

The Old Paths – April / June : 2025 – No 46

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They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him ... Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

(Psalm 126:5-6; 127:1)



From the Editor’s Desk

Pray Without Ceasing

“Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him”

(Acts 12:5)

This is a special appeal for prayer on behalf of our esteemed brother Ajay Kumar Chhatria of Titlagarh. While travelling to Orissa, our dear brother suffered a severe stroke. He was hospitalised in Visakhapatnam. Eventually, he was transferred to the Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore. At the time of writing, he is receiving therapy and making steady recovery.

Our brother is a vital worker among the assemblies in his area and is highly esteemed among the many believers that the Lord has been pleased to save through his faithful preaching of the Gospel.

As the Publisher of this Magazine, he carries the responsibility for the printing and distribution of the teaching of the Word of God in the assemblies throughout India.

We appeal to all the saints who receive the Magazine and those who help in its distribution, to fervently pray that brother Ajay may, in the will of the Lord, be granted a full recovery to his service in the Lord’s Work.

Please pray for his wife Thankamma, his daughters Blessy and Bency and the very capable staff of the CMC, Vellore.

“God hath tempered the body together ... that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1Cor. 12:24-26).

J.A. Davidson, Editor

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Daniel – The Den of Lions

Chapter 6

(All quotations are from Daniel Chapter 6, unless otherwise stated)

Introduction

Everyone will be familiar with the events that are brought before us in this chapter – Daniel being thrown into the den of lions! It is probably one of the best known and best loved of all Bible stories, yet for believers there are many spiritual lessons that can be learnt for the days in which we live. Daniel chapter 6 introduces us to the Medo-Persia kingdom under Darius: the “head of gold” (Babylon) of Nebuchadnezzar’s “dream-image” of chapter 2 had now been replaced by the “arms and chest of silver” of Medo-Persia. So, we have brought before us a different kingdom with a different king and different laws, but the same faithful and godly Daniel!

A Different Type of Kingdom

The Medo-Persian kingdom was divided into 120 provinces, each administered by a “prince” or satrap (v1). Overall responsibility was given to 3 presidents, of which Daniel was first (v2). Here we see a delegation of authority throughout the kingdom, possibly a type of bureaucracy, and a definite difference from the absolute autocracy of the first kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar! Nebuchadnezzar’s word was law – what he said went and if he wanted to change it he could and he would! (Dan. 5:19). However, Darius was in a completely different position; instead of being the law himself, he was bound by the law (“the law of the Medes and Persians”, v15). Darius realized his mistake in being tricked by his presidents and princes, but nothing could be done!

Daniel’s Testimony (vs. 2-4,13)

Remarkably, Daniel was appointed first president in the land! What a character testimony to Daniel that the new king had this confidence in him, elevating someone from the previous “administration” to the highest authority! This great man of God, now in his mid 80’s, was given overall responsibility over the affairs of the kingdom. Daniel’s upright reputation had obviously been recognized. He was known as a man of calibre, of the utmost transparency in matters of state and impartial in all his dealings. Scripture records of Daniel; “because an excellent spirit was with him” (v3); very similar to part of the “queen’s” testimony to Belshazzar (Dan. 5:12). Daniel was still referred to as one “of the children of the captivity of Judah” (v13); this, in itself, was a good testimony as it showed that after living most of his life in Babylon, he was still not assimilated and still distinct in his character from those around him! Even Darius acknowledged the holy consistency of this man of God (“Thy God whom thou servest continually”, vs. 16,20).

Evil Conspiracy (vs. 4-9,11-15)

The other two presidents and all the princes were completely opposite in character to Daniel – being evil, corrupt, lying flatterers! Their envy caused them to descend to extreme measures that would ultimately

endanger Daniel's very life! These deprived "state servants" knew Daniel's character was flawless, so they devised a scheme aimed at his faithfulness to his God. Their envy of Daniel may have been due to his association with the previous kingdom; it could have been a "spiritual" attack because of him being an Hebrew (v13) or it may have been pure jealousy against one of a higher status than themselves – or even a combination of all these! Whatever the motive, Darius was tricked into signing the decree. The king's proud heart was flattered by the proposal, and his self-centred egoism took control so that the obvious signs of danger and deceit behind it were put out of his mind. In comparative terms, Darius was a good king; yet even "good" men can be deceived from reality, especially when self is elevated and pride rules the brain!

Daniel in Prayer (vs. 10-11)

When Daniel realized the decree was signed, he calmly returned to his house and prayed, giving thanks before his God as always. His prayer life was a consistent, godly habit by a man in touch with God who committed his cause to God and in faith left it there. We can often pray when under pressure or in a crisis, but Daniel resorted to something that he always did, whatever the circumstances! "Daniel's prayer life never missed a spiritual beat". What about our prayer life? How often do we pray? He was probably one of the busiest men in the kingdom with his great responsibilities, yet he made time to pray every day. Do we? (Psalm 55:17). Can our prayer routine be easily affected by circumstances? Throughout Scripture, anyone who was ever anything for God, were always men or women of prayer. Daniel wasn't secretive in prayer, his windows remaining open when praying! Someone of less spiritual calibre than Daniel might have refrained from praying for the 30 days; after all what's 30 days in a lifetime? But those evil men knew Daniel's integrity and genuineness and that he would not resort to any compromise!

The Den of Lions (vs. 16-24)

Another remarkable testimony to Daniel's faith is that his accusers knew all about his prayer life and they knew he would not deviate from his devotion and obedience to his God, whatever the circumstances. How many of us would be like Daniel today in similar conditions? These evil conspirators lost no time in reporting Daniel to the king. Although realizing the trap into which he had fallen and wishing to deliver Daniel (v14), the king was bound by the law, despite legal efforts all day. All the king could do was to give comforting words to Daniel, although he himself had no comfort in his own heart, staying awake all night thinking of Daniel! So Daniel was thrown into the den of lions; the stone and the seal (v17) remind us of the Lord's burial. Daniel was sealed in to prevent him getting out, while the Lord was sealed in to keep His body safe and prevent others getting in! In both cases, it just highlighted the greatness of Divine intervention.

The King's Testimony

While the king was waiting anxiously throughout the night to discover Daniel's fate the next morning, Daniel himself rested secure in the company of the lions, having supreme confidence in God. A distinctive character of Daniel's faith was seen by the fact that he was still known by his Hebrew name, Daniel (v20), and not referred to by his acquired Babylonian name, Belteshazzar. The king certainly appreciated that Daniel was different from the rest of his "servants". Although speaking comforting words to Daniel (v16), Darius was not absolutely sure if Daniel would be delivered (v20). Yet when he saw him alive and heard his testimony (vs. 21-23) the king was relieved; it does seem that this first king of the 2nd kingdom of the "dream-image" (Ch. 2) believed in the living God (v26). The next king of Medo-Persia, Cyrus, was certainly used of God in the working-out of Divine purposes ("my shepherd"/"his anointed") (Ezra 1:2; Isa. 44:28 and 45:1).

What about the other Hebrews?

We know that this decree was primarily aimed at one man, Daniel! Nothing is mentioned of his 3 companions or about any of the tens of thousands of Hebrew captives living at that time in the kingdom. What would their reaction have been to this decree? We don't know the answer to this question as it's not mentioned in Scripture, so we obviously do not need to know. However, if all the Hebrews had disregarded this decree then a wholly farcical situation would have developed, with potentially tens of thousands of people being available for just a couple of lions!

Lessons for us Today

- We have seen Daniel's unwavering faithfulness in every circumstance and at every stage in his life. His was a life of practical living for God! Daniel himself attributes his deliverance from the den of lions to an angel of God (v22), yet Hebrews 11:33 connects it to Daniel's faith!
- Daniel's life in Babylon was wholly transparent before others, especially regarding his "employment". His whole desire was to strictly follow God's will and purpose.
- His priorities were spiritual. Daniel's testimony to Darius after being delivered from the den of lions was that he lived primarily before God ("as before Him") and then towards others ("and also before thee, O king"). This was Daniel's moral order.
- Daniel's life had a positive impact on others. Darius was touched by Daniel's devotion of faith, but also by his commitment to the king in accepting his unjust punishment. Others watch us, as believers, to see how we react in pressing circumstances.

Conclusion

We have seen God working through His servant Daniel in the affairs of the second kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's "dream-image", Medo-Persia. Perhaps the key to Daniel's life can be found at the end of verse 23 – "because he believed in his God"; his was real faith, not some theoretical knowledge of doctrine. He lived close to God, he knew God's will and lived it out, whatever circumstances came his way. What a testimony to the man when even his enemies could only seek to find occasion of fault regarding his faith and nothing else! Although temporarily out of the public gaze for many years, Daniel was able and ready to be used of God when circumstances demanded! In our day and age there are laws being introduced that we don't agree with or could possibly assent to, but, like Daniel, we should commit the matter to God and stand for what we believe!

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The Living God (4)

The remaining five references to "the living God" in Scripture have to do principally with the relationship of Israel to Christ. The first four are found in Hebrews, and the fifth in Revelation chapter 7. We will look at the references in Hebrews under three headings: Today, Yesterday, and Forever.

Today – Hebrews 3:12

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God". The Epistle of Hebrews is God's inspired message to professing Christians among the Jewish people who were contemplating returning to their old religion. This may have been because of persecution or just because of pressure from family members. Rather than go back, this Epistle encourages them to draw near and discover what God has prepared for their eternal blessing in Christ.

"Brethren" are addressed here. In verse 1 they are called "holy brethren". These are not the ones who are warned about departing, but they are to be vigilant for those whose profession was not real, to alert them to their danger, and lead them to become "partakers of Christ" (v14).

What was the difference between "holy brethren" and those who departed from the living God? It is in the heart: in these is "an evil heart of unbelief". In other words, there has been no inward change in these people. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23), and by nature the heart of man "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).

It is not natural to draw near to God, but sinners only want to get away from Him. True believers “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” having their “hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Hebrews 10:22). A mere profession of faith does not last, but true believers ‘hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end’ (3:14).

The message to those who depart is urgent: “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (v15). They must trust in the living God, not in a dead religion which God had already set aside.

Yesterday – Hebrews 9:14

The urgent message for “today” was to enter into God’s rest. God rests in His finished work. They were not to go back to the works of the law to get right with God, for that was impossible. They needed, as do all gentiles, to look back by faith to that most important of all “yesterdays”, when the work of our salvation was completed by the Son of God on the cross. “‘It is finished’ was His cry”.

Compared to the ritual cleansing by means of animal sacrifices, “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” If they went back to Judaism, they would not only be rejecting Christ who died for them, but also the Holy Spirit, who perhaps functioned as the fire upon the altar, and God the Father who had joyfully accepted the spotless sacrifice of Christ. The three Persons of the Trinity always work together in perfect harmony, and this is seen in a special way in the sacrifice of Christ, as well as in His incarnation, resurrection and ascension.

Faith in the sacrifice of Christ transforms us into servants and worshippers of the living God. A remarkable instance of this is seen in the Samaritan woman of John chapter 4. As soon as she had faced the question of her sins and received eternal life, the Lord taught her how to serve as a worshipper and she went forth to serve as a witness. The sacrifices and ceremonies of the Tabernacle had merely provided precious signposts to point to Calvary, where the work which gives us eternal rest was accomplished.

Forever – Hebrews 10:31 and 12:22

The two remaining references to the “living God” in Hebrews speak of the future. First, a future to be avoided (10:31), then a future to be apprehended (12:22). Chapter 10 teaches that the sacrifice of Calvary was purposed by the Father, performed by the Son and presented by the Holy Spirit as the basis of the New Covenant. If that sacrifice was refused there was no alternative, just “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation” (10:27). Thus, the solemn warning of verse 31: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”. It is wonderful to know the living God in salvation and life eternal, but He is also the living God in judgement. His wrath is “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness” and it is the “fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Romans 1:18; Revelation 19:15). It is the living God who saves those who repent and believe, but it is also the living God who condemns and punishes those who refuse to do so.

Hebrews 12 contrasts the old and new covenants. Through the old there is nothing but darkness and terror. Through the new there is blessedness for time and eternity. “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:22-24). In one sense the believer has already come into the enjoyment of these things, but this is just the beginning. We cannot attempt to enter here into all the nine-fold blessings of the New Covenant, except to notice that there is a threefold description of the city, a fourfold description of those who dwell there – angels, the church, God Himself and the spirits of just men (perhaps OT saints awaiting the resurrection), and a twofold description of the means by which we enter and remain there – Jesus the mediator and His precious blood.

Let us consider the city. “Mount Sion”, from numerous references would suggest eternal security and the place of the throne (Psalm 2:6). “The city of the living God” would suggest spiritual vitality and the divine

presence (Revelation 21:23). “The heavenly Jerusalem” would suggest unshakeable tranquillity, for the name Jerusalem means “foundation of peace” (Psalm 122:6-8). “The city of the living God” is what especially interests us here. Today believers have eternal life within them like a fountain springing up (John 4:14), but in that city they will, as it were, swim in an ocean of life and love, immersed in the all-pervading presence of the living God.

Israel’s Future

The final reference to the living God in the Scriptures is found in Revelation 7:2. An angel ascends from the east, signalling the coming dawn of a new day. However, the context shows that the great tribulation is about to break out, and because of this the angel is sent to put the “seal of the living God” upon 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel, and it would seem that these are sent forth to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to all nations, even as the antichrist was establishing his grip on the world. The “great multitude, which no man could number” (Revelation 7:9) must be the fruit of their labours.

God will have resumed His dealings with the nation of Israel, but in view of all that we have noted regarding this title – “the living God”, it should be clear that this revival of Israel is not based on the old covenant but on the new. The seal of the living God involves the impartation of spiritual life to those whose hearts have “turned to the Lord” (2Corinthians 3:15-16). Previously “they saw no beauty” in Him, that they should “desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2), but now the veil has been removed from their hearts and they can see “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Corinthians 4:6) and look forward to seeing “the King in His beauty” (Isaiah 33:17).

To sum up, the Old Testament references to “the living God” bring before us seven men (Moses, Joshua, David, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Hosea) whose lives and ministry were transformed and empowered by the living God. The New Testament references bring before us the Son of the living God, the Spirit of the living God, and the living Father, and demonstrate how the living triune God enlivens us individually and collectively. Truly, as Abigail delightfully said of David: “as the LORD liveth” we are ‘bound in the bundle of life with the LORD our God’ (1Samuel 25:26-29).

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The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 15:19-35

James gives his judgment (v.19-21)

As chairman of the Council James says “wherefore my sentence is” indicating that he is ready to express his considered opinion, give his judgment and close the proceedings. His recommendation to the meeting is that “we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God”. In other words, that we should impose no irksome restrictions on Gentile converts such as circumcision and minutiae from the range of Jewish rites and practices. Hence in his opening sentence he repudiated the stance taken by the “Pharisees which believed” (v5).

However, he additionally proposes “that we write unto them [the Gentile believers], that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood”. This letter to assemblies is to request the Gentile believers to abstain from a number of practices which would cause particular offence to their Jewish fellow-believers. Believers should always be prepared to sacrifice their liberty so as not to stumble another. These relate to four ceremonial issues, which are repeated with slight variations in verse 29 and in Acts 21:25, as a concession to the conscience of Jewish brethren with scruples. They are:

- (a) Refraining from the eating of meat purchased in the market which had first been offered in sacrifice to idols. That this was a significant contemporary issue is testified by the instruction given about it in Romans chapter 14 and 1Corinthians chapter 8.
- (b) Abstaining from moral impurity. However, this is such a basic element in holy living the question then arises as to ‘why state the obvious?’ However, Leviticus chapter 18 details a list of forbidden marriages, that is those within degrees of blood relationship or affinity. Some of the forbidden marriages listed in that chapter would not have been illegal in the Greco-Roman world but, in Jewish eyes such would be incest. So the appeal here is to avoid violating those more restrictive Jewish marriage laws.
- (c) Avoiding eating poultry killed in such a way that the blood wasn’t drained from the carcass, see Leviticus 17:13-14.
- (d) Avoiding the consumption of blood products, see Genesis 9:4.

James explains the rationale for this request: “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.” There were Jewish populations and synagogues in many of the cities in the then known world. As a result, the teachings of Moses were well known and in many cases highly respected. Gentiles generally knew about those things that Jews had a conscience about. As a result, it was necessary for non-Jewish believers to bear in mind the sensitivities of their circumcised brethren. If Gentile Christians did not respect Jewish scruples and violated them, then social fellowship with Jewish Christians would be impossible and that, in turn, would mar and divide assembly life and gospel testimony.

The letter to be sent (v.22-24)

James’ summation and proposed action received unanimous acceptance through his use of the prophetic Scripture, combined with the rehearsal of apostolic experience and the proposed abstinence by Gentile believers in the four cultural areas outlined. “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.” This was vital to promote mutual tolerance and fellowship. Reliance upon a letter alone raises certain risks as it may appear impersonal, cannot answer any questions that may arise following its receipt and clarify any point of concern. So the Jerusalem Council sent with the letter members of the Jerusalem assembly to explain its origin, amplify and clarify its meaning and secure its acceptance.

Those who were sent with Paul and Barnabas were members of the Jerusalem assembly. The first, with his double name, is evidently a Hebrew/Aramaic speaking believer of whom nothing else is known, unless he is related to “Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus” (Acts 1:23). The second, Silas, whose Latin name is given elsewhere as Silvanus, is a Hellenist (a Jew with Greek language and culture) who was also a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37) and was later closely associated with both Paul and Peter. Each of the two men selected were leaders in the Jerusalem assembly “chief men among the brethren”.

The letter itself was marked by conventional courtesy from, literally, “the apostles and elders, your brethren” and was addressed to all the churches with a Gentile membership throughout the united province of Syria and Cilicia of which Antioch is the chief city. The introduction makes clear that Gentile believers are fully accepted as brethren.

First and foremost, they repudiate totally the false teachers; “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ‘Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law’: to whom we gave no such commandment”. Due recognition is given to the fact that the unauthorised message had disturbed their hearers. A strong word is used, ‘trouble’, which means to upset or throw into confusion, often used as a military metaphor for plundering a town. The Jerusalem assembly disassociate themselves completely from the law-keeping party and therefore by clear implication from any requirement to impose the range of Jewish rites and requirements on Gentile believers. Furthermore, if those men had gone to Antioch on some official business from Jerusalem, as

Galatians 2:12 indicates, they were given no such instruction and therefore had, on their own account, exceeded the terms of their commission.

We should note that this wasn't the only time that Judaisers created trouble in New Testament assemblies. The Galatian assemblies at a later time became the focus of their concerted attack, hence the references; "there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" and "he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be" (Gal. 1:7; 5:10).

Endorsement of the men carrying the letter (v.25-27)

They explain that "It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord", hence assuring the Antioch assembly that they had convened a specific meeting to consider the issue and that, as well as the letter, they were sending delegates to ensure the conclusions were fully understood. They make clear that those delegated for that purpose were men who have the full confidence of the Jerusalem assembly. They had sent "chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth."

The letter confirms that those men named have the full support of the "apostles and elders" who give their full approval to, and high commendation of, the ministry of Barnabas and Paul. Therefore, they stand unambiguously with Barnabas and Paul in the Gospel they preached. In addition, Judas and Silas will not only deliver the letter but also confirm by word of mouth what it contained.

The appeal for Gentile recognition of Jewish scruples (v.28-29)

They announce their unanimous decision, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things". Hence the deliberations at Jerusalem, the conclusion and, indeed, the content of this letter was superintended by the Holy Spirit. They assigned to the Holy Spirit His prior authority in issuing the recommendations in this letter, which are now contained in Scripture.

Only the four matters specified are mentioned and certainly not the whole range of Jewish rites and ceremonies: "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication". The supporting words "from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well" are more of a recommendation or encouragement than a command. In effect, 'you will do well to avoid these things' or 'you shall prosper'. Then follows a conventional ending "Fare ye well".

The letter is delivered to the Antioch assembly (v.30,31)

"So when they were dismissed" indicates that Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas were commissioned and sent as a formal delegation. Antioch is named first in the letter (v23), because it was there that the original controversy arose and the appeal for help came. "And when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle" shows that care was taken to ensure comprehensive openness. Also, the letter was formally delivered in a public meeting. Every care is being taken.

The outcome was positive; "which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation". The rejoicing was because of the letter's encouraging message, i.e. that believing Gentiles were accepted equally, without having to become Jews as well. They received true spiritual encouragement from the exhortation in the letter and rejoiced in the relief they felt from its content.

The additional benefit (v.32-35)

There was further blessing in that "Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them". Again, we recall that New Testament prophets had a particular transitional ministry up until the completion of the Scriptures. They were essentially 'forth-tellers' (not 'foretellers'), communicating to the assembly messages received by direct communication from the Holy Spirit. It is good to note that the assembly at Antioch extended to visitors with ability liberty for the exercise of their teaching gift, in addition to those mentioned in Acts 13:1. Thus spiritual encouragement and exhortation was received from the ministry of Judas and Silas in addition to that contained in the important letter from Jerusalem. This would have a strengthening effect on the Antioch assembly and also reinforce the unity of the evangelical work, whether in Gentile or Jewish areas.

It would seem that with Judas and Silas having spent some time at Antioch there is almost a sense of regret conveyed in the words, “and after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles”; that is, back to Jerusalem. The best manuscripts omit verse 34, which may have been added in some texts in an attempt to explain verse 40, but it contradicts verse 33. We must infer that Silas came back later from Jerusalem to Antioch given that he re-enters the narrative at verse 40.

This section ends with the words “Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also”. This New Testament assembly was a place where the burden of teaching and evangelising was borne by a plurality of gifted local brethren.

(To be continued D.V.)

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Virtuous Women

MARY OF BETHANY

**“Mary ... sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His Word”
(Luke 10:39)**

In each of the three passages where we read of Mary of Bethany, she is found at Jesus’ feet. As the SILENT LISTENER, she “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His Word” (Luke 10:39). He was the PROPHET. As the WEEPING SISTER when “Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet” (John 11:32). She recognised the sympathetic PRIEST. In the house of Bethany, Mary, as the ADORING WORSHIPPER, took “a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair” (John 12:3). She anointed Him as her KING. Mary waits, weeps and worships at His feet. On each of these three occasions Mary was misunderstood. Martha her sister found fault (Luke 10:40), her neighbours did not understand (John 11:31), Judas Iscariot said it was wasteful (John 12:5). Mary in her learning, lowliness and love, sought at all times to be close to her blessed Lord, she knew that He understood.

“Bride of the Lamb, there is for thee
One only safe retreat;
Where Jesus is, thy heart should be,
Thy home at His dear feet.
When Satan tracks thy lonely way,
There his temptations meet;
In Jesus’ presence watch and pray,
Yea, conquer at His feet”.

Boethia Thompson

THE SILENT LISTENER (Luke 10:38-42)

The village of Bethany means; “House of figs”. The nation of Israel was at that time, the barren fig tree. In Jerusalem, about two miles away from Bethany the Jews were plotting to kill Him. Outside the city, outside the camp, is where the Lord got His place. Bethany was the place where the stench of death (John 11), was turned to the fragrance of worship (John 12). After resurrection, the Lord led His disciples out to Bethany.

The house at Bethany was inhabited by Martha; her strong point was WORK. Mary was characterised by WORSHIP, and Lazarus, raised from the dead was a WITNESS, “for the Glory of God” (John 11:4). This home was like a little sanctuary as in the tabernacle where there were priests who SERVED at the table of

shewbread, from the golden altar rose the fragrance of WORSHIP, and from the golden lampstand there shone out the light of the Glory of the Holy Place. This home has a foretaste of Heaven where His servants serve, they worship the Lamb and display His glory.

“A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house” (v38). Martha seemed to be prominent in the house. John’s Gospel speaks of “the town of Mary” (11:1). Mary seemed to have a great testimony in the town. It is better to live in a humble cottage with Christ, than live in a palace without Him. Home and domestic life is especially under satanic attack in this modern age. “Martha was cumbered (distracted) about much serving”. Martha was over concerned about her work, she had a loaded table but she also had a loaded spirit. Mary also “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word”. Martha was troubled, critical and anxious, she complained about her sister. She thought that the Lord had need of her service which was kind and thoughtful. Mary discovered that she needed the Lord. Martha thought about herself. Mary thought primarily about the Lord. Martha spoke of what she was doing for Him. Mary discovered that in a short time, He was going to die for her. The Lord sought not hers, her food; but her, her ears, her thoughts, her heart. The Lord said, “For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto (be served), but to minister (serve), and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

“Martha ... came to Him” (v40), (suddenly coming up); seems to suggest a petulant outburst, why was Mary still doing nothing, why is everyone not like me. “Lord, dost Thou not care?” This is a dreadful question. The disciples asked the same question in the storm-tossed ship; the sea was disturbed, Martha was disturbed. The Lord rebuked the wind, He also rebuked Martha; Martha was bossy, she oversaw the house, the meal, her sister and her brother. She sought to interfere with the Lord at the grave (John 11:39). Such a woman is out of place and will cause trouble in the assembly. “Martha, Martha”: the double call, ten times in our Bible, as “Simon, Simon” or “Saul, Saul” always is a call of pity and love. “Thou art careful and troubled (anxious, stressed, troublest thyself) about many things” (v41). These are “things” which may not be wrong or forbidden. “Things” which may be good and helpful are given undue importance, such as regarding Mary’s occupation as a waste of time, charging her of being a shirker not doing her share of the work and involving the Guest in a family dispute. In her liberal devotion, being over fussy about the less important, she implied that the Lord was uncaring.

Dear child of God, after Calvary, never doubt His care for you. “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1Pet. 5:7). The person who can master temporal “things” is not being mastered by “things” such as the farm, the family, the business, the finance or the phone and the media. This passage contrasts, “many things” (v41), with “one thing” (v42). Service is good, but all service and work without the Lord’s presence is not a spiritual New Testament assembly of the Lord’s people gathered to His name, but a mission or a college. And the end of life, duties, preaching, activities, even life and breath will be taken away from us but “that good part” will never be taken away (v42).

“Mary (literally) sat down beside His feet”. Mary was feasting spiritually at his feet. Martha was late for the meeting. Thomas missed the meeting, he was absent (John 20:24). “Not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Heb. 10:25). “Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words” (Deut. 33:3), is the practice of the people in the Old Testament. The first specific reference to the feet of the Lord Jesus in the Bible is “They pierced My hands and My feet” (Psa. 22:16).

Is He worthy of our worship? Does His words not merit our attention and obedience? Are we moving about and around Christ or are we making Him our own? Christ and His word in us, will keep us from the world about us. “Mary hath chosen that good part” (v42); not the better or the best, not the comparative or the superlative part, not to be compared but beyond the superficial, the trifling “things”. Our priority, our fixed focus should be set upon things above where Christ is seated. Christ Himself, hearing Him, listening to His every word, worshipping is “that good part”, not transient things, not a temporal meal, “which shall not be taken away from her” (v42).

THE WEeping SISTER (John 11)

(11:1) "Bethany;" the house of figs is now the house of affliction. Lazarus was "sick", was deadly sick, he is weak, he is dying. "The town of Mary", was not famous for its architecture, or prosperity, but for one godly family.

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (v5). He loved each one individually, equally and personally. Never doubt His love even in the valley of the shadows of death. "He whom Thou lovest is sick". Lazarus was not an apostle, not one of the twelve, he was not a preacher, we do not hear of one word that he spoke, he was a quiet believer. The Lord said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (v11). A friend is one with whom we have friendship by choice, with whom we share intimate secrets. "Ye are My friends" (John 15:14). The raising of Lazarus from out of the dead is the seventh of the seven signs of John's Gospel. The first miracle brought gladness to the marriage (Ch. 2); a scene of gloom at the grave (Ch. 11). Water turned to wine emphasised the quality (Ch. 2). Loaves and fishes multiplied to feed 5000 was a miracle of quantity (Ch. 6). This greatest miracle of all, death to life brought the development of faith to those who believed and the increase of hatred of those who sought to kill the Saviour. In each miracle we can see a new sign, and lovely pictures of Christ in His pity, power and provision for those who look to Him in need though He may test their faith.

"When Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (v32). Mary did not understand the delay of His hand, but she did not question the love of His heart. Jesus "saw her weeping" (cry of distress), "Jesus wept" (silent sympathy for grieving sisters), "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" (He was moved with compassion). At Bethany, we see His Majestic Deity and His Perfect Humanity. We also witness the proof of His power and the development of their faith. The Lord publically gave thanks and glorified God yet he neither removed the stone, nor unbound the napkin or unloosed the grave clothes. John said that they were eye witnesses. Their eyes saw an event that could not be denied; it occurred in the hearing of their ears; their hands handled the grave clothes, they smelled the stench of death; in the presence of a body dead four days, death can be tasted in the mouth. The five senses of the body, seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting, gave public witness to all of the reality of death and resurrection. "Many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him" (v45).

THE ADORING WORSHIPPER (John 12:1-11)

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" (v3). Matthew says "two days", John said "six days before the Passover" (v1). For four days, the true Passover Lamb presented Himself in the Temple by day and then went out to Bethany at night. We never read of Him voluntarily spending a night in Jerusalem. Matthew records the words of the Lord Jesus; "For in that she poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial" (Matt. 26:12). Where did Mary hear this? She learned it at His feet. Mary knew that He was going to die. This quiet, thoughtful child of God knew that her Lord was going to die, He was going to die a death of violence at the Passover in fulfilment of the Scriptures. She knew that His earthly sojourn was in the final days. The final hours were her last opportunity. This was no sudden impulse, what she did was premeditated. It was very costly, possibly equivalent to a year's wages of a labouring man. She "kept this", not to anoint her brother Lazarus who had died and was buried very recently. She loved her brother Lazarus very dearly but she loved her Blessed Lord even more.

There was no reason why a devout believer and a diligent reader of the Old Testament prophecies, could not have known, according to Daniel 9:26, the exact date when Messiah would be "cut off". Simeon knew, Anna knew at the beginning of His life. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus knew to prepare in advance for His burial. Mary's act was unique in thoughtfulness, regal in lavishness and marvellous in timeliness. John's account DECLARES ITS WEIGHT, "a pound of ointment of spikenard" kept secretly, securely and sacredly: DESCRIBES ITS WORTH, "very costly". Only Judas Iscariot the son of perdition put a price on it at three hundred pence. Judas himself was about to accept thirty miserable pieces of silver, the price of a slave: DISPLAYS ITS WITNESS, "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment".

This lovely scene at Bethany, just before His death at Calvary, is a picture of the assembly Remembrance Meeting: Do we lay up in store to have something precious to present when we come? Is Lazarus there, to shew forth His praise? Is Martha there as we engage in service at the table of remembrance? Is Mary there to bring the fragrance of worship? There was a broken box, we break the bread: It was a memorial, the Lord said, "This do in remembrance of Me": The Lord drew attention to "the Day of My burying", we likewise "proclaim His death". Mary had long hair owning the Headship of her Lord. The act was a costly sacrifice, we come with the sacrifice of praise: The house was filled with the odour of the ointment which rose up to the roof; the sweet odour of praise that ascends each Lord's Day, is "because of the angels" (1Cor. 11:10). Mary left carrying the same sweet perfume of this rarest spikenard as her own Blessed Lord. The Lord said, "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8). Martha prepared a meal but she thought that it was too much for her to do it alone. Mary poured out the precious ointment upon His head, she thought that nothing was too much. Do you agree with Mary? Nothing could possibly be too much for Him.

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious ... Unto you therefore which believe He is precious. (1Peter 2:4,7)

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Get to Know Your Bible

OLD TESTAMENT OUTLINE – Paper No 3.

EXODUS – Part 1

The second book of Moses called EXODUS means "going out". Joseph's last recorded words in Genesis clearly link with the opening chapters of Exodus; "God will surely visit you, and bring you OUT of this land" (Gen. 50:24; Exod. 9:1; Heb. 11:22). Genesis is the book of beginnings; Exodus is the book of "redemption". In Genesis God is connected by Sovereign choice and covenant with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God now brings the family of seventy souls to Himself developing a "congregation" (First ref. 12:6) through Redemption by the blood of the Lamb. After the institution of the Passover, the key word "OUT" occurs ten times.

THE SECTIONS

The historical succession of events can be distinguished easily. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the raising up of the Deliverer Moses. Chapter 3 begins with the CALL of Moses and ends in Chapter 15 with the CHORUS of TRIUMPH and victory over Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Chapter 16 begins their journey on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt and ends in chapter 40 with the solemn CONSECRATION when the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle raised up in the midst the congregation of His chosen people established the dwelling place of God in the most Holy Place and the fellowship of God with His people governed by Divine legislation and guidance from Sinai to Canaan.

Chapter 15:13 is a key verse giving five main themes in the Book: "Thou in Thy mercy", the need for Redemption from bondage; "hast led forth for the people", the triumph of Redemption; "which Thou hast redeemed", the cost of Redemption, the blood of the Lamb; "Thou hast guided them in Thy strength", the power of Redemption; "unto Thy Holy habitation", the purpose of Redemption, to enjoy His presence. This is the reversal of Genesis 3:24, when He drove out the man. Looking forward, the purpose of God in the Book of Exodus is summarised in chapter 15:17, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the SANCTUARY, O LORD, which Thy hands have established".

“And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty: and the land was filled with them” (1:7). Exodus embraces a period of 430 years from the death of Joseph to the building of the Tabernacle completed at the commencement of the second year after the departure, “going out” from Egypt. During this period, the rapid increase in number of the children of Israel caused great anxiety to the new dynasty of Pharaohs’ in Egypt.

“Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph”, (1:8). He certainly would have heard about the past governor of the land and his storehouses of corn that saved the nation of Egypt from starvation in the time of famine. The new king did not acknowledge Joseph and his merits as the saviour of the nation. He did not want to know anything about the measures of his predecessors. Forgetfulness of Joseph brought the favour shown to the Israelites by the kings of Egypt to a close. “Let us deal wisely (act craftily) with them” (1:10). The Israelites were still foreigners in customs and worship may become a threat because of their increasing number, if they took sides with the enemy of Egypt in a time of war.

THE FIRST SECTION OF THE BOOK (Chapters 1:22-15:21)

THE BONDAGE (Chapters 1-11)

There was a *DIVINE* reason revealed to Abram in Genesis 13:14-17, that the people would increase from being tribal to congregational, from 70 people to one and a half million over a period of about 200 years. The second reason was *DISCIPLINE*, the sons of Jacob sold Joseph to be a slave in Egypt. They became slaves themselves in the same land. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). Jacob himself deceived his father and in turn, was deceived by his own sons. The third reason was *DISPENSATIONAL*. Joseph, like Christ, was delivered into Gentile hands. I have “called My Son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1). The present age will continue God’s dealings with Israel, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Egypt was marked by ingratitude. The king of Egypt did not appreciate Joseph who fed the nation in seven years of famine. Egypt was a land of idolatry; “put away the gods which your fathers served ... in Egypt” (Josh. 24:14, Ezek. 20:6-9). The land of Egypt was dependent upon irrigation from the River Nile; they grew root crops of onions, leeks, garlic and cucumbers. In Canaan, the people found milk and honey with grapes growing upon the vines. It boasted of independence; “Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself” (Ezek. 29:3,9). During the time of Exodus, Egypt was a place of industry, multitudes of slaves were busy building cities, centres of idolatry and sin, for Pharaoh. It was not a good place for the Israelites to dwell. “The LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel” (Exod. 11:7). The difference was redemption from Egypt by the blood of the Lamb.

THE BUSH “And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” (3:2-3).

There are four great mountains in the life of Moses. At Horeb he saw LIGHT from a bush. At Mount Sinai, he received the LAW from God. From Mount Pisgah, he had a view of the LAND. On the Mount of Transfiguration, he appeared with the LORD of GLORY. “Fire is the emblem of DEITY”. It appeared in a humble bush, yet the bush was not consumed; indicating God’s purpose of manifesting His *UNDIMINISHED GLORY* in the humble congregation of Israel. This was a mystery of *UNREPLENISHED ENERGY*, which would never burn out. This was a great sight of *UNRELENTING PURPOSE* of God, the Great “I AM” in the midst of the people of Israel (3:14).

THE THREE DAYS JOURNEY “The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God” (3:18). Three reasons are given by God: (i) “Serve Me” – Service. They could not serve God in Egypt, they were fully occupied serving Pharaoh under great affliction. (ii) “Hold a feast” – Fellowship, they cannot enjoy communion with God if they are not close to God. (iii) “Do sacrifice” – Worship. There can be no fragrance of worship amid the stench of dead frogs. God will not get His portion from worldly believers.

Pharaoh said, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land" (8:25). The ecumenical world says 'stay and help', appeal to others with a social Gospel so that sinners remain comfortable in their sins. Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away" (8:28). God said, "Three days". In baptism, the believer confesses, "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" (1Cor. 15:3-4). Being baptized into His death and buried with Him, "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). Pharaoh said, "Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go?" (10:8). "And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go" (10:9).

Still today, the devil wants to scatter and divide the family. Some believers have gone with Christ in the path of separation but many have gone back to the world because of the family. Pharaoh said, "Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you" (10:24). Moses said, "There shall not an hoof be left behind". This service, separation and sacrifice involves our heart, our house and our habits, even our daily business. We cannot have one foot in the assembly and one foot in the world. If we are in the fellowship of the assembly on Lord's Day, we should not have fellowship with unclean business during the week. In New Testament language; "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2Cor. 6:17).

THE PASSOVER LAMB (Chapters 12-13)

"The beginning of months" (12:2). This was a tremendous new beginning and a momentous never to be forgotten date on the Hebrew calendar. Like the new birth, it is a time to stop and start again for Israel. "In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a Lamb". Israel was exempt from nine of the ten plagues, but this applied to each household and their sons. "A lamb" (12:3), of which there were many more, at least six hundred thousand. "The Lamb" (12:4), abstract but only one. "Your Lamb" (12:5), indicates a definite vital personal link. "Keep it ... kill it" (12:6). In every house there was death, either the lamb or the firstborn. God had only one Lamb in mind. "And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it" (12:7).

Beneath the blood stained lintel, I with my children stand,
A messenger of evil is passing through the land,
There is no other refuge from the Destroyers Face,
Beneath the blood stained lintel shall be our hiding place.
The Lamb of God has suffered, our sins and grief's He bore
By faith the blood is sprinkled above our dwelling's door.
The foe who seeks to enter doth fear the sacred sign.
Tonight the blood stained lintel shall shelter me and mine.

Author: Phil Keaggy

The slain lamb is a type of the Lamb of God, Whose blood was shed at Calvary; announced by John Baptist (John 1:29): declared precious by Peter, (1Pet. 1:19) and worshipped in Heaven, (Rev. 5:6-13). The hyssop, a common plant of the field typifies faith. As the first born of the Israelites were sheltered from destruction, even so the believer is shielded from God's wrath because of redemption by the blood of the Lamb. The roast lamb symbolises the sufferings of Christ on the cross where He bore the wrath of God against our sin. The unleavened bread demonstrates the putting away of the leaven of malice and wickedness. Eating "with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste" (12:11), indicates preparation for prompt departure. They were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry. "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed (asked) of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent (granted) unto them such things as they required (requested). And they spoiled (plundered) the Egyptians" (12:35-36).

This does not imply any deception on the part of the Israelites. Both “borrowed” and “lent” come from the same Hebrew word. “Borrowed” is commonly translated “asked” and can be rendered, “handed over”. This was not merely conscience money for generations of slavery. It had been promised to Abraham long before. “They shall come out with great substance (possessions)” (Gen. 15:14), as provisions for the pathway. “And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies” (12:51). This was a proclamation of deliverance from the blackness, bitterness and bondage of Egypt. It was the privilege of the congregation. They developed from a family, to a tribe, to a congregation, to an army. They were brought by the Almighty power of redemption from dwellers to pilgrims, from citizens to tent dwellers, from slaves to soldiers.

THE PILLAR OF A CLOUD AND THE PILLAR OF FIRE. “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night” (13:21). As they went out of Egypt, they were not left to please themselves and to wander anywhere. As they set out, the Pillar Cloud guided the wilderness path. They were independent of surrounding circumstances. When the Tabernacle was given the Ark of the Presence went before them. As they crossed the Jordan they followed the feet of Priestly men into the inheritance. They moved independent of their natural surroundings. At night, to them it became day. In the heat of the day, it was cool. “He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of the fire by night”, (13:22). It gave guidance, it demanded obedience. It controlled the marches. It controlled the halts. It could be seen by every eye in the camp. To us, the function of the cloud, is fulfilled by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures; a *Gift not requested*. “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (Holy Spirit) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you” (John 16:7). It was a *Guide not removed*. The Spirit can be grieved but not removed, “He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us” (1John 3:24).

The Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, He filled the house and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:2,4). We never read of the disciples praying for a fresh second special indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The Pillar was a *Guard in between* His people and the enemy. Israel had a Guide before and a Shield between. The Lord said, The Holy Spirit through the Holy Scriptures, “Shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:14). The good shepherd guides His sheep, “He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice” (John 10:4). Follow by the still waters and green pastures. Follow in stormy ways and unexpected rough paths. Do not go in front of Christ or His Word, nor lag behind. Absolutely do not go without Him. Israel did not listen to His “voice” or obey His Word and wandered aimlessly for forty years.

THE RED SEA (Chapter 14)

The Lord gave specific directions to the Israelites to make camp at a very definite place between Migdol and the sea. The guidance of the Pillar Cloud will guide into a path of trials and testing until we reach a situation of utter dependence upon God. By His Sovereign grace, He was redeeming them by Blood and now by Power (14:1-3). The waters before them, Pharaoh and six hundred captains and chosen chariots trained in war, horsemen and his army were behind them, “the wilderness had shut them in” (14:4-9). Dear reader, have you ever followed God to a dead end where you could only look up? God will teach us when we are at a standstill. If God is to get the glory, He must do the fighting. “Israel cried out unto the LORD” (14:10). Moses said “Stand still” (14:13). God said, “Go forward” (14:15). The New Testament says, “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” (Heb. 11:29). “The pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel”. The Lord Himself, the preincarnate Christ, moved to deliver His people, being a cloud and darkness to the Egyptians, but a Light to the Israelites (14:19-21). “The LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided” (14:21).

The mighty God of Creation controls the wind and the waters that He created. He caused the mighty east wind to blow the waters back, not to form a perpendicular wall, but to withhold the waters to make a wide pathway of dry land for Israel, through the Sea, which was to swallow up the Egyptians. Forty years earlier, Moses pre-empted deliverance when he slew an Egyptian and evidently failed in burying him in the sand

(2:12). When God delivered His people by power, the morning watch revealed that the Lord God of Israel was mightier than the gods of Egypt, that Moses was a greater leader than Pharaoh. “The waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them” (14:28). From that moment, God honoured His servant Moses as the leader and appointed deliverer of His people.

THE SONG OF MOSES (15:1-21)

This first song recorded in the Bible, is consecrated to the triumph of God, the exaltation of His name, His holiness, and the celebration of His praise. The sweet melody and joy of the singing exalts God’s strength, song and salvation, and victory over His enemies. The theme extends to victory over future enemies and bringing His people into their inheritance. This is accompanied by the response of Miriam and all the people (15:20-21). This song by the red Sea is echoed across the ages of time to the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb, sung by the Sea of Glass, the theme of the song of victory over the beast (Rev. 15:1-4).

THE SECOND SECTION OF THE BOOK (Chapters 15:22-40:38)

THE JOURNEY IN THE WILDERNESS (15:22-18:27)

From the Red Sea to Mount Sinai. God said to Israel, “Go forward” (14:15). The Pillar Cloud enabled them to go forward contrary to natural surroundings; it gave day when it was night, light amidst darkness, coolness when there was heat. It led to pleasant resting places but it also led to obstacles and problems to test their faith.

MARAH. “They went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter” (15:22-26). Perhaps they were still too near the Red Sea so that it was salt water. One of the marks of Egypt was bitterness. The Christian who is living too near to the world will find they taste the bitterness of that which they once enjoyed. “Three days” is the distance of death. The teaching is; Romans 6:2, “dead to sin”; Romans 7:4, “dead to law”; Galatians 6:8, “dead to the flesh”. The “tree” cast into the waters suggests the cross of Calvary, which transmutes the bitter things of life into sweetness and refreshment. At Marah, the Lord revealed Himself as Jehovah Ropheka. He promised to deliver Israel from the diseases that afflicted the Egyptians.

ELIM. “They came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters” (15:27). The numbers are significant as Israel had twelve tribes and seventy souls originally went down to Egypt. The Lord chooses twelve apostles and sent out seventy messengers. The local assembly is like an oasis in a barren wilderness. The palm tree is stable, having deep roots it can find springs of water and grow where no other vegetation is found. Its leaf is always green even when the sandstorm subsides, no dust will adhere to it. The believer whose thirst is satisfied by the Word of God is “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season; and his leaf also shall not wither” (Psa. 1:2-3). The test of the lack of drinking water was a *test of dependence* learned so early in their journey.

WILDERNESS OF SIN (16:1-4). The test of the lack of bread and the gathering of the Manna was a test of obedience, “that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or no” (16:4).

They gathered the manna in the morning, “when the dew that lay was gone up” (16:14). This was a *test of freshness*. The refreshing influence of the dew prepared the way for the manna. This speaks of the freshness of the Holy Spirit. Delay brought an offensive result, it became stale, “it bred worms, and stank” (16:20). “When the sun waxed hot, it melted”. This was a *test of diligence*. It would be too bad if an Israelite slept in. It was a *test of usefulness*. God commanded the eating of an omer for every man “according to his eating”, for six days; none was provided on the Sabbath. They could never exhaust the supply in forty years yet, hoarding up manifest a distrust of God.

The manna speaks of the Word of God on which we should feed daily. It has also the application of a double miracle. The sweet, white, small, round thing, as small as the hoar frost, speaks of Christ Himself, the Bread from Heaven (John 6:33-35). A pot containing an omer of manna was to be placed with the tables

of the law with Aaron's rod that budded in the Ark of the Covenant. This memorial anticipated the erection of the Tabernacle and looked on to the Sabbath of rest and Israel's Kingdom blessing (Heb. 4:8-9).

REPHIDIM: WATER FROM THE ROCK (17:1-16). They journeyed according to the commandment of the Lord and the guidance of the pillar cloud to pitch in Rephidim where there was no water for the people to drink. This was a *test of submission*, of willingness to walk in the path of faith in God. In chapter 16 they murmured against Moses and desired to return to Egypt (16:2). The people did chide with Moses. Moses said, "Wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?" Moses "cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. [Yet a little while and they will stone me]" (17:4). "They tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us or not?" (17:7). This is one of the reasons why Christians fail to attend the meetings and eventually leave the assembly, having lost the convictions that the Lord is there. He promised that, "where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Note the increase of unbelief. They ignored the commandment of the Lord, they disregarded the overshadowing Pillar Cloud, they rebelled against God's appointed leadership, and they doubted God's presence at all. Unbelief manifests carnality, develops criticism to find fault with everyone and everything.

AMALEK (17:8-16). "Then came Amalek, and fought against Israel at Rephidim". Amalek represents the flesh which always attacks when faith is weak.

HOREB (17:6-7). "Smite the rock". The *test of thirst*. The smitten rock beautifully typifies Christ. At Calvary, He was stricken, smitten and afflicted that sinners who deserve the pains of eternal thirst may stoop down, and drink and live. At Sychar's well, He said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

JEHOVAH-NISSI (17:8-16). God is always faithful to His people and abundant in His supplies though they are unworthy of His love. When they hungered, He gave them manna from heaven. When they thirsted, He gave them water from the rock, an unusual source. When they grew wearied in battle, God sustained them with the sight of a man with uplifted hands on the top of the hill. In John chapter 2, they had no wine at the wedding feast. The Lord gave them "good" wine in six pots full to the brim. In John 4, the woman had no water in her water pot. She left her water pot and went home with a well of living water. In John 6, the multitude had no bread. The Lord fed five thousand hungry mouths and filled twelve basketfuls for any needing more on the way home. In John 21, the disciples had no fish after a hard night of toil. In the morning the Lord filled the net and the ships so that they were not able to draw for the multitude of fish. When they reach the shore, they found more fish cooked already.

Moses stood on the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand while Joshua (first mention) fought in the valley with Amalek (17:9-12). The lifting up of the staff secured to the warriors, the strength from heaven needed to obtain the victory. God had already, at the Red Sea, chosen this staff as the saving manifestation of His Almighty power. By the power of prayer, which was embodied in the lifting up of his hands, Moses proved that it is necessary to pray not just to fight. We should always, by faith, keep in sight the Ascended Man, who intercedes for us, and whose hands never grow weary.

"And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (17:13-16). Amalek, like the flesh, can be defeated but is never completely destroyed. We need power from God to enable us to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1Pet. 2:11). So significant was this battle that Moses was to write it for a memorial and to put it into the ears of Joshua to strengthen his confidence in the help of the Lord to make "war with Amalek from generation to generation". The erection of the altar called Jehovah-Nissi (Jehovah my banner) would remind succeeding generations of God's ultimate purpose to exterminate Amalek (Deut. 25:19), and to give them rest in Canaan from all their enemies.

VISIT OF JETHRO (18:1-27). Jethro, Moses father-in-law brought further comfort and encouragement. Impressed by what he heard, he visited Moses bringing his wife, Zipporah and his sons to him. The meeting was dramatic showing that the people of God delivered out of Egypt and preserved "by the way", were a testimony to the power and glory of God. Jethro, seeing the vast multitude of people, gave wise counsel to appoint men that feared God, men of truth, to assist Moses and to be rulers in the government and

judgement of the host of Israel. Again, we have a fore view of the future glory of the Kingdom which God has in mind. Moses is the type of Christ reigning on earth. We see the Jews represented in his sons and the Gentiles as fellow worshippers typified by Jethro. The Old Testament does not expound doctrine relative to the church but it gives pictures of a future Gentile bride as in Zipporah and Ruth. This delegation of authority was helpful and sensible but was without Divine Authority. With the giving of the law and the ordinances of the priesthood, God's provision for the "kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (19:6), is detailed in the rest of Exodus, chapters 19 to 40.

ISRAEL AT SINAI (19:1-40:38)

The previous chapters of Exodus could be described as the EXIT from Egypt, a going out. These remaining chapters of this book, detail the ENTRANCE into the presence of God, a going in. The remainder of Exodus, Leviticus, and the first nine chapters of Numbers record events that took place at Mount Sinai. God has always wanted to have fellowship and communion with His creature; "They (Adam and Eve) heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8). As a result of disobedience, God drove the man out of the Garden of Eden. From Adam until this time, there had been no direct law of God. Now God says to the house of Jacob and the children of Israel; "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (19:5-6). This is a very major break in the history of God's dealings with mankind especially His chosen people Israel. God Himself never changes but His methods do. He works in different ways at different dispensations, administrations, stewardships, economies.

The word "economy" is the N.T. Greek word for dispensation or administration. In these chapters, we learn that, "The law was given by Moses" (John 1:17). In the same verse, we read, "But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". This proves that there has been a change of dispensation, from the age of promises in Abraham's time (Gen. 12:1), to this giving of the law (Exod. 19), unto the end of the O.T. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. 4:4-5). The law proved man's failure and the need for the death of Christ. "He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death (death having taken place), for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament (covenant), they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). "And all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD hath spoken we will do'" (19:8). This answer may have been made sincerely but forgetful of the weakness of the flesh and dependent upon self effort, instead of depending by faith, in God alone. The same people were soon dishonouring their vows, by committing idolatry and worshipping the golden calf resulting in the broken tablets of the law.

To people under law, God was in "a thick cloud", the people were to keep their distance, "bounds" were set, they were not to touch the border of the mount (19:9-24). God used Moses and angels to mediate the law. The law is holy, righteous, and good. It proves all men guilty and justifies no one (Rom. 3:19-20). It served as our teacher, instructor until Christ appeared (Gal. 3:24). The law does not save anyone. Do not teach or listen to anyone who teaches that salvation is by law keeping (Gal. 2:21). A believer does not live under the law (Rom. 6:14; 8:4). He is saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. Only by the new birth, regeneration, and the power of the indwelling Spirit of God can he or she keep these commandments and live a life pleasing to God. Saul of Tarsus claimed to be of the law blameless yet he wrote that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1Tim. 1:15).

THE MOSAIC COVENANT is given in three sections:

(20:1-26) – THE COMMANDMENTS express the righteous will of God. These are called the "law" by the Lord Jesus which He came to fulfil, (Matt. 5:17-19). The Ten Commandments are the abiding moral law of God given as a basis for mankind to live together. These are called a "ministration of condemnation" and "death" (2Cor. 3:7-9). The Christian is not under the covenant of works but of grace (Rom. 3:21-27; 6:14-15; Gal. 2:16; 3:10-26; 4:21-31; Heb. 10:7-17). The person who refuses salvation, by grace alone, in Christ alone, elects to stand before God based on "works" (Rev. 20:12), and is justly condemned to the lake of fire forever. Most of the commandments are negative, "Thou shalt not". Man is a sinner, and the law is given

to fully demonstrate man's nature and will. "The LORD thy God" is used in the first five commandments. The ten commands were divided by the Lord Jesus into two sections covering love to God and love to one's neighbour (Matt. 22:37-40).

(21:1-23:33) – This second division states the SOCIAL AND CEREMONIAL judgements governing the civil life of Israel. These are called, "ordinances", or "the book of the covenant" (24:7).

(24:1-18) – THE CEREMONIAL RATIFICATION of the ordinances giving the Tables of Stone, the Priesthood, the Tabernacle and the way of approach, provide a representative of the people before God in the office of the high priest. The sacrifices provided atonement ("cover") for their sins in anticipation of the death of Christ (Rom. 3:25-26; Heb. 5:1-3; 6:6-9). "Worship ye afar off", under law, distance must be maintained between God and the subject. Under Grace, the worshipper has "boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). Moses built an altar and sprinkled half the blood upon the altar and half upon the people as he read "the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people" (vs. 6-8). "They saw the God of Israel" (v10). This revelation of the glory of God from "the midst of the cloud" was "like a devouring fire" (v17).

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God's Book

Oh God, Thy precious Book is in my hand,
Here only is revealed what Thou hast planned.
May it instil true knowledge into me
And into daily life translated be.

May Scripture be engraved upon my heart;
Help me to love the whole, not just a part;
I know Thy Word, thus treasured up within,
Will keep me from hypocrisy and sin.

To grow in grace and knowledge of my Lord,
Is my desire in reading Thy good Word;
To useful be to Thee and Thine withal,
And to the devil – no more use at all.

I thank Thee, God my Father, for Thy Book,
Which tells me to Thy Son alone to look,
I thank Thee that Thy Spirit's voice is heard
Throughout the sacred Volume of Thy Word.

The Bible! Who can calculate its worth?
A heavenly Book to guide us here on earth!
In heaven settled and preserved below,
That we, the Triune God, may serve and know.

Praise God for this and all His wondrous gifts!
Praise God the Son, Whom all the Word uplifts!
And praise Him for the Spirit He has given,
Who guides us by this Book safe home to heaven!

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Joy and Rejoicing

Most of us who are believers in Christ would have to confess that one grace which is often lacking in our Christian lives is joy. We are, in fact, without excuse, for whatever the difficulties which may beset our path, God has given us so much in which we can and should rejoice. It is our present purpose to look at some of these, so as to promote joy in our hearts, but before doing so we would like to make a few preliminary observations.

JOY IS A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Some folks are blessed with a cheerful disposition, an optimistic outlook and buoyant spirits. They let nothing get on top of them, and always seem to be happy. However commendable and enviable this may seem; this natural cheeriness is not joy in the sense in which we are speaking of it now. True joy, the joy of the Lord, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22); it is of God and always in tune with God. It is not something with which we are born, nor is it something we can work up within ourselves by fleshly determination though we can certainly further or frustrate the workings of the Holy Spirit within us by our attitude of mind.

True joy is deep, and not the noisy, shallow, flippant happiness of a godless world which finds its pleasure in what offends God, and is offended by what pleases God.

JOY IS INDEPENDENT OF OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES

Because joy is a work of the Spirit of God within, it does not depend on congenial circumstances and often thrives when it might appear most unlikely (1Thess. 1:6; James 1:2). Although the Lord Jesus was, as to outward circumstances, “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3), yet He could say to His own as He was about to leave them, “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:10-11). Paul could describe himself as “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2Cor. 6:10). So, we must not suppose that circumstances should never make us sad (Psa. 119:136; Joel 1:13; 2:12-14), nor should we suppose that the Holy Spirit never uses circumstances to make us glad (2Cor. 7:7). Rather we should appreciate that as God has given us so many causes of joy that are constant and unchangeable, so we are able to rejoice “always” (Phil. 4:4) and “evermore” (1Thess. 5:16) however difficult our circumstances may be.

JOY IS DEPENDENT ON OUR INWARD CONDITION

There are many grounds for joy, but these must needs be appropriated by faith. Faith is the foundation of true joy (Rom. 15:13), feelings are not! Unbelief will rob us of our joy, and if, as we have seen, obedience is a condition of joy, a rebellious, disobedient spirit can never expect to be happy in the Lord. Sin in the heart and life must bring sorrow and cause us to lose even the joy of salvation (Psalm 51:8,12).

We must note, too, that spiritual laziness or lack of spiritual exercise, which may coexist with the desire to seek our joys down here, can lead to a lack of true joy. Those who seek are those who find. It is needful to set ourselves to appropriate divine provision, to read God’s word (1John 1:4), to occupy our hearts with God and His Son (Psa. 16:8-9) and to draw water from the wells of salvation (Isa. 12:3).

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS OUR STRENGTH (Neh. 8:10)

A joyful Christian, a strong healthy Christian, is a Christian walking in fellowship with the Lord. The devil will find it very difficult to overcome such a one. But not only will joyful Christians be strong in trial, they will be strong in testimony. Their witness will be powerful and effective (Psa. 51:12-13). We cannot bear effective witness to the joys of God’s salvation if we are always grumbling about our aches and pains, or our difficulties and problems. The joyful saint is the best advertisement for God’s salvation this world will ever see, and the most effective.

Bearing in mind these considerations, we readily see that to glorify and please God, to prosper in our souls,

and to witness effectively for Christ, we will need to identify and appropriate those things which God has given us to make us to rejoice. We might note the following.

JOY IN GOD

Romans 5:11 reminds those who have 'received the reconciliation' that their joy is to be found in the God to whom they have been brought nigh, and by whom they have been brought nigh. If the Psalmist could speak of "God my exceeding joy" (Psa. 43:4, compare v5), how much more should those who have been brought so much nearer to God in the person of His Son! Communion with Him should be the greatest delight of our souls (Psa. 27:4-6; John 16:23-24; 1John 1:3-4).

REJOICE IN THE LORD (Phil. 3:1; 4:4)

What joy and delight Christians should find in their Saviour, in the perfections of His person, the wonder and constancy of His love, the fulness of His finished work, the benefits of His present ministry and the prospect of being with Him and like Him for ever. Since He never changes, here are joys that are "always" possible. But we can rejoice in His Lordship too, His authority over us, individually and collectively, including His faithful chastenings when we go astray.

JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT (John 14:16-17; 15:26-27; 16:5-15)

The Lord cheered the hearts of His sorrowing disciples by teaching them that His leaving them would in fact be a blessing to them, for it would lead to the bestowing of "another Comforter" who would not only be with them, as He had been, but who would be in them. The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit is an unfailing joy as long as we do not grieve Him (Eph. 4:30). Where He is free to work in our hearts, He will produce His pleasant fruit of joy despite our circumstances.

OUR SALVATION AND SECURITY (Psa. 35:9; Luke 10:20)

These are grand realities to the hardest pressed believer, greater even than success in service! We should always be able to draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation (Isa. 12:3; Hab. 3:17-19)

THE HOPE OF GLORY (Rom. 5:2; 12:12)

The bright prospect before us, which may become ours in a moment of time at the coming again of the Lord Jesus, can brighten earth's darkest moments. See 2Corinthians 4:16-18. His coming is imminent; the glory is eternal! In that day all service and loss and suffering for Him will receive His own reward (Matt. 5:12; 25:21,23; 1Pet. 4:13).

THE WORD OF GOD (Psa. 119:47,103,111,162; Jer. 15:16)

We should delight in the precious and incomparable teachings of the Word of God, but more, we should rejoice in its commandments. If we truly love the Lord, we will desire to learn His will so as to do it (Psa. 119:35; Prov. 21:15). Only in His word can we learn the way of His will. The faithful ministry of the word will produce joy in both hearers (Acts 13:48) and readers (Acts 15:31).

THE PEOPLE OF GOD (Psa. 16:3; 1Cor. 16:17-18)

If we are truly born of God, we will love His children and delight in everything about them that manifests the Father. There is much about today that is grieving in the testimony, much departure from the word of God, but we can rejoice in all that is good in His people, remembering that there is plenty of failure in ourselves.

Features in God's people that will cause joy in those who are spiritually minded include the following:

Genuine conversions (Acts 15:3); the manifestations of God's grace (Acts 11:23); love (Phil. 4:10; Philem. 7); faith (1Thess. 3:6-9); generosity (1Chron. 29:9,17); obedience (Rom. 16:19; 2John 4; 3John 3-4); repentance and recovery (2Cor. 7:9); godly order (Col. 2:5); the preaching of Christ (Acts 8:5-8; Phil. 1:18); the privilege of helping others, even in lowly or costly ways (Phil. 2:17; Col. 1:24); prosperity in the work of God (Ezra 6:14-18; Neh. 12:43); the blessing and joy of others (Rom. 12:15; 2Cor. 7:13); the great blessing of being able to gather in the house of God, "the place of the name", the New Testament assembly of His people (Psa. 26:4-8; 42:4; 43:3-4; 137:6; Acts 2:41-47).

MEN OF GOD SERIES

(18) JEREMIAH

“O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction”

(Jeremiah 16:19)

The threefold “My” expresses the Lord’s sustaining strength of Jeremiah in his loneliness. Without doubt, the statement is intensely personal to Jeremiah. It is also prophetic in the context of the restoration of Israel and the drawing of the Gentile nations to the Lord, the meaning is Messianic.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias (Jeremiah)” (Matt. 16:13-14). As the people observed the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man why did He remind them of Jeremiah? Was Jeremiah a type? Why is it, that only Matthew mentions “Jeremiah”?

A CHOSEN VESSEL. “The Word of the LORD came unto me saying, before I formed thee ... I knew thee ... I sanctified thee ... I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:4). “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (1:10). What God is going to do He reckons to His servant. Kingdoms will fall and rise according to the word of Jeremiah. Matthew concludes his Gospel with the majestic words of the risen Lord Jesus, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18).

JEREMIAH SOUGHT THE HEALING OF THE PEOPLE. “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” (8:22). Gilead was famous for resin which flowed from the storax tree when it was pierced (Gen. 37:25; Jer. 46:11). This balm stings, soothes and heals as skin grows over the healing wound. The remedy was readily available to heal the nation’s malady. The door of God’s dispensary is always open. The Great Physician, at the tree of Calvary, was wounded for our transgressions, by His wounds we are healed. He is the healer without compare, always on call, no waiting list. The nation, in the future will say, He bore our sicknesses, He carried our sorrows (Isa. 53:4). Four times Jeremiah asks “Why?” “Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?” (8:5). “Why do we sit still?” (8:14). “Why, why, why, why?” (8:19,22). Typically, the healing balm that flows from Calvary’s tree is readily available. The answer to our departure and backsliding is to keep near to the Cross.

JEREMIAH WEPT FOR THE CITY. “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” (9:1). Jeremiah was a man of sorrows. He wished his head to be a spring of waters and his eyes a reservoir fed by perennial springs. Jeremiah was not a prophet of doom and gloom. To call him the weeping prophet is to miss the focus of his prophecy. His deep burden was that his message of Hope, in chapter 8, went unheeded. His people were “slain”, crushed, but not conscious of their need of healing balm (8:22). In these tears, he was like David in his grief who wept and mourned (2Sam. 18:33-19:1); like Paul who had great heaviness and continual sorrow, (Rom. 9:1-2; 10:1); like the Lord’s lament over Jerusalem. At the grave of Lazarus, He wept silently. “When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept (aloud) over it” (Luke 19:41). “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34). Jeremiah said that the people have forsaken the Lord twelve times. Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied in Babylon, but Jeremiah was left alone in the city with his servant Baruch.

JEREMIAH PROCLAIMED THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LORD’S HOUSE. “Stand in the gate of the LORD’S house” (7:2). The Lord Jesus at the age of twelve was in the temple, about His, “Father’s business” (Luke

2:49). When He cleansed the temple He said, “The zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up” (John 2:17). In Jeremiah’s day, deceived by false prophets, with empty repetition, the people said, “The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, are these” (buildings) (7:4). The buildings without the Lord’s presence were a delusion. “And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:12-13). Like His faithful servant Jeremiah, about 600 years previous, the Lord condemned the imposters in charge of His house, prophesying that after His death, AD70, “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matt. 24:2).

JEREMIAH WAS A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD. “I have not hastened (not wanted the work) from being a pastor” (17:16). Jeremiah had not tried to relinquish his work as a shepherd or leader of the people of God in spite of the suffering it involved. He faithfully followed God’s will and proclaimed God’s word as he warned them of the disaster that was about to overtake the nation. Facing great danger, Jeremiah condemned the false prophets and challenged the leaders of the nation as he prophesied the Babylonian captivity. His heart was burdened as he saw the people scattered, fearful, dismayed and lacking food. He desired to see them gathered, led by the waters, kept, “as a shepherd doth his flock” (31:10). The ancient prophet had compassion, as a shepherd he cared for his flock as the Lord Himself when He was on earth. “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). The greatest work that we can be entrusted with, is the shepherd care of God’s people. “Feed (shepherd) My sheep” (John 21:16).

JEREMIAH, SAID, “I WAS LIKE A LAMB ... THAT IS BROUGHT TO THE SLAUGHTER” (11:19). Jeremiah was mocked and scoffed; persecuted and imprisoned: suffered loneliness and tears; suffered conspiracy even by his own family; “Even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee” (12:6). His enemies said, “Let us cut him off from the land of the living” (11:19). In Lamentations, Jeremiah said; “I am the man that hath seen affliction” (Lam. 3:1). Abraham said, “God will provide Himself a Lamb” (Gen. 22:8). Daniel prophesied when shall “Messiah be cut off” (Dan. 9:26). John Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The Saviour shed tears, shed blood, He did die as the Lamb of God. “Christ died for our sins” (1Cor. 15:3).

JEREMIAH PROPHECIED CONCERNING THE NEW COVENANT. “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (31:31). “For they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (31:34). Through the darkness shines the rays of the coming dawn. Like every true preacher of the Gospel even today, Jeremiah preached repentance toward God, warned faithfully of soon coming judgement, declared forgiveness of sin, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah preached Christ in type as the Balm of Gilead, the Branch of Righteousness, the Spring of Waters, the Good Shepherd, the Redeemer, the Lord our Righteousness, the Agent of the New Covenant, the Coming Ruler and Governor of His people, the Righteous Descendant of David who would restore David’s fallen dynasty. Jeremiah wept over the sin of the people and preached repent and “Know the LORD” (31:34).

THE LESSON: Jeremiah means “The LORD exalts”. He himself was meek and lowly, yet he was raised up as the early prophet that other prophets quoted. The lesson is to be compelled to stand alone. We must fall into the ground and die and through death to self, bear fruit. This contrasts with veneration and popularity.

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Questions Frequently Asked

Question: Each of the four Gospels tell about a woman coming with an alabaster box of ointment to anoint the Lord Jesus. Are these four accounts speaking about the same occasion?

Answer: The anointing recorded in Matthew 26:7 and John 12:3 by Mary of Bethany, seems to be the same as that recorded by Mark 14:3, in the house of Simon the leper. The presence of Lazarus (John 12:1-2), attracted “much people”, and Simon the leper’s house was likely more commodious than the house of Martha and Mary.

Simon was a common name. The event in Simon the Pharisees house occurred in a different place at a different time by a different woman. “A woman in the city, which was a sinner” (Luke 7:37). Mary of Bethany was not a “sinner.” She was a godly devoted saint. She believed in burial and resurrection and therefore she believed that her Lord was soon about to die. In this, her faith and knowledge exceeded that of the disciples. The woman of the city was a well known “sinner”. She knew that she was a “sinner” and the Pharisees knew that this woman who touched the Lord Jesus, was a “sinner”. The woman was weeping in deep humiliation and repentance as she washed the Saviour’s feet with her tears. She used materials of her own penitence. Loose hanging hair was a sign of Jewish mourning and grief. By kissing the Saviour’s feet and anointing them with the ointment, very precious, she acknowledged His glory and beauty and how precious was her love for Him. “He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Luke 7:50).

“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”
(Luke 7:47)

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**“There is none that doeth good,
no, not one”** (Romans 3:12)

**“There is none good but One,
that is, God”** (Mark 10:18)

Have you ever used the phrase “**I’M GOOD**” or heard others use it? It seems to be the latest phrase now currently circulating the earth, a generalisation not perhaps to be taken too literally, as you may well realise! We find a number of such idioms used in the Bible as “*let the king live forever*” or “*God forbid*” (AV – KJV).

It is noteworthy however, when someone says “**I’M GOOD**” in the context of their eternal wellbeing. It could be said as an excuse to deflect from engaging in a conversation or maybe by someone who really does believe in their “relative goodness” or are following a “spiritual journey” they hope will work well for them in the end. But with such a vital issue as our eternal welfare, we must be certain about the matter. And for sure, God has provided a means enabling our acceptance with Him, through the only righteous and “**Good Man**” ever to live on the earth.

There is None that doeth Good, no, not one

It is a common enough yet centuries old idea that there is a bit of good in all of us! We all like 'good' neighbours and maybe try to be helpful to others; yet we must also surely realise, there is a nature within us that is not at all good, even defiling.

The Holy God of Heaven demands perfection; not one of us is 'good enough' for Him. The apostle Paul lifts the above statement from Psalms 14:1 as part of an argument to prove our inner depravity (Rom. 3:9-18). Once a fanatical Pharisee with a boasted self-righteousness, he admitted to being ***"a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious"*** (1Tim. 1:13) and elsewhere, ***"in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing"*** (Rom. 7:18) and none of us are any different to him in our natural state.

There is None Good but One ... God

In the Gospels, we find those who considered the Lord Jesus Christ as just a ***"Good Man"***, others as just a ***"Good Teacher"*** or ***"Master"***, failing to grasp who He really was. Many still do today. The Lord responded to one such individual with the above statement (Mark 10:18). He was of course Himself ***"God ... manifest in the flesh"***, the God whose intrinsic goodness of character, works and actions are often referred to in the Old Testament Scriptures. He was the only Man on earth who pleased God continually, whose motives and actions were ever pure, ***"Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him"*** (Acts 10:38). Elsewhere they said of Him, ***"He hath done all things well"*** (Mark 7:37).

Yet that life of itself could not save poor, helpless, wandering, vulnerable sheep as we are. It needed an acceptable sacrifice; for this reason Christ declared, ***"I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep"*** (John 10:11).

The Goodness of God Leadeth thee to Repentance

Have you yet accepted your need of Christ and His sacrifice? Do you really think you're good enough for God as you are? Could it be applied to you, ***"Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"*** (Rom. 2:4). Could a proud heart be the stumbling block, a reservation to confess ones badness? God is seeking to awake you to your great need; Christ has done all necessary for your salvation by His work on the Cross. To reject this is to reject Christ, and leave you without hope.

Consider the immensity of God's love: ***"For when we were yet without strength, in due time CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US"*** (Rom. 5:6-8). We exhort you to: ***"Repent ... and believe the Gospel"***.

Not by Works ... Unto Good Works

"Good Works" form a core part of the Gospel! Preachers rightly emphasise the inability of ***"works"*** to save us, ***"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast"***. Yet ***"works"*** are the proof and expectation of those saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit following true conversion, ***"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"*** (Eph. 2:8-10). ***"The fruit of the Spirit is ... goodness..."*** (Gal. 5:22-23).

Christ's true disciples find many exhortations in the New Testament to pursue such a life that will bring glory to the Lord who has saved them. Opportunities abound! There was a ***"disciple named Tabitha ...: this woman was full of GOOD WORKS and almsdeeds which she did"*** (Acts 9:36). ***"As we have therefore opportunity, let us DO GOOD unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"*** (Gal. 6:10). ***"They which have believed in God might be careful to MAINTAIN GOOD WORKS. These things are good and profitable unto men"*** (Titus 3:8).

A final warning! Most readers are probably Gentiles, this is because in early days the Jews rejected the gospel: ***“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God”*** (Rom. 11:22). This situation may soon change and the Jews will again be the main focal point of God’s goodness and the Gentiles of His severity! Also, future judgement belongs in the hands of the Son of God. ***“All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have DONE GOOD, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have DONE EVIL, unto the resurrection of damnation”*** (John 5:28-29). Those doing ***“good”*** are believers showing the proof of true salvation; the ***“damned”***, are those who refuse Him as the ***“Good Shepherd”***.

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