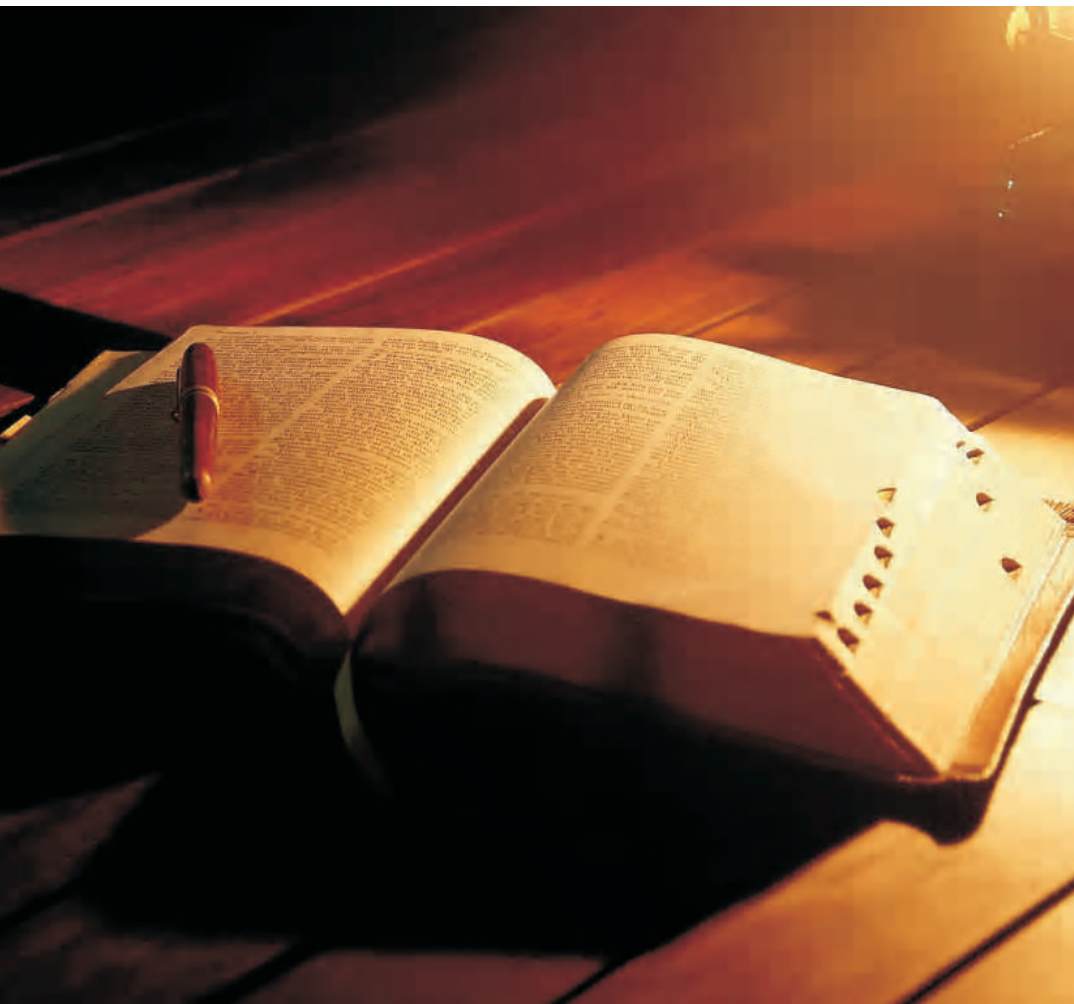


# THE OLD PATHS

January / March : 2022

№ 33



For Private Circulation Only

# The Old Paths

---

For Private Circulation Only

This is a quarterly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus for the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

**EDITOR:** A. Davidson

## **ARTICLES FOR PUBLICATION**

Articles for publication should be emailed as follows:

From non-Indian writers to Alan Davidson – **[jadavidson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jadavidson@tiscali.co.uk)**

From Indian writers to Ajay Chhatria – **[topnew2016@gmail.com](mailto:topnew2016@gmail.com)**

Acceptance of the articles for publishing is entirely at the discretion of the editorial committee.

No article either in full or in part, can be used without the prior permission of the publisher and the writer. However, a brief quotation from the magazine is permitted for the purpose of reviews and/or teaching with proper credits.

## **COMMITTEE**

Ajay Chhatria

Joseph Shah

Paul Sheppard

## **SUBSCRIPTION**

This magazine is supported solely by the freewill offering of the Lord's people. No member of the editorial committee, author of articles or any other person connected with the magazine receives payment, remuneration or gratuity of any kind. However, any believer led of the Lord to support this effort may send their practical fellowship to Mr Ajay Chhatria.

## **PUBLISHER**

Ajay Kumar Chhatria, BIBLE BHAVAN, Katkiapara,  
TITLAGARH-P.O., Bolangir-Dist, Odisha, 767 033, India

Mobile: **+919437638199** Email: **[ajaychhatria@gmail.com](mailto:ajaychhatria@gmail.com)**

---

*All communications concerning this magazine should be sent via email to –*

**[topnew2016@gmail.com](mailto:topnew2016@gmail.com)**

Website: **<https://www.topnew2016.org>**

## Contents

|  |                 |    |
|--|-----------------|----|
| Editorial – Walking in God’s Paths                     | J.A. Davidson   | 2  |
| Editor’s Note  | J.A.D and A.K.C | 3  |
| A Study of Prophecy and Future Events                  | J.A. Brown      | 4  |
| Why Read the Bible?                                    | T.J. Blackman   | 11 |
| The Acts of the Apostles (Ch 10:34-48)                 | Ian McKee       | 15 |
| A Precious Promise                                     | —               | 21 |
| He Shall Bear the Glory                                | W. Blane        | 23 |
| Get to Know Your Bible – New Testament<br>Outline (12) | J.A. Davidson   | 25 |
| Og’s Bed!  | W. Lowis        | 35 |
| The Death of Christ Facilitates God’s Judgement        | Selected        | 36 |
| Men of God Series – (7) Israel: A Prince with God      | —               | 40 |
| Questions and Answers                                  | —               | 47 |
| I am the Bread of Life...                              | —               | —  |

**W**hy call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them ... is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: ... But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth...

(Luke 6:46-49)



## From the Editor's Desk

### **“Walking in God’s Paths”**

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths” (Isaiah 2:2-3).

These encouraging words were penned by the prophet Isaiah, addressing the people of God, “In the last days”. These are the latter times of eschatology, the end times at the close of human history. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2Tim. 3:1). These are times hard to endure; fierce, dangerous times, characteristic of betrayers of God’s people in days of apostasy and persecution.

“In the mountain of the LORD’S house”, refers to Mount Zion, the future centre of God’s government for Israel and the nations. “It shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it”. The figure of a river flowing to a higher elevation is intuitive of Divine power as a peaceful river rising about the natural restless sea of strife and upheaval. Like a river glorious, sweeping the weary people upwards with God given spontaneous desire for the presence and preservation of the Lord’s House.

This spiritual elevation is found in the teaching of God’s Word. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Tim. 3:16). “He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths”. We must know God’s “ways”, in order to walk in God’s “paths”.

## **Editor's Note:** ALAN DAVIDSON and AJAY CHHATRIA

As in the will of God, we move into another year of the publication of the magazine, the committee give all the glory to God for His enabling and faithfulness, in these months of the pandemic.

The diligence of the regular contributors, who never fail, issue by issue to teach and expound the Word of God, is deeply appreciated. The writings of brother John Jeyanandam have been very instructive to help and encourage in the Service of God. Brother Ian McKee, a retired senior civil servant and assembly elder, continues to expound foundational truths from the Acts of the Apostles with profitable church applications. Brother J.A.Brown, a retired school teacher in Geography and Geology, writes from sound Biblical and scientific perspective. Brother T.J.Blackman writes as an accurate and very thoughtful expositor of the Word and his experience as a missionary in Brazil adds a wealth and weight to his words. We are so grateful, that God has maintained health and strength to these regular writers amid COVID-19, along with their assembly and family responsibilities.

Occasional papers from brother Howard Barnes and other writers who prefer to remain anonymous add an invaluable wealth and richness of instruction from the Scriptures. We continue to pray that all who seek to teach us, may prosper and be in health, even as they seek out profitable words to help the Lord's people.

In spite of a period of COVID illness, our esteemed committee member brother Paul Sheppard has been enabled to continue his invaluable and vital work of proof reading the papers, formatting the magazine and preparing the Gospel page.

The Lord will abundantly reward all His faithful servants who, behind the scenes, type the papers, and assist in every way in the translation and free distribution of the Magazine. We continue to pray for the Fresco Graphics team as they have been so reliable, in spite of staff shortages, to print and post the quarterly issues on or even before the due dates. We as a committee fervently pray for the favour of the government to the private circulation of the magazine.

# A Study of Prophecy and Future Events

J.A. Brown

**Introduction.** The next event in God's prophetic programme – the next movement in “the prophetic clock” – will be the Rapture of the Church. This imminent event is probably the most well-known and most eagerly awaited of all Bible prophecies! Nothing else has to occur before the Rapture takes place: the present scene is set for the Church to be “snatched away” or “suddenly removed” from Earth. It could happen at any moment! What a thought! Yet how much do we know and appreciate God's prophetic plans in all their totality? We trust this series of articles may be a help, not only to *inform* but to “*garrison our hearts*” when we think of all that our God has planned for the world and for us.

**What actually is Prophecy?** An omniscient (all-knowing) God has a plan for the future of humanity. This plan has been revealed through specific individuals (the prophets) over the course of time, and has been recorded for all time in the “sacred writings” (God's Word) for the enlightenment, guidance, encouragement, warning and challenge of God's people.

Those prophecies that have *already* been fulfilled have shown the perfect accuracy of God's revelations to men so far (e.g. Gen. 15:13-18 and Deut. 31:23). They clearly indicate to us words that were divinely inspired (although recorded by men). These Divine unfoldings of God's eternal plan for mankind will *guide* and *direct* us for the *present* time, and will give us *hope* and *certainty* for the future! We should remember that past, present and future were all known to the eternal, omniscient and omnipotent God.

**Divine Communication.** Prophecy was communicated in three ways – by declaring it *verbally*, by *writing* it down for permanence and by *demonstrating it/living it out* in the personal lives of the prophets.

Throughout the O.T. prophecies we read expressions like “Thus saith the LORD” (415 times), “the word of the LORD came to/unto...” (81 times), “the LORD saith...” (9 times), etc. God used men that unquestioningly received what was given them. He assured them that the fulfilment, though sometimes in the very far future, was certain (Hab. 2:3); He does not change (Malachi 3:6-7). They knew they could believe Him implicitly and made this clear as they prophesied (e.g. Num. 23:19-20; 1Sam. 15:29; Isaiah 25:1). In most cases they went willingly to convey God’s message to the intended recipients (e.g. Isaiah 6:8; Jer. 1:7-9) – perhaps the most notable reluctance being demonstrated by Jonah (Jonah 1:1-3) and Balaam (Num. 23:7-8). The New Testament contains further prophecy, as we shall see shortly.

***Fulfilled Prophecy and yet to be Fulfilled Prophecy.*** “Rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Tim. 2:15) is absolutely essential for a right, sound understanding of Scripture *generally*, but even more so with prophecy *specifically*. Many false cults and debatable groups have arisen due to an improper understanding of Biblical prophecy, and by taking events recorded in Scripture out of their time and spiritual context. Often the underlying problem is a failure to distinguish correctly between what has *already* been fulfilled and what is yet *to be* fulfilled in the *future*!!

***Major Divisions of O.T. Prophecy.*** Some of the O.T. writers prophesied of the coming Messiah, some of the *kingdom* that would be established, some of the development of specific Gentile nation empires that would arise and eventually collapse, and finally some prophesied of the historical relationship of the nation (Israel) with their God, and their ultimate final re-instatement in the land.

***What about the Church?*** O.T. prophecy concerns mainly the history and future setting of *Israel*, and also of the *Gentile* nations in their association with future events which will affect the nation. The land of Israel and the Jewish nation take centre-stage in O.T. prophecy. The Church is *not* seen in the O.T. (although always in the heart and counsels of the eternal God and certainly no after-thought!). There

are *no* prophecies in the O.T. specifically relating to the Church – this was a *mystery*, which was eventually revealed in the N.T. writings (e.g. Eph. 3:3-6)! So, while in the O.T. *two* groups are envisaged in prophecy (Israel and the Gentile nations), in the N.T. there are *three* groups – Israel, the Church and the Gentile nations (Acts 15:13-18).

***Perspective – Near Prophecy and Distant Prophecy.*** What was communicated to the O.T. prophets often had a two-fold perspective – sometimes termed *near* prophecy and *distant* prophecy (although, as we shall see, it was a bit more specific than that). What was revealed to these men of God could often be fulfilled in the short term, sometimes in their lifetimes (but not always) – *near* prophecy. But sometimes what was revealed to them had deeper, longer-term implications as well – *distant* prophecy – that wouldn't be fulfilled until many centuries later or even millenniums later.

***Prophetic Fulfilment and Prophetic Postponement.*** We can also distinguish between prophecy that has been fulfilled (sometimes termed *prophetic fulfilment*) and prophecy that has presently been postponed – not cancelled! (*prophetic postponement*). Many of the O.T. Messianic prophecies concerning redemption for Israel have been *delayed*, because of the nation's unbelief and rejection of Christ, thus the N.T. clearly distinguishes between the first and second coming of Christ because of this. A good example of this is seen in Zechariah 9:9-10. Verse 9 refers to Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (prophetic fulfilment), yet verse 10 speaks of Christ's universal dominion, still yet future (prophetic postponement). Another example is found in Isaiah 9:6-7. Verse 6 has been fulfilled, while verse 7 has yet to be fulfilled. Peter explains in Acts 3:18-21 that if Israel had repented at that time, the Lord Jesus would have returned. Prophecies such as Isaiah 9:7 would have then proceeded to be fulfilled. However, in the foreknowledge of God this did not happen; Israel's repentance is yet future (Rom. 11:26-27), and the fulfilment of the second half of this event/prophecy has been postponed accordingly.

We can also think of ***partial fulfilment*** of prophecy. The O.T.



prophets portrayed what had been revealed to them as one prophetic event. Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32 on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2:16-21. That Scripture was *partially* fulfilled at Pentecost, as Peter was linking two important truths, i.e. the giving of the Spirit (v. 17) and calling on the name of the Lord for salvation (v. 21). Yet its complete fulfilment is yet future; at Pentecost the giving of the Spirit was selective, to believers only. Also, the events recorded in verses 19-20 have never yet been seen on Earth, but they remind us of Tribulation events, as recorded in Revelation 6:12-14.

***N.T. Prophecy / Future Events.*** There are many future events recorded in the N.T. that were written by men of God not normally thought of as being prophets. Events like the Rapture (1Thess. 4 and 1Cor. 15), the Judgement seat of Christ/the Bema (Rom. 14:10 and 2Cor. 5:10) and the Marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-7) are events exclusively associated with the Church and, therefore, not seen in the O.T., but brought out in the writings of Paul, Peter and John. In Revelation, John takes us into an in-depth detail of future events (apart from the past and present emphasis in chapters 1-3). Verses such as Revelation 1:3 and 22:19 make it abundantly clear that most of the writings in Revelation are prophetic!

***Christ and Prophecy.*** Many O.T. writers spoke clearly and specifically of the coming Messiah (that is, the Christ, John 1:41 and 4:25). We are told *how* He should be born (Isaiah 7:14), *where* He should be born (Micah 5:2), *why* He should be born (Isaiah 53:4 cf. Matt. 1:21) and even *when* He should be born (Daniel Ch. 9). O.T. prophecy also enlightens us as to His *nationality* (Gen. 22:18) and His *regality* (2Sam. 7:16; Psalm 2). The Lord Jesus *Himself* declared that the Scriptures spake of Him! (Luke 24:44). We find over 100 specific Biblical prophecies regarding the coming Messiah, and to think that all these prophecies could be fulfilled in one man. And Scripture itself declares it was Christ Himself that the O.T. prophecies were referring to (John 5:39; Acts 10:43; 1Pet. 1:11). Here we have overwhelming

evidence (if we wanted it) of Divine inspiration of Scripture, the Messiahship of Christ and the reality of Christianity!

**Who were the Prophets?** They were mainly men in the O.T., who would *forth-tell* and *fore-tell*. They proclaimed God's immediate message regarding the current issues of the day to the people of their own generation, but they would also reveal God's plans and actions for the future, dependant on the people's reaction to the message! That's why it's good to know the historical background of the times in which they prophesied. They were men who had a spiritual understanding of their times and of the spiritual state of the people of God as well. Regarding their predictions of future events, they themselves did not know the full implications (1Pet. 1:10-12). They spoke for God, and they believed they were sent from God with a specific message for a specific time (see Haggai 1:13). They certainly were not necessarily born into a prophetic family as members of the priesthood were (Heb. 7:5). Amos states quite clearly about his humble origins *before* being called of God (Amos 7:14-15).

**Why were they Sent?** The prophets were *called* by, *accountable* to and *empowered* by God. They were often raised up by God in times of national crisis – perhaps a *military* crisis (Isaiah 36-37), often when the nation had *sinned* and *rebelled* against God (Ezekiel 2:3-5), at times when the people had *lost hope* (Jer. 29:11) or sometimes when *comfort* was needed (Isaiah 40:1-5). They had Divine *authority* and Divine *enabling*. The prophets were regarded by the nation as “holy men of God”, as confirmed in the N.T. by Peter (2Pet. 1:21). They were moved or borne along by the Spirit of God and given Divine expression for a specific purpose at a specific time at a specific location. The Spirit of God could be given and then taken away, unlike ourselves today as believers with the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They were called “seers” (Heb. “ro’eh”), as they could see future events before they happened. These godly men were admitted into the Divine council chambers before God, where God reveals His secrets (Amos 3:7).

**Characteristics of the Prophets.** In the O.T. we often think of the

*major* and *minor* prophetic books (according to the length of the prophecy – not because of any difference in their relevance, importance or degrees of inspiration). Yet there are many prophetic Psalms and, as previously stated, much prophecy in the N.T. also. These men were *strict* and *obedient* in their life-styles. A careful reading of Jeremiah chapters 1, 7 and 25 will reveal something about their lives. They rose up early every day, they were always expecting a word from God, for they realized that they were the ones “to whom the word of the LORD came” (Jer. 1:2). Although they were the servants of the Lord and realized they had a word from God and a message for all the people, yet they were often not listened to.

***Divine Communication.*** It has often been noted that in O.T. times, the *priest* represented the people before God, while the *prophet* spoke for God before the people. The prophet had to be a spiritual man. Communion with God was an essential pre-requisite for the truth of God to be revealed to the nation. There are practical lessons for us here today. The closer we are in communion with God, then the more will we know of His will and purpose for us – via His completed, perfect Word and the permanent in-dwelling Holy Spirit. Unlike the O.T. prophets, we won’t be waiting on God for some new revelation of His will and purposes, as God’s revealed Word is complete (1Cor. 13:10). The prophets were from very different backgrounds. Isaiah seems to have had a socially privileged background (considering the access he had to people of importance, Isaiah 7:3 and 8:2), while we have already noticed that Amos was quite the opposite with a lowly, insignificant up-bringing (Amos 7:14). Yet the prophets all had one thing in common – they knew their God and spoke intimately to Him!

***Why Study Prophecy?*** According to one estimate, 25% of the Bible was prophetic when written. The source of this estimate lists 1,239 prophecies in the O.T. and 578 in the N.T. (1,817 in total), covering 8,352 verses, and 353 distinct O.T. Scriptures prophesying of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ! Much has been fulfilled and much more is still to be fulfilled. In addition to the many reasons

for studying Scripture *generally*, a study and knowledge of Bible prophecy *specifically* will produce confidence in the Bible's *authority and accuracy*, a *comfort* and *reassurance* to believers and a revelation of God's character, amongst other things!

***The Bible's Authority and Accuracy.*** The detailed fulfilment of future events and the precise, specific fulfilment of those events that have already taken place, validates Scripture as Divine in origin, trustworthy and to be studied with confidence. In approaching God's dealings in the past, we can absolutely rely on His promised programme of events for the future. The O.T. scriptures that prophesied of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ (most of which were proclaimed between 400 and 700 years *before* His birth), have *all* have been fulfilled to the letter, without any delay or deviation! Technologically advanced human society today has major problems dealing with the present, let alone being able to predict the future!

***Comfort and Reassurance.*** A study of Bible prophecy should be a comfort and reassurance for believers as they journey through life, that God is in control of history (Dan. 4:17,35; Psa. 75:6-7)! Although there may be suffering along life's pathway, perhaps even persecution, marginalization and possibly martyrdom, and it *seems* as if evil is winning the day and Satan is in control, yet prophecy shows us that Satan will ultimately be defeated and justice and righteousness will win the day (1Cor. 15:25; Heb. 10:12-13)! That surely should be a comfort to our souls *now*!

***God's Character.*** Only an *omniscient* (all-knowing) and *omnipotent* (all-powerful) God could devise a perfect future plan for humanity and be able to make it all come to fruition in His own Divine timetable (Isaiah 46:9-10; Rom. 11:33-36). Other aspects of God's character are also evident in the prophetic writings, such as His holiness, His sovereignty, His justice and His grace. We suggest there are, or should be, ***other effects*** from a study of prophecy. These could be:

- Helping us to understand the *whole* counsel of God and His eternal purposes (Eph. 1:11-12).
- Providing answers on difficult and potentially worrying questions, regarding the dead, coming judgements, the relation of the believer to the Tribulation, etc. (1Thess. 4:13).
- Encouraging patient waiting (James 5:7-9).
- Setting the whole of Scripture in perspective (Luke 24:44; Acts 17:11).
- Having a purifying effect on our lives (1Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 2Pet. 3:11).

## Why Read the Bible?

T.J. Blackman

To answer this question, it should be enough to say: “In order to learn what God our Father wants us to know and do”. If we love Him who first loved us, we will surely desire to know everything He has been pleased to reveal in His inspired Word.

A young woman’s husband was away working in a distant town. She was asked why she read his letters so many times: didn’t she understand them the first time? She answered that it was nothing to do with understanding, she just delighted to read the words of the one she loved.

We can all make excuses – too busy, too tired, but it is really a question of how much we appreciate the Author of the Book, and how much we appreciate what He has done for us. If we realised that we have been forgiven much, we would surely love Him much (see Luke 7:47), and it would be our joy to read His words. Moreover, what an encouragement it is that the Lord Jesus recognises as members of His own spiritual family all those who “hear the word of God, and do it” (Luke 8:21).

Others object that the Bible is too difficult. Certainly, some parts of the Bible need patience and perseverance, so we should pray for patience to read on in God's word. If we do not get anything else from our Scripture reading except the development of patience, we have already received a great benefit! Of course, some parts are hard to understand – after all, it is not the word of finite men, it is the word of the eternal God. But we can pray for wisdom as we read: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). Truly the answer to every objection is: Just persevere in the reading of God’s word in a spirit of prayer. As we read His word He teaches us how to pray and what to pray for, and as we pray we understand more and more of His word.

Here then are three scriptural reasons why we should read the Bible:

1. WE MUST READ IT TO BE FED

“Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

***We need the Word of God in order to Grow.***

Peter is not speaking only of the recently saved, but of all believers when he writes: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Peter 2:2). Healthy newborn babes have a strong appetite for their mother’s milk and will cry and scream until they get it. God wants us to continue to have such an appetite for His word all through our lives, so that we may “grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). Proverbs 2:3-5 says, “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; ... Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”

***We need all the Word of God in order to Grow Properly.***

Notice that Deuteronomy 8:3 says “every word”. It is not for us to pick and choose, or decide that some parts of God’s word are not important. He has given us every word. “Every word of God is pure”

(Proverbs 30:5). Not all of the Bible is about us, but it is all for us. Just as a balanced and varied diet is necessary for a healthy body, so the whole Bible is needful for our spiritual health. The only way to avoid being extreme or unbalanced in doctrine or practice is to be acquainted with the whole of God's revelation.

### ***We need the Word of God in order to Grow Strong.***

The Lord Jesus quoted three texts from Deuteronomy in order to defeat the tempter in the wilderness. Chapter 8, verse 3, was the first one He quoted. In the context God is speaking about the trials of Israel in their wilderness journey and of God's provision for them all the way to the Promised Land. Therefore, it suited the Lord's circumstances perfectly when He was being tempted in the wilderness. The Lord used the very same resources that we have. He did not use His almighty power to defeat Satan, He just quoted the words of the Lord. If we treasure up the inspired word in our hearts, we will be strengthened and armed to face every trial and every temptation. "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1John 2:14).

### **2. WE MUST READ IT TO BE FITTED**

"All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2Timothy 3:16-17).

"Scripture" means both the Old and New Testaments. In 1Timothy 5:18 Paul writes, "the scripture saith", and immediately quotes from Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7. This "God-breathed" word is profitable to teach us what is right – "doctrine", to show us when we are wrong – "reproof", to put us right again – "correction", and then to keep us right – "instruction in righteousness". The end in view is that we should be complete and fully equipped for every good work. What a practical Book the Bible is! We need it for every aspect of our lives and service. We need it to be fitted to live and labour as men and women of God.

### 3. WE MUST READ IT TO BE FILLED

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).

It is very important to observe the parallels between Ephesians and Colossians: they shed much light on each other. In Ephesians 5:18 we have the command, “Be ye filled with the Spirit”, and a glance at the following verses makes it clear that Paul is speaking of the same thing as in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”. This means that the Spirit fills us to the degree that our lives are saturated with the Word and are under its power and authority. At the same time, the more the Spirit fills us so much the more will we love and obey the Word. You cannot have one without the other. This is not an option, it is a commandment and a necessity. If we are not filled with the word of Christ and the Spirit of God, there is a vacuum within us which will soon draw in the things of this present evil world.

It is not just a question of reading and memorising the word, although that is essential. But as every part of our lives is brought into subjection to God’s word, the Spirit of God gladly fills us with Himself in life and holiness. The result of this seen in all our relationships: to the Lord – we praise Him with grace in our hearts; in love and care to our spouses and families; and in right attitudes to those with whom and for whom we work. It will be seen especially in our relationships with those with whom we are united in Christian fellowship (See Ephesians 5:18-6:9 and Colossians 3:16-4:1).

May we know more and more the blessedness of those who meditate in God’s word day and night, walking every step of the pilgrim pathway under the illumination of its sanctifying light (Psalm 1:1,2; 119:105).

#### **A FEW HINTS:**

**Pray:** Always ask God for His help and blessing in the reading.

**Plan:** *Time* – The Word of God deserves priority. It is best to fix a time



each day for Bible reading. You can also take advantage of any other opportunities during the day.

*Quantity* – The size of chapters and verses in the Bible is very variable. Perhaps it is best to determine a minimum number of pages.

*Scheme* – To understand the continuity of the Bible it is best to read consecutively from beginning to end. However, if you prefer to give more emphasis to the New Testament, you could alternate between the New and Old Testaments, reading a whole book from each in turn – Matthew, Genesis, Mark, Exodus, etc. Doing this, after reading the NT 13 times and the OT 9 times the two Testaments will end together. Another idea is to divide the Scriptures into 5 more or less equal sections, perhaps Genesis to Ruth, 1Samuel to Job, Psalms to Song, Isaiah to Malachi and the NT, reading a certain number of pages or chapters from each section day by day.

**Persevere:** “Give attendance to reading” (1Timothy 4:13)!

## **The Acts of the Apostles**

### **Chapter 10:34-48**

Ian McKee

#### **Peter preaches in the home of Cornelius (v.34-43)**

Peter began his preaching with a solemn personal statement of what he had learned through his experiences of the previous few days. The phrase “opened his mouth” is used to introduce a weighty utterance, a message of particular importance. Peter had been specially prepared by God for the message he now delivers. “I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psa. 81:10). Christ was the theme of Peter’s message and he calls three witnesses in support: (a) God (vs. 34-38); (b) the Apostles (vs. 39-42); and (c) the Scriptures (v43).

In calling **God to witness** Peter asserts that “God is no respecter of persons”. This states the position from a **negative** viewpoint, that is God does not show favouritism or partiality. God’s attitude to people is not determined by any external criteria, such as gender, age, appearance, social status, nationality or ethnicity. Peter has newly learned the principle that a man is not accepted by God because he is a Jew, nor is he excluded by God because he is a Gentile. Peter goes on to state the **position** from a positive viewpoint, “But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him”. Therefore, a Gentile God-fearer such as Cornelius can share in God’s favour. “Every nation” means Cornelius does not have to become a Jew to be saved; his Gentile nationality was acceptable. The wording Peter uses essentially repeats what the three messengers had told him about Cornelius (Acts 10:22).

The phrase “and worketh righteousness” is used elsewhere, (see Matt. 6:1), of almsgiving. However, it is not by doing right things that salvation is obtained. Cornelius’ righteousness, his upright manner of life, wasn’t such that he had no need to be saved. And if he had done even more good works he would be no nearer to salvation (Eph. 2:8,9). Cornelius knew there was something deficient: if his pagan convictions had been sufficient why did he seek the synagogue; and if the synagogue had been sufficient why was Peter here?

Also, the phrase “is accepted with Him” must be understood in a comparative sense; that is, because God prefers righteousness to unrighteousness and sincerity to insincerity. In responding to the light that God gives, God regards that person with favour. Therefore, in the case of Cornelius, God provided for him to hear this soul-saving gospel message.

Although Peter is preaching to Gentiles, the message is similar to that preached to Jews, a summary of which is given in verses 36-43. While God is interested in every nation, God’s provision of the message of blessing was made through one nation, “the word which God sent unto the children of Israel”. It is a message “preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)”. The good news of

reconciliation is reiterated in Ephesians 2:17, “And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” So it is not just a message to Israel, it is for Gentile as well as Jew.

The facts of the message preached, “that word, I say, ye know”, centre on the historical Jesus, on the successive events of public ministry, on His Person and His work of redemption, and on the salvation He offers as a consequence. So the gospel is based upon His spoken word and the events that took place. These tidings were published “throughout all Judæa” in its widest sense, inclusive of Galilee; what we understand by Palestine. Remember Cæsarea was not far from Galilee and Philip the evangelist ministered in this area and may, indeed, have lived in Cæsarea. This message goes right back to the commencement of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, following “the baptism which John [the Baptist] preached”. Therefore, repentance was central to the gospel; the demand for a change of mind leading to a change of direction.

We then have that wonderful verse about the Lord Jesus Christ, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.” The ministry of the Lord is dealt with in more detail as Gentiles may not have known it as well. The despised Man from the despised place, was anointed for service (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18,19). This anointing was at His baptism. The Lord’s power was greater than that of the devil, who had exerted his power to tyrannise men. The Lord had addressed demon possession, plus other ailments as well as unbelief and falsehood promoted by the devil’s slanderous misrepresentations. The Lord “went about”, in continuation of His words and deeds to break or undo the works of the devil. Peter presents to Cornelius the supreme example of the doer of good, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter now draws upon the **apostles’ witness testimony**. He says, “we are witnesses of all things which He did”. His emphasis is on personal, first hand, eyewitness testimony of the Lord’s life and

deeds in His ministry of public service throughout the whole land. Their personal involvement was close. As John stated “That ... which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ... that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us” (1John 1:1-3). But it was not just His earthly ministry but his death, “whom they slew and hanged on a tree”. Using the expression “tree” indicates the curse, a death reserved for the worst of criminals (Deut. 21:22-23; Gal. 3:10-13; 1Pet. 2:24). Crucifixion was the termination of the works of the Lord Jesus.

But the Lord’s death was not the end of the story, “Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly.” In contrast to the cruel treatment which men did, God raised Him in resurrection. The Lord’s resurrection was by a divine act, the date was known, it was verified by the personal testimony of reliable witnesses. However, he was not seen by everyone. The last time the Lord was seen by the people indiscriminately was when He was upon the cross. God had already chosen the special witnesses, particularly the apostles “who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead”. The resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ, so wonderfully transfigured and glorified, could nevertheless materialise so that they could physically eat and drink together. These are among the most convincing proofs of His bodily resurrection. Peter, who ate and drank with the resurrected Christ, now will eat and drink with Gentiles!

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus constituted the gospel message, that which “He commanded us to preach unto the people”. Apostles were commanded to preach, first to the Jews, as per the Lord’s great commission given prior to His ascension (Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). Peter therefore preached to Cornelius not only because of the specific divine revelation (the “great sheet” revelation in Acts chapter 10) but also because of the Lord’s pre-ascension commission.

Peter is not only to preach as a proclaiming herald but also to “testify”, or protest solemnly, “that it is He which was ordained of

God to be the Judge of the quick [the living] and dead”. So the One preached by the apostles as being the Saviour will return as Judge of all, none will be able to escape. His position as Judge formed part of His teaching during His lifetime (John 5:22,23). The despised Jesus of Nazareth is to be the Judge. The gospel message is good news, but it also has a solemn aspect to those who refuse to repent and believe.

Finally, Peter refers to the **witness of the Scriptures**. The Old Testament prophets also gave testimony to Him as Saviour and still do through their written words. They prophesied generally that “through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins”. He is the Saviour of all who believe on the basis of Who He is and what He has accomplished on the cross at Calvary. “Whosoever” includes Gentiles as well as Jews; Cornelius as well as Peter. The hearers are responsible as to how they respond to the message. Should they respond in faith, remission of sins will be the result: forgiveness, not condemnation; a dismissal or a release from the penalty of sins. This is not a description of the sole basis of salvation, but it is a revelation that only believers shall be saved. All that is provided in this section is a summary of what Peter preached; it is not a comprehensive exposition of the doctrines of the gospel. In that respect the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians should be considered.

### **The Holy Spirit comes upon Gentile believers (v.44-48)**

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.” Cornelius and his friends received the Holy Spirit because they not only heard, but evidently, believed the word of God, something which is later confirmed in Acts 11:17,18 and 15:7-9. While some may refer to this as the ‘Pentecost of the Gentile world’ that is hardly an accurate description. Pentecost only happened once. But here Gentiles are coming into the good of what happened at Pentecost, which we’ve already considered in Acts chapter 2. So this is not a repetition of Pentecost, but a further (re)distribution of the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter is using the keys of the kingdom on behalf of Gentiles (Matt. 16:19).

One result of this is that the six Jewish believers who had come with Peter from Joppa were absolutely amazed “because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost”. To date they would have regarded Cornelius and his friends as ‘outsiders’, yet God had accepted these repentant and believing Gentiles on the same basis as the Jews. Furthermore, they did not have to become Jews before they experienced salvation.

Peter’s companions could not deny the evidence of their ears and eyes, “for they heard them speak with tongues”, that is languages unknown to the speakers, which were a sign gift in the initial period of this age of gospel grace. Those newly saved also magnified God. All that took place symbolised a reconciliation of believing Jew and believing Gentile, who had earlier been separated by differences of language as well as in many other ways.

Peter understood what was happening and was quick to draw the inevitable deduction: “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised?” If God had accepted them, so should the Jewish believers. Baptism was the believer’s response in obedience to The Lord’s command and was necessary before entering into the privileges of the Christian life. The reality of their conversion was evidenced by the fact that these Gentiles had “received the Holy Ghost as well as we [Jews].”

Peter then “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” The initiative was Peter’s, there is no recorded exercise on Cornelius’ part. If God had accepted them then so must the Jewish Christians who, presumably, performed the baptism. “In the name of the Lord”, that is of Jesus Christ, expresses the authority for baptism. This is exactly the same as baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:18-20).

Peter and his companions are then entreated to remain for “certain days”, no doubt to nurture Cornelius and his friends in their new faith and life, which is still necessary even where the power of God is so evident.

(To be continued D.V.)

# A Precious Promise

Selected

## **“Thine eyes shall see the King in His Beauty” (Isaiah 33:17)**

The prophet Isaiah is reckoned as the greatest of the writing prophets, and his chief theme is that of redemption. No matter where we search we cannot find any other writings, penned during the dispensation of the Law, which can give us a clearer view of Divine grace.

Israel had sinned and forgotten God, and because of this they were to be taken into captivity by the king of Babylon. As the prophet wrote concerning the coming captivity, and of the judgment which God must surely mete out on His people, he was able, however, to give them promises of cheer for the future, and to show that hope was not entirely gone. How good it must have been for the people of Israel, when they were downcast and in despair, to hear these words of hope and comfort from the prophet, as he looked beyond the captivity into a glorious future of glory: “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” What a precious promise to a downcast people! And how really precious it is to us!

The first thing which presents itself to our notice is:

### **The Individuality of the Promise**

The use of the word “thine” reminds us of this fact. The word of God does not say “your eyes” or “their eyes,” which would speak to us of a collective company, but it says “thine eyes,” declaring to us that although this promise can and does apply to the company of believers as a whole, yet it is a promise given specially to the individual. Oh how blessed it is to realise, that no matter how many other people will be there, nor how vast that great multitude will be,

there is one thing at least of which we can be sure, and that each true believer can say with assurance, and that is that “I shall be there.” It is when we get to realise something of what God has done for each of us as individuals, and of what He is yet going to do, that our hearts bow in praise and adoration to Him for all His wondrous love and grace.

The second thing to arrest our attention is:

### **The Certainty of the Promise**

The statement seems to ring with Divine fact, and makes use of words which make a denial of it impossible. The verb which is used, “shall,” is not the ordinary form for making a statement about the future, but what is used is the imperative, or commanding, form, laying emphasis on the truth that nothing can hinder or interfere with the fulfilment of the promise.

It is a promise for the future, and it reminds us that at present we do not see our Saviour and King face to face. There is only one way whereby we can see Him while here in the body, and that is by faith. When writing to the Corinthians the apostle Paul stated, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2Cor. 5:7). Our whole life has rested on our faith since the moment when we first trusted in Christ. Faith was where we started our Christian life, and our whole life should be a life of faith until that time comes when “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1Thess. 4:16,17). Not until then shall we realise the truth of the little hymn:

Face to face! O blissful moment!  
Face to face – to see and know,  
Face to face with my Redeemer,  
Jesus Christ Who loves me so.



Our closing thought is in connection with:

### **The King of the Promise**

A wonderful description is given here to our Lord Jesus Christ – “the King in His beauty.” We remember that at His first advent He was cast out by His own people, and rejected by His own brethren. Speaking of that time Isaiah could say, “He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:2,3). The prophet’s description was true to the letter, and when He offered Himself to the Jews as their King, they rejected Him, crying “Let Him be crucified” (Matt. 27:22). Truly, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11).

But what a change has now taken place! He is now in His rightful place in all the glory and splendour of heaven. He now occupies the throne and is the Lord of glory.

### **He Shall Bear the Glory**

Sing to God, my spirit, sing!  
Joyful praise and worship bring!  
He Whom sinners mocked as King—  
He shall bear the glory.

He in lowly guise Who came,  
Bore the spitting and the shame;  
His the highest place and name—  
He shall bear the glory.

He Who wept above the grave,  
He Who stilled the raging wave—  
Meek to suffer, strong to save,  
He shall bear the glory.

He Who sorrow's pathway trod,  
He that every good bestowed—  
Son of Man and Son of God,  
    He shall bear the glory.

He Who bled with scourging sore,  
Thorns and scarlet meekly wore;  
He Who every sorrow bore,  
    He shall bear the glory.

Monarch of the smitten cheek,  
Scorn of Jew and scorn of Greek,  
Priest and King, Divinely meek—  
    He shall bear the glory.

Where the thorn-wreath pressed His brow,  
Sits the priestly mitre now:  
With the many crowns, O how  
    He shall bear the glory.

On the rainbow-circled throne—  
'Mid the Myriads of His Own—  
Nevermore to weep alone,  
    He shall bear the glory.

Man of slighted Nazareth—  
King who wore the thorny wreath—  
Son obedient unto death—  
    He shall bear the glory.

His the grand "eternal weight";  
His the priestly-regal state;  
Him the Father maketh great—  
    He shall bear the glory.

He Who died to set us free,  
He Who lives and loves e'en me,  
He Who comes, Whom I shall see;  
Jesus only – Only He—  
    He shall bear the glory.

(William Blane – Zech. 6:13; Heb. 2:9)

# Get to Know Your Bible

J.A. Davidson

## **NEW TESTAMENT OUTLINE – Paper No 12.**

### **TITUS**

The apostle Paul's third personal epistle in the canon of Scripture, is addressed to; "Titus, mine own son after the common faith" (Titus 1:4). Paul, having faithfully developed and taught the truth of the Gospel and the doctrines of Christ and His church, throughout his ministry which was coming to an end, was concerned that his faithful followers, Timothy and Titus, should not change any of these truths. His charge to them was that they should entrust the deposit of Christian doctrine to other faithful servants of God, who would in turn faithfully teach others also. This stewardship from God was to be held with great care. Since this truth led to godliness and the glory of Jesus Christ, it was to be regarded and held as a valuable treasure. All attempts to undermine, compromise or attack it were to be withstood with steadfast resistance.

"The things that are wanting" (Titus 1:5) could be taken as a title of this letter. Its teaching is vital if we are to faithfully withstand the deceptions of the modern critics of today. Possibly the Gospel had been carried to Crete directly after Pentecost (Acts 2:11) The freshness of grace and truth was no longer felt at Crete as damaging influences were beginning to display themselves. The work was now endangered by false doctrine. Paul clearly states his charge to Titus; "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting" (Titus 1:5). This expression carries the idea of the setting of broken limbs. This particular means of setting right that, which has become defective, is the authority of the Word of God.

## THE SERVANT

Titus was a Greek, not referred to in Acts but prominent in Second Corinthians (9 times). His name is mentioned 13 times in the New Testament as a devoted companion of Paul and a capable and trusted servant of the Lord. Paul took Titus with him to Jerusalem as an uncircumcised Gentile believer. This was in confirmation of Paul's ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:1-5). Titus may have been saved in Syrian Antioch and possibly joined Paul from there on his third missionary journey.

Titus was closely associated with the church at Corinth and may have visited the believers there three times. His initially brought a gift from Macedonia to meet the need of the saints (2Cor. 8:6). Paul wrote 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians to the troubled assembly and then sent Titus to seek proof of their recovery (2Cor. 2:13). This proved to be a difficult task which delayed the return of Titus. Eventually Paul was comforted by the coming of Titus whom he met in Macedonia (2Cor. 7:6). Cheered by the report from Titus of the work of recovery at Corinth, Paul wrote 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians. Titus then made his third visit to Corinth where he evidently had gained the confidence and trust of the fractious believers, bearing further practical fellowship and the comfort of the second epistle. This difficult task proved that Titus was a man with love, compassion and spirituality yet with trustworthy faithfulness to set right things that were wanting at Corinth and later in Crete.

Titus visited Paul during his second and final imprisonment in Rome, (2Tim. 4:10). This may have been the last time that Paul had sweet fellowship with his child, his brother, his fellow worker. Paul spoke of "Titus my brother" (2Cor. 2:13); "My partner and my fellowhelper" (2Cor. 8:23). Like Joshua was to Moses, so Titus was to Paul, a most capable, trustworthy, servant of the Lord who could bring the work to completion under difficult circumstances.

## THE SPHERE OF SERVICE

The apostle Paul had been engaged in the work in Crete with Titus. When he found it was necessary to move on, he left Titus with his

authority to strengthen the Cretan churches and to deal with the serious confusion being caused by many false teachers (Titus 1:15-16). Paul's desire was to winter at Nicopolis and for Titus to meet him there.

Crete is an important island in the Mediterranean Sea inhabited in New Testament times by some Jews and many Gentiles of dishonest, evil reputation (1:12-13). The local wine was plentiful, drunkenness prevailed in society and the falsehood of the people was proverbial (1:12-13).

Church order needed to be strengthened. Standards of morality consistent with godly living needed to be stressed. The presence of many false teachers was causing divisions in the churches and subverting whole families, as vagrant parasites seeking financial gain. The background of these subverters was largely Jewish (1:10); they boasted special knowledge of God (1:16), yet indulged in fables, foolish questions and genealogies which were causing division in the churches and households (1:11; 3:9).

The date and place of writing is not stated. After Paul's release possible dates for the writing of Titus are in the range of AD63-66, consistent with the maturity of reprobate Judaism, exposed in the letter. The letter seems to have been brought to Titus by Zenas and Apollos (3:13). "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter" (3:12). This replacement proves that Titus did not receive an ordained ministry as a permanent pastor as suggested by modern erroneous teachings.

### THE SETTING OF THE LETTER

"Christ our Saviour" is central to every chapter (1:4; 2:13; 3:6).

The majestic doctrine of this short letter, briefly contained in the three chapters of the AV, carries the reader from the first advent of Jesus Christ to His final return in glory. The key section, chapter 2:11-14, begins with the advent of "Grace" that "hath appeared", historically manifest and Personified in Christ; His birth, death, and

resurrection. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (2:11). This manifestation has left instruction. "Teaching (training, disciplining) us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly (discreetly, 5 times in the letter), righteously, and godly, in this present world (age)" (2:12). This present instruction is in keeping with our expectation. "Looking for that blessed hope (certainty of fulfilment though now concealed), and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2:13). This "appearing" is the second advent in "Glory" of the Lord Himself, our blessed Saviour.

### THE STYLE OF WRITING

The Epistle of Titus is less personal than in the letters to Timothy. When writing to Timothy, the apostle wrote about the mystery of godliness and defined the true function of the local church as the pillar and ground of the truth. The letter to Titus has this doctrine applied to assemblies located among a most difficult society. Paul describes the Cretan people by quotation from one of their own poets as "Liars, evil beats, slow bellies" (1:12). Paul must concisely but definitely give apostolic authority to Titus to strengthen and set in order things that were lacking among men and women in assembly fellowship, whose circumstances were most trying and difficult to fulfil the highest function of adorning "the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (2:10). The passion of the apostle comes out in the introduction, as the zeal for "the truth which is after (according) to godliness" (1:1).

The remarkable power of this letter confirms in a most amazing way, the possibility of godly living and Scriptural assembly order for believers in the most trying difficult circumstances. The grace of God had saved them from the debased society of the Cretans; a sensual people of animal habits, fierce in their passions against each other. This same grace of God that brought salvation was the power enabling them to renounce once and for all; "ungodliness and worldly lusts" (2:12).

## THE SUBJECT

The stress of the letter is upon, “godliness” or God likeness. “According to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (1:1). This is a life of sanctification, “We should live soberly (discreetly, 5 times in the letter), righteously, and godly in this present world” (2:12). The expression “good works” occurs 5 times, with great stress upon worthy conduct.

The emphasis in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy is upon sound doctrine in contrast to Titus where the emphasis is upon conduct. Conditions in Crete were such that there needed to be stress upon godliness as well as doctrine. “That they may adorn (embellish with honour) the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (2:10). Encompassed within three short chapters, the Holy Spirit has concentrated the doctrines of Christ and applied them to the essentials of spiritual knowledge and Christian life to give us a contribution to the Holy canon of Scripture that no other book can so specifically fill.

The stress on the subject of elders (1:5-9), strengthens the similar teaching found in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, and recognises the common need among the Lord’s people until this day, for spiritual guides with shepherd care. The early churches needed apostolic authority for the recognition of elders. The completion of these New Testament writings replace this apostolic function with Scriptural guidance as to the characteristic work of elders. The word “must” (1:7), distinguishes qualifications which are essential (for example, “blameless”, repeated) and things which are assets, “if” (1:6), (for example, a family man). The collective company is composed of “saints” (holy ones), “overseers” (the work) or “elders (maturity) and “deacons” (servants in spiritual and material things) (Phil. 1:1). Paul sent to Ephesus and called, “the elders of the church” (Acts 20:17) and in verse 28, he addressed them as “overseers”. The modern usage, “bishop” has come to mean a prelate who supervises a diocese or group of churches in a district. The word never means this in the New Testament.

The Scriptural pattern is to have several elders in one assembly

rather than have one bishop over several churches. The elders are responsible for shepherd or pastoral care of the flock. This should not be confounded with the modern pastor as an office in a local assembly. There was no such person in the early New Testament pattern. This clerical system did not arise until the second century.

### THE SECTIONS

The letter begins with the salutation, which like the opening sentence of Romans, is full of Gospel doctrine. A broad outline of the main themes of the three chapters can be considered as:

Ch. 1. – The Preaching of the Gospel of God (v3)

Ch. 2. – The Teaching of the Grace of God (v15)

Ch. 3. – The Appearing of the kindness and the love of God (v4)

The key verses are chapter 2:11-14 which give the classic New Testament passage on the Grace of God, past, present and future.

The chapters are best considered by subjects rather than clearly defined sections:

Ch. 1. Church Order: The appointment of elders and the rebuking of gainsayers.

Ch. 2. Personal and Family Life: The teaching of the aged and the young; the men and the women; servants as obedient to their masters; that all of God's own people may manifest a zeal for good works.

Ch. 3. Social and Public Duties: Subjection to civil authority amid a pagan society, maintaining testimony that is excellent and beneficial.

### PHILEMON

This short little personal letter is a vital gem in the inspired canon. Written within prison walls by a manacled hand, it is a masterpiece of Christian wisdom, grace, refinement, delicate style, and irresistible courtesy. There is no application of apostolic authority but instead,



humility, gentleness and politeness. It is the practical outworking of the doctrines of Paul's epistles. The vital lesson is the development of the virtues of Christ in one another. Even as Christ was the mediator and intercessor for us with the Father, so does Paul intervene on behalf of the unprofitable offender, Onesimus for the love and forgiveness of the offended, Philemon.

Philemon was a resident of Colosse (Col. 4:17; Philemon 2). He likely was saved as Paul preached the Gospel, possibly in nearby Ephesus (though Paul had never visited Colosse) (v19). Onesimus from Colosse was a slave of Philemon who had fled from his master to Rome, after having evidently defrauded him (v18). While in Rome, Onesimus the fugitive, came under the influence and preaching of the apostle Paul and got saved. Paul writes of, "My son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds" (v10). He was induced by Paul to return to his master, being furnished with this letter written by Paul's own hand (v19). Paul recommends him to the favourable reception of Philemon because the Grace of God has turned this slave into a "son" (v10). He was once a bondservant but now to Paul, he was a "brother beloved" (v16), once, "unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me" (v11). It was at this time that Paul also wrote to the Colossians, possibly AD63. He sent it by the hand of Tychicus accompanied by Onesimus as proof of his repentance, now, "a faithful and beloved brother" (Col. 4:7-9).

Three cities existed in the valley of the river Lycus; Laodicea, Colosse and Hierapolis. Colosse was 120 miles east of Ephesus where Paul laboured for two years; "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). The church at Colosse evidently now met in the home of Philemon (v2).

The letter can be considered in three ways: Personal, Doctrinal or Practical.

### PERSONAL

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ" is an expression only used here and is better translated, "whom Christ Jesus has placed in bonds" (v1).

He refers to himself again; “as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ” (not Nero’s prisoner) (v9). Though only in his sixties, he is a veteran, showing signs of age by afflictions and labours. In his writing he blends maturity and experience with courtesy and gracious humility. The suppliant in bonds is pleading for another bondsman. “I thank my God (intimacy, conscious of God’s interest in the case), making mention of thee” (v4). Every time Paul mentioned the name of Philemon in prayer, he gave thanks.

Our beloved “Apphia” was probably the wife of Philemon. Only here does Paul place a feminine name in the introduction of a letter and this name is placed between mention of two active Christians. If so, she could greatly influence her husband’s decision. “Archippus our fellowsoldier” (v2), may possibly have been a son or household servant. The defection of Onesimus would have been known to the saints. This was a household or family trial and being a domestic problem it was being dealt with in wisdom, yet with the knowledge of the church. “Grace to you (plural), and peace” (mercy” omitted in contrast to the personal epistles to Timothy and Titus). “Grace” is mentioned in the introduction (v3), and conclusion (v25), of the letter. Philemon is referred to as a “brother”, twice (vs. 7,20), who ‘refreshed the bowels of the saints’ and Paul himself. He had become known for his habitual “love”, meeting the deep emotional needs and physical burdens and anxieties of the Lord’s people. This included relief and refreshment, showing hospitality, providing food and clothing as an agent of the Lord, a true “brother” (v7).

The style of the letter to Philemon is one of tender personal appeal. Paul gives us no Old Testament quotations. He does not condemn the whole abhorrent system of slavery. This was prevalent in New Testament times and was not overcome by condemnation but by salvation through the Grace of the Gospel proclaiming freedom from sin through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Paul does not use apostolic authority or declare a code of human rights. He approaches the situation with dignity but does not ask for human sympathy.

The keys which Paul uses as the mediator, to open the heart of the offended brother, Philemon, to “receive” back the dishonest runaway slave are as follows:

vs. 1-3 – The memory of former labours together.

vs. 4-6 – The character of Philemon’s proven love and faith (inward).

v7 – The virtues of habitual refreshment and care of the saints for which Philemon was known (outward).

vs. 8-9 – Philemon’s love for Paul, in Christ.

vs. 10-11 – The change in the offender, from being an “unprofitable” slave to Philemon, to becoming a “profitable” “son” to Paul, begotten in the Gospel.

vs. 12-13 – The request, from Paul’s “own bowels” to “receive” Onesimus even though Paul needed him at Rome.

vs. 14-15 – Voluntary choice, not forced compliance or constraint, lest Philemon would forfeit the blessing of the “good deed”.

vs. 16-17 – Receive him permanently not as a bondservant, but as “a brother beloved ... both in the flesh, and in the Lord”, as Paul himself.

vs. 18-19 – Justice. Onesimus may have taken his masters possessions which was a chargeable offence. Having stolen money or valuables for sale, to make possible his clandestine flight to Rome was embezzlement. Paul says, make the account chargeable to me, “I will repay it”.

vs. 20-21 – Paul’s “joy” and “confidence”, “in the Lord”. Philemon himself had been led to Christ and freed from the debt of sin and hell. A refusal would further burden Paul. He was confident, that when he came to visit Philemon, he would see that he would “do more than I say”; that is, he would receive Onesimus and give him his freedom by releasing him.

## DOCTRINAL

An eminent expositor of the Word has stated; “The purpose of this letter is to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ” (Wm. Kelly). The title “Lord” occurs six times and the name “Christ” seven times. In the background of the truth and treasures of this letter is the outworking of the doctrines of Paul’s epistles:

**Corinthians.** The treatment of one another in the Lord.

**Galatians.** The display of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Religious barriers are removed. Paul once a proud Jew, speaks of a Gentile as “my son”. Paul, a Roman and freeborn writes, with no social distinction about a slave as a “brother beloved”.

**Ephesians.** All the persons in this lovely letter are recipients of Love and Grace.

**Philippians.** The consolation in Christ and bowels and mercies are displayed as we serve one another in love.

**Colossians.** The key principle of the companion epistle, “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27), is seen in practice in this letter.

## PRACTICAL

The practical evidence of how “Grace” (vs. 3,25), operates in difficulties among believers is a vital lesson for all. We are to act toward our fellow believers as God has acted toward us. The following words merit further study: “Fellow worker” (v1); “fellow soldier” (v2); Fellowship of faith” (v6); “partner” or fellow member (v17); “fellow prisoner” (v23) and “fellow labourers” (v24).

The letter is a headline lesson as to how to develop the virtues of Christ in one another. We should act in Grace toward our brother or sister so as to bring the best out of him or her. We can be encouraged, when we see how difficulties and disappointments can be turned to our blessing, when we are guided by the kindness of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Og's Bed!

W. Lewis

In Deuteronomy chapter 3:11 a description of Og's bed is given – 13½ feet long, 6 feet broad, and in the early portion of this chapter it says of Og, king of Bashan, he “came out against us ... to battle.” He was one of the last of the giants, and Moses said we smote him till none was left remaining. In the previous chapter Sihon was approached with a message of peace, but like men now, he hardened his spirit and was destroyed – and so will men who refuse God's message of mercy and pardon be lost for ever.

Og was quite different, he fought Israel impeding his progress to the promised land. Og's bed still remains, for everyone who is at ease in Zion is making use of Og's bed. Am I active in prayer and service, labouring for the souls of men and women, buying up the opportunities which God puts in my way? If not, Og's bed is still used by me.

In the Gospel of the Servant (Mark) chapter 4, Christ asks: “is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?” Or am I taking my ease on it? In Matthew 13:25, while men slept the enemy sowed tares. See from Moses and David where God took His servants, they were both minding sheep at the time of their call, and Elisha ploughed. Saul the Zealot persecuted, and God so turned the channel of this wonderful man's life, that instead of dealing out death he held forth the word of life and laboured abundantly, for the Kingdom of God.

Once in a military hospital a blind soldier was playing a piano and a stranger stood and said “well done”. Turning his sightless eyes in the direction of the voice he said, “To whom am I speaking,” and the answer came, “The king of England.”

God's “well done” at last will be worth all, but it means we are to bestir ourselves in time, see things in the light of eternity, and not use Og's bed.

## **The Death of Christ Facilitates God's Judgement**

Selected

One of the least surprising features of the Bible is that it is full of surprises! What else could we expect?

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8,9).

If the teachings of the Bible were mundane and predictable it would be a sure sign that they were not of God.

But of all the unlikely truths or expressions in the Holy Scripture, which arrest us, and make us think, and think again, few can compare with the words of Revelation 6:15-17, “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

“The wrath of the Lamb”! Could a more unlikely association be found? The lamb is the symbol, both generally and scripturally, of meekness and gentleness. It is timid and defenceless: neither by nature nor by conformation is it to be linked with wrath.

We can well understand that Christ may be regarded as the Lamb at His first advent, displaying that lovely, lowly grace, and refusing to render evil for evil. But how does the title befit Him in relation to His second advent, and as the executor of divine wrath?

In seeking to resolve this difficulty, we should first notice that the Lamb of the book of Revelation is not such a Lamb as we are usually

accustomed to consider. When He is introduced to us in chapter 5 of the book we are at once given to appreciate some very important truths relative to Himself, which have a great deal of relevance in our consideration of the concept of “the wrath of the Lamb”.

### **(1) The Lamb is in the Midst of the Throne**

In the book of Revelation everything takes its relation from the throne. When John at the commencement of chapter 4 is caught up, he says, “And immediately I was (became) in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne” (v2). We might have expected him to say, “I saw God”, but he first speaks of the throne, and then of the Throne-sitter. And from thereon in the book, a variety of prepositional phrases indicates various relations to the throne. The phrase “in the midst of the throne” is striking, and seems to indicate essential Deity. Obviously it is no secondary relationship, but one reaching to the heart of the matter.

This is the basic qualification for judgement. Only God has the moral right to exercise judgement. The One by whom man was made, and for whom man was made, will call him to account for his life and works. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccles. 12:14). Vengeance belongs alone to God (Romans 12:19).

### **(2) The Lamb has Seven Horns**

This indicates perfection of power, or omnipotence. To be capable of calling all men before Him to judgement, even the dead, and to be able to execute whatever punishment is fitting upon each, the judge must possess limitless power. God alone may judge, and God alone can judge the world.

In John chapter 5 the Deity of Christ, His co-equality with the Father, is developed. The Lord refers to two factors in particular. Firstly He claims equality of power. He says, “What things soever He (the Father) doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (v19). And the work

to which He appeals as demonstrating this equality of power is the raising of the dead.

But He also speaks of an equality of knowledge. Whatever the Father does the Son is perfectly capable of comprehending (v20). And this equality of knowledge or comprehension is demonstrated in that the Father “hath committed all judgement unto the Son” (v22).

### **(3) The Lamb has “Seven Eyes”**

These “seven eyes ... are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth”. They represent perfection of knowledge or omniscience. How necessary that the Judge should be perfectly acquainted with everything which transpires throughout “all the earth”.

We must remember, too, that “God will judge the secrets of men” (Romans 2:16, also Eccles. 12:14 already quoted). He will “bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” (1Cor. 4:5).

The “seven Spirits of God” have aptly been linked with Isaiah 11:2, where we are told of Messiah that this spiritual fullness “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”.

His perfect knowledge shall produce perfect judgement, for His eyes “as a flame of fire” shall penetrate every obscurity, ascertain every fact, pierce every disguise, and destroy every “refuge of lies”.

### **(4) The Lamb is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, who has prevailed to open the Book**

Several ideas are comprehended here, and we briefly select three, humanity, sovereignty and victory.

In John chapter 5 we are reminded that the Father has “given Him



(Christ) authority to execute judgement also, because He is (the) Son of Man" (v27). If it is necessary that the Judge should be God, how fitting that He should also be man! For "Son of Man" has no definite article, and is evidently intended to be characteristic. No man will ever be able to say that he had no justice because the Judge could not enter into his circumstances. When he is judged by "that Man whom He (God) hath ordained" (Acts 17:31), it will be "in righteousness" because the Judge will be one who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Nevertheless this Judge will have the moral right to judge, because although tempted, He never failed.

He prevailed in life, being the perfect Overcomer. Sin never gained a victory over Him. The tempter's wiles were plied in vain. As the Lamb He was as spotless and as unblemished at the end of His life as he was at the beginning.

But His victory was not merely in life, nor was it merely Personal, for:

**(5) The Lamb is seen as "a Lamb Standing, as having been Slain"** and it is this characteristic which we should like especially to consider. If there is one feature above all others which we associate with the title "the Lamb", it is that of sacrificial death.

The only One capable of claiming the title deeds of earth (the book), and of opening the seals to put into practical effect those judgements which will secure His rights, is the Victor of Calvary, the Lamb who died a sacrificial death of abiding value, and who stands in heaven as Victor over sin and hell and death. In this sense the death of Christ peculiarly fits Him for the task which the Father has entrusted to Him, that of judging the world of Mankind, whether the living at His second advent (Matt. 25:31-46) or the dead at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15).

Perhaps another aspect of the matter is, the recognition that God's judgements must fall upon an ungodly world primarily as a consequence of the putting to death of Him who came in lowly grace to seek men's salvation. When once the Lord is revealed in glory

“every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him” (Rev. 1:7). This is the counterpart to the song of the redeemed (vs. 5,6) who even now pay tribute to the value of His blood. The death of Christ speaks joy to the believer but in that coming day will speak terror to the ungodly. This is the great crime for which mankind must answer in the day of His wrath.

There is something peculiarly solemn in the thought that the One before whose face men must stand in judgement, is the One who so meekly died for them at Calvary. All His humiliation, all His sufferings, all His spotless, substitutionary sacrifice has been scorned and trampled underfoot. The One that men refused to deal with as Saviour, they must meet in wrath.

Is it not striking that the very phrase “the wrath of the Lamb” falls from the lips of ungodly men, as they face with overwhelming distress the retribution which they know must ensue? How futile, how desperate are their efforts to escape what cannot be escaped! And what impresses them and wrings from their lips such terror-stricken words, is the fact that what they fear is the presence of Him that sitteth on the throne (the Sovereign) and the wrath of the Lamb (the Sacrifice).

## MEN OF GOD SERIES

### (7) ISRAEL : A PRINCE WITH GOD

**“Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed”  
(Genesis 32:28)**

“And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty (El Shaddai) appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me” (Gen. 48:3). Nearing the end of his eventful life, Jacob looked back to an

experience with God, at a “place” (mentioned 6 times in Genesis 28) which seemed to change his life. Let him describe the years of his life himself. “The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been” (Gen. 47:9). This is not a confession of gross evil but an acknowledgement that his ‘life’ had been marked by trouble and many disappointments. His pre-natal struggle in the womb with his twin brother set the tone for his disposition and habits. He took advantage of his hungry brother. He deceived his blind father. He met the guile of his uncle with superior trickery. His large family grew up to engage in hatred, jealousy, lies and violence. This is the story of Jacob in the first book of the Bible.

The last book of the Old Testament says, “The burden of the Word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau” (Mal. 1:1-3). God loved Esau as He loves all men that He created. The exceeding fervency of God’s love for Jacob is explained in Romans chapter 9. “That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth ... The elder shall serve the younger” (Rom. 9:11-12).

God’s sovereign call is not because of what He can see in us, but because of what He can make out of us. The love of God is not determined by any good He can find in us, for there is none. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). God’s choice is not to make us servants but to conform us, “To the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29).

Jacob had a dealing with God at Luz which changed him and he never forgot the “place” where God appeared to him. We too, must have such an experience as did the believers at Corinth, some of whom like Jacob, were thieves and covetous. “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified (set apart to God)” (1Cor. 6:11), at conversion.

## BETHEL

“And he called the name of that place Bethel (the House of God): but the name of that city was called Luz at the first” (Gen. 28:19).

In spite of many failures of the flesh, Jacob in contrast to Esau, always had an appreciation of the spiritual and priestly, even in the claiming of the birthright. However, God’s love led him into the very necessary school of discipline. Though now a mature man, he found himself parted from the comforts of home: leaving his mother whom he never saw alive again; hated by his brother, he was destitute and in fear. Uncomfortable as he lay down to try to sleep on the rocky moorland waste, he was a lonely pilgrim, with a staff in his hand, a stone under his head, the sods below him, the sky above him and an uncertain future before him. Jacob was naked, helpless and open for an awesome revelation of the Lord God of Abraham and Isaac.

“And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (Gen. 28:12).

“Bethel” (Gen. 28:17) is the first reference to “the House of God”, in the Bible. It is to be compared with the house that the apostle Paul wrote about; “The House of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1Tim. 3:15). It was the place of Divine choice, pilgrim rest, solid foundation (“other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”, 1Cor. 3:11), heavenly communication, angelic ministry, Lordship (“The Lord stood above it”, v13), reverence (“He was awed and said how sacred is this place” [Sproule], v17), separation (Luz means “separation”), resurrection (pillar set up, v18), remembrance (“vow”, v20), provision (“bread to eat”, v20), anointing “oil” (v18), nearness to God (v22). Giving (“the tenth”, v22), and the promise of return (God said “I will bring thee again”, v15).

The stone laid down as a pillow is a type of Christ in humiliation. His death is the foundational truth upon which we find rest. The same

stone raised up as a pillar speaks of Christ raised up again in resurrection.

The significance of the ladder also speaks of Christ the One Who descended to take upon Himself our fashion as a Man and has now ascended far above all. He is our sympathetic High Priest, through Whom our prayers ascend and the answers descend. "Ascended" is mentioned before "descended" because communion with heaven, through Christ, is a result of His work accomplished upon earth at the Cross. This was a lovely lesson for the lonely traveller, Jacob. He was weary of his journey but he was not alone. The Lord was present with him though unseen, giving protection from wolves and robbers and even Esau, the worldly man of the field.

"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. 28:15). This same promise was given to Joshua as he entered the inheritance; to Solomon relative to the kingdom and to the Hebrew believers to which were promised things that were better (Heb. 13:5). The first raised "pillar" mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 28:18,22), is identified with the "city" (Gen. 28:19). Jacob, like his grandfather, "Looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

"Then Jacob went on his journey (lifted up his feet, marg.)" (Gen. 29:1). This expression indicates that Jacob's feet were winged with joy, he sped on his way scarcely conscious of the rough terrain of earth. His burden was lifted as if lifted by ascending angels. We loose our burdens at the Cross and happily hand over our case to the Ascended Man, our sympathetic High Priest in the presence of God.

### PENIEL

At Bethel Jacob received Divine promises. At Peniel, twenty five years later, at the breaking of the day, by the brook Jabbok, he experienced Divine power. Peniel was not Jacob's first great spiritual experience but it was a dealing with God that made an abiding

change in his life. For us, the first experience is salvation and conversion. This second is the lesson of sanctification and consecration. The believers response to God's mercy in salvation should immediately be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). At conversion we are born again and indwelt by the Spirit of God. We do not have to wait for a second blessing but for many of us, like Jacob, it takes some years in the school of God's discipline for us to realise the disabilities of our fleshly nature and learn to lean only upon God in the trials of day to day Christian living.

This was a tremendous day in God's dealings with Jacob. "Early in the morning" (Gen. 31:55), he left Laban, went on his way and came to a place which he called "Mahanaim", where he saw the angels of, "God's host" (Gen. 32:2). To encourage him, now that he was on the path of faith, about to encounter a great test, God would remind him of the vision of angels and promise of Bethel, "I will bring thee again into this land" (Gen. 28:15).

In the afternoon of the day, the next host that concerned him was news of his brother Esau, coming with four hundred men (Gen. 32:6). Red Sea standstills are necessary in the path of faith when we are shut in alone with God. "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape" (Gen. 32:7-8). Jacob was in a corner. His conscience smote him about the deceit and lies that he had told his aged father and his robbery of his brother. Now he was surrounded by his wives and children, herds and flocks, the camels and the wealth of fourteen years of labour. Behind him was the memory of his trickery of Laban and before him there was what seemed to be inevitable ruin. When everything was at stake Jacob took himself to prayer. "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham (the God of Promise), and God of my father Isaac (the God of Provision), the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee" (Gen. 32:9). The God of Jacob was the God of Patience. God did not give up on Jacob, but the school of

God's love involves discipline, trial, tests, leading to a sense of utter helplessness and worthlessness, even despair.

We can be so drugged to unconsciousness by the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life that we cannot pray. Deceit and craftiness in the heart must be confessed in order to get right with God. Jacob confesses; "I am not worthy" (Gen. 32:10). Twice over, Jacob avails himself of the Word of God; "Thou saidst" (Gen. 32:9,12). He is crying out for God's help yet he is adding prayer to his own arrangements. The lesson is that praying and planning will not mix. The flesh must be subdued and God must have all the glory.

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (Gen. 32:24). God breaks a man in order to use him. Jacob still put up resistance and God was patient with him when only a touch was necessary. "And when he (the man) saw that he prevailed not against him (Jacob), he touched the hollow of his thigh (the strongest part of his body); and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he (the man) said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he (Jacob) said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen. 32:25-26). God will cripple human strength that contends with Him that in weakness man may cling to Him for blessing. Paul writes, "My strength is made perfect in weakness, Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me ... for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2Cor. 12:9-10). "Out of weakness were made strong" is a comment concerning those who triumphed through faith, (Heb. 11:34).

"And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob" (Gen. 32:27). Jacob, the liar of chapter 27, said, "I am Esau" (v19). This deception, twenty five years previous, had left Jacob weak before God and at enmity with his brother. God's name is not revealed until moral conditions are right. It is a real blessing to search ourselves with confession of our sins and stand before God in all our weakness. Jacob got to know God, "face to face" (Gen. 32:30), at Peniel. "And

as he passed over Peniel (JND) the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh” (Gen. 32:31). It was a new day. Jacob was a new man, with a new name; “Israel” – a prince with God (Gen. 32:28). “He touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank” (Gen. 32:32). The lesson is, the flesh may shrink, and it should be kept in the place of death, but it is never removed during our pilgrimage on earth.

### BEER-SHEBA.

“And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba ... And God spake unto Israel ... And He said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will (third time) also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes” (Gen. 46:1-4). In the closing chapter of Genesis, the final years of Israel overlap with the story of Joseph (the subject of a separate study).

The family of Jacob which went down into Egypt were; “threescore and six” souls (Gen. 46:26). In Egypt the family became a “congregation”, and after four hundred and thirty years; “the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt”; “about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children” (Ex. 12:37,41).

It has been said that the final years of Jacob were his best years and that his death bed was his finest hour. “God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan” (Gen. 48:3). He never forgot that revelation.

In Genesis 48, he mentions the name of God, seven times. He speaks of the God of the Patriarchs, “before Whom my fathers ... did walk”; the God of Provision; “Which fed me all my life long unto this day” (v15); the God of Promise and Preservation, “which redeemed me from all evil” (v16). After many years in the school of God’s discipline and after his life long trials, tests and tribulation, in Genesis chapter 49, he outlined prophetically God’s programme for “the twelve tribes of Israel” (Gen. 49:28). In this outline of Divine Sovereignty and



human responsibility, the man so long interested only in himself, has learned to trust only upon God, calls down the blessing of God upon his progenitors. His thoughts extend beyond their tribulations until the coming of Christ, “Shiloh”, the Prince of Peace. His dying words are marvellous in accuracy, sublime in beauty and splendid in prophecy. “He gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost” (Gen. 49:33). This final act of Jacob was his ultimate yielding to God Almighty. God is pleased, especially throughout the book of Psalms and Isaiah to be called, “The God of Jacob”. “The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psa. 46:7,11).

## Questions and Answers

**Question:** “Abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1John 2:28). In what sense could we be ashamed before Him at His coming?

**Answer:** The context of this verse is, “The last time” (hour) which occurs twice in 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:18. In the subsequent verses the word “abide” occurs three times (vs. 24 and 27 [x2]). Otherwise translated, “remain” and “continue” (Ch. 2:24).

The believer has a threefold safeguard in the last hour:

1. ABIDING: “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it” (2:21). “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning” (2:24). Believers are not to be moved away from the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel as declared in Christ.
2. ANOINTING: “The anointing (the Holy Spirit) which ye have received of (from) Him (Christ) abideth in you” (2:27). The teaching is addressed to genuine believers. The youngest believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit giving ability to distinguish truth or error regarding the

Person or work of Christ in the last hour. They are spiritually sensitive to guard against any departure or imitation in the last hour.

3. APPEARING: “When He shall appear” (2:28; 3:2). This is when “He (Christ) shall be manifest” to the believer at the Rapture. Our fellowship with Christ as believers in the time of His absence should be such that we will have confidence; we will not shrink from Him with any shame or guilt at the Rapture and Judgement Seat of Christ. We should be walking as Enoch walked, and so we will have no sense of any need of adjustment, but appear before Him with boldness and assurance.

Here in 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:28, the reference is primarily to the circumstances for believers at the Judgement Seat of Christ, before which all believers will be made manifest (2Cor. 5:10). The truth of abiding is expressed both positively and negatively. To have “confidence” means that the believer will have positive assurance and courage.

Negatively, if we are ashamed to bear testimony to the truth now, in this life on earth, we shall, “be ashamed before Him” as we “suffer loss” of reward at the Judgement Seat (1Cor. 3:15). We cannot lose our salvation, and every one shall have some reward, but we may miss a full reward. The “we” (2:28) may embrace the apostles and John’s readers. “That we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (2John 8).

Such “shame” at the Judgement Seat will not continue in heaven, for we shall all be so thankful that in any measure we are allowed to reflect the glory of our blessed Lord, by being given some capacity to reflect His glory by a crown or the fine linen of righteousness (Rev. 19:8).

“By and By, when I look on His face,  
Beautiful Face, thorn-shadowed face,  
By and By, when I look on His face,  
I’ll wish I had given Him more.”

(Grace Reese Adkins: 1884-1973)

And Jesus said unto them,  
**I am the Bread of Life: he that  
cometh to Me shall never hunger;  
and he that believeth on Me shall  
never thirst.** (John 6:35)

**A**ll four Gospel writers record the significant miracle upon the hills overlooking Lake Galilee when through compassion, Jesus, the Son of God, manifested His creatorial power by feeding 5000 men, plus women and children, from just five loaves and two small fishes, with plentiful leftovers. John however is unique in detailing for us the sequel on the following days and the consequential significantly weighty and searching words spoken by the Son of God (John 6:22-71).

Some Jews, with significant effort, had evidently come seeking the Lord for another supply of food without regard to their greater spiritual need. Their intents and desires were misplaced and called forth His admonition, ***“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed”*** (v27). While intake of bread and water is essential for our physical wellbeing and some dear readers may regularly endure hardship to ensure adequate supply for their families and themselves, none of us can afford to ignore the greater necessity of our spiritual wellbeing, which the Lord is willing and able to satisfy.

Despite the witness of His miracle the previous day, in their blindness, the Jews insisted upon a sign as validation of His credentials for being believed, making reference to the miraculous supply of manna during their forefathers forty years wanderings in the wilderness, even quoting Scripture (Psalm 78:24); His response:

### ***I Am the Bread of Life:***

In contrast to the limiting and corruptible manna of the wilderness, He presents Himself to them as the True and Life giving Bread. He came down from Heaven, sent from the Father, in order to give life unto the world such that ***“a man may eat thereof and not die”*** (v50). This is not a reference to physical death as multitudes who have already partaken of this True Bread have subsequently died; rather it is a reference to dying in ones sins and perishing in Hell for ever. Many of their forefathers who ate of the manna in the wilderness, described as Angel’s food, died in the wilderness because of their unbelief; faith was lacking in them and they never entered the Promised Land and died in their own sin (Num. 27:3).

A severe warning in this very context was given by the writer to the Hebrew epistle to exhort his readers not to likewise fall into the same category of unbelief as their forefathers: ***“To day if ye will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts ... But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end”*** (Heb. 3:7-14). A true believer will continue to the end but must first partake of Christ by faith for that life.

### ***He that cometh ... He that believeth...***

The provision of the life giving manna and water in the wilderness was a miraculous provision of God from heaven and from the rocks. Mankind’s daily need of food and drink for sustenance in its various forms is as ordered by God, even by the Son Himself, from creations day and none can evade this arrangement, whatever their view or opinion of life. All must submit to Him, even if they refute His existence!

The soul’s salvation however is secured as a once-off act of coming and believing upon Christ. When the Jews murmured at His claim to be the ***“Bread which came down from heaven”***, claiming a pre-existence with God, He used even stronger language as He begins to sift them; ***“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day”*** (vs. 53,54). This they acknowledged as a ***“hard saying”*** and many turned away from Him, misconstruing the truth of His words. Millions today still stumble as His words are inexcusably applied in a literal and sacrilegious sense to bread and wine as offered at a ‘mass’ with all the associated idolatrous adoration of such emblems. They will tragically discover that Purgatory is a myth and that no ‘mass’ said for them will ever get them out of Hell. How dreadfully solemn this delusion is!

Such an interpretation is impossible, being the devil’s deception. In actuality, it is when an individual makes good to themselves, by faith, the sacrifice of Christ and His shed blood at the cross for their sins that, in effect, they ***“eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood”***, NOT literally, but by appropriation. ***“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that BELIEVETH on ME hath everlasting life”*** (v47).

---

**A**re there though any limitations on who can receive this Life? The Lord made it very clear that He will ‘refuse’ and ‘lose’ none who come to Him in true repentance and faith, ***“All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out ... lose nothing”*** (vs. 37-40). The Gospel testimonies and the book of Acts admirably bear this truth out. Do not linger any longer but come to Him without delay and receive His everlasting life **TODAY**.

Having begun we can continually learn and feed upon Christ and know His abiding presence during the remainder of our days on earth, until He raises us up to glory ***“at the last day”*** (v54). Let the exhortation be made ‘daily’ to ensure that all who gather with believers have a genuine faith in Him, a true partaking of Himself.