

Scripture Truth



Inside:

The Cross

The faithful God

The Divine "Safari"

The power of God's Word

Holy Word, holy living

Imitating the God who loves

July – September 2010

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 2010

£9.50 Post Free UK – £11.50 Post Free Overseas

Contents

God and man revealed in the cross	1	Holy Word, holy living	16
The power of God's Word	2	The faithful God	21
Imitating the God who loves	8	The shadow of a great rock in a weary land (poem).....	Back Cover
The Divine “Safari”	13		



“Comforted of God”

compiled by Algernon James Pollock

110 pages; paperback;

available from STP at £4.50 + p&p

A collection of Scripture texts, prose and poetry which shines the light of God's Word into the darkness of disappointment, illness and bereavement.

To those in such circumstances it provides encouragement, strength, illumination, understanding and comfort. Over thirty-thousand copies were produced during the first half of the twentieth century. Its message of hope still lifts the spirit and draws the stressed, the discouraged and the sorrowful to the Saviour, who is the Prince of Peace.

Front cover photograph of Lizard Point, Cornwall

Illustrations on pages 13-15 ©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

The cross is the greatest revelation of God. When He forsook Christ there, He revealed Himself in His holiness as He visited the judgment due for sin on His only Son, who became Man so that He could take our place. “Why have you forsaken me? ...But you are *holy*” (Psalm 22:1,3). This is *propitiation* – God showing forth His holiness in respect of sin. God could not have shown it forth more utterly than in

The gospel
of God
is self-
authenticating
in the
amazing
character of
its *grace*.

The gospel of God is self-authenticating in the amazing character of its *grace*.

Not only is the cross the greatest revelation of God; it is also the principal revelation of what *man* is. Simeon said to Mary, “Behold this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed, ...*that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed*” (Luke 2:34-35). The venom of the religious leaders, Pilate’s

God and man revealed in the cross

judging our sins in His Son. There is no-one dearer to God than He. But in the same act God also revealed the magnitude of His love for sinners. “God so loved... that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16, ESV). *All* of the Father’s eternal love for His Son is implicit in that verse: and this is the measure of His love for man. The holiness and the love come together in 1 John 4:10, “In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

How amazing that God should choose, as the means of the greatest revelation of Himself, not only to humanity but even to angels, a dreadful method of execution reserved for low criminals and slaves! No-one inventing a religion would have devised this as its centrepiece!

Only
at the place
where the
infinite,
unconditional
love of God
is displayed
as a
sheer fact,
can we
really accept
the truth
about
ourselves.

greater concern for his own standing with Caesar than for his faultless Prisoner, the crowd’s malice, Peter’s denial, the cowardly flight of the other disciples – these reactions exposed the hearts of all involved. And the natural reaction of every human being when told about the cross is to turn away from it. Purely sentimental attachments to the cross dissolve once we realise that it means that our sins were visited on God’s Son. But in fact the cross is the *only* place where we can truly face up to the vileness of our natures and deeds. Only at the place where the infinite, unconditional love of God is displayed as a sheer fact, can we really accept the truth about ourselves. However, only the Holy Spirit can draw us there.

Theo Balderston

The power of God's Word

Lessons from Jonah the evangelist

Glenn Baxter

"I want us to be left with a clear impression of the undiminished power of God's Word, both in Jonah's day and now, to change lives and situations... As Paul wrote, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...'" These words from the end of this article encapsulate Glenn's ministry before he was quite suddenly called to be with Christ on 26th February – to our immense loss. The article is based on a talk given on the "Truth for Today" programme on Premier Radio (www.truthfortoday.org.uk). It will come with especial force to all who knew Glenn's tireless gospel work.

A second chance

"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD" (Jonah 3:1-3).

God had not forgotten Jonah, despite his disobedience. Jonah had been instructed by God to go and warn the people of the great Assyrian city of Nineveh about His coming judgement against them because of their wickedness (Jonah 1:2). Instead, he had gone by ship in the opposite direction. What happened next is well-known. Jonah's earnest prayer from the belly of the great fish is recorded in chapter 2. He repented, and found indeed that "Salvation is of the LORD!" (Jonah 2:9, KJV). God, who always hears a genuine prayer of repentance, caused the great fish to vomit out Jonah on dry land.

What a change has now taken place in Jonah! God's instruction hadn't changed, and His message hadn't changed. However, *Jonah* certainly had changed because of God's dealings with him. In chapter 1, Jonah's response to God's instruction had been complete disobedience combined with the folly of thinking that he could run away from the presence of the God who is omnipresent. But now, in contrast, Jonah's obedience to God's renewed instruction is immediate.

Am I still learning?

From this I would like to take three lessons for all who, like Jonah, wish to be servants of God. The first lesson is, that being a servant of God is a learning process which, I believe, continues throughout the servant's life. Never is a servant so knowledgeable or so advanced that he or she has nothing further to learn. Jonah had to be taken to rock-bottom before his spiritual education could proceed. From the belly of the great fish he proclaimed, "Salvation is of the LORD." In other

words, this servant had learned in dramatic circumstances that he was nothing in himself, but everything proceeded from God. From that realisation, God could now re-instruct His servant.

However, Jonah was not yet the finished article. Chapter 4 teaches us that the servant Jonah still had much to learn from God. At the beginning of chapter 3, Jonah was a more useable servant than at the beginning of chapter 1, but he still had much to learn. How important it is really to take note and learn from the way that God speaks to us! For most of us, God's way of speaking is likely to be far less dramatic than in the case of Jonah, but God wants us to learn so that we are of more use to Him. I ask myself, how readily am I learning?

Am I still obeying?

The second lesson I would like to take from the beginning of chapter 3 is the matter of obedience. The crucial importance of obedience is underlined for us right from the beginning of the Bible. In Genesis 3 sin enters the world because of disobedience against a specific and straightforward instruction of God. In the face of king Saul's disobedience to God, Samuel states, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). It was only when Jesus came into this world that someone could truly say, as He did, "I have kept my Father's commandments" (John 15:10).

Jonah had to learn that obedience to God is critical. If a servant obeys God's instructions, blessing will result – as this chapter shows. We are not asked to question but to obey. In Acts 8 Philip the evangelist was being greatly blessed in Samaria, but God instructed him to move from there to a desert place in the south (vv: 6, 26). What reason could there be for this? But Philip did not question God's instruction. Immediately he obeyed, and in that desert place an important man from Ethiopia was converted and baptised. Obedience on the part of Philip resulted in blessing. Later, in Acts 16:6-9, Paul and his companions were journeying westwards, not sure exactly

The first lesson is, that being a servant of God is a learning process.

Never is a servant so knowledgeable or so advanced that he or she has nothing further to learn.

where to go, but only wanting to go where the Lord instructed. Eventually the Lord spoke to them, and in verse 10 of that chapter it says that "...immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." Paul obeyed, and there was great blessing in Macedonia.

And what about me? Do I seek always to obey God's word – the Bible – in every respect? That is what God wants above everything else. My responsibility is first to Him, not first to anybody or anything else. Jonah didn't *want* to go to Nineveh, but that was precisely the place where God wanted him to go. Through staying close to the Lord, I can learn His instructions regarding my service for Him. Sometimes these instructions can be quite specific as in Jonah's case. Perhaps I may need to take time to see what the instructions for service really are; and sometimes the instructions may start with telling me what *not* to do, as was the case with Paul in Acts 16:6. Sometimes the instructions may seem to go against natural reasoning as perhaps with Philip in Acts 8. But I am convinced that always, for those who set their mind prayerfully to seek God's instructions, He will make His mind known. And ultimately, obedience to God will result in blessing, in God's timing.

Am I preaching God's message?

The last of my three points from these early verses of Jonah 3 is that Jonah had to preach the message given to him by God. God said, "...go unto Nineveh ... and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (3:2). Jonah wasn't asked to like or dislike the message. He wasn't expected to over- or under-emphasise various parts of the message according to his own inclination. The message was the word of the LORD, not the word of Jonah, and the servant had to pass it on exactly as he received it from God.

In this day, what the servant of God has to preach should be wholly based on the Word of God – the Bible. It sometimes seems to me that it is judged up-to-date to pick and choose which parts of the Bible to emphasise, and to put into the background those parts which are difficult to explain or less acceptable to the listeners. Right at the end of the Bible there is a very solemn warning to any who either add to or take away from the message of the Bible – see Revelation 22:19.

So, today, any Christian preaching has to be Bible-based. If I am preaching the gospel, I have to tell it as God tells it in the Bible: that everyone is a sinner; that God is holy and requires a penalty for my sin; that God also is love and gave His Son Jesus to pay the penalty for my sin; that the only way to heaven is by faith in the blood of Jesus; and that Jesus rose from the dead to demonstrate the eternal life that He gives to each person who truly believes in Him. Paul wrote that it is

“the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

Of course, God can use His word in power in whatever way He chooses, irrespective of the preacher or the circumstances. But it seems to me that this chapter sets out the pattern of blessing which the servant should follow, then or now. The servant first *learns* the ways of God, the servant *obeys* the instructions of God, and the servant *preaches* the word of God. And then *God adds His blessing*. “Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days’ journey” (Jonah 3:3). Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and is first mentioned in Genesis 10:11. It was built by the same family as built Babel, and both cities had a history of self-sufficiency and opposition to God. The proud attitude of its people is summed up in Zephaniah 2:15 as, “I am, and there is none beside me.” It was to this place that Jonah was sent with the message of God’s judgement.

What happened

What did Jonah do? He “began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (3:4). As soon as Jonah arrived at Nineveh he began proclaiming the message which God had given him to preach! This must have been real open-air preaching! He kept preaching as he journeyed into the city. His message – of judgement from God that would strike the city in forty days’ time – had an immediate impact, for “the people of Nineveh believed God... from the greatest of them even to the least of them” (3:5). Their turning to God in faith was evidenced outwardly by their fasting and clothing themselves in sackcloth, including the king (3:6). They turned to God from their evil way (3:8). This is conversion. And God in His grace saw their repentance and did not bring His judgement upon them (3:10).

May I remind you that the title of the article is, “The power of God’s Word”? This is it! It was the bringing of God’s word to that city that produced this dramatic change

*Jonah
wasn't
asked
to like
or dislike
the message;
and the
servant
has to
pass it on
exactly
as he
received it
from God.*

in the inhabitants and in their prospects. None of the credit for the change rests with Jonah; he was just the messenger. It was the message, God's word, which brought about the change.

Now all of this happened not too far short of three thousand years ago. One of the great benefits of studying the Old Testament is that we can see from it God's principles of working, and note that those general principles don't change over time. So today it is God's Word that still has the power to change lives dramatically. Preachers come and preachers go, political systems and social systems change over time. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25).

God's Word, with its power to change lives, is enshrined in the gospel. Just as at Nineveh, the gospel is preached today against the background of a warning about God's coming judgment. The warning for Nineveh was that God's judgement would come in forty days. In the Bible, periods of forty days or years are not too unusual, and I think that "forty" in the Bible is generally accepted as representing a period of full testing of responsibility. We don't know when God's judgement will fall on this world, but it certainly will, and at a time when God determines that man has had a full testing of his responsibility to God. Again, as at Nineveh, the only way of not suffering God's judgement is by each individual repenting of his or her own sin and turning to God in faith in Him and His Word.

If the warning of impending judgement is the background to the preaching of God's word in the gospel, the *good news* of the gospel is that God in His love has poured out His judgement on Jesus when He died on the cross; and that to anybody who repents of his sin and believes on Jesus as Saviour and Lord, God gives the gift of eternal life. The wonder of this message is summed up in the lovely verse in John 3: 16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The prospect of God's judgement is terrible; the prospect for anyone who has everlasting life is terrific.

Repentance

Jonah 3 emphasises the importance of repentance for the people of Nineveh. Perhaps we don't always sufficiently stress the importance of repentance toward God in our gospel preachings today. Repentance is vital, and it is no light matter of saying "sorry" in a superficial way. Repentance involves me recognising that God abhors sin, and that I am a sinner and my sin is against a holy God. Conversion involves a deep, deep sense of the awfulness of my sin and a life-changing turning away from it in repentance. As with the people of Nineveh, God

sees that repentance, and in His grace removes the judgement which my sin deserved.

Let us also remember that the people of Nineveh evidenced their repentance and faith toward God by a change in their behaviour. My conversion to Christ should result in a change of my way of life which should be evident to those around. This is illustrated so often in the four Gospels, as the lives of people are completely changed by Jesus. One of the most dramatic illustrations is the case of Legion in the first part of Mark 5, where that untamed multi-demon-possessed man, who spent his time in the mountains and graveyards crying and cutting himself, met Jesus, and by verse 15 of that chapter was with Jesus "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind."

Dear reader, every conversion to Christ is a triumphant evidence of the power of God's Word to change lives. The challenge to me as a Christian is whether I show that inward change by the outward evidence of a changed life.

Sadly, history tells us that later generations in Nineveh did not follow God, but returned to the sinful ways of the generations which had preceded Jonah's preaching. God's judgement then fell on Nineveh. The prophecy of Nahum, who lived later than Jonah, deals exclusively with its ultimate destruction. In each generation *individuals* must repent and turn in faith to God. The personal faith of individuals in past generations is an example, but is of no value before God for individuals in later generations. In Britain, we are blessed with many fine examples of Christians of past generations. But each of us *now* has to decide *for ourselves* to turn to God in personal, saving faith.

Not ashamed of the gospel

I want us to be left with a clear impression of the undiminished power of God's Word, both in Jonah's day and now, to change lives and situations. The Word of God is the basis of the life-changing gospel of the grace of God. As Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Romans 1:16).

Conversion involves a deep, deep sense of the awfulness of my sin and a life-changing turning away from it in repentance.

Imitating the God who loves

Jonathan Hughes

This lively article is partly based on a transcript kindly produced by Ian Ralph, and partly on a “Truth for Today” talk for Premier Radio.

Human love waits for somebody else to make the first move.

God’s love is proactive – it makes the first move.

It would be a wonderful thing if we could have a genuine desire to walk with God, talk like Him and be like Him. It is no light thing to call God our Father. It bears a responsibility to act as His sons (Matthew 5:44-45), representing Him in this world that still rejects His well-beloved Son. Just as children learn behaviour by being in the presence of their parents, so also by spending time in quiet contemplation of the Word of God and of His person, we should learn to act in a way that is just like Him. Paul wrote, “Be followers [or, “imitators”] of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Ephesians 5:1-2, NKJV).

By looking at some verses in John’s first Letter, we shall find three different characteristics of the divine love we are to imitate.

Proactive not reactive

By this, we mean that God’s love always makes the first move; it is not a reaction to something.

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love... In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:8, 10).

Our sort of love is, “You’re nice to me, so that I’ll think that you’re a nice person, and will want naturally to be nice to you.” Human love waits for somebody else to make the first move, because it is safer that way. If I proclaimed undying love to somebody who isn’t interested, I would look so stupid. But when God loves, He does so not because of anything the recipient of that love has done, but because of His very nature. He is love. His love is proactive – it makes the first move. When God made Adam and Eve, it could not possibly have been

because of something they were or had done – they did not exist! And yet the love of God acted so that His Son might not be alone but would one day have His bride.

What a tremendous thing the proactive love of God is! If you think of the parable the Lord told about the unforgiving servant who owed that debt of ten thousand talents (worth at least a good few millions in today's money). What did the master do? He wrote off the debt (Matthew 18:23-27). Was there some debt rescheduling agreed by the servant? No! He did it simply out of his own heart. Or the parable of the two debtors (Luke 7:41-43), one owing fifty "pence" and the other five hundred "pence". What did the creditor do? He "frankly forgave them both" (KJV). Why? Because that was his nature. He wanted to do it.

Picture this: Some horrible person killed one of my children, and, because of some legal loophole, got off scot free. How bad I would feel about that; how unjust it would be! Imagine then that this person bought the house next door, and wanted to chat over the fence. How awful that would be for me – a daily reminder of what they'd done to my child. Now imagine how God feels each time we talk to Him or come into His presence!

What a challenge to start off with, then! That awkward neighbour, or the frustrating person in my local church - these are the people whom God would

have me love, that they too might understand the kind of love that God has for them. Yes, they will hurt me or do things that could make me angry. Naturally, my first instinct is to harden my heart to them and to protect my feelings. But that is not to imitate the God who loves us. As a first step, we need to make a list of all the people we know, and then decide that we will always act towards them in a loving way. Some will inevitably take advantage of this, to make us look small or abuse that love. There must always be a desire on my part to enhance the lives of others, irrespective of who they are, what they have done, or might do.

Purposeful not sentimental

We live in a world which thinks of love as buying a dozen red roses, or a grand gesture like a trip to Paris. There may not be anything inherently wrong with romantic love and niceness, but it falls far short of God's love. God's love is purposeful. But what is His purpose in it? That we should be like His well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus.

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! ... Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is... My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:1,2, 18, NKJV).

John makes it quite plain that love is expressed not by words, but by actions.

So if the Father has lavished His love upon us, it is because we are His children, and with the express purpose that one day we should be like His Son. When the text says, “the Father,” this reminds us that there will be times when He needs to exercise the strictest discipline – to correct us when we go astray. When He does this, it is not that God has stopped loving us at all. Rather it is as an expression of that overwhelming love that He will not tolerate something that is not for our ultimate good. Just as, in our own families, not to discipline is a sign of not loving.

And similarly, if we are to imitate God, then we need to think clearly about how this purposefulness must represent itself in our lives.

How can I love my brothers and sisters in Christ? John makes it quite plain (3:18) that love is expressed not by words, but by actions. How it must displease God to hear those who say they are believers singing all the wonderful songs of praise to Him, and yet by their actions throughout the week utterly contradicting what they are singing. Each one of us ought

to feel the challenge of this. It is all very well for me to get home each day after work and say to my wife, “Darling I love you”. Far better if I get into the kitchen and do the dishes. Loving in deed, loving in truth. When God says something, it behoves us just to *do* it. Not to argue about or question it; just to do it.

But John says more. Someone recently said to me, “These fine nuances in Scripture don’t really matter, do they? We believe in such a great God. If you see something your way and I see it my way; as long as it is not horrendously wrong, then it doesn’t really matter. God’s bigger than our differences.”

Really? John gives a further surprising answer to the question how I love my brothers and sisters.

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:2-3).

If I were to write down five ways of loving you, this most

probably wouldn't be one of them. It is not *primarily* by having you round for tea, or helping you when you are in trouble, though these are important. But John says that the way I can show you love, and you show me love, is by keeping God's commandments. It would be a tremendous thing if I could live in such a way that every moment I'm doing exactly what God wants me to do. Then I could say to you, "Look! It really works," and encourage you to live in such a way too. Sometimes we need to love people enough to mention the things that could be better, not in a harsh or critical way, but in a desire to see the very best in one another. Do we love one another enough correct each other when we go astray? To lovingly draw each other back into close fellowship with God and with His Son?

We might say that God's love for us is a very calculating love. He knows what He wants from us, and He works to achieve that. In a similar way we need to be very purposeful in the way that we love.

Peaceful not fearful

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is

greater than he who is in the world... Love has been made perfect among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgement; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love" (1 John 4:4, 17, 18).

Naturally speaking, we are afraid to love in case it all goes wrong and we get hurt. And yet here we have the plain statement of Scripture telling us that perfect love casts out fear. Is this your experience?

Perhaps we are caught in the no-man's-land of compromise between the "now" and the "not yet". We realise that a glorious future awaits when we are caught up to be with Jesus for evermore. But even so we are afraid that we may miss out on something now, and so we are reluctant to fully commit ourselves to following Him. Fear cripples us. What if others think less of me because I fully commit to Him? The fear of doing something and it not working out may paralyse us. Sometimes I lie awake at night, unable to sleep, worrying about the decisions that are made at work,

*But John says that the way I can show you love,
and you show me love,
is by keeping God's commandments.*

about how things are going at my local church, about the future of my family. So many fears, so little love.

Perhaps you may doubt the security of your salvation, feeling that it in some way depends upon your actions now. If I do not love Him enough, I may somehow be lost. How much we need to imitate the love of God and recognise that, having once committed ourselves to Him, we are eternally secure in His keeping. We “have boldness in [or, “for”] the day of judgment” (4:17).

If there had been fear in the Lord’s love, He could not have said, “I have finished the work which you have given me to do” (John 17:4). How many of us would have to say that fear stopped me from finishing the work that He gave me to do? Fear in our relationship with Him. Fear in our relationship with one another. But “perfect love casts out fear”. The love of God is *made perfect* in us when it does.

The love that we have for Him should be a love that *sets us free* to serve without fear or concern for the results. If He should choose not to outwardly bless my service, that

must be because He has some better plan in mind. Sufficient that today He has called me to serve Him here and now. We sometimes forget that it is *His* body, *His* church, and feel that we are solely responsible for its spiritual health.

Undoubtedly, there will be times when we find ourselves disappointed and hurt. At times like this, the temptation to retreat into our own little world will be immense. But it is at just such times that He would have us carry on reaching out in love.

Conclusion

If we are to “Be imitators of God as dear children” (Ephesians 5:1) then we must learn to imitate His love in our lives by actively loving others before they love us; by loving others enough to discipline them humbly and graciously (Galatians 6:1) and with a purpose in mind, rather than in some slushy, sentimental manner; and by not allowing the fear of loving in this manner to keep us from doing what is right. Oh, that others would say of me, “He is like his heavenly Father!”

The love that we have for Him should be a love that sets us free to serve without fear or concern for the results.

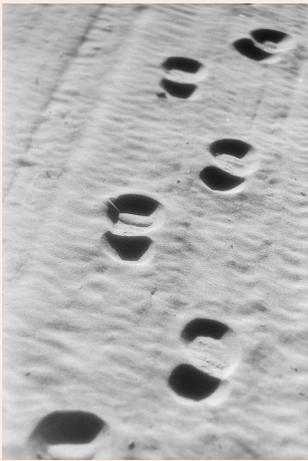
The Divine “Safari”

David Howes

Westerners often think that the Swahili word “safari” is exclusive to a journey to see African animals in the wild. In fact it is intended to cover any journey with a purpose. So a Kenyan man working in Nairobi, but with his family living in his tribal lands, will go on safari to be reunited with them, or to visit his sick mother. Most of our journeys have a purpose. Many are for a quite trivial reason; others can be pivotal and life-changing.

Your life is a journey. Does it have a purpose? Have you thought about that recently? Of course, as we go through life there are a whole range of sub-objectives. We go to school, college, or university to prepare ourselves for employment. One object of employment is to provide for our financial needs through life, both

for ourselves and our family, and eventually for our retirement. Providing for our day-to-day needs is important, but is clearly not the prime object of life’s journey! So what is the prime object? For the answer we need to look at the life and purpose of the only man in all the history of the world who was, and is, different from all the rest of us. We need to look at the life of Jesus Christ.



Our Lord’s life was a journey unique in human history. We can call it a “safari,” planned before time began. It involved none other than the Son of God visiting earth as a human being! Very God and yet very man! It had a purpose of unimaginable proportions. It opened up the way for fallen sinful man to be reconciled to God, because the purpose of His coming was to take our place and bear our sins in

His body on the cross, thereby making it possible for man to be righteously reconciled to God.

Let us use the *feet* of Christ as a point of focus to look at this unique person and His “safari” here on earth. To be at His feet is the right starting-point for every human being. At the end of Matthew’s Gospel it is recorded that the two Marys left the empty tomb “quickly... with fear and great joy and ran to report to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him” (Matthew 28:8-9, NASB). We need to adopt the same attitude as these dear sisters in Christ. They recognised Him

and His wounds, and fell to their knees, clasped those precious wounded feet and worshipped Him. May that be our attitude as we contemplate His journey here.

And let us be like that other Mary who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word (Luke 10:39), who also took a pound of very costly perfume and – “anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:3).

God walking

Think of the restriction Christ Jesus accepted to be born a baby, utterly dependent on His mother in those early days. He was already on a journey as He was born, and that journey continued in one form or another until that day on which “He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9).

The child Jesus may have been hardly able to walk when He and His family fled as outcasts to Egypt (Matthew 2:14). But I have little doubt that Jesus walked back from Egypt to Nazareth (270 miles), and during His years of ministry he walked the length and breadth of a land whose dimensions were 120 miles north to south, and fifty miles east-to west.

There was nothing aimless about His travelling during those three and half years of His ministry. Luke tells us that a careful plan was being followed. “Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come” (Luke 10:1).

Think of the restriction accepted by this Divine Person as He accepted the need to walk, in order to reach needy human beings like the woman of Samaria! John 4:4 records that “He had to pass through Samaria.” Most Jews went out of their way to avoid Samaria. Jesus could have done the same, but He *had to* pass through Samaria, because He had an appointment with a woman of Sychar – as well as with the people of Sychar. His purpose in making that “safari” was to reach out to spiritually and physically needy people.

Scripture says, “Jesus, therefore, being wearied from his journey, was sitting thus by the well” (John 4:6). While here on earth, every person Jesus reached in order to bless them, had a price tag on them for Him, in the physical effort expended. Even now that investment of reaching out continues in each of our lives!



Jesus went to the people. John the Baptist saw Jesus as He was *coming* to him and said “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). It is also recorded that John “looked upon Jesus as he *walked*, and said “Behold the Lamb of God” (1:35-36).

Jesus was *walking* when the woman came to him with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48).

He *walked* back to Nazareth with the wonderful message for the people of “release to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden.” Sadly the response of the people was that they sought to kill Him! (Luke 4:18, 29)

He was *walking* as He fell beneath the load of the cross (John 19:17, Matthew 27:32).

He “began travelling” (i.e., *walking*) with the two discouraged disciples on the seven-mile journey to Emmaus (Luke 24:15).

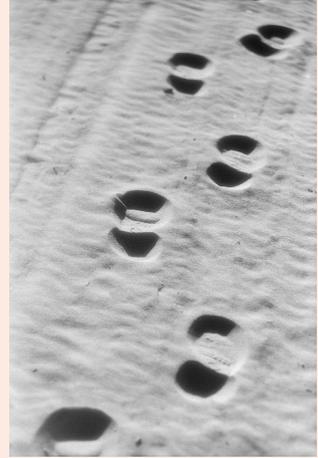
With regard to our risen glorified Lord, as already referred to, we read that He *met* the women going to tell the disciples, “and greeted them” (Matthew 28:9).

On the last day of His earthly pilgrimage, He *walked* to Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed the disciples, and was carried up into heaven. It then says, “And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Luke 24:50, 52).

From the cross to the sky

I can remember from my childhood days hearing the expression used, “We have a Man in the glory”. In those far-away days it struck me as a strange expression, because surely heaven is well populated with men and women. Now, nearly seven decades later, I know they were speaking about the Man Christ Jesus. He is the only man who *walked* this earth in perfection. At every step of His daily walk down here He brought pleasure to His Father, who is on record as saying, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). This is the Man who now appears in heaven for all those who have turned to Him for forgiveness and salvation.

Surely the “safari” of our precious Saviour should be both uplifting and a challenge. *Uplifting*, as we lovingly trace His blessed journey from the manger to the cross, from the cross to the tomb, and from the tomb to the glory of heaven; and a *challenge*, as we seek to follow in His footsteps!



Holy Word, holy living

Cor Bruins

This slightly edited excerpt from Cor's new book (advertised elsewhere in this issue) powerfully expounds the second section of Psalm 119 to show that a living acquaintance with the Word of God is crucial for holy living. Often thought to be suitable for young people, this passage is revision for older Christians too!

Beth, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, begins each of the eight verses of Psalm 119 from v.9 to v.16. It means "house". We can see this in the place-names "Bethel", meaning "house of God," and "Bethlehem," meaning "house of bread." It comes from the root *banah*, "to build". If this letter is placed on its own in front of any Hebrew word, it means "with," or "in," (and thus has the meaning of "abiding," "constancy"). The Old Testament begins with the letter *beth*, the first word being *bereshit*, "in the beginning". *Beth* is also the first letter of the word *ben*, which means "son," a prominent Old Testament word. The idea this letter of the Hebrew alphabet gives us is that of solid foundation, the rock on which our "houses" (our lives) are built (Matthew 7:24). In the eight verses of Psalm 119 that each begin with this letter we have important foundation truths.

The Word of God purifies

*How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word
(verse 9).*

Verse 9 begins in Hebrew with *bameh*, which signifies "with what?" Here is a soul with a question! The believer has sought to walk pleasingly to the Lord, but he is conscious of the world around him with all its defiling influences. There has been defilement in thought and imagination. Some believers suffer from unclean thoughts or unclean suggestions from the enemy. This young man had been defiled in this way. Now he asks the question, "With what shall I cleanse my way, my heart, my thought-life?" This verse gives us the first wonderful fact about the Word: it purifies. "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1, NKJV). "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). "Christ ... gave Himself ... that He might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26). The Bible gives us light, power and sup-

port. We are responsible to keep ourselves from becoming defiled.

The Word of God keeps

With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! (verse 10)

This verse shows us that the Word keeps the believer from wandering. When God's Word is obeyed daily it will keep me from being deceived, and it will purify me from the defilement of having to walk through this world full of uncleanness. "With my whole heart I have sought You." We have to be in earnest about it! To rush in and rush out of the Lord's presence for a little reading and prayer is not what we might call properly a "quiet time"! We must "take time to be holy." Notice that the second half of this verse is a prayer, "Oh, let me not wander." We have a prayer in verses 5 and 8 of this psalm, and in this verse prayer and Bible study go hand in hand.

The Word of God in my heart

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You! (verse 11)

Someone has said of this verse that we have here:

- the best thing – "Your Word"
- in the best place – "my heart"
- for the best purpose – "that I might not sin against You!"

What a precious jewel of a verse! What a good thing it is, therefore, to memorise Scripture, so that we may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy with the sword of the Word, and say, "It is written" (cp. Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

The Word of God in my thoughts

Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes! (verse 12)

This does not mean that mere man can bless God in the sense of imparting something to Him who is all-sufficient. But the sense of the word "blessed", in the Old as

*What
a good thing
it is
to
memorise
Scripture,
so that
we may
be able
to quench
all the
fiery darts
of the
enemy.*

well as in the New Testament, is that He is worthy “to be praised,” “to celebrate with praises.” Thus we acknowledge His goodness, with desire for His glory. The Lord Jesus was that blessed Man on earth who said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). There are various ways in which we may learn the truth:

1. by faithfully reading and studying God’s Word day by day;
2. by the ministry of the Word through God-given teachers;

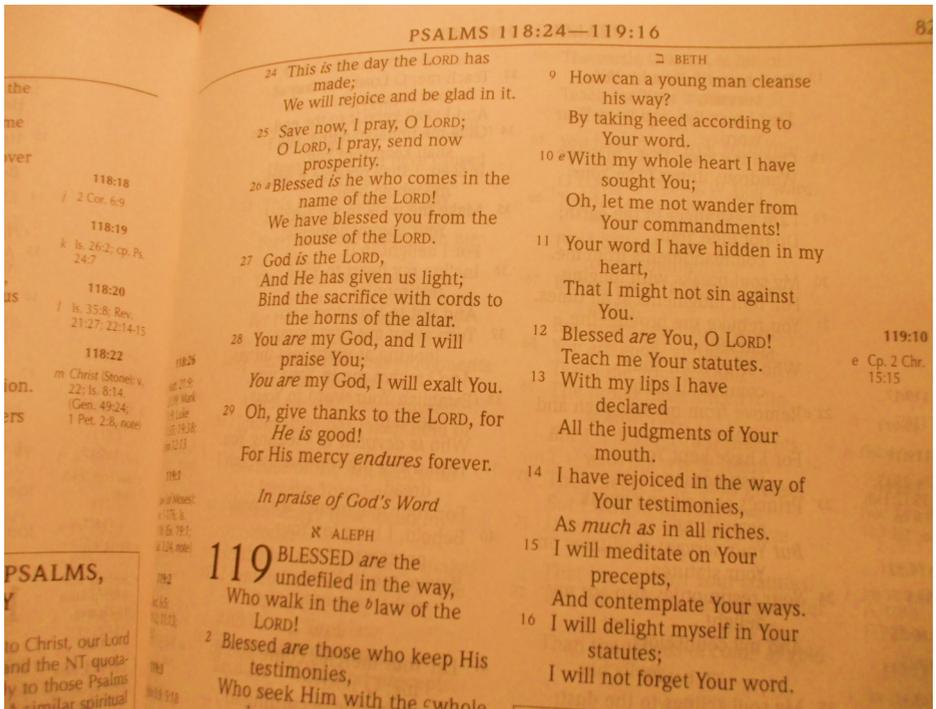
3. by reading commentaries written by gifted and spiritual men.

Through these means of grace the Holy Spirit can teach us the will of God, for He is that Teacher. Let us therefore echo the prayer of the psalmist, “Teach me Your statutes,” and remember that the meaning of “statute” is “a divine direction to obtain our obedience, and to keep us from disobedience.”

The Word of God upon my lips

With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth (verse 13).

“With my lips I have declared,” begins the verse. The believer may speak in “living echoes” of His



words! But God must first be able to speak to us, before we can speak to others what He has told us. We do well to remember this. Before Jesus can send us forth “to preach,” He calls us first to be “with Him” (Mark 3:14). Perhaps it is good to ask ourselves, “What do I use my lips for?” Certainly not for tale-bearing! How we need to pray daily, “Keep watch over the door of my lips”! (Psalm 141:3; see also Job 27:4).

The Word of God is my joy

I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches (verse 14).

“I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies.” When we remember that the meaning of “testimony” is “that which testifies of Him, speaks of Him, of what He is and of what we ought to be”, the focus is therefore *on Him*. We rejoice in Him and the way in which He leads and guides us. Is it true that we really delight to please Him and to live for Him? Is reading the Bible a real pleasure for us, or simply a daily duty? How do we profit most from our daily Bible readings? Here are some suggestions that may help. Before we read, we ask for the Lord’s help and illumination. When we have finished reading we may ask the following questions:

- Is there an example in my reading I must follow?

- Is there a commandment I must obey?
- Is there any sin mentioned that I must avoid?
- Is there a promise that I can claim by faith?
- Is there a new thought concerning the Lord Jesus Christ?

Of course we can make up our own list, but the important thing is that we meditate on what we have read, chew it over, and take it in.

The Word of God for my contemplation

I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways (verse 15).

Here is a determination expressed, “I will meditate.” How important it is to be determined about maintaining a daily Bible study! Many Christians are so disorganised that they cannot find time for Bible study – or rather, that’s their excuse! We can always find time for something that we really want to do. The important thing is that we do find some time each day. The psalmist says, “My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up” (Psalm 5:3). Psalm 119:15 continues “... *and contemplate [or “have respect unto”, KJV] Your ways.*” It is apparently not enough to be interested and meditate on the Word, but it should be followed by putting it into practice. To “have respect to”

is to be willing to obey the Word of God.

The Word of God memorised

I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word (verse 16).

How important it is also that we do not forget what we have read: “I will not forget Your word”! In verse 11 we saw the need for hiding it in our hearts. To store the mind with the Word of God is the true way of victory. Of the Lord Jesus it was said that the Word was in His heart (Psalm 40:8). How can the Holy Spirit possibly bring anything, any word, from the Bible to our remembrance if we have not first stored it there? Nowadays we say that the computer will give you nothing but what you have first stored in its memory! Some Christians take verses of scripture out of their context. Take for instance Luke 12:12, “For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” These believers take this verse to mean that you do not have to prepare yourself in order to minister the Word of God. They do not think that any preparation is necessary. I am convinced that the true spiritual believer does his daily Bible study and so the Holy Spirit prepares him, whilst the believer stores his mind with the Word of God. Then, when a believer is called

upon to minister that Word, the Holy Spirit will bring to his remembrance what he should say.

And, by the way, the verse in Luke 12:12 had to do with, and was fulfilled in, the apostles when they were persecuted, as we find it recorded in the book of Acts. So everything really depends upon our appetite for the Word of God. Our verse says, “I will delight myself.” The writer of this psalm certainly gives us a good example to follow. He repeats the fact that he delights in the Word of God at least eight times: see verses 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174. In 1 John 2, the apostle John says to the young men, “you have overcome the wicked one,” and “you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one” (verses 13-14).

Notice the “actions” in verses 15 and 16 of our psalm:

- I will meditate;
- I will contemplate [“have respect to”];
- I will delight;
- I will not forget.

The faithful God

Israel and the Land

Theo Balderston

Why did God choose Israel, and give them the “land of promise”? Have Israel and its promises a future? This article shows how the character of the promise-keeping God, and therefore even the security of our own salvation, depend on the answers to these questions.

The promises to the fathers

God is not “the faithful God” if He is not faithful through Christ to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cp. Psalm 89:1-3, 38, 49). These had two main elements: (i) that a great nation that would spring from these patriarchs, and (ii) that it would inherit the land of Canaan.¹ As the footnoted references show, the two go together.

And both promises tend to jar on the modern mind. Why did God choose one nation? Why were His promises from the start not open to everyone who imitated Abraham’s faith (on the lines of Galatians 3: 7), instead of to Abraham’s natural descendants? Special divine promises to people because of their parentage seem “unfair” to people today. And why did these promises centre on a *land*? Surely this is rather materialistic? Surely possession of land causes trouble due to competitive claims on it, whereas spiritual promises to one individual do not exclude any other individual? And surely Israel could have pleased God without a special land of its own?

To take the question of natural descent first. It had to be natural descent, because God’s post-Flood, post-Babel plan for the government of the world was by *nations*, and His blessing was *for* the nations *through* a nation (Genesis 10:32; 18:18). The “great nation” that God had promised to Abraham (Genesis 12:2) was, in one sense, just one among many nations. “The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for himself,

¹ Genesis 12:2,3,7; 13:14-17; 15:4-7, 18-21; 17:2, 6-8; 18:18*; 22:17-18*; 24:7; 26:3-4, 24*; 28:3,4, 13-15; 35:10-12; 46:3,4; 48:3-4. Asterisked references do not mention the land.

One of the great lessons in the selection of Israel as “the chosen people” is that God is God. The fact of Israel confronted the world with the sovereign rights of the Creator. The choice was His.

a special treasure above [ESV: “out of”] all the peoples on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6, NKJV; cp. 1 Chronicles 17:21). “The LORD brings the counsel of the *nations* to nothing...Blessed is the *nation* whose God is the LORD...” (Psalm 33:10,12, NKJV). And, if the promise concerns a *nation*, then, in the Bible view, nations are people united by a common ancestry (Genesis 10).

But in another sense Israel was not just another nation. It was a new nation, which in its origin was not implicated in the sin of Babel, and which sprang from a miracle – the birth of Isaac. God did not repair what had failed. He brought in something wholly new to be the means of blessing of mankind.

But first God chose Israel because He wanted them as His “special treasure”. He did this because He loved them (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6-8). The last book of the OT virtually commences with the words, “I have loved you, says the LORD” (Malachi 1:2). “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you,” are the LORD’s famous words in Jeremiah 31:3 concerning Israel. “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isaiah 63:9). “When Israel was a child, I loved him... How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?” (Hosea 11:1, 8). “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely” (14:4). “The LORD your God is in your midst... he will quiet you with his love; he will

rejoice over you with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17). Paul tells us that they are “beloved for the sake of the fathers” (Romans 11:28).

It irks the natural man to hear of God specially privileging *one* nation. “Why them and not me?” he asks. So one of the great lessons in the selection of Israel as “the chosen people” is that God is God. The fact of Israel confronted the world with the sovereign rights of the Creator. The choice was His, and the rest of humanity should have gladly accepted this. “It is not of him that wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Romans 9:16). We cannot come to God on the basis of our “human rights.” Any blessing we receive from Him will be as people who have no rights at all in His sight.

The land of promise

And why did God give them a land?

This question has two kinds of answer. The first concerns *motive*, the second, *purpose*.

As regards *motive*, the OT’s main answer is unambiguous. God gave Israel the Land because He made an oath concerning this to the patriarchs (Genesis 50:24; Exodus 6:4 and more than thirty other references). He made this oath because He loved the patriarchs, and found Abraham faithful (Deuteronomy 4:37; Nehemiah 9:8). He also gave it to Israel because He delighted in them (Numbers 14:8).

And as regards *purpose*, the land was to be their inheritance, that is to say, inalienably theirs (Genesis 15:7; 28:4; Exodus 23:30, and more than thirty other references), their possession (Genesis 17:8; Leviticus 14:34 and a dozen other references), and their place of rest where they might have freedom to obey His Law (Psalm 105:45; cp. 1 Kings 8:56). He also gave it to them as a mark of His everlasting love, in that even after their disobedience and exile He would bring them back (Deuteronomy 30:3-6).

Therefore the primary truth underpinning God’s choosing of Israel and granting them the Land is His faithfulness. Indeed, the truth of the faithful God stands or falls on the fulfilment of these promises.

The literary symmetry of the Old Testament demands that the people who receive the blessing should be the selfsame people as had incurred the curses.

Eliminating Israel

However most Christian scholars and teachers deny that these promises have any continuing force, except insofar as they have passed to the “spiritual Israel,” “the Israel of God.”² They say that promises concerning the Land were exhaustively fulfilled to the generation that entered Canaan; that the larger boundaries as originally promised (Genesis 15: 18; Exodus 23:31, etc.³) were fulfilled in the extent of the empire of Solomon (1 Kings 4:21); and that the promises of restoration to the Land (e.g. Isaiah 11:11) were fulfilled in the return from Babylonian exile after 538 B.C. There are, they say, no future fulfilments regarding Israel and the Land.

However, if the final fulfilment of the promise of the larger land was under Solomon, then what was given unconditionally was withdrawn because of man’s (i.e. Solomon’s) failure. And any idea that the promises of restoration were entirely fulfilled by the return from Babylon is scotched by Psalms 85:1,4; 126:1,4, and Nehemiah 9:36-37.

Opponents claim that it is naively literalistic to interpret the OT promises as fulfilled to national Israel. This is just what it is *not*. *All* OT prophecies of judgment upon Israel end

² If Paul referred to the church by this phrase in Galatians 6:16, then he undercut the entire argument of his Letter, namely, that Gentiles are saved as Gentiles, not by becoming Jews.

³ The boundary at the Euphrates probably refers to its northern reaches straddling the Syrian-Turkish border, not to its Mesopotamian section.

with the promise of blessing. The *poetry*, the literary symmetry, the inner moral force of the Old Testament, as well as the plain sense, demand that the people who receive the blessing should be the selfsame people as had incurred the curses (Deuteronomy 27-30). Snap this link, and the message of the Prophets collapses, the force of the unconditional promises to Abraham evaporates.

But if the character of the promise-keeping God and the literary structure of the OT combine to require that the cursed people be one and the same as the blessed people, this also tells us something important about the only way in which the two can be identical. The Scripture does not mean that every single Israelite who sinned will be restored. Certainly not. “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. But the destruction of transgressors and of sinners shall be together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed...” (Isaiah 1:27-28, RV [1881]). It is only *at the level of the nation* that the cursed and the blessed are identical. A statistical aggregate of individual Jews being saved, different Jews from those persons who long ago were cursed and scattered, and Jews who are now forfeiting their national identity by being brought into the church – these cannot be considered the very people who formerly were cursed. But Israel renewed as a nation and receiving the fulfilment of the promises can be considered that very people. Thus the force of the literary structure of the OT is that the fulfilment of the promises requires a national revival of Israel.

Obviously many detailed questions regarding the interpretation of OT passages in the NT cannot be discussed here. But insofar as I am aware of them, none of them can be made to contradict the interpretation supported here.

The New Testament and Israel

Some will say that this interpretation privileges the Old Testament over the New; and that whatever the OT appears to say is overborne by the different understanding of the New. But the Lord definitely said that He will return to *Jerusalem* as King, and that the disciples will judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; 23:39). The beginning of Luke emphasises the implications of the birth of Jesus for Israel (1:32-33, 54-55, 69-75; 2:32). And at the beginning of Acts the Lord both confirmed

If the inspired writers had wished their readers to understand that after the cross the land no longer signified anything in the purposes of God, they would have said so expressly.

this, and placed it in its post-resurrection context, when the disciples asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) His reply took for granted that this would happen (“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons”), but then diverted their attention to what their task was in the meantime –witnessing to Him in Jerusalem, all Judaea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth (vv.7-8).

For this reason, the promises to Israel take a back seat, so to speak, throughout the New Testament. The focus of the New Testament is on what the demonstration through the cross of the incorrigible sinfulness of man opened the door to, namely, God’s purposes of grace, from before the ages of time, to bestow on Christ, the Second Man, a universal and heavenly glory far beyond that originally given the first man; and to make sheer but repentant sinners, who believe in Him during the time of His rejection in this world, the participants of His glory. This stupendous perspective could not be revealed until the ascension (Ephesians 1:10-14; 3:9⁴). In this perspective the fulfilment of the particular, earthly promises to Israel recedes into the background. But Romans 11: 26-29 remind us that God’s faithfulness to His promises to the fathers requires the blessing of “all Israel” in the future. In this context “all Israel” is being contrasted with

⁴ On these passages, see an article in *Scripture Truth*, April 2007, “The mystery of Christ and the mystery of Israel”.

the “*some*” Israelites currently being saved (v.14), and cannot mean “the church”.

The variety of NT passages which have been claimed to contradict this truth cannot be discussed here. As far as I am aware of them, none of them does.

The New Testament and the Land

Direct references to the promise of the Land are rare in the NT, but they occur in Acts 7:4; 13:19 and Hebrews 11:9. None of them implies that the gift of the Land had now become obsolete. When most or all of the New Testament was written, it was still a massive fact that the Jews occupied much of “the land of promise.” If the inspired writers had wished their readers to understand that after the cross the Land no longer signified anything in the purposes of God, they would have to have said so expressly. Hebrews 11:9 is the only place in the entire Bible where the actual phrase, “land of promise,” occurs – and without qualification, even although the Letter is about the heavenly calling.

In Romans 15: 8-9 Paul writes,

“Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”

The significance of this verse is only appreciated once one realises the centrality of the Land to “the promises made to the fathers” (see above). It should be noted that Paul wrote “confirm.” He did not write “reconfigure,” which is what those who assert that the promises made to Israel are fulfilled to the church in the gospel age must make him say. “Confirmed” must also mean that the promises will be fulfilled to Israel in a manner that will be a recognisable fulfilment of them as originally given – in the same way that our Lord’s own life, death and resurrection so obviously fulfilled the promises concerning Him *as originally given*, that they publicly authenticated His claim to be Messiah.

Our Lord, I think, never spoke of the promise of the Land when here on earth. But one of His earliest actions indicated its importance in His ministry. Following John the Baptist’s arrest, He withdrew into Galilee, making Capernaum His base there, in order that Isaiah 9:1-2 might be

fulfilled (Matthew 4:12-16). Isaiah 9:1 refers to the conquest of Zebulun and Naphtali by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, in the reign of Pekah king of Israel (of whom we read in Isaiah 7:1). This was the first part of “the land of promise” to be permanently alienated from Israelite control (see 2 Kings 15:29). This was why God, through Isaiah, gave the inhabitants of that region the message of hope in the Child born, the Son given, on whose shoulders would be the government (Isaiah 9:6). And this particularly benighted part of the land of Israel received the special and first intimation of the fulfilment of the promises – in the *Person* of “the Lord of glory” growing up and carrying out much of His ministry in it.

And in Luke 21:24 the Lord speaks of those in the land of Judaea being led captive into all the nations after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This echoes Leviticus 26:32-33; and Deuteronomy 28:63, 64. But in the divine covenant “captivity” implied “restoration” (Deuteronomy 30:1-4; Nehemiah 1:9; Isaiah 27:13), and this is the implication of the Lord’s words, “... *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*”

The “land of promise” was “Immanuel’s land” in Isaiah’s time (Isaiah 8:8). It still is. Many imagine that the promise to Israel of the Land was extinguished by the coming of Messiah! On the contrary: bound into the promise of Messiah to David is the promise, “I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them any more, as previously” (2 Samuel 7:10; cp. Isaiah 49:8b, Darby trans., ESV). “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him” (2 Corinthians 1:20, ESV). When Christ returns to this earth in visible glory, it will be to that land (Acts 1:11-12, with Zechariah 14:4). The right attitude for Israel is to “wait for him” (cp. Isaiah 25: 9; 30:18; 33:2).

*The “land of promise” was “Immanuel’s land”
in Isaiah’s time (Isaiah 8:8). It still is.*

STP is pleased to publish a brand new book:

Psalm 119

by Cor Bruins

186 pages

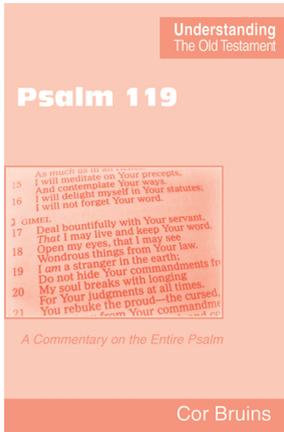
ISBN: 978-0-901860-88-0; paperback
published 31 March 2010; R.R.P. £8.50

available from STP at £6.50 + p&p

Psalm 119 is the longest of all the 150 Psalms and, perhaps for that reason, its 176 verses are seldom or never read completely either in public or in private meditation or study. This is an immense loss. It has a great subject: the Word of God. It shows how that Word is a treasure trove of spiritual resources for the highs and lows of the

Christian's journey through life. At the moment of conversion every Christian is enrolled as a student in God's school, and finding this treasure requires daily Bible study. Meditating on each day's reading helps promote growth in spiritual maturity, experience of spiritual renewal, and the Holy Spirit can maintain praise to God in a continuous spiritual revival. Why the Psalm should be written as an acrostic is a matter of some interest. Was it simply to aid memorisation of the original Hebrew text? Do the individual letters of the Hebrew alpha-

bet suggest themes concerning God's Word which are taken up in eight-verse sections? Does the current use of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to represent numbers in dates aid our appreciation of the Psalm? It obviously expresses the hopes and fears of a faithful Jew, but what is in it for those under the new covenant? The author emphasises the practical lessons from this Psalm, in order that every reader might come to share his delight in the daily reading of the Word of God and the blessings this brings.



“The shadow of a great rock in a weary land”

Fierce beat the desert sun,
scorching and strong,
arid the burning sands,
weary and long;
Egypt’s food far behind,
enemies here;
Canaan seemed distant and
death’s danger near.

Whose was the mighty Hand
offering shade?
Bidding the waters gush,
raining the bread?
Mighty Jehovah God,
“I AM”! “THE SAME”!
Shelter, food, victory,
sourced in His Name.

Burneth earth’s desert *still*
– wilderness wide?
Falls there no shadow where
I may abide?
Onward my pilgrim’s feet
daily must start:
What well, what waterspring,
refresh my heart?

Where is the piercèd Hand
guiding my way?
Shepherd’s voice clear and sweet
– what doth it say?
“Father”! A *Father’s* name,
Jesus hath taught;
home to a Father’s heart
Jesus hath brought.

Told out at Sychar’s well,
seen on the wave,
learned by the gate of Nain,
Bethany’s grave,
wondrous Gethsemane,
Calvary’s night:–
His heart, His Father’s heart,
Love in its might.

Never had Israel
lessons like mine;
writ on that lonely life
human-Divine.
Never knew Israel
shelter of love
straight from a Father’s heart,
– unveiled above.

Ora Rowan (1878). Slightly adapted.