

The Old Paths – October / December : 2020 – № 28

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For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

(Hebrews 4:12,13)



From the Editor's Desk

“A Word of Exhortation”

**“Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast”
(Isaiah 26:20)**

As another issue of the magazine goes to print, we write with Christian sympathy and love for dear fellow believers who have suffered during this global pandemic. We weep with believers who have had to part with loved ones in the most sorrowful conditions. Some could not be present in those final precious moments and because of restrictions were denied the opportunity to conduct a dignified Christian funeral.

With a population of 1.3 billion, India has had the world's biggest Coronavirus lockdown. Millions of jobs have vanished leaving daily wage workers, including believers, without income or food. As assembly believers, it is of the utmost concern that under lockdown, we can no longer gather collectively for worship or to preach the Gospel as normal. Since we cannot remember the Lord in a gathered scriptural manner,

the Lord is not receiving His portion from His people. The poor unsaved are not hearing the Gospel face to face or witnessing the reality of salvation in our lives.

The headline quotation from Isaiah 26 is similar to what the Lord said Himself while on earth. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6).

Dear burdened child of God, we need to confess our sin, humbly seek the Father's face in earnest supplication, knowing that He cares and understands the present distress. Notice that He, "seeth". Perhaps we cannot find the right words for Him to hear. How comforting to know that He, "seeth" and will answer according to His glory and to your blessing.

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Words of Promises and Comforts

Dear readers of The Old Paths,

The Lord has helped us hitherto in publishing these printed pages for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and for the spiritual edification of His people and salvation of souls.

Thank you all who have prayed and encouraged us in this humble ministry.

Today the world passes through anxiety, fear, uncertainty and death due to Covid-19; an invisible virus. Man with all his technological devices and atomic power is unable to withstand against a tiny creation of God. History witnesses, Alexander the great was killed by a tiny mosquito of India. An unseen virus kills millions irrespective of race or religion.

Only God's word gives us hope with promises of comfort and cheer.

When first man Adam rebelled against God's glorious and eternal purpose, virus of sin entered into humanity through Satan. Thereby came death and separation from Holy God the Creator (Rom. 5:12). But God promised salvation for mankind in Genesis 3:15 saying, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." God chose Abraham and his descendants the nation of Israel through whom the promised Saviour should come. He promised not only a son but a Nation and land to Abraham (Gen. 15:4-7). He also promised a son and eternal throne to king David who should be the Messiah of mankind (2Sam. 7:12). God kept all His promises to show His greatness and goodness.

The promised Messiah Jesus was born of a virgin as witnessed by the four gospel writers. We read about His birth, teachings, death and resurrection in these books. Apostle Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28,29). "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). He taught about the kingdom of heaven and has promised His people, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Every Nation is polluted in gross sins of abortion, gay marriage, rape, murder and corruption's etc. Today's slogan is "No God". For remedy from ruin God gave a clarion call to the Nation of Israel, "If My people, which are called by My Name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their

wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2Chron. 7:14). Will the Nation’s turn to God for mercy?

God has promised salvation and security, peace and protection in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross and rose again from the dead on the third day. In Him only comfort for soul is available. For it is written, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2Cor. 1:3).

Yours in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Ajay Kumar Chhatria

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Some Thoughts on John Chapter 1

In the previous article we introduced John’s gospel and considered the expression “in the beginning” in John Ch. 1. We will now consider three other expressions in this chapter: “in the world” (v. 10), “in the bosom” (v. 18) and “in the law” (v. 45).

(v. 10) – “In the world”

John’s gospel uses the word “world” more than anywhere else in the New Testament. It is used 19 times in John Ch. 17 in the Lord’s seemingly audible prayer as He descended the slopes of the city before entering into the garden of Gethsemane. In chapter 1 the word “world” occurs three times in verse 10, but not all with the same emphasis. The first two occurrences seem to imply the physical, natural created world, but the final occurrence (“but the world knew Him not”) seems to refer to the world of men. How different He was from the world of men – yet remaining a real man! The Lord stood in complete contrast to the world of men (see John 8:23). The world never wanted to know/to acquire knowledge of Him. The people of this world were, generally, oblivious and confused as to the One in their midst that the O.T. Scriptures spoke so clearly about (see Matt. 16:14). The religious leaders, with their theoretical O.T. knowledge, should have known better.

Yet how much do we know Him? How much do you really know Him, dear reader? Not only how much do you know about Him or how much do you know His Word (although commendable and important), but how much do you know Him? As Paul did (Philippians 3:8,10), we can know and experience a personal, individual closeness and intimate fellowship with Him day by day!

Our world today

What sort of world are we living in today? It is in many ways different from the world of 2000 years ago. Social and moral standards have certainly changed: there have been great advances in science, technology, medicine and health-care. Yet, in relation to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, our modern 21st Century world still “knows Him not”. The world’s present standards in relation to God’s Word are rapidly declining and it is actually possible to be different from the world and think we are OK, yet still falling far short of God’s will and desire for us as believers as to how we live our lives.

What are we looking at as we live in this present world? Are we constantly looking into the mirror of God’s Word and seeing God’s will and plan for us there (James 1:22-25)? Are we challenged and personally affected by what we read? Do we read out of a sense of habit and duty? How much do we know about what God would have us know – not to criticize others, but to put into immediate effect in our lives! We trust these thoughts on the person and character of our Lord Jesus Christ may encourage us to become increasingly more like Him daily and less like, and less influenced by, the world around us.

(v. 18) – “In the bosom”

This verse brings before us One who came into human time and was the visible display/manifestation to men and women of the invisible God (Ex. 33:20; Col. 1:15). We notice the present tense in this verse – “which is in the bosom”, not which was in the bosom! “In the bosom” describes our Lord’s eternal state, His unchanging position – He left the glory and splendour of heaven and He left His Father’s side, but He never left His Father’s bosom. This was a place of intimacy, communion, affection, fellowship and love. Yes, at Calvary He was cut off seemingly from heaven and Earth, suffering absolutely alone (even with hundreds of people surrounding the scene), with none to uphold, comfort, pity or support (Psalm 69:20; Matt. 27:46). However, the love of the Son for the Father and the Father for the Son never diminished or failed – it was, like themselves, eternal, despite the circumstances (John 14:31; 17:23-24,26).

Our love for Christ

Can we, as believers in the 21st Century, confidently say that our love and affection for our Saviour never fails or diminishes, despite the circumstances? The trials and testing’s of life are never far away. We can all be affected by personal and family issues as well as financial, employment and health problems. In the recent past, such natural disasters as flooding and the limitations and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected believer and unbeliever alike. As believers we are not immune from these things, but how do we react when we pass through them? The intimacy of Father and Son in the Godhead was never affected by outward circumstances. May this be true of us as the people of God that the permanent inner bond (the indwelling Holy Spirit) that we each have, and that the world does not have, may comfort us and guide us in times of trial (Eph. 3:16; Psalm 46:1-2). May our love for the Saviour be ever fervent and constant.

(v. 45) – “In the law”

These three ordinary men from Bethsaida (just north of the Sea of Galilee) could appreciate something that the highly educated, religious and biblically “knowledgeable” scribes and Pharisees could not. They had a personal encounter with Christ and a resulting personal appreciation of Him. So it is today in the 21st Century! God can use knowledge or the lack of it! I wonder how many of us really believe that? These four men – Andrew, an unnamed disciple (perhaps the Apostle John, v. 38), Peter and Philip – obviously had some O.T. knowledge. Also, presumably, the Lord had brought before them some light regarding Himself in these Scriptures in their conversations with Him in vv. 39, 42 and 43 and, after Philip’s call, the first three may well have imparted some of what they had already learned to him themselves. Would that today ordinary men and women had some knowledge of Scripture! God can also work on ignorance and prejudice, as with Nathanael’s assertive question – “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Nazareth was an infamous place, but God can raise that which is worthy out of such places. He still can and does today. Our prayer is that people today would, like Nathanael, “come and see”!

The law and the prophets

The O.T. Scriptures spoke of Christ in so many ways – directly or indirectly; in type, shadow or picture. On the road to Emmaus the Lord Himself expounded to those two disheartened believers, “the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). A careful reading of this verse and 24:44 when the Lord Himself refers to the Scriptures speaking of Him, would indicate the whole of Scripture testifying of Him – not only the first five books and certain prophecies.

The law

Looking at the law (the Pentateuch: the first five books) we read of the seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15), the seed of Abraham in whom all nations would be blessed (Gen. 22:18), Shiloh to whom the gathering of the people shall be (Gen. 49:10) and the Great Prophet, whom God would raise up among the children of Israel (Deut. 18:15).

The prophets

So much is spoken of Christ by the prophets, some of which has already been fulfilled (near prophecy) and some of which is still future (distant prophecy). Accurately distinguishing between what has been and what

is to be fulfilled will preserve us from the doctrinal error that some have fallen into. The Lord Jesus is spoken of as coming from the family of David (Psalm 132:11). We are told how He should be born – the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), where He should be born (Micah 5:2) and why He should be born (Isaiah 53:5-6). We are even told when He should be born, as Daniel 9:24-27 seems to indicate that Messiah would come after the nation had returned from Babylon and before the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem and scattering of the nation by the Romans. There is so much more concerning Him – what He should be like (Isaiah 53:2), some of His attributes (Isaiah 9:6-7), the way He should conduct Himself under the trials of Calvary (Isaiah 53:7), the manner of His death (Zech. 12:10) and His resurrection, ascension and exaltation (Psalm 16:10 and 68:18). Also the Scriptures promise a glorious future and restoration for Israel, centred upon Him (Ezek. 34:23-31; Jer. 23:5-6).

Conclusion

Many other writings in the O.T. relate to the person, office and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Dear reader, child of God, our earnest prayer is that what we have brought before you from John Chapter one may help you appreciate Him more deeply and, as a result, your life and my life may be the more transformed into the image of Christ.

(Concluded)

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Worship in Luke's Gospel (2)

A BACKSLIDER'S WORSHIP

In the latter half of Luke chapter 1 we have the praise of a once backslidden priest at the prospect of the restoration of a backslidden nation. As we noticed in the previous article in this series, Zacharias, had been informed by an angel from God's presence that his barren wife, Elizabeth, would have a son, who would be a great messenger of God. In spite of the wonderful news, Zacharias did not come out of the sanctuary praising the Lord, because he had responded to the angel's words with unbelief. He was struck dumb and would be unable to speak until he saw the fulfilment of the heavenly message.

However, at the end of the chapter Zacharias is worshipping, and his worship has been recorded for time and eternity in the inspired word of God. What caused such a change? He simply ceased to disbelieve and accepted the angel's message as truth. The angel had said, "Thou shalt call his name John" (Luke 1:13), and now, when the promised child was to be named, he wrote, "His name is John" (v. 63). The only hindrance to worship was unbelief. Now that he believed God, "His mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake and praised God". Now there was nothing to keep his mouth from being filled with praise, and nothing kept the Holy Spirit from filling his whole being. The unbelief of Zacharias was of course a serious matter. He received a personal visitation by the angel Gabriel from God's very presence and doubted the message which was brought to him. Nevertheless, we see with much thankfulness that the way of restoration is simply repentance and faith, and that a *full* restoration was granted to him.

Thus, we see that Zacharias' qualification to be a worshipper was simply to believe the word of God, just as in the otherwise very different case of the Samaritan woman in John 4. However, we see that his worship has a number of characteristics which would probably be beyond the capability of the woman of Samaria. As with Mary we see in Zacharias a man who was steeped in the language of Scripture. But we also note that his utterance is spoken of as prophecy (v. 67). Sometimes our definitions of things are much more narrow than Scriptural usage. While Luke 1:67 says Zacharias "prophesied", it is obvious that he is not speaking from God, but about God: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel ...". Obviously, he is praising the Lord

as he addressed those present, including the infant John (from v. 76). Often in the Psalms the Psalmist addresses God directly in one verse and then speaks of Him in the third person in the next (Psalm 145, for example). It shows that there is a close connection between praise and testimony, and that in a sense praise should be a testimony to those who hear.

Zacharias' utterance can be divided into two sections. From verses 68 to 75 he is speaking of the Lord to all present; from verses 76 to 79 he is addressing the infant John and speaking of the blessings which would be brought by the One whose forerunner John was to be. A detailed exposition of these verses would probably need several articles, for, like Mary, Zacharias brings together thoughts and images from many parts of the Old Testament. Here it will suffice us to notice two major themes. In the first section the emphasis is upon holiness, in the second the emphasis is upon light.

Holiness (vv. 68-75)

1) The Author of the message. The Holy Spirit filled Zacharias and inspired his praise. The Holy Spirit has one principle theme – the Son of God. If we worship God in the Spirit, we will rejoice in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:3).

2) The character of the messengers. Holy prophets (v. 70). Christ has been the prophets' theme "since the world began". If Enoch was the first prophet, Jude records his powerful message regarding the second coming of Christ (Jude 14,15). Some might object that Balaam and Caiaphas were not holy, but they prophesied, which is true, but their words are recorded for us in the inspired words of Moses, God's holy servant, and of the holy apostle John.

3) The nature of the message. "His holy covenant" (v. 72). This is not the covenant of the law, which is impossible to be kept by unholy sinners, but the covenant of promise which speaks of salvation and mercy.

4) The result of the message. "In holiness and righteousness before Him" (v. 75). Christ is the fulfilment of the holy covenant of promise. Through Him we can be counted holy and righteous before God and made holy and righteous in our lives. "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Corinthians 1:30).

Light (vv. 76-79)

1) The light of testimony. "And thou, child ..." (v.76). John's gospel tells us concerning the son of Zacharias, "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:8). He would bring the people to repent of their sin and proclaim the arrival of the Lamb of God, who alone could take sin away.

2) The light of certainty. "To give knowledge of salvation unto His people" (v. 77). First the lost sheep of the house of Israel then the uttermost parts of the world would be able to be sure of salvation "by the remission of their sins".

3) The light of a new day. "The dayspring from on high" (v. 78). The coming of Christ Jesus to save sinners meant a new day had dawned. Not a day of 24 hours, but "the light of the world" (John 8:12) had come bringing the day of salvation. Sinners no longer need languish in darkness and the shadow of death. They can have the light of life within them and the light of glory before them.

4) The light of tranquillity. "The way of peace" (v. 79). It is said of the whole human race, "Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known" (Romans 3:16,17). The human race is lost in the darkness of sin and its destructive consequences. The Dayspring had come and would make peace by the blood of His cross. He guides His sheep by the quiet waters of the way of peace.

Luke really is the Gospel of praise. In chapter 1, Mary rejoices in full salvation and Zacharias rejoices in full restoration. Thus begins the joyful theme which pervades this Gospel from start to finish.

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The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 9:10-21

Ananias' commission (v.10-12)

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is unique and intensely personal. But we must not overlook the distinctive commissioning by the Lord of this "certain disciple", Ananias of Damascus, to perform a special task. Ananias, sadly, is often overlooked: he is a forgotten hero of Christian history. This incident provides insight into the free intercourse between the risen Lord Jesus Christ and His servant, Ananias. While he is the second person with this name in the Acts of the Apostles, how different he is from the Ananias of Chapter 5. This Ananias was an honest man and a clean vessel who was available for the Lord to use. In that respect he is typical of what every believer should be. We can take the succinct descriptor "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias" and recast to include our location and name. Could the things that are said of Ananias be said of us?

Like Saul, Ananias saw a vision and heard a voice. With the completed Bible available to us, and with the Holy Spirit indwelling every believer, we do not need or receive visions today. However, Ananias was sensitive to the Lord's call and his name had only to be spoken once. His response was promptly given, "Behold, I am here, Lord." These are the features of true discipleship. Like Saul, he recognises the authority of the voice of command, calls Him Lord, is available for service and awaits His direction.

The Lord's guidance is clear, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." If we are available, ready and willing for God to use, we will soon find out what it is that He wants us to do. Whether or not that is spectacular in the eyes of others hardly matters, what is vital is that it is what the Lord desires. The location of the task and its details are given precisely. It is to the main east-west thoroughfare of Damascus that Ananias is being sent; and to a specific building. The fact that the Lord knows the circumstances and occupations of daily life is both reassuring and, possibly, concerning. This reminds of the abiding truth of Hagar's statement, "Thou God seest me" (Gen. 16.13).

The vision to Ananias also shows that Saul has a new reverence for God since his conversion. Doubtless his cruel persecution of believers is weighing upon his mind and conscience. His former arrogant pride and self-righteousness will be a cause of bitter regret. But the significance of the singular dealings of the Lord with him and the Lord's self-revelation must have been overwhelming. There may have been worship in his prayer as well as seeking wisdom to know both what God wanted him to do and the power to do it. His prayer is constant and ongoing; it is not a cry on behalf of his personal physical need. Saul's spiritual life started with prayer, only the Lord knew that and it was specially noted.

Taking the details in vs.10 and 12 together, we have joint corroboration by separate visions of the fact that Saul: (a) saw what Ananias looked like; (b) knew the name of this person before they met; and (c) knew what he was coming to do. It had also been disclosed to Ananias what Saul had already seen in a vision: namely Ananias coming in, placing his hands on him [Saul], so that his sight should be restored.

Luke, whether in his Gospel or in the Acts of the Apostles, is interested in the homes of his principal characters. In this book we notice that fact in, for instance, Acts 9:11; 10:6 and 21:16. Maybe this is a feature of Luke as being a doctor? This current reference is the first indication in Scripture of Saul's birthplace. Also association of prayers and visions is another feature in the writings of Luke: see Luke 1:10,11; 3:21; 9:28-31; 22:43 and Acts 10:9-12; 22:17. Three early visions of Saul are given in Acts 9:4; 9:12 and 22:17.

Ananias' concern (v.13-16)

Ananias had a serious and, to us, an understandable concern, but when he prefaced the articulation of it with the word "Lord", his query was answered. "I have heard by many of this man" probably indicates that Ananias was not one of the fugitive believers from Jerusalem, but was a long-time resident of Damascus. He was concerned that going to Saul was possibly tantamount to giving oneself up to arrest.

Ananias evidently knew Saul's purpose in visiting Damascus. News of his mission had preceded him. It was to arrest and bind believers, here called "saints", which became a common name for Christians. Indeed, it was a favourite name in the later writings of this man [Saul] who became the Apostle Paul!

The chief priests and Sanhedrin were united in taking this punitive action in defence of their common interests. Although the authority was vested in the high priest then in office, this authority had been delegated to Saul "to bind all that call on Thy name". That expression refers to those who call upon Jesus as Lord; those who have obtained salvation through His name.

The Lord graciously granted to Ananias a summary of Paul's future life and service. He assures Ananias that Saul was an instrument of divine choice, a "chosen vessel". In effect the Lord told Ananias that He was in full control of the situation. Saul's special threefold sphere of ministry is defined: (a) to Gentiles; (b) to kings, including at least Agrippa II and Nero; and (c) the children of Israel. Saul was selected to serve; it was to be service for "My name's sake".

It was also disclosed that Saul would endure many times over what he had made others to suffer, and that for the sake of the very same Name. Details of his suffering for that Name are outlined in 2Corinthians 11:23-33.

Ananias' compliance (v.17)

Ananias complied immediately with the Lord's instruction. He went to the house where Saul lodged and, as a gesture of love to the blind man, placed his hands upon him. He does not stand aloof, but fully identifies himself with Saul and communicates the Lord's purpose to heal him from blindness and fill him with the Holy Spirit. This incident demolishes any concept of 'apostolic succession' in bestowing spiritual gifts or empowerment. It also underscores the importance of every believer being available to perform a special task for the Lord.

The placing of hands was a gesture that expressed the reality of the words "Brother Saul", or "Saul, my brother". These are the first words Saul heard from Christian lips after his conversion: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost". Addressing Saul as a brother and welcoming him into the new fellowship in accord with the word of "the Lord" shows clearly that Saul was already saved.

This is the regular word for recovery of sight used frequently in the gospels, even for those born blind. The associated filling with the Holy Spirit was necessary for the prophetic service already indicated in v.15; that is, as a chosen vessel bearing the Lord's name before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. In common with all other believers since Pentecost, Saul received the Holy Spirit immediately at conversion. This filling, however, equips him for service in providing the required power and courage. It is amazing that this announcement was given by a man whom only days before Saul intended should be arrested, taken bound to Jerusalem and, no doubt, executed for his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Divine power has therefore been exhibited, both physically and spiritually.

The consequences (v.18,19)

Luke uses medical terminology to describe what happened. It was as if a flaky substance fell from off Saul's eyes "and he received sight forthwith". At the outset of his Apostolic service, Saul was obligated to someone who might be termed an 'ordinary' believer. He therefore learns the valuable lesson that God uses saints to minister to other saints, something that he was acutely aware of and greatly valued during the rest of his life.

Saul's first action after hearing the words of Ananias and receiving his sight was to arise and be baptized by Ananias. Baptism is an act of obedience, confession and faith. It is voluntary. Yet it is obligatory!

The new convert had physical as well as spiritual needs after three days without food or drink. Luke knows the importance of nourishment for convalescence, cf. Luke 8:55. So Saul received food and was strengthened. However, we note that obedience to baptism preceded his need for physical nourishment and the alleviation of hunger. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Psa. 119:60).

The words "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus" show that he now belonged to the very company he intended to destroy. Ever afterwards on his journeys he sought out the local assembly for Christian fellowship. His company was changed, "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts" (Psa. 119:63). You cannot genuinely accept Christ and have nothing to do with His people!

The commencement (v.20,21)

Immediately thereafter Saul "preached Christ in the synagogues". We are given additional insight to this in his later writings; "...the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1.11,12). So his subject matter was by direct revelation. Saul started to preach right there and then to the people he knew best. Gospel work starts where we are located, with people we are best equipped to reach. It is interesting that he stresses that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the first direct reference to this in Acts. Whereas Peter's preaching stressed Christ's Messiahship, Saul from the first stresses His deity. No one can be a true Christian without believing in and being prepared to confess the full deity of Jesus. If the Lord Jesus Christ is not God incarnate, He has no salvation for us. If He were merely God's suffering servant, but not God's Son, His death could not atone for our sins or incorporate believers into Himself.

Those who heard Saul preach were literally staggered at his preaching, which evidently was backed by his changed life. He exemplified his teaching "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Cor. 5:17). At this point in the narrative Saul went into Arabia.

(To be continued D.V.)

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Get to Know Your Bible

NEW TESTAMENT OUTLINE – Paper No 7.

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Into the wicked sinful city of Corinth, then the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire, came a little tent maker. He said that he came in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. They said that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. The apostle Paul himself was a very educated intelligent man, fluent in the original languages. It seems that purposefully and intentionally he avoided the wisdom of man's words that he might the more prove the power of God and the reproach of the Gospel. Chapter 1, "The preaching (word) of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (Ch. 1:18). "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (Ch. 15:3-4). The key to this epistle lies at the entrance; "We preach Christ crucified" (Ch. 1:23), "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (Ch. 2:2).

THE OCCASION

The power of the Gospel was demonstrated by the establishment of the assembly through the labours of Paul, Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:1-18). Paul continued there for, “A year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them”, and “tarried there yet a good while”, before leaving for Ephesus (Acts 18:11,18), where he laboured subsequently for about three years (Acts 20:31). The first epistle was written from Ephesus and Paul indicates that he will remain there until Pentecost (Ch. 16:8). The epistle was written in his third year at Ephesus, three years after he left Corinth and approximately five years after the assembly was established.

During this period Paul had received writings from the assembly at Corinth seeking answers to matters that had been raised about personal conduct and Christian liberty. “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me” (Ch. 7:1). See also the expression “now concerning” or “now as touching” (Ch. 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1) and “mine answer to them that do examine me in this” (Ch. 9:3). These questions he deals with in later chapters because even more pressing problems have become known.

Two very serious authenticated reports had reached Paul as the apostle, from exercised spiritual members of the assembly. “For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you” (Ch. 1:11). “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you” (Ch. 5:1). Known division and open fornication must be judged before there can be any blessing in the assembly. These serious problems are dealt with in chapters 1 to 5, together with the disgrace of going to law with each other in chapter 6.

THE OPENING

“The church of God which is at Corinth” (Ch. 1:2). This phrase immediately introduces firstly, the Church of God and secondly the City of Corinth. The church is the local called out company of believers gathered according to the Word of God, governed by the Will of God and guided in the Work of God. The city had a notorious reputation for luxury, licentiousness and lust. Corinth was such a vile place that the Greek language made a verb out of the name of the city. “To Corinthianise” means “to practice whoredom”. Paul lists ten of these hideous types of sinner in chapter 6 but says; “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (Ch. 6:11). Corinth was a city antagonistic to God and to the church. The atmosphere of this epistle is the responsibilities of the church in such a city.

Into the opening verses (Ch. 1:1-9), are woven doctrines that will fortify the church in such circumstances and truths that are developed in later chapters to correct the errors at Corinth.

- 1) “To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (Ch. 1:2). Moral laxity, forbidden litigation and Christian liberty were three serious matters detrimental to the presence of God and sanctity of the assembly and are dealt with in chapters 5 to 8.
- 2) “With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ch. 1:2). Lordship and Headship were being denied by some. This very serious matter is dealt with in chapters 10 and 11.
- 3) “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by Him” (Ch. 1:4-5). Paul lists spiritual riches and gift in contrast to the material riches of some who reigned as kings and were puffed up in pride (Ch. 4).
- 4) “Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift” (Ch. 1:6-7). The users and abuses of “gift” are developed in chapters 12 to 14.
- 5) “Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ch. 1:7-8). This leads us in thought to the lovely chapter 15.
- 6) “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ch. 1:9). The opening nine verses conclude with the great truth of God’s faithfulness in contrast to their failures at Corinth. “Fellowship” means more than privilege; it includes the responsibility of the church for the

city. Fellowship with Jesus Christ does not merely mean that all His resources are at our disposal; it means that the spiritual resources of the church are to be used to accomplish the Work of God in the city. Unfortunately the spirit of the city had invaded the church. This lengthy introduction is so precious before dealing with the problems at Corinth. The focus is upon the name of “Christ” being mentioned nine times in these first nine verses.

THE ORDER

Ch. 1:1-9 – COMMENDATION

Ch. 1:10-4:21 – CONTENTION

Ch. 5:1-6:20 – CONDUCT

Ch. 7:1-10:33 – CONSCIENCE

Ch. 11:1-14:40 – COMING TOGETHER

Ch. 15:1-58 – CHANGED BODY

Ch. 16:1-24 – COLLECTION and CONCLUSION

“I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel” (Ch. 4:14-15). There were many serious problems in the church at Corinth. Some today feel free to have fellowship with unscriptural practices. They attend places where for many years the Scriptures have been set aside in order to continue on a path of disobedience to the Word of God. They excuse themselves by saying that Paul went to Corinth.

Four things should be borne in mind as we consider this Epistle:

- (1) Paul wrote as an apostle of Jesus Christ (Ch. 1:1).
- (2) Paul is writing according to the grace of God, having seen them saved in Christ Jesus and having laid the foundation of the church (Ch. 3:6,10).
- (3) This was a company of believers who did not as yet have the full canon of church epistles or the full Bible that we possess.
- (4) In fact, Paul did not visit Corinth at this time but instead wrote to them. He explains in the second Epistle: “Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth” (2Cor. 1:23). As a result we have an inspired treasure of Divine wisdom to instruct in assembly principles and practises as a result of Paul writing unto the church of God which is at Corinth.

First Corinthians is a very orderly epistle if thoughtfully studied.

Ch. 1:10-4:21 – The first matter dealt with is DIVISION: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions (schisms, contentions, variances) among you” (Ch. 1:10). It is fundamentally essential to be in full harmony, perfectly joined, permanently knit in the same mind, the same judgement from the Scriptures. Later Paul will deal with discipline. There can be no discipline in a divided company. If the shepherds are not united the flock will be scattered. Paul had to write to some who five years after conversion, were still, “babes”, retarded children, difficult to teach, unable to assimilate food, spiritual dwarfs. Their claim to spiritual superiority and choice of party leaders was evidence of babyhood, the toy and tantrum state. Others were; “carnal”; “walk after the manner of men”, resulting in jealousy, strife, discord and being quarrelsome. “What will ye?” shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?” (Ch. 4:21).

Ch. 5:1-6:20 – Moral laxity and disgraceful public litigation must be dealt with next. The Corinthians had written to Paul about marriage and meats. They needed to learn to put matters right internally before externally. They were very swift to judge the motives of the servants of Christ but failed to judge a blatant case of known fornication in the assembly. They were puffed up with pride while the testimony was

repugnant among the Gentiles. Going to law before the unjust was an insult to God and degrading to the assembly. There were matters that should have been dealt with and nothing was being done. Paul stresses Holiness and Purity (Ch. 5); Righteousness and the Price (Ch. 6). "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (Ch. 6:20).

Ch. 7:1-10:33 – Answers the questions which they had written about.

Ch. 7 – Having dealt with the serious problems and the grosser matters of their neglect (Ch. 7:1), begins a new section. "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me". Paul gives plain needful teaching, yet uses sanctified modesty of language as he discusses Marriage, Separation, Celibacy and Widowhood.

Ch. 8 – This chapter deals with things offered to idols, matters of conscience and Christian liberty.

Ch. 9 – Having exhorted the surrender of one's right to eat meats in consideration of the conscience of a weaker brother, Paul now deals with the surrender of his personal rights to support as a preacher of the "Gospel", mentioned nine times in chapter 9. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (Ch. 9:27).

Ch. 10 – Since Paul has already dealt with relations between fellow believers, internally as to service in the assembly so in chapter 10 he deals with relations with the unsaved and testimony externally in an idolatrous world.

Ch. 10:14-22 – These verses show that the Lord's Table and the table of demons are incompatible.

Ch. 10:22-11:32 – Here, Paul develops the great apostolic doctrines of Lordship, Headship and the eating of the Lord's Supper.

Ch. 11:33-14:40 – The expression "When ye come together", occurs five times in chapter 11 and introduces the spiritual activities of the Church of God gathered unitedly, corporately and habitually unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ch. 15 – Having considered the local congregation, this beautiful chapter deals with the great gathering, the trumpet call, the changed body and triumphant victory through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ch. 16: 1Corinthians looks back to the Cross, gives ministry of Correction, instruction as to Coming together, The Second Coming, and in the last chapter refers to the Collection for needy believers at Jerusalem.

Suggestions for further study are references to the physical "body" of the believer. It is profitable to develop the expressions, "when ye come together", in the Epistle.

THE OUTLOOK

Recovery at Corinth was dependent upon the look of faith back to the CROSS (Past); the focus upon CHRIST AS LORD (Present), and forward expectation to HIS COMING (Prospect).

(1) THE CROSS – relative to the problems at Corinth:

Ch. 1-4: CONTENTION: Division; "Is Christ divided?"

The end of fleshly envy and pride is "The preaching of the Cross" (Ch. 1:18).

Ch. 5-6: CONDUCT: Sin is leaven; "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (Ch. 5:7).

Ch. 7-10: CONSCIENCE: The weak brother is one; "For whom Christ died" (Ch. 8:11).

Ch. 11-14: COLLECTIVE GATHERING: "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread" (Ch. 11:23). The solemnity of this "night" was in great contrast to the irreverent profane behaviour of some at the Lord's supper (Ch. 11:27-34).

Ch. 15: CHANGED BODY: Resurrection; "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (Ch. 15:3-4).

(2) THE COMING

In each section future events are kept before the readers: "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in

the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ch. 1:7-8).

THE MATERIALS: "Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it" (Ch. 3:12-13).

THE MOTIVES: "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come" (Ch. 4:5).

THE MEMORIAL: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (Ch. 11:26).

THE MYSTERY: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (Ch. 15:51-52).

MARANATHA: "The Lord cometh" (Ch. 16:22).

SECOND CORINTHIANS

No church epistle written by the apostle Paul is more personal and intimate in nature than Second Corinthians. In it he bared his soul and revealed his abiding love for the Corinthians despite those who misjudged his motives, ministry and movements.

THE PERIOD between sending the first epistle to Corinth and the writing of the second epistle was a time of deep spiritual anxiety for Paul. With the first letter he sent Timothy, who "worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do" (1Cor. 16:10). He sent Titus to deal with the collection for the poor in Jerusalem, and to bring back news to Paul of the repentance of the church at Corinth to the corrective ministry, (2Cor. 7:6-7; 8:16-17). The news of the reaction of the believers at Corinth took a long time to reach Paul in Ephesus. He longed to visit the churches in Macedonia yet he could not visit Corinth until he had heard of the repentance of the assembly. "To this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things" (2Cor. 2:9). Paul came to Troas where he found an open door to preach the Gospel. "I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother" (Ch. 2:12-13). He describes the meeting in chapter 7 "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; And not by his coming only but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (Ch. 7:5-7). The first epistle was mainly about *CORRECTION*. We have quoted this passage at length to pick up the atmosphere of the second epistle, which was expressed in these words; *COMFORT* and *CONSOLATION*. At the time of writing the second epistle, about six months after the first, Timothy had also returned to be with him. It is so good to have men who like Joshua and Caleb labour positively, and bring back a good report (Num. 14:6-8).

It is noteworthy that the two epistles to the Corinthians were the outcome of reports received by Paul. The report from the household of Chloe (1Cor. 1:11), brought him grief. The report from Titus (2Cor. 7:6-7), filled him with joy and gladness.

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST

"We preach Christ crucified" (1Cor. 1:23). In 1st Corinthians the cross and the death of Christ are at the centre of the truths presented as the basics of recovery for the failures of the church at Corinth. The emphasis in 2nd Corinthians is upon the resurrection and glory of Christ. Some twenty occurrences of the word "glory" confirm it to be the focus before the church. "For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Cor. 4:6). In this epistle Christ is seen by faith as glorified. Observe how this is woven into verses fragrant with Christ. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2Cor. 1:20).

The central section (Ch. 2:14-7:4) concerning "This Ministry", commences; "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2Cor. 2:14). "For we are unto God a sweet savour of

Christ" (Ch. 2:15). The saints are; "The epistle of Christ" (Ch. 3:3), "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake" (Ch. 4:5). In chapter 5 we should live unto Him which died for us and rose again. We are "absent from the Lord" (5:6); we seek "to be present with the Lord" (5:8); "we labour, that ... we may be accepted of Him" (5:9). "We must all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ" (5:10). "All things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the Ministry of Reconciliation" (5:18). "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (5:20).

In the section Ch. 8:1-9:15 dealing with liberality and material giving, Christ is the great example, the Rich One Who became poor, (Ch. 8:9); the Unspeakable Gift of God (Ch. 9:15).

The closing section, Ch. 10:1-13:10, affirming Apostolic Authority is more stern in tone, yet Paul presents the church as a 'chaste virgin espoused to Christ' (Ch. 11:2); "the simplicity that is in Christ"; the proof that; "we speak before God in Christ" (Ch. 12:19).

THE PURPOSE

Although Paul rejoiced that many had repented, he was fearful that not all had accepted his corrections or his apostolic authority. Second Corinthians was written to defend the authenticity of both his apostleship and his ministry. This was not carried out in a self-protecting spirit but because Paul knew that acceptance of his ministry was intimately bound with the spiritual well-being of the church of God at Corinth. In the first epistle he cautioned the church as to matter affecting the external testimony in the city. In the second epistle he is dealing primarily with the ministry internal in the church. He knew that the church at Corinth was failing to understand the real privilege of being the ministers of Jesus Christ. We need to grasp this if we are to fully understand the passion in the heart of Paul; the reason for his burden; the explanation of his tears; the cause for his anxiety. He was not seeking official recognition. He was not distressed because some did not think as highly of him as of Apollos or Cephas.

As a result we are given a large section of the epistle, Ch. 2:14 to 7:4, which is of supreme value to the Lord's servant whether it be as evangelist, pastor or teacher. The authority of God is always the authority of His Work, the authority of essential Truth. The authority of the servant is not the authority of man or of office conferred. It is the authority of the Word of God given him to preach. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not" (Ch. 4:1). This is the great sacred deposit which he holds on trust for the church, and by the exposition of which he perfects the church for its work of ministry. A broad outline of Paul's exercise is as follows:

Ch. 1-7: Paul's Exposition of the Ministry.

Ch. 8,9: Paul's Exhortation to complete the collection for the needy saints at Jerusalem.

Ch. 10-13: Paul's Exposure of false apostles in view of his imminent visit.

THE PERSPECTIVE

Paul wrote three letters to Corinth. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators" (1Cor. 5:9). This is an amplification of a former letter not preserved. He wrote 1st Corinthians from Ephesus, spring AD57 (1Cor. 16:6,8). He wrote 2nd Corinthians from Macedonia, autumn AD57 (2Cor. 2:13). Second Corinthians refers to two visits, one planting and the second proposed. He proposed to come after writing 1st Corinthians and before 2nd Corinthians but was unable. The reference in 2Corinthians 13:1 to the "Third time I am coming", is in the present tense used of intent as expressed in 1Corinthians 16:3, "I will come unto you". "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you" (Ch. 12:14), obviously refers to this second intended visit.

False teachers at Corinth, possibly Judaizers not mentioned in 1st Corinthians, had now come to prominence in discrediting Paul and hence the ministry, insinuating inconsistency by the change of itinerary as originally proposed (1Cor. 16:5-7), "if the Lord permit"; compare 2Corinthians 1:15-18.

THE PARTS

The type of writing is telescopic, developing one truth from another with doctrines constantly applied as the tone varies. "The sufferings of Christ abound in us" (Ch. 1:5); "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (Ch. 1:8). He expresses joyfulness in chapter 7, and great sternness in chapter 13. The divisions are not clearly defined yet the progress of this great epistle is developed as we see the pathos of Paul's exercise as follows:

- 1) To *ASSURE* the believers at Corinth that he rejoiced in their repentance reported by Titus and to seek the restoration of the incestuous man of the first letter, chapter 5.
- 2) To *ASSERT* his Apostolic Authority and the Integrity of his work at Corinth, which was under attack, to deal with persistent offenders and to sternly warn imposters.
- 3) To *APPEAL* for the completion of the gift for the poor saints at Jerusalem.
- 4) To *AFFIRM* his intention to visit them again that they might have a second benefit.

Further studies will be rewarding if we meditate deeper upon some of:

The Characteristic Words of the Epistle: "glory", 20 times; "grace", 18 times; "comfort" and derivative 29 times. The word that is used for "confidence" occurs 6 times in the New Testament, 5 of these are in 2nd Corinthians. There are many different words used in chapters 8 and 9 to describe the gift, grace and bounty being sent to Jerusalem.

The Contrasting Concepts of the Epistle: "Light affliction" and "weight of glory" (Ch. 4:17). "House dissolved" and "house eternal" (Ch. 5:1). "Sorrowful" and "rejoicing"; "poor" and "rich"; "Having nothing" and "possessing all things" (Ch. 6:10). "Deep poverty" and "riches of liberality" (Ch. 8:2). "Let down in a basket" (Ch. 11:33) and "caught up to the third heaven" (Ch. 12:2).

The Comparison with Truths from the Old Testament: The new creation and the old creation (Ch. 5:17). The command of light out of darkness (Ch. 4:6). The separation of light and darkness (Ch. 6:14). The serpent beguiled Eve (Ch. 11:3). As Isaac was in figure raised from the dead (Heb. 11:19), so Paul was "delivered from so great a death" (Ch. 1:10). As Joseph, a Hebrew among Gentiles was used to feed his brethren from a bountiful harvest so Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, brought a bounty to needy Jewish brethren at Jerusalem, (Ch. 8:15; 9:6).

The epistle also compares with the books of Job and the Psalms which reveal the deep personal feelings of the writers.

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Digging for Treasures from the Word of God

"... To the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2,3)

We all know that the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. A small portion in the book of Daniel, chapters 2:4-7:28, which describes the future course of the Gentile world powers, was written in Aramaic, the language of the then Gentile world. We hold to the plenary inspiration of the original Scriptures.

The ancient Hebrew is a rich language with admirable qualities and was divinely chosen to reveal the mysteries of God and the prophecies concerning Christ Jesus. It has singularly rhythmic and musical qualities and a noble dignity of style.

After the conquest of Alexander the Great, the ancient Greek dialects were merged into one common language. In its spoken form it became the everyday communicating medium of millions of people throughout the Greco-Roman world. Gradually, it became the popular dialect of the entire Indo-European community. It was a language adopted for wide use among the scholars and elite people of all the nations. It possessed excellent flexibility and capability of adapting new scientific, technical and theological terms. It possessed the needed force of expression. It also has a unique inbuilt adaptability of expressing abstract thoughts and intricate shades of ideas and meanings.

Translated Versions

By depending entirely on a translated Bible version, we miss a great deal of the glory, richness and the depth of the original languages in which it was divinely inspired. An average reader is cut off from the treasures, which lie deep within the original language. "There are few human pursuits more fascinating than the study of words. As vehicles for conveying the thoughts, feelings, and desires of men, they have an abiding interest. How supremely interesting, then, should be the study of those 'healthful words' in which the revelation of God Himself has been conveyed!" said Prof. F.F. Bruce. However, unless one has acquired a masterly knowledge of the original language one is likely to fall into many pitfalls in interpreting the deep meaning of the original expressions.

The King James Version was translated into English some 400 years ago. Language is constantly changing. A modern dictionary would give at best, the meaning of a word as it could be easily understood by the common man of today. To understand the true meaning of a word in its original Bible language, we need a dictionary that would translate the Hebrew/Greek words defining them as they were understood during the days when it was written. Only then would it give us a correct insight into its accurate meaning and describe what exactly God wanted to reveal.

The English word 'gospel', is not a common word today. ***The Concise Oxford Dictionary*** says that it would signify "a thing regarded as absolutely true", "take my word as gospel". Now this word "gospel" is translated from the Greek word "*Evangeline*" which actually means much more than that. W.E. Vine in his ***New Testament Dictionary*** says that this word means "good message or tidings". There is a lot of difference between a "*true message*" and "*good tidings*". Thus we will be able to understand the true meaning of the word and the verse, if only we know the precise meaning of such words as they conveyed during biblical times.

Besides this, we must consider other aspects as well. One Bible word in the original language has been translated into different English words in different places. Again, several original words either in Hebrew or Greek have been translated into one given English word in our Bible. The English word "*come*" is used as the English translation for 39 different Greek words. One cannot be exactly sure whether that one English word, (or for that matter any vernacular translations of the Bible) occurring in two different places is actually the translation of that same word in the original language. So we need a dictionary and a concordance, as well as some explanation to understand each word and the meaning that had actually been used in the original language. In countries like India, where people speak vernacular languages, one has to consider how a particular word is treated in his language.

To enable our readers to appreciate the implications of what is said above, and to bring out the beauty and the richness of the original divine writings and their profound depth of meaning, we would try to explain using a few samples to highlight the treasures found in the Scriptures, first in the Old Testament Hebrew and then in the New Testament Greek. We are sure our readers will be able to feel the thrill and taste its sweetness. We are sure they would themselves try to delve deep into the rich treasures found in the inspired original Scriptures.

The Rhyme and Rhythm

We give below a free metrical rendering of the passage in Isaiah 33:20,22, which would reveal the beauty and the grandeur of the Hebrew poetry:

“Look now upon Zion, our city, all festal;
Thine eyes shall see Salem, a dwelling all restful.
A tent never more to be struck
Whose stakes shall never be drawn,
Whose cords shall never be loosed,
For Jehovah our Judge is! (*Jehovah shephtehnu!*)
Jehovah our War-prince! (*Jehovah m’choquehnu!*)
Jehovah our King! (*Jehovah malkehbu!*)
‘Tis *He* who will save us! (*Hoo yoshiehbu*)”.

Here we are able to see the rhyme, rhythm and swing found in the original language. This Scripture passage expresses the triumphal chant of Israel’s anticipative faith on that divine fingerprint of Jehovah’s manifestations that are yet to come (The Lord Jesus Christ).

Jehovah our Bishop – *Our ecclesiastical Head.*
Jehovah our Commander – *Our military Head.*
Jehovah our Monarch – *Our political Head.*
He and none other shall be our *Salvation!*

In the New Testament, we have a similar Greek passage. The Epistle to the Hebrews beautifully begins with a rhythmic alliteration, “*Pobemeros kai polutropos, palai o theos*”. Apart from its phonic rhythm, it is an artistic stoke, beginning with the word ‘God’, which would readily attract the pious Hebrew, to whom this epistle is addressed.

A “Strong Man” and a “Reddish Man”, the Created being

The Hebrew language has six (six is the human number) words to denote MAN. These distinctions have not been brought out in any of the English translations nor for that matter, in any other language translations of our Bible. Hebrew “*geber*” derived from “*gabhar*” means “strong man or to be strong”. Another word “*adhahim*” derived from “*adam*” means “to be red, ruddy or reddish”. Adam was created from out of the red-earth, and therefore connotes the “man” as a being created in God’s own image. This word is thus used to refer to any one particular man or woman.

Jeremiah 17:5-8 reads as, “Cursed be the man (“*geber*”, “strong man” – Strong’s 1397) that trusteth in man (“*adhahim*”, “the created one” – Strong’s 120)” and “Blessed is the man (“*geber*”, strong-man) that trusteth in the LORD (Jehovah)” (v.7). What will be the advantage or benefit for a “strong-man” (strong in nature) to trust a “created man”, a weak man made out of dust? It would be futile and without any benefit. But in contrast, if that “strong-man” would put his trust in the Lord Jehovah and have his hope fixed firmly on that Jehovah God – how great would be his blessedness, and how firmly and surely would he be established! Thus this passage clearly describes the mere futility of a man who puts his trust in the created man, one who is frail and cursed of God. On the other hand, if that man places his whole trust in God, the only one who has created him, he would surely be blessed richly indeed.

Jeremiah 16:20 reads, “Shall a *man* (“*adhahim*”, the created one) make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?” The implication is this, “Can a created, frail man create gods for himself, and how can they be real gods? They are indeed no gods”.

“Cast”, “put to”, “poured”, “threw”, etc.

In the passage, Mark 12:41-44, we find the word “cast” in its Greek form, appearing seven (seven is a complete number) times. This Greek word “*ballo*” (Strong’s 906) means, “to throw, hurl, in contrast to striking”. However, the same word “*ballo*” is differently translated in the KJV. It is translated as “*cast*” in

connection with the seed in Mark 4:26, “*put to*” in connection with money with the exchangers in Matthew 25:27, “*poured*” in connection with ointment in Matthew 26:12 and water in John 13:5, “*laid*” in connection with laying hands in Matthew 8:14, and “*throw*” the coin in Mark 12:42, and in Acts 22:23, threw the dust into the air, etc. The different English words into which this one Greek word is translated would give some insight into the true meaning of this Greek word. The seed cast is dead and gone, ointment or water poured cannot be recovered, money put in the box and given to the money exchanger does not belong to the one who parts with it, and so on. Thus we are able to understand the real implication and the sincere mind of the poor widow when she put her entire life’s possession into the collection box, which earned the Lord’s commendation.

“A kiss of love” and “A fervent kiss”

There are two Greek words translated as “kiss”. The word “*philema*” (Strong’s 5370) noun, and “*phileo*” (Strong’s 5368) verb, means just a kiss expressing mutual love. This is a token of Christian brotherhood, whether by way of welcome or farewell, “a holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16; 1Cor. 16:20; 2Cor. 13:12; 1Thess. 5:26), “a kiss of love” (1Pet. 5:14) – V.E. Vine. The other word is “*kataphileo*” (Strong’s 2705) which denotes “to kiss fervently”.

Both these words are used in Luke 7:45, “Thou gavest Me no kiss (*‘Phileo’*, a kiss of love) but this woman ... hath not ceased to kiss (*‘kataphileo’*, a passionate fervent kiss) My feet”. This (*kataphileo*) word is used in Matthew 26:49, Mark 14:45. What the Lord really implied to Simon is obvious.

‘The change of the word from “*phileo*” to “*kataphileo*” in Matt. 26:49, Mark 14:45 can scarcely be without significance, and the act of the traitor was almost certainly more demonstrative than the simple kiss of salutation’ – W.E. Vine.

“Another of the same sort” and “Another of a different kind”

Perhaps a classic example is the clear distinction of Greek words translated as “another”. There are two different Greek words that have been translated as “another”. The Greek word “*allos*” (Strong’s 243) means “another of the *same sort*”, whereas “*heteros*” (Strong’s 2087) signifies “another of a *different kind*”.

A number of songbooks and Bibles are kept on a table. One Bible is differentiated from the other Bible by the word “*allos*” that is, another book of the same sort. However, if you want to differentiate the songbook from that of the Bible “*heteros*” is used to denote that this songbook is of a different kind to that of the Bible.

The critical distinction is seen in such places as Luke 23:32, “There were also two *other (heteros)* malefactors led with Him”. The Holy Spirit carefully uses this word signifying “other of a different kind”, to protect the holy, and the impeccable character of the Son of God.

In John 14:16 we read, “He shall give you *another* comforter”. Here the Holy Spirit carefully uses the word “*allos*”. God the Father will give you another of the same divine kind of Comforter, the Holy Spirit, another of the same triune God, How profound the implications are!

The Galatians believers had left the “gospel of grace” and had taken hold of a different kind of gospel, the “gospel of works”. The apostle Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit brings out this truth beautifully and more emphatically in Galatians 1:6,7. God called them to the grace of Christ. But they had left it and had taken hold of “another (*heteros*) gospel”, a different kind of a gospel, “which is not another (*allos*)”. There is no other gospel, not even another gospel of the same kind. How careful we are to be, to adhere to this one, the only gospel of grace!

The above would be a fitting reply to the wrong teaching of “limited atonement”, that is, Christ died only for those who are predestined and chosen by God and not for all men of the world.

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The Death of Christ Restores God's Creation

In a number of Scriptures our Lord Jesus Christ is compared to and contrasted with our forefather Adam. We are told that Adam "is the figure of Him that was to come" (Romans 5:14); and the Coming One is called "the last Adam" (1Cor. 15:45).

There are other passages of Scripture in which the matter is treated less directly, and more by implication, but where the reference is nonetheless very obvious. Such a passage is Hebrews Ch. 2.

If Hebrews Ch. 1 brings before us the glories of Christ as the Son of God, chapter 2 presents Him as the Son of Man. In verses 6 to 8 the writer quotes at length from Psalm 8. This Psalm refers to man in general, to man as man, but manifestly to Adam as man's first representative, for the allusion to Genesis 1:26-28 is obvious.

Perhaps we might point out in passing that since man in Adam is designated in the Psalm "the son of man" (v. 4), we see clearly that the phrase does not signify "son of a man", for that is something which Adam was not. The term does not of itself demand a human paternity, for Adam had no earthly father, and neither did Christ, to whom the term "Son of man" comes to refer most especially. Perhaps the most basic ideas are human nature, and identification with the human race. We have further in vs. 4 and 5 of our Psalm the twofold and paradoxical conception of lowliness and headship, two ideas which appear to characterize the references to Christ as the Son of man in the New Testament.

When God made man in the person of Adam, He crowned him with glory and honour. What this means is indicated in the next verse, "He gave him to have dominion over the works of His hands", or to put it the opposite way around, "He put all things under His feet". The crown of which the Psalm speaks is a symbolic representation of the position and authority over creation given to Adam. Glory and honour are common terms 'for the divine majesty, and thence for the kingly as a reflection of the divine: and the crowning represents the kingly majesty, with which man is adorned as with a kingly crown'.

By his sin Adam forfeited his crown, that is to say he lost his lordship over creation. The Scriptures indicate that fallen man still possesses some measure of domination (e.g. Gen. 9:2; Dan. 2:37,38; James 3:7), but whatever remnants of dignity and authority man may possess today, they are nothing to what Adam knew in his pristine glory, and to what Christ possessed as an unfallen man even in His humiliation. The fact is that because of man's regency, the whole world was plunged into ruin in the fall of its head. All that man knows today is a limited dominion over a sin-cursed and groaning creation.

In Hebrews 2:8 we are told that God subjected all things to man, leaving nothing of this earthly order outside of his dominion; but the verse makes it clear that this is not the position of things presently, though it will become the position once again in a coming day.

So, all is not completely lost. God's hopes and purpose for His fair creation are not irretrievably destroyed. Could they ever be? But the only means by which His purpose could be realized and His creation restored from the thralldom of sin to which man had subjected it, and recovered to man's dominion, is the death of Christ, as verse 9 reveals. This was the only way consistent with the character of God (v. 10).

Now although the basic idea of the absolute necessity of the death of Christ is clear and unquestionable, it has to be confessed that verse 9 is a difficult verse, and one which has led to much difference of judgment. One great problem has been the importation into the verse of ideas which are not in the context, and another has been the overlooking of obvious connections which *are* in the context.

Firstly, we may dismiss the idea that "crowned with glory and honour" refers to moral glory. Whether the idea of Christ being crowned with moral glory is acceptable in the abstract or not, it is most certainly not

the idea in the passage. The whole emphasis is upon official glory, upon the dignity of man's position of domination over creation. This was fully his only in innocence, but his moral perfection is not in view here, what is repeatedly stressed is his place of authority and rule.

Secondly, we must note that the crown implied in the context is not a victor's crown. In no sense was the crown of verse 7 (Psalm 8:5) a victor's crown, awarded to man in reward for some merit or achievement. The wonder in the Psalmist's mind is that it should ever be bestowed at all! It is true that the Greek word "*stephanos*" (from "*stepho*", to put round or encircle) originally signified a wreath or garland bestowed upon a successful competitor in the public games. Later it came to include symbols "of civic worth, of military valour, of nuptial joy, of festal gladness". In the Septuagint Version, the word denotes "crown" in general, including a royal crown (2Sam. 12:30; 1Chron. 20:2; Esther 8:15; Psalm 21:3; Jer. 13:18) and symbols of lesser dignity (Job 19:9; Ezek. 16:12; 23:42; Zech. 6:11,14). In the New Testament the reference most frequently reverts to the original sense, but here in Hebrews 2 the "*stephanos*" is implied in the verb.

"Crowned" is the symbol of authority and dominion granted originally to Adam. *If* the idea of a victor's crown is in verse 9, it is additional, being neither required by the word itself, nor the sense already established in the context.

Thirdly, we may reject the idea that since the words here rendered "glory and honour" are used in the Septuagint to describe the high-priestly garments of Aaron in Exodus 28:2, then the writer here is giving "a preliminary intimation of what is to be the main subject of the Epistle, namely the High priesthood of Christ." The reference is not to Exodus 28:2 but to Psalm 8:5; the comparison is not with Aaron but with Adam; and the theme is not the High priesthood of Christ, but His humanity. Not until His humanity is established, and its relationship to his sacrificial death, can the subject of His High-Priestly ministry be introduced.

It is rarely possible to preserve exactly the grammatical structure and the order of the words in translating from one language to another, and even where it is, because of the difference in idioms, it can be misleading. At times however it can be helpful, and we would append a rendering of Hebrews 2:9 as near as possible to the original; "But One some little lower than the angels having been made we see – Jesus – for the suffering of death with glory and honour having been crowned so that by (the) grace of God for every one (or thing) He might taste death". The punctuation and hence the grammatical structure of the verse has been presented in a number of ways, but two main lines of interpretation have been given; either that Christ was crowned because He must die or that He was crowned because He had died. The first view regards the being crowned in the light of verse 7, as contemporary with His being made a little lower than the angels, and as representing dominion over creation. As Adam was head over creation as a sinless man on earth, so "Jesus" (note the human name) was head over creation as a sinless man on earth. And as the first Adam in his headship involved the human race and the whole creation in the ruin of his disobedience, so the last Adam in His headship involved the human race and all creation in the restoration effected in His one act of obedience unto death.

The second view regards the being crowned as the reward secured by the accomplishment of the work of redemption, an idea similar to Philippians 2:8-11. This glory was not received when He was made lower than the angels, but when He was exalted above angels i.e. at His ascension. It is not possible within the bounds of this article to discuss the relative merits and demerits of these two interpretations, we would simply point out that however we connect up the clauses of the verse, there are two precious lines of truth that are implicit in the whole argument of the passage, although neither of them is developed.

Firstly, we must see that the crown originally awarded to Adam in his unfallen condition has been forfeited, and that it has been forfeited by all those who stand in relationship to him, i.e. all fallen mankind. Also, we see that in the fall of its head the whole creation is ruined and brought into bondage to corruption.

Secondly, we see that as an unfallen man, Jesus possessed what no man had possessed since Adam, dominion over creation. Witness, for example, His riding an unbroken ass through a tumultuous crowd. Consequently, by His death and annulment of sin, all those who stand in relationship to Him are granted the

glory of dominion and rule over creation with Himself. At the same time creation is delivered by its Head from the ruin into which its first head, Adam, had plunged it. This is attributed to “the grace of God”, and we are reminded that the God who made the world, and for whose glory and pleasure it was made, has secured His purpose in a way which was consistent with His own character, a way which involved the Author and Leader of our salvation in the sufferings of death.

The Source and End of all things, instead of consigning man, the cause of their ruin, to perdition, has by His grace secured eternal salvation in Christ for all those who will receive it. And this salvation is not deliverance from hell merely, wonderful as that would have been, but it entails a new relationship to God as sons, a new relationship to Christ as brethren, a new relationship to one another as the church, and a new relationship to “all things”. All those brought under Christ as Head will share His glory when creation is finally delivered from its thrall and re-established under the dominion of man. This “we see not yet”, but we shall see it in “the world to come, whereof we speak”, i.e. in Christ’s kingdom of righteousness to be introduced at His second advent, as Ch. 1 has described. The foundation has been laid, the work was done at the cross, and all now awaits “His own time”, when God “for whom are all things, and by whom are all things” shall recover them to Himself and place them once again in subjection to man in a visible way, but this time a man who can never fail.

But when Christ claims the title deeds of earth, His worthiness to do so will be acknowledged in heaven, because He is “the Lamb that was slain” (see Revelation, chapters. 4 and 5).

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MEN OF GOD SERIES

(2) JOSEPH : GOD WAS WITH HIM (Part 2)

**“God was with him, And delivered him out of all his afflictions”
(Acts 7:9,10)**

JOSEPH IS A BEAUTIFUL TYPE OF THE LORD JESUS IN GLORY

“Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt” (Gen. 45:13). The Lord prayed: “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory” (John 17:24). There are seven great men in Genesis. Joseph, the seventh, is the man of suffering and glory. “Joseph” means “Increase”. “Joseph is a fruitful bough” (Gen. 49:22).

Of the 12 tribes of Israel, two of the larger tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh descended directly from Joseph. The Lord Jesus suffered alone. In death “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter”. In resurrection, “He shall see His seed” (Isa. 53:7,10). In glory, “Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the Throne of David” (Isa. 9:7).

Joseph was the SON, received in figure from the dead. “And Israel said, Joseph my son is yet alive” (Gen. 45:28). Compare Romans 1:4, “Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”.

Joseph was a SHEPHERD (Gen. 49:24). Compare Hebrews 13:20, “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep”.

Joseph was a SERVANT (Psa. 105:17). Our blessed Lord, “Made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7).

Joseph was the SHEAF in the field (Gen. 37:7). Christ is the wave sheaf. “The firstfruits of them that slept” (1Cor. 15:20).

Joseph's dream was about the SUN, and the moon, and the eleven stars" (Gen. 37:9). Our glorified Lord is; "The root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16). To Israel; "Shall the SUN of righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2).

Joseph dreamed of one who would be SUPREME in the Earthly and Heavenly Sphere. "We were binding sheaves in the field" (Gen. 37:7). Joseph would soon control the ingathering of the harvest in seven plenteous years. This is Earthly; the Lord said, "The field is the world" (Matt. 13:38). Joseph dreamed about the sun and the moon and the eleven stars of the heavenly sphere (Gen. 37:9). Compare (Phil. 2:10), "That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth".

Joseph was the STONE. "The stone of Israel" (Gen. 49:24). This speaks of the arms of his hand being made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob. This may refer to the shelter, stability and rest he offered to Israel in the land of Goshen in the time of famine. Christ is spoken of as "The tried stone, elect and precious" (1Pet. 2:6). The "living stone", "the chief corner stone".

SECRETS were revealed by Joseph to the butler, the baker and the king. In John 4, the woman said, "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ" (John 4:29).

All the depths of Joseph's SORROW, were answered in his GLORY. They put him in a pit: God put him in a palace. They stripped him of his coat: Pharaoh, "arrayed him in vestures of fine linen". They repudiated his sonship: He wore the signet of lordship. He was conveyed by camels as an item for sale: They made him to ride in the second chariot. He was a slave in a dungeon: He was the ruler of Egypt.

Peter wrote about; "The SUFFERINGS of Christ, and the GLORY that should follow" (1Pet. 1:11). Beside the pit they sat down: at the Cross, "They sat down to watch Him there". They said, "We will see what will become of him". The Lord was silent in His sufferings at the hands of his accusers yet He glorified God before the high priest saying, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

Joseph was a man of God. Three times we read, "The Lord was with Joseph". Four times it is recorded that he, "prospered". He reigned in prison. The Saviour Himself entered the prison house of death. "He led captivity captive" (Eph. 4:8). The sound of His voice caused consternation among the hosts of Hades. "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15).

THE INVESTITURE OF JOSEPH'S HONOURS

1. THE SIGNET RING (Gen. 41:42)

This was the signet of authority, the seal of documents and decrees of law. The Risen Lord Jesus Christ broke the seal of Roman authority securing the tomb. An angel rolled back the stone, and in heaven's contempt for earth's authority, he sat on it. In Heaven (Rev. 5) there was none found worthy to break the seal but the Lamb upon the Throne. He broke the seal of judgement, He bears the sword in battle, He will put in the sickle in the harvest and He will take the sceptre in glory.

2. THE VESTURES OF FINE LINEN (Gen. 41:42)

Joseph is associated with four garments. Joseph wore the garment of many COLOURS given to him by his father. Joseph left a CLEAN garment in the hands of the temptress. Joseph wore CHANGED garments to appear before the king. Fine linen is the vesture of his CHARACTER. The Lord, "Was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). Jesus Christ, the Faithful witness, in the midst of the seven lampstands was; "Clothed with a garment down to the foot" (Rev. 1:13). Heaven will begin at His flawless, faultless, once pierced feet. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad" (Psa. 45:8).

3. A GOLD CHAIN (Gen. 41:42)

Psalm 105:18 indicates that once he wore an iron chain. The gold chain was the insignia of office. They brought “gold” when Immanuel was born. In life He manifested the gold of Divine Righteousness, the fidelity of His justice. “His Head is as the most fine gold”. “He is altogether lovely” (Song of Songs 5:11,16).

4. THE CHARIOT (Gen. 41:43)

The story is now of unimpeded progress, “Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt” (Gen. 41:45). We read about seven plenteous years, when the earth brought forth by handfuls, food in the fields, food in the barns, and corn as the sand of the sea.

When he heard the words; “Joseph is yet alive”; “When he saw the wagons”; “The spirit of Jacob their father revived” (Gen. 45:26,27). It was (i) An unlikely story. For twenty years Jacob had mourned. “Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces” (Gen. 37:33). Jacob had deceived his father with the skin of a goat. Jacob himself was deceived by ten of his own sons with the blood of a goat. (ii) An unbelieving heart. “Jacobs heart fainted” (Gen. 45:26). The very men that caused his grief were now saying that; “Joseph is yet alive”. Jacob knew that Reuben was “unstable”. He said Simeon and Levi were “cruel”. They said, “We are true men” (Gen. 42:11). They were deceitful liars, a bunch of hypocrites, they had deceived an old crippled father and watched him grief for all those years. How could he believe this story? (iii) An unmistakable proof. “He saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him” (Gen. 45:27). Those chariots covered in gilded gold, bearing the crests of Egypt and the insignia of Pharaoh; Jacob said; “It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive” (Gen. 45:28).

When the Lord arose from the dead the disciples; “Knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9). It was most unlikely that they would forge the story. They saw Him, they heard Him, they touched Him, they ate with Him, they received many infallible proofs. They fervently preached Jesus and the resurrection in the book of Acts.

5. BOW THE KNEE (Gen. 41:43)

Joseph’s glory in Egypt is a little picture of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow”. Things celestial, terrestrial and infernal shall bow and “Confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11).

6. HIS NAME (Gen. 41:45)

Joseph’s Hebrew name means, “Revealer of secrets”. “These things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables ... saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 13:34,35). Pharaoh gave him the Egyptian name, “Zaphnath-paaneah” which means “Saviour of the world”; the world as then known of heathen Gentiles. With majestic authority the Risen Saviour commanded: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel” (Mark 16:15).

“He gave him to wife Asenath”. Each of these names ends in “Nath”, which carries the idea that God lives and God speaks. This is recognition by a Gentile monarch that the God of the Hebrews exists, speaks and works.

7. A BRIDE

Some of the patriarchs had more than one wife. Joseph had only one bride to share his glory. He had a Gentile bride given to him before the seven lean years of Jacob’s trouble. The church is not found in the Old Testament but some prophetic pictures are suggestive.

HIS BONES. “By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones” (Heb. 11:22). So ending the earthly story of a true Hebrew.

HIS HEAD. “The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of thy progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: They shall be on the head of Joseph” (Gen. 49:26).

The last verse of Genesis states that “Joseph died” (50:26). All types, however beautiful, must fall far short of the Revelation of Jesus Christ Who said: “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, Behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev. 1:18).

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Questions and Answers

Question: Where is God in this pandemic?

Answer: Many have been asking this question during recent months. God has not, is not, and never shall be a passive observer of humanity or of His creation. Explain the thorns and thistles that the earth brought forth? (Gen. 3:18). Men like Cain, Lamech and Jubal sought to build cities, accumulate possession, invent musical instruments and so live in comfort, pleasure and sin without God. God cursed the ground and said, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Gen. 3:19). Even Cain realised that God must punish his sin.

Explain the confusion of language at the tower of Babel? When man rose up in rebellion and defiance of God, God scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth to convict them of their sin. They could “not understand one another’s speech” (Gen. 11:7). Today we are repugnant to each other; we must practise social distancing lest we breathe the same air.

Mankind as never before, is rising to a zenith of rebellion and apostasy before God. Pharaoh cast infants into the river. Herod slew the children with the sword. Today, thousands of babies are slain in the womb. This is an attack upon the God of life. The Sodomites of Genesis 19 committed their vile crime at night. Now it is openly paraded with pride by day, legalized by satanically controlled authorities. “Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good” (2Tim. 3:3).

Where is God? “God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not ... That He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man” (Job 33:14,17). “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God is “Longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2Peter 3:9). “God hath not appointed us (who are saved) to wrath, but to obtain salvation (the Church at the Rapture) by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Thess. 5:9).

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18). In the day of the wrath of God, after the Rapture; “The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:15-17).

We quote this passage at length to show that instead of seeking a cure for their disease, wicked men who have rejected love and forgiveness in the Day of Grace, will after the church is raptured, actually seek death in the Day of Wrath. This does not mean that the present pandemic is of no significance. Could it be at least in part, of Divine judgement upon this wicked world? A foretaste in God’s mercy to warn of greater disasters yet to come? An assurance that God’s Word will surely come to pass? A warning to sinners to flee from judgement before it is too late?

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I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. ... I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall never perish...
(John 10:11,28)

The subject of shepherds and their sheep is a central theme in the Bible with the first mention found in Genesis Ch. 4 respecting faithful Abel and His acceptable offering which cost him his life. Animal behaviour is God given even if some are currently unfavourable to us due to the consequence of man's fall into sin and the curse which still remains in effect. However, God would seek to teach us vital lessons through His creatures, the tame and the fierce, the large and the small.

The sheep is useful to us for its wool, milk and meat. It is a clean animal and was acceptable to God for sacrifice when approach to God was necessary by such means before Christ came. However, it is also a helpless creature when it comes to its own survival and needs the constant care of a shepherd to guide it to food and water, for its protection and safety, for its health and recovery when injured or lost. Some of the chief men responsible for the care of God's people in the Old Testament period were engaged as shepherds prior their 'higher' calling. Men like Moses and David had to learn the ways of caring for sheep before they could effectively lead and teach the people of God with all that was involved.

I am the Good Shepherd

There is however no shepherd like the Lord Jesus Christ. Jacob could declare that ***"the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes"*** (Gen. 31:40) as he recounted the hardships that he endured caring for his father in law's sheep; but Jacob was a deceiver. In moments of relapse, Moses rebelled against God and David committed adultery and murder. But Christ, how different He was in His character and ways. He was essentially and intrinsically "good" within Himself; Peter from firsthand knowledge wrote of Him, ***"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth"*** (1Pet. 2:22); any sincere reading of the Gospel records can prove these facts for themselves. Mark captured His shepherd heart, ***"And Jesus ... saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things"*** (Mark 6:34). He knew the hardship and toil, the hunger and thirst, the heat and cold and the enemies' hatred as He undertook His shepherd duties.

The Good Shepherd Giveth His life for the Sheep

But this Good Shepherd went much further than just teaching and instructing His potential sheep. We read of David who on two occasions put his life in jeopardy as he faced a powerful lion and bear which had taken his father's sheep; one swipe of their paws or bite from their jaws would have meant certain death for him. But David recognised God's preserving hand upon him as he slew them and with bold faith he could approach that great enemy Goliath and defeat and slay him (1Sam. 17).

In contrast however, the Good Shepherd went further and gave His life for His sheep when He laid down His precious life on the cross. It was by this great sacrificial act that He dealt with sin and the great enemy of God and man, Satan himself, and crushed his head. Psalm 22 depicts in graphic terms the horrors of the cross that He faced in death for us: ***"Many bulls have compassed Me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me around. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion ... For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet"*** (v12-18).

If David had been killed by the lion or bear, his sheep would have perished with him for who would now protect them for David's brothers seemed little interested in those ***"few sheep"***. Likewise if Christ remains

dead, there is no hope for the sheep for whom He died. No other being could help us. However, this Shepherd Himself could emphatically declare prior His death, ***“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again”*** (John 10:17) and that is exactly what happened when contrary to His enemies anticipations, He arose triumphantly from the grave on the third day and sealed His great victory for ever.

I give unto them Eternal Life and they shall never Perish

David was sent by his father to seek the welfare of his brethren although they little appreciated the man he was until He delivered them from the Philistines hands. For ourselves John could write, ***“The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world”*** (1John 4:14), but you must believe this fact! Time is running out fast for us to put ourselves into the Good Shepherd’s care. He alone can save us from the coming judgment of God upon this sin ravished world. We like sheep have gone astray but you must realise this! He alone can put you upon His shoulders and bring you back into the safety of His fold, but you must let Him! You are urged to forsake your sin and false hopes and to believe and obey the Good Shepherd’s voice.

He could say, ***“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”*** (John 10:28). This proves His omniscience, His deity. He knows the welfare of each of His precious sheep at all times; Psalm 23 can be our reality if we make Him our Shepherd to finally dwell in the Fathers house. We may suffer and be accounted as sheep for the slaughter but we have the assurance we shall never perish in Hell. Let us prove the reality of our conversion by following His ways according to New Testament teaching and likewise equip ourselves to be fellow carers of His sheep.

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