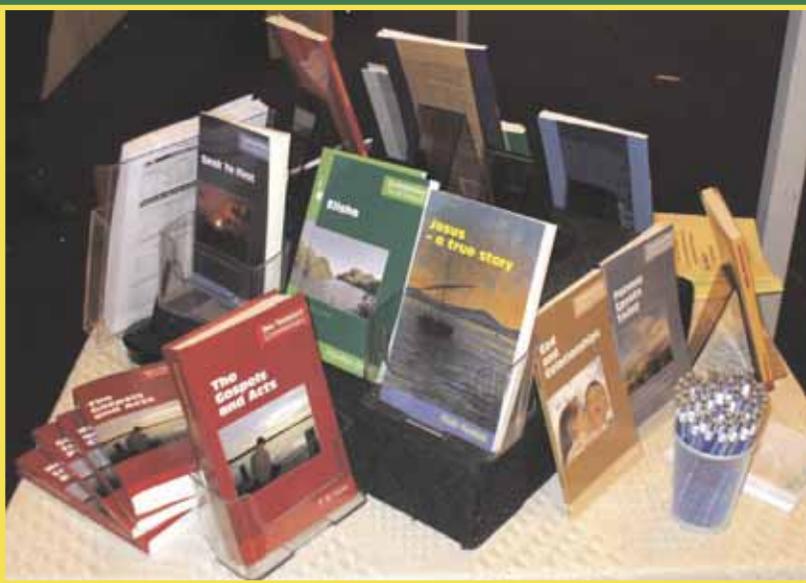


Centenary
1909 – 2009

Scripture Truth



Inside:

Chance & Evolution
He came to serve
Rich and Poor

Eating to live
Alpha People: Barnabas
Refreshment, Rest and a Rich Repast
What is a dispensation?

April – June 2009

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

Editor: Theo Balderston

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is published every three months to expound the teaching of the Scriptures so that we “may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

Annual Subscription 2009

£9.50 Post Free UK – £11.50 Post Free Overseas

Contents

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|------------|
| Chance & Evolution | 1 | Alpha People: Barnabas | 14 |
| He came to serve | 2 | Refreshment, Rest and a Rich Repast | 16 |
| Rich and Poor | 6 | What is a dispensation? | 21 |
| Eating to live | 9 | Matthew 14:25-33 | Back Cover |

In print again – from the first editor of Scripture Truth:

How to Overcome

by J T Mawson

Paperback; 144 pages; available from STP at £5.50 + p&p

Originating as a series of talks to young Christians, this book is for those who *desire* to live for Christ, and know they have the *power* of the Holy Spirit for this very purpose, and yet somehow always seem to find themselves *defeated*. The author uses examples from Israel's experiences recorded in the book of Judges to show how the Christian can *overcome* five enemies: the World, the Flesh, the Devil, Earthly Things and Carnal Religion.



Front cover photograph of STP bookstall at CBC 2008

Illustrations on page 1 © Microsoft Corporation or its suppliers

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is the imprint of the Central Bible Hammond Trust

Registered Charity No. 223327

All correspondence should be addressed to:

SCRIPTURE TRUTH Publications

31-33 Glover Street, CREWE, Cheshire CW1 3LD

Tel: 01270 252274

Fax: 01477 587454

Chance & Evolution

and the bicentennial deification of Darwin

What are the chances of human beings having developed by the processes of random mutation that are said to drive evolution? “Infinitesimal,” is the correct answer. In fact, it would be a far greater miracle than divine creation. But the answer once given me by a Cambridge physicist, to whom I got talking on a Welsh beach, was, “Well we exist, and that’s a pretty good reason for saying it can’t be that improbable.”



This isn’t true. I write this as I’m sitting in a plane delayed in take-off by another plane landing. I have a good, nearly front-on view, and I marvel at the beauty and perfection of the landing, and the controlled power that brings this huge mass of metal to earth without it splitting apart. But a counter-thought says, “This isn’t amazing. It wouldn’t be happening if the ability of pilot and plane to achieve it hadn’t been totally tested.” But that is beside the point. It *is* marvellous that machinery and pilots exist at all, such as can pass these tests.

The physicist’s reply depended on *assuming* that there is no God; it was not a means of *proving* that there is no God. But even supposing there *could be* no God, the chances of the evolution of species by random mutation are so small that they should be an incentive for discarding the theory and looking for an undiscovered, more probable cause of the (allegedly natural) “origin of species.” But a 150-year search has found nothing better than chance mutation. “Whose minds the god of this age has blinded... lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ... should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:4, NKJV).

When I wrote the above, I was on a day-trip to Frankfurt. Coming back, I got a side-on view of another plane landing. What struck me this time was the woodenness and rigidity of the craft as it landed. Not at all like a bird. God does it better.

Theo Balderston



He came to serve

The heart of Mark's Gospel

David Howes

Those who know the author and his activities for the Lord in this country and Africa will recognise the both devotional and challenging character of this article. It originated as a talk.

Four Gospels – Four Views

Why are there four Gospels? I believe we are given four very different views of Christ, because He is a wonderful, complex Person. He is, after all, *very God* and *very Man*! We should expect to struggle in coming to a deeper understanding of Him. The record is four-fold, to help us to understand Him better by having one part of His complex nature emphasised in one record, and another very different part brought into clear focus in another.

I agree with those who see representations of the four Gospels in the four living creatures of Revelation 4:7. Of these, the “ox” (the word also means a young bull, or calf) denotes a draught- or working-animal, like our farm horse of old. It corresponds to the Gospel of Mark, which especially highlights the service of our Lord. Do you want to serve the Lord? Then Mark's is the Gospel to turn to, in order to learn from the *perfect* Servant how to be a good servant!

The Gospel of the perfect Servant

In Isaiah 42:1 God extended an invitation. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul

delights” (RSV). Let us accept that invitation, and consider this Gospel!

To orientate us in this, we should bear another lovely Old-Testament scripture in mind – Exodus 21:5-6. It speaks of a slave who refused freedom because of his love for his master, for the wife he gained during his servitude, and for his children. “But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall... bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.” His ear was pierced so all could see the commitment of love. How his wife must have been constantly thrilled to see the mark of his love for her!

The Lord Jesus looks upon the church as His bride. He became a slave in order to redeem her. He has “graven” us on the palms of His hands (Isaiah 49: 16) – in the marks of the nail prints. We will see these in heaven, since there He will for ever be the Lamb “that had been slain” (Revelation 5:6). The two disciples saw them in the hands that broke the bread to them in Emmaus (Luke 24:30-31). Every time we break bread together, He has left us the marks of the commitment of His love to us.

Before we look at His service, we should stop to notice a few preliminaries about the Gospel.

A book in a hurry

I challenge you to sit down and read Mark's Gospel through at one sitting! You could easily do this in 1¼ hours. It will take your breath away! It's so full of urgent action – and these are the marks of a servant.

A key word of this book is “immediately”. It appears nine times in the first chapter. This chapter records how Jesus rose early and worked on into the hours of the night; and rose again before day-break to spend time in prayer (vv.32,35). The word for “immediately” appears forty times in Mark's Gospel as a whole, as against fifteen times in Matthew, eight in Luke, and four in John. This is a book in a hurry!

A book for failures to read

Paul was a tough man to work with. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 to find out how tough!

Mark had found this out for himself. “Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought it best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work” (Acts 15:37-8).

This is the same Mark who wrote the Gospel. Having had the experience of being a failure gave him, no doubt, a sharper eye for all the perfect features of Christ's service.

Read Mark's Gospel through at one sitting! You could easily do this in 1¼ hours. It will take your breath away!

He had, of course, been recovered from his early failure. At the end of his own life Paul wrote, “Get Mark, and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me” (2 Timothy 4:11). Even our failures can be turned into victories when we learn from them and yield ourselves to the Lord!

Without the trimmings

Mark's Gospel is a book cut down to basics. It has no royal genealogy, no miraculous birth of the “Immanuel” promised to the house of David, and no wise men worshipping “the king of the Jews” – all of which are in Matthew. Mark lacks the accounts of the Lord's childhood, of His subjection to His parents, and of increase in wisdom and height, that Luke records. Mark has no reference to His pre-existence and divine glory as found in John.

Mark's Gospel is a fitting tribute to the perfect *Servant*. Now for some high-lights of the Lord's service itself in it!

Worn out in service

Mark 4:1-34 tells us how Jesus spoke all day to a great crowd. Then, “On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, ‘Let us go across to the other side.’” And they took Him “*just as he was*” (vv.35-6).

Do we get worn out in service for Him?

Ministry in a look

Mark notices that Jesus “*looked* around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart” (3:5). Have I got a hard heart? Do I grieve and anger the One I love?

He also is the only Gospel-writer to notice that “when [Jesus] had turned about and *looked* on his disciples, he rebuked Peter” (8:33 KJV). And Mark alone says, concerning the wealthy young man who wanted to “inherit eternal life,” that “Jesus, *looking* upon

him loved him” (10:21, RSV). And that young man “went away” (v.22) from Someone who would die for him. How tragic!

These were searching “looks”. Our Lord’s ministry was a ministry of the heart, penetrating to the core of the being of the people He ministered to. It still is. There is no believer who does not at some stage experience the searching “look” of the Lord Jesus into our souls.

“He has done all things well”

Unique to Mark’s Gospel is this astonished exclamation of the crowd (7:37). Every believer can say a heartfelt Amen!

A blueprint for service

Mark’s Gospel gives a blueprint for service. Let us be imitators of Him!

What can we do? In 3:9 Jesus “told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they should crush him.” To obey that command, they would need to sit in the boat close to the shore, and work the oars to stay on station. That was their service at that time. He has asked us to be ready for His return. He does not want to find us sleeping. We can “keep on station” by being constantly in a prayerful frame of mind.

When can we take a break? There is a great tendency with even the best of servants, who truly want to be used by God, perhaps subconsciously to feel there are times when we should be left in peace. At the end of a hard day, when we sit down to a meal and there

Our Lord’s ministry was a ministry of the heart. It still is. There is no believer who does not experience the searching “look” of the Lord Jesus into our souls.

comes a knock at the door or ring on the phone, we feel inwardly aggrieved that our peace is broken and we must return to His service. At such times we need to remind ourselves of what is said of our Lord's service, e.g. "Crowds gathered to him again; and again, as his custom was, he taught them" (10:1).

Our marching orders. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (16:15). Only here is "the great commission" given in this sharp form.

When will our service finish? "Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. *Watch therefore* – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crow, or in the morning – lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. *And what I say to you I say to all: Watch*" (13:33-37).

I pick out two further highlights of Mark's "blueprint for service."

Compassionate service

The Lord had compassion on the disciples. "And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves... and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat" (6:31).

But He had even greater compassion on the crowds. "As he landed he saw a great throng, and he had compassion

on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34). He taught them "many things", but "when it grew late" He said to the disciples, "You give them something to eat" (vv.34-37).

There is no service of Christ that is not compassionate service. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels... And if I have prophetic powers... and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Wasted service

Truly serving the Lord Jesus is always *wasted* service in the world's eyes. When Mary of Bethany (cp. John 12:3) broke her flask and poured all her ointment on Jesus' head, some of those present said, "Why was the ointment thus wasted?" (Mark 14:4). She wanted Jesus to have *all* the ointment, with none left for herself. If the "Simon the Pharisee" is the same person as "Simon the leper", then Luke tells us what he did *not* do (Luke 7:44-6). He gave the Lord no water, no kiss of greeting, and no anointing oil.

Mary did not defend her action. She heard, instead, what the Lord said. "She has done what she could" (Mark 14:8). Only Mark records this. Have we done "what we could"? What a searching question! But the Lord knows when we have done our best.

He came to serve

Recall the Lord's words to those who would serve Him in Mark 10: 43-45. "Whoever would be great among you

must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” We know what that crowd didn’t yet know – where His Servant-ministry was leading. We have seen how He – the One called “my Servant” in Isaiah 52:13 – “poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many” (Isaiah 53:12). We have observed His heavenly ministry in our own past lives, leading us to a saving faith, one whereby we believe, and He Himself helps our unbelief

(Mark 9:24). We have experienced, by faith, His searching looks which have pinpointed the thoughts and bents of our hearts, and the self-centredness that constricts our response to Him. We have felt His compassion for us, and He has awakened us to His compassion for the crowds. We have noted His reply to Mary’s critics: “Let her alone;” and His unstinted appreciation of what she did: “She has done a beautiful thing”(14:6).

And what are we focussing on in response? Looking for the crown? (10:37) Or the cross? (10:42-45; 8:34)

Rich and Poor

Sydney L. Jacob

Lieutenant-Colonel Jacob (1845-1911) of the Royal Indian Engineers is remembered for his famine-relief work in India, where he founded the Panahpur famine-orphan settlement. But his message in this (slightly re-edited) talk¹ is that God must strip us of everything we are proud of before He can bless and use us. The author was first touched by the gospel at the Woolwich training academy for officers through the kindness and witness of an older cadet.

Remember that it is not *difficult*, but *absolutely impossible* for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:23-26); and yet *every man* is rich naturally.

Yes, it is perfectly true that we are all uncommonly rich, for every one of us has an uncommonly good opinion of himself, and is therefore a rich man. Yet

it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. No-one enters there till he is stripped of all, and is rich no more. Then, stripped of everything, he finds he is really rich, whereas when he was rich he was really poor. This is God’s way, and it is wonderful in our eyes.

¹ From *Faithful Sayings* (London, Central Bible Truth Depot, n.d.), a posthumous collection of his writings and addresses.

Take the convict in a jail, or take the man who is a drunkard in rags: still he thinks well of himself, and makes excuses for himself – till God strips him. It is a great thing to see that in Christianity God has to do it all. Nothing of man comes into it *at all*. Who is the best off – the one who has most of what we call “the natural good qualities”? Not at all. The greatest hindrances to arriving at the point of blessing are the qualities men admire. “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15, KJV). That one is best off, who most quickly learns that he has nothing of his own but his sin, and that he has no strength to be any other than what he now is, struggle how he may.

Therefore the more wicked, and the bigger the fool, I recognise myself to be, the better it is for me. And the better for God, for then (and not till then) God can work. As Billy Bray² said when asked how it was he got on so well, “It takes most people such a long time to learn that they are fools, and I knew I was a fool to start with.” But we think so well of ourselves that we struggle and fight for years and years, rather than come down to this.

We think that *if* we come down to this, we shall forfeit blessing. But in fact it is only then that blessing can come, for not till then can we belong to the com-

The greatest hindrances to arriving at the point of blessing are the qualities men admire.

pany of the “blessed poor” spoken of by the Lord in Luke 6:20. The difficulty is not in our badness, helplessness and need. The whole difficulty lies in this, that we fancy we have resources, and will not abandon this idea. It is easier to give one’s body to be burned than to realise nothing is our own but our sin. Once we come to know this, all is easy. Then God does the rest, and the impossible is brought to pass.

But, till we come to this, no blessing can come, for it is impossible that God should give His glory to another (Isaiah 42:8). Did He do so, He would cease to be God. He cannot give you the credit that belongs to Himself alone. Blessed be God, He must have the glory. Therefore it is that God must smash us to pieces in order to bless us, because only thus can He be glorified in His Son, and it be seen that He alone is worthy. Man is worthless, he is done for, there is not a single good thing in him at all, God has set him aside and begun again in a new Man according to

² A colourful nineteenth-century Cornish preacher with a remarkable conversion story.

His own heart; and when God works in us all is well, not otherwise.

Well, I know that you have an answer ready for [my saying that God has to do it all]. You will say, "Then that means I am not responsible." "Oh yes, you are, you are responsible all the time." You say, "This is not logical, not according to reason." But you are mistaken. Take God's word in its simplicity, accept it all, give each part its due weight. Accept all that is said about God's sovereignty. Accept all that is said about man's responsibility. Do not shirk either. It will prove to be perfectly according to reason; only *that* reason is of such a high order that man's reasons cannot reduce it to reason. Man is out of joint, and he will not understand till he gets into joint again. In the meanwhile we have to accept the truth like a little child would. Then all will be simple, for we shall then be the subjects of divine power, and find that our badness

and our foolishness are just the occasion that God desires, that He may come in with His divine power. God has everything for the person who takes his place as a poor one before Him.

God grant we may all hear the Lord's voice saying to us, "Blessed poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." What is the kingdom of God? What the kingdoms of men? Kingdoms are where *men* have sway (and therefore all is wrong!) The kingdom of God is where *God* has sway in grace according to His love, and all is blessedness there. Therefore let Him smash you up and break you to pieces. You will find this the road to blessing. The reason why we have to be so smashed up is because we are *something*, and this "something" hinders blessing. "Nothing" cannot be smashed up, "nothing" cannot be squashed, "nothing" cannot be humiliated, "nothing" cannot be put down lower, "nothing" cannot be hurt. Oh! if we were only "nothing" – to be made nothing of. If we would only let God come in, in this way, and make room for all His blessing, how happy He would make us.

Look at the cross on the one hand, and the glory on the other. Christ Himself was cut off and had nothing (Daniel 9:26, Darby Trans.); therefore we have the answer to the cross in the glory. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes (cp. Psalm 118: 23).

*God has everything for
the person who takes
his place as a poor one
before Him.*

*Let Him smash you up
and break you to pieces.
You will find this the
road to blessing.*

Eating to live

John 6

Ian Britton

This article shows a keen eye for the essential teaching of the chapter. It originated as a talk on the Truth for Today radio programme (www.truthfortoday.org.uk).

Feeding five thousand

Which food gives eternal life? Why do you need it? How can you get it? What kind of life is it? The sixth chapter of John's Gospel answers these questions.

It begins with the "feeding of the five thousand." A great crowd has followed Jesus for days, listening to His teaching. Now they are hungry and weary. The Lord Jesus, who Himself had been hungry, thirsty and weary as He sat by the well near Sychar (John 4:6, 8), understands the condition of this crowd. In His compassion, He provides more than enough food for all – from just five loaves and two small fish.

But more than compassion is involved. In John's Gospel the miracles are not just remarkable events; they are "signs" (2:11; 20:30). In other words, they show evidence of a heavenly fact to the people who witness them. The "feeding of the five thousand" was a sign that the Creator God was present. Nobody else can multiply matter in this way.

Although the people do not understand who Jesus is, they are sufficiently enthusiastic about a free lunch to want to make Him king by force (6:15).

Next day Jesus meets the same crowds on the other side of Lake Galilee.

As always, Jesus sees straight into people's hearts. He tells them that they are not truly interested in signs, but in having their stomachs filled! He advises them, "Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him" (6:27 NKJV). For the next thirty-two verses, Jesus expands on this subject, and describes Himself variously as "the true bread from heaven" (v.32), "the bread of God" (v.33), "the bread of life" (vv.35,48) and "the living bread" (v.51).

So the sign showed the Creator God being present with *food for life*. We shall consider the meaning of this under four headings.

I. Why we must eat to live

"Super foods" are often talked about today. The claim is that they are not just nourishing, but able to help cure disease and extend life. But it has never been claimed that any of them can produce life or raise the dead! Whereas the

Lord Jesus claimed that the food He was describing would “give life to the world,” indeed, “eternal life” (John 6:33,54).

His claim implies that without Him we are all dead, and need to be *given* life. The Lord explains this by contrasting the manna which the Israelites ate in the wilderness with Himself as the *living bread*. It was the crowd that had actually introduced manna into the conversation as a kind of challenge to Jesus. Their argument was, “What sign are you going to show to prove you have come from God? Moses, our great Jewish leader, gave us manna from heaven for forty years. What can you produce?” Jesus immediately takes up the comparison.

Wonderful as God’s provision (not really *Moses’* provision! – v.32) of the manna was, it had at least four limitations:

- It was physical food only.
- It was consumed and gone when you had eaten it.

- After you had eaten it you were soon hungry again.
- Everybody who ate is now dead!

By contrast the “true bread from heaven”

- Is spiritual in nature.
- Is infinite in supply and never used up.
- Is able to prevent any further hunger or thirst ever again.
- Means that those who eat it will not, and cannot, die.

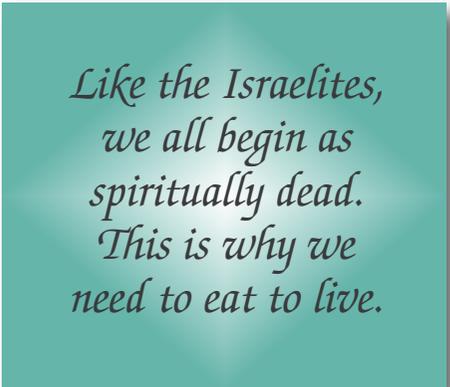
The people who ate manna in the wilderness were, with a very few exceptions, spiritually dead. They had no real faith in God. The manna did not give a single one of them new life. Nor could it even perpetuate physical life for long. Verse 58 says, “Your fathers ate the manna, and are dead.”

Like the Israelites, we all begin as spiritually dead. We have no life or energy toward God. This is why we need to eat to live.

2. How we can eat to live

But where can this new life be found? Jesus answers the question fully in this chapter. Firstly, God is the only possible source of any life. Life of every kind, spiritual and natural, animal and plant, comes from God. This is why Jesus describes Himself as having come down from heaven. For, if anyone is to “give life to the world”, He must be God from heaven.

The Jews would not accept this. They thought they knew Jesus’ father and mother, and believed that He came



*Like the Israelites,
we all begin as
spiritually dead.
This is why we
need to eat to live.*

from Galilee, not heaven (v.42; cp.7:41). Nobody who does not accept Jesus as God can receive new life from Him.

The section of our chapter from verses 51 to 55 goes further. Here the Lord refers often to His flesh and His blood.

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.’ The Jews therefore quarrelled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.’”

Why did the Lord emphasise His flesh and blood? Two main ideas are presented:

- Jesus’ incarnation was essential for this new life to be given. Our salvation not only requires that Jesus is God, but also that He became a man.
- Jesus was referring to His death. In the Bible, when flesh (the body) and blood are seen as separated, the thought presented is *death*. This is why we have bread and wine as the

Once eaten, food is built into the fabric of your body. You cannot extract it again. So once we have taken Christ as our Saviour in this way we receive eternal life, and it is ours for ever.

memorial of Christ’s death in the Lord’s Supper. The blood is what gives life, so when blood is separated from the flesh, we have death. Our salvation, then, is dependent on the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus.

Life has become available because Jesus, though God, *became Man*, and *died*.

But this still does not tell me how I can receive it.

The answer Jesus gives is, “By eating.” Imagine I am really hungry, and a beautiful, freshly baked loaf of bread is on the table before me. I have been told that it is for me, but I stand still. To satisfy my hunger, and gain the nutrition, I must do the simple thing of reaching out, taking the bread and eating it. So it was when Christ was first presented

to us as Saviour. There He was, absolutely all that we needed and desired. We then had to take the step of faith, and “make Him our own.” The word for “eat” in verses 51 and 53 is, literally, “shall have eaten.” The Lord speaks here about a definite, deliberate, once-and-for-all act of taking Christ as Saviour, at our conversion.

Once eaten, food is built into the fabric of your body. You cannot extract it again. So once we have taken Christ as our Saviour in this way we receive eternal life, and it is ours for ever.

3. The kind of life given

Even if effective, “super foods” could only extend the same, natural life that we always had. They could not raise the

But when we “ate to live” by accepting Jesus as Saviour, we did not receive another natural life that just goes on longer than our previous life; for our new life would simply be ruined again by new sins.

dead. But when we “ate to live” by accepting Jesus as Saviour, we did not receive another natural life that just goes on longer than our previous life. Nor did we get put back into the innocent state of Adam and Eve before they sinned. If either of these were true, our new life would simply be ruined again by new sins, and we would be back where we started. Jesus said specifically that this new life was “eternal” (v. 54), and that those who have it “[will] not die” (verse 50). So this new life is “eternal life,” but it must be “eternal” in the sense of not being capable of corruption again by sins.

And so in 1 John 3:9 we read, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” John makes clear that the new life in a Christian is quite unlike the old life. The new life is totally incorruptible, a life that pleases God and is suitable for heaven. Experience may tell me that I, as a person, still sin, but the Bible declares *that this is my old life at work*. So “eternal life” is more than just a life capable of indefinite extension. It is a new kind of life, of the same nature as Christ Himself, in that it cannot sin.

4. Suitable food for this new life

Different creatures need different foods. Most of us find chocolate a treat; to dogs it is poisonous. This is not just a question of taste. Each life has its own specific needs. It is the same with our

*The diet for our
new life is
extremely simple:
it is the Lord
Jesus Himself.*

new spiritual life. It cannot feed on physical food and drink, or even on the same pastimes and pleasures that nourish our old nature. It has its own special diet. The diet for our new life is extremely simple: it is the Lord Jesus Himself.

We saw that in verses 51 and 53 the word for “eat” is “shall have eaten;” But in verses 54-58 “eat” is a present tense in the original too. These verses therefore indicate that our initial “one-off” eating to gain life is not the end of our eating. Subsequently we must continue to feed on that same living bread. We can only accept Christ as Saviour once, but we can continue to meditate on Christ, and especially on Christ in His death. We trusted completely and solely in Christ for our salvation. We did not add anything of our own works, or other men’s ideas. Once that new life is ours, its only food is the Lord Jesus Himself. Of course, we will value sermons and books that help us to understand the things of the Lord

Jesus, and we will certainly need the company of other Christians. These things are vital. But what this passage shows us is that they are vital because they contribute to our understanding and appreciation of our Lord. They are not ends in themselves.

The “normal” experience of a Christian is expressed in Psalm 42:1: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.” But the honest truth is that searching the scriptures for Christ often seems like a duty that is both hard going and unrewarding. Why? Perhaps we are spiritually malnourished. If you went without food for a few hours you would get hungry. But extend this into a week or more, and you will become so weak that you actually lose appetite, and may not even be able to eat food given to you. Too much time without feeding on Christ can also lead to a damaging loss of appetite. The best way out of this problem is not to sit feeling guilty about our failure, not to try and make yourself feel keener, etc. The best way is to start eating! Confess to the Lord Himself how you feel, and start reading His word prayerfully, and thinking about Him. This is a great way to rekindle your appetite! It is the message of John 6 for us who are already Christians.

This “feeding” will keep us closer to the Lord Jesus. In verse 56 He says, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” In the next

verse He goes on to liken this to His relationship with His Father. “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so He who feeds on Me will live because of Me.” Christ did not live on this earth independently of the Father, and those who feed on Him should not move independently of the One whose life we share. Doing the Father’s will was a joy to Him, and seeking after the Lord Jesus should be a joy to me.

“Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life” (v.27). Jesus challenged His hearers to *change their focus* from the material to the spiritual. What are the most important things in my life? A good guide to this is how I spend my

time. Obviously I have to spend a large proportion of my time sleeping and working, and on necessary family matters, but I need to consider what I do with my *disposable*, or *discretionary*, time. In the hours, minutes, or days when I can actually choose what I am going to do, what are my priorities? The harsh reality is that if I do not choose to concentrate on “the food which endures to everlasting life” when I have a free five minutes, I will not concentrate on it if I have five hours to spare!

How important it is, having eaten of Christ for eternal life, to go on feeding our souls on Him!

Bread of heaven,
Feed me now and evermore!

Alpha People

Barnabas

George Stevens

Continuing George’s alphabetical studies of Bible characters.

Barnabas was “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith” (Acts 11:24, KJV). The apostles named him “Barnabas,” meaning “Son of Consolation” or, “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36). The new name epitomised his character; his original name was Joses (Joseph). A converted Levite from Cyprus, he became Paul’s companion on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:4 – 14:26). The people of Lystra imagined he was Jupiter, or Zeus, the

king of the Greek gods (Acts 14:12). This suggests a noble appearance.

His character

He was also noble morally. Like his Master, this true disciple went about doing good (cp. Acts 10:38). A good work is one that is done in the will of God, to the benefit of others, with God receiving the glory. If he was “full of the Holy Spirit,” he was not just fitted for the service of the Lord; he also produced the “fruit of the spirit” in his life

– the qualities against which “there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23).

For example, “having land, [he] sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:37). In the early days of Christianity, many new believers gave cheerfully to a common fund through which the need of every church member was met (4:34). But Barnabas is specially mentioned in this connection. He was a generous man – and transparently honest. His honesty appears in the fact that, when the disciples wanted to send financial relief to Christians in Judea, they chose Barnabas and Saul to take it to the elders of the church there (11:29-30).

Not only “a good man”, he was also “full of faith” (11:24). Surrendering his lands needed faith. His faith was seen to be *living*, full of works done in obedience to God – for faith without works is dead!

*A good work is one
that is done in the
will of God, to the
benefit of others, with
God receiving the
glory.*

His teaching ministry

When the Gentile church was expanding rapidly in Antioch, Saul and Barnabas taught it for a whole year. In fact, Barnabas had gone to fetch Saul from Tarsus to share the work with him. Without jealousy, he recognised the need for a greater gift than his own (Acts 11:25-26; cp. Acts 14:12?). There, believers were first called “Christians.” Perhaps we may say that the teaching of these two was of such a character that those who believed were likened to Christ by the citizens of Antioch.

Though surpassed by Paul’s gift, Barnabas’s own prophetic, or teaching gift was such that God separated him out for missionary work (Acts 13:2). Although not everything went swimmingly (see below), he was still labouring on the mission field quite a few years later, to judge by the fact that Paul expected believers in places far from Cyprus and Judea to respect his name (1 Corinthians 9:6; Colossians 4:10). The former text shows that he was a hard worker who was self-supporting. He was not in it for gain!

His encouragement

When the Lord Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as the “Comforter”, or “Helper,” the Greek word used is related to the Greek meaning of the name “Barnabas.” And if Barnabas was full of the Holy Spirit, then he was someone who, in the power of the Spirit, came alongside to *help*.

For example, when the believers in Jerusalem shunned Saul, sceptical of the reality of their recent persecutor's conversion, Barnabas spoke up for him (Acts 9:26-7). And in Acts 15:36-9 we find Barnabas wanting to give John Mark a second chance to go with Paul and himself on their follow-up work to the churches. Unfortunately, Paul wouldn't hear of it, because Mark had previously deserted them at Pamphylia. (No reason is given for this turning back). The result was sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. So Barnabas gave way: he took Mark to Cyprus, whilst Paul, taking Silas, revisited the towns of the first missionary journey. Did Paul perhaps forget how Barnabas had once spoken up for *him*?

But Mark benefited from Barnabas's patience and instruction, so that Paul himself later instructs the Christians in Colossae to receive him (Colossians

4:10). And near the end of his life he says to Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11).

The challenge of Barnabas

Barnabas is a challenge. Are we marked by integrity, transparent honesty, generosity and goodness? Are we hard workers for the Lord, yet, where possible, self-supporting? Do we have the ability to comfort and encourage others? Do we argue for what we believe to be right? But is our gentleness (some translate, "yieldingness") apparent to everyone (cp. Philippians 4:5, NKJV), and empowered by the realisation that "the Lord is at hand"? Do we speak up for those who have "a bad press;" and where, sadly, this reputation is not undeserved, gently seek to correct them?

Refreshment, Rest and a Rich Repast

Donald Davison

This lovely meditation should challenge readers to ask themselves: what have I made, "touching the King," that I can bring in worship to God?

A visit from God Himself

Blessing and refreshment come to us *from* God in abundant measure. It is much less common for us to dwell on the fact that once we are, by faith, in relationship with divine Persons, it opens up the possibility that we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, can bring

refreshment *to* the heart of our Lord Jesus and our God and Father.

In Genesis 18:1-8 we get a wonderful picture of man being able to bring refreshment to God.

Abraham had received several communications from the LORD up to this point in his life. The first is in Genesis 12:1-3, where he had been called upon

*When we maintain
the features of
strangership and
spiritual vigour that
we are in a condition
in which the Lord is
able to disclose
Himself to us.*

to leave country, people and family to go to a land that would be shown him. By faith he had obeyed this instruction, and “went out, not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8, NKJV).

But in Genesis 18 he receives a personal *visitation* from the LORD. What an advance, and what an immense privilege!

The LORD knew His servant, and had confidence in him (Genesis 18:19). He was pleased to make Himself known to Abraham in this remarkable way. But was *Abraham* ready for such an occasion? How did he react? Had he resources suitable for such a visitation? Similarly, when the Lord discloses Himself in the midst of His own, how do *we* react? Do we recognise Him in our midst? Have we suitable, spiritual resources with which to gladden His

heart? Abraham is an encouragement and “type” for us for just such occasions.

It was “by the oaks of Mamre,” that the Lord appeared to Abraham as he sat in the tent door (18:1, Darby Trans.). The “oaks” speak to us of strength; “Mamre” means “vigour;” and the “tent” betokens Abraham’s pilgrim character. So here we have a servant of God in old age, yet spiritually displaying vigour and a pilgrim character. A “pilgrim” is someone on his way home and a “stranger” is someone absent from home. Peter speaks of the saints as “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11 KJV). What an encouragement to us, to seek to continue in this character as long as the Lord leaves us here! It is when we maintain the features of strangership and spiritual vigour that we are in a condition in which the Lord is able to disclose Himself to us.

“Three men” stood by Abraham when he “lifted up his eyes.” He ran to “meet” them (v.2¹). He recognised one of them as the LORD, addressed Him as “My Lord,” and bowed himself to the ground in an attitude of worship. We are reminded of the occasion in John 21:1-7 when the Lord, standing on the shore in resurrection, discloses Himself to the seven disciples in the boat. John recognises Him and says, “It is the Lord.” Like Abraham “running” in haste to meet his visitors, Peter puts on his coat and casts himself into the sea to

¹ Verse references on their own refer in this article to Genesis 18.

go to Jesus. At the moment of our rapture to glory it will be with haste, in an instant, that we will rise “to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). What a “meeting” that will be!

Abraham engaged in appropriate conversation with the Lord (vv. 3ff). What an immense privilege! Abraham’s experience was a “one-off event.” Perhaps we wish that the Lord might appear to us in bodily form, so that we too might have the opportunity to speak to Him as did Abraham, and as did the disciples. But are we really less favoured? With the Holy Spirit “in” and “with” us forever (John 14:16-17), we have the privilege of being able to be in communion with our Lord Jesus and our God and Father at all times. The Lord states that both He and the Father would disclose themselves to us. The Holy Spirit is the One who takes of the things of our Lord Jesus and shows them to us. His object and mission in

His saints is to “guide us into all truth,” to “tell us things to come,” and to “glorify” our Lord Jesus to, in, and through us (John 14:21-23; 16:13-14). He is the same indwelling Holy Spirit who is the power for our worship of the Father and the Son (Philippians 3:3). We, therefore, are in a unique position, for we are able “in spirit” to be in communion with our Lord Jesus and our God and Father every day of our lives. Do we consciously realise this and avail ourselves of every opportunity to do so?

Abraham asks, “My Lord, if now I have found favour in your sight...” (v.3, NKJV). If Abraham “found favour,” or “grace,” in the eyes of the Lord, how much more ourselves! The Lord Jesus was “full of grace and truth,” and “of his fulness we have all received and grace upon grace.” (John 1:14,16, Darby Trans.). In and through His work upon the cross, we have, by faith, been “taken into favour in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). What “grace”, “favour” and “blessing” are ours! Abraham continues, “Do not pass on by your servant.” We are reminded of the two travelling to Emmaus, who requested the Lord to “abide with [them], for it is toward evening.” The Lord graciously accepted their invitation. What a revelation awaited them when He was made known to them as “He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them” (Luke 24:29-31, NKJV). May we not say, what a disclosure there is of Himself as we break bread each week in answer to His request?

*Abraham’s
experience was a
“one-off event.”
But are we really
less favoured?*

*Mary Magdalene
and other women
“ministered unto
him of their
substance.”*

Refreshment

Abraham continues, “Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree” (v.4).

When we think of feet-washing, we naturally think of John 13:1-14, and of the gracious service of our Lord in stooping down to wash the disciples’ feet. He brought cleansing from the defilement of the pathway that they had contracted that day, and at the same time ministered refreshment to them. But how often do we dwell upon the fact that we, on our part, are able to bring refreshment to *His* heart? Abraham teaches us that this is indeed a possibility. Here and there in the Gospel narratives we find people who, in the midst of opposition to Himself, had the immense privilege of ministering refreshment to the Lord. The woman in Luke 7:36-38 is an illustration of this. She, “a woman in the city,” brought an alabaster box of ointment,

stood behind Him, at His feet, in the Pharisee’s house, “weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment” (KJV). What the Pharisee had neglected to do out of coldness of heart, she bestowed upon Him with repentance, love and affection. We are told how much He, who was now her Lord, appreciated her action, and that she received from Him the blessing that was in His heart to give her.

When we come into the presence of the Lord, it is our privilege to minister refreshment to Him, to tell Him what we think of Him, and to bring joy to His heart. This can be done day by day by both brothers and sisters. Most of us would say that the greatest opportunity to bring refreshment to Him is when we meet together on a Lord’s-day morning in answer to His own request, “This do in remembrance of me.” However, we read in Luke 8:3 of Mary Magdalene and other women who “ministered unto him of their substance.” The fact that it was the women who were able to bring sustenance and refreshment to the Saviour is intended (i) to teach that this is a privilege not confined to brothers only, and (ii) to show that it is our affections which need to be in exercise to accomplish this service. I often think how sad it is when, on a Lord’s-day morning, brothers remain silent, and seem to have nothing to offer to their Lord and

Saviour for His wonderful love unto death for us.

Rest

Rest is the next thing that Abraham invites the heavenly Visitors to enjoy (v.4). We remember the occasion when at Sychar the Lord was “wearied with his journey,” and “sat thus on the well.” He converses with the Samaritan woman. Eventually she goes into the city, tells others of Him and of her experience, and invites them to “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (John 4:6,29) Was that not *rest* for Him?

Abraham invites the Strangers to “comfort” [or, “strengthen”] their hearts after their journey, saying that he would provide a “morsel” of food for them (v.5). Abraham had resources at his disposal, and indicates that he was prepared to use them for Their benefit. The heavenly Strangers were prepared to accept his hospitality and to stay until all was ready. They bid him do as he has pro-

posed. It causes me to ask: have we spiritual resources available to dispense unto the Lord when He discloses Himself to us? Sometimes, I am afraid, we are like the fishermen who, when asked, “Have you any food?” are forced to reply, “No” (John.21:5).

A Rich Repast!

Abraham goes to Sarah in the tent, and says, “Make ready quickly three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make cakes” (v.6). The call is to “make ready!” David knew something about this when he said, “My heart is welling forth with a good matter: I say what I have composed touching the King” (Psalm 45: 1, Darby Trans.). If we asked ourselves, “What have I made this week ‘touching the King?’”, would we find something suitable that we have prepared concerning Him? In John 12:2 we read, “There they made him a supper (NKJV).” What a precious privilege we have each week of doing the same! Elisha says to the widow woman, “What do you have in the house?” She has nothing but a “jar of oil” (2 Kings 4:2). What do we have in the storehouse of our hearts? The clay “jar” speaks to us of the manhood of our Lord; and the “oil,” of the power of the Holy Spirit with which He was filled while here below. Elisha’s instruction to the woman was to “pour out.” With Christ enshrined in our hearts in the power of the Spirit, we too can “pour out” our praise in abundance to Him.



*What have I made
this week ‘touching
the King’?
What do we have in
the storehouse of our
hearts?*

If you are a young brother, be encouraged to make your voice audible in praise and worship.

When the disciples were at their "wits' end" the Lord used a lad's five loaves and two fishes.

Sarah made cakes of "fine flour". This reminds us of the "meal," or "food," offering described in Leviticus 2. The "meal" offering was a companion offering, offered along with other sacrifices. It was not offered on its own. This tells us that, though the perfect sinless life of our Lord was basic, and necessary in order to prove Him morally suitable and competent to deal with the vast question of sin, yet it was not His life lived, but His life laid down in death that accomplished our redemption. The fact that the meal offering had to be unleavened (Leviticus 2:11) tells us of the sinless perfection of that life that was laid down.

Sarah was to "knead" the flour. This made a perfectly blended mixture with

no unevenness in its composition. It was so in the life of our Lord. All was in perfect consistency in His life; there was no coarseness or exaggeration in Him. Every moral feature of love, grace, kindness, mercy and truth found its expression, blended together in perfection, in Him.

Abraham also ran to the herd, "took a tender and good calf," and gave it to a servant to prepare (v.7). The preparation of this "rich repast" would take some little time. Our meditations of the Lord also take time to prepare and mature for being presented to Him. Our daily reading of His word, our prayer and "meditation of Him" (cp. Psalm 104:34 KJV), our communion with Him, are all part of the process used by God in the power of His Holy Spirit to enlarge and deepen in us our appreciation of the Person and work of our Saviour.

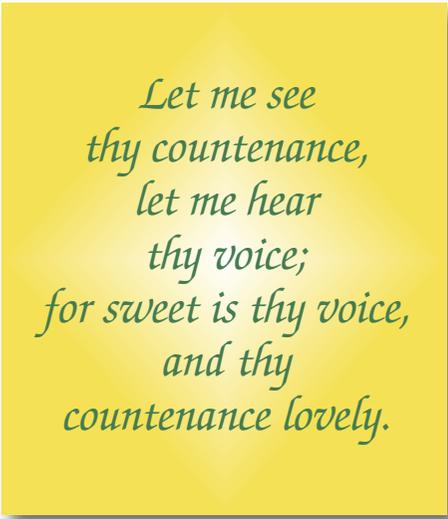
A "young man" [i.e. a servant] was given the task of preparing it. If you are a young brother and reading this, be encouraged to make your voice audible in praise and worship of the Lord. Remember that it was when the disciples were at their "wits' end" over how to feed a multitude, that the Lord "knew what he would do" (John 6:6), and used a lad's five loaves and two fishes to feed them all.

When all was ready, Abraham took butter and milk – the richness of the herd – as well as the calf, and placed

them before his Visitors (v.8). He presented his “offering” to Them.

Picture the scene: he presents the meal, sets it before Them, takes a step backwards under the tree, and looks and waits. Will these heavenly Visitors accept what he offers? Is it suitable? Will They eat? One senses a certain tension for a moment or two. What happened? “They did eat.” Oh! Wonder of wonders! Heavenly Visitors, including One who was undoubtedly the “Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8), accepted what Abraham offered.

For us today? What in secret, and prayerfulness is prepared in our hearts concerning Himself, whether much or little, and is offered in true praise, worship and adoration, is accepted by and acceptable to Him. May the gracious Lord Himself encourage our hearts to voice His praise abroad. We often



*Let me see
thy countenance,
let me hear
thy voice;
for sweet is thy voice,
and thy
countenance lovely.*

remind our hearts with the words of the Bridegroom concerning His Bride, “Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance lovely” (Song of Solomon 2:14).

What is a dispensation?

Theo Balderston

“Dispensational truth” is in an undeserved backwater today. Here is an introduction.

Why study the dispensations?

In order to truly understand *the fulfillment of God’s purposes in Christ*, you have to understand the dispensations. In order to see the greatness of *God’s plan of salvation*, you have to understand the dispensations. In order to understand *how the Bible hangs together*, you have to understand the dispensa-

tions. In order to understand *God’s present ways and purposes in the world*, you have to understand the dispensations. In order to understand *yourself*, as “a man in Adam” become “a man in Christ,” you have to understand the dispensations. In order to truly understand and grow in *Biblical holiness*, you have to understand the dispensations.

Which all makes it rather surprising that this subject is slipping into relative neglect.

What are the dispensations?

The first thing to note is that there is no special significance in the word “dispensation” itself. It does not clearly appear in this sense in Scripture, and was adopted in the early nineteenth century to identify a certain thread through the Bible, simply because it was then a common word in Christian discourse for denoting periods of human history distinguished by differ-

ences in God’s dealings with man.¹ However, as we shall see, the “dispensations,” in the sense used here, were not discrete time periods. They may have had different starting points, but sometimes continued simultaneously.

So much for what “dispensation” is *not*. What the word *does* denote is a sequence of “regimes” instituted by God to test the actions and heart of man in various ways and various spheres of responsibility. Even without a specific term for them, these differing testings can be distinguished in the Bible. And in all these different “regimes,” God pursued a *single* purpose – that of demonstrating indisputably that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8).

“No good thing” – the historical proof

And so the main biblical foundation for dispensational truth is in Romans chapters 1 to 8. Chapter 1:16 – 3:20 of Romans show that the human race had been completely tested as to the righteousness of its behaviour, and had comprehensively failed the test. The record of the Old Testament fills out historically the abstract statements of this part of Romans. It shows how God tested man in diverse situations, and how in every one of these situations, man failed. This is dispensational truth.

In order to truly understand the fulfilment of God's purposes in Christ, you have to understand the dispensations. In order to understand how the Bible hangs together, you have to understand the dispensations.

¹ See P.R.Wilkinson, *For Zion's Sake. Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby* (Milton Keynes, 2007), p.98.

Then Romans 3:21-31 shows that, this having been demonstrated beyond dispute, God intervened with His own righteous act – the cross of Christ; and that through atonement God brings sinners who simply believe into a right relationship with Himself. Chapter 5:12 draws out a further implication of this truth. The single work of Christ on the cross undoes the effects of Adam’s disobedient act for all who believe.

But chapters 6-8 of Romans make clear that, consequent upon the cross, God is not restoring man-in-Adam. Paul does not say in these chapters that in Christ we were given the potentiality for reform. No: in God’s sight we died to that old life (6:3). We died in the fact that *Christ* died to the realm where He had to deal with, and defeat, sin and death. He died to Adam’s realm (6:9-10). In resurrection He has a new body and a new life. By faith, His resurrection life is ours. For those who are saved, God finished with the man-in-Adam at the cross. Except in one final episode in the millennium (see below)

God will not test even unregenerate man any more.

Therefore, the dispensational side of the history of the Old Testament is the history that proves the moral failure of the first man, not merely in regard to what he *does*, but even in regard to what he *is*. There is no explanation for why the Bible contains so lengthy an Old-Testament record of this failure, outside of an understanding of the dispensational ways of God. But the Bible also shows that all his failure is answered to the glory of God by the second Man – Christ.

What happened in Eden

In this article there is space only for considering the first act of this long history of testing the first man and demonstrating his unreformability.

Man, meaning Adam and Eve, was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). This means, firstly, that they were jointly a moral reflection of Him – for before the Fall they only did good. But, secondly, “image” also means that they were the visible representatives of the invisible God to the lower creation over which, in the same verses, they were granted dominion. One solitary prohibition embodied the supremacy of God’s dominion. Out of all the fruits of the garden they were forbidden only to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This commandment was easy to keep in that orchard bursting with fruit, and it was all that

The dispensational history of the Old Testament proves the moral failure of the first man.

*The coats of skin
also indicated His
own holiness in not
condoning sin,
but His grace in
finding a holy way
for them to continue
in relationship
with Himself.*

they had to do to acknowledge God as their Lord.

When the devil attacked them, he went straight to the *point* of the prohibition. He used the idea as his bait, that eating the tree's fruit would emancipate them from their subordination. He suggested that it would make them "like God" (3:5, NKJV). Adam and Eve fell for it. They ate the fruit in order to push out the boundaries of their subordinate dominion. Their sin corrupted the essence of their relationship with God. Not only was their *act* disobedient, but it also revealed *hearts* whose desire went wrong in doing it. Ever since then, our *seen* sins are only the tip of an iceberg of sinful enmity to God concealed in our hearts.

Their failure terminated their paradisaical existence. God said that, because

"the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil," he must be prevented from eating from the tree of life (3:22). The knowledge only of good, that had characterised their innocence, had expanded into the knowledge of evil. But, oppositely to God, they would now put their knowledge of evil to evil uses (cp. Jeremiah 4:22). Therefore, to prevent the corruption of Eden into an evil source of immortality, they were driven out of the garden; and the cherubim prevented them from returning to eat the fruit of the tree of life. In this way God limited the damage which the Fall did to His earth.

Humanity after the Fall

Thereafter the human race lived under the sentences placed upon the woman and the man (3:16-19). They would return to the dust from which they had been liberated by the life-giving breath of God. This is emphasised by the sonorous repetition in Genesis 5:4-31 of "And he died." And God cursed the ground "for Adam's sake." He did not withdraw His grant to them of dominion over the earth; indeed it remains fundamental to human existence throughout the rest of history. But whereas formerly Adam and Eve only had to "tend" and "keep" the garden (2:15), now their livelihood would depend on grinding toil to extract food from the cursed, recalcitrant, and weed-infested ground outside Eden (3:19).

But before driving them from Eden, God covered their shame with coats of skin. He did not tell them to ignore their shame. But by covering it He allowed the ashamed pair and their descendants not to be constantly crippled by it. The coats of skin also indicated His own holiness in not *condoning sin*, but His *grace* in finding a holy way for them to continue in relationship with Himself. This involved possibly the first death they ever witnessed – that of the animal(s) whose skins they received. Thus, many hun-

dreds of years before their own deaths, God portrayed their death sentence before their eyes – but with the difference that this death was their means of continued life. This paradox was the first hint of Calvary.

God cursed the serpent, whereas He only punished Adam and Eve. This difference hints at the redemption of man, but the irredeemability of Satan. The last words of this curse announced the eventual triumph of “the Seed of the woman” over Satan. This promised them ultimate release from the enmity of Satan to which, meanwhile, the curse also condemned them (3:15).

Ever since Eden, humanity has applied its technological discoveries to “subduing the earth”. But, because “sin entered the world”, the force motivating this great human project has been greed.

David confirms in Psalm 8:6-8 that even after the Fall God has still placed “all things under [man’s] feet.” Ever since Eden, humanity has applied most of its technological discoveries to “subduing the earth” (cp. Genesis 1:28). But, because “sin entered the world” (Romans 5:12), the force motivating this great human project has not been obedience to a divine mandate, but greed. Doubtless, greed has proved strikingly effective in recent centuries in harnessing earth’s rich resources to human purposes (though always only as under some sort of regulation, prompted by the conscience which God has also left inside people as a witness to His moral claims). But in the last century and a half technology has empowered greed for an unparalleled asset-stripping of the earth’s resources, with possible effects on its climate.

*Under Christ,
and before the
earth is burned up,
Edenic conditions
will again be seen.*

Perhaps we are starting to see a global ravaging of God's earth that the grant of dominion to man wreaks, when it is exercised outside of subjection to Him?

Christ – God's answer

But did Satan win? Did he succeed in ruining the old creation irreparably? Is nothing left but for it to be burned up? The New Testament does not major on the future condition of the earth, its focus being on the heavenly hope. But Revelation gives the guide-line on this matter. Its focus is on the heavenly city during the millennium (21:9 – 22:5); but where it actually mentions the millennium, it does so in relation to the *earth* (20:2-9). And Hebrews 2:6-8 quotes Psalm 8 in relation to “the world to come” (v.5). The word here for “world” is *oikoumenē*. According to all other NT occurrences of this word (including Hebrews 1:6), and to the

lexicon, it means “the earth as an inhabited area, exclusive of the heavens above and the nether regions; the inhabited earth, the world.” And so, although Hebrews 2:8 interprets the “all things” of Psalm 8:6 in the widest sense, the use of *oikoumenē* suggests that 2:5 primarily focusses on the earth. The earth-to-come will be subjected to *man*, not angels, but *how*? Only as it is subjected to the true “Son of man” – Jesus Christ! What the first man lost, the Second Man will restore (cp. Psalm 69:4). This is a second foundation of dispensational truth.

God did not create the earth in vain (Isaiah 45:18). Under Christ, and before the earth is burned up (2 Peter 3:10,12), Edenic conditions will again be seen, perhaps in the whole earth, or perhaps in a limited part of it – “my holy mountain” (Isaiah 11:6-9).

What God originally gave Adam the responsibility to do, *Christ, and only Christ*, will fulfil,² not in innocence, but in moral perfection, and having first “tasted death” for *everything*. The “everything” of Hebrews 2:9 (see Darby Trans.) parallels the “all things” of v.8.

The final rebellion

But God will permit that neo-Edenic earth to be used as the theatre for a final rebellion, once Satan is released from the abyss for the “little season”

² On this see the helpful articles in recent issues of ST – by Yannick Ford, “Rewriting Man's History” (July, 2007), and David Anderson, “The Son of Man” (October, 2008).

*The Son will
accept for ever
and ever, as Man,
the subordinate
place which Adam
and Eve refused!*

(Revelation 20:3, KJV). The nations of the earth will have enjoyed unparalleled blessings for the thousand years, including access to the tree of life in the heavenly city, lifting in some sense their debarment from Eden (22:2). But not even all these blessings will make the natural man proof against Satan's renewed deceits. The nations will launch a final rebellion against Christ, not proclaimed to them by faith as now, but as seen by their naked eyes in *visible* glory. It will be a re-enactment on a far greater scale of the same spirit of rebellion as prompted Adam and Eve's original sin.

But then will come the end (1 Corinthians 15:24-6; Revelation 20:9-15). The heart of the natural man will have been tested and exposed with final clarity as still the same as ever since the Fall. The final judgement will occur. The "last enemy" will be destroyed. God will be "all in all."

And then *even one so great as the Son* will be subjected to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28, Darby Trans., ESV, etc.) "Subjected" – because subordination is not intrinsic to Him *as* Son. As Son He is equal with the Father (e.g. "Father, I will that..." John 17:24, KJV). But verse 27 has quoted Psalm 8:6 to ascribe to Him an expansion of the dominion originally granted to Adam. Thus the focus of the passage is on Christ *as Man*. And verse 28 states that One so great as the Son will accept for ever and ever, as Man, the subordinate place which Adam and Eve refused!

Amazing grace! What a poignant, wonderful end to the sorry history of Eden! Only *in Christ* will (renewed, risen) humanity occupy its proper place in relation to God. He will have all the glory, and the rest of us will have none. This brings us back to the first paragraph of the article.

*What a poignant,
wonderful end to
the sorry history
of Eden!*

Written by the late Ron Mahers and now back in print
in an attractive new pocket-sized format from Scripture
Truth Publications:

What Does The Bible Teach?

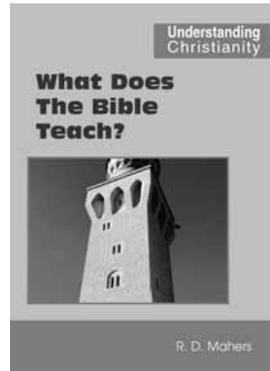
16 pages; ISBN: 978-0-901860-89-7; published 31 March 2009
A6 (105mm wide x 148.5mm high) pocket-sized paperback

This little tract is designed as an evangelistic tool when working with Jehovah's Witnesses. Have one ready to hand out when that knock comes at the door.

Their Bible study textbook is entitled "What Does The Bible Really Teach?", but a close examination of the Bible itself reveals that what *it* truly teaches is significantly at odds with *their* textbook's explanations.

Addressed to a Jehovah's Witness, this booklet compares and contrasts the teaching they receive with that of the Bible in relation to: who Jesus really is, what Jesus has done and will do, and what the future holds for the Christian. Writing in a polite, clear style, the author challenges the Jehovah's Witness reader to take up the Bible without prejudice, examine what it truly says on these vital issues and consider the consequences of accepting or rejecting the truth of its words.

The booklet's sections cover: The Deity of Christ; The Death of Christ; The Lord's Resurrection; The Triune God and The Person of The Holy Spirit; Eternal Punishment and Annihilation; The Return of Christ; What is Your Hope?; What is The Christian's Hope?



Special prices:

R.R.P. 60p each; **STP retail: 50p each**

Keep a few handy by the door! Multiple purchases:

Packs of 10 for £4.50; Packs of 100 for £40.00

The above prices exclude postage and packing,
which will be added to your invoice.

“Step out upon the waves and come to Me.”
So I stepped out, and stood upon the blackness
And while I looked at Him I walked.

The sea is black, and wind that roars
Lifts waves up high with power —
This is no place for man!
Lord! Save me, for I sink!

Immediately I felt His hand, and straightway on the ship
Beheld the sea now calm, the wind all still,
And He in front of me:
“Why did you doubt?”

Why did I doubt? The sea was black
The wind that roared raised up the waves
Their power could not be withstood.
Like that which is within me, like those waves
Like that black deep, within me seeks to overwhelm —
I cannot stand before it, least of all upon it.
When every thought of mine seems subject to defeat
And each resolve so feeble in that wind.

“But did you not see Me? Was I obscured
By visions of yourself?
Since I had called you on, would I have let you sink?
Look unto Me, for I am all your strength
And, like the calm that follows from My word,
Despairing thoughts, and strength of towering wave
Will disappear.
And you will walk upon the water still
For I have called you, and there shall be none
To thwart My purpose, and My blessing.
Do not doubt! For you shall come to Me.”

From Matthew 14:25-33

Yannick Ford