

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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Be faithful till death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2. 10 NEB)

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# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

*"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ"* (Ephesians 4. 15 NRSV).

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Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Be faithful till death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2. 10 NEB)

It is now 200 years since Queen Victoria was born on 24 May 1819. Little would her grandfather George III have thought in 1767 when his fifth child and fourth son was born that this son would produce a daughter who would wear the crown in her own right. A crown means more than just a large piece of jewellery. It also signifies royal authority and authority is not given to children but adults of age. Therefore the 1830 Regency Act was passed following the death of two of her father's elder brothers so that her mother, the Duchess of Kent would be Regent till she reached her majority at 1837. William IV died when Victoria was just days after her coming of age and was able to pass on the royal authority directly to his niece. She was crowned on 28 June 1838.

The New Testament talks about the overcoming church members being given a crown. The apostle James (1. 12) writes of the promises of a "crown of life" to those remaining faithful under trials, which is almost identical to the revelator John's words. Paul calls it "a crown of righteousness" when writing his second letter to Timothy (4. 8) having kept the faith. Peter (1 Pet. 5. 4) talks about receiving "a crown of glory" or honour.

In biblical times authority resided with a king and occasionally a queen. But that was not always so. Authority was also implied in those times to shepherds. Peter in the same verse talks of Christ in his second advent as

the “chief Shepherd”. In Zechariah it is possible to construe the use of the word shepherd to mean ruler such as King Nebuchadnezzar.

Jesus is the ultimate king with a crown, crowned with glory and honour. Ezekiel (21. 26-27) talks of him as one who would be coming whose right it would be. That right and authority would increase during his first advent having overcome sin on earth and conquered. Rather like a goal and win at an away football match is esteemed a greater achievement than a home fixture. Jesus was the ultimate overcomer.

Suffering was one way in which he overcame. It is still one way to overcome as the poem is titled ‘No cross, no crown’. William Penn the protestant reformer wrote his book of the same title while imprisoned in the Tower of London for his beliefs in the 17th Century.

There is a word of caution given by John (Rev. 3. 11 NKJV) to “hold fast...that no one may take your crown”. The overcomer must be “faithful unto death”.

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### NO CROSS, NO CROWN

*The purple grape must be crushed  
To make the sweet red wine,  
And furnace fires must fiercely burn  
The drossy gold to refine;  
The wheel must cruelly grind,  
Else where the jewel's light?  
And the steel submit to the polishing  
Or how would the sword grow bright?*

*How then, my soul, wilt thou  
The Spirit's fruits possess,  
Except thou lovingly yield thyself  
To the hand that wounds to bless?  
Then patiently let the fire  
Consume all earthly dross—  
Thou canst not hope to wear the crown,  
If thou refuse the cross!*

*Gertrude W. Seibert*

### WORLDLINESS

It is all too possible for the believer to be affected by the spirit of the age in which he lives. He can accept its maxims and adjust himself to its intellectual and social fashions. Perhaps, in the last resort, this is the real meaning of worldliness. To be a worldly Christian is to be a Christian who is unduly influenced by the spirit of the times in which he lives.

### REVERENCE

“I always put on my court robes when I enter my observatory, because when I study the stars I stand in the Court of the King of Kings”. (*Tycho Brahe*)

Magazine content. What is published is believed to have a wide interest, but everything printed may not necessarily be the opinion of the editor and his colleagues.

## A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITHFULNESS UNTO DEATH

Revelation 2. 10 (NLT) says *“Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life.”*

There are many examples of faithful servants to God in the Bible. Paul was one of those who were faithful unto death. Shortly before he was expecting to be executed by the Roman authorities he wrote to Timothy...*“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”*—2 Tim. 4. 7,8

### Remembering our Vow in Baptism

It is a serious matter and commitment to be faithful to our consecration vows. The Heavenly Father is looking for those who are wholeheartedly for Him and not “lukewarm”. In Rev. 3. 16 (NLT) the angel says, *“But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!”*. We ought to be “hot” in our zeal to do His will until the end by seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness as Jesus said. (Matt. 6. 33) That means obeying this injunction to prove ourselves worthy of a crown of life.

Our relationship to God and our service for Him should take precedence over other things in our life. A Christian cannot plan out life simply to suit themselves or to promote their own self-interests, and be pleasing to the LORD. It may seem easy to serve the LORD when all the circumstances are favourable. But we should be also willing to serve Him when conditions are unfavourable to our flesh. We are not to plan or worry about our lives like the children of the world, where we live. But how we live. We need to ask the LORD what we can do for Him under any circumstances? If we are the children of God who seek the kingdom of God first, then we would say, Dear Father, I'll go where you want me to go. I'll say what you want me to say. I'll do what you want me to do. I'll be what you want me to be. That would be the ideal mind-set of the consecrated child of God.

### Seeking The Kingdom Of God

There are two kinds of situations, one is favoured by our flesh and the other is not. Both will occur for the children of God in the LORD's

providence and thanks should be given to our LORD for both. One can look to Him for strength to bear whatever in His wisdom and love He may deem to be best for us. Paul said *“Each time he said, ‘My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.’ So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.”* (2 Cor. 12. 9 NLT)

Many times there are opportunities to serve the LORD which lead to hardship, and when such opportunities are presented we should not hesitate to accept them, regardless of what the cost may be to our flesh. This was the attitude of the apostle Paul. He had put aside every other consideration in life except that of seeking first the kingdom of God. Paul went beyond what many would have done. He argued that he had a right under the Law to expect support in material things from brethren, but Paul decided that he would not take advantage of this provision. Instead, he would work and provide for his own food and clothing, and then serve the brethren in spiritual things. Thus he would be doing double service. Paul also said in 1 Cor. 9. 27 (NLT) *“I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”* It was his desire to be used up completely in serving the LORD and the household of faith. The comfort of the flesh did not enter into his planning, but only how much he could sacrifice in carrying out the terms of his consecration vows.

### **The Race for the Crown**

1 Cor. 9. 24 (NLT) says *“Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win!”* We are to run for the prize of the high calling. (Phil. 3. 14) It is not actually a competitive race; but if we are to be victorious it is essential to “run” just as energetically as though it were. 1 Cor. 9. 25 (NLT) says *“All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize.”* It is literally true of all athletes. They must be in control in their eating, get a proper amount of rest and take the necessary exercise and training until their final victory.

### **Morning Vow**

*“What can I offer the LORD for all he has done for me?*

*I will lift up the cup of salvation and praise the LORD’s name for saving me.*

*I will keep my promises to the LORD in the presence of all his people.”*

(Psalm 116. 12-14 NLT)

This should be the everyday mind-set of the one who runs for the crown. In addition to that, one ought to keep in mind what is said in Ephesians 5.

16 (NLT) to “make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.” We need to keep up the study of the Word having fellowship with the household of faith and be a witness.

In the matter of earning a living, the Christian ought to remember that they are merely stewards. What we earn as faithful stewards should be devoted whatever is possible of it directly to the service of the LORD, the truth, and the household of faith. As said in 2 Cor. 4. 17-18 (NLT) “*For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.*”

### **Laying Down our Life**

Christians should be willing to lay down their lives in the LORD’s service regardless of the reward at the end. “*We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honour beside God’s throne.*” (Heb. 12. 2 NLT).

That joy includes an unselfish prospect of blessing all the families of the earth. The trials involved in laying down his life as the Redeemer of the world meant he had the joy of serving the Father and doing His will. How wonderful it is that this same joy is set before us. If faithful unto death, there will be the privilege of being associated with the Master in the glorious future work. And there is no reason why we should not be faithful, for the LORD has made every possible provision to this end. He has given us His Holy Spirit to guide, comfort, enlighten and strengthen us. He covers our imperfections with the robe of Christ’s righteousness (Isa. 61. 10) so that our imperfect works are acceptable to Him. He has provided the armour of truth for our protection, and we can say of the LORD. “*He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*” (Psa. 91. 2 KJV)

### **Gaining the Crown of Life**

Let us continue to run with diligence the race that is set before us, and to continue to fight the good fight of faith. Let us lay aside the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light and having been given the exceeding great and precious promises whereby we might become partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world and let us add to our faith, virtue and to virtue knowledge, and to

knowledge self-control, and to self-control, patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. Peter says that if these things be in us, we will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that we will never fall away but will be given an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12. 1; 1 Tim. 6. 12; 2 Pet. 1. 4-11)

The incorruptible crown for which we are striving is beautifully described also by Peter. He says *“we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.”* (1 Peter 1. 4-5 NLT)

RP



JESUS is the CROWN. The crown is a symbol of royal authority. Jesus as a crown shows His authority as ruling and reigning at the right hand of God, King of the universe. Jesus says...I love my people, Israel, and all who have come to Me. Every moment you give to Me and live for Me, I reward your victory and honour you with a crown of glory. You cannot see it, but others will: especially the hungry you feed, the stranger you welcome, the naked you clothe, the sick you visit ... and the prisoners you come with My pardon...

*“In that day the LORD of hosts will be  
For a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty  
To the remnant of His people,  
For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment,  
And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.”*  
(Isaiah 28. 5-6 NKJV)

*At the Name of Jesus  
Sarah Hornsby*

## PHILIP THE EVANGELIST

He first appears in those early days of the first Christian community when the believers had “all things common” but were beginning to find that sincerity of purpose in their sharing was not enough; a certain amount of system and order was necessary if anomalies were to be avoided and all who were in need to have their needs equitably met. So a working party of seven was appointed to oversee and administer this aspect of the community’s activities. Men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, is the definition in Acts 6 relating to these men. Philip was one of them, probably a young man in his twenties, zealous and energetic, highly esteemed by the brethren, and with considerable potential evangelistic ability. Whether or not he had been a follower during the lifetime of Jesus is not known, but the balance of probability is against. There had been a massive gathering of converts to the original little band of Resurrection days, and although that momentous event was still not more than a year or so in the past, by far the majority of the believers had joined since then, and it is a virtual certainty that there were men of ability among such who would speedily be marked out for special service. Thus did Philip enter upon his life of service for Christ. An active member of a virile and rapidly growing Church, he found plenty to do. “*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*” (Acts 6. 7) is how Luke’s record describes the situation. The Sanhedrin, following the advice of Gamaliel (Acts 5. 34-40) had abandoned their endeavours to stifle the new movement; for a little while the gospel of Jesus the Risen One could be proclaimed without let or hindrance, and converts were being gathered in by the thousand. It must have seemed to those ardent young workers that they were going to progress unmolested from triumph to triumph until they had fulfilled the commission the Lord had given them, and carried the message of his Kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Then the tide turned. Christianity was getting altogether too popular and the more orthodox of the Jews became restive. The while it could be considered merely a sect of Judaism it could perhaps be tolerated, but it was becoming obvious now that it was not going to be a sect, it was taking on the form of a new faith, one that would challenge Judaism and perhaps destroy it. So Philip’s colleague Stephen, the leader of the seven, was apprehended on a trumped-up charge, arraigned (indicted) before the Sanhedrin, and put to death—the first Christian in history to die for his faith. That aroused the persecuting ardour of Saul the Pharisee, afterwards



himself to espouse the faith and in his turn meet the death of a martyr; at the moment, however, his intervention sparked off the first wave of organised persecution of the Christian church and the halcyon days of care-free fellowship in the faith were gone, never to return.

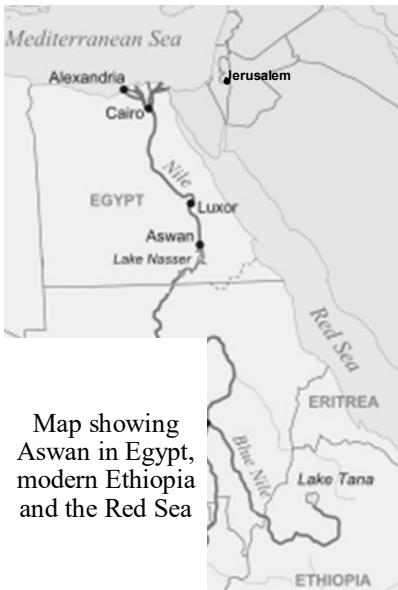
The believers in Jerusalem did one of two things; they either went underground, or they scattered away from the city. It is evident that one of Philip's temperament would not long endure a passive role "underground"; he elected instead to go away, to a place where his evangelistic fervour might find an outlet. What better choice than Samaria, only a few miles north of Jerusalem, still in the Roman province of Judea but free from the power of the priests and the Sanhedrin, for "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4. 9). "*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them*" (Acts 8. 4-5). His ministry met with instant success, and something of the enthusiastic scenes which for the past year or so had been seen in Jerusalem now began to be re-enacted in Samaria. In fact, there was much that was reminiscent of the ministry of Jesus, for at the instance of Philip the lame and the paralysed were healed and demons cast out. It would seem that what Peter and John had done immediately after Pentecost in Jerusalem Philip was now doing in Samaria; the people wholeheartedly "*believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ*" (v. 12) and demonstrated the sincerity and fulness of their conversion by undergoing baptism. There was even a false Messiah, a man named Simon—known in later tradition as Simon Magus around whom many legends have gathered—who himself abandoned the claims by which he had long deceived the Samaritans, became a convert and was baptised. How long this revival led by Philip lasted there is no means of knowing, but that it was a most effective one and constituted the second significant development in the history of the Church there is no doubt.

There was one important missing element; despite their sincerity of conversion and their baptism, the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them, and in this they were in the same position as the Apostles and the rest of the hundred and twenty original believers had been prior to the Day of Pentecost. It seems as if some outwardly perceptible demonstration had to be the portion of these Samaritans as it had been with their predecessors. The account in Acts 8 relates that when the Apostles at Jerusalem were apprised of the results accruing from Philip's work they despatched Peter and John, who, having arrived and seen the position for

themselves, engaged in prayer for the conferment of the Holy Spirit upon the converts, laid their hands upon them in the traditional manner, “*and they received the Holy Spirit*” (ch. 8. 17). It looks as if there was a visible manifestation of much the same nature as that which characterised the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and for the same reason, to convince these very immature converts of the reality of the experience. There is no indication when this took place and in fact the visit of Peter and John might have been a considerable time afterwards and perhaps even after Philip had left Samaria to execute his next commission.

That commission had to do with the Ethiopian eunuch. An angel of the Lord (not “the” angel as in the A.V. v. 26) appeared to the evangelist and told him to take a journey towards Gaza along the high road which ran south from Judea into Egypt. It is evident that by now he had returned to Jerusalem from Samaria since this was his starting point. No indication of the purpose of his journey was given; he was merely to set out along the road and head southwards. It was thus that he met the Ethiopian eunuch, somewhere on the desert road near Gaza. An important man in his own country, steward of the palace of his queen, a man of “great authority” (v. 27) as Luke puts it, he had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple and now was on his way home in his chariot—incidentally this is the only mention of a wheeled vehicle in the New Testament. He was evidently a Jew of the Dispersion; probably his family had lived in Ethiopia for several generations, and like Jews everywhere had come to occupy

positions of influence and trust. The Ethiopia here referred to was not the present country of that name but a land on the upper Nile more or less in the vicinity of the present Assuan (Aswan) Dam, adjoining the southern frontier of Egypt and often involved politically with Egypt. Ancient historians say that for a period it was ruled by a line of woman monarchs known as the *Kandaka*, a title like Pharaoh or Caesar, the “Candace” of Acts 8. This eunuch was an educated as well as God-fearing man, and now as he reclined at ease in his probably sumptuous chariot with servants to attend to the driving and to his needs, he was spending the hours of a certainly wearisome journey by reading from a scroll of the prophecy of Isaiah.



Map showing Aswan in Egypt, modern Ethiopia and the Red Sea

This gave Philip his opportunity. Trudging along by the wayside, he either heard the eunuch's voice as the chariot overtook him or else perceived the nature of the parchment he was reading. At once his evangelistic instinct came to the top and in a flash he knew why he had been sent on this mission. "*Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot*" (v. 29). With the freedom of approach so customary in the East he called out to the eunuch asking if he understood what he was reading. "*How can I, except some man should guide me?*" (v. 31) was the response. High official though he was, he manifested true humility in being prepared thus to accept guidance from an unknown wayside traveller; he invited Philip to join him in the chariot and showed him what he had been reading.

No better passage for the evangelist's purpose could have presented itself. The eunuch had been perusing Isaiah's 53rd chapter and pondering within himself as to its meaning. "Of whom speaketh the prophet this" he queried, "of himself, or of some other man"? Beginning at the same Scripture, Philip "preached unto him Jesus". (Acts 8. 35) It takes little imagination to visualise the nature of that discourse, the fervour in the evangelist's voice, the rapt attention of the other man. In that day the eunuch became conscious of a new revelation, an understanding of the Scriptures he had never known before, a meaning in life he had not dreamed existed. In that moment he found Christ, and became Christ's man. That he was a man of positive convictions and accustomed to quick decisions is shown by the immediate sequel; as they progressed on their journey the charioteer encountered one of the many rapid streams which cross the road on their way to the sea, and immediately the Ethiopian saw the possibility. "*See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*" Verse 37 of this chapter in which Philip is quoted as responding "*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*" is missing in the oldest manuscripts, including Sinaitic, Vatican and Alexandrian, appearing only in 8th century MSS, from which it is surmised that this verse was inserted by some zealous sectaries anxious to regularise the eunuch's baptism on the basis of good Church doctrine, but it is quoted in the writings of Irenaeus (A.D. 178) and Cyprian (A.D. 250) so that it may well have appeared in the earliest versions and later lost. In any case, Philip must have said something like this in response to the plea; the eunuch was duly baptised, "*and he went on his way rejoicing.*" (v. 39) Nothing more is known of him but there can be no doubt that he returned to his own country a missionary for Christ and must have had much to do with the establishment and growth of the Church in his land.

The instrument of his salvation was already away on the next assignment. A rather strange word; *“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more.... But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea”*. (Acts 8. 39-40) The words “caught away” are from *harpazo*, which in the N.T. generally has the meaning of being suddenly and violently snatched away (as in 1 Thess. 4. 17 “we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds”) although the basic principle is that of being taken by force. Agreeably to normal N.T. usage, the expression here could mean that Philip was miraculously and instantaneously translated by Divine power to Azotus (Ashdod) which could have been ten or fifteen miles distant, and there would be nothing incredible in this at a time when “miracles” of all kinds were commonplace. It would however be quite consistent with the phrase to take it to mean that under the influence of the Holy Spirit Philip was seized with an overpowering impulse to make his way at once to Azotus and so found himself there with no clear idea of how he came to be there or why he had come. In either case, he was now in Azotus and immediately began to preach Christ, continuing thus from town to town along the sea-coast until eventually he came to Caesarea, fifty miles north of Azotus, and the political capital from which the Roman governors ruled Judea. Here he seems to have settled. Nothing more is known of him until twenty-five years later when Paul and his party, en route to Jerusalem for the last time, stayed in his house for a period. There seems little doubt though that during those years he must have travelled up and down the coastal towns of Judea, always an active evangelist, preaching the faith and establishing converts, with Caesarea his permanent headquarters.

The last glimpse we have of Philip is on the occasion of Paul’s visit. Luke was one of the party and he must have acquired a great deal of his material for the early part of “Acts” from the evangelist; it is Luke too who gives him this title, here in Acts 21. 8. Luke also tells us that Philip now had four daughters “which did prophesy” (v. 9); this must mean that they also, though still in their twenties, were preachers of the word and evidently associated with their father in his ministry. Something of the evangelist’s fiery zeal and inexhaustible capacity for hard work must have reappeared in his family.

There the Scriptures leave Philip the evangelist, still in active service. Greek tradition has it that he eventually became Bishop of Tralles, not far from Ephesus in Roman Asia, but Latin tradition insists that he died at

Caesarea. The latter is more likely to be correct. Philip was not possessed of the urge, like Paul, to scour seas and mountains in far distant lands to preach Christ to the nations; he found abundant scope for his missionary zeal in the highlands and the valleys and the coastlands of Judea, perhaps never in all his life going more than fifty miles from the city where first he had accepted Christ and entered the fellowship of the Church and served awhile as one of the first seven deacons. The importance of his life's work is indicated by the title awarded him by Paul and Luke; the work of an evangelist in Paul's list of the Divine helps in Eph. 4. 11 comes next in order after apostles and prophets but before pastors and teachers. He is one of the only two—Timothy being the other—to whom the title is given in the New Testament. Perhaps that is a measure of the effectiveness of the life's ministry of this zealous and warm-hearted young soldier of Jesus Christ.

AOH

## BULRUSH

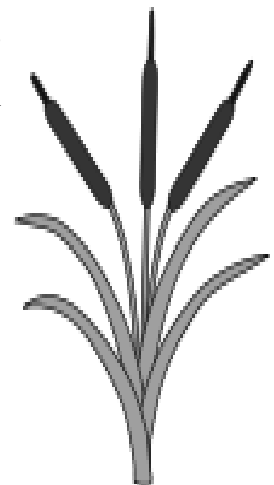
*Cyperus papyrus (Cyperaceae)*

*“When she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him” (Exodus 2. 3 NKJV)*

The ‘ark’ containing the baby Moses was a papyrus basket; in those days papyrus, or paper sedge, grew in profusion along the banks of the Nile. Moses was not alone in sailing, or floating, in a papyrus boat. *“Woe to the land...that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters”* Isaiah 18. 1-2.

A more famous use of papyrus was in paper-making. Strips of the pith were placed side by side with another layer at right angles; both layers were then pressed together to form a single sheet. The Greeks called the white pith inside the papyrus stalks *byblos* and the books composed of the pith were called *bybla*—hence the word ‘Bible’.

The papyrus has smooth three-angled stems and can reach a height of ten to sixteen feet, culminating in a plume of grass-like stalks, each bearing clusters of little brown flower heads. The general effect is often compared with that of a loose household mop.



*The Flowers and Fruits of the Bible*  
John Chancellor

## ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

### 10. The Rejected Shepherd

Zechariah's 11th chapter is the story of Israel's suffering under false shepherds, and her rejection of the true shepherd who would have fed the flock but was refused. Historically it covers the time between the period of the First Advent, pictured in symbol in chapter 9, and that of the Second Advent with its related events, shown in chapters 12-14. The background is the land of Israel as it so often appeared when suffering invasion and destruction, and the basis of the picture a pastoral one, the relation between the sheep and the shepherds, bad and good. In the end only a faithful remnant survives, but this remnant enters into the stirring events of chapters 12-14 and emerges triumphant at the end.

The curtain rises upon a scene all too familiar and infinitely sad. Judgment upon Israel because of apostasy is being executed by the agency of foreign oppressors, invading the country and desolating the land. *“Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars! Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen...! Wail, oaks of Bashan, for the thick forest has been felled! Hark, the wail of the shepherds, for their glory is despoiled!”* (Zech. 11. 1-3 RSV). Every time the Assyrians or the Babylonians invaded the land they came down from the north, first destroying the stately cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan, cutting down the standing timber for the construction of war machines or carrying it away for building purposes in their own land. Then as they swept southward the pastoral country was despoiled, the people's flocks and herds pillaged and their villages burnt. Finally came the turn of the valley of Jordan and the highlands of Judea. All this happened in consequence of Israel's apostasy from God, for thus were the terms of the Covenant. These three opening verses constitute the scenery, the stage upon which the drama is to be presented.

*“Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not”.* (vv. 4-5) This “flock of slaughter” is Israel, doomed to pillage and violence and death at the hands of alien invaders and her own rulers. This was so often the case in Israel. The people forsook the Lord and followed other gods and then found that those other gods were quite unable to protect them from their enemies. They forsook the principles of righteousness in their national life and found that oppression and injustice rebounded upon their own heads. But this time worse was to come. In the

past God had always delivered after a season. *“Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble”* recounted the Psalmist (107. 6) and he heard, *“and he delivered them out of their distresses”*. But now, says God, *“I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, ...but...I will deliver the men every one (every man) into his neighbour’s hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them”* (v. 6). This verse fixes the period to which the chapter applies; it is that following the Babylonian captivity. Up to the restoration from that captivity in Zechariah’s own day God had always delivered. Sooner or later the circumstances which gave rise to the chastisement changed, and God intervened, and the people were restored to their own land, and freed, if only temporarily until the next apostasy, from their oppressors. But not anymore. The next apostasy, with its penalty of calamity, was one that was to endure until the end, until the very time of the Kingdom and the final repentance and regathering. That apostasy had not begun at the time Zechariah received this message; the enthusiasm of the Temple rebuilding was still upon the nation and the fervency of Messianic hopes following its recent deliverance from Babylon, but it began very shortly thereafter and has continued without intermission to this day. The fulfilment of chapter 11 therefore must be held to begin not very long after the death of Zechariah and continue to the present.

From verse 7 onward the speaker is the Shepherd of Israel, the One appointed by God to lead Israel into their appointed destiny, if they would be so led. In the Old Testament He is the Divine word, the *Logos*, the Son. In the New Testament He is the Word made flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. This chapter presents him in both aspects, for although as the Divine Word He ministered to Israel in pre-Christian centuries it was as Jesus the Christ that He manifested himself to them at his First Advent and was rejected. That is what this chapter is all about.

*“So I fed the flock of slaughter, verily (therefore also) the poor (godly) of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock”* (v. 7 RV). Here is action; the Divine Shepherd enters upon a pastoral mission which for all we know might have been God’s final effort to bring Israel to a position of readiness for the opportunity which was to open before them when their Messiah came to them. The three centuries prior to the First Advent was a period of intense nationalism on the one part and fervent expectation of Messiah on the other; Judah became an independent political State for a short time and the Pharisees and Zadokites and other zealous religious sects had their rise. It was a golden age for the God-fearing element in the

nation, expecting daily the fulfilment of all that God had promised, but it was also a time which gave increasing scope for the development of a rigid, bigoted view of the Divine purposes and a narrow, arrogant attitude of superiority over other nations and peoples which ultimately overcame the better things and created the Israel which condemned and slew Jesus Christ. For three centuries the Shepherd fed the flock, a flock that was doomed to slaughter, and a few, the godly of the flock, profited, but the majority turned away. At the end of those centuries a small minority were ready to receive and accept Jesus in the way He came, and the rest, even although "all men were in expectation", were found wanting. They knew not the time of their visitation.

The shepherd's staff named "Beauty" (properly "Favour") is explained in verse 10 as picturing the Mosaic Covenant, obligatory upon Israel but so often in their history repudiated and violated. The other staff, named "Bands" (properly "Binders") is referred in v. 10 to the organic union of the peoples in the land. Both of these staves had their place in the Shepherd's ministry during those three centuries. The Covenant was reaffirmed and the sect of the Pharisees represented the national adherence to the letter of that Covenant. The pre-Babylonian division into two nations, the two tribes and the ten tribes, was ended at the return from Babylon and now the nation was one; tribal divisions were practically eliminated and the entire nation was known as Judah, the people as Jews. Never in all history had Israel enjoyed so favourable a position and opportunity to go forward in faith and expectation to meet and receive their coming Messiah and with him fulfil their age-old commission to be a light to the nations and declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

At this auspicious point the Shepherd moves to action, and describes that action. "*Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed (loathed) them, and their soul also abhorred me*" (v. 8). In the sequence of events pictured in this chapter this cutting off of the three shepherds, whatever it may mean, is prior to the rejection of the good Shepherd by the flock and their payment of thirty pieces of silver for his services (v. 12) so that it must have its application during those three centuries before the First Advent. Who or what, then, are the three shepherds thus cut off and what is the significance of the "one month"?

It is only to be expected that so obscure a phrase should be difficult of interpretation. It is said that among all the commentators and scholars involved with the Book of Zechariah there are extant some forty interpretations of the "three shepherds". Almost all confess themselves baffled by



the “one month”. There are not many expositors who have realised that this chapter constitutes a link in what might be termed a prophetic history of the period between the Restoration and the First Advent occupying chapters 9 to 11 and merging then into the events of the end of this Age in chapters 12 to 14. Once this fact is appreciated a pointer to the meaning of the three shepherds is provided. The A.V. has it “Three shepherds...” but the Hebrew text has the definite article. “*The* three shepherds...” Three specific unworthy shepherds are indicated and they are all cut off together “in one month”. This is before the First Advent. V. 15 speaks of a fourth unworthy shepherd who afflicts the flock after the Divine Shepherd has been rejected and therefore after the First Advent.

The term “shepherd” is used either for native rulers or guides, as in Jer. 2. 8; 17. 16; 23. 1-4 and Ezek. 34. 2 or for foreign rulers and oppressors, as in Jer. 6. 3; 25. 34-38 and 49. 19. Whatever man or power ruled the people was a “shepherd”. It is interesting in this connection to note that in primitive Semitic languages the same word did duty for “king”, the ruler of the people, and “shepherd”, the keeper of sheep. Since the background of this chapter is the foreign domination of Israel, and an integral part of the action is God’s declaration (v. 6) that He will deliver them into “*his neighbour’s hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them*” it seems reasonable to conclude that the three shepherds picture foreign ruling powers whose dominion over Israel, permitted by God for a season, is cut off by the Divine Shepherd preparatory to his offering his own self as king.

In such case it is easy to see in the three shepherds the three Gentile powers which by Divine permission, and within the framework of the period known as the “Times of the Gentiles”, exercised control over Israel. Babylon, Persia, Greece; these are the three shepherds whose influence hung heavily over Israel until well within the period covered by this 11th chapter, and then, more or less abruptly, disappeared from the scene.

It is customary to think of each of these powers as ruling Israel in turn and giving place at the end of its term to its successor. Politically this is so. Persia overthrew the Babylonian empire in 538 B.C. when Cyrus captured Babylon, and Greece overthrew Persia in 331 B.C. when Alexander in his turn captured Babylon. But in practice, each nation continued and various rebellions and other military adventures make it difficult to say with precision just when each one was truly superseded by the next. In point of fact all three existed in the days of Zechariah and all

three exerted various degrees of influence over Judah. This is where the allusion to the three shepherds being cut off "*in one month*" might have its place. Daniel, in his vision of the four world-empires, says (Dan. 7. 12) "*As concerning the rest of the (wild) beasts, (i.e. the three representing Babylon, Persia and Greece) they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time*". True to this, Babylon, both city and nation, continued after its capture by Cyrus in 538 B.C., until the building of Seleucia on the Tigris by the successor of Alexander about 281 B.C. attracted commerce from the city. Antiochus, the next Greek ruler, rebuilt the old temple in Babylon but the city was doomed and it vanished between 250 and 200 B.C. and this marked the full end of the old Babylonian people and power. The last Seleucid king of the second empire, Persia, was defeated in 236 B.C. by Arsaces I, founder of the Parthian empire and this marked the end of ancient Persia (the modern State and nation of that name developed long afterwards, in the early centuries of the Christian era). Greece, the last of the three powers, was increasingly harassed by the rising power of Rome and lost its independence about 228 to 208 B.C. Thus in a practical sense all three world powers, Babylon, Persia and Greece, came to an end, were "cut off", as Zechariah has it, during the third B.C. century. This century can therefore quite reasonably be spoken of as the "one month" of judgment on these powers. A similar usage is met with in Hos. 5. 6-7 where the unfaithful of Israel "*go with their flocks and their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them. They have dealt treacherously against the LORD...now shall a month devour them with their portions*". The RSV renders that final expression "Now the new moon shall devour them with their fields" and the meaning seems to be that the dawn of a new month ushers in a period of judgment and destruction on those who have incurred the Divine displeasure in past time. The month as a short time period compared with the year as a normal time measurement is reminiscent of our Lord's words "Except those days should be shortened (cut short), there should no flesh be saved". (Matt. 24. 22) Judgment, swift, sure and final, is pictured as taking place within the confines of one month. And in thus cutting off the three oppressive shepherds the Shepherd of Israel expresses his loathing for them, and they for him, as in verse 8.

So the Shepherd turns to his flock, the flock that is still rebellious and is in consequence doomed to destruction. Perhaps it is at this point we should begin to see the events of the First Advent taking shape. The history of the period immediately before the Advent shows that the nation as a whole was in no condition to meet or to accept its Lord. The work of the

Shepherd for three hundred years, since the golden days of the Restoration, of Zechariah, Ezra and Nehemiah, had produced a faithful “remnant” who were ready for him, but the rest were unworthy and fit only for rejection. So we have verse 9 *“Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another”*. That prophecy had its fulfilment in real history when Jesus pronounced over Jerusalem its doom *“How often would I have gathered thy children (you)...as a hen gathereth her chickens...and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”*. (Matt. 23. 37-38). And at the same time came the reality of verse 10 and 11 *“I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it assunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor (godly) of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD”*. Jesus cut that staff asunder and abrogated (cancelled) the covenant when he declared to the Scribes and Pharisees *“The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof”* (Matt. 21. 43).

Almost immediately the challenge came to Israel of the First Advent formally and finally to accept or to reject the Shepherd. *“If ye think good, give me my price”* (v. 12). For three and a half years He had moved amongst them, doing good and offering them the Kingdom of God. Perhaps the point at which this invitation applies is at the end of Jesus’ ministry when He presented himself in formal fashion as Israel’s king, riding into Jerusalem *“upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”* (Zech. 9. 9) and despite the immediate cries of joy and enthusiasm was within a few days rejected with the cry *“not this man, but Barabbas”*. (John 18. 40) The token of that rejection was thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas by the priests for his share in the betrayal.

Now here comes an intriguing coincidence of thought. Following the Shepherd’s request for his wages, he goes on to say *“So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter—this magnificent price at which I was assessed by them”*. The latter phrase is the literal Hebrew and is suggestive of the Lord speaking ironically of the amount which in ancient times was the price given for a slave or compensation due for the death of a slave. That was all that Israel would offer in return for the pastoral care of the Shepherd. *“And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD”* (vv. 12-13). There has been a lot of discussion and speculation as to the meaning of this expression. It is not easily apparent why the money should be paid to a potter or why there should be a potter in the Temple

anyway. Some have suggested that the word rendered “potter” is a colloquial word for treasury or treasurer and that the Shepherd thus paid the money into the Temple funds but there is no real foundation for this. The most reasonable explanation, bearing in mind the scornful rejection of this “magnificent price”, is that the expression “cast it to the potter” was a saying expressing contemptuous rejection of a worthless thing. We have a somewhat similar phrase today when we speak of a man as having “gone to the dogs”. So the picture afforded us is one in which the Shepherd, insulted by the paltry sum of money given him as wages when he might reasonably have expected respect, esteem, gratitude and love in return for his ministrations, goes into the Temple courts and contemptuously throws the money on the floor of the Sanctuary.

Matthew’s gospel draws attention to this passage when he recounts the story of Judas and the betrayal of Jesus (Matt. 27). The correspondence is not exact. The Shepherd receives the money as wages; Judas received his as the price of betrayal. The priests used the money after Judas threw it on the Temple floor to buy the “potter’s field” to bury strangers in; this is not the same thing as casting the money “to the potter” on the floor of the Temple. Matthew suggests a fulfilment of prophecy but there are numerous instances in Matthew’s Gospel where he is quite clearly quoting an Old Testament passage as illustrative of, or analogous to, the incident he narrates without really claiming that the one is a prediction of the other. It is not so much in the details of Zechariah’s vision on the one hand, and of Judas’ betrayal on the other, that the prophecy resides, but in the central principle. In both cases the Shepherd of Israel is rejected by those to whom he had ministered and the symbol of that rejection was a monetary one, thirty pieces of silver, thrown back upon the floor of the Temple in the sight of the ecclesiastical rulers who were primarily responsible for the rejection. Matthew, in the A.V. of Matt. 27. 9 credits the prophecy to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah but it is generally agreed that this is probably a mistake of an early copyist; Matthew does not always mention the prophet’s name in his allusions and probably he did not do so in this instance, and a later transcriber, taking it upon himself to add the name, added the wrong one. This supposition is confirmed by the fact that Sinai Palimpsest, a 4th century copy of a 2nd century Syriac translation, thought to be the oldest translation of the Gospels into any language, does not include the reference to “Jeremiah the Prophet” in this verse, and neither do the Peshitta and the Diatessaron (two 2nd century Syriac versions) or the 2nd century Old Latin versions.

*“Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the*

*brotherhood between*” (prop. “among”) “*Judah and Israel*” (v. 14). The preposition can mean equally “between” and “among”. At the time of the First Advent there was no distinction between the ten tribe and the two tribe nations and no brotherhood which could be broken. There was a very real sense in which the entire nation, Judah and Israel, viewed as an entity, was disrupted and the brotherhood between its individual members destroyed. The brotherhood existing *among* the citizens of the nation was completely and finally broken when, in A.D. 70, Titus quelled the Jewish rebellion against Rome, destroyed Jerusalem, and exiled the entire people, scattering them into all parts of the Roman empire. Even today Israel has not recovered from that Dispersion. This symbolic action of the prophet indicated the fact that following the rejection of Christ the nation was doomed to the breaking of family ties and national bonds, to separation and scattering all over the earth. Judah and Israel, after fifteen hundred years of national existence in the Land of Promise, would be a nation no longer.

Verses 15 to 17 describe the agency by which that scattering was to be accomplished. Three evil shepherds in verse 8, Babylon, Persia and Greece, had already been cut off. The true Shepherd had been rejected. “*We have no king but Caesar*” (John 19. 15) cried the mob at the time of that rejection. Now they should have Caesar. The “worthless” (not “foolish” as A.V.) shepherd of verse 15 is the fourth of the shepherds which afflicted the flock and well pictures Rome, the fourth oppressor of Israel. This is one who, according to the RSV, “*does not care for the perishing, or seek the wandering, or heal the maimed, or nourish the sound, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs*” (v. 16). That is a very eloquent description of the Gentile power that has ridden roughshod over Israel throughout the long centuries of this Christian era. But retribution comes. Israel brought this suffering upon herself but that does not excuse the perpetrator. “*Woe to the idol shepherd*” (v. 17) says God. Judgment shall come upon his right arm and his right eye. His power and his perception will be alike destroyed, and in the troubles that are upon the nations in our own day we see the fulfilment of that prediction.

AOH  
(To be continued)

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**Atom**—body too small to be divided; minute thing; smallest particle of element that can exist alone or in combination with similar particles.

*The Little Oxford Dictionary*

## STAND UP! STAND UP FOR JESUS—A HYMN

STAND up! stand up for Jesus!  
 Ye soldiers of the cross;  
 Lift high His royal banner,  
 It must not suffer loss;  
 From victory unto victory  
 His army He shall lead,  
 Till every foe is vanquished,  
 And Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!  
 Stand in His strength alone;  
 The arm of flesh will fail you,  
 Ye dare not trust your own;  
 Put on the gospel armour,  
 And, watching unto prayer,  
 Where duty calls, or danger,  
 Be never wanting there.

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!  
 The strife will not be long;  
 This day the noise of battle,  
 The next the victor's song;  
 To him that overcometh  
 A crown of life shall be;  
 He with the King of glory  
 Shall reign eternally.



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Not a hymn to sing sitting down! These are the words of an American by the name of George Duffield (1818-1888). He lived in many states in the North East of that country including 7 years in the 1840s as a Presbyterian Minister in Brooklyn. He wrote this in 1858 inspired by the dying words of a Christian who said, “Tell them to stand up for Jesus: now let us sing a hymn”. According to [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org) the background to this was slavery.

Here are some verses from the Bible that are reckoned to have inspired the writer;

2 Tim. 2. 3 Therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15. 25-27 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.

Psalm 144. 1-2 Blessed be the LORD my strength which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: my goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

Phil. 2. 11 That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Rom. 14. 4 Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

2 Chron. 32. 8 With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Eph. 6. 10-17 Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle...against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world... Wherefore take...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, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1 Cor. 16. 13 Watch...stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

1 Cor. 14. 8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

1 John 5. 4-5 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Rev. 2. 10 Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

2 Tim. 4. 7-8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord,...shall give me...and...all them also that love his appearing.

Rev. 3.21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

The most common tune is called either 'Morning Light' or 'Webb' as it was composed by George Webb (1803-1887) born Salisbury, Wiltshire.

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## WAITING

*“Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him.”* Psalm 37. 7 (RSV)  
*“For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from Him.”*  
Psalm 62. 5 (RSV)

Is the exhortation from those lovely psalms, to wait and fret not, our experience? This is not an attitude normal to people as we know them in every day life. In modern western society patience has become ‘conspicuous by its absence’. Everything is needed at once. How refreshing to meet a motorist who gently ‘gives way’ although not required to do so. How dangerous is the driver who impatiently forces his way forward regardless of others. Discourteous haste is not confined to travel and is all too apparent in trade and commerce. The skilled craftsman does not produce good workmanship if in a hurry. The surgeon does not complete a successful operation by ‘cutting corners’ and saving time. Impatience could never help a parent or teacher to produce good and lasting results in handling young folk. Competition may have its place on the sports field but it has less value in the ‘work-place’.

We need to consider the environment in which we live. We are urged throughout the Bible ‘to be patient—to be still—to wait’ yet this is not our natural self. Too readily we are like the world in which we live; we fret and become anxious. We find it hard to wait for results; even more so we find it almost impossible at times to be what the Bible calls ‘long-suffering’. The reason is simply that human nature rebels against a Creator whose laws demand patience. The wonderful environment in which we live cannot be hurried. Trees and plants grow slowly (as a rule) and the animal world works to a wonderful time mechanism. But man cannot stand the slow pace of nature and wants to speed everything up. The cry for bigger, better and faster results are stimulated by the ‘root of all evil’, the love of money. Observe our Saviour at work. Jesus went about Israel with ‘time for people’ although the disciples found it hard to share that spirit. Our Heavenly Father has waited for a long time for mankind to learn the lessons He is teaching. Sometimes people are impatient for Him to do something about trouble in the world. The Bible attitude is patient obedience.

DN

*“Now we exhort you, brethren, ...be patient toward all.”* 1 Thess. 5. 14



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## TO THE ONE WHO OVERCOMES

The phrase “to him who overcomes” mentioned seven times in Revelation 2 and 3 is a subject students of the Bible have contemplated. The word ‘overcome’ comes from the Greek word *nikao*. This is very close to the Christian name Nicholas which can mean ‘victory of the people’ of which the Greek equivalent is Nikolaos. According to Strong’s concordance *nikao* means to conquer, to overcome, to prevail, to get the victory.

This type of language is the language of battle and war. This is borne out by three verses in later chapters of Revelation which show the connection between overcoming and war.

1. Rev. 11. 7 The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.
2. Rev. 13. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.
3. Rev. 17. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

During the 20th Century there were many wars from the Boer war, two World wars, the Korean war, the Falklands war, the first Gulf war as well as those in Israel. The list goes on and on to which the second Gulf war can be added. The threat of war continues as do several ongoing conflicts.

Wars can take other forms. Some are shows of power like the Field of the Cloth of Gold when in 1520 Henry VIII and the King of France tried to show how wealthy and powerful they were. Many still remember the Cold war when massive amounts of nuclear weapons were held by capitalist regimes and opposing communist regimes. At times there is talk of trade wars where one country aims to gain advantage over another by means of import taxes maybe of 10%, 25% or more on goods and services or by legally preventing sale of certain other countries’ goods in their country. In the 1970s there were the “cod wars” when Iceland tried to prevent British trawlers from fishing within certain limits of Iceland which were normally deemed international waters. All this goes to show such a war can be non-violent, a war of the mind rather than war with swords, guns, ammunition and armoured tanks.

Overcoming is described in the Gospel of Luke as when “one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted and divides his spoil” (11. 22 ESV) This is the language of violence, brute force and robbery not on a national scale but between

two individuals.

Jesus is the principal example of an overcomer. Jesus said “these things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16. 33)

### **Who or what is to be overcome?**

Generally Christians speak of overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil. But what do the scriptures say? Jesus clearly spoke of overcoming the former, the world in John 16. 33. Peter talking about false prophets says that “they promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.” (2 Peter 2. 19-21 ESV) This mentions the world and its defilements, or perhaps its contaminants, corruptions or pollutions. It even begins to say how the world is overcome and that it is by the pure, uncontaminated knowledge of Jesus Christ. It also warns that it’s possible to be re-entangled or be overcome by the world once again.

There are other verses that refer to overcoming the world. 1 John 5. 4-5 plainly states “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” But what is this world that can be overcome? The world here comes from the Greek word *kosmos* meaning world system. In these parts of the world there is a secular, capitalist as well as a democratic system based on elections. The drive is to accumulate a lot of money and material possession or obtain power by winning elections.

1 John 4. 4 also speaks of the world, it says “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” He that is in the world is Satan and Satan is the prince of this world. (See John 12. 31 EXB) Satan and the world are closely intertwined and are to be overcome and this is of God by acknowledging Jesus Christ as saviour.

1 John 4 has already recorded the close relationship between overcoming

the world and the devil. Earlier in this epistle the apostle John wrote “unto...fathers,...young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. .... I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” (1 John 2. 13-14) John goes on to say, “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” This must be a true genuine belief that Jesus is the son of God. The world and the devil, Satan, can be overcome!

### **Warnings**

There are two principal ways that individual people can be corrupted in this present evil world. They are power and money. The one who came to Jesus asking, “what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal (*aeonian*) life?”. He was told to sell all he had and give it to the poor however he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions (Matt. 19. 16-24). The Greek word translated “great” comes from the Greek word *polla* meaning many. This one had many possessions and was thought to be rich at that time.

There are several accounts in the Bible about those whom power corrupted or led them to be corrupted. Herod the Great had the new born boys under two years of age slaughtered because of his desire to keep power for himself and his family. Nebuchadnezzar was gloating when he said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” (Daniel 4. 30 ESV) He was too much ‘I’. King Saul is another whom it is possible the power of being king of Israel corrupted till the Heavenly Father regretted that He had made Saul to be king for he had ceased being loyal to Him and disobeyed His commands (1 Sam. 15. 11). Satan’s desire for power and control has had even more consequences. He said, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isa. 14. 14 ESV) People everywhere are living with the consequences to this day.

### **How to overcome**

Listening seems very important. Seven times in the two chapters of Revelation it implores, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” It denotes paying attention and acting upon the instruction (Rev. 2. 7,11,17,29; Rev. 3. 6,13,22). Here are four suggestions as to how:

1. Through our faith that Jesus is the son of God (1 John 5. 5 NKJV) as it says. “Who is he that overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the son of God?” Faith is the only way to be

- saved. It is certainly not by works but only by works of faith. The scripture says to be faithful unto death in order to be given a crown of life. (Rev. 2. 10) John also wrote “every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1 John 4. 2-3)
2. by overcoming evil through the knowledge of our saviour Jesus Christ says the apostle Peter (2 Pet. 2. 19-20). Jesus was the Messiah the anointed one as Peter also says “let it be known to all of you and to all the people...that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4. 10-12 ESV) It is worth bearing in mind that knowledge can have two aspects—firstly the intellectual knowledge of the plan of God and secondly a personal knowledge formed from a one to one relationship with Jesus.
  3. with good as it says in Rom. 12. 21 in that well-known chapter in Romans by living a life of sacrifice, by the renewing of the mind, in using the gifts from God with love and by doing good to all even our enemies.
  4. because “the word of God abides in you”...(1 John 2. 13-14) enabling the overcoming one to remain in that desirous state.

### **Promises to the overcomer**

What happens to these overcomers? There are seven promises;

1. *I will grant to eat of the tree of life,...in the paradise of God (2. 7 ESV)*
2. *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. (2. 11)*
3. *I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone. (2. 17 ESV)*
4. *I will give authority over the nations (2. 26 ESV)*
5. *will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. (Rev. 3. 5 ESV)*
6. *I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. (Rev. 3. 12 ESV)*
7. *will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (Rev. 3. 21)*

What does seven represent? It represents perfection and completeness.

## In Conclusion

Overcoming is mentioned many times in the New Testament and seven times in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. It comes from the Greek word which relates to conquer in the manner of war. In this Gospel age the Christian should overcome the world and the Devil. This present evil world has the dangers of money and power. By faith one discerns it's possible to overcome the world and the devil and this is because the one has the word of God abiding in them, listening to its message and acting upon it, by loving the world less, believing in Jesus Christ, by works of faith and overcoming evil with good. And the result will be glorious and the promise, as always, sure.



## TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH

“To him that overcometh  
Will I grant to sit with me.”  
This prize above all others  
Doth the Master offer thee.

How can I e'er attain it?  
Have faith and hope and love,  
Show forth my willing service  
In labour for my Lord?

The foes of life surround me,  
Discouragement comes in,  
And Satan says in triumph  
“Don't think that YOU can win.”

Then comes that blest assurance,  
“Thou dost not walk alone,  
Be but an overcomer  
And thou shalt share my throne.”

*Poems of the Way*



## PAUL'S SHORTER PRAYERS



When we call to mind Paul's prayers on behalf of the various assemblies of God's people to which he addressed his letters, we incline to think first of those full and remarkable prayers which are recorded in the first and third chapters of his letter to the Ephesians. But, have we realised how rich are his shorter prayers such as those recorded in chapter 15 of his letter to the Romans? There are three - in verses 5 and 6; verse 13; and verse 33. Each begins with a different description of God, to whom his words are addressed: "The God of patience and consolation"; "the God of hope"; and "the God of peace". We will consider these petitions in the same order in which they occur in the chapter.

"The God of patience and of comfort". (R.V.) The NEB translates "God, the source of all fortitude and all encouragement". "Patience" as in the translations of the A.V. and R.V. can be a somewhat negative word. We may say of another: "In spite of great provocation he exercised remarkable patience", and we mean that he did not lose his temper; he kept calm. But the N.T. original word goes much further and deeper than this. It means steady, positive endurance, the power to see a difficult experience through, however great the discouragements met with on the way. Jesus was the outstanding example of steady endurance throughout His ministry, even to the end. James writes (5. 11) of Job, who was perhaps not the most patient, in the generally accepted sense, of men in the Old Testament, but his endurance, his power to hold on, however desperate things became for him, is that which James stresses.

God is the source of this endurance, He is also the source of comfort and consolation, but these two renderings in the R.V. and A.V., we are told are also inadequate. The NEB has "encouragement" and links it with the previous verse, where the O.T. scriptures have been spoken of as a source of encouragement. Our exalted Saviour is our Advocate, our *Parakletos*, the one who will strengthen our case when we have sinned. This original word is also used of the Comforter, the holy Spirit, which Jesus said He would send as another (similar) Comforter as Himself. The word in the prayer which is translated consolation and encouragement is '*paraklesis*' and is the adjective corresponding to the noun Comforter, and which some see as also meaning "stimulation".

The objective of Paul's prayer was that the brethren "be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus", by themselves being consolers,

comforters, encouragers, as well as stimulators of each other, thus bearing the infirmities of the weak and not pleasing themselves (v. 1).

**In the second prayer** God is called “the God of hope”. This is the only occurrence in the N.T. of this description of God. He is the source of hope—from Him we derive our hope. This can mean God is characterised by hope. He never despairs. Moreover He never gives us up as hopeless. However, in both cases where “hope” occurs in this verse, it is literally the hope. This is the hope of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance reserved in heaven for His faithful people, to be received when He comes again to take them unto Himself. And that is not all, for the earnest expectation of the whole creation waiteth for the manifestation of these sons of God (1 Pet. 1. 3-4; Rom. 8. 19). Through Christ, Head and body, the opportunity of salvation shall be extended to all peoples during the Millennial reign.

It is remarkable what an array of Christian virtues are included in this second prayer—“hope”—“joy”—“peace”—“faith”—and “hope” again. These are all said to be products of the Holy Spirit’s energy. The verse is well expressed by the following translations: “May the hope-inspiring God so fill you with perfect joy and peace through your continuing faith, that you may bubble over with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Williams New Testament), and “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may overflow with hope” (Barclay).

We cannot leave this prayer without reference to “joy”, leaving “peace” when we consider the third prayer. Joy is not mere happiness, for it is a fruitage of the holy Spirit (Gal. 5. 22). The soil in which it develops is faith. It is the centre of the message of the gospel—“tidings of great joy”, and He whose birth was thus announced, throughout His ministry had ever before Him a personal joy (Heb. 12. 2). It was this joy set before Him that enabled Him to endure suffering and shame. Among His last words to His followers was expressed His desire that His joy might be theirs that their joy might be full (John 15. 11). He also told them that requests made of the Father in His Name would be granted, and in consequence their joy would be full (John 16. 24). He also desired that they might have His joy fulfilled in themselves (John 17. 13). This same note of joy is sustained throughout the epistles of the N.T., and perhaps most wonderfully described by Peter in his first epistle (1. 8), “yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”.

**The third prayer** is: “Now the God of peace be with you all”. Again it means that God is the source of peace. Those who have been justified by faith have peace with God (Rom. 5. 1). This refers to our reconciliation with God, resulting in a right relationship with Him by faith. But “peace” means more. Jesus speaks of His own peace which He has given to His followers, but He, never being irreconciled with His Father, needed not to be made right with His Father, as we do. Peace, of which God is the source, is that quality of calmness, quietness and serenity of heart and mind which is maintained whilst storms of trouble may be raging without, and which in our case, apart from this provision, would tend to produce worry and anxiety. When Jesus spoke of the legacy of peace that He was bequeathing He added “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14. 27). In Phil. 4. 7 Paul refers to God’s peace that surpasseth all conception. He shows that if we by prayer and supplication let our requests be made known unto God (v. 6), the certain result will be that calmness and serenity, which are inherent in God, will be ours, and will act as a garrison force within our hearts and minds, freeing us from anxious care.

In 2 Thess. 3. 16 Paul frames another prayer which is relevant. He asks for the assembly that the Lord Jesus Himself, who is the Lord of peace, might impart His peace to them, “always by all means”.

May we all experience the power of God implicit in each of these prayers, seeing Him always as the source of supply to increase our patient endurance; comforting us and through us others, intensifying hope, joy, peace and faith through the Holy Spirit.

*Forest Gate Bible Monthly*

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## CONSTANCY

In way we know that we should go  
 The first step may the hardest be;  
 But if perchance it be the last,  
 We’ll press on still, to do God’s will,  
 To faithful be through weal or woe.

*Poems of the Way*



# . THE GATHERING HOME OF SAINTS

*Devotional glimpses of our hope.*

Chapter 2

## THE FACE TO FACE MEETING WITH JESUS

We read of Rebekah in Genesis 24. 64, that when she saw Isaac, she “lighted off her camel.” Actually, the Hebrew word allows the translation, she “*fell* off her camel”! What, I wonder, will be *our* emotions as we meet Jesus face to face?

All that journey Rebekah must have asked and learned so much about the Isaac she had never seen, and that faithful servant Eliezer, sent forth with the precious mission to find a wife meet for his master’s son, would readily tell her all that was in her heart to ask. Undoubtedly, he spoke of the great riches of Isaac’s father, and his righteousness and faithfulness, yet how, above all else he possessed, he treasured most the son of his love. He would speak with such feeling of that wonderful act of offering Isaac, and of that son’s readiness to be offered, that it would bring tears to Rebekah’s eyes. And he would tell her of the great promise of blessing and happiness for all mankind that resulted from this act of faithfulness and love.

Isaac was indeed someone very special to be honoured for the place he held in the purposes of God, but for Rebekah, there was a deeply personal meaning to all that she learned of this one she was on her way to meet. He was the one she was to marry. His future and her future were to become one. Everything they possessed would belong equally to each other, including that very special relationship with his father. Her only aim of existence would be forever to make him happy, just as her happiness would be his joy.

What would it be like that life of completed union? What would *he* be like, when, at the end of the journey, all her mental pictures and dreams would, like the light of a candle, be swallowed up in that first noonday glimpse of his smile as she meets him face to face?

Now does he walk to meet her, and as he steps towards her the whole objective and goal of the long journey is realized!

The express desire of Isaac’s father, the love of Isaac toward this future bride, the mission of Eliezer, the joy of Rebekah, for each it is the moment of blissful realization.

And so with us, the One “Whom, having not seen, ye (we) love, in Whom, though now ye (we) see Him not, yet believing (in His love and desire towards us), ye (we) rejoice,” with the unspeakable joy of one betrothed to the most wonderful person in the whole universe, the express image of His Father’s glory. (1 Pet. 1. 8)

The face of Jesus, as described by Paul, was as a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun at noon. In that face Paul knew he had looked upon the glory of God. John, in vision, also saw that face as “the sun shining in its strength.” (Rev. 1. 16 NKJV) The word he uses signifies its full dynamic power a brightness too great for human eyes to bear. Symbology, yet conveying great truth concerning this wonderful Being to Whom no human form nor any glory of the celestial spheres can compare. Such language is as the smoked glass that enables us to view the unviewable, and to glimpse something of that glory filtered down to human tolerance of vision, though humanly incomprehensible.

*Face to face with Christ my Saviour,  
Face to face, what will it be,  
When in glory I behold Him,  
Jesus Christ, Who died for me?*

And shall we say when thus we meet, “Who art Thou Lord?”

It was Eliezer who identified Isaac to Rebekah. That same Spirit of God that has led us all the way, will then complete its sacred task of union long before begun. There will be no mistaking that One endowed beyond all measure with that Spirit, that same Spirit that has so long linked our hearts with His. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty...” (Isa. 33. 17) When we think of a person we think of his face. The face identifies, and the face is the index of character, the eyes, the windows of the soul. Only in such human terms may we now envisage that meeting with the Lord Jesus.

The woman’s description in the ‘Song of Songs’ of the one she loves can find no feature of her beloved that is not altogether lovable. The choicest language known to man is there used to describe this wonderful warmth and beauty of character that we call Our Lord Jesus. Here is that Wonderful Being Who, at His Father’s command, brought into being everything that is made. The mystery of the atom, and the secrets of life, the laws of the universe that hold all things together in a state of constant vibrant power, all is known to Him, the Wisdom of an all-wise God. What

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immeasurable comprehension, skill, and mighty power.

We shall stand before that One, Who, having made the great nebulae of unfathomable space, and strung the necklace of a myriad stars to form the Milky Way of light across the heavens, at the same voice of His Father, descended to this earth, to be born of woman, and to share in wondrous intimacy every feeling of the human creature He had made. So close does He come, and so close shall we stand before the Source of that love, that uttermost love for me, witnessed at Golgotha, the same in glory. Do I know anyone who, in love for me, would *die* for me? *What shall I say or do when I stand right there before my Saviour and Redeemer?*

“Mary”, “Rabboni!” When Mary then clung to the Saviour’s feet what depths of emotion overflowed and were shared between them both. What glimpse is here suggested to the mind of that sweet hour in the experience of each redeemed one when he meets his Saviour! Where human language fails, those depths of each heart’s gratitude and love will be expressed by perfect vehicles of adoration and praise. All that we want to say to Him that now we can only express in our tears, all the love we hold for Him, *all* will be told, *face to face*.

The veil still intervenes, hiding from our eyes the full knowledge of what that meeting yet will be, but our heart observes no such limitations. Our heart can pass, even now, beyond that veil to feel the warmth and preciousness of that indescribable moment. Our heart can *feel* the desires of His heart mingling with the desires of our heart, and that mutual ache is drawing us ever closer towards that moment of mutual satisfaction and delight.

Rebekah also was veiled, and only with the eyes of faith could **Isaac** anticipate the full beauty he would yet behold in her. Jesus, and His Bride, each by faith can penetrate that veil, and see beyond all present limitations of time those precious glimpses of that moment of joy unspeakable and full of glory when we meet. Then shall all veils be lifted, and we shall **see** face to face, and **know** Him as we are and shall be forever known of Him.

DH

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*Face to face! oh, blissful moment!*  
*Face to face—to see and know;*  
*Face to face with my Redeemer,*  
*Jesus Christ, who loves me so.*

*Carrie Ellis Breck*

**Atom**—constituent of a chemical element; (Fig.) anything very small; a tiny bit.

*Webster’s Dictionary*

## THE QUESTION BOX

**Q.** Psa. 149. 9. “*To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints*”.

Does this refer to some present duty of the Church in the flesh?

**A.** No. The setting of the Psalm shows that the reference is to the coming Age. This psalm was of course first written for and applied to Israel. Now Israel expected that when the Last Day had come and the Messiah appear in the glory of the Kingdom they, His people, would be called to execute His judgment upon the wicked—which to the average Israelite meant the Gentile nations. Their expectation was right in principle, but their knowledge of the detail of the Divine Plan was deficient. When the Millennial Kingdom is fully set up there will be a heavenly people, the Church, associated with the King for the purposes of judgment, as well as the earthly people, Israel, in the Holy Land, even although that earthly people does also have a share in the privilege of doing God’s work in that Age. It is correct therefore to apply this Psalm to the Church as well as to Israel, but the time of its fulfilment is in the future just the same—in the Millennial Age.

The Psalm itself indicates this. First, the faithful are exhorted to sing unto the Lord a new song, to praise His name in the dance, to sing praises with “the timbrel and harp”. This is a theme of joy and triumph, therefore, not of grief and humiliation. “*Let the saints be joyful in glory*” says verse 5. It cannot be insisted too much or too often that the saints are not in power or glory now; glory is reserved for the future. “*Let them sing aloud upon their beds*”. This is an allusion to the time of rest from labour and entrance into eternal habitations. (“They shall rest in their beds”, i.e., in death—see Isa. 57. 2. See also Psa. 132. 13-14 where the Lord is said to “rest for ever” in His habitation of Zion.)

Verses 6-9, referring to the two-edged sword, and the executing of vengeance upon the nations, binding their kings with chains and executing upon them the judgment written, refers to the judgment work of the Millennial Age, the work of destroying all evil institutions and things that afflict mankind. It is a work that belongs to the period of the Church in power and that time is not yet. The application of the text to the present leads back to the old erroneous doctrine of the reign of the Church in the present Age, and such an application should be studiously avoided. For the Church is not reigning now. *Bible Study Monthly October 1948*

Editorial note: Although this was written in 1948 it is as relevant as ever. Defining the period to which the scripture is writing is vital as well as exactly who comes under judgement at the present time. In so doing it would prevent harsh predictions being applied which do not yet apply.

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**THE ALMIGHTY-THE ETERNAL—A BOOKLET****Extracts from a B.F.U. publication**

It is in four parts. Part one considers the beginning of time. *“I only am GOD. I existed before Time itself.”* (Isa. 43. 12-13. Ferrar Fenton). The eternity of God is beyond human comprehension. We are finite creatures; our minds can only conceive objects existing within space and events taking place within a span of time marked by a beginning and an ending. We can accept the idea of endless life by visualising the continuance of the present into future time without interruption or change for ever; it is not possible to project our minds back into past time and comprehend the idea of a no-beginning. Somewhere back in the distant recesses, our finite thoughts tell us, there must have been a start. But although this is certainly true so far as created things visible and invisible are concerned, God tells us it is not true as respects himself. God has always existed, truly eternal. With him there is no beginning. Until God began to create,...

But because God is the Source of all life and the Author of all creation, in whatever sphere of being that life and that creation is manifested, we can be assured that a time there must have been when the celestial world, with whatever forms of life it holds, came into existence by the creative decree of God, just so surely as did our own material order of things. There are a few allusions in Scripture to that fact. Of the Son it is said that *“by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible...”* (Col. 1. 16). That the creation of what is to us the invisible world, the angelic, antedated (predated) the formation of the earth at least is indicated in Job 38. 7 where the sons of God, i.e., the angels, are depicted as “shouting for joy” when God brought this planet into being. But our earth is a comparative newcomer on the scene; the starry heavens existed, substantially as we see them now, long before the Earth was formed.

A stupendous event took place. God created the first atom! Now an atom is a very tiny thing. Most people know nowadays that all earthly materials and substances are composed of atoms, clinging together tightly to make up the mass of the material. Such atoms are almost inconceivably minute.

Where human intellect fails, the Holy Spirit fills the gap. Speaking under the Spirit’s guidance, the prophet Isaiah was able to describe what the wisest of men cannot describe. *“Lift up your eyes on high”* he says in Isa. 40. 26 *“and behold who hath created these (the stars); that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.”* Here is a marvel-

lous picture; God the Creator.

Why did God do all this? For what reason has the Most High brought into existence this vast creation, so evidently intended to be the abode of continuous life—for the marvellous adaptability of our own planet to the myriads of different forms of life it supports shows unmistakably the Divine intention to multiply life in all its manifestations. The Revelator gives the answer. “*Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure (purpose, intention) they are and were created*”. (Rev. 4. 11).

How can men with their limited powers of perception come to know the God who inhabits eternity; how attain that communion and fellowship with him which He himself has said is his desire and intention? If no man can look upon his face and live (Exodus 33. 20), if He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, if He is One whom no man hath seen nor can see, how may we ever come to know him? The answer is in five simple words in John’s Gospel. “*The Word was made flesh*”.

Jesus did not become the only begotten Son by reason of his humanity. He was the Son of God, supreme over all Divine creation, from the very beginning. *Monogenes* is a word indicating the principal son or heir, hence the association with the idea of firstborn or only son, and it is the idea of primacy which has to be borne in mind. Isaac is called the only begotten son (*monogenes*) of Abraham in Heb. 11. 17 although he was not the only or even the eldest son of the patriarch—but was the heir.

No instructed Christian nowadays believes that God exists in the form of a venerable aged king seated upon a great throne set somewhere in the midst of the stellar heavens, with the Lord Christ eternally passive upon a somewhat lesser throne beside him. It may be a closer approach to the reality to picture him as a radiantly glorious being “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto,” (1 Tim. 6. 16) but even so we cannot with our human minds hope to formulate a picture which comes anywhere near the truth. The nature of the Divine Creator remains for us an impenetrable mystery. And to some extent the Person of Christ must share that mystery. We should no longer think of him in the form of the Man who was crucified, rather as the “Lord...that Spirit”. (2 Cor. 3. 17; 1 Pet. 3.18)

That the earthly life and death of the Lord Christ was...a necessary prelude to the overcoming and eliminating of sin from both the earthly and the heavenly worlds is also a fundamental of Scripture teaching. “...*having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile*

**NOTICES**

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*all things unto himself...whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1. 20).* It might well be, therefore, that the greater glory and the higher exaltation devolving upon our Lord at his return to the heavenly courts was the glory and exaltation of sin challenged on its own ground, the power of sin overcome and conquered, the fate of evil definitely sealed.

This then is our God; wise beyond all understanding, loving beyond all comprehension. In his power, infinite; in his justice, terrible toward all sin but infinitely patient toward the sinner. In the far distances of past ages He commenced to fill his creation with life; the work has as yet hardly commenced. One day in the future that comprehension will be complete, and the purpose of God will take a great step forward as life begins to fill every recess of this vast universe.

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*Oh, give me a song to sing,  
A hope which cannot die,  
A cause to serve, a crown to win,  
And let my life go by.*

*And be my way through sunny day  
Or into stormy weather,  
Just to give to me a kindred soul,  
That we may walk together.*

*But if it be that unto me  
A lonely path is given,  
Then give to me Thy Word, O Lord,  
To guide me safe to heaven.*

*Oh, give to me a song to sing,  
A hope which cannot die,  
A cause to serve, a crown to win,  
So let my life go by.*

*The God of All Grace And Me  
Maurice Cox*

### “Wycliffe”

Wycliffe is disinhumed,  
Yea, his dry bones to ashes are consumed  
And flung into the brook that travels near;  
Forthwith that ancient Voice which streams can hear  
Thus speaks (that Voice which walks upon the wind,  
Though seldom heard by busy human kind):  
As thou these ashes, little Brook! wilt bear  
Into the Avon—Avon to the tide  
Of Severn—Severn to the narrow seas—  
Into main ocean they,—this deed accurst,  
An emblem yields to friends and enemies,  
How the bold Teacher’s Doctrine sanctified  
By truth, shall spread throughout the world dispersed.

*William Wordsworth*

*“And I will give him the morning star.” (Revelation 2. 28)*

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email—[editor@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk](mailto:editor@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk)  
www.biblefellowshipunion.co.uk