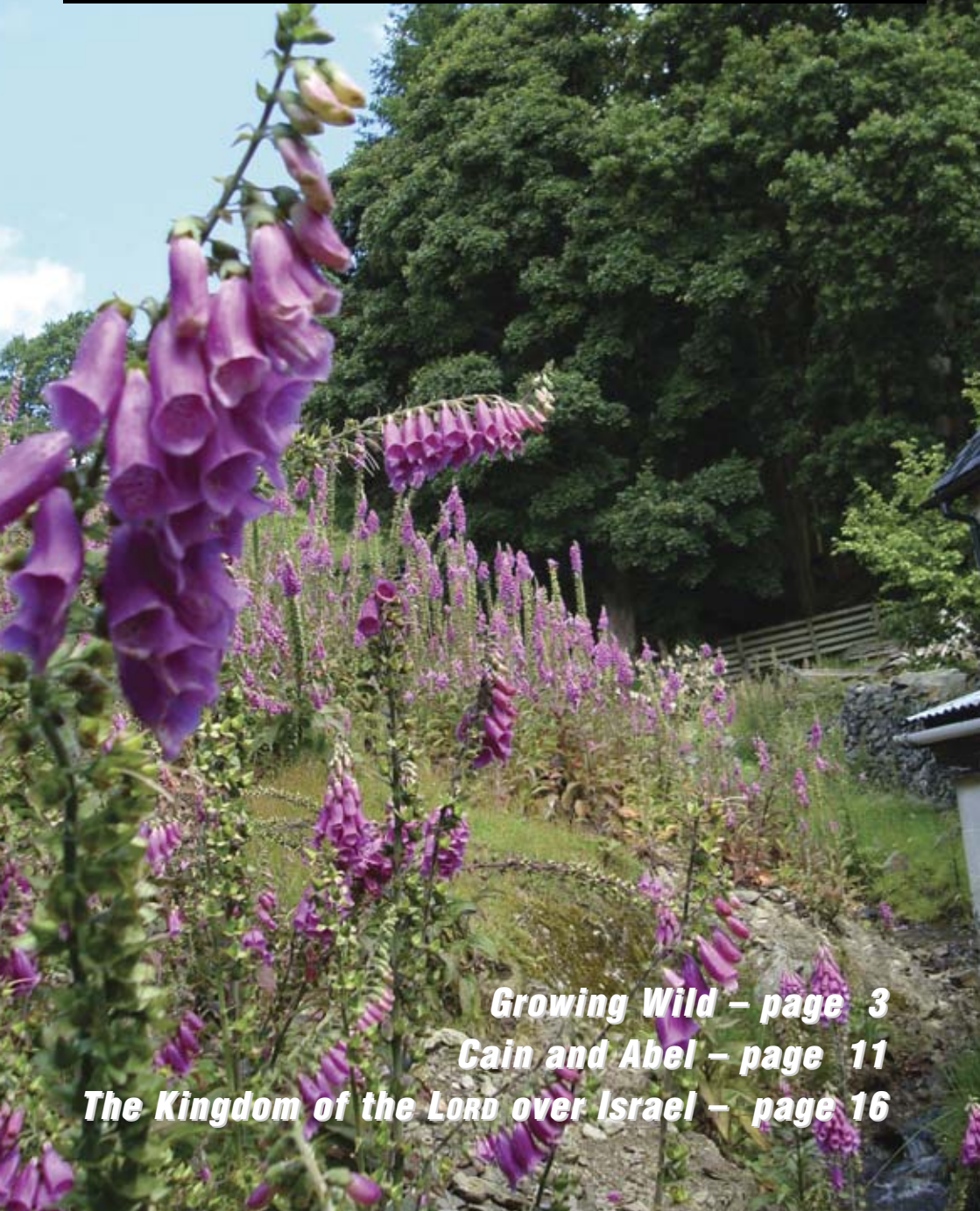


Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1493



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Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

124th Year

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1493

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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Growing Wild

Someone once aptly described a weed as *'A wild flower in the wrong place'*. See the same plants in their native habitat – in woodland or along the side of a road – and you can appreciate their natural beauty, without having to think about pulling them up.

Visible Differences

The Industrial Revolution made it possible to mass-produce things. Set the machine running and you could churn out copy after identical copy. That was revolutionary because it cut the cost of products. But handmade products have one huge advantage – every one is different. Mass-production tends towards uniformity and a lack of identity, which is why shopping streets, restaurants and leisure facilities are beginning to look the same in many parts of the developed world.

If you want to see the differences between one part of the world and another, don't look at man-made things but at the natural world. God is the author of infinite variety and the flora and fauna that adorn the created world are wonderfully diverse. Different plants grow in different places depending upon the climate, rainfall, soil conditions and suchlike. Similar plants grow differently in diverse conditions; flowers that might be extremely hard to grow in one situation can become so prolific in other localities that they are regarded as weeds! Visitors to New Zealand, for example, might marvel at the lupins lining the roadside of the

South Island, but they have spread so widely they are now regarded by the environmental authorities as an invasive species, which they are trying to control.

Weed Invasion

As every gardener knows, weeds seem to grow much faster and stronger than the cultivated flowers or plants they really want to grow. Turn your back on a garden for a few weeks during the summer and nature will quickly take over, and what is true for a garden can be true for an entire country. To return to New Zealand, it is thought that many of the weed seeds



now invading the country were brought in by European explorers as late as the 1800s, probably as contaminants of potato tubers or vegetable seeds.

They didn't mean to bring them; they came accidentally, and they have spread widely and effectively, so that they now endanger the native species and threaten to change the character of the country. And there are a lot of them, for the invading weeds include black nightshade, Canadian pondweed, water hyacinth, Cape tulip, burdock, barley grass, German ivy, wild clematis – the list goes on and on. International travel now makes it easier than ever for the pests and problems of one country to be spread elsewhere. It's another of the hazards of the 21st century; and it's like that with our lives too.

Clearing the Ground

In Bible times people lived much closer to nature – closer to God – than most of us today. Theirs was a mainly agricultural economy so if they wanted to eat they had to make sure they grew enough food. Everybody knew about sowing, planting and reaping for those tasks were second nature to them. That is why so many agricultural metaphors are used to describe the process whereby the Word of God can be planted into our hearts and minds. The prophet Jeremiah was a priest by profession, but when he wanted to encourage the people to put aside the distractions of life and concentrate on what God had to offer, this is what he said:

“Thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: ‘Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns’” (Jeremiah 4:3).

In language we would immediately understand, he was telling them not to be hard-hearted and resistant to God’s message; and not to let the cares and distractions of this life strangle and smother a message from God that was vitally important to them. Notice that it takes much longer to spell it out than it does to paint a word picture of a seed being unable to germinate, either because the ground is too hard or too weed infested.

Sowing the Seed

Jesus used the very same language in one of his key parables – that of the Sower and the Soils. In this he explained that the Word of God falls into the lives of many people, just like seed falls into a mixture of soils and circumstances. The ideal was that it should be received into a life that was ready to receive it, where it could grow

and develop. One danger was that it would fall among weeds and thorns, which Jesus interpreted to mean a life full of cares and worries:

“Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:22,23).

Notice that it is not only cares and concerns that can distract us and ensure that we pay no or little attention to God’s message. Jesus warned that the desire for material and sensual pleasures can be equally distracting, what he called *“the deceitfulness of riches”*. For the things that promise immediate satisfaction are destined to disappoint. Urging us to love God and put the things that please Him at the centre of our lives, the apostle John said:

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

So here’s the challenge. Do we want God to think of us as a weed – a plant out of place in His garden – or as a plant which is fruitful and beautiful, living to His honour and glory, both now and in the age to come?

Editor

Joshua and Jesus

God can foretell coming events in more ways than we might think. He often predicts what is going to happen by giving an inspired message to His prophets or apostles. But He also foreshadows what is going to happen through the lives of men and women, whose experiences anticipate those of the Lord Jesus – who was not born until very many years later. In this article, **Peter Hale** shows how the life of Joshua (who lived nearly 1500 years before Jesus was born) foreshadowed that of Jesus.

Who was Joshua?

Joshua is one of the most amazing characters in the Old Testament, and the time that he lived was the most dramatic in the experience of Israel. He was born in Egypt, in slavery, and came out at the time of the Exodus when Moses led the new nation towards the Promised Land and freedom. Shortly afterwards Joshua started to work with Moses, as his assistant, and many years later he was the leader who took Israel across the Jordan and into the Land itself.

There are many analogies and comparisons between the life of Jesus and that of Joshua, and we will look at just a few. Not all of them will be to everyone's taste, but if they spark off a train of thought for you, this article will have done its work.

Same Name!

❶ The names “Jesus” and “Joshua” have exactly the same meaning: Joshua is Hebrew (the language of the Old Testament) and that equates to Jesus in the Greek New Testament. Both names mean “Yah



saves”, and that was the purpose of both their lives. Through Joshua, God saved natural (or national) Israel, whilst through Jesus He saved the nation from sin and death.

❷ Joshua, like the rest of his generation, was called out of Egypt (Exodus 4:22-23), under the direction of Moses and that rescue mission gave him a new life. Years afterwards, the prophet Hosea looked back to that event and said that God was rescuing his children from Egypt (see Hosea 11:1). Yet in that marvellous way that Scripture has, when Jesus was born he too was taken to Egypt and was brought out when God knew the time was right. The gospel account looks back to Hosea's prophecy and sees how it received another fulfilment, this time when Jesus was called out of Egypt:



“He (Joseph) took the young child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘Out of Egypt I called my Son’” (Matt. 2:14-15).

In this way the New Testament links Jesus to events that have gone before, which foreshadowed his experiences.

Conquest

- ③ Joshua led his people into the Promised Land, performed miracles by the power of God, was baptized (in a figure) in the river Jordan, was buried without ceremony, prayed to God for His people, chose twelve men to guide His people, and there are no records of sinful acts by Joshua. We should be full of admiration for such faithful exploits; but notice how those things match what Jesus did – miracles, burial, intercessory prayer, choosing twelve disciples and who did no sinful acts at all. It is an amazing match.
- ④ Joshua had encounters with angels, who assisted him in the conquest of the land (Joshua 5:14,15). In just the same way, the Lord Jesus was helped by angels, especially at crucial times in his life, and once said that he could have summoned twelve legions of them to assist him, had he so chosen (see Matthew 4:11; 26:53; Luke 22:43).
- ⑤ Joshua, at the instruction of Moses, destroyed the Amalekites and Moses was told to write that down in a book (the first reference to writing in Scripture): *“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under*



heaven” (Exodus 17:14). This was written so that Jesus (the New Testament Joshua) would understand how important it is to God that all forms of opposition to His purpose should be destroyed. He means to destroy sin in all its forms (see 1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

Fellowship with God

- ⑥ As a close companion to Moses, Joshua was brought into close contact with the divine presence. He accompanied Moses on to Mount Sinai and when a meeting place with God was established in the Camp of Israel he was given the instruction to stay close to it (Exodus 33:11). In the same way, the Lord Jesus had unprecedented access to his Father. He was often to be found in prayer, especially at critical times in his ministry, and summed up his closeness to his Father by saying that “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30), a relationship he also wants us to achieve (John 17:11,21).
- ⑦ As a leader of the people Joshua is depicted in Scripture as a shepherd over God’s flock (Numbers 27:15-23). This description of a leader leading the flock out and leading them back into the sheepfold is often used in Scripture. But it comes to its climax when Jesus is described as the true shepherd, who leads God’s people along the narrow path that leads to eternal life (John chapter 10).
- ⑧ Joshua was able to overcome because God empowered him. We are told that “Joshua the son



of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom” (Deuteronomy 34:9). So it was that God gave Jesus Holy Spirit power. It came upon him at his baptism (Matthew 3:16) and this time it was unlimited power (John 3:34).

- ⑨ God magnified Joshua in the eyes of all Israel (Joshua 4:14). In an even more marvellous declaration, God said of Jesus: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him!” (Matthew 17:5).
- ⑩ And, just as we read that Joshua left nothing undone of all that God commanded Moses (Joshua 11:15), so we read of Jesus that he accomplished all that God required him to do (John 17:4).

We can only stand amazed at the patterns and intricacies of the Word of God, and pray, “*Even so come, Lord Jesus*”. For the greater descendant of Joshua is due to return to conquer the world for God and to confer an inheritance for all who are faithful, at that time when the promised land is reached and the words come true “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5).

Peter Hale

God’s Love



The love our Father has for us
Is a love beyond compare
A love so deep, so strong, so true
A love that’s always there.

No human love can reach this height
Of wonder and of grace
It can so often die – and leave
Indifference in its place.

God’s love was such, He gave His Son
To die, that we may live;
How much do we reciprocate
This love, in what we give?

This love should warm the coldest heart
A love so freely given
That sinners may respond to God,
And have their sins forgiven.

For God so loved this dying world
He gave His only son
To endure a shameful cruel death –
His sinless, holy one.

We have to give to God our heart
Our soul, our strength, our mind.
We have to imitate His Son,
Being holy, true and kind.

God’s love is not for everyone
But for those who seek His face.
May we always hearken to His words
And all His ways embrace.

Colleen Simons

An Undesigned Coincidence

When a witness stands up to give evidence in a Court Room, it is often the details that are vital in convincing the Jury that the witness is reliable. If two independent witnesses give accounts that fit together in details, their contributions carry great weight. It is by piecing together such eyewitness accounts that you can become convinced about the truth.

So it is with the Bible. Frequently statements in one account are quite innocently verified by details provided in another. In 1847, J.J. Blunt published a book entitled *“Undesigned Coincidences”* in which he set out many such instances which, he said, showed a powerful witness to the reliability of the Bible records. Here is just one of those instances

Five Thousand Fed

After John the Baptist had been assassinated by Herod, Jesus sought solitude to grieve and requested the disciples to take him by boat over the Sea of Galilee to an uninhabited desert region on the eastern side. But the crowds, many of whom had benefited from the miraculous powers that Jesus had, and who had been following him every day, saw what was happening and they hurried round the shore. So, when Jesus and the disciples arrived vast numbers of people were awaiting them.

Can you imagine what your thoughts would have been had you been in



Jesus' shoes? More and more people were expecting you to do more and more for them! But Jesus was not like that, which was just as well for the crowd that had assembled.

In his account of what happened – and there are four accounts of this incident in all – Matthew says:

“When Jesus went out he saw a great multitude; and he was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14).

In this we see Jesus at his most compassionate, setting his own grief and needs aside and attending to the needs of others, as he always did. But by now it was late in the day and there were no local shops to provide food, nor did the disciples have that sort of money. So Jesus performed the most well-known miracle of all his miracles, the feeding of the five thousand men. With women and children added there were probable some ten thousand present in all.

Aftermath

We can tell that this was an important happening, for it is a miracle which is recorded in each of the four gospel accounts, but with some important differences. Only when you fit the accounts together can you see the full picture. For example, Matthew, Mark and Luke explain that immediately after the miracle had taken place Jesus sent the disciples across the lake by boat, to return to Capernaum,

whilst he stayed on the eastern shore. But they do not say why there was such urgency. John however explains that:

“When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he departed again to a mountain by himself alone” (John 6:15).

Realising that the situation was altogether too much for the disciples, Jesus had sent them out of temptation’s way. But we would never have known that, had John not included the detail. Having dispersed the crowds, Jesus went up the mountain slopes to engage in prayer (he often sought the solitude of mountains; perhaps he felt closer to his Father in such surroundings).

By this time it was beginning to get dark and the disciples were in difficulties. They had rowed to about the middle of the lake when a tremendous gale sprang up and Matthew gives us the vital detail: “the wind was contrary” (Matthew 14:24); so we know that the gale was blowing from west to east. The disciples were making no progress whatsoever and the boat was being tossed like a cork on the waves.

Walking on the Water

Then the disciples had a terrifying experience. In the available light they could make out a figure approaching, walking over the waves and they cried out in fear. But then a well-known voice calmed their nerves: “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid” (14:27).



When Jesus got into the boat the gale quite suddenly dropped and the sea became calm. Matthew tells us that this occurred in the fourth watch of the night. In those days the night was divided into four “watches”–

- ⊕ 6pm–9pm;
- ⊕ 9pm–midnight;
- ⊕ midnight–3am, and
- ⊕ 3am–6am.

So Jesus joined the disciples in the boat sometime between 3am and 6am. Very quickly they reached the western shore at Gennesaret near Capernaum.

The next day, people who had witnessed the feeding of the five thousand found boats that had come from Tiberias and they returned to the western shore. They found Jesus in Capernaum and expressed astonishment that he had managed to cross the lake before them.

So here are the crucial details:

1. *The crowds had seen the disciples set off by boat leaving Jesus behind on the eastern shore.*
2. *They knew that there were no other boats there at the time, so Jesus could not have followed by boat.*
3. *John records (6:23) that there were boats nearby which had come from Tiberias, so when did they arrive, and why could not Jesus have crossed in one of those? Almost certainly the boats from Tiberias had been caught in the gale and the fishermen had pulled down the sails and allowed the gale to carry them to the*



desert area of the eastern bank, there to wait for the gale to drop. The fishermen would not have gone there willingly, as it was an uninhabited region.



confirm that the writers were describing events that they had witnessed. Matthew provides the vital clue that the gale was blowing from west to east.

4. The crowds therefore knew that the disciples had gone in the last boat and that no other boats went from east to west before the gale dropped early in the morning of the following day. Hence their astonishment at finding Jesus in Capernaum:

“When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’” (John 6:25).

Undesigned

See how these records dovetail together and in quite an innocent way

blowing in any other direction there would not have been any boats from Tiberias on that eastern shore. John said that there were boats there from Tiberias, yet it is taken for granted by the crowds that they were not available for Jesus to use. It is only because of Matthew’s information about the direction of the gale, which is given quite incidentally, that we understand why those boats were rendered unusable.

This is quite typical of how the Bible is demonstrably a careful historical record all the way through. It has got, as one writer put it, “the ring of truth”.

David Budden

Miraculous!

“In several instances the probable truth of a miracle is involved in the coincidence. This is a point which we should distinguish from the general drift of the argument itself. The general drift of our argument is this, that when we see the writers of the Scriptures clearly telling the truth in those cases where we have the means of checking their accounts – when we see that they are artless, consistent, veracious writers, where we have the opportunity of examining the fact – it is reasonable to believe that they are telling the truth in those cases where we have not the means of checking them – that they are veracious where we have not the means of putting them to proof. But the argument I am now pressing is distinct from this. We are called upon to believe a particular miracle, because the very circumstances which attend it furnish the coincidence. I look upon this as a point of very great importance. I do not say that the coincidence in such a case establishes the miracle, but that, by establishing the truth of ordinary incidents which involve the miracle, which compass the miracle round about, and which cannot be separated from the miracle without the utter laceration of the history itself, it goes very near to establish it.”

J. J. Blunt Undesigned Scriptural Coincidences

Cain and Abel

*Adam and Eve had two sons – Cain and Abel – and later many other sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4). How would they get on? Would they follow the example of their parents and drift even further away from God, or would they turn things around and establish a better relationship with Him, by worshipping as He had commanded? That is what **Dudley Fiffeld** now examines.*

- ❶ Concerning these two sons of Adam and Eve, Genesis tells us that: *“Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground”* (Genesis 4:2). In simple terms, Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a horticulturist.
- ❷ The real purpose of chapter 4, however, is to teach us the principles of true and acceptable worship. We are introduced to the worship of these two men by these words: *“in the process of time it came to pass”* (4:3). The KJV margin reads *“at the end of days”* and a more precise definition might be *‘at the end of the year’*. Significantly it would be at this time that Israel in later years observed ‘the day of atonement’ and ‘the feast of tabernacles’. Clearly it was a set time that God had appointed for them to approach Him, a time that much later would be memorialized in Israel’s Calendar of Feasts.
- ❸ The record says that for his offering Cain brought of the fruit of the ground. On the other hand Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock. Immediately we can see a distinction between the two, for Abel brought an animal, a blood sacrifice, whereas Cain did not.
- ❹ The record tells us that the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering



but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect:

“Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but he did not respect Cain and his offering” (4:4,5).

It was not simply a question of the offerings, but also a matter of the spirit or attitude in which they were brought. Abel brought his offering in a spirit of humility; recognizing the need for his sins to be forgiven. It would appear that Cain had no concern for such considerations. This is emphasized in the conversation between the LORD and Cain that follows:

“The LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it!’” (4:6,7).



In other words, if your heart was right, if there was no sin in you, then you know that I would have accepted your offering – *“And if you do not do well, sin lies (lit. crouches) at the door”*. This may either mean that sin is being personified (as it often is in Scripture) or it may be a hint that a means of reconciliation for sin was there – a sin offering – and that the appropriate animal was lying at the door of the sanctuary.

- ⑤ The message is that we cannot worship God any way that we please. There is a prescribed way for men and women to approach Him and if they wilfully disregard this then God will not accept them. This truth was clearly stated in the Law of Moses, where it is emphasised that a sin offering must always be brought before a burnt offering or thank offering could be accepted (see Leviticus 14:19,20 and Numbers 6:16,17).
- ⑥ It is worth noting the order in which the offerings of the Law are presented to us in the Book of Leviticus (chapters 1 to 7). It is first the Burnt Offering, then the Meal Offering, then the Peace Offering and finally, the Trespass and Sin Offerings. The Burnt Offering, which was totally consumed by the flames on the altar, represents the complete dedication of a life to God. As

things turned out, only the Lord Jesus Christ could fulfil these requirements in the order presented. He totally dedicated his life in service to God and because of his perfect obedience he was able to fulfil the requirements of all the other offerings too. In that way, his offering has replaced all the sacrificial requirements of the Law, which no longer need to be kept. He gave his life as an offering for the sin of the whole world.

- ⑦ As sinners, we must always approach God in the reverse order to that which the law prescribed. We come first to the Sin Offering, and having put away our sin God is pleased to accept our praise, our thanks, and our works. What an important foundation principle this is. God will only accept us if we come first to the cross of Christ and acknowledge our sins. With our sins forgiven, God is prepared to accept us through Christ. It was the same for Cain and Abel, as Abel appreciated. A sin offering, in recognition of human failure, was the first of the offerings that had to be made.
- ⑧ It is important to appreciate that because we are sinners all the ‘good works’ we might do are of no avail to commend us to God unless we come first to the Sin Offering that He has provided in the Lord Jesus Christ. Once that has been done, by our belief in Christ and our baptism into his saving name, God will then receive our works as acceptable worship, because they are offered through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dudley Fifield

Departure from Ephesus

The apostle Paul had been in the city of Ephesus, then in the province of Asia Minor, for 18 months and had been preaching the gospel there and to surrounding areas. But the opposition to his message had grown to such an extent that a major disturbance had broken out, led by the craftsmen who feared that his teaching would undermine their business interests, which were centred on the worship of the goddess Diana. That was a clear indication that Paul had to move on, but where would he go next?

Macedonian Mission

Once the disturbance in Ephesus subsided, Paul sent for the disciples and, having exhorted them, took his leave. He retraced his steps by travelling into Macedonia, no doubt visiting the churches at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Having spoken words of exhortation in each church he went on to Greece.

After spending three months there, during which time he may have visited Athens once more and certainly Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:1), he was about to leave by ship for Syria (back to his base in Antioch) when he discovered that the Jews were once more plotting against him, presumably with the intention of assassinating him. This caused him to change his plans and return overland via Macedonia.

To Jerusalem

A group of disciples accompanied him on his journey and these six represented a number of churches:

- ❖ **Sopater**, son of Pyrrhus, from Berea
- ❖ **Aristarchus** and **Secundus** from Thessalonica
- ❖ **Gaius** from Derbe
- ❖ **Tychicus** and **Trophimus** from Asia (Trophimus was from Ephesus (Acts 21:29).

It seems that at least three of the six disciples went all the way to Jerusalem with Paul and it would seem reasonable to assume that they went as representatives of their various ecclesias (or congregations), since Paul was bringing monetary gifts for the poor disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 24:17; cf. 24:26). They would also have provided some measure of security for the money, as it would be hazardous had Paul been transporting it alone, especially as there were people who wanted him killed, so that his message could not be spread any further.

Luke records that the members of the party listed above went on ahead and “waited for us at Troas”. So Paul had Luke with him and perhaps there were others with them when they set sail from Philippi (more strictly from the port of Neapolis; 16:11) after Passover time. On this occasion the voyage took five days (previously it took two days). They stayed at Troas for a week.



Sunday Worship

The disciples came together on the first day of the week to 'break bread', that is, hold a communion service. The selection of the first day by the early church was, no doubt, originally derived from the fact that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead on this, the eighth day, the beginning of a new week. Notice that this glimpse of First Century worship indicates the way in which it had become common practice for worship to take place on the first day of the week (Sunday) rather than the seventh day (the Jewish Sabbath). A similar reference is found in 1 Corinthians, where Paul writes:

"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2).

This suggests that the church at Corinth were to make their collection as part of the breaking of bread service and the money would be available for Paul's collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem when he arrived.

It seems likely that these meetings were held in the evening, perhaps

quite late in the evening, so that the members of the church who were slaves could attend after their day's work was completed. That would also be more closely modelled on the Last Supper which was held in the evening, and it is clear that their worship followed the Lord's example and his subsequent teaching. As Paul himself explained:

"I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Late-Night Worship

At Troas, Paul gave an exhortation and, it seems, he continued for a longer period than usual, not ending until midnight. He might already have



realised that it could be some considerable time, if ever, before he could visit them again. There were many lamps in the upstairs room in which they met and the heat from these and, perhaps, the vapour of the burning olive oil together with the late hour, proved too much for the young Eutychus. Eventually he began to doze and as Paul continued to speak even longer, descended into a deep sleep and then fell out of the window in which he was sitting. As this was on the third storey, his fall to the ground almost certainly was fatal.

The fall interrupted Paul's address and, along with others, he went down to assist. Throwing himself upon the young man and embracing him, much after the manner of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath's son (1 Kings

17:21) and Elisha and the wealthy woman of Shunem's son (2 Kings 4:34-35), the young man revived. Paul reassured all those present: "*Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him*" (Acts 19:6-12).

Returning to the upper room they broke bread. This suggests that the "order of service" used by the apostles was that the exhortation – words of comfort and Scriptural counsel – preceded the partaking of the emblems of bread and wine. However, Paul then continued to speak even longer – until daybreak! After the meeting concluded the young Eutychus was taken home, presumably now fully recovered, to everyone's relief.

John Hellawell

Speaking of Me!

I opened my Bible and started to read
How Man, at his best, is of nothing but dust,
To which he returns, in the blink of an eye —
Despite all his knowledge, he cannot tell why;
And I knew they were speaking of me, Lord,
I knew they were speaking of me.

I worked through the Scriptures and painfully saw
That few have raised up their poor selves from that dust,
But greedily pandered to Self from the start,
With all the desires of their devious heart,
And I knew they were speaking of me, Lord,
I knew they were speaking of me.

But as I read on in God's wonderful Word,
A message of hope came to light from the page:
There will be a Kingdom of saints in the earth,
Those who through repentance have come to new birth,
And I knew they were speaking of me, Lord,
I knew they were speaking of me.



Liz Robinson

The Kingdom of the LORD over Israel

God intended that His special people Israel would be different from the nations around them. They would not have a king like other countries, for the LORD God was their King, and at first He ruled through a variety of representatives. But when the people rebelled and insisted that they have a king, just like other nations, Saul, who looked the part, was chosen, though at first he seemed overawed by his task.

Unhappy Choice

As things turned out, Saul was not up to the job, and power corrupted him. Eventually God's patience ran out. It happened like this. Saul had been told by the prophet Samuel to destroy Agag the Amalekite king and all of the people and their flocks, because of the way they had behaved towards God's people Israel.

Saul only carried out part of the instruction; he kept back the best of the flocks, and spared the life of King Agag. When Samuel, God's prophet, came to rebuke him, Saul claimed that he had kept the flocks for sacrifice to the Lord, but it was an act of rebellion against God's commands and Samuel delivered the following judgement from God, one which marked the end of Saul's reign as God's King over Israel:

"Samuel said: 'Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of

witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.'" (1 Samuel 15:22,23).

Saul readily confessed, saying that he had "feared the people and obeyed their voice". He asked Samuel to pardon him and to stay with him so they could worship God together, but Samuel made a very grave pronouncement, as follows:

"I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.' And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you'" (15:26-28).

New King

This was a sad end to what had started so well. Saul's reign did not come to an end immediately. He reigned in all for 40 years, but became increasingly remote from God, and seems to have suffered from some mental illness. To replace Saul, the LORD God chose David, a young shepherd from Bethlehem. David was descended from Ruth, whose story is in the book of the same name, and from Rahab who appears in the book of Joshua at the time of the conquest of Jericho. For many years David was a fugitive from Saul,

although he spent some time in Saul's court, and is famous for his killing of Goliath, the Philistine giant. Eventually Saul and his three sons were killed by the Philistines at Mount Gilboa and David became king in his place. David seems to have been very upset at the death of Saul in spite of the difficulties Saul had caused him.



this, given the way he lived in defiance of God's law and it is uncertain how many of his successors did. King David, however, was a very godly man who was well acquainted with the Scriptures. He was also a very charismatic leader. Even though he did not always follow God's law, some of his sins were deliberate and obvious, he is called "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). It

was always his intention to do God's bidding, but sometimes his nature got the better of him.

God's Throne

The kingdom of Israel began to prosper during David's forty year reign. Perhaps it was the way David viewed his kingship which made him essentially different from his predecessor. As he was about to hand over the kingdom to his son Solomon just before he died David said this, which sums up his understanding of the privileged position he had been given:

"The LORD God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever ... He was pleased with me to make me king over all Israel. And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel" (1 Chronicles 28:4-5).

David did not regard the throne as his own: it was God's throne, on which he had been privileged to sit for a time. Solomon likewise would not be able to call the throne his own, it was God's. So when the Queen of Sheba heard of the splendour of Solomon's kingdom, for Israel had continued to prosper,

Although the Lord God had not intended that there would be a visible king over His people Israel He had nevertheless made provision in case the people should insist. Some of those provisions are listed in Deuteronomy chapter 17. Amongst them was the requirement that:

- ✓ the king should be from the nation of Israel, and not a foreigner;
- ✓ he should not be involved in the purchase of horses, because that would mean trade with Egypt, and more importantly:
- ✓ the king should write out his own copy of God's law.

Having done this, and it would take a considerable time to do so, he was to:

"read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel" (Deuteronomy 17:19,20).

It would appear that Saul did not do

she came and saw what it was like. It took her breath away and she felt that she had not been told the half of what it was really like.

“Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on His throne to be king for the LORD your God! Because your God has loved Israel, to establish them forever, therefore he made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness” (2 Chronicles 9;8).

Even this foreign ruler had to acknowledge that it was not Solomon’s throne, as it had not been David’s, but God’s. The idea that it was God’s throne continued for a little while after Solomon died, but eventually we hear the idea no more. The kingdom split into two, the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah, which went their separate ways. Over time both kingdoms became corrupt: they were far removed from the ideal nation that God had intended.

Deposed!

Eventually, God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel to the last king of Judah, Israel having been taken captive many years before. This was what God said to King Zedekiah:

“Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, thus says the Lord God: ‘Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the lowly, and abase the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him” (Ezekiel 21:25-27).

Whilst Ezekiel had a sad message about the ending of the line of kings on God’s throne at Jerusalem – and there has never been another one since – there was also a glimmer of hope. The kingdom was ended “until” one should come to whom judgment belongs and God would give it to him. There had been other promises of a coming king, like this one:

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and he rules over the nations.

All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before him, even he who cannot keep himself alive. A posterity shall serve him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation” (Psalm 22:27-30).

King David, who wrote those words under divine inspiration, realised that his hold on the throne, and that of his descendants after him, would only continue for as long as God wished it to happen. He knew the throne was God’s not his; and he also foretold who that coming King will be.

For if you read the whole of Psalm 22 you will discover a remarkable portrayal of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, a thousand years before it actually took place. There could be no clearer indication that the Coming King will be the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he will sit on David’s throne in Jerusalem.

Mark Sheppard



Forgiveness

“I can forgive it, but I can’t forget”. It is a pity that these words are so often heard. For this expression has never yet been spoken without a tone of voice which says all too plainly: “I haven’t really forgiven. I’m only saying so”.

We need to be honest about this. The man or woman who can’t forget hasn’t really forgiven at all. This cherishing of a grudge is one of the most deadly evils that can enter into the life of anyone. For, says Jesus, *“If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Matthew 6:15).

The importance of this principle may be seen from the fact that it is the only comment of any kind which the Lord made on his own pattern prayer – which is commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer. Nor was he content to say only that. He also stated the proposition conversely: *“if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you”* (6:14), a point of some value, surely, to those of us with a strong sense of our own guilt in God’s sight

Two Debtors

One of the most impressive of all the Lord’s parables is his story of the two debtors (Matthew chapter 18). The first of these owed many millions of dollars: *“Have patience with me, and I will pay you all”* (18:26). This obviously insincere promise (for what man

could hope to pay off such a debt within a lifetime?) was magnanimously received at its face value. More than this, the entire debt was cancelled there and then.

What does the man then do, but to seize by the throat another who is in his debt to the extent of less than a hundred dollars? He who has received so much mercy does not know how to show the same spirit, in much smaller degree, to another.

Unforgiven!

The outcome is startling. The unforgiving debtor finds himself summarily arrested and thrown into jail, there to languish until every cent



of the cancelled debt is paid. In human affairs such a procedure would be impossible, for a debt once legally written off cannot be revived by the

indignation of the original creditor. But this parable is about a God who is not tied to human ideas of justice. An unforgiving spirit in any one of us can bring into existence again the mountain of unforgiven sin which earlier repentance and faith may have swept out of the heavenly reckoning.

Jesus concludes his parable by saying: “So my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” Note here the phrase “from his heart”. The Lord bids us not only to forgive but also to forget.

Harry Whittaker

Two Free Offers

Resurrection

The apostle Paul declares that for the faithful dead there is to be, after their resurrection, a change of nature: *"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."* Our present nature is mortal and corruptible; but when the dead are raised, they are to be *"changed"*: for *"this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"*. This is the way *"death is swallowed up in victory"* (1 Cor. 15:50-54).



Fred Pearce

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