meet the demand for Emmaus courses and small Bible commentary study books. This is entirely operated by two national believers with only minimal supervision by us. Again,



this is a work supported by the Angolan Literature Fund and meets a great need.

We also try and help supply medicines to a small medical post which is run by nationals with minimum training, but, in the absence of anything else, we have to use what we have. Malaria treatment, paracetamol, and basic antibiotics are needed mostly, and, by the Lord's goodness, we are able to meet the needs of the immediate population and those who travel from town looking for medicines.

When we arrived in Angola in 1995, we never envisaged that we would be covering such a wide and varied service for the Lord, but living amongst folk in such deep poverty we cannot ignore the enormous needs that we see daily. Each day we feel we could have done more to help if we had the time and energy. So, along with vehicle and generator

maintenance and just trying to live in the heat and stress of Angola, life is full, busy and tiring.

We would earnestly covet the prayers of the Lord's people as we live for Him in Angola. There are big challenges that only the Lord can resolve in assembly testimony nationally. Departure from biblical truths is increasing and the autonomy of the local assembly is now being openly challenged. Spiritual battles are hard, often made personal, and, at the time of writing, Paul's words are very apt for us and those who are standing alongside us, 'We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears', 2 Cor. 7. 5. But we are deeply thankful for the local, faithful and loving believers who are our fellow labourers and stand with us in prayer.

Endnote

- 1 T. E. WILSON, *Angola Beloved*, Gospel Folio Press, 2007.

The only One who always delivers and doesn't disappoint

By **DAVID BRAUCH** Waunakee, Wisconsin, USA
All quotations are taken from the New King James Version

Much in life is overstated. In the build up to a major sporting event there is an abundance of 'hype'. The broadcasting networks advertise the event as the 'greatest thing going' and send back reports of every little news bite, tiny morsel, or rumour. Sometimes, when the game is actually played, it is boring or disappointing to watch and you wonder why you decided to watch it in the first place. Similarly, a number of products and services do not consistently deliver the satisfaction and pleasure that were promised ahead of time in the advertisements.

Even in the spiritual realm disappointing results are experienced by those who accept at face value the forecasts of the false teachers discussed by the Apostle Peter and Jude. Note that both of these authors illustrate the lack of satisfaction **in terms of water**, which is absolutely essential to life. Often, this vital commodity was, and still is, in short supply in the Middle East. The Apostle Peter accused these heretical teachers of raising false expectations. Like springs which, when approached, contain no water, or like storm-driven clouds which temporarily darken the earth, as if it will soon rain heavily, they prove to be dry, 2 Pet. 2. 17, 18; Jude 12, 13.

The temporary but barren darkness these clouds cast is indicative of the great darkness which will be their fate forever. Perhaps, when each penned their letters, they had in mind Proverbs chapter 25 verse 14, 'Whoever falsely boasts of giving is like clouds and wind without rain'. Of what value is a dried-up spring to a thirsty traveller?

Likewise, what is the worth of Spiritless teaching to thirsty souls? Not so our Lord. He boldly declared to the Samaritan woman, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst. But the

water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life', John 4. 13, 14. The Lord contrasted the **physical** with the **spiritual** water that He was offering. It is a privilege for us, as believers, to constantly 'fill up' at this fountainhead with complete assurance that every spiritual need will be fully met. In the 'Sermon on the Mount', the Lord guaranteed, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. For they **shall be filled**', Matt. 5. 6.

The Bible is full of glorious promises of satisfaction, 'Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who **comes to Me** [in faith] shall never **hunger**, and he who believes in Me shall never **thirst**"', John 6. 35. In the next chapter, we read, 'On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified', 7. 37-39. It is interesting to note that the feast here mentioned is one of the Jewish fall (autumn) celebrations, namely, the Feast of Tabernacles. Many Jews journeyed to Jerusalem to recall

their ancestors' days of travelling through the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan. In the area around Jerusalem, they built and lived for a week in small shelters (booths) consisting of palm branches and willow boughs in remembrance of their ancestors' journey, Lev. 23.

C. S. LOVETT wrote, 'The 8th day was most solemn, marking the close of the feast. For each of seven days before, the priest, in ceremonial procession, carried golden vessels of water from the pool of Siloam into the temple courts and poured them out upon the altar.'¹ This pictured the carrying of water in the Wilderness. On the 8th day this was NOT done, celebrating the entrance of Israel into the promised land where the people drank from live springs. The pool of Siloam was fed from a spring beneath the altar. When Jesus speaks of Himself as a fountain, He employs the imagery of the living spring under the altar which fed the pool. On this day, the people took boughs from their dismantled booths and beat on the sides of the altar, picturing the rock smitten by Moses. Hence Jesus is also offering Himself as the Smitten Rock.² As the rock mass was struck with a rod by Moses for the sake of the Israelites, so also was Christ struck for our sakes during the brutal night-time interrogations before Annas, and Caiaphas, as well as the extremely savage whipping inflicted by the Praetorian guard, 1 Pet. 2. 24.

When Jesus speaks of Himself as a 'fountain', He employs the imagery of this living spring under the altar. Note that He is promising that not just a paltry amount but rather an **abundance** of living water is there for the asking. WUEST translates the offer made by Christ, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and let him be drinking'.³ There is a **continuing** aspect to this offer. Isaiah recorded a similar invitation to drink, 'Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price', Isa. 55. 1.

Physical thirst is the most powerful drive known to mankind. However, here our Lord does not specify any

particular type of thirst. Some have thirsted for God himself. David wrote in Psalm 63 verse 1, 'O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water'. The Sons of Korah sang, 'As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?' Ps. 42. 1, 2.

D. L. MOODY wrote, 'How this world is thirsting for something that will satisfy my soul in places of amusement, the dance houses, the music halls, and the theatres, night after night? Men and women are thirsting for something they have not got. The moment a man turns his back upon God, he begins to thirst; and that thirst will never be quenched until he returns to "the fountain of living waters."' (Jer. 2:13) As the prophet Jeremiah tells us, we have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. There is a thirst this world can never quench: the more we drink of its pleasures, the thirstier we become. We cry out for more and more, and we are all the while being dragged down lower and lower. But there is a fountain opened to the House of David for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. 13:1). Let us press up to it, and drink and live'.⁴

According to John chapter 7 verse 39, those who respond to Christ's

invitation receive the Holy Spirit as a permanent, indwelling, life-changing presence. To speak of 'streams of living water' highlights 'four facts about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer:

- 1 He takes up residence within the "inner being."
- 2 He "flows" with an inexhaustible supply.
- 3 He brings the life of God to the soul.
- 4 He satisfies the deep thirst inside every heart'.⁵

It is touching, and a paradox, that our Lord, who sought to entirely slake the **spiritual** thirst of mankind would suffer intense **physical** thirst as part of the agonies of the cross. He endured extreme dehydration for some six hours on the cross. About 1,000 years before Jesus was born, David accurately predicted our Lord's thirst and how His persecutors would respond to it. Psalm 22 verse 15 reads, 'My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death'. It is difficult to imagine a more thorough fulfilment of this prophecy than in our Lord's experience on the cross. FREDERICK W. KRUMMACHER vividly describes the cross-induced thirst of our Lord: 'The blood vessels of His sacred body are almost dried up. A dreadful fever rages through His frame. His tongue cleaves to His jaws. His lips burn'. He concludes, "There is scarcely a greater torment than that of insatiable thirst".⁶

The torturous death of crucifixion had not been devised when David wrote his prophetic words. Note that all four Gospel authors record how the Roman soldiers tried to prepare him for this suffering. "They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink", Ps. 69. 21; Matt. 27. 34. They offered to our Saviour a stupefying liquid concoction to deaden His senses to the pain and constriction that He would soon experience. Our Lord would have none of it. He was determined to fully taste the sum total of the horrors of the cross – physical, emotional, and spiritual. He didn't want His senses deadened.

According to Luke chapter 16, the rich man, before whose gate the beggar Lazarus sat, ended up in Hades. He knew the pain of eternal torment for his sins. Much more so our Lord who took as His own the accumulated trespasses of all mankind – past, present, and future. Jesus' sufferings were so intensified that they were equivalent to the sum total of that of all unbelievers spending an eternity in the Lake of Fire.

In summary, unlike watching a favourite sporting event or acquiring some coveted gadget, personally trusting in Jesus and His sacrifice for our sins brings about complete satisfaction.

Endnote

- 1 Note that the Pool of Siloam, discovered in 2004, was the only permanent water source for the city of Jerusalem in the first century AD. It was fed by the waters of the Gihon Spring diverted through Hezekiah's Tunnel, built in the 8th century BC.
- 2 C. S. LOVETT, *John*, Vol. Four, *Personal New Testament Commentary*, 1969-1970, pg. 135.
- 3 KENNETH. S. WUEST, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977, pg. 230.
- 4 D. L. MOODY, *The D. L. Moody Year Book: A Living Daily Message from the Words of D. L. Moody*, found at <https://www.preceptaustin.org/bybook/43>.
- 5 Extracted from here: https://www.preceptaustin.org/john_739_commentary.
- 6 F. W. KRUMMACHER, *The Suffering Saviour*. Found here: <http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/BooksoftheBible/TheSufferingSaviourbyFWKrummacher>.



Characters in the Early Years of the Lord

ANNA

By **MICHAEL WILKIE** Inverness, Scotland

Of all the people who surrounded the Lord Jesus in the earliest days of His life, probably the least prominent is Anna. All we know of her is found in one of Luke's characteristic pen-portraits in three verses in Luke chapter 2. Two major things are said of her: she was a prophetess and she was a widow. It is interesting that when her family and social circumstances are described, they are linked with her status as a prophetess, while the description of her spiritual activity is connected with her widowhood. Perhaps the obvious lesson from this is that God does not differentiate between our social circumstances and our spiritual service. As believers, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of thinking that it is acceptable to be a different sort of person in the assembly from the sort of person I am when at work – every aspect of my life ought to be characterized by godliness.

A prophetess

In many ways the description of Anna that is given under this heading is unremarkable. Of her father, Phanuel, nothing more is known. She came from the tribe of Asher, but again, there is little said of the members of this tribe in scripture.¹ Her husband, who had obviously been dead for a number of years, is not even named. All in all, there was very little, seemingly, about this aged woman that would cause her to make her mark in history. And yet, the Spirit of God records that she was 'a prophetess', someone through whom the mind of God could be made known to His people. From this we learn that God is not dependent on a man or woman's social prominence in order to be able to use them in His service. He can, of course, use kings and prophets and mighty men if He so chooses, but He is equally able to reveal His mind through the humblest of believers. Let this be an encouragement to each of us – no matter how lowly our position in the eyes of the world, God is able to work through us if we are prepared to be usable in His hands.

A widow

How lonely those eighty-four years had been we can only guess. The scripture makes no mention of children, so it may be that she had none. Perhaps the hopes and dreams of her early married years had come to nothing – all that stretched before her were empty days, when it would have been so easy to become resentful at the solitary path God had called her to tread. And yet, her devotion to God is seen in the fact that she 'departed not from the temple', Luke 2. 37, and spent her days in fasting and prayer. If God had removed all else from her, it must only be so that He Himself would become everything to her, and so she would devote her service to Him. Let us learn from this; in this modern world there is great danger, with its emphasis on comfort and self-interest, that we begin to regard our Christianity from a purely selfish point of view. It can become a hobby that we engage in when it suits us, rather than the defining focus of our lives and an overriding duty that we owe to our Creator. When I stand at the Judgement Seat of Christ, it will not matter how much time I gave to my career and the time that I spent 'taking

it easy' will be seen to have been wasted so far as eternity is concerned.² Let us see to it that, as much as lies within us, we follow Anna's example, who 'served God . . . night and day', v. 37.

But then there came the day that must have been the highlight of her whole life. Moving through the temple, as she had no doubt done many times before, she came across a little group of four people: two men, a woman, and a child of a few weeks old. The long-promised Messiah had come at last, and she was there to witness it! In such a scene of joy, it was only natural that her heart would rise in praise to God, and that she would want to tell others of what she had seen. There is something greatly encouraging about this; even at the advanced age of eighty-four, there was still something that she could do that God valued enough to cause it to be recorded in holy scripture.³ First, she gave thanks to the Lord, v. 38. Notice the order of things here; before she speaks to man, she will give to God. It is an abiding principle of scripture that God must have His portion first and then man can be blessed. It was the order of angelic praise in verse 14, and it ought to be the attitude of our hearts also. But, second, she speaks of Him 'to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem', v. 38. Let this be a challenge to all our beloved elderly brethren and sisters: is there still the desire to evangelize that there was in earlier days? While it is true that society is changing, the need of mankind is still the same; while it may also be true that my sphere of service may shrink as age advances, surely there will always be opportunities to speak to others about Him. May God help us to do so, so that if the Lord spares us we, like Anna, may 'bring forth fruit in old age', Ps. 92. 14.

Endnotes

- 1 However, it is interesting that the first mention of Asher, the father of the tribe, is linked with praising women.
- 2 This is not meant to imply that periods of rest and relaxation are wrong, but, if the attitude of my heart is that any difficult or exhausting thing is to be avoided, I cannot expect to receive much praise of God in that day!
- 3 Some take the view that her widowhood alone had lasted eighty-four years, and that her actual age was around 100. The point remains the same!

WORD FOR TODAY

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** Newbury, England

Graptos (Painted/Written)

Graphe (Written characters)

Grathma (A Letter/Document Record)

Many years before the invention of pens and keyboards, writers in antiquity found a variety of ways of communicating with each other through different forms of pictorial and written text. Writing, in fact, goes back some 5,000 years to the ancient Middle East, where individuals sought to communicate with each other through trading activities and cultural exchanges. Invading armies often imposed their systems of communication upon conquered nations. People sometimes communicated through wall paintings or clay tablets such as cuneiform, which represents one of the earliest systems of writing invented by the Sumerians. Forms of communication developed through the centuries when alphabets were produced and written texts then became normalized. The Bible itself is a written or inscribed text and is the product of human writers, being at the same time, the inspired word of God.

Derivatives of the Greek noun *graphe* occur in the Septuagint (LXX) and many of the texts where these words are included underpin the authority of the word of God. For example, in Exodus chapter 24 verse 4, Moses formally inscribes the terms of the covenant with God in a written text. The Ten Commandments are referred to in Exodus chapter 31 verse 18 as 'two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God'. Isaiah also inscribes the word of God on a large scroll as he is instructed, to 'write in it with a man's pen', Isa. 8. 1. The word is again used to describe what is inscribed on Belshazzar's wall relating to the imminent demise of

the Babylonian kingdom, Dan. 5. 5. This can be compared to the finger of God in both Exodus chapter 8 verse 19 and as indicated above. In the New Testament, *graphe* occurs at least fifty times and refers to written characters, or essentially the art of writing. It is almost exclusively used, though, by New Testament writers to define the Bible as the sacred writings or scripture, thus confirming the canonical text of both Testaments. In His dispute with the chief priests and the Pharisees in Matthew chapter 21 verse 42, our Lord uses Psalm 118 verses 22 and 23 in support of His argument. He describes this text as 'the scriptures', which denotes a certain part of the sacred text. Similarly, in Luke chapter 4 verse 21, when He hands back the scroll of Isaiah to the synagogue attendant, He makes it clear that this text is '*graphe*', that is, part of scripture. This statement is important because it not only confirms the opening words of Jesus' public ministry, but firmly roots it as an eschatological event in the fulfilment of scripture or, as MARSHALL comments, 'It refers primarily to the actual day on which Jesus spoke as being the day when prophecy began to be fulfilled (cf. 2. 11), but this original "today" has become part of the era of fulfilment, the "year of the Lord's favour" which has now come and remains present (2 Cor. 6. 2). Hence this "today" does not refer only to the past, so that salvation belongs to the past and not to the present'.¹ According to the Lord, these scriptures (*graphe*) bear witness of Him, John 5. 39, and also confirm that those who exercise faith in Him will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, 7. 38, 39. Here, in this immediate context, it is the whole of scripture that is being emphasized as *graphe*.

The Apostle Paul also confirms the reliance that he places on the Old Testament as revealing through

the prophetic word, the 'gospel of God'. This source he identifies as being 'the holy scriptures', Rom. 1. 2. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 3 and 4, he shows why the scriptures are to be regarded as uniquely authoritative. This sense is taken up by other New Testament writers, such as James, who applies an Old Testament text, Lev. 19. 18, to an everyday situation and describes the text as 'the scripture', Jas. 2. 8. Peter also makes reference to the word when he draws down on it in support of his argument in 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 6. The expression he uses, 'For it stands in scripture' ESV, is used intransitively to mean 'it is contained' or 'it is written', and this settles any argument as far as he is concerned.

In passing, we should note that the term scripture does not just apply to the Old Testament. Peter makes it quite clear that the writings of the Apostle Paul are also to be regarded as authoritative, as with 'other scriptures', 2 Pet. 3. 16.

In summary, then, the use of the word *graphe* highlights just how much importance God places on His written word, the scriptures. Whatever our circumstances in life, may our constant watchword be, 'what saith the scripture?', Rom. 4. 3.

For further reading/study

Introductory

'Scriptures' in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (IVP), pp. 1404, 1405.

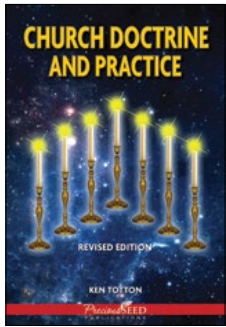
Advanced

'*Graphe*' in GERHARD KITTEL (Ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol 1), pp. 749-761.

Endnote

- 1 I. HOWARD MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke* (*The New International Greek Testament Commentary*), William B Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Book Reviews



Church Doctrine and Practice (Revised Edition) Ken Totton (editor)

Paperback, 394 pages, Published by Precious Seed Publications, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK. ISBN: 978-1-871642-93-3.

This year will see the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of this helpful book, now revised. The fact that the original volume was reprinted in 1971, 1975, 1984, 1999, and 2004 bears some testimony to its lasting value amongst believers.

Bearing this in mind, it is good to see that the editor has retained the bulk of the articles that formed the old edition. The main changes are as follows: the introduction has been removed – one of the articles being moved into the section entitled ‘The Church’ and the other into the section entitled ‘Warnings and Exhortations’; two articles have been removed from the section on unity; one article has been removed from the section on reception and

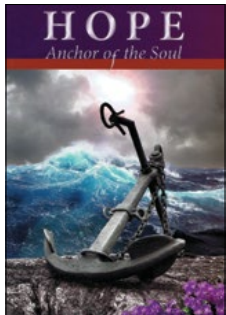
fellowship and one of the articles replaced; three articles have been removed from the section on spiritual gifts and service; the section on pastoral responsibilities has been retitled ‘Elders’ and its scope enlarged; the section entitled ‘God’s Workmen’ has been retitled ‘Service’ and a number of articles added to it; the section entitled ‘Gospel Work’ has been significantly expanded; and a new section entitled ‘Pastoral Topics’ included. The bibliography at the back of the book also contains a list of other publications that the interested reader can source for additional help on the topics covered in the book.

From that brief survey of the changes, it is evident that the editor has sought to

develop the book by a slight restructuring of its contents. He has retained what has proved of worth whilst adding in what should have a resonance for the present.

The publisher’s desire is that this revision will provide a reference resource for a new generation, challenging us all to return to or maintain practices that date back to apostolic times. This is material that will build up the Lord’s people, establishing the biblical basis on which they should gather.

This book is highly recommended.



Hope – Anchor of the soul Robert Plant and Amanda Le Bail

Paperback, 77 pages, Published by John Ritchie Publishing, 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, Scotland, KA3 1RH. ISBN: 978-1-912522-56-9.

This small, full-colour booklet is made up of thirty-one readings consisting of Bible verses, simple meditations, hymns and poems. As the introduction indicates, ‘it is written with the sole intention of helping to ease the pain often caused by sickness, sorrow, disease, and death’. Chapters include: The passing storm; A God full of compassion; A blessed hope; Just standing; and Help in the time of need.

For those affected by serious illness or bereavement, this book will be a welcome help. It is beautifully illustrated and each meditation should take only a few moments to read. There are selected Bible verses and passages that fit the day’s theme. There are well-known

hymns by Fanny Crosby, Horatio Spafford, John Newton, Joseph Scriven and others, as well as some poems written by one of the authors. There are also true stories based upon other themes. Overall, there is a diverse mix of material that is intended to offer hope to those in life’s darkest times.

It is clear that considerable attention has been given to the overall presentation of the book’s content and this reviewer is confident that there will be something to encourage and uplift the reader. The only minor irritation is the occasional error that careful proof-reading might have spotted. Otherwise, it is a very timely and helpful book.

QUESTION

Is any aspect of the Mosaic law binding on Christians?

ANSWER

It must be a real source of comfort and encouragement to every Christian to know that, in these days of upheaval and insecurity, our God is consistent and unchangeable. This glorious fact is declared in several verses throughout the Bible. In the last book of the Old Testament, we read 'For I am the Lord, I change not', Mal. 3. 6. Hundreds of years later, James wrote, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning', Jas. 1. 17. These and other verses present to us the immutability of God's eternal nature.

However, the fact that God is immutable as to His nature does not detract from His sovereign prerogative to operate in different ways in His governance of mankind. The various dispensations found in the Bible are clear examples of the variety of means God has chosen, both to reveal His character and to impose His rule over people. Many Bible teachers believe that there are seven distinct dispensations and it is the fifth one of those, the dispensation of law, which is being referred to in the above question.

In one sense, the phrase 'the Law' embraces three different components. There was the ceremonial law that related to the sacrificial offerings and the functions of the priesthood. There was the civil law, where God set out His decrees for Israel to follow in their daily lives relative to their judicial system, etc. Then, there was the moral law that we commonly refer to as the 'Ten Commandments'. These three aspects formed 'the Law'. However, when people refer to the law they are primarily thinking of the moral law, as given to Moses on Mount Sinai and which was written on tablets of stone.

In the early years of the church age there was much contention between Jewish teachers and Gentile Christians. Even converted Jews found it difficult to let go of some of their former practices and customs and this led to tensions in the church at Rome as well as elsewhere. In addition, adherents to Judaism sought to infiltrate assemblies and tell Gentile converts that, in order to be saved

and blessed by God, it would be necessary for them to be circumcised. In particular, the Epistle to the Galatians highlights this problem.

Throughout Galatians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul contrasts the law with the promises of God contained in the gospel and shows that the law was intended to be temporary, 'Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, **till the seed should come** to whom the promise was made', Gal. 3. 19. Later in the chapter, we read, 'Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, **we are no longer under a schoolmaster**', vv. 24, 25.

The opening six verses of Romans chapter 7 present further help in respect of our position as Christians in relation to the law of Moses. Space does not permit an exposition of this section but, in summary, the apostle is teaching that we, having died with Christ, are no longer liable to the claims of the law, 'ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ', Rom. 7. 4. When Christ died on the cross, He satisfied the requirements of the law that had highlighted our sinful state and He met the holy demands of God. This truth applies to every Christian; it is not a state we are to aspire to, but a positional truth that relates to all who are in Christ.

Whilst it is clear that the believer's salvation owes nothing to law-keeping or ritual, what of the believer's sanctification and personal walk? The law established that there should be love towards God and towards each other and these instructions are now presented to us in the New Testament, not as aspects of the Mosaic law, but as God's requirements for His people today. Therefore, we should seek to carry out these imperatives, not as law-keepers but as Christians adhering to the teaching of our Saviour. Galatians chapter 5 also indicates **how** we should seek to carry them out, 'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit', v. 25. It is only the Spirit of God that can empower us to do what is pleasing to God and if we are led of the Spirit we 'are not under the law', Gal. 5. 18.

The Precious SEED Committee

Chairman and General Editor:

JOHN BENNETT

19 Alfreton Road, Pinxton,
Nottingham NG16 6JZ

Treasurer:

MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE

PO Box 10544, Grantham NG31 0HW

Secretary:

JOHN SCARSBROOK

34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh,
Sheffield S21 1HW

Ministry Articles Editor:

SANDY JACK

YPS:

STEPHEN BAKER

*Editors can be contacted through the
email address below or by post to the
Chairman.*

Other Trust Members:

**Jonathan Black, Brian Clatworthy,
Richard Collings, Andrew Dutton,
Frank Proudlock, Stephen Sherwin,
Ken Totton.**

*All committee members can be contacted at
secretary@preciousseed.org
or via **0044(0)1142 511700***

FACTS AND FIGURES

- The magazine is published quarterly by the Precious Seed Trust, Registered Charity No. 326157.
 - It is distributed, without charge, to over 100 countries, many in the developing world.
 - Numbers printed are over 12,000 (50% of these going overseas) plus over 1500 in India.
 - Postage accounts for over 60% of our costs.
 - Including postage, each magazine costs around £1.00 sterling.
 - Gifts to help in the work may be sent in any major currency to any of the addresses shown below or through the website.
 - UK donors can add 25% to their gift by using the Gift Aid scheme (details available from the secretary).
- Please send book orders to: Precious Seed Publications, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield S21 1HW, UK.
 - Magazine orders, amendments and gifts should be sent to the address below or to the Lilydale, Livonia, or St. Catharines addresses below.
 - Contact Addresses:
 - U.K.** **Precious Seed International,**
PO Box 10544, Grantham, NG31 0HW.
 - Australia** **Precious Seed International,**
PO Box 836, Lilydale, Victoria 3140.
 - Canada** **Precious Seed International, c/o Counsel Magazine,**
PO Box 427, St. Catharines, ON, L2R 6V9.
 - U.S.A.** **Precious Seed International, c/o Truth & Tidings Gospel Trust USA,**
37177 White Tail Court, Farmington Hills, MI 48335.
 - Visit our website: **www.preciousseed.org**
 - Make use of our email facility: **secretary@preciousseed.org**
 - Call us on **00 44 (0)1142 511700**

If you wish to help in the work, this can be done in several ways:

- 1) **BY CREDIT/DEBIT CARD** using our website www.preciousseed.org and selecting 'Support Precious Seed' on the menu bar, or
- 2) **BY ELECTRONIC BANK TRANSFER** either using online banking, or by instructing your bank local branch to make an electronic payment. The Precious Seed bank account details are:
 - Account name: Precious Seed
 - UK Account Number: 00399475
 - UK bank Sort Code 30-98-94
 - IBAN:GB75 LOYD 3098 9400 3994 75
 - BIC: LOYDGB21454

If you use this method please let us know separately either by email to secretary@preciousseed.org or via the post as sometimes the details of payees are not evident from bank statements.

USA If you wish to make a donation using a cheque in US Dollars please:

1. Make payable to: Truth & Tidings Gospel Trust USA.
2. Send to: Truth & Tidings Gospel Trust USA, 37177 White Tail Court, Farmington Hills, MI 48335. with instructions to forward funds to *Precious Seed International*.

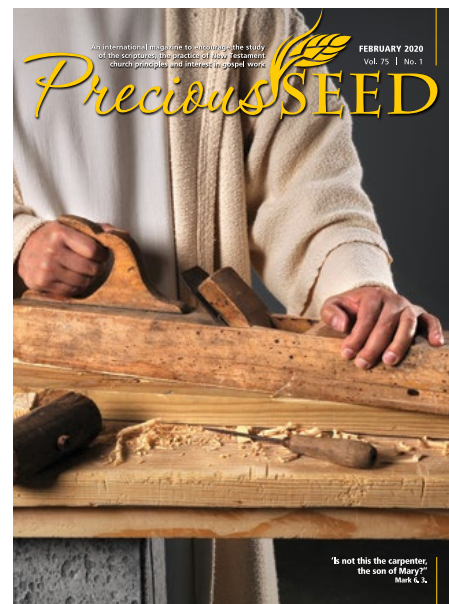
Canada If you wish to make a donation using a cheque in CAN Dollars please:

1. Make payable to: Gospel Trust Canada.
2. Send to: Gospel Trust Canada, 3 Hill Top Trail, Stouffville, ON, L4A 3G7 with instructions to forward funds to *Precious Seed International*.

New Zealand If you wish to make a donation using a cheque in NZ Dollars please:

1. Make payable to: Global Connections in Mission.
2. Send to: Global Connections in Mission, PO Box 744, Palmerston North, 4440 with instructions to forward funds to *Precious Seed International*.

NOTE: ARTICLES EXPRESS THE CONVICTIONS HELD BY THE AUTHORS. ALL THE TRUSTEES MAY NOT AGREE WITH EVERYTHING THAT IS STATED IN ANY ONE ARTICLE. ULTIMATELY, THE AUTHOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT IS WRITTEN.



'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?' Mark 6. 3

A carpenter in the ancient world was a highly skilled worker in wood who provided a variety of services to local communities. This included, among other things, making domestic furniture and household utensils as well as agricultural equipment to meet the needs of the farming community, 2 Sam. 24. 22. The carpenter's tool box consisted of an array of implements such as planes, dividers or compasses, Isa. 44. 13, as well as wooden mallets, Judg. 5. 25, chisels, awls, and axes to carve wood, and hammers and nails to secure items in place, Jer. 10. 4. Parts of the tabernacle were made from acacia wood by the gifted craftsman Bezaleel and his team of co-workers that would have included carpenters, Exod. 31. 1-11. Phoenicia was famous during David's reign for ship-building and Hiram king of Tyre sent carpenters and masons to build David a house out of cedar wood, 2 Sam. 5. When the temple was built, carpenters would have been responsible for a large amount of the work such as the making of the two cherubim out of olive wood each measuring ten cubits high, 1 Kgs. 6. 23. Later, carpenters were employed to repair the same temple during the reign of Joash, 2 Chr. 24. 12. Sadly, carpenters also made idols for worship, Isa. 44. 13-17. In New Testament times the trade of a carpenter was regarded as being equivalent to that of a common labourer, hence, part of the lower classes. So it is more than likely that the congregation in the synagogue at Nazareth was making a highly disparaging comment when they identified the Lord as 'the carpenter, the son of Mary', Mark 6. 3. In Matthew's account, however, our Lord is identified as 'the carpenter's son', Matt. 13. 55, which assumes that Joseph had passed on his skills to our Lord. This family was undoubtedly well known in the locality for its wood-working business, but the reality of who our Lord really was seems to have missed them entirely! In WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT's famous picture entitled *The Shadow of the Cross*, our Lord is depicted as working as a carpenter with his arms outstretched after sawing wood, and the shadow of His outstretched arms falls on a wooden spar on which tools are hung, creating a 'shadow of death' depicting crucifixion. How ironic, then, to think that the very raw material that He had often shaped with His hands as a carpenter would one day be shaped into a wooden cross used for His public crucifixion. But, as Peter reminds us so powerfully, He was 'delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God', Acts 2. 23. May we, like Paul, only glory in that cross, 'the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ', Gal. 6. 14.

© Precious Seed International.

The magazine is copyrighted for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of the material and not to limit proper use of the articles. For use in other publications and for orders and distribution please contact Michael Buckeridge, PO Box 10544, Grantham, NG31 0HW, UK. The magazine is issued free of charge. Its production is maintained by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. Readers are requested to notify changes of address and to keep the number of magazines ordered under review. No member of the Committee receives any remuneration for services to the Trust.



www.preciousseed.org



Precious Seed International