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## EXAMINING ONESELF

*“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5)*

The beginning of a New Year is an appropriate time for the Christian to review the *status quo*, not just the situation in the world but also their personal circumstances.

A review of one’s circumstances provides the opportunity to reflect on the achievements and failures of the last 12 months, that is, to “*examine oneself*”, and consequently to resolve to be more zealous in the future and to pray more earnestly for forgiveness for those things wherein one has failed.

### Standard

The purpose of an examination is to compare the specimen being examined with a standard. In the material world, if the object is new, the standard is the specifications prescribed for its manufacture, and the purpose of the examination is to check that the product meets the specifications.

If the object is not new the purpose of the examination might be to ascertain whether the object is safe to continue in service. In such cases the standard used might include the results of a previous examination in an effort to gauge the rate of change and hence whether the object is likely to remain functional until the next regular examination.

Both of those principles apply to the examination of the Christian. In the first instance there is an ultimate standard—“a specification”—to which every Christian must aspire, and that is the standard set by Jesus Christ. While no other human being can meet that standard, human failure must not discourage anyone from attempting to attain it.

Several aspects of the standard are listed in Matthew chapter 5. The standards specified in that chapter are higher than were prescribed by the Law Covenant. One example of the higher standard is articulated in verses 21 and 22: “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever*

*shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment...*”. The higher standard is that merely being angry is equated with killing.

For the Christian, the second standard—comparing the present condition with a previous one—may be applied when considering Peter’s exhortation in 2 Peter 3:17-18: “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*”. Comparing one’s present standing with that of earlier times may indicate progress or regression.

Specifically, one may ask themselves whether there has been any nurturing of the fruits of the spirit. Development of the fruits of the Spirit also entails “*putting off the old man*” (Eph. 4:22) because one cannot “*serve God and mammon*” (Matt. 6:24).

With material objects the present condition is normally worse than it was previously due to even normal usage causing “wear and tear”. However with the Christian the latest condition should be better than previously due to Christian growth. If no progress has been made, or the condition is worse than

### In This Issue

Examining Oneself	1
Present Truth	3
Israel and Ammon	6
Our Rational World	9
Sanctifying the Lord	10
And His Name Shall Be Called: Wonderful	12

previously, the Christian should realise that increased diligence is required to improve their lack of progress or halt their back-sliding, bearing in mind that the Devil is ever alert to lead the Christian astray: *"Ye therefore, beloved... beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness"* (2 Pet. 3:17). The remedy is *"to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard..."* (Heb. 2:1).

### Object being examined

In the physical world every examination pertains to only one specimen (although it might be comprised of several parts). It is the same for the Christian. The exhortation is to examine *"yourselves"*, that is self, not to examine another: *"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way"* (Rom. 14:10-13). As Jesus said: *"Judge not, that ye be not judged"* (Matt. 7:1).

Paul exhorted the Romans not to *"put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way"*. Christians must examine themselves to ensure they do not cause another *"to stumble or be offended or made weak"* (Rom. 14:21). One trait that can stumble another is a failure to *"esteem another better than oneself"* (Phil. 2:3). Such failure can discourage the other by making them feel inferior or inadequate. Every Christian's examination of themselves should include asking themselves whether all of their actions have been motivated by the desire to positively edify and not demise another (Rom. 14:19).

### Conduct

The Apostle Peter reminded his readers that they were being observed by others, and so every Christian must examine their conduct, not just when among their brethren but also in the world: *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation"* (1 Pet. 2:11-12). Participation in activities that *"war against the soul"* are to be avoided, not just because of their potential to cause back sliding in oneself, but also because of their effect on others, including the Lord's ministry: *"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain... Giving no offence in any thing, that the*

*ministry be not blamed"* (that is, discredited) (2 Cor. 6:1-3). When one is confronted with such situations the proper thing to do is to *"come out from among them"*—without passing judgment—and *"touch not the unclean thing"* (2 Cor. 6:17).

### Knowledge

The Apostle Peter also exhorted the brethren to grow in knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), and Christians are to examine themselves whether their knowledge has grown, not with the intent of *"puffing oneself up"* (1 Cor. 8:1), but that their appreciation of the Lord's leading has increased, and that they have benefited from the increase in the light that God has graciously shone on their path: *"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"* (Prov. 4:18).

Pride is one of the weapons of the Devil (1 John 2:16) and it is easy to be proud of one's knowledge. Hence it is appropriate that every examination include a review whether one's actions have always been in accord with the realization that it is by God's grace, and God's grace alone, that anyone can know God as the creator of all things, that all events in the world are in accord with His plan and that He has provided the means by which all mankind will be restored to an everlasting life of health, peace and happiness: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor. 4:6).

The temptation to be proud of one's knowledge is so powerful that Paul reminded all churches that their knowledge was a gift of God. To the Corinthians Paul wrote: *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence"* (1 Cor. 1:26-29); and to those in Ephesus he wrote: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast"* (Eph. 2:8-9).

As Hebrews 13:20-21 reads: *"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus... make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"*. May every Christian realise this privilege as they examine themselves.■

## PRESENT TRUTH

*"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12)*

The truth about God and His plan for mankind may be divided into two parts: one that has been known by His faithful ones since very early times and one that God has revealed gradually over time.

### Truth known from early times

One item of truth that God has revealed to His chosen ones since early times is the creation of mankind. Moses knew that God created mankind: *"For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth..."* (Deut. 4:32). The Psalmist, who also lived in Old Testament times, knew that God created the universe: *"The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. The north and the south thou hast created them..."* (Psa. 89:11-12). And again: *"I said, O my God... Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands"* (Psa. 102:24-25).

The verses quoted above relate to works that were already finished when the words were spoken. However God's revelation of truth was not limited to what He had already accomplished. He revealed to Abraham that He would bless all the families of the earth through Abraham's seed, something that, at Abraham's time, was future: *"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD... in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice"* (Gen 22:15-18). It is not clear if Abraham knew the details of how God would fulfil His promise, but nevertheless he believed God, as the Apostle Paul explains: *"... Abraham; who is the father of us all... staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform"* (Rom. 4:16-21). The fact that Abraham might not have known how God was going to fulfil His promise does not negate the fact that God revealed to him at least one component of His plan; the blessing of all nations.

### Truth revealed in First Century A.D.

However Paul explains that it was not until after Jesus' sacrifice and the giving of the Holy Spirit that one part of God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled: *"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the*

*children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham... That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"* (Gal. 3:6-14). The giving of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles is one part of the gospel that God *"preached to Abraham"* which was not revealed until "later".

### Present truth

The gradual revelation of God's plan has continued to this very day. One example is present day conditions: they fulfil, at least in part, what the prophet Daniel wrote more than 2000 years ago. Concerning Daniel's prophecy being fulfilled today the historian Rollins wrote: *"Can any reasonable man who makes use of his understanding ascribe such a prediction either to mere chance or to the conjectures of human prudence and sagacity? Can any light but that which proceeds from God Himself penetrate, in this manner, into the darkness of futurity and point out the events of it in so exact and circumstantial a manner? The state of the world to-day reflects the days of Lot in Sodom, and the days of Noah before the flood, and there can be no doubt that a great calamity on the human race is pending: 'And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed' (Luke 17:26-30)." Mr. Rollins deemed the present conditions so amazing that *"no reasonable man"* can contribute them to anything other than the fulfilment of the prophecies contained in God's Word, that is, that present day conditions are *"present truth"*.*

As well as the decline in moral standards, there are numerous technological developments that are fulfilling aspects of God's plan, and which were not understood in times past. One such development is the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy of *"many running to and fro and knowledge being increased"* (Dan. 12:4). The increase in the amount of travel by

common people and the speed at which they travel are phenomena that exceed the expectations of many who lived as recently as the twentieth century. Likewise the increase in medical technology and electronic communication techniques surpasses many of the expectations, even of those who worked in and were regarded as experts in those fields, as recently as forty years ago. Consequently "*knowing the present truth*" may justifiably be understood to mean, at least in part, being aware of such developments and attributing them to be part of the fulfilment of Bible prophecy.

### Peter's exhortation

Nevertheless the question may be asked: to which truths was Peter referring in 2 Peter 1:12?

Peter's objective was not to teach them anything new but to "*put them in remembrance*" of the things they already knew. Consequently it follows that Peter was not referring to the developments of the last 100 years or so, nor to the technological developments that may be inferred to be fulfilments of Daniel's prophecy, nor to the decline in moral standards prophesied by Jesus, nor to any political development of our time.

In trying to identify to what Peter was referring it is pertinent to remember that Peter wrote that they had already been given "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*". That statement was a reminder because he had told them in his first letter, that "*they had been begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

Hence, in the context of Peter's letter, the means by which they could attain eternal life was "present truth", it not being "available" nor revealed until after Jesus came to earth: "*I am come that they might have life*" (John 10:10). That the hope of eternal life was "new" and as such was "present truth" is reflected by it being a centre point of Paul's preaching: "*Paul... an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God... promised before the world began; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour*" (Titus 1:1-3).

The hope of eternal life was so "new" that, in his letter to Titus, Paul repeated it: "*That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*" (Titus 3:7). (As an aside the details of the hope of eternal life being new in Paul's day is reflected in the fact that the expression "*eternal life*" does not occur in the Old Testament.)

The hope of eternal life was not an addition to God's plan but was part of it from the beginning, having been "*promised before the world began*", but the details regarding how it was to be accomplished were not revealed to mankind until God's due time. In other words, Peter was reminding them of the change of dispensation and the consequent benefits to them.

Paul's words agree with those of the Apostle John who wrote in his epistles that the hope of eternal life was not manifest until after Jesus came to earth: "*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*" (1 John 5:11-13). Truly, at the time when Peter wrote, the hope of eternal life was "*present truth*".

### Godliness

Peter also reminded them that they had been given "*all things that pertained unto godliness*" (2 Pet. 1:3). Godliness is reverence for God and Peter reminded his readers that it is through their knowledge of their calling (2 Pet. 1:10) that they were able to revere God.

Peter considered it necessary to remind them they had been called to godliness because Israel of old discarded their knowledge of God, and hence their reverence for Him, and suffered the consequences: "*Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land... Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away... Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God...*" (Hosea 4:1-6).

In similar vein Paul wrote to the Romans reminding them of the need to retain God in their knowledge: "*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness...*" (Rom. 1:28-32).

Paul also lamented that some of the Philippians failed to retain God in their knowledge—that is, retain

reverence for God—substituting their material welfare (their “belly”) for Him: *“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)”* (Phil. 3:17-19).

Thus it is apparent why Peter declared he would not be negligent to put them in remembrance of those things and that it was by His divine power that God had revealed these things to them.

### Their calling

Peter also reminds them that they had been called: *“Him that hath called us to glory and virtue”*. God’s calling was present truth at that time but it had not been in previous times: *“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”* (Eph. 3:5). It could not be made known in earlier times because the Spirit could not be given until after Jesus was glorified (John 7:39).

Further, those to whom Peter was writing were “strangers”: *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”* (1 Pet. 1:1). Paul explains the sense of the term “strangers” in his letter to the Ephesians: *“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ”* (Eph. 2:11-13).

### Precious promises

Consequently Peter reminded them that they had received *“exceeding great and precious promises”* and particularly because it was by them that they might be *“partakers of the divine nature”*.

### The Divine Nature

There is more than one meaning that may be ascribed to the term “divine nature”.

One understanding is that it refers to the status of the glorified saints during Jesus’ reign: *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the*

*beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years”* (Rev. 20:4).

An alternate understanding is that it refers to the standard to which Christians are to aspire during their life on earth. There is no thought that they will achieve it because that would mean they become perfect while in the flesh, but it is the standard to be kept in view. However that understanding depends on the meaning of the word “partakers”. The Greek word translated “partakers” (Strong #2844) occurs only 10 times and in some verses it may be interpreted to refer to the present life and not a future life:

- *“And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been **partakers** with them in the blood of the prophets”* (Matt. 23:30);
- *“And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were **partners** (with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men”* (Luke 5:10);
- *“Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices **partakers** of the altar?”* (1 Cor. 10:18);
- *“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have **fellowship** with devils”* (1 Cor. 10:20);
- *“And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are **partakers** of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation”* (2 Cor. 1:7);
- *“Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my **partner** and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ”* (2 Cor. 8:23);
- *“If thou count me therefore a **partner**, receive him as myself”* (Philemon 17);
- *“Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became **companions** of them that were so used”* (Heb. 10:33).

While it might be unclear whether to apply the term “divine nature” in 2 Peter 1:4 to this life, both understandings should motivate the Christian to strive to put off the characteristics of the natural man: *“If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”*. (Eph 4:21-24). The call to do so is indeed known today—it is present truth. ■

## ISRAEL AND AMMON

*“And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon” (Judges 10:7).*

One of the secrets of God’s dealings with the human race, and which is known only by those whom He has enlightened, is that, as Daniel testified, He uses whomsoever He pleases to accomplish His purposes: *“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him” (Dan. 2:20-22).*

One example of God utilizing human agencies is His use of Pharaoh at the time of Israel’s exodus from Egypt: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; **that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.** For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed **for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth**” (Exod. 9:13-16).* God’s purpose was not to bring blessing on Egypt, but to show Pharaoh, and ultimately the whole world, His power. Such a motive or purpose might seem to be a trivial purpose compared to the drama of the forthcoming plagues, nevertheless that was God’s purpose, and the principle of God using comparatively extensive procedures to achieve what to the human might seem a side issue, is one characteristic that pervades several features of God’s plan.

Another example of God utilizing human agencies to accomplish His purposes is that of His use of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon: *“In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck, And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; I have*

*made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand” (Jer. 27:1-8).*

God’s use of Nebuchadnezzar to carry out such significant actions is testimony to the fact that God uses whom He pleases without reference to their standing among the nations. Some of the recorded aspects that testify that Nebuchadnezzar was God’s agent or “servant” are:

- God identified Himself as the One who made the earth, and mankind, and the beasts. Thus Nebuchadnezzar was an agent of creator God;
- It was God who gave the land to Nebuchadnezzar;
- Nebuchadnezzar’s supremacy would last until the “very time of his land”;
- God declared that He would claim He was the One who accomplished the subjection of these five kings, even though it was Nebuchadnezzar who would carry it out.

### Israel as God’s agent

God has used not only kings to carry out His plans but indeed whole nations, the nation of Israel being one: *“But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend... Thou art my servant... Fear thou not; for I am with thee... I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel... That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it” (Isa. 41:8-20).* The nation of Israel was to perform a disciplining work among the nations, not for their

own glory, but that the nations may know that God is the supreme and Almighty Power.

God also uses the transgressions of nations, as well as accomplishments, to effect His purposes. As His servant, God is going to use Israel's waywardness as one of His means of educating the heathen of the consequences of disobedience: *"And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant... Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them"* (Jer. 9:11-16). Ultimately Israel's scattering—a punishment for their waywardness—will be an instrument of instruction to themselves, and to the other nations, of the consequences of disobedience: *"So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies..."* (Eze. 39:22-23).

### Forgiveness

Consistent with His utilization of their transgressions as His means of correcting Israel, God will forgive their trespasses: *"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward".* But then follows: *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isa 1:3-4; 18). The meaning of "reason" in verse 18 is not one of Israel bargaining with God but of "being right" (Strong's H3198). The verse therefore challenges Israel to realise that, in spite of their previous transgressions, God will forgive them; that is, He will "wipe the slate clean" and their sins "shall be as white as snow".

God's forgiveness of previous transgressions is an essential part of God's plan because it is the means by which the nations will acknowledge God as a merciful God. It is also the means by which the nations will learn from their experience with sin and

death because they will be granted a "fresh start". Thus Paul declares: *"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid... God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew... (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day... I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles..."* (Rom. 11:1-11). It is because God will forgive Israel of their previous transgressions that He is able to "not cast them off".

Further, the wonders of God's plan is illustrated by the fact that Israel will not only be forgiven of their previous errors but they will be leaders among the nations: *"Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you"* (Zech. 8:22-23). The nations will recognise that Israel is one of the agents God has used to carry out His plans and that God alone is indeed the Omnipotent One.

### Ammon

Israel is not the only people whom God has used to accomplish His purposes and whose dealings are recorded in the Old Testament, Ammon is another. Judges 3:12-13 records God using Ammon, in combination with the Moabites, to punish Israel: *"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees"* (Judges 3:12-13).

On another occasion God used Ammon to punish Israel for their worship of heathen gods: *"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and... the gods of the children of Ammon... and forsook the LORD, and served not him. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed"* (Judges 10:6-9).



## God's predetermined plan

God's dealings with the Ammonites were not random events determined in hindsight, but were part of a predetermined plan: *"Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD... I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD"* (Jer. 49:1-2).

Zephaniah confirmed that God's punishment of Ammon was predetermined: *"I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts. The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen"* (Zeph. 2:8-11). It was because of Ammon's "reproach" of God's people, Israel, that Ammon will be "as Gomorrah". However it is important to remember that Ammon was merely an instrument in God's hand which He used to humble Israel when they were deviant.

## Neighbours

God has used several other nations also as instruments in His hand, but Ammon is of particular interest because they were neighbours of Israel, being on the eastern side of the Jordan River, the area now known as Jordan. According to the OECD/World Bank statistics issued in 2008, about half of the current population of Jordan are descendants of the Palestinians, and hence it is possible some of the characteristics of the nation of Jordan today are consequences of them being descendants of the people of Ammon.

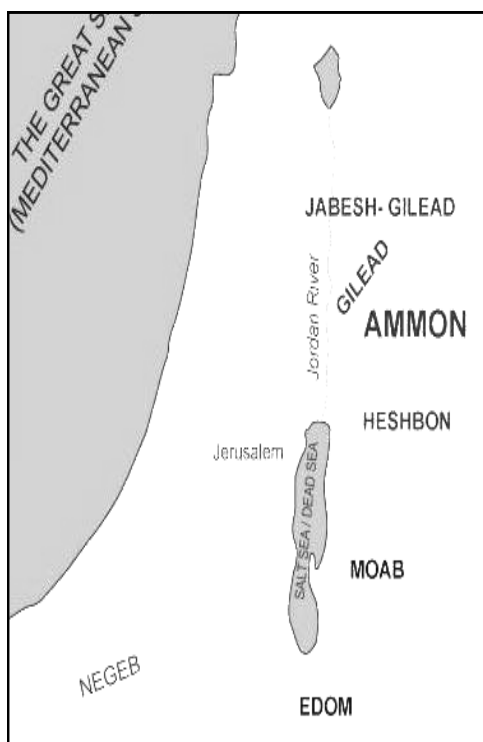
The present dispute over the occupation of the area known as the West Bank might relate to the situation that existed in Old Testament times. The Ammonites

were a warlike people: *"And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel"* (Judges 11:4), and as mentioned above, at one time *"the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim..."* (Judges 10:9). If the following excerpt from *The Jordan Times*, published on November 28, 2015, accurately reflects the current attitude of Jordan towards Israel, it seems the current attitude is similar to that held during the times of the Judges: *"Israel alone is responsible for the current wave of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories. And while one is not sure whether the events there are the spark of another Intifada, it is certain that the tragic events that are unfolding in front of our eyes are the direct result of Palestinian desperation and of Israel's*

*continued provocation, oppression and colonisation of Palestinians. Israel is making it impossible for the Palestinians to stay put. The Israeli government is building more settlements and expanding existing ones. This requires more land, which Israel is usurping from Palestinian inhabitants. It is also demolishing houses, imprisoning people for the most trivial reasons, disrupting daily life in mean ways through its numerous checkpoints, and provoking and killing motorists and pedestrians in cold blood. Its lawless settlers are burning houses and murdering peaceful Palestinian children, men and women. And its religious extremists are transgressing and endangering the holiest Islamic site in*

*Palestine, Al Aqsa Mosque, under the very eyes and protection of Israeli politicians and police. Beyond this, Israel has deliberately sabotaged the peace process in an attempt to destroy the Oslo Accords, the idea of a two-state solution and the various UN resolutions which guarantee Palestinians their right to liberty and full statehood".* It is only when one understands that all events, in the Middle East and elsewhere, are under God's control, and that when His time comes, all will be resolved according to His plan, that such animosity can be explained.

Further, just as God will disregard Israel's transgressions and has promised to gather them again in their own land, God will do likewise with the people of Ammon: *"afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD"* (Jer. 49:6). (As an aside, it is important to





note that, when the Lord is the captor, an expression of “captivity” signifies a time of blessing and not of punishment: “*Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad*” (Psa. 14:7).) Just as Israel will rejoice when God is their captor—brings them back to their land—so too will Ammon.

Additionally, along with all nations, Ammon will be subservient to Israel: “*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people... from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim... they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them*” (Isa 11:11-14).

#### God’s ways past finding out

It is the exercise of such autocratic power—at one time using a nation to punish another but then later punishing the nation that was His instrument—that, in part at least, makes God’s plans mysterious to mankind and which “justifies” cynicism, because, to the secular mind, it may be considered inconsistent and contrary to God being a “God of love”. In order to rationalize all events it is necessary to keep in mind that ALL events in the world are part of God’s overall global plan, that that plan encompasses all mankind and was “conceived” before He created the universe: “*For the creature was made subject to*

*vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*” (Rom. 8:20-21).

Just as God’s plan has been in effect since the beginning of time, so it will not be fully accomplished until the times of restitution are fulfilled, when all mankind will enjoy prosperity and peace on a scale never before experienced: “*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*” (Isa. 11:1-9).■

## OUR RATIONAL WORLD

The following is the text of a prayer given recently by Minister Joe Wright when opening a session of the Kansas Senate. When he was asked to open the new session everyone expected the usual generalities, but this is what they heard.

\* \* \*

*“Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, ‘Woe to those who call evil good’, but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it politics. We have*

*coveted our neighbor’s possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.*

*Search us, Oh, God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen!”*

\* \* \*

The response was immediate. A number of legislators walked out during the prayer in protest. In 6 short weeks, Central Christian Church, where Rev. Wright is pastor, logged more than 5,000 phone calls with only 47 of those calls responding negatively. The church is now receiving international requests for copies of this prayer from India, Africa and Korea. The question arises are there yet 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:4)?■

## SANCTIFYING THE LORD

*"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).*

In his letter to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul told them that there were no grounds for them to be proud of their knowledge of God's secrets, nor of their faith, because it was by God's grace (or favour) that they had their understanding of His plan and purpose for them: *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)... That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Eph. 2:4-10).

Paul reminded the Philippians also that it was God's work and favour that enlightened them: *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you... Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 1:3-6).

And to the Corinthians also Paul wrote: *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"* (1 Cor. 1:30). Paul declared that their wisdom was "of him", that is it was God's work. Later in his letter he emphasised that their understanding was due to God dealing preferentially with them in that He has not given His Holy Spirit to everyone: *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"* (1 Cor. 2:7-10). It was only because God had revealed His secrets to them by His spirit that they knew anything.

### Sanctification

Paul told the Corinthians that God had *"made Christ Jesus... sanctification"*, and the Thessalonians that sanctification was God's will for them: *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification..."* (1 Thess. 4:3).

Sanctification has been part of God's arrangement since creation: *"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made"* (Gen. 2:3). One provision that sanctified (separated) the seventh day was that no servile work was permitted to be carried out on that day: *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it"* (Exod. 20:8-11). "Hallowed" means the same as "sanctified"; in the Old Testament both words are translated from the Hebrew word "qâdash" (Strong's #6942) which Dr. Strong defines as "a primitive root; to be ... or pronounce or observe as clean (ceremonially or morally)". Being "clean" implies holiness, and the word "holy" quoted in Exodus 20:8 above is translated from the same Hebrew word "qâdash".

Sanctification applied not only to the Sabbath, but also to the altar in the tabernacle, and the priests involved in temple service: *"And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office"* (Exod. 29:44). They were set apart for exclusive use in those services.

Another aspect of sanctification as it applied to the tabernacle was that sanctification did not alter the qualities of the inanimate objects. Jesus reiterated this principle when He rebuked the scribes and Pharisees regarding the temple services: *"Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?"* (Matt. 23:17, 19). The point is that inanimate things could not make themselves holy; they were holy because of the function for which they were used. Likewise in the tabernacle and the temple there was a place called the holy of holies, which simply means that it was a place that was set apart and reserved for particular services.

However the sanctification of personnel was different, they were to be changed inwardly: *"For I*

*am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy*" (Lev. 11:44-45). The people were to sanctify themselves and keep themselves holy (or pure). Thus they bore some of the responsibility. The same principles apply to the Christian: their sanctification is to be a consequence of God giving them His Holy Spirit and therefore giving them insight into the secrets of His plan. The Christian is to make every effort to sanctify themselves.

### **Sanctified by the truth**

Jesus also asked God to sanctify His followers *"through the truth"* (John 17:17). It is the truth that sanctifies, that is, that enables one to stand apart from the evil in the world. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: *"...take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth..."* (Eph. 6:13-14). The truth provides the conviction that is necessary to resist the Evil One.

Paul told the Thessalonians that abstinence from evil would lead to them being sanctified in the fullest sense: *"Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thess. 5:22-23).

### **Peter's exhortation**

In view of the Christian's standing being initiated by God, and being dependent on a knowledge of His truth, which in turn is only made possible by Him having given them of His Holy Spirit, it might seem an anomaly that Peter wrote that the believer must sanctify God.

The seeming contradiction is resolved when it is realised that Peter's exhortation was not that the Christian would in any way alter or affect God's character, but that the Christian is to sanctify God in their heart; that is, the change is to occur within the Christian. The exhortation is reflected in Jesus' model prayer to His disciples: *"Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thine name"* (Matt. 6:9). The Christian is to hallow, or set apart, God's name from all else.

Indeed such a disposition was part of the Law given to Moses: *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain... Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy"* (Exod. 20:7-8). God's name was to be revered as

was the Sabbath day. Sanctifying or hallowing God's name implies recognition that God is almighty, that He is above and separate from all others. A sanctified Christian's desire is to show forth His praises in every aspect of their life. As Peter later wrote: *"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light"* (1 Pet. 2:9).

### **In practice**

Paul instructed Timothy regarding one aspect of how he was to sanctify God: *"As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm"* (1 Tim. 1:3-7). Paul's instruction contains several separate exhortations:

- He was to teach no other doctrine. Any doctrine other than that which was taught by the apostles would not bring honour and glory to God because it would not set Him apart from every other god;
- In that vein Timothy was not to engage in erroneous disputes about the nature of life and the future of the world. Likewise the Christian today is to recognise and sanctify the truth of the gospel and must not enter into debates involving man's philosophies;
- Timothy was to ensure he maintained a clear conscience, an admonition applicable to the Christian today: *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron"* (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

Sanctification requires a Christian to be careful about their activities: *"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Cor. 6:15-18).

May everyone whom God has blessed with a gift of the Holy Spirit strive to ensure they sanctify God wholly within their heart.■

# HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED: COUNSELLOR

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).*

**T**he role of a counsellor is to advise and guide another.

However there have been some mischievous counsellors in Jerusalem: *"Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city" (Eze. 11:1-2).* But it was not always so, nor will it continue to be so in the future. Isaiah 1:26 reads: *"I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city".* The counsellor to whom Isaiah's prophecy refers is the glorified Jesus Christ: *"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD... with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and... righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins..." (Isa. 11:1-5).*

In that day the people will rejoice in the counsel they receive: *"O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" (Isa. 40:13-14).*

The Lord has not needed a counsellor because He was the creator: *"For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited... I declare things that are right... there is none beside me" (Isa. 45:18-21).*

A teacher is also a counsellor; they guide and give advice to their students. The Lord will provide truthful teaching and guidance: *"Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psa. 25:8-9).*

The time is coming when mankind will seek Him as their righteous teacher: *"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills;*

*and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:1-2).*

The teacher they will seek is Jesus Christ: *"... Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. 3:21-22).*

Those whom God has blessed in this present time by giving them of His Holy Spirit are privileged to enjoy His counsel now: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psa. 32:8).*

One of the secrets of God's guidance is that He has blinded the eyes of the nation of Israel so that they will be an instrument by which He will instruct (counsel) the rest of mankind in the time prophesied by Micah and quoted above. The blindness of Israel in the present time does not mean His plan has failed, on the contrary, it will, in due time, be a testimony to the nations that God is overall and He has done things wisely. Paul explained the Lord's strategy: *"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:32-36).* *"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9).*■

## PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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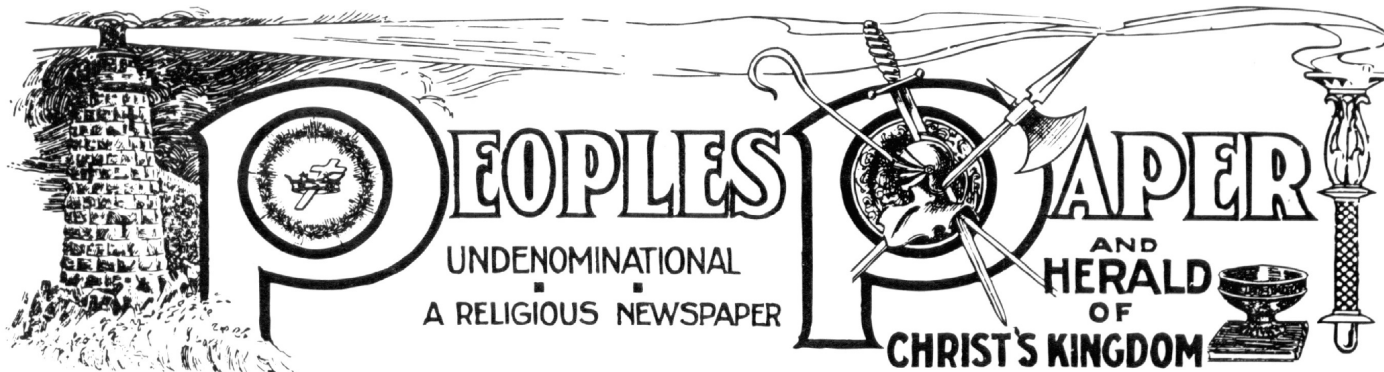
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*While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord's Word, we cannot accept responsibility for every expression used, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported*



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## CRUCIFIED AND RISEN

*“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:5-6)*

At this season of the year, the thoughts of every Christian turn to the events in Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago. There it was that the man Jesus was put to death on a Roman cross; there He suffered and died, *“the just for the unjust”* (1 Pet. 3:18); there all the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning His fleshly existence found their fulfilment; and there it was that the hopes of some initially evaporated: *“And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:18-27).

The dismay Cleopas experienced was a result of the hope Jesus’ disciples held when He was alive, that “at last” the promised Saviour had come, the One who would “redeem Israel”. And not only redeem Israel but indeed the One whom John the Baptist had earlier announced as *“the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). As Cleopas declared, in spite of Him not being honoured by

everyone, He was regarded by some as *“a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people”*. He was the basis of their hope. However while they recognized Him as *“mighty in deed and word before God”* it is apparent Jesus’ disciples did not fully understand the significance of the moment.

### A sequel to the Passover

Historians differ slightly regarding the precise time frame of the events that immediately preceded Jesus’ death. It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the minute details of the timing of events and any differences relating to them, but to focus on the significance of His death and the privilege of all who believe He was the Saviour of the World.

Approximately six days before His crucifixion Jesus instructed Peter and John *“to go and prepare the Passover”*, and as they entered the city they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water: *“And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover”* (Luke 22:8-10).

Jesus’ disciples were familiar with the Passover because it had been practised by their predecessors since Israel’s exodus from Egypt. Their exodus was

In This Issue	
Crucified and Risen	1
Taught of God	4
Not Your Own	5
Christian Discipleship	7
Hatikvah / Conventions	8
The Prophecy of Jacob’s Trouble	9
And His Name Shall :Be Called: The Mighty God	12

preceded by some amazing miracles, culminating in the angel of death passing over the Israelites' houses as identified by the blood of a lamb that the Israelites had painted on "the side posts and upper door posts" of their houses in accordance with the instructions the Lord had given to Moses: *"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever"* (Exodus 12:1-14).

The passing over of the Israelites' houses by the angel of death was not only miraculous but it also foreshadowed some of the key events in God's plan, and hence the Israelites were commanded to remember their deliverance every year, regardless of their abode: *"And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses..."* (Exodus 12:24-27).

### **Sustenance**

Israel's exodus from the land of Egypt was only the first step in them completely throwing off the burden of slavery. It was followed by a long period of meandering through deserts until they reached the land God had promised to their father Abraham. During their meandering they required food which God miraculously provided (the Israelites called it manna) and water from a rock (Exodus 16:1-15; 17:1-6). Both of those phenomena were not only significant as the means of sustaining the Israelites during their physical escape from Egyptian bondage but they also have a spiritual significance for God's people who have lived since Jesus' death. Jesus introduced them to some of this significance when He ate the Passover with them on the night before His crucifixion: *"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave*

*thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you"* (Luke 22:13-20). Jesus' reference to the Passover was an implication that His sacrifice superseded the passing over of the angel of death when Israel was delivered from their slavery in Egypt; the blood of the lamb would be replaced by His blood.

### **Deliverance**

Jesus' reference to the Passover also links the effect of the sacrifice He was about to make—the giving of His life—with the deliverance the initial Passover effected for Israel. The first Passover memorial related to the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery whereas His Passover sacrifice was the means by which the whole world of mankind will be delivered from their bondage to death: *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression... But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead... the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"* (Rom. 5:12-19).

### **The ransom**

Another concept applicable to Jesus' sacrifice is that of "ransom". A ransom is a price paid by one party for the benefit of another; in the case of the release of Israel from Egypt it was the blood of the animal on the doorposts, and in the case of Jesus it is His blood at Calvary: *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"* (1Tim. 2:5-6).

### **Remembering Him**

The annual observance of the Passover was a long-

standing practice for the nation of Israel. Likewise the instructions and procedures He gave to His disciples now have a long history of repetition, being observed by Christian people world-wide, year after year, and even more frequently in some circles. Consequently there might be a temptation to regard the procedures as a ritual and thereby lose sight of the significance of His sacrifice. All who remember His sacrifice each year and attribute Him with being the ransom for the whole world of mankind should do so in sobriety and with reflection.

And so it is that Christians remember Him by keeping the simple Memorial service which He instituted in an upper room. The Christian's memorial service is not celebrated by killing an animal but by partaking of unleavened bread and drinking of the "*fruit of the vine*" (Matt. 26:29). The unleavened bread is representative of Him who is the "*Bread of Life*" and the fruit of the vine is representative of His blood.

Through the elements He prescribed, Christians reflect on the shedding of His blood—His life—so that the whole "*creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*" (Rom. 8:21).

### **Children of God**

While the long term effect will be the deliverance of all mankind from the grave, there is a more immediate and privileged effect at the present time: "*the glorious liberty of the children of God*".

God's provision of material sustenance during Israel's wandering in the deserts foreshadowed His sustenance in a spiritual sense of those who escape bondage from Satan's realm now: those who have "*escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*" (2 Pet. 1:4). Jesus explained the spiritual significance to His disciples: "*They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life...*" (John 6:30-35).

While at the present time the effect of Jesus' death is limited to those who have been privileged to understand the details of God's plan, ultimately it will result in every human being escaping from the bondage to death. Their escape will be realised when they are resurrected from the grave: "*Marvel not at*

*this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life (Greek: zoe—life); and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (Greek: krisis—by implication justice, specifically divine law) (John 5:28-29).*

Notwithstanding their resurrection from the grave, every human being who wishes to live forever will be required to prove their loyalty to God and to live in accordance with His righteous standard: "*And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people*" (Acts 3:20-23).

### **He is risen**

Notwithstanding God's miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and all that it foreshadowed regarding Jesus' death, mankind's plight would not be any better if Jesus had not been resurrected, as Paul explained to the Corinthians: "*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you... 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... if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins... But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept*" (1 Cor. 15:1-20). So it is that Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the key to the gospel: it is only because He was raised to life that anyone can be assured that His sacrifice ransomed the whole world of mankind from the death sentence and that they will be resurrected from the grave. The hope of eternal life for all mankind is assured not because of His death but because of His resurrection.

Understanding the essential nature of Jesus' resurrection also helps one to appreciate the joy that would have come to His disciples when they realised the essence of the angelic message: "*He is not here, He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go quickly, and tell His disciples*" (Matt. 28:6,7). Just at they would have rejoiced at Jesus' resurrection so do Christians rejoice today—it is the key to all their hopes.



Christ's resurrection is the assurance that Jesus' death was not vain, that every experience of mankind is in God's hand, and that in His due time all mankind will be delivered from the present bondage of corruption: *"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God"* (Rom. 8:20-22). *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?... For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen"* (Rom. 11:33-36).

### Every year

Just as the nation of Israel was required to remember

their deliverance from slavery in Egypt by repeating the Passover ceremony every year, so also Jesus has requested Christian believers—the *"Israel of God"* (Gal. 6:16)—to remember Him every year, as Paul reminded the Corinthians: *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew (proclaim) the Lord's death till he come"* (1 Cor. 11:23-26). It is a privilege to understand the effect of Jesus' sacrifice—that indeed He brought life to light—and to remember Him at this time of the year. ■

## TAUGHT OF GOD

Teaching involves two parties: the teacher (leader) and the pupil (follower), and thus may be considered to be one leading another to an interpretation or understanding.

The process will be successful only if both are willing to participate. In earlier times the nation of Israel was not willing to be taught: *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye"* (Acts 7:51). On the contrary the Psalmist (David?) wrote: *"Teach me thy way, O LORD..."* (Psa. 27:11).

The teacher also must meet certain criteria, the first being they must know the subject they purport to teach. In this respect Jesus was in stark contrast to the scribes: *"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"* (Matt. 7:28-29).

Secondly the teacher must understand the status of their pupils and adjust the level of the concepts to be taught. Jesus knew the capability of His disciples and limited His teaching to the concepts they were able to understand: *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"* (John 16:12).

However Jesus also knew that, while His disciples were unable to comprehend some concepts, when they had received the Holy Spirit they would understand: *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance..."* (John 14:26). However He knew

that the Holy Spirit would not be given until after He had risen from the dead (John 7:39).

Likewise mankind in general cannot now understand some concepts of the gospel because God has revealed them only to those to whom He has given His holy spirit: *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom... as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"* (1 Cor. 2:7-12).

Nevertheless not all things are immediately revealed to every Christian, some being reserved until they are more mature: *"For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"* (Heb. 5:14). Hence the admonition to *"grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

### Teacher's disposition

And maybe above all, the teacher must be humble, realizing of whom they have been taught: *"... learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart..."* (Matt. 11:29). Indeed all are *"taught of God"* (John 6:45). ■

## NOT YOUR OWN

*“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For you’re bought with a price! Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s ” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*

**T**here are several factors that spur Christians on to “lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset” them, and to “run with patience the race that is set before” them (Heb. 12:1). Three of them are listed in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: that their body is part of the temple of the Holy Spirit; that it is God who has given them the Holy Spirit; and that He has bought them.

All three are enveloped by the concept that collectively they are the “body of Christ”: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). The concept of the church being the body of Christ is one of the precious truths that are a mystery to all except those to whom God has given His Holy Spirit.

There are several different illustrations in the Bible regarding the nature (character) of the Church and its development: the church is compared to sheep, to soldiers arrayed in battle, to guests at a wedding, to wheat among tares, and as wise virgins with their oil in their lamp. Each illustration is pertinent but each only illustrates the characteristic intended in that analogy; none portrays all of its characteristics. In order to obtain a complete understanding of the character of the church all pictures (or illustrations) must be combined (or aggregated). When such a complete picture is assembled, the Christian can better understand what is required of them—as body members—to “glorify God in their bodies”. In other words when they realise that they are not their own, but that they have been bought, and so are to be ministers of Him who has bought them.

One has testified: “As I walk in this narrow way, I am not my own. It implies a certain attitude, a way of looking at relationships with people and things. Going about my daily activities, it helps me determine what I should do and how I should act”.

### Temple of the Holy Spirit

The first phenomenon to realise is that the members of the church are the temple of the Holy Spirit. There are two separate aspects relating to that concept.

Firstly a temple is a dwelling place: “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be

*their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:16); God dwells in His temple.*

Hence the concept of Christians being the temple of the Holy Spirit means that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, and they should always display that Spirit and not the spirit of the Evil One: “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 John 3:23-24).

The residence of the Holy Spirit in an individual should be manifested by their conduct: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:15-20). The realization that their every movement or action should reflect that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in them presents every Christian with a challenge, and should guide them regarding their response to every situation.

### Given by God

The privilege of having the Holy Spirit is appreciated to a greater extent when it is realized that God gives His Holy Spirit only to those whom He chooses: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth... the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:7-14).

An appreciation of the privilege of having God's Holy Spirit is increased by remembering that He is the creator of the universe. There is no greater power! And it is He and no one less who has given insight into His plan for mankind. What a privilege!

### **Bought with a price**

The privilege of knowing God's plan is further accentuated by realizing that God has bought those who are His. Buying anything means one has to contribute something—most commonly it is money but it may also be time or other goods—and to realize that God has paid a price for the ones whom He has chosen should invoke a spirit of love for Him and an unquenchable desire to serve Him. The common man cannot pay a greater price than his life—*"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). The price God paid was the life of His only Son: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

### **Glorifying God**

When one realises their privilege the next challenge is to ensure that they glorify God, not just in their body but also in the spirit. The challenge applies to every one, individually.

Glorifying God in the body may be interpreted to mean by one's actions: actions that are seen by those with whom one comes in contact: *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation"* (1 Pet. 2:11-12). The Christian is "on show" 24 hours of every day; their actions are being watched closely by many, and especially by those who would despise the Faith.

Whereas glorifying God in one's body is visible to the world, glorifying God in one's spirit is an internal "hidden" matter, and might be more testing because of the temptation to regard it as such. Consequently the test is to guard one's thoughts as Paul explained to the Philippians: *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (Phil. 4:8).

One aid that assists one to comply with Paul's admonition is to keep Hebrews 4:12-13 always in mind: *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful,*

*and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"*, and that *"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he"* (Prov. 23:7).

### **Transformation into new creature**

The outcome of continuously realising that one is not one's own, that they should continuously endeavour to glorify God, both in word and in deed, is the development of a character that reflects Jesus Himself: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Rom. 12:1-2). The Christian is not left to speculate about the nature of the "will of God": *"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful"* (Col. 3:12-15).

### **Sanctification**

Glorifying God is both a lifetime work and a progressive work. It is progressive in the sense that, as one progresses, one should become more aligned with the Perfect Example, as may be inferred from Jesus' prayer: *"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:16-17).

Sanctification is God's desire for those to whom He has given His Holy Spirit: *"This is the will of God, even your sanctification"* (1 Thess. 4:3). It is a work of purification, of rooting out *"the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes"* (1 John 2:16), and *"not making provision for the flesh"* (Rom. 13:14). Such an objective is made possible by remembering that the Christian has been bought, that he is not one's own, and that he is striving to glorify God. The reward will be glorious: *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:2-3). ■

# CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Perhaps the example of the Galatians, and Paul's reminder to them, is a timely refresher for the Lord's people in these days when they are confronted by a multitude of temptations from many sources: "*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain*" (Gal. 3:1-4).

The temptation confronting the Galatians was to revert to the practices God required under the Law Covenant. Such regular practices and ceremonies, although onerous, provided a sense of security, and so they were tempted to abandon their venture into the "unknown". Paul reminded them of the vanity of the Law Covenant practices in an effort to encourage them to press on in their new found faith. And so it is that a review of the Christian's consecration vows lessens the possibility of them being overthrown by the challenges they will meet in their life, and to be dismayed as though "*some strange thing has happened unto them*" (1 Peter 4:12).

## Counting the cost

It is helpful to continuously remember that there is a cost to Christian discipleship: Jesus offered no earthly reward of ease and prosperity.

One of the costs stemming from association with Jesus is the loss of popularity: "*Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven... (but) woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you...*" (Luke 6:22-26). The disregard one receives during this present life is to be negated by comparing it with the prospect of glory, honour and immortality in God's kingdom: "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father...*" (Matt. 13:43).

The Christian should be encouraged in their walk by remembering the parable Jesus gave about a man planning to build a tower but who couldn't complete it (Luke 14:28-30). Great strength will be derived from recalling Jesus' words: "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the*

*Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works*" (John 14:10). Just as Jesus attributed His resources and ability to His Heavenly Father, so the Christian should remember that "*it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*", and further that "*He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phil. 2:13; 1:6).

## Humility

Another offset that might be employed to denounce the rebukes and challenges that come to the Christian is the realisation that they understand events in the world that are mystical to mankind generally: "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Cor. 2:14). However such a realization can lead to a superior attitude.

An attitude of pride is contrary to God's will; the Christian is to develop a spirit of humility, among fellow disciples as well as in their dealing with the world in general: "*And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me*" (Mark 9:33-37).

The Christian's growth of humility is enhanced by calling to mind that their knowledge is a gift of God, and is not their own work (in the sense in which the world of mankind would claim it). Increased knowledge should promote the development of humility, and one consequence of humility is "*esteeming others better than oneself*" (Phil. 2:3).

One example of Jesus' humility is His discussion with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1-27). Samaritans were to be avoided because they were not Jews; they were Gentiles transplanted into the land from foreign countries several centuries earlier when the 10 tribes were taken captive by Assyria in 739BC (2 Kings 17:24-29). Keeping that background in mind manifests Jesus' humility in speaking to the Samaritan woman.

### Worshipping in spirit and in truth

Jesus makes a distinction between worship in spirit and worship in truth. One might have the truth—know a great deal about God’s plan for mankind—but might not have the proper spirit. On the other hand one might have a great deal of the spirit—be humble, teachable and sincere—but not be able to show forth God’s praises because they do not have a sufficient knowledge of the truth.

A Christian’s worship must be in spirit and in truth, not with flamboyant outward show as was the case with the scribes and the Pharisees: *“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat... all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren”* (Matt. 23:1-8). Jesus’ words speak for themselves; no explanation is required.

### Supreme love for God

Finally the Christian is to have supreme love for God. There are at least two aspects that test one’s supreme love for God.

One aspect is to be prepared to forsake and fight

against all sinful and selfish tendencies of the flesh. Jesus taught such disposition in His lesson as recorded in Matthew 18:8: *“Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire”*. In this parable the hand and the foot represent aspects of one’s character that are not in accord with the Divine Will. Just as it would be a painful action to amputate part of one’s physical body, so also discarding one or more of what the Christian might regard as one their “strengths” might well cause pain. But it is a requirement.

A second aspect of supreme love for God is that one’s love must envelope those who are also walking in the narrow way: *“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ”* (Gal. 6:2). Bearing the burden of others involves being prepared to forgo one’s own preferences in order to provide assistance in any way—physical help, provision of material goods, taking time to express emotional sympathy—whether the occasion is convenient or otherwise.

Finally, preaching to another includes actions and situations other than verbal advice or explanation, and must extend to all men: *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Gal. 6:9-10).■

## HATIKVAH

The words of the *Hatikvah* (Israel’s national anthem) do not need any explanation:

*“As long as deep in the heart, the soul of a Jew yearns, and towards the East the eye looks to Zion, our hope will not be lost. The hope of 2,000 years, to be a free nation, in our land, the land Zion and Jerusalem”*

“Even during the darkest days of their existence, whether it was the Spanish Inquisition or the Holocaust, from Pogrom’s to terrorism, Jews have never lost their hope. They read their Bible and they **believe** that God’s word is true. *“But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await for it with perseverance.”* They persevered through centuries of despair, and nothing shook them from their faith. Today we are living in a day when we are seeing that HOPE fulfilled.”

*Christian Friends Of Israeli Communities 2014*

*“... let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God”*  
(Jeremiah 31:6)

## CONVENTIONS

### Queensland, Australia

The annual convention of the Nambour Bible Class will be held from **23 to 25 September 2016** at:  
Alexandra Park Conference Centre  
Mari Street, Alexandra Headlands, Qld 4572

For enquires contact:

Henry / Margaret Greenhalgh	07 5483 1157
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darryngreenhalgh@hotmail.com	
*	*

### Victoria, Australia

The annual convention of the Berean Bible Institute Inc. will be held from **20 to 23 January 2017** at:  
Camp Wilkin  
57 Noble Street, Anglesea, Victoria 3230

For enquiries contact:

Graeme / Dawn Smith	02 62414863	0411466159
Ray / Susan Charlton	03 90175759	0429172606
Adam Kopczyk	03 98794594	0411368226

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# THE PROPHECY OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

**B**efore embarking on a detailed exposition of the prophecy relating to Jacob's trouble, it might be profitable to revise the principles to be observed when addressing Bible prophecy.

Prophecy may be defined as "history written aforetime", that is, it is a prediction that is made before the event or events occur.

Prophecy is valuable for at least two reasons:

- **Authenticity**

The fulfillment of a prophecy attests the authority of the prophet. There are many false prophets in the world and the Christian is to be aware of them and ensure they are not deceived by them. As Jesus said: *"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"* (Matt. 24:24).

- **Knowing the time**

The fulfillment of a prophecy that contains a time element identifies that time. As Jesus said: *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors"* (Mark 13:28-29). Jesus used an example from their own experience—fig trees putting forth leaves—to teach them that, just as on that basis they could confidently predict that summer would come soon, so when they saw the events come to pass about which He had told them, they could be confident that His coming was nigh (Mark 13:26).

## **Fulfillment**

However in some cases it is difficult to know which events have transpired, which are transpiring and which are still future.

Some of the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament are explained in the New Testament. One example is Jesus' coming to earth: *"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord... And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"* (Luke 4:17-21).

Until Jesus explained that the prophecy recorded in Isaiah 61:1-2 foretold His coming it was unclear as to whom or when it referred. Thus, when proclaiming events in the world to be the fulfillment of prophecy, it is necessary to be assured that the parties mentioned in the prophecy and the time to which it refers are substantiated. In this vein Peter wrote: *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Pet. 1:16-21). Peter assured his readers that they could believe that Jesus was The Christ because of the events he and others had witnessed when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:17).

## **Daniel's prophecy**

Daniel was not given the details regarding how one prophecy given to him would be fulfilled: *"And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand"* (Dan. 12:8-10).

While it was not given to Daniel to understand the details of the prophecy, Jesus explained that His followers would understand: *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)"* (Matt. 24:15). Nevertheless it is possible that, while some of the details predicted in the prophecy may be confidently attributed to some past events, it is possible that some aspects are still future, and therefore unclear, even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **False prophets**

Another factor to consider is that, as Jesus also prophesied, there are false prophets: *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there*

*shall be false teachers among you...*" (2 Pet. 2:1). Peter's warning may apply not only to those who issue a prophetic statement but also to those who claim to be able to interpret prophecy.

Nevertheless, in spite of the uncertainty of interpreting some prophecies, prophecy is an important element in the bulwark of the Christian's hope. As Jesus said: *"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh"* (Luke 21:28). The test for the Christian is to ensure that, as far as God has revealed the meaning of a prophecy, they carefully, and prayerfully, compare the events in the world with the prophecies given in the Scriptures, and it is in that spirit that one should ponder the prophecy relating to Jacob's trouble.

### **Jacob's trouble**

Jeremiah 30:7 prophesies a time termed "Jacob's trouble": *"Alas, for that day is great so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it"*.

Jeremiah 30:7 contains the only reference in the Bible to the term "Jacob's trouble". Consequently there is no inspired explanation of its fulfillment and so one cannot be dogmatic regarding its interpretation. However it seems to contain some important details of God's plan and so its study is warranted.

Several Bible expositors have suggested events that might constitute its fulfillment. One suggestion is that Jeremiah 30 can be divided into eight parts:

- Verses 1 and 2 are instructions to Jeremiah to record what God had told him;
- Verse 3 declares God's purpose for Israel;
- Verses 4-9 summarise the troubles upon Israel;
- Verses 10-11 describe the outcome of those troubles;
- Verses 12-15 describe the reason for Israel's dilemma;
- Verses 16 describes God's judgment upon Israel's oppressors;
- Verses 17-22 describe God's restitution of Israel;
- Verses 23-24 describe the means by which God will bring about Israel's punishment and restoration.

### **Jeremiah 30:1-2:**

*"The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book"*.

It is unclear to which "words of the Lord" Jeremiah 30:1-2 refer: the words "have spoken" simply mean that Jeremiah wrote the words after he had received them. Some scholars interpret the words to refer to

chapter 29 which records Israel's captivity in Babylon. However chapter 29 is a letter (verse 1) and hence to require Jeremiah to record those words again seems to be superfluous. Alternatively they may be understood to refer to the words that follow in chapter 30, and hence chapter 30 may be understood to describe details of Israel's regathering at some time after their return from Babylon.

The time to which verses 1 and 2 are taken to apply is important because it determines to which time the return mentioned in verse 3 refers.

### **Jeremiah 30:3**

*"For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it"*.

If Jeremiah 30:3 refers to the return of Israel from their captivity in Babylon it strengthens faith in the prophecies of the Bible because Israel's captivity and their release after 70 years (Jer. 29:10) is recorded in secular history—the words have come to pass!

However if verse 3 is interpreted as the return of Israel to their promised land at a later time, it may be understood to relate to the time when Israel will be regathered after their scattering: *"Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations... He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD..."* (Jer. 31:10-12).

### **Jeremiah 30:4**

*"And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah"*

The naming of Israel and Judah separately in this verse might indicate that the events prophesied in this chapter occur before the reunification of the two kingdoms, and hence before the fulfilment of Ezekiel 37:15-22: *"The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the*



Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand... And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; **Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:** And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all”.

### Jeremiah 30:5

*“For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace”.*

This verse indicates that the time period of Jacob’s trouble is different from the time period prophesied in Ezekiel 38:10-11: *“Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates”.* The expression “unwallled villages” indicates a time when Israel will be living in peace; it is possible such a time of peace has not existed in Israel since Solomon’s reign: *“Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days”* (1 Chron. 22:9).

The time when Israel will be dwelling without walls or gates has not yet come. On February 10, 2016, a segment of “*ILTV English News*” (Israel Television News) reported as follows:

**“Fortress Israel”:** *Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu unveils new plan to completely surround Israel with security fencing; multi-year plan will cost several billion dollars.*

*Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu toured on Tuesday the route of the fence being built along Israel's eastern border with Jordan.. Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eizenkot and Southern District commander Eyal Zamir also participated in the tour along the route of the anticipated 30-kilometer fence. So far five kilometers of the border fence have been erected. "The advantage of building here as well as along the border with Egypt is that there are no structures every kilometer or two next to the fence, which can be served as shafts and tunnels," Netanyahu said. "This is not the situation in Gaza," he explained. "It's also*

*not the situation in Judea and Samaria, where there are erected buildings next to the separation line we are considering setting up. There, when building a fence, we need to take into account they're building tunnels underneath. Whoever said it is not important to territorialize in the modern era should go to Gaza." The Prime Minister expressed his opinion that all of Israel should be surrounded by some sort of border fence. "At the end, in the State of Israel, as I see it, there will be a fence that spans it all... Will we surround all of the State of Israel with fences and barriers... we must defend ourselves against the wild beasts," Netanyahu stressed”.*

### Jeremiah 30:6

*“Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?”.*

Since a male person cannot bear children, the expression “*A man travailing with child*” is symbolic, and may describe the nature of the distress. A similar expression occurs in Hosea 13:13: *“The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children”.* Ephraim suffered as does a woman before she gives birth.

The concept of a non-female agency giving birth to a human being also occurs in Isaiah 66:6-8: *“A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who has heard such a thing! Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? shall a nation be born in one? for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children”.* In these verses “city”, “temple” and “earth” are symbolic because none of them can give birth to a physical man child. However while the verses provide some justification for attributing a symbolic meaning to the expression a “*man travailing with child*” in Jeremiah 30:6, these verses do not provide any evidence regarding the symbolism of the expression. However there is a difference between the situations in Jeremiah 30:6 and Isaiah 66:7—in Jeremiah the man suffers the birth pangs for some time but in Isaiah the delivery occurs “*before she travailed*”.

### Inconclusive

While this discussion is inconclusive, maybe it will encourage each one to study the “*deep things*” of God’s Word (1 Cor. 2:10), until they are “*fully persuaded in their own mind*” (Rom. 14:5). May God help each one whom He has called so to do.■

# HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED: THE MIGHTY GOD

*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).*

**T**he title “mighty God” reflects the status and esteem that awaits the resurrected Jesus Christ.

When He was on earth as a human being He possessed might (that is, power) greater than all around Him: *“And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.”* (Luke 7:21-22).

Jesus also demonstrated He had power over the elements: *“And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”* (Matt. 8:25-27).

## Future power

The potential of Jesus’ future power and glory is emphasized by the fact that He performed those miracles when He was on earth as a human being—flesh and blood—and therefore *“a little lower than the angels”* (Heb. 2:9). However now He has been exalted above the angels and is sitting at God’s right hand: *“God... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things... when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels...”* (Heb. 1:1-4).

Another indication of His power is that He will rule the earth and subdue all evil; God Himself will be the only one who will not be subject to Him: *“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet... For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all”* (1 Cor. 15:24-28). His power is such that God called Him “god”: *“... unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever...”* (Heb. 1:8).

## God

The title “god” does not mean the supreme ruler of the universe, but simply one who has strength.

As the Apostle Paul wrote, there are many gods: *“As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him”* (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

## Worship

Another aspect of gods is that they are worshipped: *“They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship”* (Isa. 46:6).

Worshippers may show their subjection by kneeling, and so will the world of mankind worship Jesus Christ: *“... Christ Jesus... : Who, being in the form of God... was made in the likeness of men: And ... he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore **God also hath highly exalted him**, and given him a name which is above every name: **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil. 2:5-11).

Idols attract worship but they do not have any power: *“They that make a graven image are all of them vanity... Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?... the workmen, they are of men... they shall be ashamed together”* (Isa. 44:9-11). The fact that Jesus will be called “god” attests the esteem that will be His. ■

## PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM

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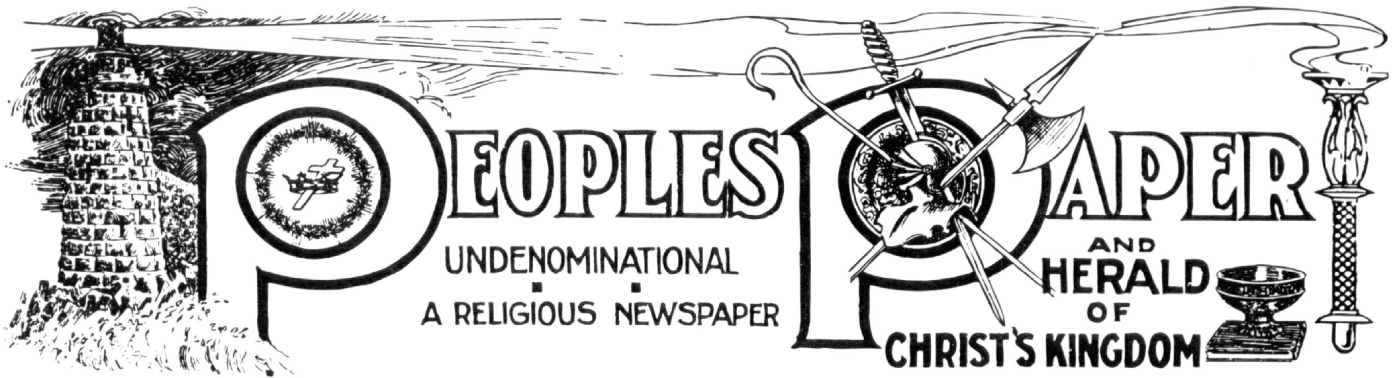
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## WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO

*“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few” (Act 17:10-12)*

The Christians at Berea were diligent in their attention to the gospel. Several aspects of their diligence are worthy of consideration.

### Received the word

The first attribute is that they *“received the word with all readiness of mind”*.

It is easy to reject out of hand anyone who is “not known”, or who is “not highly esteemed in the truth”. Those who profess to be a disciple of the Lord must not forget that God uses many agencies to sanctify His people, as recorded in Hebrews 13:2: *“be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares”*. Hence one must keep an open mind regarding the times, places and agencies that God might use to bring them greater light; they must not despise another just because the other is not known to them.

However, while being ever ready to be taught of God there is a need to be watchful because there are those who preach false doctrine. Paul counselled the elders of the church at Ephesus: *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30)*.

Paul warned that the threat would not come from “outsiders” only but also from those who were *“of their own selves”*. One temptation which confronts all leaders, and which has the potential to result in them becoming a *“grievous wolf”*, is the desire for esteem. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they had succumbed to that temptation: *“And the*

*Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:14-15)*.

Paul also denounced the yearning for prominence: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3)*.

Paul and Silas warned the Ephesians that one of the tactics of the wolves would be to *“draw away disciples after them”*; in other words, to cause division among the Lord’s people. The temptation was so strong that Paul also warned the Romans to be aware of it: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18)*. Christians must watch for any influence

### In This Issue

Whether Those Things Were So	1
Entering Into Rest	3
Israel : In God’s Time	5
Things I Must Remember	8
The Sun	9
Conventions	11
His Name Shall Be Called The Everlasting Father	12

that tends to cause dissention among God's people: *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"* Heb. 12:14-15.

The situation is made yet more complex by the requirement that the Christian be *"ready to give an answer to everyone who asks them of the hope within them"* (1 Peter 3:15), and so it is that those who are in effect drawing some away after them might be doing so because they believe they have greater light and it is their responsibility to "preach the Word".

### Ears to hear

Further the Bereans had ears that heard the message from Paul and Silas. It is God's blessing to have ears to hear, as Jesus told His disciples: *"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear"* (Matt. 13:15-16). At all times it must be remembered that having ears to hear the treasures of the gospel, is a manifestation of God's grace and is not a result of one's intellect or academic ability: *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 1:6). It is God who has begun the work; Who has given to anyone "ears to hear" and who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6) to all who hear: *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor. 2:9-14). The Christian, no matter how knowledgeable they might be, or how much they are sought because they are able to expound the gospel to others, must never forget that they have their knowledge because God has deigned to give it to them: *"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh*

*and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 16:17)

### Many teachers

Just as the Bereans heard the word that was preached unto them, so also the Christian today is to learn from their teachers: *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom. 10:14-15).

However in the 21st century there are many "teachers" of various forms.

One form of teaching is books. There might be a temptation to accept what one reads in a book because a printed and bound book has an air of authority, and one might feel that all things published in a book have been scrutinized and can be relied upon to accurately convey the truth of God's Word. It is a challenge to reject what one might read.

### Searched the Scriptures

Another attribute for which the Bereans were commended is that they not only *"heard the word"* but they did not accept what they heard just because it was Paul or Silas who had told them. On the contrary they *"searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so"*.

It is possible that searching the Scriptures presents the Christian with a greater challenge today than it did in the apostle's time due to the variety of translations (or "Versions") that have been published.

One factor that might increase the temptation to accept what one reads in one translation is that "modern versions" use language that is more aligned to the language used in general conversation and consequently it is easier to understand. However one should ask themselves the question "why do I prefer that particular translation?"

One danger is that it might not be the language used but that the understanding that may be drawn from it is more palatable, is more in line with what one would like to think.

Another temptation that might confront the student is to use one particular translation for a particular verse (because one is attracted to the concept conveyed by that translation) but to change to another for a different verse. Today the challenge of "searching the Scriptures" is indeed a challenge.

### Many of them believed

The clause *“therefore many of them believed”* (Acts 17:12) implies that they changed from their previous belief and embraced the message Paul and Silas had brought to them. It is easy to instantly dismiss any message which is different from what one currently believes. One must not reject any “new thought” just because it is new; indeed many who now rejoice in the truth of God’s Word were introduced to the message by someone who expounded, either verbally or by the written word, concepts which, at that time, were new to them.

And that is true regarding not only the first inkling of the gospel—the *“milk of the word”* (1 Cor. 3:2)—but to all levels and depths of God’s Word: *“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”* (1 Cor. 3:5-6).

Having said that, it must also be remembered the counsel Paul wrote to Timothy: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men*

*shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away”* (2 Tim. 3:1-5). An highminded disposition reflects pride and is contrary to the humility which the Christian is to develop, and Paul exhorted Timothy to turn away from those who have that disposition: *“Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”* (James 4:5-6)

Indeed, it is by God’s grace, and God’s grace alone, that anyone is able to *“grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet. 3:18).

May God bless all who strive to *“prove all things and to hold fast that which is good”* (1 Thess. 5:21).■

## ENTERING INTO REST

*“Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it... Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest lest any man should fall after the example of unbelief”* (Hebrews 4:1, 11)

**T**he promise of rest for the Christian will reach its ultimate fulfilment when they are resurrected in the first resurrection; after that time they will not be liable to death: *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power...”* (Rev. 20:6). Their immortality will be their reward for their devotion to the Lord during their earthly life: *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”* (Rev. 14:13).

Effort is required in this present life to gain the reward of eternal life at the first resurrection: *“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* (Matt. 7:12-14). The first part of Jesus’ exhortation—to do unto others as ye would have them do unto you—requires conscious effort, as Paul

wrote in his letter to the Ephesians: *“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph. 4:22-24).

In Hebrews 12, “putting off the old man” and “putting on the new” is compared to a race. *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds”* (Heb. 12:1-3). Weariness ensues the expenditure of effort.

### Rest in the present life

However there is a rest that the Christian enjoys during their present earthly life. It is not a rest from

exertion, nor a rest from the obligations God has given them. On the contrary effort is required to enter into that rest: *“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest”* (Heb. 4:11). The Christian’s rest during their earthly sojourn is a rest in comparison to the stress that burdened them before Jesus shone into their heart: *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matt. 11:28-30). The rest is available only to those who commit their welfare into God’s hand: *“Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and trust not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:5,6). Hence the Christian’s rest is a rest from anxiety and striving to gather earthly riches: *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”* (Matt. 6:19-20).

### Unbelief

Hebrews 4:11 exhorts all Christians to labour so that they do not *“fall after the same example of unbelief”*. The example is that of the Israelites’ who failed to maintain their trust in God throughout their sojourn in the wilderness after their exodus from slavery in Egypt: *“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea... But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted... Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”* (1 Cor. 10:1-11). The Israelites became doubtful of God’s on-going provision for them and sought to return to the material benefits they enjoyed in Egypt: *“And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness”* (Exodus 14:11-12).

The same challenge—maintaining faith that God will continue to care for each one of His people—has confronted the Lord’s people from early days: *“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of*

*afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used... and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward”* (Heb. 10:32-35). Maintaining the same exuberance and enthusiasm as one experienced when they *“first believed”* is part of the challenge of all those who would continue to enjoy His rest throughout their earthly life.

### Joyfully

An essential component of entering into God’s rest in this life is to joyfully comply with His will. Such joy is available only to those who believe *“... that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Rom. 8:28). If one has any feeling of resentment regarding the race God has set out for them they will not enjoy the peace (rest) that He provides for them. In this regard, Jesus is our ultimate example: *“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”* (Psa. 40:7-8). The reminder in Hebrews 12 is worthy of repetition: *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds”* (Heb. 12:2-3). In the words of another, “it is not for us to supervise the trials and difficulties which may beset us. It is for us to make an unreserved consecration of ourselves to the Lord, and then leave to Him the decision of how great shall be our trials, how great our sacrifice in following his leadings”.

### God’s witness

Another aspect of being able to rest in God’s providence in this life is the necessity of belief that God—the creator of the universe—has indeed shone in one’s heart: *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Cor. 4:6). Paul used the witness of the Holy Spirit dwelling in each one to assure the Christians at Rome: *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified”* (Rom. 8:16-17). God, who began His work in each one, *will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil. 1:6).■



# ISRAEL : IN GOD'S TIME

*"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)*

**D**uring the last 10 years or so, the events in Israel indicate that the time has come for God to start returning His favour to them: *"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes"* (Rom. 11:25-28).

There are several components of the Apostle Paul's statement that are worthy of note:

- Disregarding the events relating to Israel constitutes wisdom in one's own conceits;
- Blindness in part has happened to fleshly Israel;
- Israel's blindness will be removed when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in;
- The Deliverer will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
- Turning away their ungodliness is one of God's covenants with Israel.

To those points may be added:

- God's covenants are irrevocable (Gal. 3:13-17);
- God will honour His covenants regardless of the Israel's disobedience: *"For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant. Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant"* (Eze. 16:59-60);
- Another of God's covenants with Israel is that He will bring them back to the land He gave to Jacob: *"And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their*

*God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore"* (Eze. 37:24-28).

- When God brings Israel back to their homeland He will make Himself known to them, and the period of their isolation from God will be an example to the other nations: *"So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; **Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD"** (Eze. 39:21-29).*

## World War 1

During World War I, the Balfour Declaration expressed the intention of the British Government to create a Jewish State: *"His Majesty's government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object"*. Nevertheless it is doubtful the British Government realized that it would be another 29 years before the State of Israel would be declared (1948), and a further 19 years until Jerusalem was brought back under Israeli control (1967).

It is now 102 years since the beginning of World War 1. The passing of more than 100 years has the potential to cause many to wonder whether God's kingdom will ever be established. It is becoming a



test of faith to believe that the promises of God respecting Israel will be fulfilled. That test is greatly nullified by remembering that all of God's promises will be fulfilled **but in His time**—His appointed time—and not mankind's time: *"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry"* (Hab. 2:3).

### 1967 Six Day War

In recent times there have been reports by several Israeli news agencies—Israel Broadcast Authority, JerusalemOnLine, Arutz Sheva, and BreakingIsraelNews—that some Israeli commentators attribute Israel's victory in the Six Day War to God ("Hashem"). One such report reads: **Who Conquered Jerusalem in 1967: God or Man?** (By Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz, June 5, 2016, (<http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/69157>): *"Thus saith Hashem: I return unto Tzion and will dwell in the midst of Yerushalayim; and Yerushalayim shall be called the city of truth; and the mountain of Hashem of hosts the holy mountain."* Zechariah 8:3 (The Israel Bible™). *The 1967 Six Day War is usually described as a series of swift and daring battles that decisively saved Israel from an overwhelming enemy, but some historians claim that the incredible victory in Jerusalem... was won almost by accident, against the expressed desire of the Israeli high command. Others see the unlikely victory as coming from a higher authority, as the clearest expression of the will of God... (and) attribute the victory to a higher authority than the dictates of history*".

Commander Rafael "Rafal" Eytan, who led the paratroopers of the 35th Brigade into the holy city, **was not a religious man, but even he was affected by the event. "Apparently someone in heaven was watching over us"**.

Rabbi Dov Begon, head of Yeshiva Machon Meir, was a foot soldier during the battle for Jerusalem in 1967. He described his experience to Breaking Israel News: *"It was clearly a case of divine will, hitoruta d'la'ila (awakening from above). The entire war came at us against our will, but the battle for Jerusalem even more so. Everyone who fought in the war saw this. After 2,000 years of longing, it took three days. Before we knew it, we were on the Temple Mount, feeling like we were dreaming."* *"When Hashem brought back those that returned to Tzion, we were like unto them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the nations: 'Hashem hath done great things with these' (Psa. 126:1-2)"*.

### From 1970 onwards

Perhaps one of God's greatest secrets is His dealing

with Israel since 1967. While the nations have expended much effort trying to find a peaceful solution to "the mid-East problem"—various partition plans, Oslo Accords, Two State Solutions, and contests arising from the concept of "occupied territories"—the governments seem to be largely oblivious to the recent technological and humanitarian developments in Israel.

Additionally it is not only the secular governments who are unaware of the events, but the religious world also, including those religions whose faith and preaching is ostensibly based on the Bible, is oblivious to recent events in Israel and their relation to Bible prophecy.

Their ignorance may be excused to some extent because, in terms of area, Israel is the 100th smallest country, and as at March 2015, comprised less than 1/1000th of the world's population. However those proportions make Israel's accomplishments all the more remarkable.

On 12 September 2015 (27 Kislev, 5776), a combination of data sources, including *"The Jerusalem Post"* (<http://www.jpost.com/>), published the following data:

- the Middle East has been growing date palms for centuries. The average tree is about 18-20 feet tall (6 metres) and yields about 38 pounds (17 kg.) of dates a year. However Israeli date trees are now yielding 400 pounds/year (182 kg/year) and are short enough to be harvested from the ground or a short ladder;
- Israel's \$100 billion economy is larger than all of its immediate neighbors combined;
- Per capita, Israel has the highest percentage of home computers in the world;
- Israel has the highest ratio of university degrees to the population in the world, producing more scientific papers per capita than any other nation (109 per 10,000 people);
- The per capita income in Israel in 2000 AD was more than 17,500 USD, exceeding that of the UK;
- 24% of Israel's workforce hold university degrees, which is third in the industrialized world (after U.S.A. and Holland);
- Israel is the only country in the world that entered the 21st century with a net gain in its number of trees, made more remarkable because this was achieved in an area considered mainly to be desert;
- Israeli scientists developed the first fully computerized, no-radiation, diagnostic instrumentation for breast cancer.
- An Israeli company developed a computerized system for ensuring proper administration of medications, thus removing human error from medical treatment (7,000 patients die from treatment

mistakes every year in U.S.A. hospitals);

- An Israeli company developed the first ingestible video camera, so small it fits inside a pill, and is used to view the small intestine from the inside, detecting cancer and digestive disorders;
- In Israel 145 per 10,000 of the workforce are scientists and technicians, compared to 85 in U.S.A., 70 in Japan, and less than 60 in Germany;
- Israel absorbs one of the largest immigrant quotas per capita in the world: between 1984 and 1991, Israel airlifted a total of 22,000 “Jews at Risk” in Ethiopia to safety in Israel;
- In 2015 Israel absorbed 28,000 immigrants, including 8,000 from France. With a population of 8,300,000, that constitutes 0.3% of the population. This rate of immigration reflects Israel’s policy: the head of the Knesset’s Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs Committee, declared that *“Israel must be prepared to absorb Jews who come from France or anywhere else in the world in the wake of the ongoing terrorism... France has seen a sharp rise in anti-Semitism in recent years and led countries from which Jews made aliyah (home coming) to Israel in 2014, with almost 7,000 new French immigrants, which was more than double the 3,400 who came last year (2013)”*.

All the above were achieved while engaged in regular wars with an enemy that seeks its destruction, and an economy that has to spend more per capita on its own protection than any other country on earth.

### What lies ahead

Many of God’s prophets record God’s future dealing with the fleshly nation of Israel. So numerous are the references that to deny them is almost a denial that the Scriptures are God’s Word.

Jeremiah is one such prophet: *“And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant. Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. **I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them**”* (Jer. 9:11-16). Israel’s dispersion

amongst the nations of the world was a deliberate punishment meted out by God for their previous transgressions and acts of disobedience.

However He has not cast them off forever, but just as He punished them so also will He restore them: *“Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them”* (Jer. 32:37-42).

### Restoration

However their restoration to God’s favour will occur over a period of time. The prophet Ezekiel compares the process to what one may imagine would be the process of restoring human skeletons to life: *“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; **Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD...** Then he said unto me, **Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel...** Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD... And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD”* (Eze. 37:1-14).

Firstly the “bones”—the whole house of Israel (Verse 11)—come together, then “sinews” are added, followed by “skin” and finally breath is installed and

the Being comes to life. The “reassembled” nation of Israel will receive its breath of life—Ezekiel 37:9—when God establishes His New Covenant with them: *“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: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: 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”* (Jer. 31:31-34).

#### **A channel of blessing**

Finally the restored nation of Israel will be a channel through whom God will teach the other nations: *“In*

*those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you”* (Zech. 8:23).

The prophet Isaiah also testifies that is God’s plan for Israel and that the other nations will come to Israel to learn of God’s will for them: *“In the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”* (Isa. 2:2,3).

The promise is wonderful and the challenge to the Christian today is to have the patience that is necessary to wait for it to be fulfilled, realising that God will fulfill all His promises, both to the world and to all nations, but He will do so in His time.■

## **THINGS I MUST REMEMBER**

#### ***The high calling***

My election to the high position to which I am called is not yet made sure – the race for the prize of my high calling is still before me. I am yet in the enemy’s country, surrounded by many subtle and powerful foes. If I would be successful I must *“fight the good fight of faith, the weapons of my warfare are not carnal and I wrestle not with flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Eph. 6:12).

#### ***Faith***

Without faith I cannot please God, I cannot be justified, I cannot be an overcomer. Faith without works is dead.

#### ***Truth***

Truth is given to me for its sanctifying effect upon my heart and life. Its precious fruits should be more and more evident from day to day. I must add to my faith true excellence of character that will mark me as separate from the world and its spirit.

#### ***Virtue***

Virtue stimulates benevolence, which in turn seeks to alleviate suffering, to sympathise with sorrow, to comfort those in distress, to elevate and bless others and to assist all men as I have opportunity. For this I must gain knowledge of God’s character in order that

I may more thoroughly imitate it and more fully conform to His teaching. I must exercise self-control in all things and let my moderation be known unto all men, that is, not hasty, rash or thoughtless.

#### ***Patient submission***

I must let patience have her perfect work, that I may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. With long-suffering meekness I must earnestly strive to stem the tide of human imperfection and weakness and endeavour to regain divine likeness.

#### ***Purity***

I need to keep the instructions and principles of the Lord fresh in my mind and drink them frequently every day. By God’s grace I stand as a guide post in the world’s dark day. I must let my pure light shine. *“To the pure all things are pure...”* (Titus 1:15).

#### ***Christian growth***

I must grow in grace and knowledge; not knowledge only but also in grace. I must try to be more Christlike, more meek and gentle, more disciplined and refined, more temperate in all things and more possessed of the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

Regarding knowledge I must remember that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof and for instruction in righteousness that I may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.■

# THE SUN

**W**ithout the sun there would not be any life on planet Earth: no human, animal or vegetable life. The planet would be black and lifeless. And it is not only the existence of the sun that is critical, its position is also critical. If it were a little closer it would burn up most life forms; if it were a little further away human beings would freeze to death.

## Fire

As well as providing the warmth necessary for life, the heat of the sun can start a fire. Fire consumes materials and in that sense it is a means of destruction. It is used in the Scriptures to describe the removal of the present heavens and earth. Zephaniah 1:14-18 reads: *"The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness... And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD... Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the **fire of his jealousy**: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land".* The prophecy records that God will remove the evil with *"the fire of His jealousy"*.

The Apostle Peter uses the same symbolic language: *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and **the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up**. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein **the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved**, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"* (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Peter uses a mixture of terms to describe the removal of this present order: heavens departing with a noise, elements melting, earth being burned up, and all being dissolved. Peter comforts his readers by reminding them of the promised *"new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"*.

Likewise Zephaniah prophesied about the glorious time to follow: *"Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the*

*LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent"* (Zeph. 3:8-9). After the fire of God's jealousy has removed the dross, God will turn to the people a pure language, the outcome of which will be mankind serving him *"with one consent"*, that is, agreeably, co-operatively.

## Light

The sun is the major source of light. Before the invention of modern light sources the only sources of light were the sun and fire.

In the physical world objects can be seen by the natural eye only if they are illuminated, that is, light is coming from them, either from their own luminosity or by reflection from another source.

In the Scriptures "light" is used in both a literal and a symbolic sense. The literal sense relates to the creation of the universe: *"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day"* (Gen. 1:3-5).

One example of light being used in a symbolic sense is Jesus' declaration at His first advent: *"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12). The light that Jesus brought into the world illuminated God's purpose for mankind, which purpose had hitherto been shrouded in the dark sayings of prophecy, as Isaiah prophesied: *"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined"* (Isa. 9:2).

Another example of light being used in a symbolic sense is 2 Corinthians 4:6. Paul wrote: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"*. Paul describes the enlightenment with which each individual is blessed when they receive the Holy Spirit, and contrasts it with the darkness in which they sojourned previously.



Hebrews 10:32 uses similar terminology: *“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions”*. The term “illuminated” implies light is impacting on one and contrasts the insight God’s chosen ones now enjoy compared to the darkness in which they had dwelt previously.

Paul also states that it is the light one has received that enables them to understand the times and seasons of God’s plan: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness”* (1 Thess. 5:1-5).

### Lightning

Another effect of the sun is lightning. Lightning is a source of both heat and light. Lightning is frequently associated with thunderstorms. Thunderstorms form when a moist atmosphere is heated from below to form clouds, which interact with each other and build up static electricity. The electric charge is dissipated as lightning. At the same time, energy is dissipated in the form of thunder.

Thunderstorms are manifestations of God’s power and can invoke fear: *“Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people... The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled... The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook”* (Psa. 77:13-18).

### Anxiety

Exodus 19:16 records an instance when lightning caused anxiety to the children of Israel: *“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled”*. The Israelites were frightened by the thunder and lightning.

God used lightning to scatter David’s enemies in the days of Saul: *“The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice. And he sent out. Arrows and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them”* (2 Sam. 22:14-15). The arrows and lightning caused them to fear.

Jesus prophesied that a time would come when men would be frightened by the events in the heavens: *“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken”* (Luke 21:25-26). While the prophecy does not specifically mention lightning, the scenario is “the powers of heaven” creating fear.

### Lightning as a source of light

However lightning is not always associated with thunderstorms and fear. Matthew 24:26-27 reads: *“Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”*. The prophecy relates to Christ’s second advent but does not include any reference to thunderstorms or fear.

In the New Testament “lightning” is translated from the Greek word “astrape” which Strong’s Concordance (#796) defines simply as “lightning”. “Astrape” occurs nine times, four of which are in Revelation (4:5; 8:5; 11:19 and 16:18). In all four of these instances it is associated with thunder. However thunder is not mentioned in the other five instances: Matthew 24:27, 28:3; Luke 10:18, 11:36 and 17:24.

The lightning mentioned in Matthew 24:27 comes “out of the east”. Due to the topography and nature of a particular region some weather systems “frequently” originate in the same area and move in the same direction (for example cyclones normally move from west to east). However no data could be found that indicates that thunderstorms in Israel regularly originate in the east. That fact has led to the surmise that the lightning of Matthew 24:27 refers to something other than lightning, and the sun has been suggested because it always rises in the east. However to interpret “astrape” to mean something other than lightning means the four references to “astrape” in Revelation have to be disregarded.

Luke 17:24 also mentions lightning but does not mention thunder nor the direction from which the lightning comes: *“For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day”*. The lightning of Luke 17:24 can be seen over a wide area.

Matthew 28:3 describes the angel’s countenance as “like lightning”. There is no mention of thunder, how

widely the angel was seen nor the direction from which it appeared. Perhaps the lesson is brightness.

Another instance of “astrape” is in Luke 10:18: “*And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*”. “*Falling from heaven*” is consistent with literal lightning; it is difficult to equate it with the sun.

The remaining instance of “astrape” is in Luke 11:36 where it is translated “*bright shining*”: “*The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light*” (Luke 11:34-36). It is difficult to equate the “*bright shining of a candle*” with the sun or lightning, and so it seems that another lesson is to be learned from Luke 11:36.

The effect of the bright shining of the candle is to effect a change from being full of darkness to being full of light. Such total “occupation” of the individual may be implied to be a form of “wideness”, as in 1 John 1:5-7: “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*”.

The importance of being “*full of light*” is consistent with Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians: “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light*” (Eph. 5:8).

### Lightning flashes

Lightning occurs as a flash, that is, it is of very short duration, and hence is seen only by those who are watching at that instant. However while it is momentary, lightning is visible over a wide area; “*from one end of heaven to the other*”.

However while the lightning flash is very brief, if it causes a fire—and hence destruction—its effect is prolonged and is visible to all. Nevertheless the cause of the fire is not visible to all.

With the exception of its occurrence in Matthew 28:3—the angel that rolled back the stone—all the prophecies that relate to lightning relate to the second advent of Christ—“*so shall also the Son of man be in his day*”. Hence it is suggested that the symbolism of

lightning in the various contexts is used to convey different aspects of Christ’s coming:

- **Flashes:** The events that trigger the manifestations of His coming are each fleeting and are seen only by those who are constantly watching; the Christian is to be constantly watching;
- **Extent:** Nevertheless to those who are watching and who recognise what they see to be effects of Christ’s coming, the effects are widespread: they are not confined to one particular location: “*And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not*” (Mark 13:21);
- **Effect:** The effect of His coming is the gradual removal of national supremacy just as a fire gradually consumes its fuel; the nations are in gradual (but also rapid) decline.

Limiting the conclusions that may be drawn from the references to the sun as a source of both heat and light (and ultimately lightning) might seem to be “shallow” and deny some deeper aspects of the prophecies, but it seems to be consistent with all references and substantiated deductions. The time is coming when the whole world will dwell in the light of God’s glory, when all symbolisms will be fulfilled: “*And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it*” (Rev. 21:23-24).■

## CONVENTIONS

### Queensland, Australia

The annual convention of the Nambour Bible Class will be held from **23 to 25 September 2016** at:

Alexandra Park Conference Centre  
Mari Street, Alexandra Headlands, Qld 4572

For enquires contact:

Henry / Margaret Greenhalgh	07 5483 1157
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*	* *

### Victoria, Australia

The annual convention of the Berean Bible Institute Inc. will be held from **20 to 23 January 2017** at:

Camp Wilkin  
57 Noble Street, Anglesea, Victoria 3230

For enquiries contact:

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# HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED: THE EVERLASTING FATHER

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).*

**B**oth of the aspects of the title "Everlasting Father" are significant.

## Father

A father is one who begets another: *"Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old"* (Prov. 23:22).

God is the father of Jesus and Jesus is God's Son: *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son... For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?"* (Heb. 1:1-5). God confirmed that Jesus was His Son when Jesus was baptized: *"And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Mark 1:11).

Jesus acknowledged that God was His Father: *"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"* (John 20:17).

## God is our Father

Jesus' statement that He was going to His Father and our Father reveals that, in the spiritual sense, God is the father of those to whom He has revealed the truth: *"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures"* (James 1:18).

Likewise Paul distinguished the status of God and Jesus to the Christian: *"Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."* (1 Tim. 1:2), and again in his letter to the Colossians: *"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Col. 1:2).

Consequently the expression in Isaiah 9:6 that refers to Jesus as a father is not referring to the spiritual aspect of the believers' life at this time.

## Jesus the Father of the world

In one sense God has given the world to His Son: *"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine*

*inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession"* (Psa. 2:7-8). The concept is consistent with Jesus giving His life so mankind can have life: *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"* (John 6:51). Since Jesus may be regarded as mankind's life-giver He may be regarded as the Father of mankind.

Mankind receiving life through Jesus is in contrast to them losing life due to Adam's transgression: *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"* (1 Cor. 15:22).

## Everlasting Father

While God has given the heathen to His Son, after Jesus has restored them to life He will give the kingdom back to God: *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet"* (1 Cor. 15:24-25). Hence it might seem that Jesus will not be mankind's everlasting father.

However in the physical world the status of father cannot be removed; regardless of what one's progeny may do, they are one's children forever. Likewise in the spiritual sense Jesus, as mankind's life-giver, will be their father forever. The life that Jesus gives them will be eternal; never again will there be a requirement to "salvage" mankind from death: *"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb... And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: . And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever"* (Rev. 22:1-5).■

## PEOPLES PAPER

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## FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

*“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8)*

It is common practice for Australian companies to include a statement in their advertising material advising how long they have been in business. Usually the statement is only a minor component of the advertisement, being comprised of a few words such as “since xxxx” (xxxx being the date when they commenced operations), or “xx years experience”. The purpose of including such information is two-fold: to assure their hoped-for clients that they are “established” and hence will continue to be in business for some time hence, and to convey the impression that the company is experienced and therefore provides expert service.

The same criteria apply to the assurances given in the Bible: not only is the “information” provided of long-standing but also it has been provided by the longest standing and Highest Authority in the universe.

### Long standing

Regarding the Bible being of long standing, Psalm 90:2 reads: *“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God”* (Psa. 90:2). God existed before He created the earth; indeed it was He who formed it.

God revealed His long standing to Isaiah also: *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”* (Isa. 46:9-10).

God declared to Isaiah that is He is omnipotent—that is, all powerful—and from “ancient times” He has done all that He wished, and that He will continue to do all that He pleases, including the “things that are not yet done”, that is, those elements of His plan that have not yet been carried out.

### The prophets

To those testimonies may be added the words of the prophets, as Peter affirms: *“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables... We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Pet. 1:16-21).

Belief in the trustworthiness of the prophecies is fundamental to the Christian’s faith. As Paul testified: *“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust”* (Acts 24:14-15). The fulfilment of the things prophesied by the “holy men of God” provides the present day Christian with a bulwark for their faith, just as Paul further testified: *“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day,*

In This Issue	
From The Foundation Of The World	1
Israel’s Borders	3
The Path of the Just	4
Israel: Preparing for Messiah	8
Let Him Teach Thee	8
The Most Holy Name	9
Listening and Doing	10
Whom Jesus Loved	11
His Name Shall Be Called: The Prince of Peace	12

witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts 26:22).

### Jesus' long standing

Hebrews 1:1-2 declares that Jesus was with God at the creation of the world: "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*". Since Jesus was present with God, and in fact was the One by whom God made the worlds, He is fully aware of all of God's actions since creation.

In that vein Revelation 13:8 is significant. It declares that "*the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world*". "The Lamb" is none other than Jesus Christ: "*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). The fact that Jesus was "*slain from the foundation of the world*" is testimony that God has been "*working out His pleasure*" since He created the world; His "*pleasure*" includes Jesus' coming down to earth from heaven (John 6:35-38) and His subsequent crucifixion. Those two events were part of God's plan "*from the foundation of the world*".

### The lamb slain

Perhaps there is a deeper truth underlying Revelation 13:8, that Jesus was "*slain from the foundation of the world*". However, as it is commonly translated, Revelation 13:8 does not specify whether Jesus was "slain" before the earth was created, or whether He was not "slain" until after Adam transgressed.

The difference is significant in that it determines whether God planned Adam's transgression before He created the world or whether Jesus' sacrifice was not part of God's purpose until after Adam transgressed (which time, although later, may also be regarded as "*the foundation of the world*").

A third understanding is that God provided for Jesus' death before He created the world, but only because He "foreknew" Adam would transgress. This view may be regarded as something of a "safety net", that is, that before He created the world, God provided for mankind's redemption "should it become necessary". As such it may be contended that Jesus' death was not part of His plan from the "*very beginning*".

Arguments can be substantiated from Scripture for each of the three interpretations regarding when Jesus was "*slain*", and it is acknowledged that among the students of God's Word, all three views are held. The purpose of this article is not to be dogmatic and

dictate to any whether their understanding is correct or incorrect. The principle that determines whether an article is published in this journal is whether consideration of it will help the reader to be "*fully persuaded in their own mind*" (Rom. 14:5). If a reader agrees with the thoughts expressed in the article, it may be taken as a positive aid to their conviction; if they disagree with the understanding expressed, their consideration of the arguments presented might help them to consider the view of another and hence to better explain to others how the verse should be understood.

In either case the exposition to another should be given in the spirit exhorted by the Apostle Peter: "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*" (1 Pet. 3:15). All explanations to others should be given in a sanctified (holy) manner, remembering always that one is able to understand anything of God's plan only because God has revealed it to them, as Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth: "*...we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory... as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Cor. 2:7-14). And as Paul continues: "*For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase*" (1 Cor. 3:4-7).

Peter joins Paul in reminding his readers that the way of the Christian is one of humble progression: "*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Nevertheless it seems that no definite conclusion regarding the precise time when God planned Jesus' sacrifice can be drawn from Revelation 13:8; the Greek words used in Revelation 13:8 are not sufficiently precise.

## Calling out of the church

Another truth to which long standing testimony of the Scriptures is vital is the “calling out a people for His name” (Acts 15:14).

The Apostle Paul leaves no doubt that the calling out of the church was part of God’s plan from before the foundation of the world: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”* (Eph. 1:3-5).

An examination of the meaning of the word “before” gives added assurance that the calling out of the church was an integral part of God’s plan before He created the world.

### Before

According to Strong’s Concordance, the word “before” is translated from the Greek word “pro”, which Dr. Strong defines (#G4253) as “a primary preposition; “fore”, that is, *in front of, prior* (figuratively *superior*) to”. “Pro” occurs 46 times in the New Testament, some of its occurrences being:

- “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:12). The prophets existed before, that is, at an earlier time, than when Jesus was speaking to His disciples;

- “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark” (Matt. 24:38). Jesus was describing the situation that existed on the earth before, that is, at an earlier time, than when God sent the flood;

- “Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead” (John 12:1). Jesus went to Bethany before, that is, at an earlier time, than when He kept the passover.

Thus it seems the Greek word “pro” means before—ahead of in time—and therefore God planned the calling out of the church before He created the cosmos. For that to be the case, it seems consistent to understand that Jesus’ sacrifice was also planned before God created the cosmos.

### God’s foreknowledge

There is one feature of God’s plan that is consistent with all three interpretations regarding the time to which Revelation 13:8 refers, and that is as recorded in Isaiah 46:9-10 (quoted previously; but for convenience it is repeated here): *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”*. One can certainly hold firmly to the truth of the statement that God knows the end from the beginning, which includes the time at which God planned the necessity, role and time of Jesus’ “slaying”. ■

## ISRAEL’S BORDERS

In the secular world the borders of Israel have been the subject of heated international debate for centuries, in many cases leading to armed conflict. The comment below is an excerpt from an article by Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz on June 8, 2016. Adam is an Israeli Rabbi (the official definition of a rabbi is “a religious teacher and person who is authorized to make decisions on issues of Jewish law”—see <http://www.jewfaq.org/defs/rabbi.htm>).

\* \* \*

“Prophetic literature shows a clear and surprising picture: the Messianic age will feature an Israel that encompasses the entire world. Haters of Israel can interpret this in a negative light, but the truth is a utopian vision of universal brotherhood.

The borders of Israel cannot be described in absolute terms because they have changed frequently. Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, head of the Gal Eini religious Zionist movement, taught that there were actually

three different sets of borders described in the Bible and one that came later in history.

The final set of borders is described in prophetic teachings:

- The borders promised to Abraham in the book of Genesis, which extended from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18-21). This was much larger than any of the other descriptions in the Bible;
- The borders described in the Bible before the Israelites entered the land (Numbers 34:1-12);
- The borders established by conquest after six years of battle by those who entered the Holy Land with Joshua (Joshua 13);
- The borders of those Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile, which were substantially smaller than before the exile”.

—[www.breakingisraelnews.com/69368/global-kingdom-israel-times-messiah/KcitS5qXBfcdpzx1.99](http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/69368/global-kingdom-israel-times-messiah/KcitS5qXBfcdpzx1.99) ■

## THE PATH OF THE JUST

*“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18)*

The following article is based on the writings in 1939 of H. W. Longfellow. The question is whether the events of the last 77 years mean the light shining more brightly today.

\* \* \*

**I**n order to understand the “*path of the just*” throughout the ages it is necessary to understand that God is omnipotent—that is, all powerful—which enables Him to make promises such as He made to Abraham: *“As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be”* (Rom. 4:17-18). Even though Man’s life expectancy in those days was greater than it has been during centuries since, it seemed to Abraham that it was impossible for any man at his age to beget children. And for Sarai to bear children when she was 90 years of age seemed beyond all possibility. Nevertheless that is what God promised: *“And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?”* (Gen. 17:15-17). Nevertheless *“... Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”* (Rom. 4:3).

### Abraham’s justification

Abraham’s righteousness was the equivalent of what today is more commonly called justification; the term simply means “to be rendered innocent”. The expression does not mean that Abraham was perfect, but that God did not level his transgressions against him, as Romans 4:1-2 reads: *“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God”*. There were no grounds *“pertaining to the flesh”*—that is, deeds he did during his earthly life—by which Abraham could claim to be righteous, not even the preparations he made to kill his son Isaac. God deemed him to be righteous because he believed God. It was on the basis of his faith, and his faith alone, that God deemed him to be righteous. His belief was that God would fulfill His promise.

Likewise Noah was deemed to be a “*just man*” (Gen. 6:9). Noah is also said to be “*perfect*”. However Noah was not perfect in the literal or fleshly sense; it was because of Noah’s faith that God counted him as righteous: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Heb. 11:7). God regarded Noah’s faith to be as Abraham’s faith, as is evident from the surrounding verses in Hebrews 11: *“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went”, and “But without faith it is impossible to please him”* (Heb 11:6-8).

Paul repeated the words of Isaiah 41:26: *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one”* (Rom. 3:10). The fact that Noah was not perfect in the absolute sense is borne out by the fact that he died: *“And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died”* (Gen. 9:29).

### The glimmer of hope

Notwithstanding the fact that neither Noah nor Abraham was perfect and therefore did not gain eternal life at that stage, God has always given a glimmer of hope that it was not His plan that man should live a few years and then perish. Such a plan would mean that His plan for mankind was contrary to His purpose in sending His Son to earth to die on the Cross: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). However, so far, that glimmer of hope has been concealed from the majority of mankind.

Nevertheless the “only reason” He could consistently give any glimmer of hope is because He is omnipotent. It is because He is omnipotent that nothing could prevent His plans from being realised, and therefore Jesus’ sacrifice being successful. It was on that basis that He was able to regard Noah and Abraham as righteous: He was “able” to *“count those things which be not* (Jesus’ righteous sacrifice) *as though they were”*. As Peter declared: *“Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which*

*is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12).*

### **The glimmer of hope revealed to Eve**

On the very day the sentence of death was pronounced, and before the guilty pair had been expelled from their beautiful home—the Garden of Eden—a statement was made by the One who sentenced them, that some descendant of Eve would bruise the head of the serpent.

Eve had been instrumental in procuring the disobedience of herself and her husband. However an examination of the circumstances under which she was deceived, and consequently disobeyed, does not condemn her outright, but rather exemplifies God’s wisdom and supernatural power.

Eve’s deception was consistent with the prevailing situation. She was of human form and therefore of a lower generation than the angels: *“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psa. 8:3-6).* Even though Man was set over God’s earthly creation, the serpent was of a higher level of species: *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made” (Gen. 3:1),* and therefore was able to deceive Eve: *“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14).* Deception is when one mind is led to believe their understanding is correct when it is not correct. That situation is facilitated by one agent (the deceiver) being of a higher intellectual ability than the other (the one who is deceived).

One element necessary to appreciate God’s wisdom in the scenario in the Garden is to realise that it also demonstrates God’s omnipotence: there never was any doubt that Eve would be deceived; indeed Paul declares that it was by this incident that God would accomplish His plans, being the author of Man’s fall: *“For the creature (creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20-21).* The creation was deliberately made subject to this present situation by God; He subjected it *“by reason”* because His plan has always

been for mankind to be delivered from the ensuing bondage of corruption. And so all is in harmony with God’s grand plan—that He subjected it—because the experience will ultimately be to Man’s advantage, as Solomon declared: *“And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised (profited) therewith” (Eccl. 1:13).*

Nevertheless, in spite of all those considerations, the glimmer of hope given to Eve—that the seed would bruise the serpent’s head—was far from definite in expression of detail. In itself it indicated only that at some unspecified future time the serpent who had misled would be crushed, and his present advantage would be turned to defeat. But as to who was to be the descendant of the woman, and how He would accomplish His victory, were not stated. Neither was anything said as to the scope of the benefits, if any, that would accrue to the woman and others of her posterity. Nevertheless Adam and Eve might have inferred that this promise, indefinite as it was, gave some ground for hope that this calamity would be undone and they would be restored to their home.

The promise was made several thousand years ago, and it has not yet been fulfilled. But the delay shows that God’s appreciation of time is on a much larger scale than human’s frame. Indeed a thousand years in Man’s time is but a day in His time (2 Pet. 3:8), and so the Christian can rest assured that in His time the God of Peace will bruise the serpent.

### **Promise to Noah**

After the Flood had subsided, so that Noah and his human and animal companions could leave the ark and again inhabit the dry land, God made a promise to Noah, which later was expressed as a covenant between God and all flesh, that never again would the earth be destroyed by a flood. The perpetual succession of seed time and harvest, summer and winter on the earth was guaranteed by the covenant. In guaranteeing the perpetual existence of the earth, the ordained dwelling for the human race, it would seem that God would have it understood that inasmuch as the dwelling is to be preserved there will be human beings to occupy it. This a ray of light additional to that given to Eve: Noah’s star began to shine in the second or third (thousand year) day after the star given to Eve, so the additional light granted to Noah was not long in coming. However the darkness of sin and unbelief had become very dense indeed just before the Flood.

### **Promise to Abraham**

Some few hundred of “our years” after Noah’s star of

promise began to shine there appeared a new luminary: the promise to Abraham and the covenant God made with him embodying this great promise. To Abraham, God promised—and confirmed the same with an oath formally sworn and according to the manner then in vogue among men—that in his seed *“shall all families of the earth be blessed”*.

From Eve’s star shone the light that the serpent shall be bruised, but nothing was said of a benefit to her descendants; from Noah’s star came the light that the earthly home is to be preserved in perpetuity, now from Abraham’s star shines the light that all the families of the earth are to be blessed in one of his descendants. Verily the light shone more brightly.

But in the meantime dark clouds of error—some superstitious, some scientific, all more or less sinful—have obscured and from many have hidden, these beautiful stars of hope and promise, so that vast numbers of persons are quite in ignorance of these lights, while others who know or who have heard something of them cannot now see all clearly. From the human perspective this is very saddening and part of the mission of Christian witness is to clear away the confusion and ignorance so that many hearts may be gladdened by the gracious rays of light.

#### **Faith counted for righteousness**

Of Abraham it was said that he *“believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness”*. While this statement in so many words first occurs in connection with Abraham, it is to be understood from Hebrews 11:39-40—*“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect”*—that the same blessing was true of Abraham’s predecessors in the way of faith, back to the very first, just as it has been true since Abraham’s time of all his successors in the same way—*“the path of the just”*—to the present day. The principle of the imputation of righteousness on account of faith is indeed one of the fundamentals of God’s dealings with men, and will continue to be so until all His purpose respecting the blessing and salvation of men is completed.

The imputation of righteousness on account of faith to a person who is not righteous in himself requires the offering of a sacrifice acceptable to God; the One who imputes righteousness to the imperfect believer. This sacrifice is shown by the Apostle Paul to be that of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

But the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins had not been offered in Abraham’s time and was not offered until two thousand years later. How then could it be the basis or ground or sure foundation of that

righteousness imputed to Abraham, to Noah, to Abel, and to others in ancient times on account of their faith? The answer is that from the very foundation of the world Jesus Christ was the “Lamb slain”, and even though the sacrifice had not been offered in Abraham’s time, the fulfilment of God’s purpose was sure and steadfast, and could not be thwarted by any influence, human or spiritual. Indeed God’s power is so utopian that the successful offering of the sacrifice was never in doubt, and hence He was able to *“call those things which be not as though they were”* (Rom. 4:17). Thus He was able to justly impute righteousness to believers before the event just as He is able to impute righteousness to those who believe after the sacrifice has been offered.

#### **Promise to Moses**

Moses was one of the great men of all time; one of the majestic figures of human history. Under divine guidance, and upheld by divine power, he accomplished a feat that has never been equalled. Notwithstanding the hostility and opposition of Egypt, he led away safely, from the greatest and most cultured nation of that day, an army of about three million slaves (the children of Israel), and welded them into a nation. How little the self discipline among those people, and how much forgetfulness of the wonders that were wrought by divine power in Egypt, was soon shown by their complaints in their journey to freedom. And how little their conviction that their leader was God’s servant among them, was evident by their deliberate decision *“up, make us gods... for as for this Moses... we know not what is become of him”* (Exod. 32:1) while he was in the mount receiving instruction from the God who had brought about their miraculous deliverance.

Moses was not only the divinely appointed leader of this people: he was also their lawgiver and the mediator of the covenant formally made between God and them. In his personal character Moses was one of those men of faith to whom righteousness was imputed in anticipation of the sacrifice that was to be offered. In his official capacities Moses was a shadow of the Coming One who would supersede him as leader of God’s people. Moses had been given this promise of another leader to be raised up, and he made it known to the children of Israel so they might be watchful and expectant, ready to receive the promised one and to render Him obedience in whatever He would say to them: *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken”* (Deut. 18:15).

The star of promise given to Moses shone more brightly that it did to Eve, Noah, and Abraham. Several centuries later Peter reminded them that God

had provided a successor to Moses just as He promised: *“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities”* (Acts 3:22-26). Peter enlightened them that the promises to Abraham and Moses find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ: He is not only the Seed of Abraham, but also the One who was to be raised up *“like unto Moses”*. Peter also gave assurance that Jesus is the promised descendant of Eve who is to bruise the serpent’s head, as indeed the New Testament plainly enough states: *“... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”* (1 John 3:8).

Moses, in his official capacities—one of which was that of Mediator—was a shadow, so also was the Law Covenant which he mediated. However the Law did not have any merciful provision of justification and life for those who sought, unsuccessfully though sincerely, to commend themselves to God by its means. The Law of Moses said: *“Do and live”* (Lev. 18:5). None of the children of Israel could *“do”* therefore none could live—Jesus Christ excepted—and so all came under the curse of the Law. This curse was additional to the inherited curse—like the rest of the race—from Adam’s transgression. It required the Redeemer to hang on the tree of Calvary to remove the Adamic death sentence for both Jew and Gentile: *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”* (Gal. 3:13-14).

### **Promise to David**

When David desired to build a house for the Lord because he considered it was not fitting that he should dwell in a house of cedar while the Ark of God dwelt behind curtains, the prophet encouraged him in what must have seemed to them both an entirely worthy conception. But that same night the Lord gave the prophet a message for David, to say that David should not build the proposed house for the Lord, but his son should build it. Meanwhile the Lord promised to build David a house, not meaning a

material house, but that his “house” or family should supply the One who would sit on the throne of the Lord for ever. Through the prophet Isaiah this promise is called *“the sure mercies of David”* (Isa. 55:3). Later Paul explained that *“The sure mercies of David”* is Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and is the fulfilment of God’s promise, Jesus being the Son of David: *“And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David”* (Acts 13:32-34). The gospel ray was now shining brighter than at any time previously: the One who would bruise the serpent, God’s plan to preserve the earth forever, the means by which God’s promise to Abraham could be accomplished, Moses’ successor, and the sure mercies of David were all identified.

### **Promise through Jeremiah**

The Law Covenant, under which the children of Israel were bound and specially cursed, was *“weak through the flesh”* (Rom. 8:3), that is, none of those under it was strong enough to obey all its precepts and thus become entitled to life. Under the Law, the children of Israel were in a hopeless position of despair. They were prisoners in a pit wherein was no water; they found no way to be delivered from *“this body of death”* (Rom. 7:24).

But the Lord caused a star of promise to shine in the time of Jeremiah, the prophet, about six hundred years before Jesus’ first advent. The promise was that a New Covenant would be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, and that this New Covenant would contain every necessary arrangement for the extension of divine mercy and forgiveness to those under it, so that God would be able to completely forget their sins and iniquities: *“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: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt... But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people”* (Jer. 31:31-33).

How privileged are those whose eyes God has touched and so are able to realise that *“the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”*. ■



# ISRAEL: PREPARING FOR MESSIAH

*'Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,' says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? [Malachi 3:1 (The Israel Bible)]*

The following report is printed with the kind permission of "BreakingIsraelNews".

It reports an interview by Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz given on July 20, 2016, 12:30 p.m. (Israel time).

\* \* \* \*

Last Saturday night, Rabbi Shalom Berger, the spiritual leader of the Mishkoltz sect of Hassidic Orthodox Jews, paid a visit to Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, one of the leading rabbis of this generation.

A large crowd gathered to witness the auspicious meeting of these two great Torah authorities. Rabbi Berger brought a copy of his book on the section of the Talmud (Oral Law) dealing with Shabbat, as a gift for Rabbi Kanievsky, who studied a few pages and encouraged him to write more books of this kind.

Rabbi Berger then asked Rabbi Kanievsky if it is true that this year is especially auspicious for the coming of the Messiah.

Rabbi Kanievsky answered without hesitation. "Of course, the year, 5776, in Hebrew letters (תשע"ו) spells 'salvation' (תשועה)."

*Breaking Israel News* spoke to Rabbi Yosef Berger, the son of Mishkoltz Rabbi Shalom Berger and the rabbi of David's Tomb in Jerusalem, about Rabbi Kanievsky's declaration. Rabbi Yosef was by his father's side when the two Torah greats spoke.

Rabbi Yosef told *Breaking Israel News*, "It is generally accepted that Rabbi Kanievsky is on a high spiritual level approaching prophecy, what Jewish scholars call *ruach hakodesh* (holy spirit). He has been speaking about Messiah this year in a way he has never done before."

Rabbi Berger asked Rabbi Kanievsky what must be done to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Rabbi Kanievsky gave an unexpectedly direct and simple response: Wait.

"Now," said Rabbi Kanievsky, "All that can be done is to anticipate the imminent arrival of the Messiah."

Read more at <http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/72238/rabbi-kanievsky-mishkoltz-rabbi-can-done-wait-messiah/#KXsvwxIRx73LVdS0.99>.

## Comment:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom 11:25). Has the time arrived for God to begin opening Israel's eyes?■

## LET HIM TEACH THEE

LET Him teach thee, weary soul; (Psa 27:11.)  
Let His hands now make thee whole; (Job 5:18.)  
Let His peace thy heart control,-- (Col. 3:15.)  
Let Him teach thee.

Into paths of righteousness (Psa. 23:3.)  
Let Him lead and let Him bless; (Psa. 67:7.)  
Let Him save thee from distress,-- (Psa. 107:13.)  
Let Him teach thee.

Let Him guide thee with His eye; (Psa. 32:8.)  
Let His hand thy need supply; (Phil. 4:19.)  
Let His goodness satisfy,-- (Psa. 65:4.)  
Let Him teach thee.

Let His good Word sanctify; (John 17:17.)  
Let the furnace purify; (1 Peter 1:7.)  
Let Him say, "Fear not; 'tis I",-- (Mark 6:50.)  
Let Him teach thee.

Let Him probe thy heart within; (Psa. 66:10.)  
Let Him search out every sin; (Psa. 139:23.)  
Let the glorious light shine in,-- (2 Cor. 4:6)  
Let Him teach thee.

Let the Shepherd kindly feed; (Isa. 40:11.)  
Let Him firmly, truly lead;  
(He'll not break the bruised reed,) (Isa. 42:3.)  
Let Him teach thee.

Let Him give thee songs at night; (Job 35:10.)  
Let Him make the darkness light; (Isa. 42:16.)  
Let Him set thy spirit right,-- (Psa. 51:10.)  
Let Him teach thee.

In the tumult let Him hide, (Psa. 27:5; Psa. 31:20.)  
Let Him keep thee at His side; (Ex. 33:21.)  
Let His name be glorified,-- (Isa. 61:3.)  
Let Him teach thee.■

# THE MOST HOLY NAME

**I**n Hebrew, God's name is the tetragram: YHWH ("tetra" means four; "gram" is something written; hence four letters). According to Charles Ryrie's Study Bible it occurs more than 6500 times in the Scriptures. Consequently there is good reason to examine its meaning.

In Old Testament times, a name was not only a means of identification, but also a title that reflects the person's character. One example of a name being an identity is Nabel, whose name means fool, and as such is the target of Abigail's explanation to David: "... for as his name is, so is he, Nabel is his name, and folly is with him..." (1 Sam. 25:25).

Likewise God reveals his identity through his name. Exodus 3:14 reads: "*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you*". "AM" is translated from a primitive Hebrew root meaning "to exist, that is, be or become, come to pass". A wide variety of English words is used to convey the thought of the original Hebrew. One meaning that may be ascribed to it is "he causes to become"; a meaning that is appropriate for the creator of all things. Additionally He not only caused the physical universe and all living beings to come into existence, but He continues to cause His will and purpose to be carried out.

## YHWH

While GOD is reverentially addressed in the Bible with different titles such as "our Father", "our Lord", and other phrases such as "Alpha and Omega" and "King of Kings", the tetragrammaton YHWH is unique. It is exclusive in all Hebrew literature, both secular and religious; it is never used to refer to any other person or creature, only to God: JEHOVAH.

In the King James version the title "Jehovah" occurs only four times:

- Exodus 6:3: "*And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them*";
- Psalm 83:18: "*That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth*";
- Isaiah 12:2: "*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation*"
- Isaiah 26:4: "*Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength*".

## The King James Version

The King James Version is an esteemed translation of the Holy Scriptures. It has been known to hundreds of millions for more than 400 years as the Authorized King James Version.

For those 400 years this English translation has been a bright light. Although the King James Version was not the first translation of the Word of God into the English language, it has been referred to as the HOLY BIBLE, that is, it has been regarded as one of the most trustworthy and influential translations of all times. Because it became the Bible of the common man, it has been said that the entire English language was progressed more by this version of the Bible than any other literary work in English.

The preface of the original King James Version reads: "*Zeal to promote the common good, whether it be by devising anything ourselves, or revising that which hath been laboured by others, deserveth certainly much respect and esteem, but yet findeth but cold entertainment in the world. It is welcomed with suspicion instead of love, and with emulation instead of thanks: and if there be any hole for cavil\* to enter, and cavil\*, if it do not find a hole, will make one; it is sure to be misconstrued, and in danger to be condemned*" (\*CAVIL: "To find fault unnecessarily; raise trivial objections").

## Jehovah

While "Jehovah" is the most important name in the Earth, it has been trivialized by regarding it merely as the traditional Hebrew name for God and only one of the many names of God, rather than recognizing it as being descriptive of God's character and authority. Later translators have sought to improve on the King James Version, however many have continued to substitute "Lord" instead of the name "Jehovah".

Strong's Concordance defines the Hebrew word translated LORD (#H3068) as "(the) *self Existent* or eternal; *Jehovah*, Jewish national name of God".

Jehovah is not just one of God's many names in current use, but is His great name forever: "*And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations*" (Exod. 3:15).

In 1870 the councils of the Church of England recommended to the British Crown that a revision of

the Authorized King James Version (AKJV) be produced and so the Revised Version (RV) of the Old and New Testaments was published in 1885. It was the first officially authorized and recognized revision of the King James Version. A group of translators from the United States of America was chosen to simultaneously collaborate with the translators to produce a version in “American English”. This counterpart to the RV of 1885 is known as the American Standard Version of 1901 (ASV) and is largely identical to the Revised Version, the most noticeable difference being the restoration of “Jehovah” in approximately 7000 places, rather than LORD, to represent the Divine Name: “the tetragrammaton YHWH”.

### God’s jealousy

Jehovah is a jealous God: *“Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”* (Exod. 34:12-14).

While one may muse over the reasons why the translators have almost totally avoided using the name “Jehovah”, His name has been preserved to some extent by it being the only tetragrammaton in the Hebrew language; just as God as Creator is unique so also is His name. And the prophecy is that when God (Jehovah) reveals Himself to His chosen people of Israel, He will bring again His name of Jehovah into common use: *“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there”* (Ezek. 39:25-28).

### The Trinity

One consequence of not fully appreciating the name Jehovah is the accommodation of the concept of the Trinity. It is not claimed that the non-use of the word “Jehovah” is the cause of the term “Trinity” being introduced into Christian literature, but merely that its non-use tends to mask the authority and individuality of Jehovah and His Son Jesus Christ. On the other hand, use of “Jehovah” and conscious realisation of

its meaning is one factor that guards against the two being confused.

### Final comment

The non-use of the name Jehovah in many recent translations is made more remarkable by the fact that the significance of YHWH is well known. Regarding God’s Name, the preface of the American Standard Version of 1901 reads: *“This Memorial Name, as explained in Exodus 3:14-15, and emphasized as such over and over in the original text of the Old Testament, designates God as the personal God, as the covenant God, the God of revelation, the deliverer, the friend of Abraham, He is the Eternal One, the helper of those who are in trouble”*. Much can be made of each of the characteristics of God’s character quoted in that preface.

The uniqueness of the tetragrammaton YHWH is one means that aids the believer to appreciate that “Jehovah” is indeed the Almighty, the I AM, and hence His plan will be totally fulfilled in His time.

### A treasure

Nevertheless the Scriptures, in all its various forms and translations, is a blessing to all who are privileged to be able to peruse its pages, and to whom its message affords hope and comfort. It might be beneficial to remember that, prior to the invention of the printing press, few people had books of any kind, let alone a Bible, and even after the press was invented providing for the mass production of the King James Version, few people could afford to buy one. So precious was its pages that many bought it one page at a time and shared it with others.■

## LISTENING AND DOING

**J**ames 1:22-23 reads: *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass”*.

Those few words contain a powerful lesson:

- Listening is very important because it enables one to learn what the Scriptures say, what the speaker holds in their heart, and about oneself (are we prepared to learn?);
- Doing is important because the Christian must not *“love in word only but in deed and in truth”* (1 John 3:18). James continues: *“But wilt thou know O vain man, that faith without works is dead”* (Jas. 2:20).

James’ letter is addressed to the *“twelve tribes scattered abroad”* (James 1:1). However his exhortations apply to all believers.■

## WHOM JESUS LOVED

The crucifixion of Jesus, as recorded in John 19:26, is rich in human sentiment, so much so that it may be regarded as the moment when human emotion reached its pinnacle: *“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, ‘Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home”* (John 19:26-27).

The only man who has ever come down from heaven was being crucified. He was God’s only Son and had come to earth *“that they might have life”* (John 10:10). However, in spite of His personal agony, He cared for His earthly mother and asked one of His disciples to provide for her.

One may wonder to which disciple Jesus committed His mother’s care. The expression *“whom he loved”* might seem to indicate that there was one particular disciple whom He loved more than the others.

The expression *“whom He loved”* occurs only in John 19:26, however the expression *“whom Jesus loved”* occurs four times, all of which are in the book of John: John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20.

A similar expression—*“other disciple”*—occurs four times: John 18:16; 20:3-4 and 20:8, but no reference provides any direct reference regarding who is meant.

Hence it is unclear what significance should be given to the expressions: was Jesus’ love for that disciple greater than for any of the other disciples?

Further, if all the references are to the same disciple, what particular characteristics did He possess that made Jesus prefer him above the others?

### Textual evidence

There is little textual evidence to support the understanding that the disciple is John. The Greek words used for “love” in these verses imply a general affection, rather than a specific—or singular—love. Strong’s Concordance quotes the Greek in John 13:23, 19:26, 21:7 and 21:20 as *“agapao”* (G25), which is defined as “to love (in a social or moral sense)”. *“Agapao”* is used to describe God’s love for the world (John 3:16), Jesus’ love for *“Martha, her sister and Lazarus”* (John 11:5), and the disciples’ love for one another (John 15:17; Rom. 13:8).

Another Greek word that is translated “love” is *“phileo”* (Strong’s Concordance G5368) which is

defined as “to be a friend to (*fond of* [an individual or an object]), that is, *have affection* for (denoting *personal* attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling; while G25 is wider, embracing especially the judgment and the *deliberate* assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety: the two thus stand related... the former being chiefly of the *heart* and the latter of the *head*)”. That definition indicates the Jesus’ love for “the disciple” was not a personal love for an individual.

Notwithstanding to whom John’s record refers, one can be assured that Jesus loved them all: *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you”* (John 15:12).

### Side effect

If Jesus had a “special love” for John, or any other of His disciples, it could mean that it is acceptable for His followers to have different levels of affection for various ones in their fellowship.

Such a disposition is contrary to both Paul’s and Peter’s teaching: *“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”* (1 Cor. 12:22-27), and *“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins”* (1 Pet. 4:8).

Another over-riding principle is that all of Christ’s followers are *“... but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph. 2:19-22).

Maybe John did not wish to give any grounds for the assumption that He was preferred above any other and so did not refer to himself by name.■

## HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED: THE PRINCE OF PEACE

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).*

The last title ascribed to The Child in Isaiah 9:6—*"The Prince of Peace"*—gives an air of hope and confidence in these unsettled days when the news bulletins are filled with stories of conflict.

A prince is a leader; one who is in charge of a group, and is elsewhere translated "captain": *"So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes" (Deut. 1:15).*

### Subordinate

While they are in charge of a group, a prince is still subject to a higher power. They are not the ultimate authority, "merely" carrying out the wishes of their leader. Saul was one such prince: *"Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of, this same shall reign over my people" (1 Sam. 9:15-17).* Saul was anointed to be a prince over Israel to carry out the Lord's work.

Consistent with being subject to a higher power, the scope of a prince is limited in both the geographical area over which they have jurisdiction, and the people who live in that region. Saul's mission was to bring the nation of Israel out of the land of the Philistines.

### David a Prince

Ezekiel 34 describes the role of prince David in the re-gathering of Israel: *"And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (verses 23-25).* David's role will be such that he is called a prince.

### Michael as prince

Daniel 12:1 foretells a time when Michael will stand up and assume His power as a prince: *"And at that*

*time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book".* Thus the first event in the reign of Michael as prince will be a time of trouble and *"not of peace"* (Jer. 30:5). Revelation 12:7-8 confirms that initially there will be a battle between Michael and the dragon, with Michael being the victor: *"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven".*

### World wide dominion

Michael's realm will not be limited to the nations of Israel but will extend to the whole earth: *"In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psa. 72:7-8).*

Likewise His authority will not be limited to the nation of Israel but will be over all nations: *"Then the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28).*

While Michael's realm, as a prince, will be world wide and He will dominate over all other powers, He will be subject to God, the Ultimate Authority. ■

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