



THE OLD PATHS

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The Old Paths

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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.

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Contents

Editorial – The Holy Scriptures	J.A. Davidson	98
Editors Note – Ajay Chhatria	—	99
Daniels Vision of Four Great Beasts	J.A. Brown	100
The Acts of the Apostles (Ch 15:36-16:5)	Ian McKee	105
Virtuous Women – Mary of Magdala	J.A. Davidson	110
God and the Word of His Grace	M.A. Rudge	115
Being Ensamples to the Flock	—	116
Get to Know Your Bible – Old Testament Outline (4)	J.A. Davidson	117
He Called Me Out...	Harry Bell	128
Full of Good Works	Cliff Jones	129
Men of God Series – (19) Ezekiel	—	134
Questions Frequently Asked	—	144
Oh LORD, I know that the way of man...	—	—

How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light.

(Psalm 36:7-9)



From the Editor's Desk

The Holy Scriptures

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”

(2Timothy 3:16)

All sacred writings, Old Testament and New Testament, are brought into being by the breath of God. He breathed out the Scriptures. It is not just that God breathed into the authors, He did not suppress the personality of the human author but raised it to a higher level of activity. The Scriptures are beneficial for the act and context of teaching, for example, Hebrews. We profit from warning by rebuke and conviction, as in Galatians. We must obey by setting wrong to right, as in Corinthians. We gain training and instruction in righteousness, for example in Romans. The inspired writings are to guide our ways and to promote our fellowship with the Divine Author.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut. 6:6-7).

When quiet in my house I sit,
Thy Book be my companion still,
My joy Thy sayings to repeat,
Talk o'er the records of Thy will,
And search the oracles Divine,
Till every heartfelt word be mine.

O may the gracious words Divine
Subject of all my converse be!
So will the Lord His follower join,
And walk and talk Himself with me,
So shall my heart His presence prove,
And burn with everlasting love.

Oft as I lay me down to rest,
O may the reconciling word
Sweetly compose my weary breast!
While in communion with my Lord,
I sink in blissful dreams away,
And visions of eternal day.

Rising to sing my Saviour's praise,
Thee may I publish all day long;
And let Thy precious word of grace
Flow from my heart, and fill my tongue;
Fill all my life with purest love,
Till called to join Thy saints above.

William Hoste

Editors Note

On behalf of our dear brother Ajay Chhatria, I convey his thanks to all the readers from India and Ireland, together with all Christian friends that continue to pray for his wellbeing and recovery as he continues to receive high quality therapy in Vellore.

As you can understand, it is difficult for him to communicate due to physical challenges resulting from his stroke.

**“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest
prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth”
(3John 2)**

Daniel's Vision of Four Great Beasts

J.A. Brown

Chapter 7

(All quotations are from Daniel Chapter 7, unless otherwise stated)

Introduction and Background

Daniel chapters 1 to 6 were mainly historical, with dreams/visions experienced by Gentile kings being interpreted by Daniel. From chapter 7 we have visions given to Daniel himself being angelically/Divinely interpreted, mainly concerning prophetic events. The narrative reverts to the first year of Belshazzar (556-555 BC). This vision of four great beasts seems to run parallel to Nebuchadnezzar's dream image of chapter 2, but with very different imagery being used. The dream image consisted of various metals; images of glory, strength and greatness that would appeal to the human mind as attractive. Thus would the four successive empires appear to the eyes of man! In contrast, here in chapter 7, Daniel's vision of these four great beasts was really how the character of these four empires was viewed by God – as beasts, having no conscience and absolutely repugnant!

The Four Great Beasts

The empires seen in the metals of Nebuchadnezzar's image (Dan. 2:31-45) and these four great beasts here in chapter 7 represent the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24), beginning when the line of David no longer ruled and finishing when "David's greater son" (Christ) will reign universally! Other empires have existed in history (e.g. the British Empire) but they are of no concern here, they are not mentioned in Scripture and they have had no direct effect on God's earthly people. These four great beasts are Babylon (Dan. 2:36-38), Medo-Persia and Greece (Dan. 8:20-21); the fourth beast is not specifically identified. Historically we know it was Rome, but there

must be a reason for this name omission. These empires were diverse (v3) – they certainly were distinct from each other, but the fourth empire has/will have completely different characteristics!

The Prophetic Gap

The period from Pentecost to the Rapture (the “Church Age”) is not the subject of Old Testament prophecy. The prophetic clock stopped at Pentecost when the fourth empire (Rome) was still dominant; after the Rapture it will take centre-stage again, in some form, going into the Tribulation period. Daniel, like all OT prophets, knew nothing of the “Church age”/“Day of grace” leading up to the Rapture; it was a mystery in OT times, only to be revealed in the NT! What was revealed to Daniel only concerned God’s earthly people and their relationship to Gentile nations up to the time of Christ (then the prophetic gap) and then after the Rapture into the Tribulation period. Most of the dream image prophecy of chapter 2 and this vision of the beasts in chapter 7 has been historically fulfilled – but not all! The fourth empire will be enacted again after the Rapture.

Daniel Troubled (vs. 15 and 28)

Daniel was grieved, troubled and his countenance changed after he had this vision, and especially concerning the fourth beast! What a testimony to Daniel’s feelings – his spirit, body and head all being involved (v15). He had always been concerned for the present character and the future of the nation whilst in captivity, but when it was revealed to him what would befall the nation regarding the fourth beast, he was much troubled! Daniel now realised that what his people were experiencing in their present captivity would pale into insignificance in a coming day in what we know as the Tribulation period. Yet ultimately through tragedy, there would be triumph, for “the times of the Gentiles” would come to an end, the final Gentile kingdom would be destroyed (v26) and the “stone” foretold in chapter 2 would fall and the final everlasting kingdom established (v27).

The First Two Beasts – The Lion and the Bear (vs. 4-5)

The first beast was a lion with eagle's wings (v4) corresponding to the head of gold of Daniel 2:32,38. This was the Babylonian empire. A lion suggests strength and majesty, while the eagle's wings suggest mobility. The Babylonian empire was still existing when Daniel had this vision; Nebuchadnezzar had died by this time having had his wings plucked (v4) when he lived in insanity, animal-like, for 7 years (Dan. 4:16,32). The second beast (v5), the bear, corresponded to the breast and arms of silver of the dream image (Dan. 2:32). This was the Medo-Persian empire. The 2 silver arms indicated the dual nature of the kingdom and being raised on one side suggested that one member, the Persians, would eventually be dominant. The 3 ribs could indicate the 3 main nations conquered by Persia – Asia Minor, Babylon and Egypt! This kingdom was vicious, never satisfied and urged to "devour much flesh".

The Third Beast – the Leopard (v6)

The third beast was depicted as a leopard with 4 wings and 4 heads. It corresponded to the belly and thighs of brass of the dream image of Daniel 2:32, which represented the Grecian empire. Leopards are swift and stealthy in their movement, and the Greek empire under Alexander the Great made widespread, quick-acting conquests. Perhaps the 4 wings on the leopard would suggest flexibility and possible multi-directional movements. The Greek empire had only one head, Alexander, originally; after his death at 32 years of age the empire was divided between Alexander's 4 generals. The end of verse 6 shows us that despite the strength of human resources, God still over-rules in the kingdoms of men and gives and takes power from whosoever He wills!

The Fourth Beast – No Name Given (vs. 7-8)

The fourth beast was so terrifying, destructive and different from the other beasts, that no animal name could depict it! It had great iron teeth and 10 horns and a little horn (vs.7-8); cf. the dream image which had legs of iron and 10 toes (Dan. 2:33,42). The Greek empire

collapsed sometime before the Lord's birth, so it is this fourth empire that takes us into the NT, and must refer to imperial Rome. Rome obliterated all opposition against it and extended from Spain to Syria, then down into Egypt and North Africa. This fourth beast was in place when the prophetic clock stopped at Pentecost and the "Church Age" commenced; it will then re-emerge after the Rapture and into the Tribulation period. The features seen in these four beasts are all seen in the Beast of Revelation 13:1-2! This fourth beast was legally responsible for the death of Christ, it destroyed Jerusalem in AD70 slaughtering millions of God's earthly people and then persecuted early believers within its empire.

The Beast Slain and God's Kingdom Established (vs. 9-14)

As fierce and as terrifying as this fourth beast was, Daniel saw it cast-down (v9) and slain (v11). All the forces of evil will ultimately be destroyed with the coming in judgement of one who is divinely pure and powerful (v9). The character of the judge is seen in verse 9 – "fiery flame"/"burning fire". He is referred to by a title only found here in Scripture – "the Ancient of Days" (vs. 9,13,22). This fourth kingdom, however great in power and longevity in the eyes of men, is only temporary in God's timetable. However, His judgement is permanent on this fourth beast ("the burning flame"). A divinely established kingdom will then be set-up which shall never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44 and 7:14) in contrast to all the previous four kingdoms! This universal kingdom (v14) will be given to the "Son of Man" (vs. 13-14) with dominion and glory (v14) – then all nations will serve and obey Him!

The Ten Horns and the Little Horn (vs. 17-28)

We have already noted how Daniel was troubled when it was revealed to him how his people would suffer in the future. What a blessing to know that we, as believers, will never have to experience the Tribulation in any way or form! After the Rapture a renewed human power (the fourth beast) will re-emerge. These 10 horns represent 10 kings; yet the Roman Empire has never historically had

10 kings, so this part of the vision must still be future! In a fast-moving geo-political world today, things can change rapidly. Many refer to a still future “revived Roman Empire”, although Scripture doesn’t give it a name. It’s probably safer to say that the reactivated fourth beast will be characterised by features that once marked Rome; it certainly will be much larger in extent and power (“devour the whole Earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces” – v23).

Further Explanation

This fourth beast is described by an unusual word that is used only once in the book of Daniel – “stout” (“more stout than his fellows” – v20), meaning “chief” or “greater”. It was certainly more diverse than all the beasts that went before it. It had 10 horns (kings) in its head and another horn, a “little horn” (v8); 3 kings were subdued, with the little horn being in absolute control. Horns always denote power in Scripture (e.g. Zech. 1:18-21) and 10 is a number associated with administration. These 10 horns/kings give their power and strength to the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13) – we are therefore describing a satanically inspired world dictator of a G10 of nations under his control. Yet ultimately even this great adversary will be eternally judged (v26) and “the stone” of Daniel chapter 2 will fall, world empires will fade away and the everlasting kingdom established (v27).

Conclusion

This “little horn” of Daniel chapter 7 can be compared with the first Beast in Revelation 13 – both came out of the sea (7:3 cf. Rev. 13:1), both accounts speak of swelling words and blasphemies against the Most High (7:20,25 cf. Rev. 13:5-6), both are wearing out the saints (7:25 cf. Rev. 13:7) and both are given authority for a set time (7:25 cf. Rev. 13:5). What we have learnt so far from the dream image of chapter 2 and this present vision of the four great beasts in chapter 7, can be further expanded upon elsewhere in Scripture, including Zechariah 14, Matthew 24 and 25, 2Thessalonians 2 and especially

Revelation chapters 6-19. As we continue through Daniel's prophecy we will need to differentiate between the "little horn" of chapter 7, the "little horn" of chapter 8 and the "king" of Daniel 11:36! We trust (D.V.) to look at Daniel's vision of the Ram and the Goat (Ch. 8), and also of the little horn, in the next issue.

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 15:36-16:5

Ian McKee

Preparing for the second missionary journey (v.36-39)

This new section commences with an unspecified time point, "And some days after"; perhaps when winter gave way to spring. Of greater importance we learn from this section that great spiritual victories may often be followed by painful and sad events. So it was here.

"Paul said unto Barnabas, 'Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do'". It was Paul and Barnabas' united intention to revisit the Galatian assemblies they had seen planted and provide pastoral care and oversight. So the primary purpose on the second missionary journey was not to plant new assemblies in these areas but to strengthen those already planted. The initiative for this was from Paul who was more than a pioneer missionary. Not only did he see assemblies planted, he had a heart to see them nurtured.

While there was agreement between Paul and Barnabas as to the intention, there was no agreement as to the arrangements: "And Barnabas determined [was minded] to take with them John, whose surname was Mark". This wording mirrors that in Acts 12:25. John Mark went with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but he returned to Jerusalem part way through that

journey without any specific reason being given for his defection (Acts 13:13). Perhaps Barnabas was minded to take John Mark so as to give his cousin (Col. 4:10), a second chance, disregarding the possibility of defection occurring again. Promotion of a relative always incurs actual and reputational risk; it can often be very unwise to attempt it. Spiritual reasons must always prevail over personal considerations.

However, Paul “thought not good to take him [John Mark] with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work”. Paul considered it to be unwise to have one with him day by day who had previously shown himself to be unreliable. This reminds us that in the service of God, faithfulness outweighs gift. Paul took a serious view of John Mark’s earlier desertion and lack of perseverance. His duties on the earlier journey may have been practical and supportive but whatever they entailed became additional responsibilities for Paul and Barnabas. The Lord’s work is not something which people may take up when they enjoy it and abandon it when its demands become costly or onerous.

The outcome was significant: “And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus”. It is always sad to see division between the Lord’s servants, particularly when their disagreement arose from a positive exercise of heart. However, in matters of doctrine they were united and Paul later makes favourable mention of Barnabas (1Cor. 9:6), which disproves any inference that there was ongoing irritation between them. In addition, there was later reconciliation between John Mark and Paul: Col. 4:10; 2Tim. 4:11. It is a mistake to connect this issue with that of Galatians 2:13 in which Barnabas played only a temporary and minor part.

We should note that while the issue between Paul and Barnabas was serious they did not divide the assembly over it, nor each establish their own ‘brand’ of Christianity based on personality. Having recently avoided schism on Jew/Gentile lines it would have been

disastrous to have schism on the basis of preacher personality. God is sovereign and can overrule in the divisions between His servants so that outreach is effectively doubled with two missionary teams. Barnabas and John Mark depart for Cyprus, which was Barnabas' native island. Tradition has it that Barnabas remained there until his death. However, it is sad to note that, as a result of these events, Barnabas no longer features in the onward progress of the gospel toward Rome; which is the developing theme in the Acts of the Apostles.

The second missionary journey commences (v.40,41)

We then read "And Paul chose Silas", someone whose recent ministry in Antioch had greatly impressed him. Paul is therefore furnished with a well-qualified co-worker (a Jerusalem Jew, v22; a prophet, v32; and a Roman citizen, Acts 16:37). They then "departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God", just as Paul and Barnabas had been for the first missionary journey (Acts 14:26). Paul and Silas certainly had the commendation of the Antioch assembly, something that is not recorded in relation to Barnabas and John Mark. While two preaching pairs were now operating they did not have equal endorsement from the Antioch assembly.

Paul and Silas "went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches". They move north through the 'Cilician Gates', a majestic, narrow pass through the Taurus mountains connecting the low plains of Cilicia to the Anatolian Plateau. Syria and Cilicia formed one administrative province. They were engaged in consolidating and strengthening the assemblies planted on the first missionary journey.

Introduction to Timothy (Acts 16:1-5)

The second missionary journey leads to the evangelisation of Europe (Acts 15:40-18:22). It involved a journey of between 3,000 and 4,000 miles. Those saved during this period exhibit the close connection between belief and behaviour, with Luke's chosen examples evidencing the broad scope of salvation.

Paul returned to assemblies he had seen planted, “Then came he to Derbe and Lystra”, with the use of the singular “he” denoting Paul as the leader (cf. Acts 18:19,23). It is interesting that the place where the outward leg of his first missionary journey ended some seven years before and which was associated with suffering (Acts 14:8-19) became a source of great comfort. We are here introduced to a new character who fulfilled an important role in the subsequent work of the gospel and to Paul in particular; “and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek”.

Further detail about Timothy’s family is elsewhere given by Paul; “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2Tim. 1:5). The specifics as to when each of these women, and Timothy, were saved is not given. While these representatives of three generations were saved, it would be unwise to conclude that each were saved with a large time gap between. Paul refers to Timothy as “my own son in the faith” (1Tim. 1:2). Further insight is given as to Timothy’s upbringing; “And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Tim. 3:15). So while Timothy was the product of a mixed marriage, his grandmother and mother were evidently devout Jewesses who taught Timothy the Scriptures from childhood. Were Lois and Eunice saved when Paul and Barnabas came to Lystra on the first missionary journey? Was Timothy saved at the same time, or subsequently? Does 1Timothy 1:2 conclusively mean that Timothy was saved directly as a result of Paul’s preaching; or does it simply indicate close and intimate association in service? Whatever view is taken, Timothy became a disciple, a follower, an adherent of Paul.

Eunice, a Jewess marrying a Gentile, reflects a more liberal or less restrictive attitude than would be normal in Palestine or Jerusalem. However, Timothy’s mother being a Jewess made Timothy eligible to

be a Jew (Jewishness is transmitted through the maternal, not the paternal, link). The tense suggests that his father was dead.

Luke often displays an interest in men's reputations (cf. 1:21; 6:3; 10:22; 16:2; 22:12), including here in relation to Timothy: "Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium". He was evidently growing in grace and had made considerable strides in the period since his conversion. The local brethren could confidently recommend him as a travelling companion for Paul and Silas. Timothy appears to have had no objection to go, in wisdom respecting the judgment of older believers.

However, before taking Timothy with him, Paul "took and circumcised him [Timothy] because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek". At first this seems peculiar, particularly coming after the Council of Jerusalem, which established a clear understanding of Gentile/Jewish Christian relations. However, the action taken here was out of consideration to unsaved Jews who would be offended if Timothy was not circumcised. Presently in the eyes of the Jews Timothy ranked as a Gentile; but in the eyes of the Gentiles he was practically a Jew. Paul therefore regularises his status, particularly as any uncircumcised son of a Jewish mother would be viewed by Jews as being an apostate. Paul's action was appropriate therefore for a man with a Jewish mother who would serve among Jews. Timothy being born in a mixed marriage was therefore an exceptional case; the regular position being "But neither Titus ... being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised" (Gal. 2:3). The circumcision of Timothy, however exceptional, was only done after the theological principles were established at the Council of Jerusalem. We must note that Timothy's circumcision was nothing to do with salvation but with service out of respect for Christian and non-Christian Jews.

The cities "they went through" are those evangelised on the previous missionary journey, i.e. Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. They "delivered them the decrees for to keep" because they had been evangelised from Antioch. The decisions in the letter from the

Jerusalem Council were consistent with argument in the later Epistle to the Galatians. This duty completed is the last reference to this Council.

This section ends with another brief report of progress: “And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily”. The earlier reports were in Acts 2:47; 6:7 and 9:31. They were privileged to witness the regular and steady expansion of the Lord’s work. Gospel preaching makes the assemblies stronger numerically and Bible teaching makes them stronger spiritually.

(To be continued D.V.)

Virtuous Women

J.A. Davidson

MARY OF MAGDALA

“Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord”

(John 20:18)

Mary of Nazareth at the announcement of His Birth, was revealed to be a woman of Faith. Mary of Bethany anointed Him against His Burial; she was a woman of Hope. Mary of Magdala was undoubtedly marked by Love for her Blessed Lord, even in death she observed where they laid His Body.

HER DELIVERANCE

Magdala, now Mejdal, was a wretched hamlet, on the shores of Galilee, near Capernaum. It should have been a place of beauty. Mary may have been a woman of wealth with a home of affluence. She was possessed by seven devils, “Sunk in ruin, sin and misery, bound by Satan’s captive chain”. Josephus says that there were

hundreds of synagogues to the devil, and thousands of priests and priestesses of Satan in this region. Mary was the object of Sovereign choice. Luke says, “out of whom went seven devils” (8:2). Mark writes, “out of whom He had cast seven devils” (16:9), suggesting violent resistance. Demoniacs never sought Christ by their own accord. Christ alone, has power to bind the strong man. He had victory over Satan in the wilderness; He defeated him at the Cross. What a deliverance for such a tormented soul to come into the calm of sins forgiven, to be possessed by the Spirit of God.

HER DEDICATION

“Certain women ... ministered unto Him of their substance” (Luke 8:2-3). Mary Magdalene is always mentioned first in these lists of women with the disciples, except in John’s Gospel where prominence is given to “His mother”. In the Lord’s days of rejection, Mary followed Him in the path of dedication. Where He was, Mary was there too, “with Him”. From the start, she never lost sight of Him; she followed Him from Galilee (Matt. 27:55), always at His disposal, having sacrificed of her home comforts, in her own sphere of service as permitted by the Lord. She ministered unto Him, she heard His Words, saw His Works, and followed in His Ways. She was a living example, a dedicated follower. These women never preached publicly, they were never commissioned, but served with humility with the highest dignity in this unique privilege. The Lord restored what Satan had attacked. She was in the synagogue as a worshipper, on the way as a pilgrim, at the Cross in her love and dedication, at the tomb in her distress, and in the upper room in quiet fellowship with the disciples.

HER DEVOTION

As her blessed Lord was led out to Calvary, Mary followed, “beholding afar off”; “standing at the Cross”; she “sat over against the sepulchre”; she beheld, “how His Body was laid”, with love, tears, sorrow, and grief. Some of His followers went back, some followed no more, some of the disciples went home, one even denied Him, but

Mary was present at Golgotha, at the Cross, at His Death, at the Tomb, His burial in the Garden, among the four devoted women. We are only told of one apostle being at the Cross. John took Mary, the Lord's mother, away to his own home. There was reproach and danger to be associated with Jesus of Nazareth. They "laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip ... they gaped upon Me with their mouths" (Psa. 22:7,13). Passersby reviled, the people rejected, the priests mocked, the mob howled. He was misjudged, maligned, maltreated, whom "they slew and hanged on a tree". Mary was beholding these things with weeping eyes and rent heart. He was everything to Mary. Now that He had died, Mary's life was also at an end.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). This statement teaches three crucifixions; the Cross of Christ, the crucifixion of the world, and crucifixion for me as a believer. What the world did to our Lord Jesus, divides the believer and the worldling. The worldlings ambitions, attitude, unbelief and sin, deny the Cross:

"His dying crimson, like a Robe,
Spreads o'er His Body on the Tree
And I am dead to all the world,
And all the world is dead to me".

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

HER DISTRESS

"Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping" (John 20:11). Mary was sobbing, wailing, she was convulsed in tears, the word is "strong crying". Her world was as empty as the sepulchre, her heart was empty, she was as dead with Christ. The teaching of Romans chapter 5 is that He died for me. The lesson of Romans 6 is, that I died with Him. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:3-4). When we were baptized, we professed to identify with the Lord Jesus in death, burial and

resurrection, being raised to walk in newness of life. Our obedience in baptism was not just an act of a moment but should be the fact of a lifetime.

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre” (John 20:1). Mary waited obediently having observed the Sabbath. She had spent time devotedly, having prepared spices and ointments; nothing was too lavish for Him even in death. She was as empty as the empty tomb. His enemies took His words literally but the empty tomb brought her tears instead of joy, “Woman, why weepest thou?” (20:15). She came fearlessly; it was night, she passed through the dark streets of the city, there was fear, plottings, there had been murder in those streets; she entered, a lone woman into a garden, at a tomb. There was reason to be “affrighted”, she saw “angles”. She approached forgetfully; it was now “the third day”, even the Body of the dead Christ would have comforted her. If Christ be not risen, we are of all men or women, most miserable.

Mary said into the angels; “They have taken away my Lord”. Even in death, when all seemed so hopeless, Mary still identified with Him. She said that He was still “My Lord”. Mary was not interested in the disciples, the angels or “the gardener”. Mary “turned” twice. “She turned herself back” (20:14) and saw One whom she thought to be the gardener. It is good to turn from the distressing scenes of sorrow to find Him. Jesus said unto her, “Mary”. “She turned herself” again, (20:16). He was revealed in one Word; His voice, His tone, her name; it was what she knew best. In the dawning light of that first resurrection morning, she too, uttered only one word, “Rabboni”, Master, My Teacher.

The resurrected Lord Jesus was seen by one, two, seven, ten, of eleven, of over five hundred at once. He was seen at the tomb, in the garden, on the road, in the room, on the shore, in Judæa, in Galilee, in the clouds. Mary heard His Voice; His disciples saw His Wounds; John saw His Provisions; Thomas beheld his Lord. Elizabeth called

Him, “My Lord”, before His birth; Mary spoke of Him after His death as “My Lord”. Thomas after resurrection said; “My Lord and my God”, (John 20:28).

HER DELIGHT

Jesus saith unto her, “Do not cling unto Me”. She may have thrown her arms around Him; did she hold His feet? “Go to My brethren”, this was a new relationship. “Go”; she was sent as a messenger having seen Him first. She was not bidden to go into all the world and preach, He did not commission any women to publically preach. “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God” (20:17). She testified as to His resurrection and Ascension.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2). Godly sisters have a unique privilege in their own sphere to set the saintly tone of the assembly and to acknowledge the Headship and Lordship of the Ascended Christ.

“Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her” (John 20:18). This is the last specific mention of this virtuous woman as she gathered with the disciples. After the disciples saw the Lord ascend from Mt. Olivet, they returned and went up into the upper room where they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication; “with the women” (Acts 1:14). If Mary Magdalene was present, she was content to lose her identity with the company gathered where Jesus Christ is Lord.

Concluded

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory;
but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other
better than themselves. (Philippians 2:3)

God and the Word of His Grace

The Late M.A. Rudge

When Paul commended the elders of the church at Ephesus “to God, and to the Word of His grace” (Acts 20:32), he brought together *two* important matters which are easily overlooked. They are one of approximately twelve pairs of words used in his message and are of special importance for elders, who are also described here as overseers and shepherds.

Both Paul and the elders at Ephesus faced a largely unknown future, except for the certainty of dangers from without and from within, but here was a twofold, unfailing and all sufficient resource. God Himself and the Word of His grace would be able to meet every need. It is not God without the Word of His grace and it is not the Word of His grace without God. Both are necessary. If it was God without His Word, it could leave room for human ideas, intellectualism, emotionalism and tradition. If it was His Word without God, it could lead to formalism, mere wordiness, and handling the Word without being in fellowship with Him.

Paul brought the same two things together again in the epistle to the Romans. In chapter 15, he concludes a long section of practical teaching by directing attention to, (i) the pattern of the selflessness of Christ, who “pleased not Himself,” (ii) the “patience and comfort” ministered to us by the Scriptures and (iii) God Himself as “the God of patience and consolation”. Again, God and His Word are brought together in a significant way by the use of the same words, to describe the twofold ministry needed to fulfil all the practical responsibilities and maintain like-mindedness to the glory of God.

As he put these two things together, Paul knew well that the patience and encouragement ministered from the Scriptures can only be realised in fellowship with God and as He ministers to us through

them. This connection is made by the definite article before each word – ‘Now the God of the patience and the encouragement, arising from the Scriptures, give you to be thinking the same thing among one another according to Christ Jesus, in order that with one mind and one mouth you may keep on glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (K.S. Wuest).

When Joshua was faced with the responsibilities of leadership in entering the land, the same two matters that have already been considered were again brought together twice, as the basis for him to be strong and of a good courage. He was given the assurance of the presence of God and the guidance of His Word – “as I was with Moses, so *I will be with thee*: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage ... Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to *all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee*” (Josh. 1:5-7). This is repeated in the reverse order in verses 8 and 9 – “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth ... Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

A great need of our day is for men who teach the Word of God in fellowship with Him. This will mean that they will be practicing what they teach – “the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19).

Being Ensamples to the Flock

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| In Conversion and in Testimony | – 1Thessalonians 1:7 |
| In Patience and in Suffering | – James 5:10 |
| In Doctrine and in Life | – 1Timothy 4:12 |
| In Devotion and in Humility | – 1Peter 5:3 |

Get to Know Your Bible

J.A. Davidson

OLD TESTAMENT OUTLINE – Paper No 4.

EXODUS – Part 2

THE TABERNACLE AND THE PRIESTHOOD (Chapters 25-31)

THE TABERNACLE (Chapters 25-27)

THE SANCTUARY (25:1-9). “The LORD spake unto Moses saying ... Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the Tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it” (25:1,8-9). This fulfils God’s purpose, having brought His people OUT of Egypt, He now desires to bring them IN to Himself that He may have a place that He may dwell among them. God desires to dwell among his people so that again, man will be communing with God. There has been no dwelling place since Eden, just temporary manifestations. We need to have spirit and conscious revelations of God’s presence so that we are not left in dryness and barrenness. Moses got no pattern in Egypt. The emphasis is Holiness, the Holy Place and the Most Holy. In the Bible, the vast work of creation is covered in two chapters. The building of the Tabernacle covers sixteen chapters showing its importance in God’s sight. “Gold, silver, brass”. The willing and the wise surrendered personal wealth to adorn the House. We never lose by giving back, it is sinful to withhold (Acts 5:1-11). As they left Egypt, they were granted freely what they had requested of the wealth of Egypt. They were victorious over Pharaoh, not vanquished as slaves.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT (25:10-16). Instructions as to the vessels begin with the Ark of God’s presence, the very innermost vessel of the Holiest. Overlaid with pure gold, with a crown of gold, containing

the two tables of the law, Aarons rod and the pot of manna. All God's works and purposes must begin in the sanctuary with God.

THE MERCY SEAT (25:17-22). "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat (propitiatory, from Heb. Cahphar, to cover), from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony". God manifest Himself in the glory cloud. The holiness and righteousness of Jehovah administered by the custodians of the very Throne of God could only be approached by blood sprinkled on, and seven times before the Mercy Seat, reminding us of "The blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14).

THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD (25:23-30). With the twelve loaves, expressed communion and fellowship with God typically of feeding upon Christ. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1John 1:3).

THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND (25:31-40). Made of solid gold, the seven branched lampstand does not speak of the public testimony of the light of the Gospel. The light from the lampstand shone over upon the other vessels and reflected upon the glory of the Most Holy. The continuous priestly function reflecting the glory of the beautiful almond beaten work speaks of the ministry and flow of the oil of the Holy Spirit. "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:14).

THE FABRICS OF THE TABERNACLE (26:1-14). The details of the fabrics of the Tabernacle (26:1-14), are richly significant of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ as set out in Hebrews 9:1-24. The curtains of white "fine twined linen" speaks of the sinless life and perfect personal righteousness of the Son of Man, the subject of Luke's Gospel. Loops of "blue", speak of the One who came down from heaven, the Son of God, the theme of John's Gospel, "purple" suggests His royal lineage traced in the Gospel of Matthew. "Scarlet" indicates the sacrificial blood of the Perfect Servant of Mark's Gospel. The unity of His Holy character and fitting work as Mediator is seen in

the perfect joining and hanging of the curtains. The “curtains of goats hair” remind us of the scape goat, the sin bearer (Lev. 16:9; Isa. 53:12). “A covering”, singular, for the tent of ram’s skins dyed red is typical of the One who was “wounded for our transgressions” (Isa. 53:5). “A covering above of badgers skins” speak of the lonely One. This plain black covering protected the tabernacle from the fury of the tempest, the beating storm, the searching sun, and the dew at night. Externally to the natural eye, the tabernacle was not attractive, it was not appealing. Christ was not appealing to the multitudes nor is the local assembly. “There was no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isa. 53:2).

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TABERNACLE (26:15-30). This consists of boards of acacia wood, which remind us of trees cut down in the forest, boards shaped and straightened out. This is a picture of ourselves in the assembly, the house of God. We were once proud sinners in native forest, cut down and brought to repentance by the Gospel; Jew and Gentile brought into shape by the teaching of the Word of God; baptised and gathered in close assembly fellowship to stand shoulder to shoulder in testimony. External walls of cloth, not stone walls or iron gates with metal locks, provided no security. The tabernacle possessed great wealth with no guards. The Divine Presence, the fear of God, reverence and holiness kept out all intruders. The “boards” set in sockets of silver, speaking of redemption, had stability to stand upright, helping to support each other. This is another picture of strength and steadfastness in assembly fellowship. There is a great preservation in unity, not isolation. Each board was covered by “gold”. We should look upon each other believer as a Divine work covered with gold. There were “ten (responsibility) curtains”, “fifty” golden (divine) clasps, “Pillars” for strength, “cords” reaching out to pegs, a picture of faith laying hold upon the promises of God and His Word.

THE VAIL (26:31-37). The beautiful vail, separating the Holy place from the most Holy typifies the sinless humanity of Christ (Heb. 10:20). It illustrates the truth that “by the deeds of the law there

shall no flesh be justified" (Rom. 3:20; Heb. 9:8). When Christ died on the cross, the vail was rent; Divinely from the top, equally in the midst; and eternally from the top to the bottom. The entrance vail signifies Christ who said "I am the way ... no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). The five "sockets of brass" (bronze) symbolize Divine righteousness in judgement, satisfied by redemption displaying the beauty of mercy and truth.

THE BRONZE ALTAR (27:1-19). This was the first of the vessels of approach, at the threshold. The great altar of acacia wood covered with brass measured 7½ feet (229cm) square and 4½ feet (137cm) high. This was for the sacrifice of animals. The sacrificial blood of atonement was the first necessity to man's approach to God. It is typical of the cross, the death of Christ, one whole burnt offering. It must be stressed that the suffering for sin has taken place already, outside the camp. "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:11-12).

Approach to God is by way of the Brazen Altar. The claims of righteousness having been met by Christ. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:10-12).

OIL FOR THE LAMPSTAND (27:20-21). "Pure oil olive beaten for the light". The light does not refer here to testimony in the world but to communion and worship as priest in the Holy place. The light shone over upon the table of shewbread and the altar of incense. The continuous priestly exercise at the lampstand revealed the brilliance of the almonds and the beaten work of pure gold. Access is by blood but communion and transformation into the likeness of Christ is by the oil of the Spirit of God (1Cor. 2:14; 2Cor. 3:18; Eph. 2:18).

THE PRIESTHOOD (Chapters 28-29)

THE GARMENTS OF THE PRIESTS (28:1-43). The basic function of the priesthood was to act as a mediator or administrator in the holy office between God and His people. To function in the tabernacle he was to receive, “holy garments ... for glory and for beauty” (28:1-5). The first part mentioned of Aarons dress of rich colour, his dress as the high priest, is the “ephod”, like an apron, with two sections joined at the shoulders and open at the sides. The curious embroidered “girdle”, was a woven band around the waist (28:6-8). “Two onyx stones” (28:9-14), on each shoulder, were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. “The breastplate” containing twelve precious stones, each one bearing a name of a tribe was fixed by gold chains on the front of the ephod. The shoulders (v12) are the place of strength and the breast (v29) the place of affection. The breast plate, called “the breastplate of judgment” (28:15,29-30), bore “the Urim and the Thummim”, the light and the perfections which were used to determine judgements and guidance from the Lord (Num. 27:21; 1Sam. 28:6).

A blue “robe” was worn under the ephod, reaching down to the knees (28:31-35). On the hem were small bells and pomegranates speaking of testimony and fruit. The sound of the bells were heard when Aaron entered or left the holy place, “that he die not”. “The golden plate” graven “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” (28:36-39), was to be worn always on his forehead. This was meant to symbolise the acceptance of the high priest as the representative of the people before God in bearing “the iniquity of the holy things”. Aaron’s sons wore garments, “for glory and beauty”. As they ministered in the Holy Place, their tunics, sashes, linen breeches (trousers) and bonnets (hats) clothed them from their heads to their ankles. They ministered on holy ground therefore we do not read of covering their feet.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS (29:1-46). To “consecrate Aaron and his sons” means literally “to fill the hand of”. Placing the sacrifices that follow in the priest’s hands to offer before God means

that they were sanctified and installed in the holy service of priesthood.

THE TABERNACLE (Chapters 30-31)

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE (30:1-10). The golden altar stood in the holy place, 18 inches (46cm) square, 36 inches (91cm) high. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. On it, incense was burned morning and evening speaking of the intercessory work of Christ, as we offer praise and prayer. Aaron applied the blood of the sin offering on the horns of the altar to make an atonement.

THE REDEMPTION MONEY (30:11-16). The half shekel of silver, also called the atonement money, was given by all, rich or poor, according to the census of the people, as an offering unto the Lord to make an atonement for their soul. This speaks of the redemption necessary for the service of the tabernacle.

THE LAVER (30:17-21). True worship demands continual cleansing from daily defilement. The priests used it to wash their hands and feet as they went into the tabernacle or serve at the altar. It is symbolic of the “washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25-27; Heb. 10:22; 1John 1:9).

THE ANOINTING OIL (30:23-33). Oil as a type of the Holy Spirit was used to anoint the tabernacle, the vessels and the priests. This signifies the necessity for the endowment of the Holy Spirit in all spiritual and divine service.

THE INCENSE (30:34-38). The incense was a perfume made from various spices to be burned on the golden altar morning and evening, speaking of Christ ascending unto God as the sweet odour of our acceptance. “Stacte” means “to drop or distil” (Song of Songs 5:13). Matthew records HIS WORDS. “Onycha” means “a lion”, speaking of the uncompromising firmness and faithfulness; the decision of the character of Christ; HIS WILL undeviating as seen in Mark’s Gospel. “Galbanum” was white and fragrant, typical of His purity, Holiness, blameless, His spotless life; HIS WALK as traced in Luke’s Gospel. “Each ... of like weight” His Grace and Truth, internal excellency,

outward purity, were all exactly proportioned, harmonised and blended.

No quantities were specified, His perfections are immeasurable. "Thou shalt beat some of it very small". All the varied and combined excellencies of the Lord Jesus in the minutest thought and act of Person and life, were precious to the Father. "Where I will meet with thee". The ground on which God and man meet, mercy and truth unite is at Calvary, also unites believers to praise His perfections. "None like it". His preciousness is inimitable and cannot be counterfeited. There was to be nothing made like the perfume, the confection after the art of the apothecary, speaks of that which was uniquely supreme. True worship is the overflowing of the heart satisfied with Christ.

THE CRAFTSMEN (31:1-11). "Bezaleel" (in the shadow of God) and "Aholiab" (tent of my father) were chosen by God to supervise other wise hearted craftsmen in the special skilled workmanship of constructing the tabernacle and all its furniture. The work is the Lord's but He calls His workers. With the Divine command there is always the Divine enablement.

THE SABBATH AND THE TWO TABLES OF STONE (31:12-18). The rest of God's Sabbath was disturbed by sin (Gen. 2:2). How beautiful to consider the workmen engaged in the completion of another work to God's satisfaction. This rest on the Sabbath Day and the completion of the writings, inscribed on the two tables of stone by the finger of God, "made an end" of God communing with Moses upon Mount Sinai (v18).

THE GOLDEN CALF (Chapters 32-34)

"Moses delayed". In previous chapters, God has revealed His holiness and righteousness. He redeemed His people from bondage, supplied all their needs as He led them out of Egypt, gave them great treasure and wisdom to build the house of God and now gives to Moses, the tables of the law upon Mount Sinai. At the bottom of the mount, impatient with God and His servant, these same people break the

first commandment, call for the making of a graven image, seek to worship other gods, engage in revelry, eating, drinking and immorality. Their rebellious and callous conduct was incredible, especially their desire to replace the blood of the Passover Lamb with the glitter of the bull worship of Egypt. Before Moses had returned bringing the Holy oracles of God into their midst, they had displayed the exceeding wickedness of man's fallen nature, their disobedience and utter inability in their own strength, to keep the legal covenant they had vowed to obey.

"Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (32:19). They were now under the curse of a broken law. Aaron said, "Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf". They used gold, the chief metal of the tabernacle to make an image of a four footed beast. There was abomination in the camp. Man lacking faith, having lost sight of the One who has ascended into the presence of God, needs something visible, that is shiny. "The people gathered themselves together unto Aaron". They gathered to the wrong man. The man who should have led them into the presence of God was leading them away from God. Moses got the pattern on the Mount; Aaron got his pattern from Egypt. Aaron was older than Moses, he was more eloquent, a good speaker, more pliant, more flexible, he bent like a sapling, he floated with the popular current of the time, three months after they left the slavery of blackness and bondage. It was "molten", the flesh produces something easily made, very pliable.

The "beaten" vessels of the tabernacle required God given skill to produce beauty and glory. Christendom gets their pattern from fleshly desires for bigger cathedrals, crosses, clericy, and crowds. Babylon uses adornments to produce the scarlet woman. Aaron built an altar that was not asked for, and proclaimed a feast, not requested. They "offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings", but no sin offering. They rose up to "play" not to pray. At the bottom of the mountain, Aaron, at the level of the people,

brought nakedness, shame, idolatry, insanity and manifest the depravity of the people. God said, "Let Me alone". He knew that Moses would pray. The intercession of Moses, the man who was prepared to lay down his life for the people, is a beautiful picture of the advocacy of the Lord Jesus (1John 2:1-2). Moses ground the golden calf to powder, scattered it on the water and made the people drink. The people must taste the bitterness of sin to learn the horrendousness of idolatry, in the sight of God. "Who is on the LORD'S side"? Some of the people were still continuing out of control. Sin brings division and the need of purging. The broken law brought the death of three thousand souls. The Gospel of the Grace of God brought the salvation of 3000 souls at Pentecost. The "consecration" of the Levites may be the reason why they were chosen to be the "blessing" of the priestly tribe.

This whole sad chapter reveals the inability of the law (though good in itself – there is nothing but good in the law), to bring forgiveness, salvation and justification. The law was a pedagogue to uncover man's guilt, to bring to repentance and confession of sin. Salvation is by "atonement for sin" (v30).

REPENTANCE OF THE PEOPLE (33:1-23). God remains faithful despite the unworthiness of His people. He confirmed his promise to give them the land of Canaan. "I will send an angel before thee". God Himself could not accompany them in their midst for they were a stiffnecked people, "lest I consume thee in the way" (33:1-6). "The tent of meeting" means the tent of assembly or appointment and was pitched outside the camp. This was not the tabernacle or house of God which was not yet constructed to be placed in the midst of the camp. This was a temporal provision. Faithful individuals, having stripped themselves of any offending ornaments, who desired to seek the Lord could leave the defiled camp and seek God's presence outside the camp (33:7-13). "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (33:14-23). The Lord assured Moses of His presence. "I will give thee rest" literally to settle down and dwell safely in the promised land. Moses said, "I beseech Thee, shew me

Thy glory". Moses needed a fresh vision of God before his people left Sinai. He could not behold the essential Being of God, but he had direct, face to face, unhindered communion with God. God put His servant in the cleft of the Rock and covered him with His hand as He passed by. God is spirit, not body. This is figurative language of the appearance of God's back, the afterglow of the full splendour. The Son of God said, "He that has seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

THE COVENANT RENEWED (34:1-28). The promised vision of the covenant of God was based upon the renewal by the second table of the law. Moses prepared "two tables of stone like unto the first". Jehovah wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. This involved the proclamation of the Name of the Lord; "Jehovah, the Mighty One, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin".

THE SHINING OF MOSES' FACE (34:29-35). Moses was unaware that his face was shining as a result of being in God's presence, forty days and forty nights. In 2Corinthians 3:13-18 the apostle Paul states that Moses veiled his face so that the people would not see the fading glory of the law. This veil is done away in Christ. The veil remains upon unbelieving Jews who reject Christ. At the second coming of Christ, the veil will be removed from the nation when they repent and accept their Saviour (Rom. 11:25-26; Zech. 12:10-13:1).

THE ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE (35:1-40:33)

These chapters detail the carrying out of the instructions for the setting up of the Tabernacle and the institution of the Priesthood given in chapters 25-31. The purpose of this repetition is to emphasise the importance of the Tabernacle and Priesthood in the foreshadowing of the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ who far surpassed the type, fulfilled all that was foreshadowed and left nothing undone in God's great programme of redemption. The keeping of the Sabbath teaches that before any work is done,

obedience and rest in the Lord's presence must come first (35:1-3). The offerings must come from a stirred and a "willing heart". The work of construction was for the "wise hearted" as gifted and enabled by God (35:4-35). "The people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much" (36:6-7). This liberal and spontaneous giving to God should always mark the redeemed people who remember that God gave His only begotten Son.

THE ORDER OF THE VESSELS (37:1-38:31). The Ark of God's presence and the Mercy Seat, are again prominent as the first vessels mentioned (as in 25:10,17) being in the midst of the Holy Place. The vessels of the holy place; the table of shewbread (25:23), the lampstand (25:31), and the incense altar (30:1) are detailed next. The anointing oil, the altar of burnt offering, and the construction of the courts (again, as in chapters 37 and 38) stress the order of the vessels of approach unto God. Every last "pin" was essential to the construction and observed by Jehovah as recorded in His Word.

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS (39:1-31). The garments of the High Priest and the functioning priesthood stress that holiness and righteousness must come before worship and glorification. The gold plate was engraven "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" so that Aaron might bear the iniquity of the holy things (28:38). The lesson is that all our worship and service is stained with sin which must be purged from all impurity by our Great High Priest, before it is acceptable by the Father (Heb. 9:13-14).

"Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by his precious blood,
Before Thy Throne Thy children fall,
And worship Thee, our God".

James G. Deck (1807-84)

THE FINISHED WORK (39:32-40:33). "According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And

Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the LORD had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them". Failure to obey God had brought many sorrows upon His people. It is vital to obey the Word of God in detail without deviation. "This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, and to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory" (29:42-43). God is faithful to His promises. This quotation from chapter 29 reveals that obedience is essential, even though details may seem to be oft times repetitious. Failure to follow the teachings and doctrines of the Holy Scripture in the NT assembly will cause division, departure and disaster instead of God's intention of rest, repose and sweet remembrance of all we have in the Person and work of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE TABERNACLE (40:34-38)

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (40:34). As redeemed, vindicated and victorious, the people marched out of Egypt, the cloud went before them to lead them in the way, day and night (13:22). He took not away the cloud. Now an obedient people, represented by "washed" priests before the altar, followed the cloud, and rested where it rested, "For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was upon it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (40:38).

He Called Me Out...

He called me out – the Man with garments dyed,
I knew His form, My Lord, the Crucified,
He showed Himself, and oh! I could not stay,
I had to follow Him, had to obey.

It cast me out – this world, when it had found,
That I within my rebel heart had crowned,
The Man it had rejected, spurned and slain,
Whom God in wondrous grace has raised to reign.

And so we are without the camp – My Lord and I,
But oh! His presence sweeter is than any earthly tie,
Which once I counted greater than His claim,
I'm out, not only from the world, but to His Name.

Harry Bell (1905-76)

Full of Good Works

The Late Cliff Jones

Not of Good Works

Salvation is entirely of grace though faith in the Person and completed work on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the cross the Lord suffered and His precious blood was shed. As our substitute He paid the penalty for our sins and voluntarily tasted death. After three days He rose from among the dead and His resurrection showed that His sacrifice was accepted by God His Holy Father.

That a sinner can do nothing to contribute, in any way, to his own salvation is shown definitely and unequivocally in Ephesians 2:8-9, where we read, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast". A religious, natural man tends to think instinctively of earning salvation either entirely by his own good works or of contributing to his own salvation by doing good works, so that salvation would then result from a combination of the good works of the individual and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is that salvation is due entirely to the grace of God, and the glory,

thanksgiving and praise are entirely His. Being aware of the fact that we owe our salvation completely and entirely to God should have a humbling effect on us, and make us long to show our love and gratitude to Him by serving Him and doing good works which are in accordance with His will and for His glory.

The natural man can do nothing to please God, for “the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8). The Lord said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7), that is “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). The new birth is, therefore, entirely the work of God, and until and unless God moves in our lives we will not be saved. Writing to believers Paul said, “And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). God is the source of all spiritual and physical life and until He graciously quickens a person who is in the natural state of being spiritually dead, and gives that person spiritual life and awareness, then he will remain spiritually dead.

Using words, written or spoken, we tell the gospel to lost sinners, but unless the Holy Spirit moves in the heart of a sinner, convicting him of sin, showing him the terrible danger he is in, and revealing to him the love, grace and mercy of God, and the only way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ then the sinner will not respond to the message. The Lord said, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him”, and again, “No man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father” (John 6:44,65). It is entirely by the grace of God that a sinner is enabled to exercise “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). All the praise, glory, honour, worship, adoration and thanksgiving for our salvation are due solely and entirely to God.

Whereas it is true to say that God has elected or chosen some to be saved (Eph. 1:4), we must always remember that there is the parallel truth of human responsibility. An individual must, by a positive act of the will, chose to be saved. We read in John 6:37, “All that the Father

giveth Me shall come to Me”, this is God’s electing grace. The latter part of the verse goes on to say, “and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”, this phrase reveals human responsibility to accept God’s offer of salvation. God’s offer of salvation is free to all as is shown in Revelation 22:17, where the Holy Spirit says “whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely”. God has chosen some to be saved, but that does not mean that He has chosen some to be lost. The whole of humanity has sinned and deserves God’s eternal punishment, but God has graciously elected some to be saved. Believers are to preach the Gospel to as many people as they can reach. It is the hearer’s responsibility to accept or reject God’s gracious offer of salvation. The Word of God presents us with the truth of God’s sovereign election and the truth of human responsibility and one truth must not be emphasised at the expense of the other.

Evidence of Salvation

Reading on from Ephesians 2:8-9, which tells us of salvation by grace through faith, we read that, “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Good works do not contribute to the salvation of a sinner, but it is the will of God that having been saved, a believer should actively seek to do those good works which are in accordance with the will of God. The good works done by a believer are evidence of his salvation.

It is God that justifies (Rom. 8:33) and “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). We read in Galatians 2:16 that, “a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ ... for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”, and yet James tells us that “by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (2:24). If a man has professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and there is no evidence in his way of life of good works, then his profession is false and he has not been saved, he does not have a living, saving faith, for such a faith would inevitably result in good works. The good works would prove the

existence of the faith by which the man is justified. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:17,20,26) and a person who has a true and living faith, who has been saved by grace, will give proof of his salvation by acts of grace and love.

We read in Romans 4:5, "to Him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness". When Abraham, a Jew, believed God, "it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:22,11). He was justified by faith. Years later he obeyed God and offered up his son, Isaac, on an altar (James 2:21). In doing this, Abraham gave practical evidence of his pre-existing faith (Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham's works proved the existence of the faith by which he was justified.

Writing of the Gentile, Rahab, James asks, "was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (James 2:25). Her faith in God caused her to act as she did, her works proved the reality of her faith.

The Word of God contains numerous references to the need for good works to be seen in the lives of believers. In 2Timothy 3:17 we learn that one of the purposes of the precious, inspired Word of God is that "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works". Believers are told that men are to see their good works that God may be glorified (Matt. 5:16). We are to "walk worthy of the Lord ... being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). We who have been redeemed are to be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14), we are to be "careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). We can never lose our salvation for having been chosen "in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4) the believer is saved eternally for "whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom he called, them He also justified: and whom he justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). However, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2Cor. 5:10). We shall

gain or lose reward according to the things we have done or failed to do, in this life.

While she was With Them

It is only in this life that we have opportunities to do good works. This fact is brought out clearly in the account of Dorcas found in Acts 9:36-42. In these verses we read of Dorcas (Tabitha) who was a disciple who lived in Joppa. *Dorcas* is Greek and *Tabitha* is Aramaic for “gazelle”. Dorcas used her time and other resources, where she was, for the glory of God. Her life was full of good works. She was committed to doing good works which were evidence of her saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dorcas made garments and gave alms to the poor. She did what she could in the time available to her. It is only when we are alive on this earth that we have opportunities to serve God and give evidence of our faith by doing those good works God would have us to do (Eph. 2:10). Dorcas was active in her service for God, she did not spend her time in seeking pleasure for herself, or in simply thinking about or speculating on doing good works, she actually *did them*. The good works Dorcas did were evidence of her faith to the believers in the assembly where she was in fellowship. Her good works were also a witness to unbelievers in the area in which she lived. Acts of kindness are often remembered long after words have been forgotten.

There came a time when Dorcas was taken ill and she died. She was sorely missed by the widows she had helped. We must ask ourselves to what extent would we be missed. Would we be missed in the assembly? It was said at the funeral of a sister who had gone to be with the Lord, “the assembly will never be the same again”. Would we be missed in the area around the assembly and in the area where we live? Would our witness and good works be missed? Dorcas was missed and the widows lamented and grieved for her. The disciples knew that Peter was at nearby Lydda. They sent for him and he came immediately. When he came the weeping widows showed him the

garments Dorcas had made. Peter put them out of the room and knelt down and prayed. Then he said, “Tabitha, arise” and she rose from the dead. One consequence of these happenings was that “many believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:42). Dorcas did what she did in accordance with the will of God, and she did it well and as unto the Lord. Her faith and obedience had far reaching affects.

As believers we are to do good first of all to those who are “of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10), that is our fellow believers. Apart from, and in addition to, fellow believers, there are those in need and suffering in the world around us. In Galatians 2:10 we are enjoined to “remember the poor”, and in James 1:27, a believer is told to “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”.

MEN OF GOD SERIES

(19) EZEKIEL

“The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God”

(Ezekiel 1:1)

Ezekiel wrote about “The glory of Jehovah” (1:28). The first vision that he saw was “the likeness of a Throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the Throne was the likeness as the appearance of a Man above upon it” (v26). Ezekiel’s name means; “God strengthens”. Like Isaiah, this tremendous revelation of the Throne was the Source of His Strength. Isaiah saw seraphim, Ezekiel saw four “living creatures” or “cherubim” each had wings to move in the heavens with intelligence, power, patience, and swift administration of the Throne. They had “wheels” indicating irresistible progress of swift motion in the events on earth. “Their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a

wheel" (v16), going straight, each wheel transversely advancing forward but incapable of turning back. This awesome, omniscient, Divine knowledge was given on Divine direction by the "Spirit" moving with no restriction accomplishing the Divine Will and Sovereignty for the nation and the nations, Jew and Gentile. The "Glory of the One" who spake to Ezekiel, accepted his worship. "When I saw it, I fell upon my face" (v28). This Voice of Authority, and Vision of Power was given as a great stimulant to the faithfulness to the servant of God, who was among the captives in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar in Babylon.

THE TRIALS HE ENDURED

Apart from the Lord Jesus, there has been no other Servant of God who faced more trials, carried more burdens, distresses, dangers and disappointments than Ezekiel. His name is not mentioned specifically in any other book in the Bible. What we know about his own personal experiences are from his own writings. God intended Ezekiel to be a sign to the nation of Israel from the experiences of his life (24:24). He was a faithful servant who felt the weight of his ministry, a burden for God's people, and the awful reality of judgement upon rebels. His life was completely under God's appointment. Although living in isolation and oppression in Babylonish captivity, he was greatly used by God as having a mighty influence as a priest upon the worship of God.

"And He said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me" (2:3). They are designated a "rebellious" people, five times in chapter 2, as well as "imprudent" and "stiffnecked". "And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them" (2:5). The futile rebellion of Zedekiah against Babylon was exceeded by the constant idolatry and apostasy of the nation against God. This was true of their forefathers and continuously characteristic of the present generation of captives. They were no better in their state of

revolt and idolatry than the heathen “nations” around them. They were “impudent” (lit. hard of face), stubborn, resolute and shameless. Ezekiel could expect their reaction to the Divine message of judgement upon their sins to be completely hostile and wilfully obdurate.

“And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious” (2:6-7). Imagine being commissioned, as Ezekiel was by Adonai Jehovah (i.e. Lord GOD), the Supreme Lord, to carry the message of coming judgement and being told that these rebels will not listen to you! The object of the Divine message was to provide clear evidence which could not be denied that the voice of Jehovah had spoken through His faithful messenger Ezekiel. A scroll written without and within was given to him, and “there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe” (2:10). This scroll he was to eat and then to “go speak unto the house of Israel”. A servant of God must absorb the message himself before preaching it to others. The eating and masticating is metaphorical, indicating that he understood the message and the sweetness of it to him should manifest that he had an agreement with the Word of God.

His ministry began with silence (3:22-27). “The Glory of the LORD” appeared again at his second vision. In “the plain” (valley) the Lord talked with him, “Go, shut thyself within thine house”. He was not to go out among the people, the Spirit entered into him, saying “Thou shalt not go out among them: And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house”. He was to refrain from public ministry. His seclusion involved actual restraint; they put “bands” upon him, trying to inhibit Ezekiel, thinking that he was mad. He was like the Lord Jesus, “They went out to lay hold on Him: for

they said, He is beside Himself” (Mark 3:21). If they bound Ezekiel to make him keep quiet, God acquiesced, depriving them of reproof or the watchman’s warnings. The most severe judgement that God imposes upon those with a hard and impenitent heart is to “gave them up ... gave them up ... give them over” to His wrath upon their reprobate corruption (Rom. 1:24-28).

In Hebrew thinking, there is a close connection between speech and action. In the section (4:1-5:4), Ezekiel is instructed to give four symbolic acts to illustrate, the siege, exile and destruction of Jerusalem. On the “TILE” he drew the map of Jerusalem and the siege around it. The “IRON PAN” or flat plate illustrated the barrier between God and the city because of their sin. Punishment was illustrated by THE PROPHETS POSTURE to lie on his left side facing north toward the house of Israel, and again in his right side facing the house of Jacob, “to bear their iniquity”. “Forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year” (4:6). This did not mean that he was prone night and day (part of the day was spent preparing food, 4:9). The children of the captivity would see his action and ask what it meant. As the representative of the nation, “Thou shalt bear their iniquity” (4:4). This was symbolic of bearing the burden, to feel the weight, to be pressed down, not able to escape punishment of the “iniquity”. This was not vicarious or mediatorial. God’s patience was at an end. God had set his face against the city (15:7). His servant was to do likewise (4:3; 20:46). The prophet’s posture demonstrated the implacable, irrevocable purpose of God to destroy the city.

“Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine ARM SHALL BE UNCOVERED, and thou shalt prophesy against it” (4:7). His arm withdrawn from his tunic indicated a readiness for battle. “Bands” or chords restricted his movements for the time allotted. The Lord Jesus said, “But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished” (Luke 12:50).

The horrors of the siege and exile to Babylon were illustrated by the eating of POLLUTED BREAD in a time of famine. This was

unspeakably abhorrent to Ezekiel, the godly priest whose sensibilities to dietary laws were deeply offended. For three hundred and ninety days Israel would eat defiled bread, prepared in loathsome filth, offered to idols, and drink pollution for the allotted time. Instead of being a sanctified separate people their daily allotment would be the “abominable” repugnant produce of sickening idolatry. “Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof” (4:9). God hates mixtures. They copied the idolatry of the heathen nations. In captivity, God made them sick of idols, and “consume away for their iniquity” (4:17).

The sign of the SHARP KNIFE and BARBER’S RAZOR upon his hair (5:1) was a shameful act and forbidden for a priest (Lev. 19:27; 21:5). One cannot comprehend the horror of Ezekiel as he was called upon to destroy the mark of his consecration. The agent of God’s wrath upon Israel was the sharp “sword” of Babylon. Similar language is used about Assyria (Isa. 7:20). To be left with half a beard was a sign of disgrace, mourning and catastrophe. This dear servant of God must have felt this keenly and been severely tested as to his obedience to God and love for God’s people. The hair was to be burned, one third in the midst of the city (in the siege, death by plague, famine and fire); one third around the city (smitten by the sword) and one third away from the city (scattered by the wind) as they tried to escape by flight. Egypt, Moab or Ammon provided no safety. Judgement was equally proportionate and certain even to the few in number “in thy skirts” (tunic), a remnant who likewise suffered in captivity.

The lesson for us from the object lessons of the dumb prophet is that, as the Lord taught, we should go and “shew”, by clear example, before we attempt to preach verbally.

I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day,
I’d rather one would walk with me than only tell the way;
The eyes a better pupil, more willing than the ear;
Fine council is confusing, but examples always clear.

The best of all the preachers are the men who live their
creeds –

To see good put into action is what everybody needs;
I soon can learn to do it if you let me see it done;
I can watch your hands in action but your tongue too fast
may run.

The lectures you deliver may be very wise and true –
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do;
I may or may not understand the high advice you give,
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how
you live.

Edgar Guest (1881-1959)

THE WITHDRAWAL HE WITNESSED

Instead of the young priest administering the Holy oracles in the sanctuary, Ezekiel is transported in spirit to receive visions of abominable practices that merit swift implacable judgement. He saw an image of jealousy in the entry of the house of God, mocking God's outraged authority; secret chambers of the elders hiding disgusting practices; the worship of creeping things (Egyptian idolatry); the women weeping for the god of fertility (Babylonian idolatry), and worshippers of the sun god (Persian idolatry).

They "provoke Me to anger: and lo they put the branch to their nose" (8:17), expressed a gesture by the priests of exceptional defiance and contempt of God. They said, God has forgotten, God does not know, we can do what we like. This involved disdain for the coming Messiah. This attitude prevails today toward the Lord's second coming. A vision of Christ and His Coming Glory is essential for every servant of God if he is to set his affection on things above this sordid, sinful world.

A fresh vision of the Throne of the Glory of God, as given to Ezekiel in chapter 1, is repeated in chapter 10:1-17. Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord departing in a reluctant prolonged process from between the cherubims to the threshold of the house, to the east gate, to the

midst of the city, “and stood upon the mountain (Mount of Olives) which is on the east side of the city” (11:23).

THE WARNING HE SOUNDED

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the Word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me” (3:17). The duty of the watchman, sat in the watchtower upon the city wall, was to sound a warning blast on the trumpet immediately he saw the clouds of dust raised by approaching hostile forces. Ezekiel was to be this lonely figure standing apart from his complicit fellows, to keep constant vigil and to warn of impending judgement. This was a solemn responsibility. If he failed to warn of coming judgement and someone was slain as a result of his failure to raise the alarm, even though the slain be a wicked man, God said, “His blood will I require at thine hand” (3:18). The vigilance of the watchman is repeated again in chapter 33:1-9. His warnings went unheeded. The difficulty was for Israel to realise that God was arrayed against them because of their abominations and their iniquity and that God would allow Nebuchadnezzar to punish this rebellious people, break down the walls, burn the city, destroy the House of God and carry the vessels and captives away to Babylon.

THE GLORY RETURNS

“The hand of the LORD was upon me (6th reference; a serious weighty burden), and carried me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about (on this side and on that side): and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?” (37:1-3). The regeneration of a dead nation was by God’s sovereign grace, “not for your sakes” (36:22), not one man’s merit. No prophet affirms the Work of the Holy Spirit (36:27) in regeneration as Ezekiel does. The fulfilment of Divine purpose will be in accordance with the covenants with Abraham and David. Upon return from Babylon the exiles failed again; they rejected the Messiah, they are today

scattered again in contempt among the heathen. Ezekiel was shown a vision of dry, bleached, helpless, dead bones beyond human aid. As a priest, Ezekiel must not come into contact with dead bodies, unclean, defiling, hence he must “pass by ... round about”. The Nation was like severed limbs, scattered in Assyria and Babylon, with no corporate identity or nationhood. “Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath (Spirit) to enter into you, and ye shall live” (37:5). That is life infused from a state of deadness.

Ezekiel was to “prophecy” by faith, that disconnected, shameful, slain, unburied bones, “shall live”. Ezekiel had prophesied the RETRIBUTION of Israel and Judah, as they had been defiled, scattered, dispersed, since they had profaned the Name of God. They had REPENTED and abhorred their sins, “and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations” (36:31). The house of Israel shall say, “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts (for ourselves)” (37:11). This is figurative language of national life gone, it is all over for us, there is no energy or power left. Their captors thought that God had forsaken them or could not deliver them.

The only answer to these dead bones will be REGENERATION, “up out of your graves” (“graves” 4 times in chapter 37:12-13). Dead bones raised with sinews, flesh, skin and breath. “So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (37:10).

Again the prophet is given a parable in action. He was to take two dead sticks, hold them in his hand end to end and they became one stick as he held it. This represented the unity of the tribes of Israel and Judah, as one stick. God said, “They shall be one in Mine hand” (37:19). “And they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols” (37:22-23). Observe “no more” three times. There will be a complete cleansing of the land and a gathering from the dwelling places where they had been scattered. This has never yet occurred.

This can only be a future regathering of Israel with universal application from the lands of their scattering. There will be One Nation, One Shepherd, One King, One God, One Ruler, “the sure mercies of David” (Acts 13:34). The leaders of the nation cried, “No King but Cæsar” and they rejected the Messiah. David refers to the final Heir, the Branch, the stem out of Jesse, Christ, not David himself. There will be no more succession of kings, no more the physical line of David. The division of the nation came about due to the apostasy and idolatry of David’s son, Solomon. The Rule of the Messiah will establish the Rule of Righteousness, the quality of the Kingdom will be Righteousness reigning in the Messianic Kingdom of Christ alone.

There has been no rightful King upon the throne of David since Zedekiah, the profane wicked prince of Israel. “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem (mitre), and take off the crown” (21:26). Even after the return from Babylon there has been no established priesthood or no king on the throne, it was the “end” of the old order. The times of the Gentiles brought desolation and chaos. “I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is (Heb. “whose it is” ≡ Shiloh, Gen. 49:10); and I will give it Him”; the “right” of priestly and royal glory. Messiah, will have the double “right” of Priest and King (21:27). This will be the literal earthly kingdom and glorious future for Israel. They will have liberty from oppressors, the flock shall never again be scattered, they will never again experience hunger. Israel will bring blessing to other nations with abundance of produce. “I will raise up for them a PLANT OF RENOWN, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger” (34:29). The Plant of Renown raised up is the Messiah, the fruit will be famous. He will be the BRANCH of the LORD; the HIDING PLACE from the WIND; the SHELTER from the STORM; the LIGHT in the MORNING; the COVERT from the TEMPEST.

God not only vindicated His faithful servant when the Glory departed as he prophesied because of Israel’s sin, but He gave him the opportunity to prophecy about the future when the glory would

return and abide in accordance with the promise of the covenant of peace. This is summarized in the words given to Ezekiel in chapters 37:26-28: “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore”.

This “covenant of peace”, will be unconditional, grounded alone upon God’s Grace and Promise. The nations universally shall know that God has sanctified Israel to Himself. This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled either spiritually by the church or literally among the heathen. “My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore”. This cannot be Zerubbabel’s temple or Herod’s temple, both of which have been destroyed. It will not be the temple defiled by the beast. “I will be their God, and they shall be My people”. God will not abandon nor replace His promises to have a literal kingdom and have a literal dwelling place in the midst of His chosen people on earth, as described by Ezekiel in the closing chapters of his unique prophecy.

The climax and crowning experience of the prophet priest is in chapters 40-48. This is a key passage of Old Testament prophecy and test verses of Bible interpretation. Ezekiel prophesied about sacrifice, priesthood, the city and the divisions of the land during the Millennium. The work of Christ nullified the OT offerings which never had efficiency (Heb. 9-10). They pointed forward to the death of Christ as the future offerings will be retrospective and commemorative. The details of the temple as Ezekiel saw them are minute; the measurements shown by the man with the measuring line are precise. There is no mention of silver or gold as in Solomon’s temple. The Glory present is in the Messiah Himself. Ezekiel, the man who suffered trials that brought him so low, concludes with the triumphant announcement, “The LORD is there” (48:35).

Questions Frequently Asked

Question: Please explain Hebrews 10:20. “By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh”.

Answer: The doctrinal teaching of Hebrews chapter 10 ends at verse 18. The supremacy and sufficiency of Christ, means “no more offering for sin” is necessary. We can enter into the exercise of priesthood on the basis of all that is ours in Christ, His sacrifice, offering and exaltation on the right hand of God as our Great High Priest.

“Having therefore, brethren boldness (confidence, 10:35, on account of what has been prepared) to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus” (v19 – x7 references in Hebrews; first reference, 9:12). We have proper liberty, freedom of approach, to “enter” in spirit, love, worship, devotion, to Heaven itself, the presence of God. “By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say (the way of), His flesh” (v20). The expression is “newly sacrificed” (only here), opened up, unknown in the past, which will never decay, never wax old. Under law to enter meant death, now it is death to stay away. “The way” is the journey, the access, the going, entering rather than the end of the road.

“His flesh” is the “way”. “The veil” is the barrier, the prohibition; it closed men out of the Holiest. Jesus said, “I am the Way” (John 14:6); “The Word was made flesh” (John 1:14). This is a recently opened and “living way” of perpetual efficiency. “The offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). As the Forerunner and Leader on the path to God which He first walked Himself, He has inaugurated the access by which “we enter” (v19) we “draw near” (v22).

“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23)

The basic idea beneath all human philosophies, religions and opinions is, “Do your best and hope for the best”; **BUT IT WON'T DO!**

Perhaps you say, “A man can do no more than his best, if that is not good enough, that's just too bad!”

Now that is an attitude that is both foolish and fatal, for there is an answer, a simple answer, though it cuts right across the grain of human pride and self-sufficiency. That answer is to seek until we find one who can do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

You may reply, “But man is the greatest being on this planet, if he cannot help himself, then who can help him?” To answer these questions, let us reflect a little!

A Sobering Situation

First of all, let be said, that there is no **“IF”** about man's ability to meet his own greatest needs. Long centuries of human history have proved that man has an underlying problem that he cannot solve.

The many technological inventions we see around us today cannot solve his problem: the application of such technology is as much used for evil just as it is for good, to increase sorrow as well as to ease our burdens in life. Horrifying weapons, nuclear, chemical and biological, are now in men's hands who are much the same in heart as their ancestors with primitive weapons, yet who are no better fitted to possess such as ever they were! To apply a conclusion from one of bygone days –

“For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow”

(Ecclesiastes 1:18)

We need more prisons, not fewer. A vast amount of money is spent globally to ensure ongoing security and safety, whether in defence, the public domain or to safeguard against cyber and other IT attacks. The veneer of civilisation has worn thin and the more man is uplifted in pride at his own cleverness, the lower he sinks morally and the more lawless and bestial he becomes. His futile attempts to reform or harmonies societies through Woke, diversity or inclusivity is proof of this.

The plain fact is that there is in man's heart a root principle of badness that he has never been able or ever will be able to resolve. The Psalmist put it like this –

“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies”

(Psalm 58:3)

And lying is soon followed by a multitude of other bad conduct, proof of our fallen nature, stacking up against ourselves, ready to incur God's wrath at judgement day.

A Saviour Supplied

Hence, to address the previous questions, if man's need is ever to be met, he must find someone greater than himself, one not affected nor degraded by our hopeless degenerated condition: and the wonderful fact is that such a One has visited this world as a perfect Man, and that for the express purpose of meeting this great need. It is against God we have offended, yet God who has supplied for our need!

Consider these remarkable words –

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world”

(1John 4:14)

“Once in the end of the world hath He (Christ) appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many”

(Hebrews 9:26-28)

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”

(Isaiah 53:6)

What we need to do is to acknowledge honestly our need, that the root of badness in us, which is what God calls sin, and which is expressed in lawlessness, wanting our own way and pleasing ourselves, is something we cannot cure; then to repent and trust in the all-sufficient work of a perfect, divine Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we will have something far better than a vague and uncertain 'hoping for the best' which can never be realised; a hope ***“sure and steadfast”*** as ***“an anchor of the soul”***, nothing less than the ***“hope of the glory of God”*** –

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved”

(John 3:16-17)

God will one day create a new world without sin, sorrow or death; the way in is by believing God today, to become ***“a new creature”*** in Christ, to be part of His church. Then we can devote our remaining days to serve Him by His indwelling Holy Spirit. Time is running out fast and God's longsuffering will end soon, once the church is removed; then the world will be exposed to the righteous wrath of God.