



THE OLD PATHS

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The Old Paths

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

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Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and
 He that formed thee from the womb, I
 am the LORD that maketh all things; that
 stretcheth forth the heavens alone: that
 spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself;
 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars,
 and maketh diviners mad; that turneth
 wise men backward, and maketh their
 knowledge foolish;

(Isaiah 44:24-25)



From the Editor's Desk

MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLISHER – **BROTHER AJAY CHHATRIA**

Our dear brother and publisher of this Magazine, Mr Ajay Kumar Chhatra, wishes to express his sincere thanks to all the readers and concerned believers who have prayed for his recovery from the physical effects of his severe stroke. Our brother received excellent medical treatment and rehabilitation therapy in the care of skilled professional staff of the Christian Medical College, Vellore. He has also been lovingly cared for by his devoted wife, Thankamma, and his two medically trained daughters, Blessy and Bency. He attributes his steady recovery above all to his ever present and glorious Saviour, the Lord Jesus, Who has answered the prayers of the Lord's dear people in many outstanding ways spiritually and physically. Our brother also would have us to pray that he may be fully recovered, that he would be strengthened to return home to the sphere of his labour and fruitful service, in the assemblies in the Titlagarh area, where he has laboured fruitfully for over fifty years.

“Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another” (John 15:16-17).

Brother Ajay has expressed his desire to be relieved of the responsibility as Publisher and Distributor of the Old Paths Magazine. Our brother pioneered the publication of the first issue in 2012. We have appreciated his commitment and steadfast support of the teaching of the truth of the Word of God through times of both encouragement and opposition over these years. In the will of the

Lord, the committee will continue to greatly value his advice and contributions as the Lord enables.

Brother Joseph Shah of the Dishergarh Sanctoria assembly, Bengal, has been a committed supporter of the work of this magazine. He is a diligent full time worker in the assemblies and Gospel in N.E. Bengal. Additional to his busy shepherd care and Gospel outreach, he has expressed his exercise to become the Publisher and Distributor. He is already busy in the translation of the magazine and books as a faithful committee member. Brother Ajay and I have no doubt, as to the fervent commitment of brother Joseph to the teaching of the Scriptures after a Godly manner. In the will of God, the January 2026 Issue, of the Old Paths Magazine, № 49, will contain the necessary name changes and contact details. Please continue to support our brother as he engages in the propagation of the Word of God for the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

We take the opportunity to request that all who receive bulk quantities of the magazine, please check that contact details and quantities received, are correct and if needed, updating by notifying brother Joseph. Please also ensure that all the magazines and books received are being usefully distributed and read, that each believer will profit spiritually.

In this stewardship, we are all labourers together in the Lord, that the people of God may be; “Nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine” (1Tim. 4:6).

J. Alan Davidson
Editor

The path of the just is as the shining
light, that shineth more and more unto
the perfect day. (Proverbs 4:18)

Daniel's Vision of the Ram and the He Goat

J.A. Brown

Chapter 8

(All quotations are from Daniel Chapter 8, unless otherwise stated)

Introduction

The book of Daniel was originally written in 2 languages – Chaldea and Hebrew. The Chaldean section (Ch's 2-7) detailed events that would occur among the nations during the "times of the Gentiles", with the whole course of history being mapped out by God and ultimately being under His control! Here from chapter 8 to the end of the book, the Hebrew language is once-again used (i.e. Ch. 1 and Ch's 8-12), with these remaining chapters primarily taken-up with events specific to God's people!

Context

This vision of the Ram and the He Goat was given to Daniel at Shushan almost at the end of the Babylonian kingdom and about 2 years after his vision of the four great beasts in chapter 7. It revealed events soon to pass concerning the Medo-Persian and Grecian kingdoms (vs. 3-22) – this was near prophecy to Daniel, but now historical to ourselves today. Yet what was revealed to Daniel concerning the little horn (vs. 9-12 and 23-25) was both near and distant (yet to be fulfilled) prophecy. It does seem that some of the prophesies revealed to Daniel would have a dual accomplishment; prophesies that indicated events near at hand (although still future to Daniel) were being used of God as pointers to events still future from today's standpoint!

Shushan (v2)

Shushan or Susa was approx. 250 miles east of Babylon. Today the

settlement of Shush, in present day Iran, stands on its site. It was the winter residence of the Persian kings, but later destined to be one of the capitals of the Persian Empire after Cyrus' time. It seemed that after the conquest of Babylon in 539BC. some of the captive Jews moved eastward to Shushan, as did Mordecai (Esther 2:5-6). Perhaps Shushan was chosen as the location of this vision as it was to assume greater importance in the next kingdom, signified by the 2-horned Ram. Much of the book of Esther is centred in Shushan, and later Nehemiah served there as Artaxerxes' cup-bearer (Neh. 1:1; 2:1).

The Ram and its Interpretation (vs. 3-4,20)

Daniel first saw a Ram with 2 high horns, with the higher one coming up last! The Ram was the symbol of Persia and Persian kings wore ram's head of gold. Persian coins bore the image of a ram. The higher horn represented Cyrus and Persia, while the lower horn represented Darius and the Medes; the Persians would ultimately have dominance in the Medo-Persian kingdom. The interpretation in verse 20 confirms that these 2 horns were the kings of Media and Persia (representing the breasts and arms of silver of the "dream-image" of Daniel 2:32). This Ram advanced rapidly and overthrew all before it in three directions – west, north and south! Although still future when revealed to Daniel, this accurately portrayed the advancing armies of Cyrus, eventually conquering Babylon, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor in the west; then Armenia and the Caspian Sea area in the north; and finally Israel down to Ethiopia, Egypt and Libya in the south.

The He Goat and its Interpretation (vs. 5-8,21-22)

The He Goat or the Rough Goat was the king of Grecia (v21), with the notable (v5) or great horn (v21) between his eyes being the first king. Historically this was Alexander the Great. Daniel was given a graphic picture of the speed of conquest and absolute terror (vs. 5-7) of this young ruler of the 3rd kingdom (Greece) that had been prophesied in the "dream- image" (Dan. 2:32) – the thighs of brass. In less than 12 years Alexander's armies had conquered Persia, Egypt, Babylon and Syria and even as far east into India! Then, at the very height of his

fame and conquests, Alexander was suddenly taken from this life at 32 years of age! After his sudden, premature death (“the great horn was broken”) he was succeeded by four of his generals and the empire divided into 4 weaker kingdoms that never approached the power and dominion of the original Greek empire! It was then from one of these kingdoms, Syria, that “a little horn” would arise (v9).

A Little Horn (vs. 9-12)

The vision now became focused on what would arise eventually from Syria. This personage would be more fearful and ferocious than all before him. Notice regarding the Ram – “great” (v4); the He Goat – “very great” (v8); yet concerning this little horn – “exceeding great” (v9). It seems this personage would be involved in great evil military (v9) and religious (vs. 10-12) exploits! It was this little horn’s evil exploits against God’s holy institutions (the sanctuary and the sacrifice, v11) that caused the greatest concern among the “saints” (v13). This little horn was seemingly being allowed of God to fulfil His purposes in chastisement, yet God is always in absolute control and withdraws the power allowed when His will and purposes are accomplished (v19)!

The Saints, the Voice and an Angel (vs. 13-19)

The saints or angelic watchers (see Dan. 4:13) questioned how long this evil activity of the little horn would be allowed to continue (v13). The answer was specific – 2,300 days! (v14). No more and no less! How specific is Scripture! Daniel didn’t have to wait long for the interpretation of the vision; he heard a “man’s” voice instructing Gabriel to make known the vision (v16) – surely only a Divine person could instruct angels! Daniel’s attitude and demeanour (v17) showed the moral gulf separating the holy things of heaven and God from even a man of Daniel’s righteous character. Daniel was shown that even the frightening events that would come about would only be temporary, for there would be an end to what was being prophesied. It’s interesting to note that Gabriel spoke to and was clearly

understood by Daniel in a language he was familiar with (cf. Luke 1:13-17).

The Little Horn Interpretation – Historical

After the death of Alexander the Great, history records that one of Alexander's generals, Seleucus, took control of Syria (also Babylon and Media). His ruling family had been established there for the next 150 years or so when Antiochus Epiphanes took over the kingdom in 176BC. Antiochus was vicious in battle and an absolute despot to those he ruled over. He persecuted God's people, introduced idol worship to his kingdom, robbed the temple in Jerusalem, appointed his own priests and did abomination in the sight of God (vs. 10-12). As noted already, this evil activity lasted 2,300 days (about 6.3 years); it is possible that this refers to 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices (cf. v26) or 1,150 days! When this appointed time was up, history again records that Judas Maccabaeus led the people in resistance and cleansed the sanctuary of its defilement!

The Little Horn Interpretation – Prophetical

This "king of fierce countenance" (v23) and one motivated by Satan ("not by his own power") was certainly true of Antiochus Epiphanes, as secular history proves. At times God uses near (soon to be fulfilled) prophecy – in this case the evil exploits of Antiochus Epiphanes – as a pointer and reflection of distant (yet to be fulfilled) prophecy – in this case an evil personage still to be revealed in future days (v23). We believe the "Great Tribulation"/the time of "Jacob's Troubles" are in view here! This person will "stand against the Prince of princes" (v25), his might and power being satanically controlled (v24) as he seeks the military destruction of the Jews in a coming day (v24). He seems to be un-opposed (v25), but like the historical Antiochus, his reign of terror will end (v25). Who is he? We cannot be sure, but he certainly has features that will be seen in the anti-Christ (2Thess. 2:3-12 and Rev. 13:1-10); some have suggested that he answers to "the king of the north" (Ch. 11), and being confederate with the antichrist!

Whoever he is, he is evil and hates God's people, but he himself will ultimately be judged of God!

The Little Horn of Chapter 7 and the Little Horn of Chapter 8

Are these different individuals or is it the same person? There has been much discussion over this question! We suggest considering the following points:

- The little horn of chapter 7 emerges out of the 4th kingdom, and is the 11th horn, while the little horn of chapter 8 emerges out of the 3rd kingdom and grows out of four horns.
- However, they both have one thing in common in their hatred and persecution of God's people.
- Also, they both point to an evil personage on the world's scene in the Tribulation period.

The Effect on Daniel

This vision had a profound effect on Daniel. It was a revelation that he couldn't fully understand (v27) and that he must keep to himself at that time (v26). This was an experience that drained him and he lay sick and exhausted for days ("fainted"/"sick certain days", v27). What had been revealed to him concerning the future suffering of the nation astonished him; what affected (or would affect) the people of God affected him, such was his love and desire for God's children. Could that be said of us today? Despite his present circumstances and what had just been revealed to him, Daniel "rose up, and did the king's business" (v27). This man of God remained consistent, active and faithful in every changing situation of life! Do we?

Conclusion

Biblical prophecy is a pathway that many fear to tread!! Daniel was a Divinely-gifted interpreter and receiver of dreams/visions, a godly man who had the benefit of the angel Gabriel explaining the vision to him – yet still finding difficulty understanding things! So, where do

we stand? However, we *do* have the permanent, indwelling Holy Spirit and the advantage of historical hindsight as to what has already been fulfilled! The vision concluded with the destruction of this evil personage, whoever he is, by Divine power (v25). Gabriel then cemented the authenticity of all that Daniel had just been told (v26). It was revealed for our instruction (as is *all* Scripture – 2Tim. 3:16); much has already been fulfilled, but there still awaits further accomplishment in the future!

Thoughts on Ephesians Ch. 4

T.J. Blackman

Ephesians 4:1-6

The apostle Paul wrote 14 inspired epistles. Nine of these are addressed to churches or groups of churches in Europe and Asia Minor. Each of these has a principal theme: Romans – the Righteousness of God; 1Corinthians – the Church of God; 2Corinthians – the Service of God; Galatians – the Grace of God; Ephesians – the Purpose of God; Philippians – the Glory of God; Colossians – the Truth of God; 1Thessalonians – the Salvation of God; 2Thessalonians – the Judgements of God. Ephesians occupies the central place in this nine-fold exposition of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3); there are four epistles before and four after.

This epistle has two distinct sections: Chapters 1-3 are mostly doctrinal, and chapters 4-6 are practical. The doctrine provides the indispensable basis for the practice. Chapter one – God’s purpose is fulfilled in Christ alone, Chapter 2 – God’s purpose embraces sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, and Chapter 3 – God’s eternal purpose is to be glorified in the church “throughout all ages, world without end”.

Thus chapters 1-3 empower the word “therefore” in 4:1. Incarcerated

in Rome, Paul still saw his circumstances as an essential part of God's gracious purpose. He was the Lord's prisoner, and in union and communion with the Lord could be fruitful in that barren place – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon are the precious fruit of his incarceration. Chapter 4:1-16 emphasises our collective life and 17-32 our individual life.

From his heart he beseeches, he implores, or rather Christ in him implores us, to walk worthy of our high, holy and heavenly calling (see Philippians 3:14; 2Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 3:1). This is the first of seven essential aspects of the Christian life: our walk, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, love, and unity.

Our Walk: To walk suggests steady progress. Enoch and Noah walked with God, Abraham was to walk before God. To do so implies agreeing with God (Amos 3:3). We can only agree with Him if we learn about Him and His will in His word. In the Lord's strength we can "walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31), and by His grace, "walk ... to please God" (1Thess. 4:1). The Christian who abides in Christ "ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1John 2:6), and in this passage we can see how the following aspects of the Christian life are seen perfected in Him and practiced in union with Him.

Lowliness: Philippians 2 brings before us the perfect example of lowliness, or humility. No one else ever made himself so low. The eternal Son of the Most High became an obedient servant unto the death of the cross. This shows us that we can never be too humble as members of the body of Christ, that and whenever we are proud, we are not behaving like members of Christ.

Meekness: In Matthew 11:28, lowliness and meekness characterise the heart of the Saviour who invites us to come to Himself. Meekness is lowliness in action: towards our fellows it is gentleness, towards God it is willingness to do His will.

Longsuffering: In love, He would suffer as long as necessary, and so should we in order to be a blessing to each other.

Forbearance: In love, He would bear as much as necessary, and so should we in order to be a real help to each other.

Love: “In love” occurs six times in Ephesians (1:4; 3:17; 4:2,15-16; 5:2). The love of Christ gives us confidence (Romans 8:35), it is our contemplation (Ephesians 3:19), and it constrains us (2Corinthians 5:14). The love of Christ revealed at Calvary and poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5) is the power to practice the Christian life in lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearance.

Unity: The final and crowning aspect of the Christian’s walk is to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. We cannot create this unity, the Holy Spirit already created it on the day of Pentecost (1Corinthians 12:13), but we are to “keep” it. This does not mean that we should form organizations or fellowships to this end, but that, in the context of the local assembly where we are in fellowship, we should be diligent to maintain this unity among ourselves, using the means already described in the previous verses.

The “bond of peace” is beautifully illustrated by Abigail’s words to David in 1Samuel 25:29, that together we are “bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God”. Thus, in verses 3-6 the unity is shown to be in union with the three Persons of the Trinity, “and these three are one” (1John 5:7).

The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual life; the Lord Jesus is the source of divine light; God the Father is the source of all true love.

Linked to the three divine Persons are eight facts:

1) One Body: The first believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit, forming the one body on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2; 1Corinthians 12:13). The local assembly should manifest locally the living unity of the body of Christ.

2) One Hope: “One hope of your calling”. Through the gospel we were called to Christ and brought into His body. Those called in this

way share the same glorious hope. All will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever. The whole body will go up to meet Him when He returns.

3) One Faith: verse 13 speaks of “the unity of the faith” as our aim. As we are taught by the same Lord, through His one inspired Book, we can be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1Corinthians 1:10).

4) One Baptism: some of the Ephesians had been baptized before by John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-5), but only one baptism is valid in this dispensation – that which forms part of the great commission: “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). In public baptism the believer identifies himself with Jesus Christ as his “one Lord”.

5) All are in His family: “One God and Father of all”. All believers are born again and are children of the Heavenly Father.

6) All are under His Authority: “Who is above all”. He wants us to be “as obedient children” (1Peter 1:14).

7) All can be Used by Him: He is “through all” He wants to work through us all. He wants us to be instruments of His righteousness and channels of His love and peace.

8) All are indwelt by Him: “and in you all”. What an amazing thing true believers have in common! The Holy Spirit indwells them (1:13-14) as the “earnest of our inheritance”; Christ dwells in their hearts by faith (3:17); and God the Father is “in you all”.

We cannot do anything about the divisions in Christendom. But how many reasons we have to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” in the local assembly! It is the Spirit of God Himself who declares in Psalm 133, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... there the LORD commanded the blessing”.

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 16:6-15

Ian McKee

The Holy Spirit redirects (v.6-10)

The reference to going “throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia” is most likely a reference to Iconium and Antioch Pisidia, cities visited on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:14-14:5), i.e. the Phrygian region of the province of Galatia. Paul, with Silas and Timothy, were now on the border of Proconsular Asia and therefore it was natural for them to look south west along the main road toward Colossae some 150 miles away and, beyond that, to Ephesus. We shall note that there are three direct interventions of God recorded in the space of five verses!

They were “**forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia**”, being prevented by some undefined way from moving in the direction of Colossae. Operating in accordance with the general commission, Paul still had to respond to the Lord’s providential ‘closing of doors’. Even an apostle will not know the Lord’s will for him in detail at every moment in time. Although the possible intended direction of apostolic service is here curbed, the prohibition was temporary (cf. Acts 18:18-21; 19:1-20). We note that great stress is laid on the guidance of the Holy Spirit at the start of the second missionary journey.

“After they were come to Mysia” indicates that with the south west route forbidden to them, they went north, crossing the Sultan Dagh mountains into Mysia, hoping to go on to Bithynia, the province situated on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Again, “**the Spirit suffered them not**”. On a second occasion they are prevented, again in an unexplained way, from moving forward without specific direction. We should note that Peter later wrote to believers in Bithynia (1Pet. 1:1).

So “they passing by Mysia came down to Troas”. Only the road to the North West seemed open to them so either they bypassed, or skirted, Mysia. However, as they could not easily get to Troas without passing through Mysia, this may have the meaning that they did not stay to preach in Mysia. Troas was an Aegean port near to the Hellespont, or Dardanelles. Troas was a free city, made a Roman colony and a regular port of departure/arrival for journeys across the Aegean Sea between Asia and Macedonia. As far as a land journey was concerned this was the ‘end of the road’ for the missionaries!

Until now Paul and his party have been receiving negative guidance, being prohibited and restrained from going in certain directions. Now ‘closed doors’ and **negative guidance** are replaced by **positive guidance**, with permission and constraint being given. Until this point the ‘invasion’ of Europe with the gospel seems not to have been in the mind of Paul but it certainly was in the purpose of the Holy Spirit, “and a vision appeared to Paul in the night”.

Exceptional visions found in early New Testament times are not to be expected today when we have the completed canon of Holy Scripture and believers have the indwelling Holy Spirit. Already in the Acts of the Apostles we have had two sets of confirmatory visions. The first concerns the newly converted Saul and Ananias of Damascus (Acts 9:10-12). The second concerns Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:3,17; 18:9; 22:17). Now it seems we may have a third vision with confirmation.

We are first told what Paul saw in the vision, “There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him”. It seems as if the man was adopting some posture indicative of beseeching or appeal, possibly beckoning to Paul. Given that the two earlier sets of visions in Acts were confirmatory, was the man of Macedonia seen in the vision Luke, whom Paul had either just met or was just about to meet? It is highly probable. Then we are told what Paul heard the man of Macedonia say in the vision, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us”.

Prompt obedience follows revelation, “And after he [Paul] had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia”. Sometimes it is the small words in a passage of Scripture that carry the greatest significance; and so it was here. The word “we” includes Luke. Until this point Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, has written in the third person about Paul and his travels, i.e. using “he” or “they”. However, from Troas, after Paul received the vision, Luke switches to the first person plural, i.e. “we” or “us”. The first “we” section continues until Acts 16:17 at Philippi when his writing goes back to the third person. There are three such “we” passages in Acts; and each coincide with significant crises in Paul’s ministry, which may require the attentions of Luke the doctor (although we do recognise that all of Paul’s service was punctuated by crises, e.g. 2Cor. 11:23-33).

“Assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them [the Macedonians]” demonstrates that Luke has joined Paul, Silas and Timothy in Troas to accompany them to Philippi. Luke does not give any grand announcement of his arrival, using “we” and “us” as his understated introduction! **God’s guidance is not only negative, but positive.** Putting together the vision, both in its visual and aural aspects and the arrival of Luke, the little group of probably perplexed missionaries were now able to discern the clear and single purpose of God’s intention – and respond to it.

Luke as a writer has a true feeling for the sea and sea voyages, capturing the scene in a few words, “Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis”. Catching a favourable wind, they came by the conspicuous landmark, the rocky island of Samothracia whose peak rises to 5,000 feet. It is possible that they made an overnight stop here, sailing on the next day to Neapolis, the nearest port to the city of Philippi. The whole 150-mile voyage was completed in two days (NB. it took them five days on their return voyage, Acts 20:6.)

Arrival at Philippi (v.12)

The arrival of the Gospel into Europe is introduced by the words “And from thence to Philippi”. It must have seemed an insignificant and inauspicious commencement, only four men disembarking from the ship newly docked at Neapolis, followed by a ten mile walk westward along the Roman road, the Via Egnatia, which crossed the Greek peninsula from the Aegean to the Adriatic.

This city was named by Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. For two centuries it had been a Greek colony then became a Roman colony in BC146. Philippians enjoyed autonomous government free from tax and tribute; Latin was the official language and Roman customs were adopted. Luke’s statement “we were in that city abiding certain days” may indicate a stay of possibly several weeks. While there may have been many converts, only three are selected for particular mention, to show how Christianity can cut across and break down barriers.

Europe’s first convert (v.13-15)

The missionaries going outside the city on the Sabbath to the river side suggests that there was probably no synagogue in Philippi, for which a quorum of ten righteous men was needed. However, at the river side there was a place “where prayer was wont to be made”; whether an open air site or an enclosure by the Gangites River which could be used for ceremonial washings. Perhaps the prayers of these women were behind God’s call to His servants; if so, it was one of the most influential prayer meetings ever held!

Here the missionaries sat down waiting to be invited to speak and then they “spake unto the women which resorted thither”. This is conversational speaking rather than preaching. They bring the Gospel to bear on those with an existing spiritual interest.

Now we are given one of Luke’s concise biographies, “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God”. Lydia may have been her trade name rather than her personal name, i.e. ‘the Lydian woman’. Thyatira was a city on

the other side of the Aegean Sea within provincial Asia, which was once in the ancient kingdom of Lydia. Thyatira was famed for dyers and Lydia specialised in cloth treated with an expensive purple dye, 'rose madder' or 'Turkey red' obtained from the root of a plant, *Rubia tinctorum*.

The interesting point to note here is that while Paul was not permitted to preach in Asia (Acts 16:6), here a woman originally from Asia, but now located in Philippi, becomes the first convert in Europe!

This woman, "which worshipped God, heard us". Lydia was reverent towards God, probably behaving like a Jewess without having become one, although there is the possibility that she was a Jewish proselyte.

We next read about Lydia; "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul". Although the message was Paul's, the saving initiative was God's: He opened her heart that she listened carefully and was saved. We have here Divine sovereignty and the hearing of faith. It was God who opened her 'inner eyes' to see and believe in the Jesus whom Paul proclaimed. Yet the Lord's work was not in itself direct, He chose to work through Paul's preaching. This phrase signifies full belief. The illumination of the Holy Spirit grips the mind and assures it with absolute awareness that what is spoken is the Word of God.

What next follows in the sequence of events is a baptism, "And when she was baptized, and her household". This is the second household baptism Luke records (cf. Acts 10:33; 16:33 and 18:8). Perhaps some of the women by the riverside were of her household, which may include servants and/or slaves as well as family, assuming she was a widow. The genuineness of her conversion is seen in her prompt baptism (cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12,36; 9:18 and 10:48).

Lydia then asks the missionaries, on the basis that they considered her to be a believer in the Lord, to "come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us". Lydia's house must have been of considerable size to facilitate the accommodation of four

missionaries! Once the heart is opened the home is opened too. She insisted, she wanted to do what she could to assist; fellowship follows faith. Lydia's house may have become the meeting place of the soon to be established Philippian assembly. So Lydia became part of the ongoing flow of Gospel tidings to others through her practical support.

(To be continued D.V.)

Get to Know Your Bible

J.A. Davidson

OLD TESTAMENT OUTLINE – Paper No 5.

LEVITICUS

“And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation” (Leviticus 1:1)

The Book of Exodus ends with the construction of the tabernacle. Leviticus continues as the sequel of Exodus developing the use of the tabernacle. The subject is the way of approach by sacrifice and offering, into the presence of God in the tent of meeting. The people have been redeemed from Egypt and are moving into the wilderness. If they are to enjoy the presence of God in their midst, they need to learn how to live as a holy nation. This book gives vital teaching for all who wish to live holy lives. In Exodus 25:8, God said, “Let them (the people of God) make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them”. He gave Moses the pattern of the framework, fabric and furniture of the tabernacle in Exodus chapters 25 to 40. The functioning of the tabernacle is now outlined in Leviticus during the period from the setting up the sanctuary on the first day of the first month in the second year, in Exodus 40:17, to the departure of the congregation from Sinai on the twentieth day of the second month in the second year (Num. 10:11).

GOD'S CALL

Leviticus is the title given by the Septuagint translators, when the Old Testament Scriptures were translated from Hebrew into Greek. This title is not inspired and is misleading since there are only four references to the Levites in the book. The Hebrew title means, "And He called" as in chapter 1:1. A call to worship may be the title to the opening chapters. Secondly, there is a call to Holiness if acceptable sacrifices are to be presented. The word "Holy" occurs eighty seven times. Delivered from Egypt and redeemed from the power of darkness, God in grace calls to "any" who will offer. He no longer speaks amidst the cloud and thunder of Mount Sinai but in the quiet peaceful conditions of the Sanctuary, a call to worship "in the beauty of holiness" (Psa. 29:2).

There are forty eight references to God commanding and speaking to Moses. These references mark the divisions of the book, for example the distinctions of the offerings: 1:2; 4:2; 6:25; 7:23,29. Resulting from these direct specific communications from God, there are more actual words directly spoken by God in these chapters than any other book in the Bible. This makes this third book in our Bible immensely important and worthy of careful study. The grace and truth of salvation has delivered us from this present evil age and it is expected that our lives will be marked by worship and holy living. We do not express this in the same way as the Israelites, but the principles still apply through "Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11).

GOD'S COMMANDS CONCERNING THE OFFERING (Chapters 1-7)

"Speak into the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD" (1:2). The word is "*horban*", approach offering, means to draw near. This is God calling His people to come near unto Himself. Leviticus is the guide book of drawing near to God. At last, His redeemed people have access, approach and atonement. "If his offering be a burnt sacrifice" (1:3). The word is "*lolah*", ascending offering, to ascend. This is acceptance

appreciation, that which ascends as a sweet savour in communion with God.

In Leviticus chapter 1, if an Israelite desired to give to God that which God appreciates, he brought a BURNT SACRIFICE. He offered it all to God, an offering on the altar burnt as incense, a sweet savour unto the Lord, a savour of rest.

In chapter 2, if one should wish to bring fragrance that God accepts, he brought a MEAT OFFERING of fine flour, pouring oil upon it, and putting frankincense thereon. Of this he took a handful himself of the fine flour, of the oil and all the frankincense, sharing the rest with Aaron and his sons.

In chapter 3, if an Israelite was in the good of communion that ascends to God, he brought a PEACE OFFERING. The priests were to sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about the choice portions which were to be offered on the altar. Communion was manifest as God, the priests and the offerer got their portions of that which spoke of Peace, "Shalom", or Peace together with Divine Persons.

Chapters 1 to 3, were voluntary, spontaneous, sweet savour offerings. Chapters 4 to 6, were compulsory, mandatory sin or trespass offerings to remove anything unintentional that may hinder communion with God.

In chapter 4, if anything came to the knowledge of the offerer, such as a sin through ignorance against any of the commandments that ought not to be done, not a deliberate sin, this would hinder his approach to God. The offerer or the priest that is anointed who may have sinned was to bring his offering, to be slain at the door. The blood was to be sprinkled seven times before the Lord, before the vail of the sanctuary, put upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense, and poured at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering. Provision of a guilt offering for the possibility of the sin of ignorance extended to the whole congregation, the ruler or one of the common people.

In chapter 5, if a soul sin by hearing or touching uncleanness perhaps unknowingly, or speaking unadvisedly, when it becomes known to him, he shall confess his specific sin and bring his trespass offering, (5:6). This is not habitual trespass, but he must offer that which will recover communion with God if upon his conscience he is guilty of something that will hinder access to God. This does not correspond to the forgiveness of sins experienced in salvation. On the cross, Christ was, “made sin for us” when He suffered “without the camp” (Heb. 13:11-13). “For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). In practice, we still have a fallen nature. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:8-9). At the altar we are accepted in the Beloved One and restored to communion with God.

All the offerings speak of Christ. The bullock, is the male of superior strength, the son of the herd, useful in labour, seen in Christ; “He shall see of the travail of His soul” (Isa. 53:11). The Lord’s patient service and untiring labour is seen in Mark’s Gospel. “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The sheep, in its meekness and patience, is a type of unresisting surrender to death as in John’s Gospel. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

An offering of one of the goats speaks of the travelling Saviour passing by, steadfast, undeterred, unhesitating in His path to the Cross. The key to Luke’s Gospel is His own words, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). If his offering be of fowls, “He shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons” (1:14). When He was born, the wise men came seeking the King. Matthew records that when they saw “the young child” in humble circumstances with Mary His mother, they “worshipped Him” (Matt. 2:11). The rich became poor, the mourner, the innocent, the Man of Sorrows. “We ... mourn sore like doves”

(Isa. 59:11). The meal offering is mingled as we see His Person in all four Gospels: The Messiah of Israel (Matthew), the Servant of Jehovah (Mark), the Perfect Man (Luke), the Son of God, become flesh (John).

The practical lessons from the Five Offerings are:

The Burnt Offering – ACCEPTANCE; as we respond in unshared devotion and love. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

The Meal Offering – CONSECRATION; unblemished purity, perfect balance in our walk and ways. “An odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18).

The Peace Offering – COMMUNION; uninterrupted intimacy between God and His people. “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ ... we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1John 1:3,7).

The Sin Offering – REMISSION; unselfish separation from worldly ambitions. “Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4).

The Trespass Offering – COMPENSATION; untiring zeal to pay our debt. “We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh ... if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:12-13).

Leviticus 6:8 to 7:38 continues the Law of the Offerings giving further details of the priestly presentation, portions and partaking of the Sacrifices.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD (Chapters 8-10)

Previously in Genesis, Abel acted in individual priesthood and Noah exercised family priesthood. Now Aaron and his sons were consecrated a priesthood to represent the people before God. Washed to remove defilement, clothed in beauty, anointed with oil, Aaron and his sons offered sacrifices and the ram of consecration signifying the holy office of priesthood was instituted by the shedding of blood. They were separated for seven days to feed upon the flesh

of the offerings and unleavened bread before they were manifest on the eighth day when “the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people” (9:23).

Despite this solemn holy consecration of the priesthood, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, offered “strange fire before the LORD”. “There went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD” (10:1-2). The “strange fire” is not specifically defined, perhaps intentionally and certainly by inspiration to show that the priests must be an example before the people of strict obedience to the Word of God. Any disobedience or small deviation from God’s commands detracted from His Glory and spoiled the type. The first seventeen chapters of Leviticus are devoted to explaining the persons, priests, and correct procedures to be followed in sacrifice. The overall concept is the presence of God in the Holy ceremonies, “before the LORD” (1:9,13,17; 2:9; 3:5; 10:1-2). “And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean” (10:10). These principles extend even unto the daily civil duties of life in chapters 11-27.

THE CLEAN AND THE UNCLEAN (Chapters 11-15)

God expects his redeemed people to be sanctified unto Himself in the basic essentials of daily life and habits. Lives of habitual separation from all uncleanness is stressed again. “To make a difference between the unclean and the clean” (11:47), in the CONSUMPTION of food (Ch. 11); at CHILD BIRTH (Ch. 12); in CLEANSING from the plague of leprosy (Ch’s 13-14), and purification from all defiling CONTACTS, (Ch. 15). Presently these requirements are still helpful for good hygiene and health of N.T. believers. We do not order our lives by legal requirements but God has not lowered His standard. “Ye shall be Holy; for I am Holy” (11:44). The priest must examine the garment defiled by leprosy, “in the warp, or in the woof ... burn that wherein the plague is with fire” (13:57). In the modern age, what we see and hear across the airwaves and through the media is like a polluting fog, a disgusting stench, energised by the prince of the power of the air. The Grace of God in salvation has raised us to walk with God not

only to the standards of legal requirements but far above that; “The love of Christ (not my love for Christ, but His love for me, in that He died for me) constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2Cor. 5:14-15). “Touch no unclean thing” (Isa. 52:11) quoted in 2Corinthians 6:17.

THE CLEANSING OF THE NATION (Chapter 16)

“And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered (drew near) before the LORD and died” (16:1). The first recorded act of the consecrated priesthood was sin. Nadab and Abihu occupied the highest privilege yet they failed in the essential scrupulous observance of the directions of approach before the Lord. This sad event would produce the thought of separation from God and spoil the enjoyment of access and approach that God desired for the nation. The Day of Atonement was a day of affliction for sins, a Day of Repentance, the holiest of all rest days, a high day, a Sabbath of solemn rest. The congregation of Israel was called to be a Holy Nation.

The object of the old covenant was the vital approach, acceptance, and atonement to maintain fellowship with God. This day was repeated annually. The sins which were dealt with on that day were the sins of the nation that had accumulated over one year. The necessity to repeat it annually showed that the sacrifices were temporary and passing and that a permanent sacrifice was required. The inspired commentary on this is Hebrews 9:6 to 10:22. Aaron was the High Priest but the Lord is our Great High Priest not offering for Himself but for our sins. Aaron entered with the blood of goats and calves into an earthly tabernacle to the purifying of the flesh. The Lord, with His Own blood, entered into heaven itself, having purged the conscience from dead works to serve the living God; having perfected forever them that are sanctified. Aaron stood to minister; the ascended Lord Jesus has sat down on the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

“The live goat” typifies the Lord Jesus Who in His atoning sufferings had no companions or followers when He “bare (aorist tense, once for all) our sins in His Own body on the tree” (1Peter 2:24). In the future, the nation shall observe the Day of Atonement as the sixth feast of Holy convocation (Ch. 23). This will occur following the rapture of the Church when at the end of the years of tribulation and affliction Israel will acknowledge the Lord Jesus as He returns in glory, as their Messiah.

CONGREGATIONAL SANCTIFICATION (Chapters 17-22)

These chapters deal in great detail with the holy living of the people and the priests. In family life, social relationships and every day activity, conversation and separation, God does not lower the standard of Holiness; again repeating “Ye shall be Holy: for I the LORD your God am Holy” (19:2). “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (19:18). The farmer was not to sow his field with mingled seed. They were not to wear a garment mingled with linen and wool (19:19). Nakedness, uncleanness, heathen abominations, idolatry, familiar spirits, and wizards were to be avoided under penalty of death. Sabbaths were to be strictly observed. The use of the remnants of the peace offering, the gleaning of the harvest, just weights and righteous standards were the marks a sanctified congregation. No profanity was to be seen among the priests and all offerings were without blemish.

THE CONVOCATIONS OF THE FEASTS (Chapter 23)

The seven annual set feasts of the year united the people. Family life revolved around the feasts even until the days of Luke chapter 2. All males were to appear at Jerusalem three times a year in the place where God had placed His Name at the set time. This had a joyful effect upon the daily lives of the congregation, to refresh their minds as they remembered their deliverance from bondage and to enter into God’s thoughts of rest, righteousness, and peace.

“In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’S PASSOVER” (23:5). Redemption from Egypt. The blood of the lamb typified the death of Christ. “On the fifteenth day of the same month

is the FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD" (23:6). This holy convocation of seven days, the eating of unleavened bread speaks of burial, a convocation (calling together), a purging out of the old leaven of the former life; teaches Righteousness.

"When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a SHEAF OF THE FIRSTFRUITS" (23:10), speaking of Resurrection. Fifty days after the bringing of the sheaf; "Ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. Ye shall bring out of your habitations TWO WAVE LOAVES" (23:16-17), speaking of Regeneration. This corresponds to the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

"In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of BLOWING THE TRUMPETS" (23:24). The Reawakening of Israel. This blast of the trumpet, a sign from heaven, in the seventh month, looks forward to the Lord's manifestation. "Also, on the tenth day of the seventh month there shall be a DAY OF ATONEMENT" (23:27). For the nation this will be the day of Repentance, affliction, and great mourning. It will be the day of Christ Returning in manifestation, when He will be recognised as the One Whom they had pierced.

"The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the FEAST OF TABERNACLES for seven days unto the LORD" (23:34), speaking of Rest. During these seven days the nation rested in booths rejoicing prophetically in view of the kingdom reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. The last three of the seven feasts, celebrated on the first, tenth, and fifteenth days of the seventh month point forward to the end of the tribulation years which follow the rapture of the Church. Israel will acknowledge the Lord Jesus, when He returns in glory, as their Messiah.

THE CONTINUAL BURNING OF THE LAMPS AND THE CONTINUAL MEMORIAL BREAD (Chapter 24)

"Bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually" (24:2). From evening to morning, the

lamps upon the candlestick were to burn continually before the veil. This does not speak of the outshining of Gospel light, but shining over upon the beautiful vessels of the sanctuary. The pure oil speaks of the Holy Spirit; "He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:15). Upon the table of shewbread, every Sabbath, twelve loaves were placed, "Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute" (24:5-9). This maintenance of the holy place is given in the context of the penalty of death executed upon the sin of blasphemy and murder in the camp (24:10-23).

THE COMMANDMENTS AS THEY ENTER THE LAND (Chapters 25-27)

The remaining chapters of Leviticus give commandments, "When ye come into the land" (25:2). "In the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land" (25:4). In the fiftieth year they were to proclaim liberty "throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a JUBILEE" (25:10). The land shall keep a Sabbath literally means "rest a rest". "Jubilee" means, "Return, Restore or Liberty". In the Day of Atonement, when the high priest appeared again, they were to make the trumpet sound throughout all the land. On the morning of Yom Kippur, the mellow note of the ram's horn sounding across the fields declared freedom. There was to be liberty for the Hebrew slave to become a freeman again; and released from toil and cultivation of the land.

The land belonged to the Lord, Israelites were tenants, land that had been sold was restored to the original owner, each was to return, every man to his own possession allocated to the tribes of Israel by God. Israelites were largely an agricultural people, dependent upon the early and the latter rain from heaven. The everyday life of God's people, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly differed from the nations around them. Their calendar and use of time required obedience and faith in God's provisions. They were to live free from stress and strain, not adding house to house or field to field but in careful stewardship of what God had given them. There was no conflict between socialism and capitalism. Every Israelite was one of, "My

servants” (25:42,55). There was relief from the evidence of the curse (the sweat of the brow).

Yet these commands did not encourage laziness, but strengthened family bonds and all values were settled by the proximity of the Year of Jubilee. The next generation was not left destitute; there was no accumulation of wealth nor exploitation of the poor. Neglect of the statutes, Sabbaths and the sanctuary by the nation resulted in the land being left for seventy years while the inhabitants were driven into captivity. Israel after the barrenness and destruction in the great tribulation, will enter the blessed peace, fruitfulness and abundance of release, reunion and the rest of the millennium kingdom. Sorrow will be turned to rejoicing, affliction to atonement, joy and jubilee.

This lovely book ends as it began with the opportunity for devoted souls to “bring” (1:2), or to “redeem” not only “the tithes of the land” but to freely and willingly add “the fifth part” to their offering to the LORD (27:30-32).

Christ – The Image of God

Paul Sheppard

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

(John 1:18)

It takes one who IS God to fully represent and reveal God. The Lord Jesus Christ stated clearly that, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Therefore men cannot approach or address Him as they please according to their vain designs or superstitions. He, as eternally Father, Son and Spirit, existed before time, is outside of space and without a material body, being the cause of all created matter: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

Many centuries later, in challenging the god's of the nations He declared, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me" (Isa. 46:9). The apostle Paul described Him, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1Tim. 6:16). While men such as Moses (Exod. 33:18-23), Isaiah (Isa. 6), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1), had glimpses of God's glory, this was not the full transcendent majesty of His glorious Being, "There shall no man see Me, and live" (Exod. 33:20).

God warns extensively in His inspired Book against being represented by a physical form, taken from His creation or vain imagination. It is an abomination and reduces Him to the baseness of that creation or exchanges Him altogether. The Israelites were commanded, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God" (Exod. 20:4-5). Yet how often they were guilty of this! And of the nations Paul wrote, "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to **CORRUPTIBLE MAN**, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:21-23).

MAN – Made in the Image of God

The creation of man was distinct from the other resident earth dwellers; **"And God said, 'Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness: and let them have dominion' ... male and female created He them"** (Gen. 1:26-27). While formed from the same earth matter, it is alone of man that, **"The LORD God ... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"** (Gen. 2:7).

So in what sense is the remarkable fact of the creation of man, "In the image of God ... male and female", to be understood?

First it is clear that there are similarities between animals and man, in particular apes, which have very similar forms, skeletons, and bodily functionality as one could expect, from the same designer using the same material. And while we cannot ignore that our bodies do express something of God's own faculties in our ability to see, hear, talk, smell and touch, known as anthropomorphism (Psa. 94:9) even as animals to some degree, our capabilities rise far above the "brute beast" who often act on instinct without the ability to perceive those deeper lessons and truths that God intends us to learn and appreciate through our senses such as His affection, care, holiness and ability to love, obey and communicate with Him.

Chimpanzees, our closest biological earth inhabitant, have a genome (i.e. gene pool) over 90% similar to ours. However that commonality is quite superficial with significant differences amounting to millions of units of information; genes do not define our personalities! One key point is that apes have 24 pairs of chromosomes; man has 23, making it impossible for us to have a common ancestral line as evolutionary proponents insist! Apes have a full covering of fur: we have fine hair, often dense at discrete locations manifesting maturity and distinguishing the male from the female (1Cor. 11:14-15).

Apes are quadruples, have long forearms and were designed to walk on their knuckles; man was made physically and morally upright with a dignified posture in his walk with joints and bones designed to allow this. Unlike apes, our brains have folds, increasing enormously their capacity and ability. Female apes generally give birth without the travail and labour pain endured by women due to Eve's sin (Gen. 3:16); they have mammary glands but no breasts except slight swellings when feeding young (Psa. 22:9). Apes cannot use their hands with great skill, or communicate by articulate speech or make facial expressions; apes cannot smile! And there are many other unique features giving man a superior place and work in God's creation. Adam needed a compatible helpmeet and companion, one fully fitted to engage with and to compliment him; God provided her, formed from a rib of Adam (Gen. 2:18-25; 1Cor 15:39; Cp. Eph. 5:30).

The word “soul” (*‘nephesh’*) used for man (Gen. 2:7) is also used of the “creature”, fish, birds and beasts (Gen. 1:21,24) which also have the “breath (*‘ruach’*) of life” (Gen. 7:22). But while the soul gives self-consciousness to both man and animals, only eight “souls” were saved on the ark, excluding the many animals brought to safety, emphasising the distinct differences between man and animals (1Pet. 3:20). Our non-biological soul, independent of the genome, is our personal identity incorporated within our bodies.

Man also has a spirit which gives him God-consciousness and the ability to communicate with Him, unlike animals. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably in Scripture but generally the above is the usual usage. So, for the believer born from above, God’s Spirit, “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). Man is therefore a tri-part being of spirit-soul-body (1Thess. 5:23), superior to animals in this sense and given dominion over them to act as God’s representative custodian of the earth.

Therefore returning to our earlier question, being created in God’s IMAGE and LIKENESS must express something other than physical appearance. The Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were involved. “Let US make man in OUR image ... OUR likeness”, NOT MY or YOUR image as those who deny the tri-unity of God reason, insisting angelic beings were involved in our formation.

Made in God’s IMAGE, which is never said of angelic spirit beings, suggests one who REPRESENTS God (1Cor. 11:7) having similar faculties in his dominion over the other creatures on earth and in God’s LIKENESS suggesting one who RESEMBLES God (Jam. 3:9), bearing something of His moral awareness and consciousness, perhaps not so easy to explain or comprehend in full measure.

Like angels, man was created with a perpetual existence, to be consciously alert, somewhere, forever. Unlike animals, we were given the capacity to think abstractly, make discrete decisions, innovate and plan ahead without reliance on inbuilt instincts as ants or migratory birds. We can appreciate beauty with ability in music and science; we can express emotions, love and obedience towards God

and fellow man in various ways. We have moral awareness and are conscious now of our failures since the fall. Yet through redemption and reconciliation, have a capacity to worship, communicate with and know God, being able to appreciate and to be part of the fulfilment of His eternal purpose and counsels in Christ Jesus His Son.

Although, “The LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh...” (Exod. 7:1), this was a special and limited instance of him being given power to act as God’s representative with His authority, having powers to administer judgement over Egypt and the expectation of Pharaoh to hear and obey him. Further it is written, “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High” (Psa. 82:6-7; John 10:35-38), which, while primarily said of corrupt Jewish leaders, could be applied to all in authority who rule over men as God’s administrators of peace, law and justice (Rom. 13:1-4), being accountable to Him in a coming day. How solemn that most who desire to wield power give no thought to future accountability! The superstitious men of Lystra were wrong when they exclaimed, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men” (Acts 14:11; 28:6).

Many of Adam’s sons throughout history, by flattery and satanic pride (Isa. 14:12-15; cf. Gen 3:5; 1Tim. 3:6), have deified themselves (i.e. the Pharaoh’s, Cæsar’s)! But like the coming “man of sin ... the son of perdition” (2Thess. 2:3-8), of such it is written, “thou shalt be a man and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee” (Ezek. 28:9).

CHRIST – The Eternal Image of God

“Who IS the IMAGE of the invisible God...” (Col. 1:15; 2Cor. 4:4)

Man via Adam, though ‘made in the image of God’, has his significant limitations being a creature as ‘made by God’. There is however ONE MAN who has lived on earth, who possessed the unique character and attributes of the true and living God. Though He was sent and born, “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:7), being a “real” Man with spirit (Luke 23:46), soul (Matt. 26:38) and an obvious body (Luke 22:19), He was without that defiling thing called sin, which He came to address.

We sometimes meet those who insist Jesus came only as a spirit, but not in a body. Such ideas are fundamental attacks on the Godhead being recurrences of century old errors. Paul and John dealt uncompromisingly with such in their writings. God has ensured that the Scriptures adequately enable us to expose and refute such error.

Paul aptly warned against the foolish notions of men, followed by a profound confirmation of Christ's deity, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. **For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily**" (Col. 2:8-9)". John could write as an associate of the Son, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life" (1John 1:1); but then thundered out, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist" (1John 4:3; 2:22). The Jews were wrong in saying, "Thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33).

God has only ONE TRUE image of Himself, ONE equal to Him, without limitations, a full representation, possessing attributes unique to God alone, i.e. His power (Mark 4:37-41) and glory (Matt. 17:1-8). This is an inherent reality and eternal truth which became a visible and tangible reality to created mankind at Christ's birth. Prior to this He had appeared to men of previous generations in the form of a Man, called a Christophany. We may think of Daniels companions in the fiery furnace, causing Nebuchadnezzar to exclaim, "I see four men ... the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dan. 3:25).

Two words are translated image in the NT:

EIKON is the usual word employed. The image on the coin (Mark 12:16) represented Cæsar but would change as they expired. These images were not the reality; however Christ is the reality, He "IS the image of God"; He does not change being eternally the same.

CHARAKTER is used once in Hebrews 1:3, "Who (the Son) being the brightness of *His* glory, and the 'express image' ('*charakter*') of His

(God's) Person..." The thought is of an impression made by a die, something stamped out which is distinct yet bears the exact impress of the die. Hence Christ, the Son, one of the Persons of the Godhead, bears the exact impress, of the substance and nature of God.

Christ being the "image of the invisible God" is as true for those who have not seen Him in "the flesh" as for those who did. Many, who saw, heard and witnessed His power, refused Him and denied Him to be the Son of God. He said to His disciples on the eve of His sufferings for sin, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). So as we read the Gospel accounts, we too can perceive the true character of God the Father in Him, through His words, His ways, His holiness, His love. John again could write, "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).

But he wants us to share in that revelation and appreciation of "the only begotten Son", the One who dwelt eternally in the bosom and affections of the Father, the invisible God, who came to manifest Him in the flesh (John 1:18). "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1Tim. 3:16). Christ was the true exemplar of godliness and devotion, a life of full obedience and glorifying to God: "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). To achieve this, we should ever remember, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor" (2Cor. 8:9), He "made Himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2:7), He "was made a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9) and He was "Thrust ... out" (Luke 4:29), "laughed to scorn" (Luke 8:53) and "set at nought" (Luke 23:11) by those who failed to understand who He really was. Be ever thankful to God if your 'eyes' are open.

God as spirit cannot die; the Son was born of a woman to deal with the sin which marred God's original creation of. But now in His bodily resurrection He has brought in something far better to benefit His redeemed for ever, that should significantly affect them in this life.

REDEEMED MAN – The Image of Christ

“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29)

As Adam’s offspring we were born in sin, “in his own likeness, after his image” (Gen 5:3). Now, born again of God, in contrast have a glorious future, a certain reality, when we shall “be conformed to the image of His Son”, having a perfect body as His with His perfect moral character (Phil. 3:2; 1John 3:2-3). “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1Cor. 15:49).

“Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as so by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Cor. 3:18). “And put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col. 3:10).

The expectancy of certain future conformity should compel us to walk responsibly by faith, day by day, to become more aligned in our life to His image. This will become apparent as we allow Him to work in us, to evidence that our ties with the old Adamic nature are severed, and we are now under new ownership, a new Head.

Trials and Tribulations

Selected

It is a well known fact that Peter’s first epistle was written to suffering saints, and that in every chapter their sufferings are mentioned in various terms, and also, by way of encouragement and motivation, the sufferings of Christ.

If Christ, the Son of God, suffered in this world, then it is inevitable that those who follow Him will suffer also. Moreover, the more closely they follow Him, the more like Him they seek to be, the more they will suffer.

In this respect His people, walking in a similar path, and for the same reasons, are said by Peter to become “partakers of Christ’s sufferings”, inasmuch as they have armed themselves “with the same mind” and “follow His steps”.

To the measure they suffer *for* Christ, they suffer *with* Christ; but Peter is encouraging them also to suffer like Christ. It is true that we can never suffer what Christ suffered; that is the very reason why He suffered, to save us from ever having to suffer the eternal consequences of our sins at the hand of God. But while we cannot, and will never need to, suffer atoningly, we can note *how* He bore His sufferings, meekly, sweetly and submissively, and seek to bear our own much lesser sufferings in like manner.

Of one thing we may be sure, Christ only suffered for righteousness’ sake, for doing the will of God, and this is one vital matter which Peter labours to impress upon his readers, that they should be absolutely sure that they are not suffering for their own faults and failures but only for doing the will of God.

So inevitable is it that loyalty to Christ in this world will result in suffering as He suffered that we are said to be *called* to suffering for well-doing, as well as called to His eternal glory (Ch. 2:21; 5:10), seeing that the path to glory is inevitably the path of suffering.

What Peter is in fact doing is fulfilling the mission entrusted to him by the Lord Jesus when He said to him before the cross, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32), and after His resurrection, “Feed My lambs” and “Shepherd My sheep” (John 21:15-17). The word the Lord uses to him, “strengthen”, is the same word Peter uses, better rendered “stablish” in 1Peter 5:10.

In the first chapter of his first epistle Peter writes these words, “Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of

Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing” (vs. 6-8).

In this passage Peter teaches a number of vital truths regarding the trials the believer in Christ experiences which need to be considered.

1. The TIME of Trials

The passage commences and ends with the emphasis on “*now*”. Two things are said to characterise the believers’ present lives, namely trials and faith. We live in the period of Christ’s ascension to heaven and consequently His physical absence from earth. He is beyond the reach of physical sight and can be known only by faith. We belong to the company of those of whom the Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29), and what we have come to know of Him causes us to love him.

But Peter is telling us that this present life on earth is not only a time for the exercise of faith, it is also a time for the testing of that faith, and will be until Christ appears and is no longer unseen, needing the exercise of faith.

So trials and tribulations are for this life only; when once we are in His presence, one way or another, trials will be for ever over and all will be “joy unspeakable and full of glory”. Even if trials should be with us all life long, what is that compared to eternity (2Cor. 4:16-17; Rom. 8:18).

2. The DURATION of Trials

They are “for a season” only. The same word is translated “a while” in chapter 5:10.

While believers can expect trials of some sort as long as they are in the world (Heb. 12:5-10), Peter has more than that in view, as the later quotation in chapter 5:10 shows.

In Isaiah chapter 28, God reminds His people that trials are not prolonged beyond the end to be attained or else they are damaging rather than productive. The farmer does not continue

working his ground beyond the stage where it is fit for sowing, neither does he thresh the fruit of his harvest too severely lest he damage it (vs. 24-28). “This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (v29), and is the very principle on which He works with His people Himself.

He does not afflict His saints beyond the point where they are ready to receive His word into their hearts in the way in which He sees best to impart the sort of truth He desires to be learned. And whatever fruit is produced is threshed only sufficiently to separate it from the husk or chaff which encloses it. This last figure teaches the same lesson as Peter teaches here, the separation of the gold from the dross.

So trials continue until the desired result is achieved, either the hearty reception of the truth of God, or the testing of faith to purify it from refuse. He knows when and how to end the trial (1Cor. 10:13).

This leads naturally to the next point:

3. The NECESSITY of Trials

Peter says “if need be”, Jeremiah reminds us, “He doth not afflict willingly (lit. from His heart) nor grieve the children of men” (Lam. 3:33). God only “afflicts” and “grieves” when it is necessary, when the desired results can be achieved by no other means, and all too often when gentler methods have failed (Job 33:14-24; 34:31-32).

In that respect the necessity of the trial, and consequently its duration, may depend upon our responsiveness to it.

But surely it is good to know that God will not cause His children one needless tear or heartache. For that is the very...

4. NATURE of Trials

They cause what Peter calls “heaviness”, otherwise “sadness”. The epistle to the Hebrews tells us, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb. 12:11), using

the same Greek word as Peter here. Elsewhere Peter speaks of the “fiery trial” which is to try them (Ch. 4:12) which reminds us not only of the purifying effect but the extreme painfulness of trials. See also chapter 2:19.

5. The VARIETY of Trials

Peter speaks of “manifold” temptations or trials. Later he uses the same word to describe the grace of God (Ch. 4:10), and while it is precious to think that there is a great variety of grace to support us in every trial, it is sobering to remember that trials of a great variety of sorts may come upon us. They may come from many different sources and be of many different sorts. They may be spiritual or physical, or both together, being personal problems, domestic problems, assembly problems, professional problems, economic problems, social problems, for example. But of whatever sort they are and from whatever source they spring, we can be assured that they are necessary, being ordered or permitted by God for our good (Rom. 8:28) and profit (Heb. 12:10). Whatever human hatred may be behind them, divine love is employing them (Heb. 12:6). This should bring joy even in “manifold trials” (James 1:2).

It should be noted that the use of the words “temptations” or “tempt” as in older versions of the Bible in English is archaic and consequently misleading. In current English they signify enticement or seduction to do evil, and this is something which God never does as James emphasizes in his epistle (Ch. 1:13). So a better rendering is “trials” or “tests”, and the purpose of them is to try or test what is good, not to tempt to do evil.

6. The PURPOSE of Trials

The next word Peter uses for the process is stronger than “trials” and should be rendered “proving” or “proof” and “tried” should be rendered “proved”, showing that the purpose is not so much to see if good is present but to show that it is present, and not only so but to strengthen and purify (to refine) the good that is present.

James speaks of the benefits of this “proving” in this present life (Ch. 1:3-4), as enabling us to rejoice even in the naturally grieving circumstances of trial, and this paradox is succinctly expressed by Paul in 2Corinthians 6:10, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing”.

Peter, however, speaks of the future benefits of enduring trials (v7 and compare James 1:12). How precious our faith is to God when we trust Him even in the furnace of affliction (Isa. 48:10; 2Pet. 1:1; Psa. 22:8; Heb. 11:5-6) and how precious it will prove to be to us at the appearing of Christ, when all our gold will have been left behind. Note that “precious” and “honour” are closely related words.

Finally we may observe on a more general note there are many different aspects of the purpose of God in trials, and they are often connected and not absolutely separable. In a general way we may say that trials may be punitive (2Sam. 21:1), corrective (Job 5:17; Psa. 119:67), demonstrative (Job Ch’s 1 and 2), educational (Psa. 94:12; 119:71), purgative (1Pet. 1:7), productive (Heb. 12:10-11), perfective (James 1:2-4), qualificatory (2Cor. 1:3-6), preventative (2Cor. 12:7), directive (Gal. 4:13).

Of them all we can say that they are ordered or overruled in God’s infallible wisdom and love for His glory and for our good, both presently and eternally, as well as furthering His purpose in less obvious ways.

...For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:38-39)

MEN OF GOD SERIES

(20) DANIEL

“O man, greatly beloved”

(Daniel 9:23; 10:11,19)

“O man, greatly beloved”, means “desirable, delighted in”, can be translated, “precious”. Like His blessed Lord Jesus, Daniel was given this heavenly acclaim three times after his triumph of faith when he “stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb. 11:33). Peter wrote, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious (the preciousness)” (1Pet. 2:7). In his long life, Daniel experienced the truth of angelic encouragement; “The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (11:32). Daniel’s godly life condemned his foes. They told lies and plotted to get him put to death. “They brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions ... a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords” (6:16-17). He was delivered from the lions mouth (6:22), compare Psalm 22:21. He was taken up out of the den and “no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God” (6:23). So Christ in the tomb, saw no corruption, He was raised from the dead and the seal was broken, the stone was rolled away to reveal victory over the enemy who had the power of death, that is the devil.

The four longer prophecies, like the four Gospels, are like four majestic pillars guarding the entrance to the great edifice of the prophetic revelation of God. Isaiah presents the HOLINESS OF GOD, “Holy, Holy, Holy”, “The Holy One of God” (29 times). Jeremiah displays the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, His name means, “Jehovah will raise up”. Ezekiel writes about the GLORY OF GOD, departing, returning and abiding. Daniel foretells the POWER OF GOD, the supreme rule of the “Most High”. The Gentile monarch is taught by Daniel that, “There is a God in Heaven” (2:28). Nebuchadnezzar the

king, unto all peoples, nations and languages acknowledges that, “The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men” (4:17,25,32). The key to Daniels prophecy is the successive replacements of Satan’s man, by God’s man at the exact time of God’s Sovereign Will. Daniel is not called a prophet in the Old Testament. It was the Lord Himself in the New Testament that authorised his vital and unique predictions, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by DANIEL THE PROPHET, stand in the holy place” (Matt. 24:15). Apart from Moses and Solomon, Daniel is probably the most intelligent man that God raised up to do valiant service for Him in the Old Testament.

THE CONFLICT

The prophecy of Daniel begins with the conflict of two cities, “Babylon” the religious city, and “Jerusalem”, the city of the covenant, the cross and the Christ. This is the central conflict of the ages. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins”, (9:24). The captivity of the nation of Israel, was not a devastating set back to God’s purposes note: “The Lord gave” (1:2); “God brought” (1:9); “God gave” (1:17). There was a threefold reason for the captivity. (i) The Lord was not receiving worship from the nation which was divided. Since the Holy Vessels were not being used to worship God in the temple, He allowed the vessels to be carried into Babylon. Instead of the gold and silver being lost and destroyed God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to keep the vessels until the restored remnant would use them again in Jerusalem. (ii) The Land had been ignored, neglected and forsaken, the rest of the Passover and Jubilee was not being observed. God removed the people and the land had its rest. (iii) The Laws of the Covenant had been broken; the precious Word of God had been profaned by the people so God allowed them to be carried away captives into Babylon, “The land of Shinar” (1:2), which Abraham had left.

Daniel and his three companions, (called “children”, four teenagers) were carried as captives to Babylon. Daniel served in three

successive empires, prophesied concerning a fourth empire and lived at least into his eighties. He was taken from Jerusalem which had been raided, spoiled and soon to be left in ruins when he was about 16 or 17 years old. He was now in Babylon as a student in a beautiful city of temperate climate, magnificent palaces, mighty temples, and pleasant gardens. The mighty River Euphrates provided abundant water, pleasure boats, sport, riches, and excitement. These four friends attended the best universities with free meals and free accommodation. The city also was famous for magic and divinations in a society that was completely anti-God. Israel was now being united in captivity, beginning with the elite youth of the nation. The administration of this heathen king tried to change Daniel's diet, his appearance, and his name.

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself (pollute himself with ceremonial defilement) with the portion of the king's meat" (1:8). What we eat is important. Eve "did eat" (Gen. 3:6). Adam "did eat" (Gen. 3:6,12), and sin entered into the world. Daniel and his companions had a choice to make. Was it really a big deal? He is going to cause trouble. They were among others who were eating. Could he not compromise, nibble a little to keep the peace? The society in which they were compelled to dwell, formed by Nimrod at the tower of Babel, was defiant of the Almighty God and every aspect of life was polluted by religious abomination. The food that was eaten was first lifted up to the gods of Baal or Ashtoreth. Literal food and nourishment are essential for physical growth and strength. A spiritual appetite is proof of the new birth; "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1Pet. 2:1-2). The writers of this magazine earnestly desire the assurance that young believers are reading what is written, and have an appetite to meditate upon the Scriptures quoted, and make it your own to be accepted and obeyed.

They were granted permission to eat vegetables and to drink only water for ten days. "At the end of ten days their countenances

appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat" (1:15). Ten is the number of testing. Israel was given the ten commandments. Israel failed the test of obedience whereas Daniel passed the test.

The eunuchs of Babylon tried to change their appetite, their appearance and now their association by changing their names. Daniel and Mishaël end with "el", "God the Mighty One". Hananiah and Azariah end in "ah", as in Jehovah, the covenant keeping God. These Hebrew names they sought to replace with the names of the gods of idolatry. Some ask, what is in a name? The answer is (1) Salvation: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other NAME under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). (2) The assembly: "For where two or three are gathered together in My NAME, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). In the NAME of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have salvation, we are baptised, we gather distinct from and in condemnation to all sectarian names. Separation is not narrowness but obedience; not ingratitude for Daniel was a pleasant young man, (1:9,12-13), whom God had brought into favour and tender love; not isolation, for the king "found them ten times better" (1:20). The man who could "stand" in the court of heaven was not afraid to stand in testimony in the court of Babylon.

THE CAPTIVITY

Captives were taken from the ten tribes of Israel in the north and from Judah in the south. Now the times of the Gentiles had begun when there would be no division because Israel was all one in bondage. In captivity, the captives were mocked by their enemies ... has your God failed? Nebuchadnezzar had to confess; "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings" (2:47). Belshazzar learned that his sin was against "the Lord of heaven" (5:23). Darius wrote; "I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God" (6:26). The captives were tested. Has God changed His purposes? The secret of the vision of the great image was God's

Sovereignty; God's power and purpose, He is Omniscient (Ch. 2). The form of One like unto the Son of man in the midst of the fiery furnace proves that God is Omnipresent (Ch. 3). The plaintive cry of the sleepless king at the mouth of the den of lions; "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" God is Omnipotent (Ch. 6).

THE CHALLENGE

As we trace Daniel's purpose, progress, and profit in the school of God, it is evident that his character was not shaped in a Babylonish university but in severe adversity. Four boys under sentence of death gather together in a prayer meeting (2:17-18); three young men in the furnace of fire seven times hotter (3:19-21); one older man thrown to the lions (6:16), are thrilling stories of the deepest trials of faith in the darkest, most hopeless circumstances (Heb. 11:33-40). These deliverances will serve as great comfort to the people of God in the future great Tribulation.

The lesson from these challenges is that obedience to the Word of God always brings a choice. Daniel would not defile himself by eating, and so doing what he had never done before (1:8). Daniel would not cease to pray three times a day with his window open toward Jerusalem and so he would not cease to continue doing what he had always done (6:10). Daniel would not change.

THE CONTROL

God can allow wicked men to chastise His people and rule over them. God in His Own programme will fulfil His promises, protect His people and honour His servants. The testimony of faithful Daniel humbled three kings who ruled over two world empires. Interpreting the dream for Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said, "The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" (2:37). Nebuchadnezzar in his PRIDE, ignored God and was humbled to eat grass in his insanity. Belshazzar brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the House of God, "They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and silver" (5:4). In PROFANITY he denied God. The

writing upon the plaster of the wall sentenced him to death that same night. Darius the median, claimed deity and insulted God by signing the PRESUMPTIOUS decree to pray to him alone. He was made himself to pray for mercy with a “lamentable voice” to the living God very early in the morning at the den of lions (6:20).

The dream concerning the image of four metals in chapter 2, was the dream of a heathen man, seeing the course of world history as the imposing form of a man. The vision in chapter 7 was the dream of the godly man, concerning the same world history as four horrible beasts. God controls the prophetic future yet allows for human freedom and responsibility. The last empire of the beast almost defies description for immorality, brutality, and depravity. God fulfils His Own will during the times of the Gentiles. Human freedom is not uncontrolled. God is not just waiting to underwrite human choice. The Son of Man will come with the clouds of Heaven. “There was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (7:14).

THE CONQUEST

Woven into the dreams, revelations of secrets, and words that are sure, Daniels unique prophecies trace the Sovereignty of God through the Times of the Gentiles until the Kingdom of the Son of God. This kingdom shall “consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (2:44).

THE STONE – “A stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors” (2:34-35). Without human power or attainment, the Lord from heaven, at His Second Coming to judge the world, will smash the kingdoms of men and introduce universal peace.

THE SON OF GOD – “Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished ... Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire ... Lo, I see four men loose; walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (3:24-25). It may not be that the mighty monarch of Babylon came to personal faith but at least he acknowledged God among his own gods as the Most High. A Jew, Daniel sat in “the gate” of administration in the first kingdom of the times of the Gentiles. Daniel had cabinet rank at the royal court (2:49). The last mention of his three companions, called “servants of the Most High God” is that they “quenched the violence of fire” (Heb. 11:34), as if raised from the dead.

Daniel in his later years recorded in detail the seventy weeks determined upon the people of Israel. He was inspired to record accurately the date after threescore and two weeks when Messiah shall “be cut off” (9:24-27). This is the key to prophetic truth relative to the future of Israel and the coming Messiah, His Cross and His coming global Kingdom.

“He is coming again, is the promise to disciples when He
went away;

In like manner as He has gone from you, you will see Him
returning some day;

Does His tarrying cause you to wonder, does it seem
He’s forgotten His own?

His promise is true, He is coming for you, God is still on
the throne” –

“God is still on the Throne, and He will remember
His own;

Tho’ trials may press us and burdens distress us,
He never will leave us alone;

God is still on the Throne, He never forsaketh His
own;

His promise is true, He will not forget you, God is
still on the Throne”

Mrs F.W. Suffield

Questions Frequently Asked

Question: Is there a difference between THE LATTER TIMES in 1Timothy 4:1 and the LAST DAYS of 2Timothy 3:1?

Answer: These expressions refer to basically the same post apostolic times, but differ in details. The Lord always spoke about His future coming as being imminent. The doctrine of the epistles is based upon the reality that the Lord could return at any time. These passages stress the characteristics of the seasons not the prophetic time.

The doctrine of the faith is expounded in 1Timothy chapter 3; chapter 4 in contrast deals with departure from the faith. “But” (in contrast to, “the mystery of godliness”, 3:16) the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the LATTER TIMES some shall depart from the faith” (4:1). This is an explicit warning as to the characteristics of the season, future to speaker (Paul) but coming in the time when Timothy would be teaching other “brethren” (4:6). This is a subjective fortification that Timothy was to teach against error and false teaching WITHIN the assembly at Ephesus. “Some”, a minority, who formerly professed to believe would deliberately abandon, defect by wilful departure from the doctrine concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostasy involves specific people. They claimed a superior spirituality of celebrate life relative to marriage and meats. Behind their false teaching was a satanic scheme to rob God of “thanksgiving”, twice (4:3; 4:4).

“In the LAST DAYS perilous times shall come” (2Tim. 3:1). This is the closing stages of the same period, warning of dangers in the world WITHOUT by “men” in general. “This know” is not a passing situation, but implies a permanent characteristic. The nineteen features of the Last Days are listed as a warning that the believers might not be stumbled. These dangerous seasons are the character of these days, not the length of the season.

“In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace;” (Ephesians 1:7)

During the apostle Paul’s confinement in Rome, following several years of constraint in Cæsarea, he was never inactive (Acts 23:23; 28:30-31)! Apart from receiving many visitors to whom he continued, ***“Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ”***, and coupled with a fervent prayer life, he also wrote epistles full of rich truth. These included one to the Ephesian believers wherein he spoke of himself as being ***“the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles”*** and the ***“prisoner of the Lord”***, descriptions he would have scorned as an unconverted proud and zealous Jewish Pharisee.

But the Gospel changes people! While Paul’s conversion, like that of others, was dramatic, all true believers find themselves in possession of the same heavenly blessings by virtue of the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

In Whom

The source of these blessing are found alone through a unique Person, none less than the eternal Son of God. He, Emmanuel – “God with us”, was born into our world as the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth, through Mary, a virtuous and God fearing virgin of lowly circumstances. He was born a holy being, without inherent sin. This can be appreciated by carefully reading the Gospel records detailing His life, words, works and His interactions will all manner of individuals across the spectrum of society. Death could have no claim upon Him, unlike ourselves: ***“The wages of sin is death”*** (Rom. 6:23) and hence death, physical and eternal, is our natural expectation.

We have Redemption

We needed to be redeemed from a state of bondage from which we could not extract ourselves, from a power greater than ourselves. The Lord taught that, ***“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin”*** (John 8:34) and again the apostle Paul in his epistle to Roman believers wrote, ***“being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness”*** (Rom. 6:18). We all in our natural state are servants to sin in some form or other, not necessary by addiction to drink, alcohol, gambling, inordinate lusts, or misguided devotions, but even small habits we might think trivial, trap and ensnare us, being a source of offence to God. Further, we needed to be freed from the devil’s blinding influence upon our minds (2Cor. 4:4).

Through His Blood

But the price paid was immense, even the shedding of the Redeemers precious blood. Nothing else could satisfy the demands of God's righteousness. As Israel required the blood of Passover lambs to liberate them from Egyptian bondage, so we needed a far richer supply of blood: ***"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"*** (1Peter 1:18-19). God's promise to the Israelites was, ***"When I see the blood, I will pass over you"*** (Exod. 12:13). Applying and sheltering under that blood by faith was their sole means of protection from the destroying angel of death. Further, in contrast to the limiting scope of animal sacrifices, ***"How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"*** (Heb. 9:14). ***"...The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"*** (1John 1:7). Keep away from anyone who belittles or denies the necessity of the shedding of Christ's precious blood!

The Forgiveness of Sins

King David who confessed to God, ***"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned"*** (Psa. 51:4) also wrote, ***"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is not guile"*** (Psa. 32:1-2). This is not presumption but a blessed assurance; forgiveness of sins past, present and future, made possible through the shed blood of Christ, God's Son. God Himself said, ***"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"*** (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12). The true believer gains a right standing with God and can approach Him in prayer with confidence knowing that no accusation can be raised against them from a positional standpoint.

According to the Riches of His Grace

We could achieve and deserve nothing of ourselves; it is all of God's rich and bountiful grace, ***"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"*** (Rom. 3:24); ***"That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"*** (Eph. 2:7-9). Everything is of God, ***"According to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself ... Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will ... unto the praise of His Glory"*** (Eph. 1:9-14). What a blessed prospect awaits those whose faith and hope rests in Christ Jesus alone.

For those who can say of God's Son, ***"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me"***, let us serve Him faithfully and fervently in the little time remaining to us down here.

If there should be some reader whose precious soul is still not redeemed by faith in the precious blood of Christ, and in possession of the heavenly blessings of the true believer, let nothing hinder you from repenting and believing. God did not spare His Son for your salvation, deliverance from the fear of death, even Hell itself.