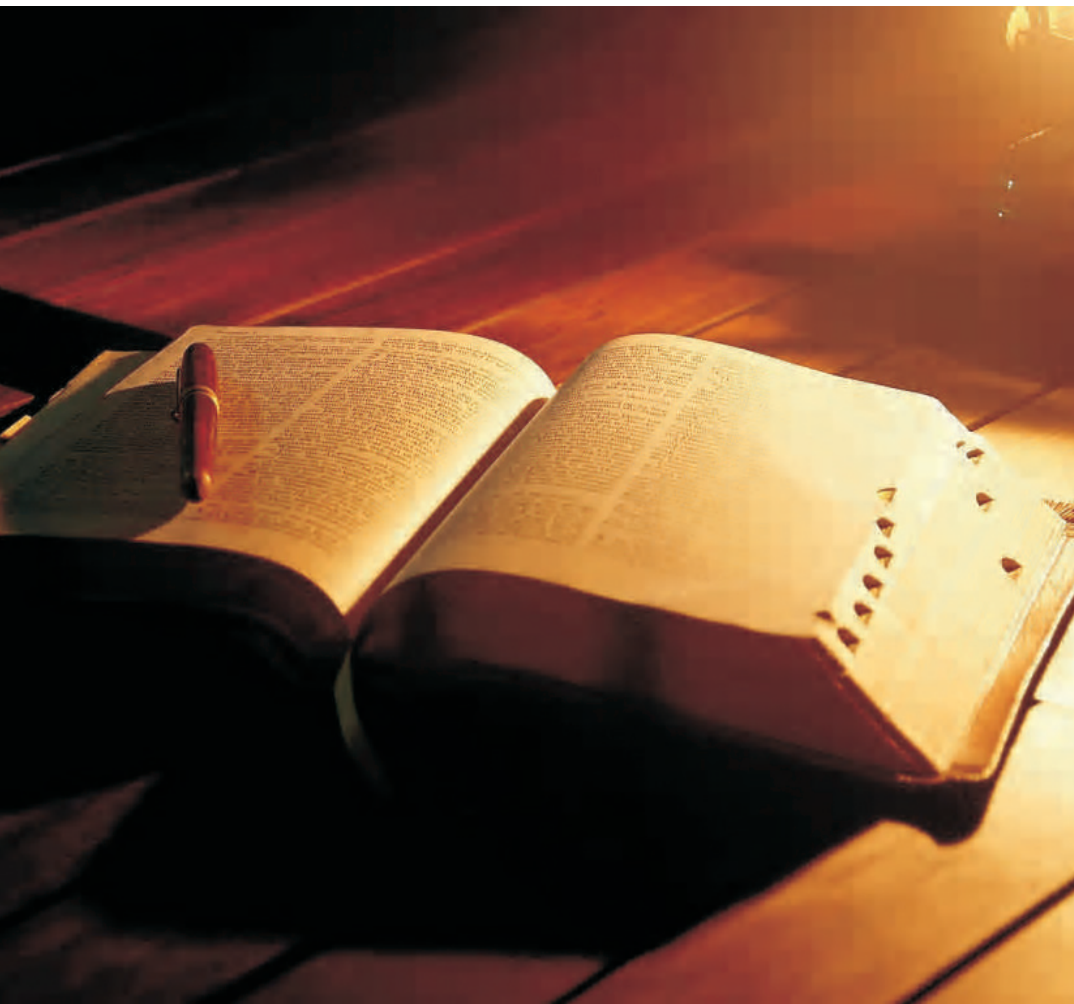


# THE OLD PATHS

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For Private Circulation Only

# 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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**A**h Lord GOD! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee. ... the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts is His name. Great in Counsel, and mighty in work: for Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: (Jeremiah 32:17-19)



## From the Editor's Desk

### HE READ ... THE BOOK

**“He read in their ears all the words of the book”**

**(2Kings 23:2)**

Hilkiah the high priest, “found the Book of the law in the house of the LORD” (2Kings 22:8). Shaphan the scribe read the Book before King Josiah (v10).

“When the King had heard the words of the Book of the law, that he rent his clothes” (22:11). The King confesses, “Great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this Book” (22:13). Josiah went into the house of the Lord, with all the men of Judah, the priests, the prophets and all the people, both small and great and “he read in their ears all the words of the Books of the Covenant which was found in the house of the LORD” (23:2).

The Book had been hidden by rubbish in the house of God. The Book will keep us from the world but the world will keep us from the Book. This was a copy of the Law of Moses. Nothing new was needed. When the words of the Book were read, and received with repentance, there was worship, obedience, and restoration for the people of God. May God preserve us to be men and women of the Book.

The Bible is God’s written revelation of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit of God. It is God’s Holy Book, our sole authority for what we believe, obey and trust.

This Book is the only reliable source of Divine predictions and prophecies of things to come. The **BIRTH** of our Lord Jesus was

foretold by Isaiah the prophet, “A virgin shall conceive” (Isa. 7:14). The very date of His **DEATH** was given by Daniel the prophet, when the ‘Messiah shall be cut off’ (Dan. 9:26). The promise of His **COMING AGAIN** is recorded three times in the closing chapter of the Book, “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

## Daniel – Pride Comes Before a Fall

J.A. Brown

### Chapter 4

(All quotations are from Daniel Chapter 4, unless otherwise stated)

#### Introduction

Here we have the personal testimony of a heathen king, of God’s dealings in his life and the changes that came as a result. Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged Daniel’s God-given ability regarding the dream-image (Dan. 2:47) and had witnessed the unique power of God in the deliverance of the captives from the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:26-29), yet he still hadn’t been brought to a *personal accountability* and repentance before God. His personal pride still raged! Daniel had learnt through the experiences of youth and a godly upbringing. Nebuchadnezzar had not learnt through his experiences, so God created circumstances that he would learn by, through the realization of this particular dream. He had to learn that he was *nothing* and that God was *everything*! (vs. 34-35).

#### Pride

Nebuchadnezzar was marked by pride. What is pride? It has often been defined as *“a feeling of satisfaction and deep pleasure with the elevation of self as a result of one’s own achievements and having a high opinion of one’s own importance.”* Pride inevitably places self

before God and is repeatedly condemned in Scripture (e.g. Prov. 8:13; 16:5; 21:4; 29:23). Yet even in all this God shows grace: “*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*” (James 4:6). Nebuchadnezzar was given 12 months grace for repentance, but he refused to humble himself, so Divine discipline became inevitable. Time was given for repentance to the people of Nineveh – they repented and judgement was averted; the people in Noah’s day didn’t repent and judgement came! What a difference in attitude the king had *before* God’s judgement on him (v30) and *after* God’s dealings with him (v37).

### **How things can Change (vs. 4-9)**

When God gave this dream to the king it was at a time of *peace* and *prosperity* (v4). The appearance *without* was that everything was going well! Yet *within*, the king was deeply afraid and troubled (v5). Up to this time he had felt secure, but this was a false sense of security. Nebuchadnezzar was to have judgemental dealings with God; so it will be in a coming day when the Christ-rejecting world will be resting in “*Peace and Safety*” that Divine judgement will fall (1Thess. 5:3). The king became frustrated in his efforts to know what the dream meant (vv. 6-7). Why didn’t he go to Daniel straight-away? Had he not learnt the lessons of the impotence of his “wise men” from the dream image (Chapter 2)? Eventually Nebuchadnezzar appealed to the only source of help!

### **The World’s Wisdom**

The “wise men” had previously boasted that if they were told the dream, then they would interpret it (Dan. 2:7). This time they *were* told the dream (vs. 6-7) yet they *couldn’t* explain it! Why not? Worldly wisdom can never understand or explain the things of God (1Cor. 2:14). Nebuchadnezzar had everything that people desire today – power, status and riches – yet he was ignorant of future events! Great scientific, medical, technological and educational advances have been made in recent years, and much of it has been beneficial to human well-being. Yet despite these advancements,

there is still a great void in spiritual understanding and appreciation of Divine things. Human understanding, by itself, can never take in or explain the things of God. Yet even the humblest believer in Christ, via the inspired Word of God and the permanent, indwelling Holy Spirit, has the key to God's prophetic programme for this world!

### **The Dream (vs. 10-18)**

The dream was of a great tree reaching up to heaven and seen throughout the whole Earth! (v11). [Cp. the tower in Genesis 11:4 – both the tree and the tower were destroyed!]. The birds and the animals used this tree for food and refuge (v12); then an angelic voice (*"watcher"/"holy one"*) commanded to cut down the tree, but leaving the stump with a band of iron about it for *"7 times"*. The dream commenced in *symbolic* form, but towards its end it became personalized, especially in verses 14-16. (*"his" instead of "it"*) and now pointed to a *person* who would be dehumanised for 7 years. The dream not only troubled Nebuchadnezzar (v5) but it also had a profound, troubling effect on Daniel himself (v19), as he knew what the dream would mean! Here Daniel is a true servant of God – accurately and faithfully delivering the message that God had revealed unto him, but also showing the burden/responsibility the message had on himself!

### **The Interpretation (vs. 19-27)**

The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar and the great kingdom of Babylon rooted in the earth (v11), suggesting sustenance, stability and strength. The beasts and birds could represent those peoples and nations that relied on Babylon for provision and protection. The tree reached up to heaven (v11) – this *could* indicate that all powers are given and ordained of God (Rom. 13:1) but it *could* also speak of the king's glory, greatness and arrogance. Nebuchadnezzar's pride indicated that the true God had no place in his domain. The watcher/holy-one must be an angel of God (N.B. *"come down from heaven"*). Angels are active in the affairs of this world (Dan. 10:4-21).

This personage came with the united authority of all those of similar rank in heaven to the herald himself! (v17). The tree was to be felled and the king dehumanised and made insane, living beast-like for 7 years. The iron-band would only restrain the tree's growth temporarily; after 7 years the king would return to normality in person and position. He would be allowed 12 months to change his attitude before Divine judgement proceeded.

### **The Effects (vs. 31-36)**

Nebuchadnezzar ignored his opportunity for repentance. What wonderful grace of God in giving this despot 12 months to consider his ways! The last recorded words of the king *before* Divine judgement fell on him just serves to highlight his arrogance and personal pride (v30). He used the personal pronoun 3 times in verse 30 – boasting of his status, power and personal achievements. Even as he was speaking, God intervened in his life. What the dream prophesied was now put into action. He was driven-out and became like the beasts of the field for 7 long years. In Daniel 3:19, Nebuchadnezzar had ordered the fiery furnace to be heated 7 times its normal strength; that represented the king's judgement on others. Here in verse 25, his 7 years of insanity represents God's judgement on him! After the 7 years, he lifted up his eyes toward heaven (v34). How the 7 years could have been avoided if he had done just that after Daniel had interpreted his dream!

### **God's Moral Order**

We have been considering God's judgement upon an ungodly king (*not* a Hebrew). The Scriptures are quite clear that God's *moral* order is for *all* mankind, not just the Jew or the believer! In Amos 1:3 to 2:3 we read of Divine judgement on the ungodly nations around Israel, but then judgement was declared on Judah and Israel as well (Amos 2:4ff.). *All* were accountable to God! The same can be said for Divine order in aspects of life today, e.g. marriage, the role of women, etc. Marriage is a Divine institution, established at the very beginning of



the human race (Gen. 2:24); it precedes Pentecost at the establishment of the Church and also precedes the giving of the Law for the nation at Sinai. The scriptural basis, the sanctity and the insolubility of marriage is for *all* mankind and for *all* generations.

### **God's Sovereignty**

God's sovereignty refers to His absolute power and control over all things, and doing what He wills in all matters! At times, as in Nebuchadnezzar's case, He intervenes *directly* in human affairs and sometimes *indirectly* – whichever way His ultimate purposes may be perfectly fulfilled (Psalm 115:3 and Isa. 46:10). God is not limited by anything outside of Himself and nothing can hinder His will, whether it be human sin, lack of faith or even demons. Our God does what He pleases and will always bring His purposes to pass, simply because He is God!! He is absolute sovereign regarding "*the inhabitants of the Earth*" (v35); "*the army of heaven*" refers to angelic powers that exist to carry out the Creator's demands (see Psalm 103:20-21). God is sovereign in regard to the Earth (Psalm 47:7), Israel (Judges 8:23) and to what He says of Himself (Mal. 1:14). Has He absolute sovereign control in the day to day running of our lives?

### **Conclusion**

Verses 1-3 and 37 *summarize* Nebuchadnezzar's testimony, written at least 8 years after the events recorded in verses 4-27 and at least 7 years after verses 28-36. This chapter points to the absolute essential need for *all* to recognize the sovereignty, might, and supremacy of God, and also the humility of man. God establishes and brings down individuals and kingdoms according to His own will and purpose. We see an example of a true servant of God in Daniel, with his tremendous courage in all situations and his compassion for even the hardest and vilest of men. We notice Divine judgement descending swiftly when enacted, yet also Divine grace giving much time before judgement is sent! Both God's warning to the king and the promise of restoration were accurately fulfilled; this is surely evidence (if we needed it) of a God whose word we can always trust!

## The Living God (2)

T.J. Blackman

### **The Living God is Fully Revealed in the Son of the Living God**

The previous article on the subject of “the Living God” concluded with the final Old Testament reference – Hosea 1:10 which spoke of the “sons of the living God”. Although that verse is quoted in Romans 9:26, it is noticeable the first New Testament reference is Matthew 16:16. This is the sixteenth reference in the Bible and the central reference of the 31 mentions of “the Living God”. This is certainly the centre of all divine revelation – the One to whom all the Old Testament pointed and who fills every page of the New Testament. The way these references are placed in Scripture shows that the inspired word is indeed a full and perfect revelation of the living God.

### **The Identity of the Son of Man**

In Matthew 16, the Lord questions the disciples about His identity. As far as the people were concerned some thought He was John the Baptist, others Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. It is interesting to think of these suggestions. They could see characteristics of those great men of God in Jesus of Nazareth. But truly it was not because He was following in their footsteps, but rather, regarding the prophets, it was that they had been in His presence before His incarnation. They reflected in their lives the characteristics of the Son of the living God they knew and served.

Then He asked for the disciples’ opinion. Peter answers, and it is not merely his opinion but, as the Lord tells him, a divine revelation from God the Father. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”. This title is also used by Peter in John 6:69, to emphasise His uniqueness as the One who has “the words of eternal life”. “The Christ” (anointed) and “the Son” are both used in the prophetic Psalm 2. First Israel and the nations are seen to be gathered together “against the LORD, and against His anointed”. The assembly in Jerusalem understood this to apply primarily to His crucifixion (Acts 4:25-26).

The word “set” in Psalm 2:6 is also translated “anointed” by some – “I have anointed My king” (JND) – although it is not the same word in Hebrew. Then in verse 7, God the Father says: “Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee”. He is God’s Son eternally, but in resurrection is the “first begotten of the dead” (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). In resurrection, the Father promised Him the heathen (the nations) for His inheritance and uttermost parts of earth for His possession (v8). This is partially fulfilled in this church age, but will be abundantly fulfilled in the Millennium. In Psalm 2:12 we read: “Kiss the Son ... Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him”. The kiss would be an act of worship, proof that He is God. As such they are to put their trust in Him and be truly blessed.

The title “the Christ”, the anointed One, is equivalent to “the Messiah” in the Old Testament. In the OT, prophets, priests and kings were anointed. In the NT, the Lord Jesus is anointed as Prophet, Priest and King. His anointing took place at the river Jordan after submitting to the baptism of John. His anointing was a manifestation of the Trinity: The Son was anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit. It is good to remember this in the many places in the NT where we encounter the name Christ – the Father anointed the Son and the Holy Spirit was the anointing to empower Him for service (Luke 4:14) and sacrifice (Heb. 9:14). So, whenever we read the title “Christ”, we are reminded that the living God is a triune God.

As the “Son of the living God” He is coequal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is “the eternal life” (John 14:6; 1John 5:20) and when we read in John 5:26 that “the Father ... hath given to the Son to have life in Himself”, it means He has life to impart to those who believe. He is “the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). We have life in Christ now (John 5:24), but resurrection will introduce us to life in all its abundance and fulness. We shall see in the next section that this is the basis of the victory and security of His church.

### **The Security of Christ’s Church**

Some have misunderstood the Lord’s answer to mean that Peter would be the foundation of the Church. Woe unto us if that were so!

Peter makes it clear in his first epistle, chapter 2, that he did not understand it that way, but that Christ Himself is the living stone to whom we come and on whom we are built as “a spiritual house”.

What the Lord says next makes this absolutely clear. “Upon this rock (the Lord Himself as ‘the Christ, the Son of the living God’) I will build my church”. If Peter was the foundation, it would be like building a skyscraper on a pebble! The meaning of “church” here is the assembly of all true believers, from Pentecost to the rapture. The local church is also referred to in Matthew 18:17. The Lord would build His church as a whole living thing by saving sinners throughout this age of grace, but in the local church the believers are responsible for the building of it (1Cor. 3), although He is still the foundation: “other foundation can no man lay...” (1Cor. 3:11), and we depend on God to “give the increase”. Every believer is part of the church which The Lord Jesus is building and will never be removed from it. Every believer should be part of a local assembly, a “church of the living God” (1Tim. 3:15), but if he sins, or embraces wrong teaching, he could be excluded from it, as Matthew 18 makes clear. This distinction is very important.

The next statement of the Lord Jesus proves the security of all who are part of His church in the all-embracing universal sense: “...and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. In Scripture the gate of a town was the place of administration and authority. “Hell” (‘Hades’ – ‘the unseen’) suggests the unseen realms of darkness described in Ephesians 6:12: “principalities, ... powers, ... the rulers of the darkness of this world, ... spiritual wickedness in high places”. These satanic forces are constantly seeking to destroy the church, but the church is in Christ the Son of the living God, beyond the reach of death and we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us – “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. Death, the devil and all the powers of darkness are rendered powerless when we are in Christ, the Son of the living God, who “loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25).

# The Acts of the Apostles

## Chapter 15:1-6

Ian McKee

From Acts chapter 2 the Gospel was, in the main, opposed by Jews and, indeed, their opposition will continue. However, in Acts chapter 15 a more serious difficulty arises from Jewish attitudes, but this time from within the assembly at Jerusalem.

Acts 15:1-16:5 is the watershed of the Acts of the Apostles. The Council at Jerusalem, which is the principal subject in Acts chapter 15, is essential: (a) to the consolidation of the missionary endeavour toward the Gentiles; and (b) in preventing the division of the work into Jewish and Gentile assemblies. A Judaising element in the Jerusalem assembly wished to impose Jewish rites and ceremonies on Gentile converts, but Christianity is not a Jewish reformation movement: it is something totally distinct.

Another feature to be noted is that Acts chapter 15 begins and ends with internal difficulties: (a) in relation to doctrine, and (b) personal disagreement respectively.

We should also note that after his participation at the Council at Jerusalem, Peter disappears from the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles to be replaced by Paul. That doesn't mean that Peter doesn't continue in vital service for the Lord, he does, as the two epistles written by him show. In addition, while there are references to Jerusalem in the latter chapters in this book the focus upon Jerusalem declines to be replaced by increasing references to Rome.

### **Troublemakers from Jerusalem come to Antioch (v.1)**

We are now introduced to "certain men which came down from Judæa". Such men repeatedly dogged the footsteps of the Apostle Paul with their own brand of teaching, which sought to bring saved Gentiles into bondage to Jewish legal requirements. Their attack was

subtle because it used Old Testament Scripture and, in coming from Jerusalem, they projected a certain sense of legitimacy. The effects of their pernicious teaching is clearly seen in the Epistle to the Galatians where the Gospel message was in danger of being corrupted. Paul had a very clear perspective. In his view they were trouble makers, e.g. “there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” and “he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment” (Gal. 1:7; 5:10). The seriousness of the saved Jew/Gentile issue was such that, as seen in Galatians 2:11-14, it had grave implications in the area of social life, requiring Paul to challenge Peter about resiling from his earlier willingness to eat with saved Gentiles, something which also impacted upon Barnabas as well. Evidently it was a recurrent issue, here in relation to the very gospel itself.

These men came to Antioch teaching “except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”. In addition, they were commanding that Gentile converts must “keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). Note the words “cannot” (v1), and “needful” (v5). They may not have been opposed to the evangelisation of the Gentiles, but were acting as a ‘pressure group’ determined that Gentile converts should not only submit to baptism but also to circumcision and law observances as would have been demanded of Jewish proselytes. In making these conditions of salvation, therefore they were implying that faith in Christ was not sufficient.

Their teaching would undermine the work of evangelisation to the Gentiles, corrupt the gospel, set the assemblies at Jerusalem and Antioch (and James and Paul!) at variance. Such proselytisation would deny the efficacy of the work of Christ. Essentially they were inferring that what had commenced by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), needed to be completed by law keeping. Hence that which was wrought through Christ, had to be finished through Moses; that Moses must complete what the Lord had begun! These Judaising teachers had therefore strayed into very serious error: they were denying the sufficiency of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary.

It must, however, be noted that their teaching in this way was not with the authority of the Jerusalem assembly as was later clarified in correspondence “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ‘Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment’” (Acts 15:24). This implies that, if indeed they had had any commission from the Jerusalem assembly, they certainly had grossly exceeded their remit!

### **Travel from Antioch to Jerusalem (v.2-4)**

“Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them”, that is with the men who had come from Jerusalem. They relentlessly opposed the false teachers. The concept of fierce dissension and controversy might at first seem foreign to assembly life and this was likely a new experience for the assembly at Antioch. But the purity of the gospel is at stake, so this was no moment for toleration or compromise. The assembly is not an open forum debating chamber where men can propagate what they please. Doctrinal truth must be maintained at all cost and it was vital that Paul and Barnabas were present with insight into the pernicious implications of what was being taught and had the ability to refute the error. Every assembly needs, and should have, men who know the Word of God and can ably expound it positively and use it to combat that which is false.

The Antioch assembly “determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them [presumably elders], should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question”. The Antioch assembly not only resisted the error but also traced it back to its source at Jerusalem. If the issue is to be comprehensively dealt with, then a delegation must be sent to Jerusalem for that purpose. It is not that Paul did not have sufficient apostolic authority, or that there was any lack of confidence in Barnabas, in contesting the issue at Antioch. But the visitors seem to have inferred that their teaching had authority from the Jerusalem assembly. It was therefore necessary to travel to Jerusalem to resolve the matter satisfactorily.

Including others in the delegation demonstrated that this was not just a dispute between these men and Paul and Barnabas, but that the assembly at Antioch were equally fully committed.

Very often serious issues involving doctrine, but not necessarily confined to doctrine, can have a paralysing effect upon all concerned. Although this issue was one of magnitude, it did not have any such effect upon this delegation: “and being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice [Phoenicia] and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren”. They were not travelling to Jerusalem so bowed down with worry and concern that they lost the joy of what God had already accomplished. Also, giving reports of the Lord’s work to those young assemblies which they visited, they would receive encouragement from the joyful response they received. Not everyone had been infected by the narrow sectarian attitudes displayed by the Jerusalem Judaisers!

Eventually they reach their destination: “And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them”. They were received without any reserve by the leadership of the Jerusalem assembly.

It should be stressed that this is not a visit by a delegation from a ‘regional assembly’ to an earthly ‘headquarters’! Each assembly is autonomous, responsible to maintain fidelity to the word of God and responsible to the Risen Head, even our Lord Jesus Christ. While assemblies do not belong to an overarching organisation, either on a national or regional basis; nor is there any external or confederated board of governors, assemblies should enjoy mutual fellowship, support and care.

### **Trouble again and steps to address it (v.5,6)**

While those coming from Antioch were favourably received at Jerusalem it wasn’t long until the controversy broke out afresh, this time within the Jerusalem assembly: “But there rose up certain of the



sect of the Pharisees which believed". They agreed with those who had gone to teach at Antioch, contending "that it was needful to circumcise them [saved Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses". Therefore, by implication, faith in Christ was not enough for salvation.

This same error became prevalent later in the assemblies in Galatia, which necessitated Paul's writing the epistle to the Galatians. Paul's refutation of the error is comprehensive and uncompromising: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:1-7). It should be remembered that Paul himself was a Pharisee which believed, but he was in the enjoyment of grace, free from Pharasaical prejudice.

Circumcision and observance of the law's requirements were incumbent upon Jews in the era from the giving of the law on Sinai, Exodus chapter 19 et seq., but now the era of gospel grace has arrived and while they may still have some place for Jews it was wrong to make them obligatory for everyone, especially saved Gentiles!

The battle lines are clearly drawn. The issue is simple and straightforward, that is whether circumcision and law keeping were necessary for salvation. The question was whether saved Gentiles, like Gentile proselytes to Judaism, must conform to the Jewish law in order to enjoy the privileges of assembly fellowship or, indeed, to be saved at all! The issues, at what we call the Council at Jerusalem, could not be more grave. The very basis of salvation was at stake.

The definition of the gospel was in the balance. The cohesiveness of the work of God was under attack with the very real prospect of the work dividing broadly into a Jewish work and a Gentile work. This was a defining moment in less than a generation from Pentecost. Satan has launched an attack on the very fundamentals of the gospel.

It is against that background that “the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter”.

(To be continued D.V.)

## Virtuous Women

J.A. Davidson

### The PRAISED WIFE

**“Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all”**

**(Proverbs 31:29)**

We must not leave our meditations on the Virtuous Women of the Old Testament without considering the unnamed wife and mother of Proverbs 31:10-29. Much has been written in the previous chapters of Proverbs about the qualities and influences of women for good or evil. These verses contain a summary of the life of a wise woman, a helpful helpmeet, and a memorable mother.

### HER PRECIOUSNESS

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies” (v10). The Hebrew word for “virtue” means much more than her purity, it indicates one who is strong in all spiritual and moral qualities. The key word in Proverbs is “wisdom”, meaning the ability to live in the fear of God in an ungodly world. Proverbs provides Divine guidance for God’s people in the affairs of everyday life

relating to husbands, wives, children, business, and society. Solomon, the main writer, seemed to have failed in this search. "He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart" (1Kings 11:3). Perhaps in Proverbs 31, he was thinking of the Shulamite, the "fairest among women", the "undefiled" perfect one (Song of Songs 1:8; 6:9,13). She was married to a poor shepherd. Yet together they had more true riches than Solomon.

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (v11). The word "trust" means that he can find a refuge in her. Some of us who go forth into the world to preach the Gospel, often find ourselves serving amid the filth and depravity of mankind. How lovely, after perhaps months abroad in loneliness and dirt to return to the clean welcoming environment of home and to the loving embrace of a waiting devoted wife. "He shall have no lack of spoil" (v11). This real helpmeet is a true provision of God to him so that he does not lack anything of true value.

"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (v12). She is not moody or spasmodic through the good and bad days that beset married life. She is there to lift him up when he is down and to habitually provide a reliable, discerning stimulant to her beloved's well being. Marriage is not costly adornment, powder and paint. Marriage is a person, not just a pretty face but a treasure given by God for life.

### HER PRUDENCE

"She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands" (v13). Her husband and her household benefit from the work of her "hands", mentioned six times in these verses. She is no idle busybody going from house to house. She works "willingly", with pleasure, weaving long hours using materials readily available if her husband possesses land and has some sheep. She is content to make her own way in life, prudent with her husband's means and family livelihood.

“She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar” (v14). A thrifty shopper, she seeks out the right food for her family. A healthy diet is most essential both physically for her boys and girls, and spiritually for their advancement in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

“She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a potion to her maidens” (v15). This suggests a well managed household, not erratic and spontaneous confusion, but planned objectives for every hour of a long day, so that all in her care know what they are doing.

“She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands, she planteth a vineyard” (v16). Rather than spending all her money on cosmetics and luxury, she increases the family income. With her husband’s agreement and careful consideration, she uses the profit of her domestic diligence and hard work to purchase and plant a vineyard. The fruit of the vine is often a symbol in Scripture of joy and gladness, which this wise mother brings to her husband and household.

“She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms” (v17). She keeps healthy and by hard manual work, she is an example to her family and maidens. Using the best materials, “her merchandise is good” (v18), because of the skill of her hands on the “spindle” and “distaff”, perhaps indicating the making of two or three-ply yarn (vs. 18-19). The burning of a candle or lamp by night was a sign of prosperity rather than sleeplessness (Prov. 13:9; 21:20; 24:20).

#### HER PITY

“She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy” (v20). Her hand extends beyond the immediate family needs and is opened in compassion to “the poor”. She stretches out with both “hands” to help the needy. Material abundance that lacks benevolent generosity becomes stagnant selfishness. Better to give than to receive. Her gifts are directed to the genuinely “needy”, not for influence or advancement. Dorcas

“made coats and garments while she was with them” (Acts 9:39). Sisters can still make garments to give to the needy, thoughtfully enclosing a Gospel tract.

### HER PLACE

“Her husband is known in the gates, where he sitteth among the elders of the land” (v23). She is not known in public, this is not her sphere but she supports her husband who is respected as he attends the meetings of the elders. In her own sphere she supports his work, strengthens his hand, smooths his paths, shares his burdens while sheltering their family. He has authority to attend to the affairs of leadership of the city because he has confidence in his home affairs being ordered in wisdom and in the fear of the Lord. An overseer and deacon in the house of God must “rule his own house” (1Tim. 3:4,12). The brother who is leading God’s people or serving in a public manner must have a household where all are in subjection to the Word of God. Having total confidence in his wife to compliment and commend his teaching is an essential blessing beyond compare.

“She maketh fine linen” (a symbol of righteousness), “and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant” (v24). Having diligently and lovingly attended to the welfare of her family and the needy, society now benefits from her activities which began in the home.

### HER PREPARATION

The cold storms of winter do not catch the household of this virtuous woman unawares. “She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet (some translate, double clothed)” (v21). She lays up food and heavier garments in summer with forethought of provision for the warmth of her children and husband as he returns from caring for his flock in winter. Every wise and godly mother will be concerned that her children be protected from the cold world of sin, the strong winds of evil, and the coming storms of God’s wrath after the Rapture. She seeks to shelter them with an early knowledge of the Scriptures that are able to make them “wise unto salvation” (2Tim. 3:15).

"She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple" (v22). She is a "keeper at home" (Titus 2:5). The winter storm may rage outside but here we get the picture of the family safely gathered in the light and warmth of home. It is a beautiful sanctuary adorned with carpets, tapestry, and quilts that blend, in keeping with her own character of love kindness and care. This home is a warm, settled retreat in a time of storm. "Silk and purple", wound and spun by her own hands have been paid for and can be worn with legitimate dignity.

"Strength and honour are her clothing" (v25). She is not decked in outrageous clothes or interested in worldly fashion. Nor is she slovenly and careless about her appearance. The "fine linen" of purity is consistent with her character. She wears "purple" of royal dignity (v22). Her bearing is not of arrogance and pride, but her dignified attire and deportment is admired by any who can recognise a woman that is pleasing to God. The second reference to her clothing in the Hebrew rhyme; "strength and honour are her clothing" (v25), indicates dignity and character admired by all in her activities in the home, among the poor and the merchants with whom she does business.

"She shall rejoice in time to come" (the prospect of "the coming day" JND) (v25), shows that she has conducted herself and maintained the basic standards of wisdom before God with a clear conscience, so that she is free of any anxiety or perplexity for her husband or family in the future.

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (v26). The book of Proverbs has much to say about this great test, the use of the tongue. Her speech is not sharp or short, abusive or abrasive, caustic or critical. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak ... let them ask their husbands at home" (1Cor. 14:34-35). In the testing affairs of daily life her husband can have confidence in her. We can almost hear the tender tones of kindness and grace spoken by this sensible, spiritual dear lady, yet within the unalterable pillars of wisdom.

“The law of kindness” (v26) expressed by her tongue displays the feminine excellence of her worth with warm words of encouragement to the weary traveller, a comforting Scripture for the fainting warrior in the conflict, soothing balm of her caring lips that fall tenderly upon the sick pillow of the weak.

“She looketh well to the ways of her household” (v27). Her “ways” speak even louder than her words. She attends to the daily round of family life but has deep interest in how her children are raised and prepared for the future. She will bring in happiness and provisions but she will keep out the evils of the world. This today, will involve control of the evil influences of modern social media. She “eateth not the bread of idleness” (v27). Scripture exhorts, “That with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2Thess. 3:12), working not at all as busybodies.

#### HER POSTERITY

“Her children arise up, and call her blessed” (v28). “Honour thy father and they mother” (Exod. 20:12) is the primary commandment which has to do with one’s duty to mankind. After Solomon’s day the history of each of the kings of Israel, whether good or bad, usually notes that “his mother’s name was...”. Every one of us began life in a mother’s womb. A mothers hands guide infant feet; she is the first to influence and the first to encourage. The mother’s sphere is the home, the domestic realm, the personal, the private. Although less prominent than her husband, her role is no less vital, essential, dignified, and godly. Happy the child who learns early in life that sin brings trouble. The curbing of hot temper, and wilful obstinacy of inherit fallen nature will develop character and nobility in formative teenage years. “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me” (Matt. 19:14). The verses of Scripture and Bible stories about Christ read daily by the parents in the home are treasures that will never be forgotten through life. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). When away from home and from parental restraint, he or she will not depart from the training. Again, Solomon wrote; “The rod

and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Prov. 29:15). A stern, sharp tongue, harsh restrictions or no control at all are two extremes that a true loving mother will avoid. She will be remembered for his wise conversation, sacrificial love, and godly example. Such a mother may raise men of God or mothers in Israel from among her children.

### HER PRAISE

“Her husband also, and he praiseth her” (v29). The following verses may express his words “many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all” (vs. 29-31). “Favour” (charm) may deceive, “beauty” may fade. “A woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised”. The “fear of the LORD” is the focus of Proverbs 1:7. “The fruit of her hands” that have been so busy (vs. 13,16,19-20), in the private service of others are now publicly praised in the “gates”. This is a fitting conclusion to Proverbs, the inspired canon on true wisdom examined and proven in this most virtuous woman. Above all price, the virtuous woman, who “feareth the LORD, she shall be praised” (v30).

## **Get to Know Your Bible**

J.A. Davidson

### **OLD TESTAMENT OUTLINE – Paper No 1.**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Golden Key to open the Bible. In the Old Testament, He is seen from the PROMISED SEED (Gen. 3:15) to the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Mal. 4:2). The book of Genesis begins with the glory and majesty of Creation seen in the beauty of the Garden of Paradise where God desired to commune with His creature. Man has proved to be a sinful failure in the Age of Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Covenant Promise and Law. The Old Testament proves that THE SON OF GOD must come, the Gospels reveal that He



has come. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). The epistles declare the great blessings of His coming, and with the Book of Revelation, ends with the promise that He is coming again.

The unity of the Bible, the Old Testament and New Testament, is clearly stated by the risen Christ Himself; “Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25-27). The only Scriptures known at the time when the Lord was speaking were the Hebrew Scriptures, being the Old Testament comprising the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

### STRUCTURE

The arrangement of the 39 books of the Old Testament can be considered in this simple 3 fold structure:

**HISTORY:** 17 books; 5 books written by Moses dealing with the Formation of Israel beginning with the life of Abraham and the giving of the law through Moses. The remaining 12 books deal with Israel in the land of promise, Joshua to Esther.

**POETRY:** 5 books; Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon develop the Feelings and personal experiences of God’s people in Old Testament times.

**PROPHECY:** Another 17 books, again divided into a group of 5 longer (major) prophecies, Isaiah, Jeremiah and his Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and 12 shorter (minor) prophets from Hosea to Malachi. These books expose the Failings and Future of the nation of Israel.

### UNITY

Some readers of the Bible say that if the OT concentrates on God’s earthly people Israel, we in the present age, should concentrate on reading the NT and focus on the Church, God’s heavenly people. This leads to the neglecting of the truth of the OT because it misses the

vital truth that the OT points forward to Christ by focusing on the nation of Israel from whom the Messiah would come. The prophet Isaiah said, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His Name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). This verse is quoted by Matthew in the first chapter of the NT adding; “Which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

The opening chapters of Genesis show God’s purposes for all mankind, the whole of His creation and even His judgement upon satanic forces.

### AUTHOR

The Bible does not just contain the Word of God, it is the Word of God, the written Word of God; God revealing Himself to all mankind, through the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). In His coming He said, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:9). In His life, the Lord, clearly established the unity, vitality, and eternality of the OT and the NT, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17-18).

In the NT epistles, the apostle Paul referred to the OT Scriptures (the only sacred writings available at that time). To Timothy he says, “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). The present writer, like Timothy, will always be so thankful for the OT Scriptures in the words of the early prophet Isaiah concerning the death of the Lord Jesus. As a boy, burdened about my sins, in repentance, by faith I accepted that: “He was wounded for our (my) transgressions”. Paul adds, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2Tim. 3:16). That means that, all sacred writings are brought into being by the breath of God. God breathed

out the Scriptures, not just that He breathed into the authors, He did not suppress the personality of the human writer, but raised it to a higher level of activity, the actual words are God inspired. It took over 1400 years to write.

The apostle Peter, preaching to a Gentile called Cornelius, concerning the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, stated that, “To Him give all the prophets witness” (Acts 10:43).

The OT begins with God’s creation, formed for His glory and blessing. Sin brought a curse upon all that was “good” in Genesis. The first man by eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, brought sin into the world and was driven out of the garden. The last book of the NT, the Revelation of Jesus Christ promises, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). We call upon the aid of the Gracious Holy Spirit of God as we study the chapters of the OT with expectancy pointing on to the NT and the certainty of fulfilment through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### INSPIRATION

In concluding this introduction to the study of the Old Testament, we cannot improve upon the words of Charles Hadden Spurgeon:

*“This volume is the writing of the living God: each letter was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips; each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit. Albeit, that Moses was employed to write his histories with his fiery pen, God guided that pen. It may be that David touched his harp, and let sweet Psalms of melody drop from his fingers; but God moved his hands over the living strings of his golden harp. It may be that Solomon sang canticles of love, or gave forth words of consummate wisdom, but God directed his lips, and made the preacher eloquent. If I follow the thundering Nahum, when his horses plow the waters, or Habakkuk, when he sees the tents of Cushan in affliction; if I read Malachi, when the earth is burning like an oven; ... it is God’s voice, not man’s;*

*the words are God's words, the words of the Eternal, the Invisible, the Almighty, the Jehovah of this earth."*

This eloquent writer adds, "This is God's Book, man, read it!"

(Ref. "Inspiration" THE BIBLE ~ Spurgeons Sermons. Baker 1883. Volume 1 – Page 26)

### THE PENTATEUCH

Originally, the first five Books of the Bible formed one continuous work. In the Hebrew manuscripts, they are still connected in one unbroken roll. The word "Pentateuch" (five volumes), signifies; "the five volumes" used by the translators as descriptive of the principal subjects of each book. The numerous references made in later Scriptures, to these vital subjects would be unintelligible without the information which these five books contain of the commencement of the inspired volume. The designation, "The Law" indicate the Divine Code upon which the whole fabric of God's revelation rest, hence the Satanic assaults that have been made on these fundamental truths. Beginning with Creation, the God fearing Bible loving believer must know what he or she believes and why they believe it, in these last days, when God's control of His Creation and climatic conditions are under attack by heretics worldwide.

That the writer of these books was Moses is attested without doubt, by the internal character and statements of the writing itself. "Write this for a memorial in a book" (Hebrew, "the book" – Exod. 17:14), shows that the narrative of Exodus chapter 17 was to form part of a register already in existence (e.g. Exod. 24:4-7; 34:27; Num. 33:2). Later, historical books refer to the Pentateuch (e.g. Josh. 1:8; 8:34; 23:6; 24:26; 1Kings 2:3). Joshua himself possibly completed the Book of Deuteronomy after the death of Moses. Frequent references are found in the prophets to facts recorded in the Books of Moses (e.g. Isa. 1:9, compare with Gen. 19:1; Isa. 12:2 with Exod. 15:2; Hos. 9:10 with Num. 25:3; Joel 1:9 with Num. 15:4-7; Amos 2:9 with Num. 21:21; Mic. 6:6 with Lev. 9:2). The Lord Himself when upon earth

attested to the Divine approval and authentic verification to the books of Moses (e.g. Matt. 19:7; Luke 16:29; 24:27; John 1:17; 7:19). The integrity of the Book of the Law is continued in Acts (3:22; 28:23) and the Epistles (Rom. 10:5).

It must also be stressed that Moses had frequent direct communication with God (Exod. 23:22; 33:3) and most of the Book of Leviticus are the actual direct words from God, when “The LORD spake unto Moses” (1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1 etc.). What the four Gospels are to the New Testament, the five Books of Moses are to the Divine communications of the Old Testament.

## The Impeccability of Christ

Paul Sheppard

**T**he Bible is an honest book! It “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12), able to reveal the true motives and give an assessment to anyone of their true standing with the “living God” who truly allows it to search their hearts. The Psalmist could say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:23-24).

It has often been said that the ‘best of men’ are only ‘men at best’ and this is impressed upon us within the divine record. All of the examples of men and women of faith mentioned therein, in some way failed at times as, like ourselves, they inherited and manifested the same sinful nature as Adam through his disobedience. Men such as Abraham, “the friend of God”, Moses who was, “very meek, above all the men ... upon the face of the earth”, David, “a man after Mine (God’s) own heart”, and even Daniel, “a man greatly beloved”, we find confessing his sins with those of his nation as the seventy years captivity in Babylon due to their rebellion, were drawing to a end.

**B**ut there is One Man, just one, found on the pages of Scripture who never sinned, **COULD NOT SIN**. A thorough coverage of Him is given from His birth to His ascension, of His inner thought life, particularly in the Psalms, to His words and works as recorded in the Gospels. He, unlike Abraham who heeded Sarai's council to take Hagar (Gen. 16), never followed carnal advice, even from His own brethren (John 7:4). He never as Moses, "spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Psa. 106:33). He never, like David, took ease while the battle raged (2Sam. 11). For these three men who faltered, the outcome was disastrous. And yet no person has come under such intense scrutiny respecting their integrity of character as Jesus, the Christ, Who "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" (Heb. 1:9), even being "persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:10). As "in the days of His flesh" when He "endured such contradictions of sinners against Himself" (Heb. 12:3) when "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me" (Rom. 15:3), so the attacks upon Him persist today, either from outright enemies or even from misguided "brethren".

Even to insist He could not sin as God but could as Man on the grounds of it being more glorious for Him to resist the ability or urge to sin, is to divide the indivisible Person of the Son and hold to a most heinous sin! As in Heaven above, so He was on earth below, not being able to sin or able to tempt others to do so. If any defect, even of minutest detail, could be detected in the words He spoke or interaction with others – His actions or reactions, in His thoughts or conduct throughout His life, especially during the severest of trials in association with the events of Calvary where He suffered for sins, our sins, our faith and hope is but in vain. But this could never be so!

And yet while without sin, He knew bodily constraints such as thirst, hunger, tiredness and pain and was not insensitive to the effect sin had upon others. It was written, He "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17) as His compassion overflowed into alleviation of the dire needs of the others, even from traditionally hostile people such as the Syrians (Matt. 4:24). He wept and groaned in His spirit in the presence of death and its formidable consequences

(John 11:33), He was troubled in spirit at Judas' betrayal (John 13:21), He sighed deeply in His spirit in the presence of unbelief (Mark 8:12), and expressed righteous anger at the hard hearts of men (Mark 3:5).

He was brought up in Nazareth, a place of ill-repute, lived amongst "a perverse and adulterous generation", in a land under the political authority of Roman Caesars. He moved amongst religious Pharasaical sects composed of blind spiritual guides with adherence to man-made traditions along with the socially lenient Hellenistic Sadducees with their denial of truth and focus on liberalism, with many other hostile influences which so easily sway many from a path of holiness and fidelity to God. Yet He remained unblemished, undaunted and undeviated from the great work He came to accomplish for the glory of God and blessing of mankind. We have ample assurance and clear testimony that here was a Man who did not sin; who was never inwardly tempted or even momentarily contemplated such for there was naught in Him to create even an impulse to do so. Here was a Man with a single eye and a single heart, without respect of persons, who never had to withdraw a word, offer an apology or seek pardon.

**L**et us therefore strengthen our hearts in the "Captain of our Salvation" by considering some aspects of this great and assuring truth that is presented to us in the Scriptures of truth by faithful witnesses, who wrote objectively and from unprejudiced personal experience as moved by the Spirit of God. Such witness should assure any "honest heart" that the blessed Christ of God, His eternal Son, was not only without sin but unable to sin, that is, impeccable. As He was before He stepped into our world of time from the eternal realm, so He remained through all the "days of His flesh", like incorruptible shittim wood, and as He continues today as an exalted and glorified Man, sat down on the Right hand of God in Heaven above.

There He resides as a "Merciful and Faithful High priest", Whose sufferings in life and death fitted Him for a vital ministry now for His people in their pilgrimage homeward to glory. "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). "For we have not an high priest which cannot

be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15)

### **Testimony from Heaven**

**Gabriel's Declaration to Mary** – "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). He was holy at His birth, conceived without a direct biological father or original sin and although necessarily of David's seed via His mother, He remained unblemished as His body developed in her womb. This remained so throughout His life, in early days partaking of His mothers breast milk or later eating the common people's food, He remained unsullied in His body even in death, knowing no corruption (Acts 2:27). While we can be affected by the food we eat and should take precautions if handling hazardous materials prior to a meal, the greater spiritual truth He taught is that, "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:18-19). Such things easily defile us but NEVER defiled Him, for He was "pure in heart".

***Of the Father and the Holy Spirit at His Baptism*** – "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: And lo a voice from heaven saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matt. 3:16-17). All others whom John baptised made a point of confessing their sins in the water. John himself, though filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15) yet knowing his own sinful tendencies, recognised the purity of the One who came to be baptised of him for "righteousness sake". He identified with the people He came to save but with no sin to confess, "went up straightway out of the water", "praying", to be met by the accolades of Heaven and the alighting and anointing of the Holy Spirit in dove form, a clean bird, upon Him. A testimony for sure of the pleasure and acceptance found in Him during those thirty hidden years at



Nazareth and for His progressive move now into the public sphere for the next 42 months to fulfil a teaching and healing ministry prior to offering Himself as the unblemished Lamb at Calvary.

### **Testimony of the Son**

***A Challenge to the Jews*** – “Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me? (John 8:46). In a long discourse in which the Jews sought to malign Him, He, with utmost dignity and patience, challenges them. They had no just reason to disbelieve Him, as He could only speak truth, the One who, in Person, brought “Grace and Truth” with Him into the world as never known before. It would be arrogance for any other to make such a claim.

***To His Disciples*** – “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me”. As He faced the cross, the devil sought to find a just cause for death in Him, yet could find no flaw in His character to demand as such. He was tested by this enemy of truth in the wilderness over a forty day period, but unlike Eve in the Garden of Eden where everything was so idyllic, he could not cause His fall by any means. He died for another reason: “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise let us go hence” (John 14:30-31), and to face the foe head on, in order to defeat him.

### **Testimonies of Men**

We also find recorded some significant statements from those who had association with Him, even enemies, some who only had momentary meetings with Him, some much longer.

***The Officers sent to Apprehend Him*** – “Never Man spake like this Man” (John 7:46). While these men sent from the Pharisees and chief priests may have heard more than recorded in the narrative, their reply was noteworthy. Anyone who reads the Gospel records and His words recorded therein and the manner of their deliverance can only come to the same conclusion! Some men are known historically for great orations etc. but they are only men of the earth and speak as

such, often proudly. His words were so different, spoken in grace yet in truth, with authority yet without boasting, for the eternal welfare of man yet with solemn warnings. His words were compatible with His ways: “He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all” (John 3:31). Indeed, none could speak as He did.

**Judas Iscariot** – “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Matt. 27:4). This poor man had the privilege of accompanying the Lord for over three years, even being empowered by Him to perform miracles, yet at the end could only refer to Him as “Master”. This “son of perdition”, guilty of treason of the highest order, never grasped the identity of the Lord despite all he observed. He never absorbed His teaching respecting “the deceitfulness of riches”, yet was compelled to acknowledge his own guilt and the innocence of the One he betrayed, when facing the reality of His certain death.

**Pontius Pilate** – “I find in Him no fault at all” (John 18:38). “I am innocent of the blood of this just person” (Matt. 27:24). Pilate the judge was not duped by the tactics of the Jews as they sought to pervert the cause of justice to gain a conviction without trial. He correctly identified their envy towards Christ and under examination judged Him to be without any “cause of death” and stated such three times. But his vacillation does not excuse his action for, though “he sought to release” Him, he had the power to do so, but would not.

**The Convicted Malefactor** – “...but this Man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke 23:41). This man began his punishment taunting the Lord but was transformed within a few hours. He grasped truth the rulers had refused to accept, hearing truth even from them in their taunts, “If Thou be the Son of God”; “If He be the King of Israel”; “He saved others”. He heard the Lord’s own words, “Father forgive them; for they know not what they do”. In the face of such provocation he observed His attitude and spirit. He confessed his own guilt and just death, acknowledged the Lord’s innocence and His Lordship and entered into His kingdom while his accomplice perished in his sins.

**Centurion at the Crucifixion** – when he “saw what was done, he

glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man” (Luke 23:47), “Truly this Man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). This hardened and experienced executioner was moved as he watched over the scene, observing the manner of Christ’s death through the dismissal of His spirit and the quaking of the earth. Never in his experience had he witnessed the likes before! He realised this was no ordinary Man, a righteous Man and more indeed and unjustly put to death. This is one of a number of noteworthy centurions in the NT.

### Testimony of the Apostles

**Peter, the man of Action** – “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again...” (1Peter 2:22-23). Writing to servants of the perfect servant, having observed Him in many varied situations, interacting with many people across the spectrum of society, Peter could bear such a testimony to Him.

**Paul, the man of the Mind** – “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2Cor. 5:21). Christ knew no sin in His thoughts, even as He weighed up the depth of woe before Him in Gethsemane, and as He suffered on the tree God’s wrath against sin resulting in that cry, “My God, My God, why has thou forsaken Me?” Only loving, obedient thoughts towards God and those Who He came to make righteous.

**John, the man of the Heart** – “And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him” (1John 3:5-6). He is essentially and eternally the sinless One. So those who are truly His will not be characterised or dominated by sin.

From our brief consideration of our Lord Jesus Christ, our hearts should bow in worship for the true **“Lamb without blemish and without spot. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world”** (1Peter 1:19-20) whose life could not be stained nor His bones be broken by men. The Impeccable Christ now acts for His believing people above. We look for that day, “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1John 3:2)

# MARANATHA

CHRIST is coming! Let Creation  
Bid her groans and travail cease;  
Let the glorious proclamation  
Hope restore and faith increase.  
Maranatha!  
Come, Thou blessed Prince of Peace.

Earth can now but tell the story  
Of Thy bitter Cross and pain;  
She shall yet behold Thy glory,  
When Thou comest back to reign.  
Maranatha!  
Let each heart repeat the strain.

Though once cradled in a manger;  
Oft no pillow but the sod;  
Here an alien and a stranger,  
Mock'd of men, forsak'n of God;  
All Creation  
Yet shall own thy Kingly rod.

Long Thine exiles have been pining  
Far from rest and home and Thee;  
But in Heavenly vesture shining,  
Soon they shall Thy glory see.  
Maranatha:  
Haste the glorious Jubilee.

With that Blessed Hope before us  
Let no harp remain unstrung;  
Let the mighty Advent Chorus  
Onward roll from tongue to tongue:  
Maranatha!  
Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!

E.A.

# Guidance

Selected

## A Right Perspective

If there is one aspect of life and service regarding which all honest Christians would admit their need of greater proficiency, it is the matter of recognising God's guidance. Many of us desire to do the will of God but find it difficult to discern what His will is, so as to be assured of it.

In matters of right or wrong it is not so difficult, though even here there is much divergence of judgement on matters which affect our lives profoundly, such as church order, evangelistic methods, separation from the world, and even basic moral issues such as contraception and divorce.

But it is even more difficult to find assurance in personal affairs where no principle is involved, as, for example, where we should live, what employment we should take, whether we should marry, and if so, whom?

It is very easy to talk glibly about the Lord's guidance, about seeking His mind, about doing His will, and then, when our characters, lives and service are examined in the light of harsh reality rather than pious talk, to be found just as selfish, just as unspiritual, just as unfruitful as those who would hesitate to claim to inhabit such high ground.

There are those, too, who talk of voices and visions, about dreams and prophecies, who yet neglect sinfully God's book of which it is said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). They speak dramatically of God's remarkable and miraculous guidance at times, but for every instance of it in their lives we cannot but see a dozen instances of worldly wisdom, self-will and even Satan's influence.

There is a great danger of discouragement and even cynicism, if we

belong to that class of persons who realise they have not yet reached perfection! For those who think they cannot make a mistake there is no problem: dogmatism is their way of life.

It is far better to seek humbly and sincerely to live by the will of God, to be conscious of our dullness and shortcomings, and to show the measure of our spiritual attainments in our lives, than to be always preaching piety, for this leaves us in danger of “severer judgement”, as James reminds us (James 3:1-2), and of exposure as hypocrites.

Nevertheless God’s guidance is an important and practical subject, and younger and less advantaged believers need all the help they can be given. Only one man ever fully lived His creed and did the will of God perfectly without making a mistake. Let us seek to learn some lessons from God’s word together, and may He by His grace help us all to put them into practice better in days to come than we have done in the past.

### **Principles to Follow**

Firstly let us assure ourselves that God’s guidance is a practical reality and not just a pious theory. Although God is so immeasurably great, He does interest Himself in the affairs of His people, and is more ready to guide us personally in our lives than we are to be guided. Numerous Scriptures assure us of this, and we may note just three. “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye” (Psa. 32:8). The Lord Jesus taught on one occasion, “And when he (the shepherd) putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice ... I am the good shepherd” (John 10:4,11,16). Then Paul states, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). So Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all ready to be our Guides: what a privileged people we are!

But this leads us to the question, how can we discern this leading?

- (1) We must abandon all self-confidence, and accept what the prophet says, “I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). The clear

condition of Proverbs 3:5-6 is, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths".

- (2) We must abandon all self-seeking. If our object is not the pleasure of God and the glory of His name but some other selfish object we cannot expect God's guidance. We must be able to pray, "For Thy Name's sake lead me, and guide me" (Psa. 31:3); then we shall prove, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake" (Psa. 23:3).
- (3) We must abandon all self-will, seeking to free ourselves of our own will, if we wish to learn God's will. Only by the presentation of our bodies to God as a living sacrifice can we "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2). We cannot expect to discern God's will at certain times and in specific instances: we must be committed unreservedly to doing God's will "in all our ways". Conformity to this world and its ways will prevent us from proving God's will (Rom. 12:2) and so will pandering to the flesh, the old nature within us, for this will grieve the Holy Spirit and frustrate His operations in our hearts (Gal. 5:17; Eph. 4:30). Any sin in heart or life, such as unbelieving thoughts towards God, unkind and unforgiving feelings towards men, or disobedience to what we already know of the will of God, will create an impasse, preventing further progress (Psa. 66:18; Prov. 28:9). The more we do the will of God, the more light will be given us as to the future pathway. (Mark 4:24-25; John 9:31; Eph. 5:14-17; Phil. 3:16).

There can be little doubt that one of the main reasons why we are so slow to discern God's will is that we are not sufficiently honest and thorough in our self-judgement (Psa. 139:23-24) and so not as single as we might suppose in our outlook (Matt. 6:22-23).

On a more positive note:

- (4) We should ask God's help, simply, dependently, believingly and patiently (Isa. 37:14-15; James 1:5-7; Psa. 37:5,7).

- (5) We should seek God's mind first thing every morning: His voice should waken or open our ears every day (Isa. 50:4-5). This is the critical exercise for receiving His instructions for each day.
- (6) We should read the Scriptures regularly, not merely to acquire Bible knowledge, but to hear the good Shepherd's voice calling to His sheep and indicating the path to tread. Special study should be given to subjects which are of present concern, using helps such as Bible References and Concordances to seek to discover all we may of the teaching of the Word of God regarding them.

In matters which are not specifically mentioned in the Scripture, we may apply the general principles of the Word of God, relating them honestly to our present path. See e.g. Acts 24:16; Romans 14:22-23; 1Cor. 6:19-20; 10:31; 2Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:1-2; Phil. 3:13-14; Col. 3:17; 2Tim. 2:21-22; Heb. 12:1; 1Pet. 4:10; 1John 2:6,28; 1Cor. 10:32-33; Matt. 5:16. These Scriptures, and many others, are golden mottoes which should regulate our lives at all times.

- (7) We should be sensitive to the inner leading of the Holy Spirit, constraining us for God's glory to pursue a certain path, in distinction from fleshly impulses which, in seeking our own satisfaction, would prejudice us as to our pathway (Gal. 5:16-17).
- (8) Although we are not to be governed by circumstances, we must be alive to indications sent to us by God to confirm what has been communicated to us (2Sam. 5:23-24; Eccles. 11:1).

Sooner or later we will be obliged to make a decision, and this is where many of us make a mistake. We think that God's guidance is a matter of God making the decision, then communicating it to us in some special way. There is a reluctance to see that we must make the decision, but with God's help, and with the wisdom which He imparts.

Says the Psalmist, "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way" (Psa. 25:9). The latter part of the verse



may include outward guidance through the Scriptures, the godly counsel of mature Christians, the indications of His providences etc. but the former part speaks of inward guidance, God guiding us in our assessing of matters in our mind, helping us to weigh all the considerations, and formulating our judgements or decisions. God's guidance is operative in our minds, our judgements; so it is not a matter of fancies and impulses, of "feeling led".

Many make hasty decisions, becoming impatient of waiting on the Lord, but many others lag behind, refusing to make decisions when they should. Guidance then becomes a matter of default. We are not where we are because we are sure it is where God would have us be, but because we have never been sure that God is leading us elsewhere. We are doing what we are doing not because we believe it is what God would have us do, but because we are not assured that we should be doing anything else. This is negativism and leads to barrenness, to absence of joy and conviction. Because of lack of initiative and decisiveness we are waiting for God to do what He expects us to do with His help.

### **Making a Wrong Move**

But what if we make a wrong decision?

If we are genuine and sincere, and have made a mistake because of misunderstanding or frailty, and not because of sinful self-will. God will show us our mistake.

- (1) The literal rendering of Colossians 3:15 is helpful, "And let the peace of God arbitrate (act as an umpire) in your hearts". Christ was the only One who did the will of God perfectly and who knew, as a result, a constant, unruffled peace of heart. This peace He has bequeathed to His people (John 14:27), and when they do God's will they enjoy His peace, but when they act out of step His peace is withdrawn. So it becomes an umpire or monitor in the soul. If we lose our peace of heart, even when we think we are doing right, we may be sure we are making a mistake and we need to rethink our situation.

- (2) If we are willing to be taught, God will show us when we are mistaken in our mind. “And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Phil. 3:15).
- (3) If we tread a wrong path, God will call us back into the right path. “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it,’ when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isa. 30:21).

It is with much diffidence and a consciousness of many failures that we seek to present this subject, but we trust that God in sovereign grace will bless His word to His people and enable us all to prove more really and more consistently the prophet’s words, “And the LORD shall guide thee continually” (Isa. 58:11), and the words of a faithful servant of old, “I being in the way, the LORD led me” (Gen. 24:27).

## MEN OF GOD SERIES

(16) JOB

**“Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth...?”**

**(Job 1:8)**

Within a few minutes, Job lost all his possessions and his family. Soon he also lost his health to sit in agony amid dust and ashes. His wife added temptation to affliction, his friends accused him of evil and in all his bitter anguish, God’s hand was hidden. Why do the righteous suffer? The choicest of God-fearing saints must learn that there is a Divine purpose in their suffering. God never allows His children to suffer needlessly. We must see God’s glory and God’s Sovereignty prevail in the story of Job, the man who at the beginning of the book (1:8; 2:3) and at the end of the book (42:7-8) six times, God calls “My Servant Job”.

Agonising in pain, weeping from grief, lamenting sore loss, we are often caused to ask, why do the righteous suffer? Dear child of God, have you ever asked, why did this happen to me? Usually, trials come without explanation. We often relate suffering to sin, our troubles to our transgressions. By asking, where did I go wrong? what did I do to deserve this? we may conclude that afflictions are undeserved and develop a sense of injustice.

### THE MAN – God’s Confidence in His Servant (Ch’s 1-2)

God Himself describes His servant Job saying; “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect (blameless, without moral blemish) and an upright (straight, not deviating from God’s standards) man, one that feareth (reverence, faith, submissive to God’s majesty) God, and escheweth (rejecting, hating, spue out anything contrary to God’s character) evil” (1:8). After Satan’s first attack God repeats this assessment adding “And still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movest Me against him, to destroy him without a cause” (2:3). Job was not just a good man, he was no ordinary man, he was a God-fearing man. God is expressing His confidence in His Servant. “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (1:22). God is the Righteous Judge. This assessment contrasts with that of his critical friends, and some more modern commentators, accusing him of being a wilful sinner. Job was wholly at rest with the Will of God. “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the LORD” (1:21). Job had no hard thoughts toward God. Like a leper from head to foot, destitute, deserted, diseased, Job sat amid dust and ashes without in the place of the offall. “He took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal” (2:8). “In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (2:10).

The book of Job is possibly the oldest book of the Bible. There is no mention of the law, the length of life is comparable with the patriarchs, and the speakers are well acquainted with the great details of creation. The background of the satanic attack upon God’s servant can be explained by the enmity of the two seeds foretold in Genesis. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and

between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). Satan is the father of lies, the slanderer, the accuser of the brethren, roaming around seeking whom he may devour (1Pet. 5:8). God was confident that Satan would find in Job, more than surface devotion. The godliness of Job could not be challenged. Satan attacked Job’s motives and so he attacked the very integrity of God. Does God get His servants to serve Him by rewarding them? God used Job twice to silence Satan and to lead Job into a deeper spiritual understanding of Divine purpose. Job is not left alone.

A New Testament example is given by the Lord to Simon Peter. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31-32). We get an appreciation of the unseen realm presently as we contemplate our great High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, “He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:24-25). He intercedes for us, presenting His Person, His death for us and His Holy Office to shield, protect from temptation and preserve from defilement. Our blessed Risen Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, represents all that we need for salvation, redemption, sanctification, and protection, spiritual, supernatural, and eternal.

#### THE MYSTERY – God’s Silence while Job Suffers (Ch’s 3-37)

“The greatest of all the men of the east” (1:3); the man who sat as judge in the gate of the city, respected by young and old (29:7-8), now sits languishing and mourning in physical torture and distress among garbage and ashes outside the gate. His three friends came to sympathize and comfort. They wept and wailed at his physical condition. They tore their robes as a token to show that they were broken hearted; they threw dust in their grief and sat with him in silence for a week (2:11-13). In the three circles of their dialogue, they displayed a great knowledge of God as Creator. They understood creation before Moses had written about it far better

than modern scientists, so called, today. They spoke right words that did not apply to Job. Their charges against Job became more vitriolic and specific. Job well described them as dried up water courses (6:14-27). Job could find nothing wrong in himself; his friends could find nothing right. They succeeded where the devil failed. They added mental distress to physical torture. They became his accusers, his miserable comforters. They said that to suffer so severely, Job must have sinned grievously. God was angry with Job's councillors. "My wrath is kindled against thee ... for ye (plural) have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath ... go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the things which is right, like My servant Job" (42:7-8).

From the beginning it is vital to note Job's faith and his unhesitating acceptance of the Will of God. "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither" (his body to the dust of earth) (1:20-21).

Job did not have the solace and comfort of the written Word of God yet his faith in God is seen by the Divine titles which he used: "Elohim" – Creator; "Jehovah" – Everlasting One; "Almighty"; "El Shaddai" – Mighty, All sufficient; "the Preserver of Men" (7:20); "the Holy One" (6:10) – the Source of Utter Perfection, Unsullied Holiness, Unchanging Righteousness. Job pleads his sincerity in believing and obeying God Who could not do wrong. He claimed submission to "Adonahy", "the Sovereign Lord". "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (28:28).

Job had the knowledge of God as the Refiner of Silver and the Purifier of Gold. He spoke of the fruit of the Spirit in a crushed and humbled life.

Job's lament was the SILENCE OF GOD. God's hand was hidden. In God's permissive will, he sits in bewilderment. Job knows nothing of the scene in courts above and of Satan's involvement. He did know

of earth's trials, the natural events of the bandits, the lightening, and the cyclone. He experienced destitution, sickness, disease, multiple bereavement, humiliation, and depression. Sitting on an ash heap scraping loathsome boils from head to toe, he holds on to God's integrity, justice, and truth but why, why does God not speak, why does God not explain, why does God seem to be absent? He is desperate in his attempt to bring his faith and his experience together. In deep anguish he seeks relief in Shoel, the place of the dead. He is "hedged in" (3:23), sighing and groaning are his food and drink (3:24). Unless suffering, such as Job's, drives us back to God Who makes Himself closer, personally, vitally known by experience, we will miss the main lesson that the book of Job is written to teach.

Job longs for relief in death, yet believes in resurrection "For I know that My Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my veins be consumed within me" (19:25-27). In despair, he cries for an arbitrator, a mediator, a "Daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both" (9:33). Job longs for communion with God, Who seems inaccessible, why is God inactive? He sets out his integrity like a legal oath, "My conscience will not reproach me", "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go" (27:6). Is God a mere passive spectator to his dilemma and despair?

Eliphaz said; "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace" (22:21). To this, Job answered and said, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" (23:3). "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him" (23:8-9).

"But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10). "He knoweth the way that is with me" (RV Margin). "The way" is not a path or a journey, but God knows all that is in a man, He knows the ultimate meaning of individual

personality. God knew Job perfectly and all that was within him. Job has a consciousness that his life had a purpose and a meaning. In order to bring this about, there was a need of a process of testing by fire. "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold". Job valued a sense of God in his life. He admits that beyond the knowledge of God's blessings there is the refining process of trial in all Job's experiences to reveal the heart, the pertinence, pierced by the sharp knife of affliction. He has "tried me" to reveal the "gold", the final dignity of Divine government.

#### THE MEANING – God's Presence made Known (Ch's 38-42)

"Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:1-2). God does not make any specific reference to Job's suffering nor does He correct his theory concerning evil. Job, by a series of questions, is directed to God's handiwork in space, in the sky, on the earth and in the sea. The message is that, if Job could not comprehend God's government of nature, how could he understand God's ways with man? In Job's first "answer" to God (40:3-5), he exclaims his awe and submission to God's will, purpose, and power in creation. He confesses his insignificance in contrast to his presumption, he inability to understand instead of his self-confidence. He cannot instruct God, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth" (40:4).

To this, the Lord challenges Job again with the same words and asks him to consider the "behemoth" (40:15) and the "leviathan" (41:1), monstrous creatures, untameable and fearless. The strongest creatures dare not resist God. If God controls the steps of the wild goat, donkey, and ox as they climb rocks, does He not watch over His people on the rugged rocks of adversity? Since God guides His creatures, so that they are not afraid of the floods, can He not preserve Job in the waters of adversity? God says that everything under heaven is Mine, therefore who can have a claim against God, who can dare to resist Me to My face? The lesson is that even in uncertainty, in the dark, in the unknown, even in apparent failure,

faith must learn to trust God. God has been present all along. The wisdom of God controls earth's foundations, the sea, clouds, light and darkness, snow and hail, rain and dew, the lion and the lioness, the goats, the deer, the donkey, and the ox: the ostrich that flaps and runs away from her young. This panorama of God's handiwork is a display of God's wisdom.

Another lesson in these chapters is the Sovereign freedom of God's timing. There are no answers to all Job's questions, no apology for the long silence, no references to Satan or no answer to Job's pain. "Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that Thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not ... I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:1-6). Job is silenced, he repents of his arrogance before the Sovereignty of the infinitely wise and powerful God. In this confession, he is like the other men in the Bible who came to know God. Isaiah said, "I am undone" (Isa. 6:5), he felt his corruption in the presence of God. Paul said, "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). This is the lesson of the offence of the Cross when all goodness and merit that men can recognise in themselves must be nailed to the Cross, to gain the risen man. Job was well satisfied with self until he saw God. Self must be ignored if Christ is to be adored.

Christ Jesus Himself; "Though He were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). The hidden purposes of God are revealed in the Cross when the Perfect Servant became the Sufferer; He Who was rich became poor. He was denied by His "familiar friend"; when reviled He prayed for His accusers; as the Man of Sorrows, there was no beauty that we should desire Him, (Isa. 53:2). From the darkness of Golgotha we hear the cry, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me" (Psa. 22:1). In suffering death, He destroyed the devil and became the "One Mediator between God and men" (1Tim. 2:5), that Job sought.



“So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (42:12). The Lord granted him double the livestock which he originally possessed and restored seven sons and three daughters outstandingly “fair”, to whom he gave “inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his son’s sons, even four generations” (42:15-16).

Job is used as the example of suffering affliction in the New Testament. “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience (endurance) of Job, and seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy” (James 5:11). “The end of the Lord” is the purpose, the joyful consummation to which the Lord brought the sufferings of His Servant Job.

The lesson from the book of Job is that of “endurance” under testing, fortitude, courage in adversity, acceptance of calamities in submission to God’s will. We often misunderstand why God permits us to endure oppression and injustice. The Lord has an end in view, that we might prove that He is very pitiful (full of pity) and of tender mercy (compassionate)” (James 5:11).

## Questions Frequently Asked

**Question:** “To deliver such an one unto Satan” (1Cor. 5:5). “I have delivered unto Satan” (1Tim. 1:20). Please explain what is meant by delivering unto Satan?

**Answer:** The reference to delivering to Satan is associated with the Apostle Paul on two occasions as above. Both passages refer to very serious matters in the apostolic period of the church for which there is an extreme form of discipline. The differences between these chapters are important. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5, the problem is moral wrong, whereas the problem with the Timothy passage is doctrinal wrong. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians has the future in view, “That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (v5), but in

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, the present is in view. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians it is an assembly act with which Paul associated himself, but in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy it is an apostolic act. The objective in the discipline in each case is different. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, it is “for the destruction of the flesh”; in the other it is “that they may learn not to blaspheme”. The word “learn” here is not by the impartation of knowledge, but rather to learn by the way of chastening, correction and even severe discipline. In both cases the discipline is remedial. It is important to remark that God may allow Satan to touch the flesh but not to touch the spirit of a believer.

What then does it mean to deliver to Satan? It involves serious discipline by putting the offender into the sphere of the world. The world is the place where Satan as the “god of this world” rules, but by contrast the assembly is where God rules. Paul with apostolic power takes this action. We do not believe that in our day, any individual can perform such a serious act. It is the assembly that excommunicates and not any one individual. The two men mentioned had been teaching slanderous doctrine against God. The point must not be overlooked that the assembly is a shelter for believers in this world. There is ‘a within’ and ‘a without’ of the assembly. An assembly should be a sphere of blessing, comfort, protection, and spiritual help for the believer in this world.

Answer written by the late Mr. John J. Stubbs

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (1Peter 5:8-9)

## **“Make haste, and come down...”** **(Luke 19:5)**

Luke's Gospel account puts much emphasis on wealth and the perils of it. Money has its proper and fitting uses but when it takes over a person heart and life, let them beware and take heed: ***“Ye cannot serve God and mammon”*** (Luke 16:15).

### ***A Curious Soul***

We read in chapter 19:1-10 of a man named Zachæus. He was a wealthy man, but he was not satisfied with his wealth. He had a desire ***“to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature”*** (vs. 2-3).

What he lacked in size, however, he made up for in energy and determination. So we read, ***“He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him”*** (v4).

Just what he expected to see in the Lord Jesus Christ we are not told, but his earnest desires were rewarded by much more than sight, for he heard the Lord, speaking to him, and calling him personally. However well hidden he might have been the Lord saw him, and knew him, and called him by name.

How good it is to know that if we really desire to know more about Christ, He is well aware of it, and is ready to reveal Himself to us!

***“Zachæus,”*** He called, ***“Make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house”*** (v5).

The word of God declares that we are all “little of stature”. It says, ***“There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”*** (Rom. 3:22-23). The very best of men and women fall far short of God's standards of absolute righteousness, as our own consciences should surely tell us.

However, like Zachæus, many think if we are to see the Saviour and come to know Him, we must climb by our own efforts, we must improve ourselves, we must elevate ourselves.

The first thing we have to hear from His lips if we are ever to receive Him unto ourselves and into our lives is the word, ***“Make haste, and come down”***.

Zachæus had to stand before the Lord in all his smallness, to accept the plain truth of what he was, not only physically but also spiritually – ***“a man that is a sinner”*** (v7). And so do we! We have to come down from the supposed heights of self-righteousness and religious attainments, from self-esteem and self-effort, and stand in the presence of the Lord as sinners, sinners that must be lost in hell eternally, if He does not save us.

And when we come down to our true level, and take the sinner's place before Him, we shall find Him only too willing to receive us and save us, for did He not say, ***"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"*** (v10)?

But make haste! Do not allow pride or stubbornness to keep you from coming down speedily and taking your true place as a lost sinner before Him. Zachæus was not a well liked man among the people, for he was ***"chief among the publicans (tax-collectors)"*** (v2) and branded as a ***"sinner"*** (v7) by those who despised him, not accepting that they were equally so in God's sight as noted above (Rom. 3:23). Maybe he had collected much of his wealth through underhand business dealings, taking more than he should in each tax demand, to line his own pockets, as we say.

### ***A Converted Soul***

Never again would the Lord pass this way. Never again would Zachæus have the opportunity of receiving Him. It was his last chance, and this could be yours! Delay no longer, but do as Zachæus did; ***"He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully"***. To take the sinner's place and to receive the sinner's Saviour would make ***"today"*** the happiest day you have ever known. It would bring to your heart a joy, the joy of God's salvation, a salvation that will last for all eternity.

He relinquished the grip money had upon him proving the reality of repentance and conversion: ***"Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold"*** (v8). The Lord response: ***"This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham"*** (v9). Zachæus was characterised by the same faith as Abraham, century's earlier, faith in God; he was justified by faith. What about you?

The Lord was passing through Jericho on His last journey to Jerusalem, there to be crucified and die to purchase pardon for sinners, to release them from their great debt, if they would but acknowledge their need and receive Him as Zachæus did.

### ***A Conceited Soul***

Zachæus was unlike the rich farmer of Luke 12, representative of so many who want to build better for this life and enjoy their wealth for a season. He lost his soul the same night! He was unlike the rich young ruler of Luke 18 whose covetousness and hold on this worlds perishable goods prevented him from laying hold of the incorruptible eternal riches. We read of the rich man in Luke 16 who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, and of Lazarus, the beggar, who desired to be fed with crumbs off his table. They both died, and the tables were turned! Lazarus, the man with faith in God, found rest in Abraham's bosom, at peace; the rich man, consumed by his wealth in this life, with no time for God, found himself wrapped around by the tormenting flames of hell, with no rest.

**D**on't let the ***"deceitfulness of riches"*** or anything, or anyone stop you getting to Christ; Time is short, your soul is so precious – ***"Make haste, and come down" TODAY*** and know the blessing of salvation coming to your soul, with eternal joy.