

BIBLE STUDIES

'Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so' (Acts 17: 11).

**A STUDY OF THE HOUSE OF GOD
Part 1**

VOLUME 45

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CONTENTS

GROUP STUDY: A Study of the House of God (Part 1)

Bethel—the fundamentals	2
God's choice of a people to dwell among	17
The Tabernacle—the pattern and its significance	33
The Tabernacle—approach to God's presence; giving to God	49
The house in Shiloh—the Place of the Name; the capture of the Ark	65
David's desire for a house for God	81
David's preparations for the house of God	97
Solomon's Temple	113
The house and a divided people—Rehoboam and Jeroboam	130
The house and the kings—Abijah, Asa and Jehoshaphat	147
The house and the kings—Joash, Amaziah and Uzziah	163
The house and the kings—Ahaz and Hezekiah	177
Editorials	1, 17, 33, 49, 65, 81, 97, 113, 129, 145, 161, 177
Comments	15, 29, 47, 61, 79, 95, in, 126, 141, 159, 174, 190
Questions and Answers	16, 31, 63, 80, 96, 111, 127, 160, 176, 191

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS:

Psalm 119	145, 161
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BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol 45 Jan 1977

It is interesting to note that the five continents are represented in the contributions received this month, as we commence our study of the truth of the house of God.

Our exploration of the subject begins with the consideration of the revelation given to Jacob at Bethel. The views expressed in the papers and in attached correspondence indicate that there is some uncertainty in the minds of contributors regarding the extent of Jacob's knowledge of God and of his dealings with Him before he arrived at Bethel.

There is sufficient information given in Genesis 25 and 27 to indicate that Jacob and Esau had entirely different characteristics although they were twins. Esau was a 'profane person' (Heb. 12: 16), who was largely governed by natural desires. Jacob is described as a 'plain' (Heb. *tarn* - perfect) man (Gen. 25: 27). The same word is used to describe Noah (Gen. 6: 9) and Job (Job 1: 1) and consideration of this usage and of its various occurrences in the Old Testament is enlightening.

Jacob, no doubt, had received instruction from his mother, who had been informed of God's purposes for Jacob (Gen. 25: 23), and possibly also from Abraham, if not from Isaac, and he went resolutely after the birthright and the blessing because he placed a high value on them. We do not, however, seek to justify the methods he used to obtain them.

Although almost half his life lay behind him when he set out on the journey that brought him to Bethel the greatest experiences of his life still lay before him, namely those personal dealings with God at Beth-el and Peniel. Jacob was the man of God's choice (Rom. 9: 11-13) and eventually God brought the man He had chosen to the place He had chosen.

J. K. D. J.

REMINDER

Will contributors kindly note that their papers should reach Mr. E. Archibald two months before the date of publication. Editors welcome the increase in the number of papers received on the new subject but the late arrival of some papers has made their work more difficult.

BIBLE STUDIES

BETHEL—THE FUNDAMENTALS

From **Barrhead**: Isaac's command to his son Jacob was that he should get a wife from his mother's family in Haran. On the way to Haran Jacob stopped at a place which appeared to be unknown to him. At this place Jacob had a dream of a ladder set up between earth and heaven, upon which were angels going to and fro between heaven and earth. At the top of the ladder stood the Lord. The God who in time past had revealed Himself to Abraham (Gen. 12: 1, 7) and Isaac (Gen. 26: 24-25) was now revealing Himself to Jacob.

On waking from his sleep Jacob realised that he had, in ignorance, stumbled upon a hallowed place in which there was an angelic ministry between heaven and earth. Greatly impressed and full of dread he called the place the house of God which was also the gate of heaven. This was to be a turning point in Jacob's life because he committed himself to the Lord's service which commitment would be expressed in giving a tenth of all his possessions. The pillar set up by Jacob in the place of revelation would be the house of God.

After an interval of some twenty years the Lord spoke to Jacob again; the command was to go to Bethel and build an altar. The passing of years had not diminished Jacob's dread of Bethel, for he commanded his family to put away their strange gods and to purify themselves. They were, of course, a holy nation in the making and it was fitting that they should cleanse themselves. It is significant that the house of God and the altar were being brought together at a specific location on earth. In addition access into heaven commences from the house of God. To worship God at the house of God meant that Jacob had to separate from old associations and all that was not of God. *L. deVille.*

From **Birkenhead**: Key points to be gleaned from this incident are numerous. The house of God is the place of God's choice (28: 11). The pattern is given by God but men build the house. God's presence in His house gives it character and vitality - 'the Lord is in this place' (28: 16). It is a place of communication between God and man. What is given to God brings down blessing - apparently angels play their part in this (28: 12). The place of ministering angels in association with God's house interested us (see Heb. 1: 14 and 1 Cor. 11: 10). The house of God is the place of divine revela-

tion. An attitude of reverence and awe is vital (28: 17, Heb. 12: 28, 29) and that which would hinder and defile must be put away (Gen. 35: 4). The pillar set up speaks of testimony, and the anointing of the pillar with oil is linked with the anointing oil referred to in Ps. 133, typical of the unity of the Spirit.

R. D. Williams

From Derby: The first mention of Bethel is found in Gen. 12: 8, where Abram built an altar and called on the Name of the Lord. Whilst Bethel means 'the house of God', there does not seem to have been a dwelling for God there. On the contrary the name Bethel in after years became infamous as a centre of gross idolatry. God's speakings seem to be often associated with His dwelling place, as in the dream of Jacob.

Jacob was not a profane man like Esau his brother, but one who held as sacred things and circumstances associated with God's speaking with him. There is often a link between God's dwelling place above and His dwelling place on the earth. This is noticeable in the Lord's words to Nathanael in John 1: 51, which seem to be associated with the millennial Temple. At the present day also, God's spiritual house on earth is seen to be linked with His holy sanctuary above.

Bethel, in the days of the prophet Samuel, became one of the four centres of worship, as in 1 Sam. 10: 3, 'Going up to God to Bethel'. It was also known as 'the hill of God' and 'the high place'. Samuel had built an altar in Bethel as he did also in Gilgal, Mizpah and Ramah. The ark of the Lord was at this time in the house of Abinadab (1 Sam. 7: 1-2).

G. Conway, S. R. W.

From Edinburgh: Jacob, although mature in years, has been seen until this point to be a supplanter, and a man seemingly after the best of both worlds; in the things of men and the things of God [Comment 1]. This dream is God's revelation to him of the nature of the purpose He had planned for him.

The house of God in the Old Testament stands largely in contrast to that of the New; physical to spiritual. But Jacob's experience at Bethel can be easily identified with the New Testament revelation, coming as it does before the giving of the law. Here it can be seen that the house of God is where His presence is known and feared, His purposes are revealed and are to be obeyed. The ladder of Gen. 28: 12 shows that the house of God is the place where heaven and

BIBLE STUDIES

earth are linked. The 'gate of heaven' gives access to the presence of God, wherein we enter to worship Him on the first day of the week.

Jacob at Bethel met with the revealed Truth of God and he erected a pillar as a memorial or a witness to the truth; staunch, immovable, upon which the truth of the revelation may stand (1 Tim. 3: 15). Jacob's actions represent human activity - men should be building where God reveals Himself to them (1 Cor. 3: 11-15). Revelation always demands something from us, so Jacob vowed his vow, the first mentioned in Scripture, notably in connection with the house of God. It is possible Jacob saw the principle of tithing in his grandfather's encounter with Melchizedek. Tithing seems to be carried as a principle into the law and then into the New Testament, (see Heb. 7), not from a legalistic point of view, but in order that we may grasp the spirit of giving [Comment 2]. Giving to God seems to be another fundamental associated with the house of God. Today we should be prepared to give all, including our lives (1 John 3: 16).

Alan Manzie

From Galston: It was 'the place' (ch. 28: 11 RVM). The stone Jacob took was both pillow and pillar - a rest from the thoughts that disturbed him and a memorial to the grace of God (cf. Heb. 2; 1 Tim. 3: 15). Dr. Strong says that 'ladder' is from a verb meaning 'to mound up' and is translated sometimes 'to cast up' i. e. 'ladder' is a 'way cast up' (cf. John 14: 6).

The angels of God were ascending and descending. Why this order? We thought that the significance is that 'The Lord is in this place' and therefore the movements of the angels are described in relation to God, ascending from and descending to God (compare the instructions for the making of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25-30) and description of offerings (Lev. 1-6)). We noted too John 1: 51. The angels ascending and descending signify that it was a place that had communication with heaven. The top of it (the ladder) reached to heaven' (v. 12), and the statement 'this is the gate of heaven' signify that the way of approach to God is by the house of God. Jacob poured oil upon the top of the pillar, thereby sanctifying the place (see Ex. 40: 9-15; 30: 22-29; Lev. 8: 10). It was a holy place (see Ps. 93: 5). Jacob contracted to give to God a tenth of all he received from God, i. e. the

BIBLE STUDIES

place is associated with giving to God. The tenth would appear to be a guide to giving, although we recognize that if we first give our own selves to the Lord the determining of the material portion will soon resolve itself [Comment 3]. It was also a place where sacrifices were made, for he built an altar there, i. e. it is associated with worship. Finally 'Put away the strange gods... purify yourselves, and change your garments' surely teaches that God must have the whole of a man's heart, and that the house of God demands holy lives and that others should be able to see that those in the house of God are consecrated to Him. *J. H Johnson*

From Hamilton (Scotland): There is a distinct line drawn throughout the sacred writings which reveals the purposes of God, not only to create but to communicate and commune with man and for God to have a dwelling place on earth. In Gen. 28 we have the first mention of the house of God and certain basic truths are introduced relating to His house:

- (a) *That the house of God is positioned on earth.*
cf. Gen. 28: 12, 16, 17, 22. 'A ladder set up on the earth'.
2 Chron. 6: 18; 7: 1 'the glory of the Lord filled the house'.
1 Tim. 3: 15. 'How men ought to behave themselves in the House of God'. Jacob's stone, the Tabernacle and the Temple rested on earth.
- (b) *That it is the place of divine choice.*
cf. Gen. 28: 11 RVM. 'And he alighted upon the place'.
Ex. 25: 8 'Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them'.
- (c) *That it is the sphere where worship and witness can find expression.*

A divine position from which divine power may be expressed through the medium of human instrumentality, the house of God is the proper sphere where disciples display the powers, gifts and skills that the Lord has given them.

- (d) *That the house of God is a spiritual sphere.*
1. The distance between heaven and earth is seen to be bridged or eliminated. See Gen. 28: 12. cf. John 15: 1. Ezek. 1: 1. Mat. 3: 16. Acts 7: 56.
2. There is a sense of the divine presence, cf. Gen. 28: 16, 17. *Quartus*

From **Hamilton** (Ontario): Regular mention of the 'place' named by Jacob as Bethel perhaps would denote the

BIBLE STUDIES

accuracy with which God **guided His** servant to **His choice** of location for service. 'God Almighty' whose blessing **Isaac had** invoked on Jacob, **gave to Jacob the** revelation of His presence **at Bethel** - gripping his heart with **a reverential fear** and awe.

The simple wants **expressed** in Jacob's vow **to the Lord (reflected** as 'contentment' by **Paul** in **1 Tim. 6: 8)** were met a thousandfold in God's promises. Being **the second born ('... that which is spiritual' (1 Cor. 15: 46))**, Jacob received divine enlightenment **as to God's house**.

The first altar erected may signify **to us the impression the** experience **at Bethel had** on Jacob. **The second altar erected called El Bethel** perhaps might indicate **that** Jacob having since **wrestled** with God **had** come to know God **the more**. [Comment 4] Gen. 31: 13 - God spoke to Jacob **as God of Bethel**, whereas in Gen. 28: 13 it was **'the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac'**.

That Jacob allowed **the** retention of idols within his family **after the** awesome experiences of **the dream** and **the wrestling** shows **the** long-suffering **of** God in eventually prompting Jacob to return to Bethel. Jacob's awareness of **the** necessity for purification before worship **has to be shared** by **all** who worship God in His house.

The erection of **the** stone pillar symbolic of **the** Stone of **Israel** described in Jacob's blessing on Joseph (Gen. 49: 24) is significant throughout Scripture, **as for example in the** house described in 1 Pet. 2. *B. Archibald, D. Beck*

From Hayes: **The dream revealed** to Jacob **the** close connection **between** heaven and earth. This connection **seemed** a spacious staircase, **rather** than **a ladder**. **The** Tower of **Babel** was man's **attempt** to link **earth** and heaven by his own efforts. **The ladder** of Jacob's **dream was set up** on **earth but was** of divine origin. **The dream** showed God's interest in man and His use of angelic messengers between heaven and **earth**. More particularly, it showed God's interest in Jacob in his loneliness and **fear**. God stood above **the ladder** or, may **be**, actually beside Jacob, to confirm **the** promise **made** to **Abraham** and Isaac and also to **add the** personal and immediate promise: **'I am with thee, and will keep thee withersoever thou goest...**

'How **dreadful** is this **place'** (RSV 'awesome', NEB 'fear-some') was Jacob's comment and **he** named it **Bethel, the**

house of God, the first use of an expression that was to become a theme in Old and New Testaments. Jacob worshipped God there, made his vow and set off for Paddan-aram. The time came when God reminded him of Bethel and told him to return - not as a solitary wayfarer but with wives, children and great possessions. Jacob had the experience of Peniel and reconciliation with Esau, but stopped short of Bethel at Shechem and erected an altar there to the God of Israel. The stay at Shechem was disastrous, but God preserved him and urged him to go to Bethel. No other altar would do instead. It comes as a shock to see Jacob collecting up the false gods from the company and hiding (not destroying) them. We have so much more of God's revelation than Jacob had, yet how easily we may have false gods amongst our possessions - material or in the mind - hindering our service in the house of God.

From Kilmarnock: Within the Paradise of Eden an unseen discipline prevailed. Disobedience brought casting out and visual discipline in the form of the Cherubim; separation was enforced, as Job could say 'The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me' (Job 6: 4). The descendants of Adam were varying in their response to God. But God is greater than man. He speaks 'in a dream, in a vision of the night when deep sleep faileth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealet their instruction' (Job 33: 15, 16).

The pen of the Psalmist reveals in Ps. 147: 19 'He sheweth His word unto Jacob', and a marvellous word it was: 'I am the Lord... I give it... I am with thee... I will not leave thee... I have done... I have spoken'. Instead of 'the flame of a sword', a ladder stretched between heaven and earth. Here was an entrance into the presence of the Almighty El Shaddai. No wonder the immensity of the occasion brought the awesome reverent response, 'Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not'. Dare we write that the foundation stone was laid for man by Jacob in the setting up and anointing of the stone pillow, thus paving a way of opportunity for man to re-address himself unto God, and this Jacob did when he renamed the site Bethel [Comment 5]. El Bethel (Gen. 35: 7), means 'The God of the house of God' and seems to explain that God has a particular place, not just any place. Gen. 28 reveals the greatness of the house

BIBLE STUDIES

of God, while Gen. 35 reveals the greatness of the God of the house. A. M. R., J. M. R.

From Kingston-upon-Thames: The account of Jacob's dream reveals several facets of spiritual truth concerning God's House. In embryo form is presented the essential nature of His dwelling place. It is a place of the divine Presence whose intrinsic holiness instils awe as it signifies the existence of a righteous Judge. Yet these characteristics are linked with God's purposes of love as the house is seen also as a meeting place where His promised blessings are confirmed.

The revelation of the truth of God's House should result in a response both in heart and action. This can be seen in Jacob's anointing, vowing and tithe intent. Even before the Tabernacle order of offerings had been established God had communicated to man the way of sacrifice, and the use of oil as an anointing medium (**28: 18; 35: 14**) is perhaps not unusual. However, it is significant. The link between oil and the working of the Spirit of God (see, for instance, Zech. 4: 2-6, 11-14; Rev. 4: 5) brings a special relevance to Jacob's sanctifying action. Thus, after a silent witness to the Holy Spirit's working, Jacob binds his heart and actions in a vow. It is noteworthy that the vow encompassed testimony associated with the place of the Name (28: 22).

Bethel, according to God's command (35: 1), was to be the spot for Jacob to find the fulfilment of dwelling rather than the transitory rest of tabernacling (a different Hebrew word is used in v. 1 and v. 22 respectively meaning 'to dwell' and 'to tabernacle'). The return to Bethel was undertaken on the basis of separation - 'put away the strange gods'; and purification and sanctification - 'change your garments' (v. 2). No doubt Jacob was stimulated in this exercise by his memories of the previous meeting with the Lord there. In bringing this matter within the context of the experience of saints today the principles of separation, purification and sanctification are strongly re-emphasised in Heb. 12, which culminates with the statement that 'our God is a consuming fire'.
G. M. Hydon

From **Lagos:** Unlike his brother Esau, Jacob was a spiritually minded man. The vision of Gen. 28 was given because he was able to discern and receive the revelation from God [Comment 8]. It was an act of divine grace that Jacob was

granted a **part** in **this** sacred introduction of dispensations embracing **the** purpose of God to **dwell** among men. **The** inception of **that** purpose **was at Bethel** and **its** perfection is seen in **the** eternal **state**: 'Behold **the** tabernacle of God is **with** men, and **He shall dwell with them**' (Rev. 21: 3).

The Lord **made** two choices at **Bethel** and showed **them** to Jacob. **The** one **was the** choice of Jacob **himself**: '**I am the LORD, the** God of **Abraham thy father**, and **the** God of **Isaac... I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have** spoken to **thee** of (vv. 13, 15). **The** other **was the** choice of **the place Bethel** as the centre of divine **service** and worship **at the time** Jacob lived. Jacob **was able to discern** that '**surely the LORD is in this place... how dreadful is this place! This is** none other **but the** house of God, and **this is the gate** of heaven' (vv. 16, 17). Many years **later** Jacob **was** commanded to recognise **the place** of God's choice: '**Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar** unto God, who **appeared to thee**' (Gen. 35: 1).

The condition of association **with** God at **Bethel** was separation and holiness of life. **Acceptable service** for God and **the blessings** of God upon Jacob **were bound up with Bethel** (see also Rom. 14: 17-18; Ps. 137).

S. Coker, E. Bassey

From **Leeds**: **It was ever** God's **desire** to have fellowship **with** men on **earth**, **with the** establishing of a **specific place** **where He** could **dwell** and communicate **with** men.

Jacob **was filled with** godly **fear** (reverence) when he **realised that** God **was in the place**, and **that the place was** the house of God (v. 17. See Hosea 12: 4). God's together people **must ever** show reverence for **the** House of God, **the place where** God **dwells** (Lev. 19: 30). **David said** 'In Thy **fear will I** worship toward Thy holy **temple**' (Ps. 5: 7).

Paul says to Timothy, **That** thou mayest know how men ought to **behave themselves** in **the** house of God, **which is the church** of **the** living God' (1 Tim. 3: 15).

The pillow **that** Jacob **used** **was raised up** as a **pillar**, a memorial stone, marking **the place** as a **place** of witness. **The** house of God **is pillar** and ground of **the truth** (1 Tim. 3: 15). When Jacob returned **again** to **Bethel** (Gen. 35: 7) he **built** an **altar**, calling **the place** **El Bethel** (**The** God of **the** house of God). '**Blessed are they that dwell** in Thy house, **they will be still praising Thee**' (Ps. 84: 4). *H. R. Dodge*

BIBLE STUDIES

From Liverpool: Gen. 28 reveals God's desire to have a place on earth in which He could dwell among men. And he (Jacob) lighted upon the place' (v. 11 RVM), which he eventually called Bethel (the house of God,) a name which was later to be confirmed by God Himself (35: 1). But God could not have a house until He had a people, and so it was Zion that God eventually chose for His dwelling place (Ps. 132: 13-14) [Comment 9].

In the ladder that Jacob saw set up on the earth we see a link from earth to heaven which would tell us, among other things, that God's house would be a place of communion. Here we are reminded of the New Testament truth that the Lord Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life. No one cometh unto the Father but by Him (John 14: 6). It also reminds us that the way into the Holy place has been made manifest, into which we have boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh (Heb. 10: 19, 20).

Jacob said, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven' (28: 17). Such a place inspired awe and commanded due reverence, not so much because of the place but because of the One who dwelt there.

There must also be a putting away when we come to God's house (35: 2), 'Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings' (1 Pet. 2: 1). 'Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for evermore' (Ps. 93: 5). *J. W. S., A. H.*

From Madras (India): We find here Jacob lonely in his journey from Beer-sheba to Haran and v. 11 says, 'he lighted upon a certain place'. The marginal reading of R. V. makes this clear that it is 'the Place'. At first he had not realized the importance of this particular place in which he slept and had the vision. Only then he could say, The Lord is in this place; and I knew it not' (v. 16). Because the place where he lighted was indeed 'the Place', he was afraid and said, 'How dreadful is this place!' (v. 17). The chosen place of God was made known to him in his vision and he discerned and spoke being moved by the Holy Spirit, This is the house of God' (v. 17). The gateway to the truth of God's house upon this earth is that God always chooses the place where

He will dwell and men must come to that place (see Deut. 12: 14). Thus the dwelling place of God on earth was first marked by Jacob by setting a stone. Later, during Solomon's reign people brought stones for the laying of the foundation of the temple of God. Nowadays the building up by the Lord Jesus of the spiritual house consisting of the living stones is taking place (see 1 Pet. 2: 5) [Comment 10].

Gen. 35: Jacob was told by God to dwell in Bethel, taking with him his family, because that was His desire. God's desire for men today is to dwell in His house. Before going to the place called Bethel, we should note that Jacob commands his family to put away the strange gods and to purify themselves and change their garments, which indicates to us the standard of holiness associated with God's house (see Ps. 93: 5). *M. Rama Doss, Mani Babu*

From Melbourne: As Jacob fled in fear from Esau his brother, it was not by chance that he lighted on a certain place. His footsteps had been guided by the God of Abraham and Isaac, the One who was about to comfort him, and was to reveal Himself as the God of Jacob. Prior to this we are not aware of anything in his revealed history to indicate that he had a personal knowledge of the God of his fathers. Doubtless he had received instruction from Isaac and Rebecca concerning the fact that the God of glory had revealed Himself to Abraham in Mesopotamia, and again to Isaac at Beer-sheba. Now to Jacob there was a further revelation that in the heart of God there is the desire to have closer fellowship with man and communication between heaven and earth. That night in that place Jacob was to have an experience which was to be the beginning of spiritual life to him [Comment 6]. Above all else he saw the God of his fathers, Jehovah Elohim, who confirmed the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, together with the assurance that until he returned to this land from Haran, He would be with him and would not leave him. This presence and the promises made to one who was rightly called Jacob (supplanter), by One who knew all about him, caused him to say with awe and godly fear, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven'. He had uttered a kindred thought to that which was in the heart of God, doubtless implanted there by the Spirit of the Lord.

T. L. F., T. W. F.

BIBLE STUDIES

From Methil: How faithful is our God! We are reminded of 1 Cor. 1: 9. To Jacob, destitute and fleeing from his brother, God revealed Himself. It was not we feel, a full revelation, as to one who was in full communion with God, which does not seem to be the case with Jacob, but it was in a dream. It made a deep impression nevertheless upon Jacob. So much so that he said 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of heaven'.

The stone that Jacob used as a pillow became a pillar, and so it is true, as one has said that 'what we rest on becomes our testimony'. We think we can also say it becomes the theme of our worship for the Lord Jesus is the foundation of everything. The truth concerning His person and His work on Calvary's Cross is what we rest on. This becomes our subject of worship to God, and our testimony to men. God's rest is in His Son. His rest and ours are one. See also 1 Tim. 3: 15.

Jacob lighted upon a certain place (Heb. 'the place', see R. V. margin) not just any place, but the place of God's own choice (Deut. 12: 2, 3, 5, 11, 13, 14, 18). It is God's presence that makes the place what it is. If God is not in it, it cannot be His house. The LORD Jehovah stood above the ladder that Jacob saw. It was raised up from earth to heaven. It speaks no doubt of the millennial day when, as Scripture says, the Lord 'will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth' (Hos. 2: 21). How true this is in a very special spiritual sense today, when in God's spiritual house God's people are able to worship Him in Spirit and in truth, and He finds an answer, a response in their hearts to Him for all that He has done for them in Christ!

A McIlree, Senr.

From Middlesbrough: Jacob had stolen his brother's birth-right [Comment 11], and was fleeing from him when he came to rest at a place that he was to call Bethel. Whilst asleep there he had a vision of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it, and the Lord standing above it. It was a place of *authority*. The Lord said, 'I am the Lord the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac' (v. 13). It was also a place of *promise*. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed', (v. 13). It was to Jacob a place of *fear*; he was afraid and said, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none

other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven' (v. 17). The latter part of this statement shows us it was also a place of *approach*. It was a place of *witness*. Jacob took the stone he had rested his head on and set it up as a pillar, and anointed it with oil and called the place Bethel (vv. 18-19). It was also a **place** of *offering*. Jacob promised to give back to God one tenth of all that he had received from His hand (v. 22).

God commanded Jacob to return to Bethel and make an altar there. Jacob then went to his household and told them to put away their strange gods, to purify themselves, and to go with him to Bethel that he might build an altar there unto God (Gen. 35: 1-4). This teaches us that the Place is a place of *holiness* and *worship*. Jacob saw the house of God as a house on earth. In our day the house is a people, as it is written 'But Christ as Son, over His house, whose house are we . . . ' (Heb. 3: 6). We have our access to God through Christ His Son, High Priest over the house of God, and through Him we are able to draw near to God with boldness to worship Him (Heb. 10: 19 22). *J. McL, J. L*

From **Nottingham**: In our study of the portion concerned we were impressed with the words of Gen. 28: 11, ' . . . he lighted upon a certain place . . . ' (R. V. margin 'the place'). This was the place of God's appointment although then Jacob knew it not What attracted Jacob, humanly speaking, to this place? It was his need, no doubt, for a suitable spot to rest which would involve some measure of shelter, food and water. Whatever the advantages that attracted the weary traveller, there was far more for Jacob in the place than he anticipated. As he declared later, it was a place full of dread and none other the the house of God. It was in this place that Jacob had the wonderful vision of the ladder, the top of which reached to heaven. It is true 'So seems my Saviour's cross to me, a ladder up to heaven'. But it is more than that. Our thoughts travel to Heb. 10 where we have the precious truth of a people for God, in His house, drawing near with a true heart and fulness of faith in collective worship. Jacob was conscious of the character of the place on which he stood and exclaimed, 'How dreadful is this place!' Reverence and godly fear should characterize those who seek to serve God in His spiritual house of the present day.

R. Hickling

BIBLE STUDIES

From Trinidad (USA): It is appropriate that Genesis, the beginning of beginnings, should reveal such light on God's desire for worship as seen in Bethel, the House of God. Abram, when promised that he would become a great nation went up unto the mountains on the east of Bethel and there built an altar and called upon the Name of Jehovah (Gen. 12: 8). God seemed to place special emphasis on that 'certain place' where Jacob tarried all night. For Jacob could say, 'Surely the Lord is in this place' and he called that place Bethel. But to the world and its darkness the name of the place was Luz (Gen. 28: 19). To them it was only another plot of ground to live on, but to God it was precious. Such is the spiritual Bethel of today; to the world insignificant and unrecognized but to God a holy Temple and a habitation in the Spirit (Eph. 2: 21, 22).

Jacob's full appreciation of Bethel came as he was found in total rest on the rock. Upon his recognition of where he was and what he had seen, his pillow of rest was soon turned into a pillar of testimony (Gen. 28: 18). Our rest and spiritual sight must be found in Christ (John 3: 3). Without the experience of first resting on Christ it would be impossible to have the vision of Bethel and an appreciation of the Place of the Name.

A price had to be paid by Jacob to meet God's standards in Bethel but the reward was far greater than the price as God appeared unto Jacob again and blessed him.

D. Williamson, R. Higgins

From Whitehills and Macduff: Jacob learned that the house of God was God's dwelling place on earth, yet a place with a ladder reaching to heaven. It was suggested that the ladder speaks of Christ and reference was made to John 1: 51 where the Lord says 'Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man', and certainly the position of the Lord Jesus in the house of God today, as High Priest over God's house, links earth and heaven in very special ways.

Jacob said he would give a tenth to the Lord, and while Abraham gave this to Melchizedek we could not find to whom Jacob made this offering [Comment 7],

As He promised at Bethel, the 'God of Bethel' protected Jacob at Paddan-aram and brought him back full and prosperous, but Jacob settled near Shechem from whence, after

great trouble over Dinah's matter, the Lord called him to go up to Bethel and raise an altar to the God who had kept and blessed him. Jacob remembered that where God dwelt was a 'dreadful place' and also the place where God specially spoke to him of blessing. It was also the special place where God was to be worshipped, hence the putting away of the idols. Position and condition go together. *A. R.*

COMMENTS

1. **(Edinburgh):** It is true that Jacob was rightly called a supplanter, but it was in relation to things of spiritual value, the birthright and the blessing, that he supplanted Esau twice (Gen. 27: 36).
2. **(Edinburgh):** The reference in Heb. 7 to Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek is made, I judge, primarily to establish the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek over the priesthood of Aaron. The principle of giving is, of course, carried over into the New Testament, but no specific proportion is laid down. Guidance is given by such scriptures as 2 Cor. 8: 12, 9: 7 and to these our friends have alluded.
3. **(Galston):** Of course under the Old Covenant tithing was required of Jacob's descendants.
4. **(Hamilton, Ontario):** I presume that the two altars our friends refer to are the one built at Shechem (Gen. 33: 20) and the one built later at Bethel. Jacob had wrestled with God at Peniel before he built the first, but before he returned to Bethel and built the second he had received a clear instruction from God to do so (Gen. 35: 1).
5. **(Kilmarnock):** It was God who took the initiative at Bethel. What Jacob did was part of his response to the revelation God had made to him.
6. **(Melbourne):** I would judge that Jacob's spiritual life had begun before he came to Bethel. The revelation at Bethel, however, marks a turning point in Jacob's life, and is the first recorded personal encounter he had with God.
7. **(Whitehills and Macduff):** Jacob could, and did, give to God through the altar. His wealth was largely measured by the amount of cattle he possessed. *J. K. D. J.*
8. **(Lagos):** This suggestion does not seem to be in keeping with Rom. 9: 11-13. God's revelation was not given to Jacob because of his personal qualities.

BIBLE STUDIES

9. (Liverpool): Although there was no building there, and only the person of Jacob representing the people that should be, Bethel was the house of God.

10. (Madras): The Lord Jesus builds the Church which is His Body; men build the house of God.

11. (Middlesbrough): Esau sold the birthright; Jacob was perhaps guilty of sharp practice, but not of theft. *P. L. H.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From Birkenhead: Is there any significance in the fact that no mention is made of the altar until chapter 35?

When the revelation was made to Jacob in ch. 28 he was a lone man on his way to Paddan-aram with possibly little or nothing to give. When he returned to Canaan more than 20 years later he was rich in cattle, having been blessed by God. He had promised to give a tenth to God, and the altar provided a channel for so doing. *J. K. D. J.*

Jacob built the altar in response to the express command of God. First he had revealed to him the place where God was to be served, and its nature, then he went to that place with sacrifice and worship *P. L. H.*

From Galston: 'Beth-el but the name of the city was Luz at the first' (Gen. 28). Some of us understand from this statement that there was a city when Jacob arrived there, and that he probably slept on the outskirts. Others thought that there was no city at that time, and that Jacob slept in the open country.

The account in Gen. 28 clearly suggests open country beneath the stars, but the city of Luz was apparently nearby.

From Trinidad (USA): What, if any, is the significance of the order of the words 'ascending and descending' (Gen. 28: 12?). The same order is found in John 1: 51.

The whole emphasis appears to be on *earth* being linked with *heaven*. The ladder was 'set up on the earth', the order used is in keeping with this emphasis. There may be, however, a deeper significance. *J. K. D. J.*

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BIBLE STUDIES

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

EDITORIAL

Vol 45 Feb 1977

The high number of contributions, to which reference was made in the January issue, continued and Editors are encouraged by this trend. Inevitably, however, consideration of space has resulted in a number of papers being pruned, in order to give a fair presentation of thought from each. We feel sure that contributors will welcome the wider exchange of thought which the larger numbers of papers provides. Nevertheless, to those whose contributions have been significantly shortened we offer our apologies.

A feature of our study this month is the necessity of obedience on the part of the people of God. The conditional nature of the covenant with Israel has been well noted—'If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall ye be . . . ' (Ex. 19: 5). On their acceptance of these terms Israel was constituted the people of God. Eventually, their continued failure to obey resulted in the kingdom being taken from them, to be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Mat. 21: 43). The parallel between Ex. 19: 6-7 and 1 Pet. 2: 5-10 is clear. Like Israel, God's New Testament people occupy a position which is awesome in the greatness of its privileges; like them we too have a duty of obedience to render. May we not be found wanting, as they were!

R. L.

GOD'S CHOICE OF A PEOPLE TO DWELL AMONG

From Birkenhead: At Babel mankind sought to come together in their own way, but the Lord stepped in to scatter them, and brought into action His plan through one man, Abram (Gen. 11 & 12). The Lord revealed to Abram that of him He would make a great nation, and to Jacob a glimpse was given of God's purpose to dwell on earth among His people. God chose a people (Deut. 10: 14-16) who were not seeking Him. Through this people it was His purpose to bless the nations (Gen. 12: 3, John 4: 22; Gal. 3: 14).

BIBLE STUDIES

The Lord was also able to manifest His character and ways in His dwelling with His people. The promise to Abram was unconditional and He kept His promise in mind when He delivered His people from Egypt (Deut. 7: 8). He chose a land in which the people would dwell and His people built a house to His plan. The chosen nation was numerically weaker than the seven nations who would be cast out to make way for God's people. Yet God's eye is upon His people, and they will be preserved through the promises of God by His almighty power (Jer. 31: 35-37).

R. D. Williams

From Derby: In Ex. 24 we have a crisis in the fulfilment of God's purposes concerning the children of Israel. If they were to be His people among whom He would dwell they must enter into a covenant involving pledged obedience to the Lord's authority. This they did when Moses took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people and they said 'All that the LORD hath spoken will we do, and be obedient'. Following this Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said: 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD hath made with you upon all these conditions' (RVM). Only after this (v. 12) did the LORD say unto Moses, 'Come up to Me into the mount... and I will give thee the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them'. Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights, during which time the Lord made known His desire to have a sanctuary that He might dwell among them. Before the forty days and forty nights were completed, however, the people grew restive and impatient and rebelled, and falling into the sin of idolatry, they disobeyed the very first commandment (Ex. 32). God would have consumed His people there and then, had not Moses besought the **LORD** in a most wise and winning way. Nevertheless a new generation was later taught what their fathers had been taught at Horeb nearly forty years previously.

A Smith, S. R. W.

From Galston: Israel were redeemed by God's mighty hand from Egypt, for while Israel were serving the Egyptians God had no holy people or peculiar treasure because they were not free to serve Him. 'No man can serve two masters' (Mat. 6: 24). Even while they were serving the Egyptians the unseen hand of God was evident because the more they were

afflicted the more they spread abroad and multiplied (Ex. 1: 12).

The reason for God's choice was twofold and was not affected by the numerical size of Israel (Deut. 7: 7-8):

1. 'Because the LORD loveth you'. In Deut 7: 7 'love' has the meaning of 'delight' while in v. 8 God's love is seen expressed in His choice of Israel.
2. 'Because He would keep the oath which He sware unto your fathers'.

The people God had chosen had to be:

holy: that is pure, clean, separate and

peculiar: that is, shut in, shut off, shut up as wealth, closely guarded.

God made a conditional covenant with Israel at Sinai (Ex: 19: 5), to which all the people replied, 'All that the LORD hath spoken we will do'.

We find in Ex. 19: 6 the first mention of kingdom as referring to divine rule. This kingdom of priests had a special task: to worship God according to His word. In return God would look after them by supplying their daily needs and in helping them to overthrow their enemies.

D. Gillies

From Hamilton: God's choice of Israel was based on love for Abraham and his seed (Is. 41: 8; Ps. 105: 6, Deut. 10: 15). Because He loved their fathers therefore He chose their seed after them and brought them out with His presence, with His great power (Deut. 4: 37). A New Testament comparison is, 'Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession' (1 Pet. 2: 9).

Although recipients of divine grace and subjects of divine choice and love, the divine demand for obedience (Ex. 19: 5-8) is in no way diminished. As a result of their obedience to the Lord's command, holiness becomes a characteristic of the people of God (Deut. 7: 6; 14: 2; 26: 19; 28: 9; Ex. 19: 6, cf. 1 Pet. 2: 9). Holiness is positive and can be expressed not only in words but in activity [Comment 1]. In Ex. 25: 8-9 God said, 'Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee... shall ye make it' (cf. Ex. 40: 34-38, 2 Chron. 7: 1-3, Heb. 3: 6, Eph. 2: 22, 1 Pet. 2: 5). In the Tabernacle and the Temple there were blended together divine plan and human instrumentality, and in the fusion of these two the

BIBLE STUDIES

glory of God was manifest. Today in churches of God, forming the house of God, we have seen in the results of following God's word and being instruments in His hand, that God in very truth dwells among men. *Quartus*

From Hayes: Although Israel was highly honoured above all other nations it was not because of anything inherent in Israel as a people. They were tiny and insignificant but because of God's promise to Abraham and the patriarchs they were to be given a place of honour and glory. Israel's election was entirely due to God's love to the patriarchs, and their prosperity depended upon their obedience to His commandments (Deut. 4: 37-40; Ex. 19: 5-6). The word 'peculiar' has changed its meaning in today's usage: in the Authorized Version it means 'special, particular, belonging exclusively to, unique'.

Israel would become a nation exclusive to God. God's house or dwelling place on earth would be linked with Israel as a nation. The character of God's house would inevitably be bound up with the character of the nation. If they had obeyed God in keeping His covenant then this kingdom of priests and holy nation would have shown God's house to the world and the Gentiles would have benefited by Israel's adornment of her privileged position. God's house on earth is the place where He sets His Name. It reached its highest expression in the Old Testament in the house Solomon built for God.

The tragedy of Israel was that she did not live up to her high calling of God. Throughout the centuries from Sinai, God was wooing Israel when she backslid and in the end this people who became God's people forfeited this high honour when the Lord uttered the words: 'Your house is left unto you desolate' (Mat. 23: 38, see also Mat. 21: 13), showing it was their house and no longer God's house [Comment 2]. The covenant was set aside by God because of Israel's repeated disobedience. *R. F. Robertson*

From Kilmarnock: God's choice of a people was not a haphazard one for we read that the two basic reasons for His choice were because He loved them and because He would keep His oath which He had sworn unto their fathers (Deut. 7: 8 and see Ex. 32: 13) [Comment 11].

Although the children of Israel had been divinely delivered from their bondage in Egypt (Ex. 13: 14), they did

not automatically become a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We read (Ex. 19: 5) that it was future and conditional as it is written 'if ye will obey My voice.... ye shall'. The conditions God laid down had to be met, therefore we read that they had to be a delivered people and they had to be an obedient people, subject to God. Therefore when the children of Israel met these conditions God made them a holy nation which speaks of their character. He also made them a kingdom of priests which speaks of their service and finally He made them a peculiar treasure which speaks of their value.

God's desire was to be worshipped by His chosen people in a way that was acceptable to Him. Therefore, after His people had said 'All that the LORD hath spoken will we do and be obedient' (Ex. 24: 17), He laid before them through Moses and Aaron the divine method of worship. So the children of Israel were shown the form of worship, the place where they were to worship, and who was chosen by God to be their high priest (Ex. 25 *et seq.*).

God's desire was that the firstborn among the children of Israel should be priests performing a priestly function in His house in the divinely prescribed way. However, owing to their disobedience they lost this wonderful opportunity and God chose the sons of Levi to be His functioning priests in His house and He chose Aaron to be the high priest to lead His people in their worship [Comment 3].

In Acts 2: 41, 42 we find the divine conditions that must be adhered to, after which God will recognise a believer as one of His chosen people. Subsequently we read (1 Pet. 2: 5-9) that they who have been delivered through salvation and have carried out the conditions of Acts 2: 41, 42 become a holy priesthood, an elect race and the people of God.

God's chosen people today have been shown how to worship (Acts 2: 42), where to worship (the house of God) and who has been chosen as their High Priest. 'Jesus entered for us, having become a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek' (Heb. 6: 20) [Comment 9: see also Comment 12].

J. Cranston, I. Rankine

From Kingston-on-Thames: From Deut. 7: 8 we learn the two main reasons behind God's choice of Israel as His people. These are firstly His love, and secondly His oath [see Comment 11].

BIBLE STUDIES

God's choice of Jacob illustrates the exercise of His sovereign will (see for example Rom. 9: 11-13) and it shows that His love is not necessarily related to human merit. It is clearly not based on the same foundation as man's choice, which would have fallen upon Esau rather than Jacob by virtue of his being the firstborn.

The principle of God establishing His choice by way of oath can be traced back to Abraham (e. g. Gen. 15: 16-18). It is to be noted, too, that the oath to Abraham called for a response and this is also the case when it is confirmed through Moses to Israel. God looked for a response from the heart of His chosen people and demanded obedience to the terms of His covenant, which became the basis of His dwelling with them (Ex. 19: 5-8; 24: 5-8 and 25: 8).

It is noted that by this time the people had been redeemed from Egypt, baptised unto Moses (1 Cor. 10: 2) and were to be separate from the nations (Deut. 7: 1-5).

Today there is an opportunity for those baptised believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, having been redeemed, to become collectively a separated people of God. There are marked parallels between 1 Pet. 2: 9 and Ex. 19: 5-6. The principle of God's choice remains the same, having declared His love to us through Christ, His New Covenant has been established on the basis of shed blood (Heb. 9: 15-20). The terms of the New Covenant likewise call for a spiritual sanctuary to be built strictly according to the revealed pattern of the apostles' teaching (see Heb. 8: 5-6 and Rom. 6: 17). Thus God is able to dwell among His chosen people today [Comment 12: see also Comment 9]. *C. R. Parker*

From Lagos: The first occurrence of the expression 'My people' in Ex. 3: 7 is a profound revelation. We believe that 'God who . . . calleth the things that are not, as though they were' (Rom. 4: 17) had in His purposes chosen Israel to the new place of being a people for God. Deut. 7: 6-8 underlines the governing principle in the divine choice: 'Because the LORD loveth you' and 'because He would keep the oath which He swore unto your fathers.' The oath envisaged the coming of Messiah through Israel (Rom. 9: 4-5). As the time of the promise drew nigh (Acts 7: 17; Gen. 15: 13-16), God was unfolding His great purpose first in the redemption of Israel by the blood of the lamb (Ex: 12). Then they were 'baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea' (1 Cor.

10; 2), and voluntarily Israel as a nation entered into a covenant relationship with God before ever He put His name upon them (Deut. 32: 8-9, Ex. 19: 5-6). The covenant could not be made in Egypt until Israel took their stand in separation from there. Israel's place as the people of God was a conditional thing, and carried with it great promises for them in their obedience (Ex. 19: 5-6). It was possible for Israel to forfeit their place as the people of God if their condition spiritually was not in keeping with the place God had called them to (Mat. 21: 43; Rom. 11).

Holiness because of association is understood in the word, Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God' (Deut. 7: 6), and this is a divine gift. In contrast to this the exhortation in Lev. 11: 44 and 1 Pet. 1: 15-16 envisages a spiritual condition of the people of God in keeping with their position.

'Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests' was a divine ideal which Israel has not attained [Comment 4]. The tribe of Levi was chosen to fill the priesthood for Israel (Ex. 32; Num. 17: 1-18: 7) [See Comment 3 and Answers to Question 2]. The New Testament parallel emerges in Rev. 1: 5, 6 and 1 Pet. 2: 1-10. S. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: Following the great Flood and the dispersal of men throughout the earth God had a specific nation (people) in view (Deut. 32: 7-9). When God called Abram out unto Himself (Gen. 12: 1-3) His promise was that from him would come 'a great nation'. Abram went out at God's command, separating himself from his own kindred and his own country, but unto God, whom he obeyed for the rest of his life. God's promise was renewed through Isaac (Gen. 26: 3-5) and again through Jacob (Israel) (Gen. 28: 13-15).

God had also revealed to Abram (Gen. 15: 13-14) that before his seed entered into the land of promise they would endure a time of enslavement (bondage) in a strange land (Egypt). This also was confirmed to Jacob (Gen. 46: 3-4) and 70 souls (the children of Israel) went down into Egypt (Ex. 1: 5). Over a period of 430 years the patience of God waited as Abram's seed developed, finally growing into a nation of people down in Egypt (Ex. 3: 7-8) [Comment 10].

Moses was chosen to become their leader (Ex. 3: 10) and God's word through him was 'Let My people go... that

BIBLE STUDIES

they may serve Me in the wilderness' (Ex. 7: 16). They were to know the salvation of God from the hand of the oppressor, from their bondage in Egypt. The waters of the Red Sea closed in behind them, they were now cut off from Egypt (type of the world) and were a people together and separated unto God.

Their continuance as the people of God was conditional. 'If ye will obey.... keep My covenant... then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me... a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation' (Ex. 19: 5-6) and together they promised to obey (v. 8). Although they were often disobedient and rebellious, and because of their unbelief they were punished (Deut. 1: 31-40), God was yet gracious towards them (Deut. 7: 6-16).
P. M. Jefferson, H. Ft. Dodge

From Liverpool: The contract which God made with the people gave privileges and incurred obligations on both sides [Comment 5].

(a) The Choice

- (i) God's right: Rom. 9: 14-16 and Ex. 33: 19 show that it is God's sovereign right to make a choice of whomsoever He wants. But God's sovereign grace must find an answering response in human responsibility.
- (ii) Whom did he choose? The descendants of Abram (Gen. 12: 2), specifically those descended through Isaac and Jacob.
- (iii) Basis of His choice: From Deut. 7: 6-8 and 4: 37 it is clear that it is God's love and mercy towards His people which led Him to choose them.
- (iv) Purpose of His choice: The people were to engage in divine service. 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me' (Ex. 9-1), said God to Pharaoh. It was also to show that He is God (cf. 1 Pet. 2: 5-9). Other nations would receive a blessing through them (Zech. 8: 22). Israel were to be the means to an end, not the end itself.

(b) The Relationship

We noticed that the kingdom and the house of God always go together. They were God's people before the covenant was made with them—'Let My people go' [Comment 6]—but they did not become a kingdom until after the covenant was ratified. We noted that even in

Babylon they remained the people of God, although the house and the kingdom had been destroyed. During the time in Egypt and Babylon God did not dwell among them [See Question 1].

D. J. Webster, M. S. Elliott

From Macduff and Whitehills: God longed for a people among which to dwell and He chose the children of Israel, not for their might, nor yet for their righteousness but because God had promised that Abraham's seed would become a mighty nation (Deut. 7: 6-8) [and because He loved them—Eds.] God chooses the foolish things of the world that He might put to shame the things that are strong (1 Cor. 1: 27). We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1: 4) [Comment 7].

In Ex. 19: 5 we read of God's promise and condition: 'Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me from among all peoples'. The children of Israel resemble us so much today for they also broke His covenant many times and wandered far away from God, but God's great love and grace always shines through when we humble ourselves before Him and seek to do His will.

God says 'I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people'. Well might we praise and thank God that He chose us, the weak things of life, to be a people for Himself.

Colin Chinchen

From Madras: God called Abraham to separate from his own people and country. This comprised first of all a command to leave his father's family and go to Canaan, and secondly a promise that God would bless him and make of him a great nation (Gen. 12: 1-3). From him the nation of Israel was built but the reasons for God's choice are given in Deut. 7: 7-8 [See Comment 11].

The people were redeemed out of Egypt to become a separated people which is described as a peculiar treasure, a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19: 6). God separated them from all other people (1 Kings 8: 53), and intended that they should not be reckoned among the nations (Num. 23: 9). In this connection we note that they covenanted to obey the law God gave to them and then were instructed to make Him a sanctuary so that He could dwell amongst them (Ex. 25: 8). So we learn that God's

BIBLE STUDIES

house is associated with a separated people obedient to Him.

When Israel rejected Christ the kingdom was taken away from them (Mat. 21: 43) and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Luke 12: 32). Further to this, the Lord Jesus, before His ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, spoke to His apostles 'concerning the kingdom of God' (Acts 1: 3). That is, no doubt, concerning the kingdom of God in this present age, which is totally under the Lordship of Christ Jesus (Mat. 28). So, after hearing from their Lord, the apostles 'went about preaching the kingdom' (Acts 8: 12; 20: 25; 28: 31), and churches of God were planted. Today their successors are God's spiritual house and a separated and obedient people (1 Pet. 2: 5, 9; Heb. 3: 6). *M. Rama Doss, S. Raja Kumar*

From Methil: The Lord calls Israel His 'peculiar' people (Deut. 7: 6), referring to the special place, or place of wealth that God gave them, and His peculiar treasure (Ps. 135: 4) for they were so precious to God. They were in themselves in no sense special or precious but were elevated above all other peoples or nations simply because it was God's prerogative to set His love upon them. They were not selected because of their great size, for they were a very small people. They did not wish to be obedient (Ezek. 20: 7-10) but God made Himself known to them by bringing them out. This was the proof of His love towards them. Their continuation as a peculiar treasure was conditional on their continued obedience and their keeping of the covenant or contract that He had made with them.

The Lord speaking to Moses concerning this people said, 'I... have separated you... that ye should be Mine' (Lev. 20: 26). We today are the chosen separate people and He says to us 'Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate' (2 Cor. 6: 17). We may not always be right conditionally, but so long as we follow the principles set out for us (Acts 2: 41-42), we shall continue to be the people of God. Judgement begins at the house of God (1 Pet. 4: 17; 1 Cor. 1: 26-27), and so if we cease to be positionally right God will come in judgement, as He did in the churches in Revelation [Comment 13]. *A R. Smith*

From Trinidad, Colorado: God's desire from the beginning was to have a people set apart as His own special treasure.

There is, of course, the first step of choosing but the true joy seems to come in the possessing. Although God does the choosing He desires the possession of a people (Deut. 7). He chose the fewest of all peoples and brought them out of the hand of Pharaoh King of Egypt.

But there are conditional aspects of possession (Ex. 19: 5). The joy of possession came from the obedience of His chosen ones. They were to be His for His eternal purpose and pleasure, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. With the choosing past and the little word 'if in the balance, God's people often responded (e. g. Joshua 24: 24).

The people of old failed to keep the covenant relationship with God and thus we find in Christ, the Author of a New Covenant, the same eternal principle.

The possession of a people for God depends upon the obedience of the chosen ones. Salvation was brought to all men so that we should live righteously and godly, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession (Titus 2: 11-14). To be such a people calls for full obedience to the word of God, striving in all things.

Peter gives us a very clear description of the people of God today (1 Peter. 2: 9). We have rejoiced in realizing that God's purpose in this divine plan for a people to dwell among was to have for Himself a kingdom of priests. Thus we can see it expressed in the New Testament as living stones, built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

D. Williamson, R. Higgins

From Nottingham: In Gen. 11 is the record of the nations trying to shut out God, while in Gen. 12 is the record of how God shut out the nations and called one man, a person of divine choice, unto Himself that He might make of him a great nation which would be a peculiar treasure unto God. As the years passed the purposes of God were fulfilled and the telling description in Ex. 1: 7-10 shows the expansion of the children of Israel. This caused perturbation in the courts of Pharaoh but the designs of God were being carried out in choosing and preparing a people amongst whom He could dwell.

The service they were to render was not to be conducted according to their own devices and ideas. First they ex-

BIBLE STUDIES

perienced bondage, then redemption, then baptism and separation. Having progressed through these steps they were ready to enter into covenant relationship with God and so be a people among whom God could dwell. The word of God was that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant they, a collective people, would be a peculiar treasure, a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These were characteristics of the people of God. They had it in their hearts to obey God (Deut. 5: 28, 29) but often failed. God wanted Israel to be His possession and ever be aware they were not their own but belonged to Him. In their day the apostles stressed the same truth in relation to the people of God of this dispensation. We have been called by divine grace, and having been redeemed are now separated unto the Lord to carry out His revealed will. The highest purpose of the people of God today is to serve Him, that is to render Him homage (Rom. 1: 9; Heb. 9: 14 and 12: 28).

The first letter of Peter contains parallels relating to God's chosen people of a past day and His people today. We read we are redeemed by precious blood (1 Pet: **1: 18, 19**), but on giving the Lord His rightful place, and not the place of rejection as given Him by so many, we are an elect race, a holy priesthood, and a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2).

R. Hickling

From Melbourne: In an idolatrous city, Ur of the Chaldees, God's eye rested upon a man, Abram by name, and although he was like other men, infected by sin and human frailty, God made choice of that man to be progenitor of a holy nation. When the God of glory appeared unto him with the command to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and migrate to the land which would eventually be that of his descendants, he went forth, believing the word of the Lord. In Abram God saw one who would command his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord. Abraham's subsequent history, and that of his immediate descendants, reveals a marked contrast to that of other people and nations of the period.

It was amongst a nation proceeding from Abraham that God desired to dwell eventually. This nation must, however, know Him experimentally. They must pass through the crucible, the furnace of affliction in Egypt. They must experience sorrow and oppression under the taskmasters,

until their cry ascended to heaven. They must witness the plagues of Egypt their own deliverance from them, the judgement upon the firstborn of Egypt and experience their own deliverance through the blood of the Lamb and the overshadowing wings of the Almighty. They must witness the waters of the Red Sea rolled back so that they might pass over on dry land, and see the destruction of the hosts of Egypt. Then on the other side of the Sea, they, with Moses, sang the song of triumph (Ex: 15: 1-17). They had now become acquainted with Him of whom their fathers had told them, and now having known His redemption, were prepared to harken to His law, and prepare for Him a habitation.

W. H. F., T. W. F.

From Barrhead: The covenant made with Abraham concerning the seed and the land was entirely unconditional, and depended on the sovereign will of the Lord; but the covenant at Sinai is clearly conditional: 'If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant'.

The history of the house of God shows this conditional aspect in three major instances:

- (i) when God forsook the Tabernacle at Shiloh,
- (ii) when God left His house before Nebuchadnezzar burned it.
- (iii) when our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God went out of the Temple and His voice sounded in the courts of that sacred Temple for the last time: 'Your house is left unto you desolate' [see Comment 2].

If God's dwelling among His people was conditional on their obedience to His will then this should have a very important place with regard to the divine service and the testimony of the people of God today.

Beautiful things are said of Israel (Ex. 19: 5-6): — a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests (which in the Septuagint is spoken of as a royal priesthood, [Comment 8], a holy nation. Divine love and purpose are the great motivating powers behind it all. Israel were not chosen because of any numerical superiority for they were the fewest of all the nations.

Wm. Fullerton

COMMENTS

1. (Hamilton): The thought expressed here has to do with the need for the people of God to maintain holy lives,

BIBLE STUDIES

but do the references not imply 'imputed holiness'? See the penultimate paragraph of contribution from Lagos, where this distinction is well made.

2. (Hayes): Was not the Lord here speaking prospectively, in that this did not take place until Calvary?

3. **(Kilmarnock):** The service of the priesthood was the function of Aaron and his sons, and despite the sin of the golden calf (Ex. 32), the Lord said 'They shall keep their priesthood' (Num. 3: 10). The Lord's purpose for the first-born was that they should be wholly given to Aaron to do the service of the Tabernacle. However, after their failure at Horeb they were replaced by the Levites whose work was to 'do the service of the tent of meeting' (Num. 18: 6). But they were not to 'come nigh unto the vessels of the sanctuary and unto the altar, that they die not'.

4. (Lagos): Israel were constituted a kingdom of priests and a holy nation at Sinai, when they accepted the terms of the covenant. In that sense, they attained to the ideal. They did, however, fail many times through disobedience, and, of course, in the New Testament times the priesthood has passed to God's New Covenant people.

5. (Liverpool): Our friends are not, of course, suggesting an equal partnership in the matter of the covenant. The obligations were on Israel's side. In return for their obedience, the Lord held out to them the promise that they would become a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, as is pointed out at the end of this contribution.

6. (Liverpool): Israel were *chosen* as God's people before the covenant was made; they were *confirmed* as His people at Sinai, on their promise of obedience. In the scripture quoted (Ex. 5: 1) the Lord was speaking prospectively. He 'calleth the things that are not as though they were' (Rom. 4. 17).

7. **(Macduff and Whitehills):** Does not Eph. 1: 4 refer to the choosing of individuals?

8. **(Barrhead):** See answers to Question 2. R. L

9. (Kilmarnock): The people of God today form the spiritual house (1 Peter 2: 5, 9). The spiritual house which is on earth is linked with the heavenly sanctuary, which is

the place of our worship—cf. article on The Way of the Holies' (B. S. Vol. 11, 1942, p. 1).

10. (Leeds): The period of time from the confirmation of the covenant made with Abraham to the giving of the Law is stated in Gal. 3: 17 to be 430 years. The period of time Israel was in Egypt was possibly 215 years (see B. S. Vol. 43, 1975 p. 32 and Vol. 12, 1944 pp. 87, 100). *J. K. D. J.*

11. (Kilmarnock): These are not really the reasons for God's 'Choice—they are its consequences. The oath "had been given because God had chosen.

12. (Kingston-on-Thames): Is not the sanctuary today in heaven? In the building of this men do not play a part. It seems important to make a distinction between the sanctuary in heaven (i. e. the place where God is worshipped) and the house where God dwells on earth (see also Comment 9).

13. (Methil): Israel's failure was primarily conditional, and the kingdom was taken from them because they failed to 'bring forth the fruits thereof. The Lord condemned Israel because they glorified themselves as sons of Abraham, but behaved as sons of the Devil. *P. L. H.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. From Liverpool: Can the term 'the people of God' be restricted to those who find themselves in churches of God?

God constituted Israel His people at Sinai, on the basis of their acceptance of the terms of the covenant. Even in captivity in Babylon they were still referred to as 'My people' (2 Chron. 36: 23). That position never altered until the fulfilment of, the Lord's pronouncement The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits that the terms 'an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession' all refer to those gathered together in churches of God, forming the house of God (1 Pet. 2: 5).

2. From Barrhead: When did the choosing of Ex. 19: 5-6 take place?

The choice of Israel to occupy this unique place as the people of God must have been made in the divine counsels of eternity past.

BIBLE STUDIES

3. **From Barrhead:** Was every individual male envisaged as a priest in the royal priesthood, or the expression 'a kingdom of priests'?

- (i) This question is, of course, based on the Septuagint rendering of Ex. 19: 6 (royal priesthood), from which it could, perhaps, be argued that all in Israel were in the royal priesthood. I have always understood the R. V. rendering 'kingdom of priests' to be an accurate one. Accordingly, although every person in Israel was in the kingdom of priests, only Aaron and his sons were in the priesthood (see Ex. 28: 1; Num. 3: 10). Note also that Ex. 19: 24 draws the distinction between 'the priests and the people'. In the New Testament, all within churches of God are seen as priests, forming a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2: 5, 9).

R. L.

- (ii) I agree with the answer given by R. L. to this interesting question. It has alternatively been proposed 'that all Israel (male and female) were priests in the sense that their whole lives should be offerings to God—the nation was collectively and individually for His service. However, they were represented in sanctuary service by the priestly family chosen by God for His purpose'. While recognising that God desired this consecration in holiness from every Israelite, I suggest that this would be seen in such terms as 'a holy nation'. I find it difficult to understand that they were all regarded as priests in view of the distinction consistently made between priests and people (e. g. Hosea 3: 9). Do not Heb. 7: 14 and 8: 4 strengthen this view? As to the tribe of Judah, Moses 'spake nothing concerning priests', so much so that in the days of His flesh on earth the Lord 'would not be a priest at all'. Could this argument in Hebrews have any validity if in fact God regarded every Israelite as a priest?

G.

P.

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A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

EDITORIAL

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Contributions this month have given a proper emphasis to the importance which God placed on exact faithfulness to the revealed pattern in building His dwelling place. The Tabernacle was itself the physical manifestation of heavenly things, and Scripture has revealed to us the significance of some of its parts and its services. Heb. 9: 5 implies that an explanation was possible of the meanings of the articles mentioned in the preceding verses. However, we should be cautious in supplying these explanations unless we have direct scriptural warrant. For instance, several contributors suggest that acacia wood speaks of the incorruptible humanity of the Lord Jesus, gold speaks of His deity, and copper speaks of judgement. These suggestions have been hallowed by tradition, but they have no direct scriptural warrant, and if applied rigorously can lead to contradictory results. It is perhaps best to regard them as permissible illustrations, rather than definite types.

It is clear, however, that the Tabernacle was intended to illustrate to us the glory and holiness of God's immediate presence, and contrast the ways of entry there in the past and the present. It is apparent too that it demonstrates God's desire to dwell among men in a house constructed to His specific design, which is reflected in the spiritual house of the present day. It is our duty to be as careful in following the pattern as Moses was, so that we too may be judged faithful in all God's house as servants. *P. L. H.*

THE TABERNACLE—THE PATTERN AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

From **Derby**: God had said to Moses 'Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them... according to the pattern that was shewed thee in the mount'. God must have all things relating to Himself carried out in His way, which is the divine requirement for the present day. Man

BIBLE STUDIES

has many different ways, but God has only one way, both in regard to salvation and for His saved ones. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching', which embodied the commandment of the Lord (1 Cor. 14: 37). In Prov. 8: 31 we read 'My delight was with the sons of men'. God's desire was ever to come nearer to His human creation, first in Eden, then the Tabernacle, then into men's hearts, and finally in the eternal state to have man with Him for ever. The Lord Jesus became man that He might dwell among us (John 1: 14), and finally suffer and die for man to bring him back to God (1 Pet. 3: 18).

In the court was the laver, which was made of copper. The altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the court was made of acacia wood overlaid with copper, which was fire-resisting. Copper is said to be a symbol of judgement, and at the altar the unblemished victim suffered the stroke of divine judgement instead of the sinner, a precious type of our blessed Lord Jesus who suffered the judgement of God in our stead and thus secured the salvation of the believing sinner. The laver speaks of self-judgement, **but** is also a figure of regeneration, as seen in God's command to Moses to take Aaron and his sons and wash them all over and to clothe them, which was an act never to be repeated, although they were to wash their hands and feet often. This lesson was taught by the great Teacher: 'He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean' (John 13: 10). So Aaron and his sons were commanded to wash before entering the holy place to do service, and also before approaching the altar of sacrifice. In Titus 3 we read about the washing (margin, 'laver') of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which speaks of our new birth. The laver is also a type of the word of God as seen in Eph. 5: 26: 'That He might sanctify it (the church), having cleansed it by the washing (margin, 'laver') of water with the word'. This washing of the body as a type of regeneration seems to be suggested in Heb. 10: 22, 'Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water', preceded by the words, 'Let us draw near with a true heart'.

S. Wymer, **S. R. W.**

From **Hamilton (Scotland)**: The revelation of the pattern was a divine communication, mediated through Moses for

the guidance of the children of Israel in order that the **LORD** (Jehovah) should have His dwelling-place in their midst. The importance that God placed upon this pattern is clearly seen in Ex. 24: 12, 16, 17: 'And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the mount... and the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai... and the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire'. The Tabernacle demanded the personal visitation of the God of heaven to enunciate not only the pattern but the materials, methods, men and women to be involved in its construction. Whilst two chapters of Genesis deal with the creation, fifteen chapters of Exodus are given to the pattern of the Tabernacle.

It is worthy of note that the Holy Spirit uses two Hebrew terms for the pattern of the Tabernacle:

mareh (Num. 8: 4), also translated in R. V. as 'look upon' (Gen. 12: 11), and 'appearance' (Lev. 13. 4, Num. 9: 15).

tabnith (Ex. 25: 9. 40), translated elsewhere in R. V. as 'likeness' (Deut. 4: 16), and 'after the figure' (Is. 44: 13).

The Hebrew word *mishpat* is translated 'fashion' in Ex. 26: 30: 'according to the fashion... which hath been shewed thee in the mount'. This word is also translated as 'right' (Gen. 18: 25) and 'after the ordinance' Num. 29: 33).

The divine presence was known to Adam (Gen. 3: 8, R. V. M.), Enoch (Gen. 5: 22), Noah (Gen. 6: 9) and Abraham (Gen. 17: 1), but the significance of the Tabernacle lies not in the appearing of God but the fact that God has His dwelling-place on earth, and further, that His dwelling relates to a community, the holy nation, Israel, not visitation to individuals only. The Tabernacle expresses the unique relationship between God and His people: He dwells in their midst, He guides them on their journey and has opened up a way in which man can worship Him according to the divine plan.

M. C.

From Kilmarnock: The choice of a place to dwell in was God's and not the people's. On moving at God's command they stopped when and where God wanted (Ex. 40: 36, 37). For us, God does two things—He saves us, and instructs us with the intention that we come to the place He has

BIBLE STUDIES

provided. Then we worship, and thus God gets something in return for the instruction we received. The path of a disciple requires first of all instruction, and then obedience* Ex. 35: 5 gives God's requirement: 'Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD'. In this case an essential qualification was given: 'whose heart maketh him willing' (Ex. 25: 2). None escaped from responsibility, but in addition willingness was expected. The response of the people showed that their hearts were willing, for they gave too much; the Tabernacle was built to God's specifications and was not as large or as decorated as the gifts would have allowed.

The Tabernacle could not have been made had the children of Israel not been freed from bondage, and then from a willing heart given to God. Therefore the 'pattern' of the Tabernacle might be seen as salvation first, followed by baptism 'unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea' (1 Cor. 10: 2), and finally worshipping God in the place He provided, thus comparing with New Testament doctrine [Comment 1].

Provision is made for the movement of the Tabernacle, implying it was a necessity, given to God's people during their journey for two purposes. It is seen to be a place to go to, but it is also a place from which God will speak: 'And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee' (Ex. 25: 22). It was a place of worship provided for the people irrespective of their location. It was a place *for* them, instruction was given *to* them, and the ultimate purpose was to be *with* them.

R. McK., B. R.

From Lagos: At the inception of both kingdoms—(1) Ex. 19: 5-8 and (2) Acts 1: 3—we note with interest the forty days of preparation, the giving of commandment, and the pattern of God's dwelling place among His people. The Apostles executed the New Testament pattern from the day of Pentecost; Moses like them is commended for the faithful implementation of the Old Testament pattern of God's dwelling place (Heb. 3: 5).

The details of the pattern specified acacia wood overlaid with pure gold for the ark and table of Shewbread, bespeaking the God-Man, the Lord of glory. The mercy-seat and

the lampstand were all of pure gold, bespeaking their origin from God.

In the court the pattern specified the location of the laver for the priest to wash his hands and feet (Ex. 30: 17-21) and the altar of sacrifice of acacia wood overlaid with brass [Comment 2]. We see the portrait of Christ in the gate, veil and screen: blue identifies the One from above, purple His royalty, scarlet His humanity and linen His innate righteousness. Acacia wood overlaid with brass for the altar foreshadowed the One who was the sacrifice and the altar, and who suffered for sins once.

The pattern was to be observed in all generations. David had to observe the pattern despite his sincere intention (2 Sam. 6). The apostle Paul envisaged nothing short of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20: 27). Among Paul's closing words to Timothy was the exhortation: 'Hold the pattern... which thou hast heard from me' (2 Tim. 1: 13).

S. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: To have a dwelling place on earth was God's desire (not man's), the object being that God might dwell amongst his own gathered out and gathered together people (Ex. 25: 8). It was God who revealed its pattern (v. 9), in which there was nothing of man or the mind of man. *All* was to be 'according to the pattern' of God, but to man was entrusted the gathering together of the materials necessary, the preparation, the work, and the construction.

God made clear to Moses that he was to make *all* things according to the pattern showed to him in the mount (Ex. 25: 40, Heb. 8: 5). Moses was faithful in *all* God's house (Num. 12: 7, Heb. 3: 5) and the Tabernacle prepared and erected in the wilderness was to the pattern given by God.

Amongst the words used for 'pattern' in the New Testament we find:

- (1) *tupos* (ensample): making an impression by means of striking, the impress of a seal; also a mould or casting into which molten metal is poured to assume its shape, cf. 'the pattern of teaching' (Rom. 6: 17 RVM).
- (2) *hupotuposis*: an outline sketch from which that which is to be made can be faithfully produced, as in 'An ensample of them which should hereafter believe' (1 Tim. 1: 16) 'Hold fast the pattern of sound words'

BIBLE STUDIES

(2 Tim. 1: 13).

(3) *hupodeigma*: that which is shown by example. 'I have given you an example' (John 13: 15), 'An example of suffering, and of patience' (Jas. 5: 10).

All earthly structures are built by some one (Heb. 3: 4). In this first earthly Tabernacle we see the hand of the divine Builder, and the Builder of all things [Comment 3].

H. R. Dodge.

From Galston: The pattern (a structure, and by implication a model or resemblance, from *banah*, to build: Dr. Strong) which Moses saw, was we suggest a structure or full-scale model—not a set of scale drawings.

The Tabernacle (Hebrew *mishkan*, dwelling place) was the boards and curtains (Ex. 26: 6, 7, 15, 18, 30); the Tent was the goats' hair curtains and the two coverings (Ex. 26: 7, 11) [Comment 4]. The whole structure was referred to as the Tabernacle and was also referred to as the tent of meeting (Ex. 27: 9, 40: 34) and is also called 'the tabernacle of the tent of meeting' (Ex. 40: 2). Finally the most holy place would appear to be the Tabernacle proper while the holy place was the tent of meeting. The former emphasises the privileges of the people in drawing near to worship and to hear through the priesthood. Both are linked in the phrase 'the tabernacle of the tent of meeting'.

Unity is emphasised again and again:

- (a) The linen curtains were to be coupled together with 50 clasps of gold 'and the Tabernacle shall be one'.
- (b) The goats' hair curtains were to be coupled together with 50 clasps of brass 'that it may be one'.
- (c) The lampstand was beaten out of one piece of gold.
- (d) 'Of one piece with the mercy-seat shall ye make the cherubim on the two ends thereof (Ex. 25: 19).
- (e) The horns of the altar of burnt offering 'shall be of one piece with it'.
- (f) The horns of the golden altar 'shall be of one piece with it'.

These things no doubt reflect the unity of the Godhead and speak of the harmonious blending of priests, Levites and people in their service towards God. The same harmonious unity should characterise the people of God today who are divinely brought together to 'form a habitation of God in the Spirit'. We recall too the words of the Lord

Jesus: 'that they may be one even as we are one' (i. e. the Father and the Son).

Gold was seen on the inside and brass on the outside of the Tabernacle. We suggest that these speak of mercy and judgement. The Hebrew word for mercy is translated in other parts of Scripture by 'favour', 'kindness', 'loving kindness', etc. How loudly, gloriously and sweetly the gold and the brass (copper) speak to us—the people of God today! As we approach God we come to the copper altar, and we remember the judgements endured by the Lord Jesus on our account; then in the holies we contemplate His faithfulness and kindness—'in His temple everything saith, Glory'—and we look forward to the time when God shall shew unto us 'the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus'. *John H. Johnson.*

From Kingston-on-Thames: The constituents of the Tabernacle are listed three times in Exodus in relation to the instruction (Ex. 25-30), construction (Ex. 36-39), and erection (Ex. 40) of the house of God at Sinai. Such repetition not only emphasises the importance of making everything according to the divine pattern but also highlights the fact that the constituents are listed in different orders within each of the lists.

In the first list of instructions the objects are listed outwards from the ark except for the altar of incense and the laver, which are not mentioned in connection with the rest of the furniture but only after the fitting out and hallowing of the priests who were to officiate. This would suggest to us that the offering of prayer and the cleansing of which the altar of incense and the laver respectively speak are properly for the use of priests engaged in priestly service.

In the second list the Tabernacle and its coverings are constructed first, and then the furniture they were to house. This would suggest that the divine service which each of the objects depicts cannot be rendered apart from the prior construction of the house of God by men at God's bidding. The reverse order, however, is true of the laver, the copper altar and their enclosure, the court. Here the emphasis is not on 'receiving in' but on 'keeping out', for the court, and the righteousness and judgement of which it speaks, maintain separation from the unclean and outside place.

BIBLE STUDIES

In the third list the objects follow the order of the second save that the veil and the screen are mentioned in their appropriate position relative to the passage of the high priest to and from the presence of God. It thus shows the way by which men may approach God not only at Sinai, but in its teaching, in the house of God today.

Ian E. Penn.

From Liverpool: It is clear from Ex. 26 that the ten curtains coupled together made the Tabernacle, and the eleven curtains coupled together made the Tent. (See also Ex. 36: 8).

The plank structure was made for the Tabernacle (26: 15, 36: 20), and was a strong surrounding for it. This is a point of some importance, as it places the hanging of these ten curtains inside the plank structure, forming the walls and roof of the Tabernacle proper [Comment 5]. Being 28 cubits long these curtains would reach across the roof 10 cubits and down each side wall 9 cubits, or within 1 cubit of the ground. Then, each curtain being 4 cubits broad, joined together they would cover 40 cubits. This would allow 9 cubits to hang down at the western end, making it the same as the sides, leaving 30 cubits to cover the length of the structure, with a hanging of one cubit over the pillars at the eastern end, from which hung a special entrance curtain.

The second set of curtains, which were made of goats' hair, was for a tent over the Tabernacle (26: 7, 36: 14). This idea of a tent is not met by throwing these curtains over the Tabernacle as a pall is thrown over a coffin. Further, in 26: 14 and 36: 19, a covering (singular) of rams' skins dyed red is made for the tent. The sealskins above, must then be above the Tabernacle proper. Thus in looking at this structure you would see the dyed rams' skins as a covering for the goats' hair curtain, and the sealskins as a covering for the fine twined linen Tabernacle [Comment 6].

The veil would hang on the side of the pillars which was towards the holy of holies, enabling the priests in taking down the Tabernacle to unhook this heavy curtain and walk forward to throw it over the ark and the mercy-seat as none were allowed to look upon these items of furniture. The holy of holies would thus be a perfect cube

with the embroidered linen being the walls, and one cubit of gold-covered planks being seen below the curtains.

The letter to the Hebrews makes it clear that the way into the holy place was not manifested while the first Tabernacle was standing (Heb. 9: 8), this first tabernacle being the outer compartment where the priests went in daily. On the day of atonement, the people could watch the high priest as he went through the gate of the court and then through the screen of the door, but never saw him enter through the veil, since the outer compartment hid him from their view. The way of the Holies is now manifest because the house of God in the New Testament is not a building having two compartments, but a people who can enter the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 10: 19-22) [Comment 9]. This sanctuary is not part of the house of God today as the sanctuary was in the past. The sanctuary was always in existence even when there was no house on earth.

We would value criticism of this paper [Comment 10].

G. S. Webster, M. S. Elliott.

From Macduff and Whitehills: The Tabernacle in the wilderness was a pattern or copy of the true tabernacle in heaven. The framework was of shittim wood overlaid with gold, each board standing on sockets of silver, thus reminding us of churches of God being fitly framed together for a habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2: 22). This framework was covered with two sets of coverings and two sets of curtains. The outer covering was badgers' skins and the inner, rams' skins dyed red, while the outer set of curtains was goats' hair, and the inner, fine twined linen of blue, purple and scarlet, all pointing to Christ. [See Editorial and comment 11].

The Tabernacle contained two distinct departments, the holy place and the most holy place. The holy place contained the altar of incense, the table of Shewbread and the golden lampstand, and was a place of priestly privilege and service (Heb. 9: 6). The most holy place had a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant [Comment 12]. Heb. 9: 7 shows it was only the high priest who entered in once a year, not without blood, for himself and for the errors of the people. From the gate right into the most holy place was the way of approach to God. Our way of approach is very important in service for God.

BIBLE STUDIES

In **Ex. 40: 34** we see the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. The beauty and glory of God's dwelling place can be seen from the inside (Ps. 84: 1, 2). *James McLeay.*

From Melbourne: The Tabernacle was a pattern of the things in the heavens, where the worshippers are untainted by sin, and now man, a fallen creature, was to learn the way into the presence of God as a worshipper also.

The materials were of earth; the people of Israel were asked to bring them that a dwelling place might be erected for Him who had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, and they brought willingly. Much of the material had evidently come out of Egypt and had been obtained when, at the Exodus, they spoiled the Egyptians. In the desert of Sinai we understand that there was acacia wood in abundance. It was an essential part of the building about to be commenced, and it was imperishable. The furniture of the Tabernacle was made from this wood and covered with gold, typical of the incorruptibility of the humanity of the eternal Son of God, while the gold portrayed His divinity [See Editorial].

The Tabernacle was erected at the west of the court parallel with the walls of linen. The boards which formed the walls were held together by five bars of acacia wood and covered with gold. The middle bar ran through the centre of the upright boards from end to end of the whole. This bar doubtless typifies the Holy Spirit who dwells among the collective people of God, who are builded together to form a habitation for God on earth so that the unity of the Spirit may be made possible. (We also believe that the Holy Spirit dwells within every believer, but we are here dealing with a collective people). The visible bars have been defined as lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearance, by which the unity of the Spirit may be maintained in the bond of peace.

On the golden altar the priests burned the specially prepared incense night and morning; the perfume of the incense was never absent, and it would permeate the area within the veil. The fire in the censer in which it was burned came from the altar of sacrifice in the court. This appears to be typical of the work of Christ as great Priest and Advocate. We are reminded of the words of the song-writer,

Thy name is as incense poured forth'. The golden lampstand was made from a talent of gold, to burn continually before the Lord, and as it burned, reflecting continually the glory of the holy place, the gold, the colours in the veil, and the coverings of the dwelling seen from within, everything said 'Glory'. We can see here prefigured a church of God, of divine origin, fed with pure olive oil (typical of the Holy Spirit), and shedding divine light around. Twelve loaves were placed on the table of Shewbread each Sabbath, representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

W. H. F., D. McF., T. W. F.

From **Methil**: The Tabernacle was God's dwelling place amongst His people Israel (Ex. 25: 8, 9). God's desire is to dwell amongst His chosen people and He will continue to do so in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21: 3).

The Tabernacle that was in the wilderness was a portable sanctuary. It was a place of beauty and glory, built entirely by men precisely to God's pattern. It is likely that much of the precious metal voluntarily brought by the willing-hearted amongst the people came originally from Egypt. God's instructions about the design, dimensions, and materials to be used for the Tabernacle were exact, giving no one the opportunity to introduce his own ideas. Order is the divine hallmark, as shown by the precise positioning of the furniture and the orderliness of the boards and curtains.

Salvation from Egypt was accomplished by God for them and they were saved to serve (Ex. 9: 13). Here, in the building of the Tabernacle, they were permitted to serve, and this required implicit obedience; they were to build according to the pattern delivered to Moses. It was the willing-hearted and they alone who were to bring, and the supply of materials was more than adequate (Ex. 36: 7). There can be no lack for God's house when the chosen people give willingly.

The true value of the Tabernacle lay not in the value, though great, of the materials used, such as the gold and silver, but rather in the workmanship that brought out the God-given pattern. The lampstand, though all of gold, was made from only one talent. But we are not given any insight into the hours of care taken in the working of it to be true to the pattern.

BIBLE STUDIES

Although the inside of the Tabernacle was a place of much glory and beauty, the outside was a covering of badger skins. To him who had not entered in, the Tabernacle would appear as a place of *no* glory [Comment 7],

The culmination of the obedience of the people came when the cloud descended upon the completed Tabernacle, signifying God's glory and presence. God's presence would not have been associated with that which fell short of, or went beyond, his own commandment.

Alan Manzie, Neville Coomer.

From **Trinidad, USA:** As we trace God's dealings with man from the beginning, we see God's desire for a place of communion with man. We also see the necessity of God being the designer of the place. Eden, as in Gen. 2: 8, is an example of this: 'God planted a garden eastward, in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed'. We believe this garden was a copy of the heavenly Eden, the garden of God spoken of in Ezek. 28: 13. Even though God did not dwell there it was a place of delight among men.

In view of this, it is understandable that in seeking a dwelling place among the people whom He had chosen, it must be a copy of the heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 8: 5). God made known in Ex. 25: 8 His desire for man to make a sanctuary, that He might dwell among them. We took special note of Ex. 25: 9, that it was to be according to all that God showed them, which included the building and furniture; and the importance of *men* and *women* giving willingly as their heart led (Ex. 25: 2).

In the design of the courtgate and the tabernacle-door there was only one way into the court and Tabernacle, and the gate was twice as wide in size. This reminded us of the only way to God through Jesus Christ and the gate was wide in illustration of God's love for man—'God so loved the world'. By contrast the door was smaller and only a selected few entered into God's house. What about today? [Comment 8],

Paul said, 'God dwelleth not in temples made with hands' (Acts. 17: 24). We know that God still has a house to dwell in, built of ransomed saints. God's design shows through to us in the message by Peter, 'Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house' (1 Pet. 2: 5). In Ex. 19: 56 we find concerning the Tabernacle that Israel was

to be a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation; and in the parallel for us today in 1 Pet. 2: 9, 'Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation'. As God entrusted the building of the Tabernacle to man, so also man has a hand in the building of His house today, but it must be builded on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone.

M. T. Williamson, S. Higgins, R. Higgins.

From Barrhead: 'For God is not a God of confusion' (1 Cor. 14: 33) but a God of order, so in the pattern of the Tabernacle as in creation itself everything was done in an orderly fashion. In Ex. 25: 8, 9 Moses was instructed, 'And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it'. The pattern was to be strictly adhered to, no variation or departure being allowed. Moses, who was faithful in all his ways, completed and set up the Tabernacle according to all that was shown him in the mount. At the setting up of the Tabernacle, seven times we read 'As the Lord commanded Moses'; so he completed the work, and it pleased the Lord to dwell there. How careful and precise we must be according to all the Scriptures!

If the Tabernacle were to be made according to the pattern, all material must be on hand in the wilderness. God's provision was wonderful, first opening the hearts of the Egyptians to give to the children of Israel when leaving the land, and then the hearts of the children of Israel in response to Moses' appeal for material. The people offered more than enough in those precious days in the history of Israel.

The pattern was of something existing in heaven. For each item, there was something corresponding in heaven. Nothing in the pattern was just for show but all was of great significance, for this was the place of meeting and communion, a divine system originated by God, and a place of service for the holy priesthood. Heb. 9: 9 tells us that the Tabernacle is a parable for the time now present, a parable which we must not misapply, but precious where it can be used to illustrate a New Testament truth. For example, the ten curtains of similar material and size, coupled together so as to be one, illustrate beautifully the unity of

BIBLE STUDIES

churches of God, fitly framed together, forming the house of God.

The Tabernacle gives us a deeper appreciation of the order of divine worship when drawing near. No longer do the priests go into the first Tabernacle continually, or the high priest into the second, alone and once in the year, but the people of God draw nigh once a week into the Holies, no veil separating; for our Lord Jesus Christ is the veil and through Him alone we enter. It is a privilege and challenge to offer service and worship well-pleasing unto our God.

Ross Green

From Birkenhead: God redeemed a people from Egypt and expressed to Moses the desire that they make Him a sanctuary that He might dwell among them (Ex. 25: 8). This which was erected on earth was a copy and shadow of the heavenly (Heb. 8: 5) and such was the pattern from which Moses worked. God's dwelling place was prepared from materials brought willingly by the people, and today God's dwelling is amongst those who themselves come willingly to Christ, God's Son, who is the chief corner stone.

Studying the detail of the Tabernacle we are able to learn much concerning God and His Son. The court was that which met the eye from the exterior. This was made of linen, which speaks of righteousness (Rev. 19: 8) and implies that we see the righteousness of God when we look at His dwelling. It is impossible for us to draw near to God pleading our own merit. The curtains, however, are of fine twined linen, blue, purple and scarlet, colours which speak of (a) the One who came from heaven, (b) the King and (c) the suffering One. Thus it is that we are reminded that it is only possible to enter into the presence of God because of the work of Christ (John 14: 6). Cherubim were woven into the Tabernacle curtains and the veil, reminding us that they are guardians of God's throne or presence. Acacia wood, rendered in the Septuagint, 'incorruptible wood', is used extensively in the construction of the Tabernacle, and in most cases reminds us of the perfect humanity of our Lord, which when overlaid with gold, speaking of deity, tells of the fact that Jesus was 'God and man in one combined' [See Editorial].

Pure gold was used for the lampstand and the mercy-

seat. The place of communion between God and His people is from above the mercy-seat which is upon the ark containing the law, which was made honourable by our High Priest. Silver was used for the sockets for the boards (Ex. 26: 19) and fillets for the pillars of the court. Silver has thoughts of its use as a payment for redemption, and thus of a realisation that we in God's house are resting on the work of our Redeemer. Brass has links with judgement (e. g. in the brazen serpent, Num. 21) reminding us that One must bear the judgement due to us before we could know acceptance in God's sight. Seal skins were used as a protective covering for the Tabernacle, and it is proposed that there is a way in which we can be exercised to play a part in the protection and preservation of God's house.

R. D. W., R. L. S.

COMMENTS.

1. **(Kilmarnock):** This is not the pattern of the Tabernacle, but that of the holy nation.
2. **(Lagos):** Although R. V. uses the word 'brass', the metal was in fact copper.
3. **(Leeds):** God was the designer of the Tabernacle, but not its builder. In all ages, God has given the pattern of His house, but men have been responsible for its building.
4. **(Galston):** Were not the linen curtains, strictly speaking, the Tabernacle, while the boards were for its support?
5. **(Liverpool):** Scripture does not say that the boards surrounded the Tabernacle, and there is no mention of any means of securing it inside the boards. It has been suggested that the 'boards' were not solid planks, but frames composed of two uprights (the word translated 'tenons') joined by cross rails. (See New Bible Dictionary, article Tabernacle'). If this were so, the tabernacle curtains would be visible from the inside even if they were thrown over the frames (see Ex. 40: 19).
6. **(Liverpool):** The suggestion that the goats' hair curtains were erected as a 'fly-sheet' over the Tabernacle, with some clearance in between, does not seem to fit the description. If the 'tent' were raised, there would no longer be one cubit left on each side (Ex. 26: 13) to hang over the sides of the Tabernacle, but some smaller amount. The tent would not then touch the floor, and the 'boards' of the Tabernacle, at least, would be left exposed. It requires

BIBLE STUDIES

some ingenuity to interpose the 'sealskins' between the Tabernacle and the tent, as there is nothing in Ex. 26: 14 to indicate that this might be the case; 'above' naturally refers to the preceding article. However, further comment from contributors would be interesting.

7. (Methil): The word translated 'badger' in A. V. and 'seal' in R. V. probably refers to a porpoise, in the opinion of modern scholars. The skins were valuable in Old Testament times, as is shown by their inclusion with embroidered work, fine linen and silk in Ezek. 16: 10.

8. (Trinidad): This parallel does not seem satisfactory. Those who entered into the Tabernacle went in as representatives of the people of God, in priestly service for them. We are not representatives either of believers as a whole or of people in general. *P. L. H.*

9. (Liverpool): The way of the Holies is now manifest because Christ has shown it to be Himself (Heb. 10: 19-22), and not because the house of God today is a people (see also the final paragraph of the Barrhead paper). *A. B. R.*

10. (Liverpool): This view of the Tabernacle and its coverings has frequently been proposed. We shall welcome further discussion. A point which weighs personally with me is that such detailed instruction is given about the sanctuary and furniture that it seems extraordinary if there was a whole range of 'supporting gear' (which would be needed to implement this alternative view) that is not described at all.

I would have a similar difficulty about the suggestion gleaned from the New Bible Dictionary in Comment 5—if there had been such a 'framework' I would have thought the detailed measurements would have been indicated. *G. P.*

11. (Macduff and Whitehills): See the penultimate, paragraph of the Barrhead paper for the suggested typology of the curtains.

12. (Macduff and Whitehills): The golden censer referred to in Heb. 9: 4 was, I think, the altar of incense, which was associated with the Holy of Holies, although it was positioned in the holy place (see Bible Studies Vol. 22, 1954, page 91). *J. K. D. J.*

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A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

EDITORIAL

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'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?
Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?'
(Is. 33: 14)

With arresting forcefulness Isaiah's questions focus attention on the kernel of this month's subject. For if men are to respond to the divine desire that they should make Him a sanctuary in which He may dwell among them, they must remain always aware that 'our God is a consuming fire'. The meticulous care with which God prescribed for Israel the means by which their service in association with His house could be acceptably rendered impresses the same truth. However, the ordinances of divine service under the Old Covenant made possible Israel's approach to God through the Aaronic priesthood, and contributors have helpfully examined the principles emerging from a study of some of these ordinances.

As for ourselves, we are blessed with a better covenant, deriving from a better sacrifice and yielding a better hope and better promises. Nevertheless, the basic principles of divine holiness remain, and still within New Covenant privilege, 'holiness becometh Thy house, O LORD, for evermore'.
G. P.

THE TABERNACLE—APPROACH TO GOD'S PRESENCE AND GIVING TO GOD.

From Galston: God appeared in the cloud upon the mercy-seat within the veil (Lev. 16: 2) and strict instructions were given to Aaron regarding his approach to the mercy-seat. Aaron, who was the high priest, remained in this office until his death, and only as high priest was he permitted to enter within the veil once a year. He must have with him blood not his own (Heb. 9: 25).

BIBLE STUDIES

His first duty was to present the bullock of the sin offering to make atonement for himself and his house. This was followed by the associated burnt offering. The goat which was for the Lord, previously chosen by casting lots, was then offered, followed by the associated burnt offering [Comment 1]. The blood of both animals of the sin offering had to be sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat seven times.

Aaron then had to present the live goat by laying his hands on its head and confessing over it the sins of the people. An appointed man then led the goat away into a solitary land and let it loose never to return. This is a true picture of 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us' (Ps. 103: 12). *D. Gillies.*

From Hamilton (Ontario): God's displeasure expressed in the summary judgement of death to Nadab and Abihu, would serve as a solemn warning, especially to Aaron the high priest. If God is to be sanctified in all those who draw nigh unto Him (Lev. 10: 3) then Aaron and his sons must now be cautious and sober and approach God's presence with reverence and godly fear.

God appeared in the cloud of incense upon the mercy-seat [Comment 2], revealing the truth perhaps that no man can look upon God and live (Ex. 33: 20).

The whole service of the material house was committed to God's anointed high priest alone who went in on behalf of God's people [Comment 3]. He alone took the censer full of live coals from the copper altar (which speaks of Calvary) and with his hands full of sweet incense beaten small brought it within the veil before the mercy-seat. Without the cross there can be no worship today.

Unlike the Lord Jesus who is sinless, Aaron had to take the blood of the slain bullock within the veil before the mercy-seat and sprinkle it seven times as a sin offering for himself and his household. Before entering, Aaron bathed; he was then clothed in the holy garments of linen which would speak of the purity and unsullied righteousness of our High Priest. When Aaron took off the garments of glory and beauty, we suggest it was because the plain white garments best became him on the solemn day of humiliation. This could typify the grace of our Lord Jesus laying aside the

glory He had in heaven. He who was rich became poor for us [Comment 4]. He came to earth, was clothed in human flesh, made atonement for the sin of the whole world and in a special sense for God's people (1 John 2: 2; John 1: 29). The atonement which the high priest made pertained only to the congregation of Israel but the work of Christ is so vast, perfect, and eternal, that there is now no annual remembrance of sin (Heb. 10: 10). C. *Ramage*, T. *Ramage*.

From Hamilton (Scotland): (i) *The wrong approach.* Notwithstanding their ancestry, training, and the revelation of God, Nadab and Abihu went astray in their approach to God, for they offered 'strange' fire before the Lord (Lev. 10: 1) and as a result of this 'there came forth fire from before the LORD' (Ex. 30: 9; Lev. 10: 2). They erred in three areas:

- (a) Their mind—they did not hearken to the voice of God (Ex. 30: 9).
- (b) Their members—they offered 'strange' fire (Num. 3: 4).
- (c) Their wills—they overstepped the divine will (Lev. 10: 1).

(ii) *The right approach* is the result of divine revelation, for the Lord clearly details the procedure involved in coming into His presence. The holiness and righteousness of God demand safeguards for those who approach (Heb. 12: 28, 29).

(Hi) *When to approach:*

The commandment was clear: 'not at all times' (Lev. 16: 2); and 'once in the year' (Ex. 30: 10, Lev. 16: 34).

(iv) *How to approach:*

Cleansed. Lev. 16: 4—'he shall bathe his flesh in water'.

Clothed: Lev. 16: 4—The unadorned simplicity of the holy linen coat, linen breeches, linen girdle and linen mitre must have spoken forcibly to Aaron as he took off his colourful garments of glory and beauty.

(v) *What to offer:*

(a) To cleanse the priests a young bullock was required for a sin-offering (cf. Lev. 16: 3, 6, 11, 14).

(b) To cleanse the people two goats were required (Lev. 16: 7).

(c) The cleansing of the sanctuary had to be by blood 'because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and

BIBLE STUDIES

because of their transgressions, **even all** their sins' (v. 16). After **the** solemn ritual of **the Day** of Atonement **how** wonderful it must **have** been for priests and people to know **that the** question of sins **had** been **dealt** with. How **much** more wonderful it is for **the** people of God today to know **that** their **Great High Priest** is without **flaw**; **that He is a Priest** for **ever after the** order of **Melchizedek**; **that the** blood of Jesus **has** cleansed **the true** tabernacle, **the** heavenly sanctuary, for **ever**; and **that there** is no more offering for sin.

M. Carruthers.

From Kilmarnock: Priestly service does not give licence for **the** appointed priest to do **as he pleases**, nor **has he** to **engage** in **the** priestly service **as if it were a ritual**. **The priest must be able** to diagnose **the** meaning of **his** service to God, and **be aware** of **all that takes place** in God's house. Aaron was instructed (Lev. 16) **as to the** appointed time **that he had to enter** into **the holy place**, **the** manner of his offering **and** his personal preparation. This **was such that** no defilement of any kind **was** allowed.

As Aaron entered before God for **the** people of **Israel**, so our Lord **Jesus Christ**, following His **death** and resurrection, entered into **the** presence of God to enable **us** to **be purged** from sin **and** approach God through Him. **Lev. 1-6** detailed to **the** Israelites **that**, as **the** chosen people, they **had the** right, **the** means and **the** substance to approach to God, **but** again pointed out **the** attention to **be** paid to **their** personal presentation to God.

Consideration of this **subject** therefore **teaches us**:

(a) The Tabernacle **was the only place** to worship God.

(b) **That** only certain persons **had a right** to enter **the** holy of holies.

(c) **That the offerer was** to bring his gift personally.

(d) The manner of our approach **at the** Remembrance **is** not to **address** God simply **as Father**, **but as the God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ [since **the** occasion involves our position before God **as a** worshipping people, **and** not simply our relationship **as** children to their **Father—Eds.].**

From Kingston-on-Thames: 'Every high priest, being **taken** from among men, is appointed for men in **things** pertaining to God, **that he** may offer both gifts **and sacrifices** for sins'

(Heb. 5: 1). Although all the people of Israel were involved in repentance on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16: 29, 30), entry to God's presence was limited to a single man, the high priest, once in the year. This had to be preceded by his washing and donning special clothes. He, as an appointed representative, had first to offer a sacrifice for his own sins and take the blood into the most holy place. He had to hide the mercy-seat with a cloud of incense as soon as he entered the divine presence, and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice in front of the ark before he could offer a sacrifice for the sins of the rest of the people. In contrast Christ, the 'High Priest of the good things to come' (Heb. 9: 11), having offered the one sacrifice of Himself, is now seated on the right hand of God (Heb. 8: 1).

The high priest had to make atonement for the holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar with the blood of the animals sacrificed for his own and the people's sins. This purification by blood (Heb. 9: 22) was necessitated by the contamination of the Tabernacle due to its presence among the Israelites (Lev. 16: 16).

In addition to the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement other offerings were brought for sins (Lev. chaps. 4-6). In each case the priest made atonement for the sins of the giver by offering the sacrifice to God (e. g., Lev. 4: 20). However, the burnt offering was 'accepted for him to make atonement for him' (Lev. 1: 4) before it was killed but this was in anticipation of its blood being shed. The sacrifices of Lev. 1-3 were acceptable as a 'sweet savour unto the Lord' (e. g., Lev. 1: 9, 2: 2; 3: 5) because of the efficacy of the atonement made by the priests through the sin and guilt offerings (Lev. 4: 20 *et al*), and annually by the high-priest on the Day of Atonement [Comment 5].

This principle is apparent in Lev. 5: 7-10 where a first bird was killed as a sin offering, and the second offered for a burnt offering. It is also shown by the actions of the high priest on the Day of Atonement when, having made atonement by the blood of the sin offerings he left the holy place, and sacrificed burnt offerings for himself and for the people (Lev. 16: 24).

In the same way, because of Christ's atoning death we are able to offer to God acceptable sacrifices of praise (Heb. 13: 15).

G. Riley.

BIBLE STUDIES

From Lagos: Aaron needed the bullock of the sin offering to make atonement for himself and also for his house. For his acceptance in the sacred presence of God, a ram for a burnt offering was additionally required. With the blood of the bullock and the sweet incense and coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, Aaron entered into the divine presence within the veil (Lev. 16: 11-13); his attire for that occasion was as God commanded him (Lev. 16: 4).

The tenth day of the seventh month was the Day of Atonement for all Israel, to cleanse them from all sins that they might be clean before the Lord (Lev. 16: 29-30). Atonement was made for the holy sanctuary, for the tent of meeting, the altar, the priests and for all people of the assembly (Lev. 16: 33). Israel would need to prepare for this sabbath of solemn rest when they would afflict their souls (v. 31).

The New Testament pattern has answering principles. 'For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us' (Heb. 9: 24). 'He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh' (Heb. 10: 20). 'By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified'; and 'now once at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 10: 14; 9: 26). In deeper reverence, therefore, the redeemed covenanted people of God in the present dispensation should draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith to the Holy Place above to fill the hands of the Great High Priest of our confession, even Jesus (Heb. 10: 19-22). S. Coker, E. Bassey.

From Leeds: God's call (Lev. 1: 1) is to His gathered out and gathered together people, to draw near and worship Him in the way which He reveals. What God commanded, God expected. Everything associated with the Tabernacle (the dwelling place of God) was explicitly detailed. The way and the manner of the approach of His people in worship were clearly laid down. There were no margins for error.

When the people approached God, bringing their offerings in the prescribed manner, people or priests had to identify themselves with their offerings. The hand was placed upon it (1: 4). The approach was made in three stages:

- (1) The gate, through which the people passed, bring-

- ing their offerings to the north side of the altar (Lev. 1: 10, 11).
- (2) The door of the Tabernacle (tent of meeting) through which the priests came to 'the within' of the Tabernacle, the holy place (Heb. 9: 6).
 - (3) The veil, through which the high priest alone went, once in the year, on the Day of Atonement, into the most holy place where God dwelt (Lev. 16: 2; Heb. 9: 7).

Christ is ever the Way to God, both for the sinner (John 14: 6) and for the people of God (Heb. 10: 19-22).

H. R. Dodge.

From Liverpool: The Tabernacle was not only to be God's dwelling place, but also the place where He could be approached on the basis of blood. The approach into 'the holy place within the veil' (Lev. 16) was preceded by meticulous preparation on the part of the high priest.

Under the old economy it was only the high priest who entered into the holy place as the representative of the people. Under the new dispensation Christ is the High Priest in the greater and more perfect Tabernacle by virtue of His own blood (Heb. 9: 7-28), so that God's people are exhorted to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus as the Great Priest over the house of God. To the extent that all God's people now enter the Holy Place the type fails, but in all else it follows through even to the washing of the body (Heb. 10: 19-22) [Comment 6].

Although under the old dispensation individuals were not able to enter the holy place there was ample provision for the offering of gifts and sacrifices by the exercised person (Lev. 1-6). The burnt offering is detailed in chap. 1 and in view of the fact that it is given first we wondered if it was the most important. Certainly it was important, as we are told that it was to burn continually [Comment 7]. It speaks of the worth of the Lord Jesus to God as a sweet savour and of our appreciation of this. The meal-offering, peace offering, sin offerings and guilt offerings follow, and all speak of Christ and some aspect of His life, death and resurrection.

Today, as individuals, God's people bring their sacrifices to the Holy Place and unitedly offer them through their High Priest to God. Blood sacrifices are no longer required, but they bring a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips which is the

BIBLE STUDIES

confession to His name (**Heb. 13: 15** and **1 Pet. 2: 5**).

D. J. W., M. S. E.

From Melbourne: In the first six chapters of Leviticus we find details of the provision made for Israel's approach to God; while in chapter 16 we find details of their most solemn annual experience—the Day of Atonement. In chapters 1-3 we have the 'sweet savour' offerings associated with their worship, which were designed to enable them to express the deepest feelings of their hearts towards Him. We should note that these are recorded first, as being the highest form of offering, but they depended upon the offerings of chapters 4-6 to make them effective, as in every case the basis of approach to Jevovah by a sinful and failing people depended upon appreciation of the meaning of the sacrifices for sin.

In every part of the sweet savour offerings, God saw beyond the offering to the One whom it prefigured. In the burnt offering He saw the offering up of Christ to Himself in complete submission to His will. In the meal offering was seen the True Bread of God which was to come down from heaven, and be anointed with the Holy Spirit. His life on earth was a continual sweet savour to God; it was completely devoid of sin and corruption.

In the sin offering provision was made for cleansing from indwelling sin. Whether in the case of a priest, the whole congregation, a ruler or one of the common people, unwitting sin, when it came to their knowledge, must be dealt with through confession and sacrifice; otherwise burnt and peace offerings would be unacceptable. Confession and identification with the victim were seen in the laying of hands upon the head of the victim by the offerer.

We understand that trespass is an infringement on the rights or claims of another, whether God or man, and the offering for such must not be made until there has been restitution made to the one who has been wronged. This offering atoned for only one offence. The principle in both sin and trespass offerings was that apart from true repentance there was no forgiveness.

The tenth day of the seventh month was to be a day of affliction of soul in which no work was to be done. This was to be a day of bringing to remembrance of sin, even though atonement had been made by the stipulated sacrifices of Leviticus 4-6 [Comment 8]. But on this day the high priest

entered the holiest of all.

The **details** recorded in **these** portions, a summary of sacrifice and offering, **were** intended to **impress** upon **Israel** the **terrible** holiness of Jehovah, the heinousness of **sin**, and the way appointed whereby they could approach **Him** as worshippers **with their** voluntary offerings. **T. W. F.**

From **Methil**: **It was** only a people **redeemed**, sanctified, and brought into covenant relationship **with** God in a manner **which was** typical of the blood of the Lord Jesus, **shed** (**Mark 14: 25**) and sprinkled (**1 Pet. 1: 2**), **that was prepared** for approach to God. **Since** they **were still** sinners, both as **individuals** and as a people, **this** approach could only be representatively through **their high priest**, Aaron, who **had** to offer for **His** own **sins** and for **the sins** of the people, **sacrifices which** could not **take** away sins for ever. Nor could he continue in God's **presence** by reason of death. **But Christ**, by His one offering, **made it** possible for **all** who **believe** on **Him** to **be justified** once for **all**, and to **be** sanctified once for **all** (**Heb. 10: 14; 1 Cor. 1: 30**).

The instructions for the building of the **Tabernacle** illustrate God's coming out to **men** in the revelation of **Himself**, that men may come in to **Him** and worship and **serve Him** in a spiritually intelligent **manner**.

What we have in the early chapters of **Leviticus** is first of **all** an individual coming **with his gift** to God. **He** may be **rich**; he may be **poor**; **but he** brings according to **what he can** afford (**2 Cor. 8: 12**). **We** may be **rich** in our understanding and appreciation of **the** Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. God **will accept** our worship, however **meagre**, if **given** out of our heart's affections, and our **Great High Priest** **makes up** for our shortcomings. However, **this** does not **relieve** us from **the** responsibility of **seeking** to become, by **the** study of God's word, spiritually **mature**, and having our affections developed. **A McIlree (Snr.)**

From **St. Helens**: Aaron **was** instructed through Moses, his brother, not to **assume that he had unlimited access** into 'the holy **place** within the **veil**, before the **mercy-seat** which is upon the **ark**'. **He was** forcefully reminded of the **death** of his two sons resulting from **their uninvited** approach before the Lord. **Specific times were laid down and great**

BIBLE STUDIES

emphasis was placed on Aaron's self-preparation before he was allowed to approach the Lord's presence. Similarly it behoves us to recognise the importance of preparation before we approach the presence of God on the specified day, to remember the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and to worship (Heb. 10: 22).

Due to the sinful nature of Aaron (Lev. 16: 6) it was necessary first of all to offer a bullock as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering for himself and his house before he was permitted to present the two he-goats and the ram on behalf of the sins of the congregation of the children of Israel [see Comment 1].

In Lev. 16: 19 we see that the blood of the bullock was sprinkled on the altar seven times, indicating perfection, yet the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was shed only once and 'cleanseth us from all sin'. *K. J. Gutteridge.*

From **Aberdeen**: We note the constant demands of God, that if a man would bring an offering, it must be brought to a particular place, namely the door of the Tabernacle, and at all times it had to be without blemish. Only by observing these conditions would his sacrifice be acceptable. The approach to God's presence was not solely dependent on the obedience of the people but also on the holiness and cleanness of Aaron, the priests and even the Tabernacle. Thus we see (Lev. 16) the introduction of the Day of Atonement, when Aaron was instructed to wash his flesh and put on the holy garments and take his bullock and slay it for a sin offering for himself and his house, and only after offering for his own sin could he enter within the veil and sprinkle the blood seven times upon and before the mercy-seat. This occasion is not pointing to any ordinance for us to keep today, for Christ has entered into the Holies in heaven once and for all after bearing the sin of the whole world. He intercedes and offers up continually to God the sweet savour of His people's offerings.

The burnt offering (Lev. 1) brings before us the thought of Christ offering Himself without spot to God as a voluntary sacrifice—patient, obedient, innocent, yet shedding His blood.

The meal offering (Lev. 2) depicts the richness and perfections of the life of Christ. The fragrance of His character

rises **up** before God as a sweet smelling savour, as **He** was tested in every point as if by fire.

Col. 1: **20-21** and Eph. 2: **15-17** would help us to understand the type shown forth in the peace offering, for it is only at the cross of Christ **where** His blood was **shed that** God and man can meet in perfect peace and have communion and fellowship together.

The sin offering gives us a different view of the person of Christ; Himself holy and spotless, yet laden with our sin on Calvary (1 Pet. 2: 24). Christ's death is brought before us as the One who suffered outside the camp that He might sanctify His people before their God. The trespass offering is needed where the believer, through not cleaving closely to his God, wanders into wrong ways and oversteps the boundaries of God's will. There is a way back to God in the pure ram and the confession of the repentant man.

From Barrhead: Leviticus 16 underlines the seriousness with which God regards the matter of our approach unto Him. The basis of our approach is the fact that sin must be dealt with before we approach, but personal cleanliness is also important. The main application of Leviticus 16 is that Christ has made atonement for the people of God. This is the basis of our serving God although in our case it is a spiritual service (Heb. 9: 14). The people of God today draw near through the veil which is the flesh of Christ (Heb. **10: 20**). But the Lord Jesus, our High Priest in God's presence, must have something to offer and what He offers He obtains from the people of God (Heb. 8: 3). Our responsibility is to offer service which is well-pleasing to God and to do it with a deep sense of reverence and awe (Heb. 12: 28). In the Old Testament individuals in the nation brought their sacrifices, but it was only the priest who was allowed to offer these. In contrast, today, every person among the people of God is a priest (1 Pet. 2) and we draw near continually, that is week by week we judge, and each may offer through our Great Priest.

There are two kinds of offerings in Hebrews 5: sacrifices for sin and gifts. Today we do not offer a sin offering [Comment 9]. In relation to **the** burnt offering there was provision for wealth and poverty and it is certain that the offerer was expected to bring the best he could afford. Only the best in

BIBLE STUDIES

our lives is worthy of God. The meal offering brings before us the preparation that was necessary before the offering came to the altar; we considered the part that women may have had in the preparation.

D. J. Kerr.

From Birkenhead: On the Day of Atonement all the sins of the previous year were dealt with. The events of the day depict our present position and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ our High Priest (Heb. 9: 7; Heb. 10). The work of Christ in offering Himself is once for all (Heb. 9: 26-28; 10: 10). Furthermore, He entered into the Holy Place once for all (Heb. 9: 12) and, in heaven our High Priest appears before the face of God for us (Heb. 9: 24). Because the way into God's presence is so opened up for us, and there is One appearing for us, we are exhorted to draw near with boldness to offer up a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips (Heb. 13: 15).

Our offering to God is helped considerably as we are able to obtain a comprehensive view of the scope of the death of Christ as portrayed in the five offerings (Lev. 1-6). From the human standpoint there must firstly be an appreciation that sin is a barrier between us and God. The blood of the sin offering must be sprinkled for cleansing. The offerer, placing his hands on the offering, tells of the transfer of sin taking place—Christ was 'made to be sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 5: 21). The sin offering was burnt outside the camp, reminding us of Christ who suffered without the gate (Heb. 13: 12). In the matter of trespass, restitution must take place and this is confirmed by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5: 23-25). The above two offerings emphasize that the hindrance to our approach must be dealt with. The other three offerings were brought of the offerer's freewill.

Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross (Col. 1: 20). On this basis the worshipper enjoys Christ in communion with God knowing that reconciliation has taken place. The fine flour of the meal offering reminds of the Man Christ Jesus and the fact that there was nothing to offend in His life. He was without sin. The burnt offering reminds us that Christ offered Himself without blemish unto God (Heb. 9: 14).

In certain offerings there were different grades of animal stipulated for the varying grades of offerer; a precious reminder that with our growing appreciation of Christ so the

quality of our offering should in consequence increase.

R. D. Williams.

From **Derby**: The whole system of sacrificial offerings to God was appointed because a holy God cannot have sin in His presence. Sin must be adequately atoned for in God's own appointed way. The high priest was firstly to bring a young bullock (possibly a bull) for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. These set forth the Lord Jesus Christ in type as first offering Himself for our sins and then offering Himself without spot or blemish unto God.

The burnt offering was never to be eaten, neither was the sin offering whose blood was brought into the holy place. After removal of certain parts the rest of the sin offering was carried outside the camp, reminding us of Him who suffered outside the city wall. There are certain features mentioned in chapter 6 which do not appear in chapter 16, for example the fire on the altar was to be kept burning continually, none of the sin offering whose blood was brought into the holy place was to be eaten, but a sin offering whose blood was not brought into the holy place was to be eaten by the priest who offered it.

Atonement needed to be made for the holy place, the altar, and the tent of meeting; Aaron presented the live goat, which was for Azazel (dismissal). 'And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel... and shall send him away by the hand of a man... into the wilderness' (Lev. 16: 21). This depicts the truth that 'as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us' (Ps. 103: 12). *A. G. Willis, S. R. W.*

COMMENTS

1. (Galston): It seems clear from Lev. 16: 24 that the burnt offerings for Aaron and the people were not offered until the high priest had completed his work in the most holy place, put off the linen garments, bathed his flesh in a holy place, and put on his normal garments of glory and beauty.

2. (**Hamilton—Ontario**): Admittedly it is not easy to envisage from details given just how the Lord appeared 'in the cloud upon the mercy-seat'. But was not this associated with Ex. 40: 34 when the cloud covered the tent of meeting

BIBLE STUDIES

and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle? Would there not be a continuing manifestation of this glory in the cloud upon the mercy-seat? If so, the incense cloud from Aaron's censer would be to screen him from this glory, 'that he die not'

3. (**Hamilton—Ontario**): There were, of course, others involved in the service of the Tabernacle (e. g. priests and Levites), but the point being made is a vital one—that without the high priest's annual entrance into the most holy place on the Day of Atonement, there could have been no acceptable continuance of divine service.

4. (**Hamilton—Ontario**): It is difficult to reconcile with the Day of Atonement a type of the Lord Jesus laying aside His glory. For Aaron's high priestly service illustrates, by comparison and contrast, the Lord's ministry on behalf of God's people in the heavenly sanctuary. The Lord's high priestly service did not begin until after His ascension, and there could be no subsequent laying aside of His glory. Would not the type rather point to the absolute purity and holiness of the One who 'bears the iniquity of the holy things' (cf. Ex. 28:38)?

5. (**Kingston-on-Thames**): The point is well made that the sweet savour offerings were acceptable before God on the assumption that the offerer's sins and trespasses had already been dealt with as appropriate by other offerings. Our understanding of Lev. 1: 4 should harmonise with this. The offerer was already accepted as to guilt before God on the basis of other sacrifices. Now he brought his gift of a burnt offering, wholly for God, an act of spiritual worship. The root meaning of *kaphar* (to make atonement) is 'to cover'. The burnt offering, eloquent to God of the perfect Person and work of His Son, made atonement for the offerer in the sense that spiritual service was made acceptable. Human limitations were 'covered' in the divine presence by the offering which prefigured the yielding of Christ utterly to the will of God in His death on Calvary.

6. (**Liverpool**): (i) It will be appreciated that Old Testament types teach both by comparison and contrast. So it is not so much a matter of the type 'failing' as of our deducing contrasts which further enhance the glory of Christ.

G. P.

(ii) I view Aaron's entry into the holy place on the Day of Atonement as prefiguring the entry of Christ, in resurrection, into the heavenly sanctuary (see Heb. 8: 1-2). Our High Priest has not only entered in to cleanse, but has made it possible for the people of God to enter in also to worship in spirit and truth (John 4: 24). *J. K. D. J.*

7. **(Liverpool):** Each offering had its own importance, but the burnt offering was unique in character, expressing the Godward aspect of Christ's sacrifice, and so it assumes special importance as a result.

8. **(Melbourne):** The reverse order places this in truer perspective! For the annual 'ceremony' on the Day of Atonement was necessary as the 'framework' within which the sacrifices could continue acceptably to be offered.

9. **(Barrhead):** We still need, of course, the sin offering aspect of Christ's sacrifice, but it is eternal in its efficacy.

G. P.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

We are indebted to **Mr. A. H. Jones** (Barry) for answers to two questions from **Melbourne**.

1. In connection with the sin offering, we note what have been called the 'outer' and the 'inner' sin offerings, depending on whether the blood was applied to the horns of the altar of burnt offering or the altar of incense.

Please comment on these differences and their significance.

There are several differences between what our friends describe as 'outer' and 'inner' sin offerings.

The 'outer' were for individuals such as one of the rulers or one of the common people. The 'inner' were for (a) the Anointed (i. e., High) Priest (b) the whole congregation of Israel (c) the sin offerings of the Day of Atonement.

The 'outer', for individuals, were offered at the altar and the fat was burnt, but the carcass was eaten by 'every male among the priests'—it was most holy. The 'inner' were also offered at the altar and the fat burnt on the altar, but afterwards the carcass was burnt in a clean place without the camp.

The 'outer' were offered by a priest, but the 'inner' only by the High Priest.

BIBLE STUDIES

Blood from the 'outer' was placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; but blood from the 'inner' was placed on the horns of the altar of incense, and also sprinkled seven times before the veil of the sanctuary. These distinctions emphasize the importance of collective responsibility. Collective failure seriously affects the worship of God. An appreciation of the distinction between these two classes of offerings helps to an understanding of the Hebrew Epistle. The Lord Jesus is there brought before us as the High Priest who is able to make propitiation for the sins of the people. From the personal offerings we learn the divine principles that govern our fellowship with God, so clearly seen in John's first Epistle.

2. The sacrifice for the trespass offering was a ram, and for this animal no alternative was provided. Please comment on this.

When a man sinned, he had 'missed the mark'. God provided forgiveness when an offering 'according to his means' was offered. A man who trespassed went over the mark and did some damage. There are two key words in connection with the trespass offering—*estimation* and *restitution*. When the man presented himself for the forgiveness the priest estimated the damage and a ram proportionate to the priest's estimation had to be brought. Thus while there was no alternative to the ram, the rams might vary much in value according to the trespass. It was not to be estimated according to the man's means as in the case of the sin offering. Moreover the offerer had also to make restitution. This had to be made in full and a fifth part added. This principle of restitution is demonstrated very clearly in Ex. 21 and 22. The remark of David to Nathan, 'He shall restore the lamb fourfold', and the response of Zacchaeus, 'I restore fourfold', help to demonstrate the principle. If we trespass then let us be willing to make restitution. If we are trespassed against we always have the liberty to forego restitution.

BIBLE STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

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In the wilderness the tight encampment made it easy for Israel to see that the Tabernacle and its service were central to their lives, and in Deut. 12 Moses made it clear that in the wider spread of the tribes throughout Canaan they must still observe the principle of one place and altar for divine service. The message comes down through the ages and is confirmed through New Testament scriptures to us that God's people must worship at the 'Place of the Name'—not in every place. It is plainly the high duty of those who would please God to serve with the people of God in the way and place He commands.

Shiloh (tranquil) would appear from later events to have been only a temporary resting place for the Tabernacle. In Deut. 12: 10, 11 it was promised that God would give 'rest from all your enemies round about so that ye dwell in safety ... the place which the LORD your God shall choose...' would be shown, but it was not till David's reign that they truly had rest and Jerusalem was chosen. The picture in Judges 2 is nations as 'thorns in your sides', Israel 'delivered ... into the hands of spoilers', 'sold ... into the hands of their enemies', God did not drive out the nations. But in 1 Kings 5: 4 we read David's words 'But now the LORD my God hath given me rest (same as in Deut. 12: 10) on every side; there is neither adversary, nor evil occurrent'. And it has taken our Saviour to create by victory the circumstances which make it possible for us to worship in the way He has shown us.

A. B. R.

THE HOUSE IN SHILOH—THE PLACE OF THE NAME; THE CAPTURE OF THE ARK

From Edinburgh: Deut. 12: Monuments of idolatry are to be destroyed. The place of God's service is to be kept. Blood is forbidden. Holy things must be eaten in the holy place. The Levite is not to be forsaken. Idolatry is not to be enquired after.

BIBLE STUDIES

Ex. 34: 13 'Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves, for the Lord is a jealous God'.

Gen. 9: 4 'Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat'.

1 Sam. 1: 24 Hannah took Samuel after he was weaned to the House of the Lord in Shiloh. She brought her offering, because of her vow and the Lord's answer to her prayer.

Lev. 18: 3 Israel were a holy nation and were to be kept separate from all the ordinances of the peoples they came into contact with from Egypt to Canaan. *E. Moncur*

From Galston: Deut. 12 emphasises that God must be worshipped and served by His people in the way and place appointed by Him and in no other way or place. This is clear from vv. 2-3, 'Ye shall surely destroy all the places, wherein the nations... served their gods... and ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Asherim with fire... ye shall destroy their name out of that place' (i. e. every visible reminder of the worship carried on in those places was to be destroyed). Israel was to worship in 'the place which the Lord your God shall choose'. This is emphasised six times over in this chapter (vv. 5, 11, 14, 18, 21 and 26).

Worship at the place of the Name is associated with eating and rejoicing. In the peace offering they enjoyed the blessing of giving to God, they enjoyed (no doubt often dimly apprehended) the blessing of being partakers with God, and they enjoyed communion with God. It was a time to rejoice before the **LORD**. How **great** then was the sin of Hophni and Phinehas who caused men to 'abhor the offering of the LORD'. How pregnant with meaning is 1 Sam. 1: 3, 'And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests unto the LORD, were there'. No wonder godly Hannah vowed to give the son she asked for to the Lord all the days of his life.

Samuel was not a Levite but an Ephraimite (1 Sam. 1: 1) and was not entitled to minister in the Tabernacle before the Lord [Comment 1], but we see in this another illustration of the meaning of 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice' (Hosea 6: 6) in addition to those the Lord gave in Mat. 12. The men with the birthright to serve as priests had sold it for the pleasures of sin. God needed a man to attend to certain services in the Tabernacle and He used Samuel. God was going to raise up a faithful priest (not Samuel but Zadok).

Presumably Samuel did not serve as priest (since he was not a descendant of Aaron) but as a servant of Eli the priest, i. e. Eli gave the instructions and was responsible for all that was done.

John H. Johnson

From Hamilton (Ontario): The Place of the Name was a subject dear to the heart of God. It is mentioned six times in Deut. 12. Not only was it a gathering place for God's people and a place where God's will could be carried out; it was also the place where God could 'put His Name' and best of all it was the place where the ark of the testimony could rest. This means that the place would be honoured with God's presence. In the words of Ex. 25: 22, 'There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee'. It is a profound thought that the God of Heaven would deign to dwell with men on earth.

The designated place in Israel was not a place of sadness but of joy. In Deut. 12: 18 the tithe of the harvest was to be eaten in 'the Place of the Name', and it was said 'Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God'. Today as we enter in to worship in His presence, while there is an element of sadness there is also much rejoicing as we consider the victory of Calvary and its associated blessings.

The House in Shiloh. Apart from Jacob's prophecy in Gen. 49, the first mention of Shiloh is in Josh. 18: 1. Here we read, 'The whole congregation... set up the Tabernacle'. Shiloh means 'rest'. The people of God were together; they were in the land and God seemed to honour their decision although we know that the place of His final choice was Jerusalem. We wondered why they did not set up the Tabernacle at Jerusalem which means 'peace'. Was it because all the enemies were not conquered? We read in Josh. 15 that the children of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem [Comment 2].

Shiloh was the centre of gathering in Josh. 21 when the inheritance of the Levites was arranged by Joshua and the priest. It is also noted in Judg. 21: 19 that the feast of the Lord was held yearly in Shiloh [Comment 3]. However, when we come to 1 Sam. 1 the state of God's house is very sad. Eli the judge and priest was not spiritually strong, and finally the ark was taken and the glory had departed from Israel. The bright spot in this scene was the woman of vision,

BIBLE STUDIES

Hannah, who offered her son to the Lord. It was in Shiloh that Hannah prayed for a son. After he was born and offered to the Lord, it was in Shiloh that the Lord called him and gave him the prophetic word, and it was in Shiloh that the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel by the word of the Lord (1 Sam. 3: 21).

Central to all that we have said is the ark of the covenant. The ark rightfully belonged in the house of God, and when it was taken from its place, things started to go wrong. The Philistines were punished. They sent it back to Israel and when the men of Beth-shemesh looked into it, 50, 070 were slain. The severity of the punishment emphasizes the solemnity of disobeying the word of God. *E. Nash, N. Mackay*

From Hamilton (Scotland): In the first few chapters of 1 Samuel we have various Hebrew words used by God the Spirit to describe the place where the people of God came to worship and to offer sacrifices (1 Sam. 1: 3).

(1) In 1 Sam. 1: 7; 1: 24; 3: 15 we have reference to 'the house of the Lord'; the Hebrew word underlying 'house' is *bayith*, which is a general word for house. It has a great variety of applications, as can be seen in any concordance. But the point in the above references is that it is the 'house of Jehovah'; similarly in Jer. 7: 14 'the house which is called by My Name'.

(2) In 1 Sam. 2: 22 we have the words 'tent of meeting' to describe the Place of the Name. The Hebrew word here is '*ohel*' and another scripture which links '*ohel*' with Shiloh is Josh. 18: 1, 'And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there': cf. Josh. 19: 51. In this word '*ohel*' and its R. V. translation 'tent of meeting' we have very clearly expressed not 'possession' as in '*bayith*' but the link with their history, the Tabernacle in the wilderness which spoke to the children of Israel of God dwelling in their midst, the point of emphasis being in the words tent *of meeting*.

(3) In 1 Sam. 1: 9 we have the first mention of the word '*hekal*' which is translated temple and is found in 1 Sam. 3: 3 'In the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was'. According to Strong's concordance this term indicates a large public building such as palace or temple; cf. 1 Kings 21: 1; 2 Kings 20: 18; also 1 Kings 6: 3, 5, 17, 33.

(4) The last term is found in Ps. 78: 60 'So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh'. The word here is '*mishkan*' which simply means 'a residence', and applied specifically to the Tabernacle (cf. Ex. 26: 1, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18).

In Ps. 65: 4 we have two of the above terms used in one verse. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts' (Heb. '*chatser*'—a yard, as enclosed): 'we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house (Heb. '*bayith*') the holy place of Thy temple' (Heb. '*hekal*'). *Matthew Carruthers*

From Hayes:

The Commandment concerning the place

- (a) Israel was to pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land (Deut. 11: 31; 26: 2)—the place was in the land of possession.
- (b) It was to be a place chosen by God (Deut. 15: 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26).
- (c) It would be out of all the tribes (12: 5); in fact in one of the tribes (12: 14).
- (d) In that specific place God would place (cause... to dwell) His Name (12: 5, 11, 21).
- (e) The place would be God's habitation (12: 5).
- (f) There would be only one place (12: 13).

Shiloh was the first place in the land where God chose to cause His Name to dwell (Jer. 7: 12; Josh. 18: 1). Shiloh (place of rest) was north of Beth-el in the land of Ephraim (Judg. 21: 19).

All the congregation knew and accepted that this was the place of God's choice, so there they set up the tent of meeting. Ephraim had been chosen because 'the birthright was Joseph's' (see 1 Chron. 5: 1, 2; Gen. 48) and with the birthright went the responsibility for the house of God (see Ps. 78: 60, 67, 68).

Israel, under Joshua, appreciated the vital truth that there should be one Place, one Tabernacle, one Altar of the Lord (Josh. 22: 19; 24: 31), and Shiloh was at that time the appointed place.

'All the time that the house of God was in Shiloh' (Judg. 18: 31) was approximately 300 years (c. 1444-c. 1141 BC. Newberry). [Comment 4]. During this period the ark of the Covenant was removed from Shiloh to Beth-el (Judg. 20: 27)

BIBLE STUDIES

and then returned to Shiloh. **The** reason for this does not appear to be given. Elkanah was one of the few who continued to go up from year to year to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice (1 Sam. 1: 3) [Comment 6].

The ark with the mercy-seat was the token of God's presence (see Ex. 25: 22). As such when it was placed or handled incorrectly there was due judgement meted out. The fear of the token of God's presence and the judgement it brought was certainly seen among the Philistines. The presence of God therefore is to be revered. *D. Parker*

From Kilmarnock: When Israel entered into the land of their inheritance, the place of worship was first set up in Shiloh—'My place which was in Shiloh, where I caused My Name to dwell at first' (Jer. 7: 12). Here the provisions of Deut. 12 could operate. They were given explicit instructions as to the statutes and judgements which they would observe only when they were in the land which the Lord the God of their fathers had given them to possess, all the days that they would live upon the earth (Deut. 12: 1). There was no hint of compromise in relation to the other nations' gods, because they were to 'destroy all the places' (Deut. 12: 2)—'and ye shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire' (Deut 12: 3).

Under no circumstances would God allow a mixture of worship to take place in 'the place of the Name'; however, in His house they were to bring all that God commanded of them, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices, their tithes and the heave offering of their hand and all their choice vows and they were to rejoice before the Lord their God (Deut. 12: 11, 12).

Just as there was a place of the Name in the Old Testament days, so there is a place answering to God's divine statutes and judgements in the New Testament dispensation. In Israel's day it was a material house, whereas today it is a spiritual house wherein God's spiritual commands are carried out.

We read in 1 Sam. 3: 21, 'and the Lord appeared again in Shiloh'. This time He revealed Himself to Samuel and what He said to him brought sadness to his heart. There had been a great drifting away from true worship in God's House, so much so that we read in 1 Sam. 2: 17, 'and the sin of the

young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord', and so **God** told Samuel that Eli's family would be punished because of **their** false teaching and wayward ways. **Therefore because God** knew the condition of His **people He** could **predict** to Samuel, 'and thou shalt behold **the** affliction of My habitation in all the wealth which God shall give Israel' (1 Sam. 2: 32).

J. Cranson, I. Rankine

From Kingston-on-Thames: Although full detail is not given of the course of the ark's journey, it is clear that after the initial resting at Shiloh it was subsequently moved to Beth-el. However by the days of Eli it was firmly established within some semi-permanent structure (Josh. 18: 1; 1 Sam. 1: 3, 9). (Would not this be the Tabernacle?—*Eds.*). However, there is no record in Scripture **of** any design for the building which housed the ark of God (1 Sam. 3: 3) and it seems clear that there was no permanent house (2 Sam. 7: 6). We are not told when Shiloh was given as the place of the Name, but it was at some time given to Joshua (Josh. 18: 1). And from Jer. 7: 12 it is shown that Shiloh was indeed the place of God's choosing.

Deut. 12: 5 shows that one place was chosen by the Lord God to which He put His Name (16: 2; 26: 2). In Deut. 12 God tells His people that they were not to worship the gods of the land. They were to worship God in the one way that He prescribed, and in the one place of the Name. Hence there is prohibition against tampering with His commandments (Deut. 12: 32) to accommodate human weakness.

Israel resorted to taking the ark into battle, rather than enquiring of the Lord at the place of the Name. So the capture of the ark by the Philistines meant the Lord had left the ark (1 Sam. 4: 22).

The ark was returned to Israel on a new cart which the Philistines had made; but it was the Levites (1 Sam. 6: 15) who correctly took down the ark of the Lord (2 Sam. 6: 3-8). David was to make the same mistake as the Philistines, but unlike them he knew the will of God and should have obeyed it.

G. J. Ackers

From Lagos: Moses received the statutes and the judgments which underlined God's sovereign right to choose the place of His rest among Israel. The people in all their tribes

BIBLE STUDIES

were to acknowledge the place of God's choice and come there to worship and to serve the Lord their God (Deut. 12: 5, 13, 14). In the days of Joshua when Israel possessed the land of the covenant (Gen. 15: 18-21), Shiloh was the place of the Tent (Josh. 18: 1). The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord, that He had wrought for Israel' (Judg. 2: 7).

In the high-priesthood of Eli, God-fearing Israelites like Elkanah and Hannah who discerned the place of the Name, came year by year to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh (1 Sam. 1: 3, 21, 24-28), but there were also those who rejected the counsel of God and affronted the Lord by building high places and graven images (Ps. 78: 56-58). The sins of Hophni and Phinehas found tolerance with Eli and discouraged the God-fearing from coming to the house of God in Shiloh (1 Sam. 2: 17). For want of teaching priests 'the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no open vision' (1 Sam. 3: 1 RVM), but The LORD appeared again in Shiloh... the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD' (1 Sam. 3: 21). The word of the LORD in every generation is the means of divine revelation to faith. 'Samuel grew... and did let none of His words fall to the ground' (1 Sam. 3: 19; John 7: 16-17).

'Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint' (Prov. 29: 18). They removed the ark from the house in Shiloh and brought it to the battlefield and in the judgement of the Lord the men died and the Lord delivered His strength into captivity (Ps. 78: 61). And thus the Glory departed from Shiloh; God forsook the Tabernacle of Shiloh. He set aside the tribe of Ephraim (Ps. 78: 55-67).

'And what place shall be My rest?' (Is. 66: 1). Such was the heart-searching question which found no answer in the intervening barren years until the revival in the days of David the son of Jesse.

S. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: During their journeyings through the wilderness the children of Israel carried the Tabernacle with them. It was a mobile structure. As God moved forward, His people moved forward and the Tabernacle was erected as and where God chose to rest. At Shiloh (Place of rest) the Tabernacle came to a more permanent resting place and for

over 400 years it was the Place of the Name where God Himself found rest and dwelt amongst His redeemed and gathered together people. Within the Tabernacle and within the most holy place was the ark of the Covenant. It was ever associated with the place of the down-dwelling of God amongst His people.

Rest from the burden of sin can be found only in Christ, but then the believer in Christ has another burden to bear—in the Lord's service. The prophets of God in their day knew of this burden as they spoke often of the 'burden of the word of the Lord' (Mai. 1: 1; Nah. 1: 1; Hab. 1: 1; Is. 13: 1). This rest is not a rest *from* work (labour) but rather is it a rest *in* work. We can be occupied in no greater work than His. The harmonious working of our hearts and minds with the joy of ever doing His will should provide us with spiritual 'job satisfaction' and development. We should be constantly refreshed and invigorated in the accomplishment of His service, for Christ says, 'My yoke is easy, and My burden is light' (Mat. 11: 30). *H. R. Dodge*

From Melbourne: Throughout the desert journey of forty years the Tabernacle was the divine centre of gathering, service, and worship for Israel. Its situation was governed by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. Israel did not choose the place—this was the prerogative of the God of Israel. They were prepared thereby to recognize the fact that when they had entered the land of Canaan, Jehovah would choose a place amongst their tribes where His Name should dwell, and to which His people should gather at the appointed seasons to do Him service.

For over 300 years the Tabernacle remained in Shiloh as God's centre for Israel. We would however suggest that this was an interlude in the purposes of God from eternal ages, when His eye rested upon Jerusalem and Mount Zion. Is not this seen at the time of Abraham's testing when the command was to offer Isaac as a burnt offering in the place which God had seen and chosen in the land of Moriah?

From a man of God Eli received the message telling of divine judgement upon his house; but to Samuel as a child was revealed the full import of God's purposes in judgement upon both the house of Eli and the nation of Israel. The Philistines were the people chosen to execute His judge-

BIBLE STUDIES

ments. The confidence of Israel in bringing the ark of the covenant into battle was completely misplaced because of their non-conformity to the divine law which was held within the sacred ark. They had forfeited every claim to His presence and protection. The cherubim with outspread wings were guardians of the righteousness of Jehovah; and His righteousness, apart from atonement could only demand judgement. For over 300 years He had dwelt in their midst notwithstanding their waywardness and frequent departure from Him. But now righteousness could only be vindicated by the death of Eli and his sons, the defeat of Israel, and His departure from among them as the ark of God was taken. The lament of the dying wife of Phinehas was a summary of the crisis now upon them, 'The glory is departed from Israel'.
R. Busby, T. W. Fullerton

From **Methil**: God solemnly charged the people of Israel to destroy all the places in which the nations they had conquered served their gods, 'upon the high mountains, upon the hills and under every green tree' (Deut. 12: 2). Then followed the commandment, 'Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God. But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His Name... thither thou shalt come' (Deut. 12: 4-5). With regard to worship and sacrifice they were clearly instructed that this must only take place in the place of the Name. Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place the LORD shall choose (Deut. 12: 13-14).

As in the wilderness, so in the land, no matter how far removed from the place of divine choice, all were required to come to the place of the Name to be well pleasing to God. While it is true today that neither in Samaria's mountain nor in Jerusalem shall men worship (John 4: 21), the same principle is seen among the people of God, within the Churches of God where He is sought and served. The place of the Name is according to the Scriptures 'the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Tim. 3: 15).

The people's action in removing the ark of God from its divinely appointed place and bringing it to the battlefield of Aphek led to their judgement by God and their slaughter at

the hands of the Philistines. God forsook the people of God and delivered His strength into captivity. As the disobedience of the people of Israel was judged, so also will we be judged, if we disobey His will. Judgement begins at the house of God (1 Pet. 4: 17). *A. R. Smith*

From St. Helens: When speaking to the woman at Sychar's well, our blessed Lord said, 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers' (John 4: 23).

We have revealed in Deut. 12 God's command to His ancient people, Israel, in relation to worship. Redeemed from Egypt they were taught by Moses regarding their behaviour when they reached the place of God's choice, and God said, 'Thou shalt have none other gods before Me' (Deut 5: 7). God's chosen people were told that He would make known to them the place wherein He would abide with them if they obeyed His commands. So today, in obedience to His word the people of God are 'buildd together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (Eph. 2: 22), a 'spiritual house' of 'living stones', a 'holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices'.

Any departure from God's orders brings anger, judgement, oftentimes destruction. Eli himself was blameworthy when the ark of the covenant was taken from Shiloh, resulting in Hophni and Phinehas, evil-doers themselves, and thirty thousand Israelites, being slain. Peter reminds us that 'the time is come for judgement to begin at the house of God'. Blessing followed; Samuel was born and given to the Lord, and God was pleased, when Elkanah and Hannah went up to Shiloh to worship.

J. H. R.

From Trinidad, USA: To the children of Israel, who had travelled the long, hot, dry, troubled journey of the wilderness, Canaan was to be the land of promise and to God it was to be a place of rest. We noted the emphasis on the words 'the place which Jehovah your God shall choose', and contrasted that with the words of v. 8, 'Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes'. Paul could write to the Galatians, 'He that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life' (Gal. 6: 8). Only with

BIBLE STUDIES

eyes of spiritual obedience can **we have** an appreciation of the place **which** God **will choose** for **His Name** to **dwell** in.

Joshua **set up** the Tabernacle in Shiloh (Josh. 18: 1) and from year to year **Israel was** to go and **sacrifice there** (1 Sam. 1: 3). It should **have** been easy in comparison to the wilderness journey, **but** even from **the** beginning they **failed**, **as we read** of the tribe of Dan setting up **Micah's graven image all the time** the house of God **was** in Shiloh (Judg. 18: 31). **After 433 years** the glory **departed** and **all that was left was** the wickedness of the people. **The children** of Israel seldom learned **the** lessons of history (Jer. 7: 12-15).

As the child Samuel comes on **the** scene it is of **special** importance to note **the spiritual** condition of **the** children of **Israel**. 'And **the child Samuel** ministered unto **the** Lord before Eli. And **the** word of **the** Lord **was** precious (**rare**) in those days; **there was** no open vision' (1 Sam. 3: 1). **Their** 'vision' (**which** comes from **the** root word *chazah*—mentally to **perceive** and contemplate **with pleasure**) **was** not **widespread** but limited to a very few. **The wise** Solomon wrote, '**Where there is** no vision, **the** people **cast off** restraint: **but he that keepeth the law, happy is he**' (Prov. 29: 18). **Israel were** so **blind** to **their** condition **as a** people **that** they fully **expected** victory by bringing **the ark** out to **battle**. They **had** forgotten **that** the glory of **the** house **was due** to **the** presence of God in fellowship **with** an obedient people. *D. Williamson*

From Vancouver, **BC**: **The Name** of **the** Lord **as** revealed to Moses in Ex. 34 **was** a proclamation of God's ways and **character**. **The Name** of **the** Lord **is** a living, vibrant outworking of **the** glorious **character** of God. **The place** of **the Name** at Shiloh **was centred** in **the** Tabernacle **and the service with the** priesthood. **The Name** of **the** Lord **was** not a paper-thin notice over **the** door, **but an** all-encompassing **area** of God's presence of love, mercy **and** judgement; **but** primarily love (1 Kings 9: 3). **The Name** of **the** Lord **required** a mercy-seat and **its service** in order **that** **His** love **might** flow out in blessing.

The proclamation of God's **Name** in 'visiting **the** iniquity' **was fulfilled** towards Eli and Hophni and Phinehas. Mercy could not flow from **the** mercy-seat **if there was** no repentance and no **substitute**. **The** Lord **did** not **speak** to **Samuel** from between **the cherubim** on telling of **the** punishment to

come to Eli, but He 'came and stood' and spoke. Nor did God speak to Eli from over the mercy-seat, but sent a prophet with the words of warning and judgement. Sometimes, in days past God spoke judgement from the door of the tent.

Perhaps at the beginning Eli, thinking to give his sons an added incentive to serve the Lord, permitted them to do things contrary to the word of the Lord and even he himself feasted with them in some aspects contrary to the commandment of the Lord [Comment 7]. But this led only to a worsening condition. We must not 'do evil that good may come' (Rom. 3: 8), which is an age-abiding statute of the Lord. Without repentance and a sacrificial substitute for sin, carrying the ark with its mercy-seat into battle was of no avail to bring help to them from God. *H. McL.*

From Barrhead: The rebellious generation that refused to go up and possess the land (see Num. 13 and 14) had well nigh passed away; the future belonged to a new generation, who would possess the land (Num. 14: 31). In Deuteronomy we have a second giving of the law and the judgements and statutes were to be observed once they were in the land.

The second commandment forbade idolatry and once in the land all places of idol worship were to be utterly destroyed (Deut. 12: 2). The temptation of idolatry had to be removed from a people that was described as being stiff-necked (Deut. 10: 16); the Lord will not give His glory to another or His praise to idols (Is. 42: 8). The Lord their redeemer was to have the preeminence in their lives.

From Jacob's experience we are taught that the house of God or the Place of the Name and the altar were to be at a specific location on earth (in Jacob's time, Beth-el). The principle discerned in Genesis is restated to the covenant people of God. Where God in His sovereignty puts His Name, in that place must all sacrifice be made without exception. The suitability of any particular place was not to be left to how men saw the place, but the tribe and location would be God's choice and to His will all must submit.

Sacrifices and burnt offerings must be killed at the place of the Name. However, normal slaughtering for the purpose of food was in their own homes, whether a person was ceremonially clean or unclean (v. 15). Those gifts which had been set aside for the Lord could only be eaten in the presence of the Lord at the Tabernacle. *L. deVille*

BIBLE STUDIES

From Birkenhead: The people of God, when they arrived in the land of promise, were faced with many places of worship already in existence for use by the inhabitants of the land. All of these were to be destroyed (Deut. 12: 2, 3). The people of God were to come to the Place of the Name in the place of God's choice, bringing their sacrifices as appointed. According to Josh. 18: 1 the place at this time was Shiloh and the tent of meeting was erected there for many years.

An indication of the spiritual state of God's people is the appalling record of the ark being taken, unhindered by Eli, to the battlefield in an effort to bring victory against the Philistines. The gravity of this action does not seem to register, surely indicating the declension which had taken place. The capture of the ark was the nadir of Israel's history at this time.

Although the Israelites seemed uninterested in the ark, God was watching over its movements, and when it was placed in the house of the Philistine god, then God acted and overturned Dagon. Wherever the ark went there was affliction until the Philistines were forced to return it to 'its own place' (1 Sam. 5: 11). Even when this took place the Lord came down in judgement on those Israelites who looked into the ark.

God forsook Shiloh (**Ps. 78: 60**) and it appears that the ark of God, although back in the land, was never returned to the tent of meeting. These events bear eloquent testimony to the consequences of departure from the Lord.

R. D. Williams

From Derby: In Deut. 12: 5 we learn that God had a place in the land of promise that He Himself had chosen, 'the Place of the Name'. The Tabernacle was set up in Shiloh in the lot of Ephraim. The question was asked, 'Whose choice was this?' We do not find in the book of Joshua any commandment of the Lord as to the precise locality in the land that God had chosen, but no doubt the Spirit of the Lord was guiding His servant Joshua, for we read in Ps. 78: 60, 'The Tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men'. It was not any place, but to the place of His choice, where all burnt offerings and sacrifices were to be brought.

In 1 Sam. 1: 3, 7 God's house was still at Shiloh. Eli was the high priest and his two sons Hophni and Phinehas were priests, but it is written, 'they knew not the LORD' (2: 12).

God sent a prophet to Eli who pronounced judgement on him and his house and spoke of **the impending death** of his two sons. God raised **up** godly **Samuel** in answer to **the** prayer of his mother Hannah, who **seemed to be** aware of **the low state** of **the** nation. **1 Sam. 4** relates **the** impious and provoking **act** of removing **the** holy oracle out of **its** divinely appointed **place** [Comment 5]. God **executed His** judgement upon Israel by a great slaughter, 34, 000 men. **It appears that the elders** of **the** people were guilty of this great **trespass**. God severely **judged the** Philistines in **each** of **the** five cities where **the ark was** taken, and they decided to send **the ark back** to Israel. When **the ark** arrived at **Beth-shemesh** **the** men of **that** city rejoiced to **see** it, and offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices unto **the** Lord. **Alas, the** men of **Beth-shemesh** had forgotten **the** sanctity of **the ark** and God's **severe** warnings of a **past** day. To look upon **the sacred Oracle** could **have** meant instant **death**, how **much** more to look into it? **Thus** seventy men and 50, 000 men perished under **the fierce anger** of **the** Lord (**there** is thought by some to **be a doubt as to the** accuracy of **these** figures). In Ex. 40: 21 **we** read, 'And **he** brought **the ark** into **the** Tabernacle, and **set up the veil** of **the** screen, and screened **the ark** of **the** testimony, as **the LORD** commanded Moses'. Vv. **33, 34** 'So Moses finished **the** work ... and **the glory of the LORD** filled **the** tabernacle'. From this point onwards **the extreme** sanctity of **the ark and the** mercy-seat **was to be** strictly observed on pain of death.

G. Conway, S. R. W.

COMMENTS

1. (Galston): **Samuel was a** Levite—a Kohathite, possibly a descendant of **Izhar** (**1 Chron. 6: 16-28**). **The** Kohathites' responsibilities **are** listed in Num. **3: 31**—'**the ark and the table, and the lampstand, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary** wherewith they minister, and **the screen, and all the services thereof.** ' In Josh. 21: 20 **the** Kohathites **were** given land in Ephraim, which may explain why Elkanah **had his home there.** **The** declension in Eli's day may **have** been responsible for his apparent absence from service. **The** Levites **must** in any **case have** spent **much** more time away from **the** Tabernacle and **the Temple**, for they **served in 'courses'** (**24** in David's time).
2. (Hamilton, Ontario): I think **there is** significance in **the**

BIBLE STUDIES

fact that David, the man after God's heart and the great victor, was the one who showed what and where God's choice was. Is there not a lesson in this for us?

3. (**Hamilton**, Ontario): All the prescribed feasts of Jehovah (Lev. 23; Num. 28, 29) should have been held here, but in Judg. 21: 19 the celebration seems to have been associated with the ingathering of the vine harvest and was possibly the Feast of Tabernacles.

4. (**Hayes**): 1 Kings 6: 1 says it was 480 years from leaving Egypt to Solomon starting to build the house, in the fourth year of his reign. Presumably we must deduct at least 40 years for the wilderness journey, 40 years for Saul's reign and an allowance must be made for other times but 300 years seems short, and I think something nearer 400 is more likely.

5. (**Derby**): I am not sure it is right to call the ark of the Covenant 'the holy oracle'. In the Old Testament the expression is used for the word of God (2 Sam. 16: 23), of the Most Holy Place of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6: 16), and in the New Testament the plural is used of the word of God.

A. B. R.

6. (**Hayes**): There does not seem to be any scriptural ground for the suggestion that only a few continued to go up to Shiloh to worship.

7. (**Vancouver**): God condemned Eli's inaction in failing to restrain his sons, but the suggestion that he had partaken with them goes beyond what is revealed.

P. L. H.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Galston: Please expound Deut. 12: 21-22, and in particular v. 22.

The eating here is 'because thy soul desireth to eat flesh' and has nothing to do with peace offerings which were offered and eaten at the Place of the Name (Lev. 7). Certain domestic animals were specified for offerings, but other animals were permitted for eating which could not be offered, viz. 'whatsoever... is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud', e. g. the hart and the gazelle (Lev. 11: 3). Since this has in view purely domestic eating there is no need for the strictures on who should eat, or in what condition.

A. B. R.

BIBLE STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

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God said of David, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who shall do all My will' (Acts 13: 22). It is not surprising, therefore, to see expressed in David's life and in his psalms a great love for the house of God and a deep appreciation of the privileges and responsibilities associated with it. The lovely psalms he wrote enriched the service of God's house in the past, and are copiously drawn from by the people of God today in their spiritual exercises.

In so many ways David furthered the purposes of God relative to His house in his own day, and his singleness of purpose as expressed in Psalm 27: 4 is worthy of our emulation today.

J. K. D. J.

DAVID'S DESIRE FOR A HOUSE FOR GOD

From Hamilton (Ont.): Often in life we suffer from disappointment when we realize that the chief desire of our heart is to be denied us. Consequently, we can feel somewhat of the disappointment which David felt when Nathan spoke the words of Jehovah, telling him that he would not be permitted to build a house for God.

Originally when Nathan heard of David's desire, he told David, 'Go, do all that is in thine heart'. Then the word of God came unto him, 'Thou shalt not build Me an house'. David then sat quietly before the Lord. He wondered why God ever chose him, a shepherd boy, to be established as king and his seed after him for ever (v. 18). The answer was apparent in the words of Jehovah to Samuel concerning the choosing of the young shepherd David, 'Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature... for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart'.

A criterion for being God's anointed in that day was a pure heart, which David in his Psalms asked to have. God saw in David the desire for a clean heart and a right spirit (Ps. 51: 10). This was the same heart that was to ask one

BIBLE STUDIES

thing of Jehovah, and that was to dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever. Thus, even when he came to the realization that he would not see the desire of his heart come to pass, he did not lose any of his heart's zeal for the house of God. Instead of being discouraged, he set about with all the power and wealth at his disposal to make the necessary preparations to enable his son to build the house for God at a later date. David's desire to build the house was certainly commendable. He saw that Jehovah still dwelt in tents while he lived in a house of cedar. David's idea was to build a permanent house for God, but he was told that it was not the will of the Lord for David to build it. So we see afresh that the desires of our hearts, worthy as they may be, may not necessarily be God's will for us. Nevertheless, having found God's way, let our zeal be as David's zeal for the house of God.

Ron Thomas, Ed Bijons

From Hamilton (Scotland): Hiram, king of Tyre had sent carpenters and masons to build a house of cedar in Jerusalem for David the king (2 Sam. 5: 11). When David was dwelling in his house and the Lord had given him rest from his enemies, David spoke to Nathan the prophet and contrasted the permanency of his dwelling-place with that of the ark of God which 'dwelleth within curtains' (2 Sam. 7: 2).

In Ps. 26: 8 we have clearly stated the affection of David for God's house: 'Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth', but in 2 Sam. 7 it is noteworthy that David's concern is for the ark of God. In v. 6 the Lord answers, 'I have not dwelt in an house (Heb. *bayith*) since the day that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent (Heb. *ohel*) and in a tabernacle (Heb. *mishkan*). There is a similar thought in 1 Sam. 3: 3 where it is stated that 'Samuel was laid down to sleep, in the temple (Heb. *keykal*) of the Lord, where the ark of God was'. Here once more the ark of God and the house of God are linked. David's desire to build a house for God was answered by Nathan in 2 Sam. 7: 3 'Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee'. The love of David the king and the wisdom of Nathan did not make them immune from going before the will of God; for Nathan had granted David the liberty of doing that which lay on his heart. Before that night had passed the

word of the Lord came to Nathan, 'Go and tell my servant David' and in 2 Sam. 7: 12, 13 the Lord states, 'I will set up thy seed after thee... He shall build an house for My Name'. Solomon the son of David would have the honour of building God's house. How keenly must David have heard those words, 'Thou shalt not build an house for My Name, because thou art a man of war, and hast shed blood (1 Chr. 28: 3). But disappointment did not break David, for he had his part to play in the provision of gold, silver, brass, iron, cedar trees, precious stones and marble (1 Chr. 22: 2-4; 29: 2-5).

David wanted to be a builder but God had decreed that he should be a giver.
Matthew Carruthers

From Lagos: The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant' (Ps. 25: 14). David underlined the two things which characterised his life and which were fundamental to the great spiritual revival in his day: (i) 'The Spirit of the Lord spake in me' (R. V. M.); (ii) 'His word was upon my tongue' (2 Sam. 23: 2). The great hall-mark of the spiritual revival during the reign of David was the consuming desire in David's heart for God's house, 'Go and tell My servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build Me an house for Me to dwell in?' Then David... sat before the Lord; and he said, 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me thus far?' (2 Sam. 7: 5, 18). The spirit of grace and humility shown by David is worthy of note (vv. 18-20). The Lord was able to use him. What pleasure it gave to the Lord as expressed in these words: 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who shall do all My will' (Acts 13: 22).

'Spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel... saying, Why have ye not built Me an house of cedar?' (2 Sam. 7: 7). We note the principle which was set forth from the beginning: that the building of God's house must be done by the people of God; that the work must be done by willing subject hearts (Ex. 25: 2-9). Paul reminds us, however, that we should not receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6: 1).

It should be remembered that the house of God was not built until after the death of David. Howbeit, the vision and the zeal were real to David as highlighted in his song, 'Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion... Blessed is the man

BIBLE STUDIES

whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, the holy place of Thy temple' (Ps. 65: 1, 4). *S. Coker, E. Bassey*

From Leeds: When the king had rest, his thoughts turned towards God's house (2 Sam. 7: 1, 2) and to the ark of the covenant which is ever associated with God's house. It was in his heart (the place of affection). In moments of tranquility and rest we do well to meditate on God's gracious dealings with us and on the place of His choice.

David had just brought the ark from the house of Obed-edom to the site which he had prepared for it at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6: 15-17) and he placed it in a tent (1 Chr. 15: 1; 16: 1). Sleep would not come to him until he found the right place for the ark (Ps. 132: 4-8). On that day David gave thanks (1 Chr. 16: 7), 'Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion' (Ps. 9: 11). Although God had given Moses a definite pattern for the Tabernacle and the people completed its construction according to that pattern, God apparently did not mind that the ark was now placed within a tent and that it was placed on a site that David had prepared. We wondered if David had made a tent similar in structure to the Tabernacle and if the ark was placed within the most holy place.

David set up the service for song in the house of God after the ark had rest (1 Chr. 6: 31; 16: 7, 9). Prior to this, singing did not appear to have had a part in the services of the Tabernacle. David delighted in singing and was described as the sweet psalmist of Israel (2 Sam. 23: 1). When Saul desired someone who could play well they commended David as one who was cunning in playing (1 Sam. 16: 17, 18). 'Upon the harp will I praise Thee O God, my God' (Ps. 43: 4). He sings, 'Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth' (Ps. 26: 8). Only thirty-four of the Psalms are expressly without titles and the majority of the remaining 116 Psalms (about 75) are directly attributable to David. The Lord Jesus Himself refers to what David says in the book of the Psalms (Luke 20: 42; 24: 44).

There can be no greater place on earth than where God dwells, thus David's desire was to establish a permanent dwelling place for God. *P. M. Jefferson, H. R. Dodge*

BIBLE STUDIES

From Melbourne: During the period between 1 Sam. 7: 1 and 2 Sam. 6, approximately a century had elapsed. In that time we find the last days of the Judges, the corrupt rule of the sons of Samuel, and the reign of Saul, the king chosen by the nation. Although we have no record of the removal of the Tabernacle from Shiloh, we judge that it was probably removed by Saul and erected at Nob; from whence it was removed to Gibeon after the slaughter of the priests. Sacrifice and offering continued on the altar of burnt offering, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord was missing, together with the sacred Presence of Him who dwelt above the mercy seat between the cherubim.

During the later years of the reign of Saul, God saw among the tens of thousands of Israel a man, a shepherd lad of Bethlehem, one whose heart had evidently been stirred by the records of the past which he had heard at Bethlehem. The thought has often appealed to us that the desires expressed in Ps. 132: 2-7 had been with him in embryo form from shepherd days, gradually developing from the day when Samuel anointed him as God's chosen king. When he took his place as king over all Israel, we judge that his desires towards a place for Jehovah reached a climax and the resolve and accompanying vow were made, 'Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids; until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob'. David knew the mind of God and pitched a tent for the ark in the city of David, which is Mount Zion. He consulted with his counsellors, captains, and the people of Israel, and the momentous hour arrived when they brought the ark out of the house of Abinadab. David's joy was great, but he had to learn the solemnity of handling the ark of Jehovah. Uzzah put forth his hand to save the ark from falling and died for his error. David had overlooked the fact that it was written in the law of the Lord that none but the Levites should carry the ark, and the passage of time had not erased that divine law. Fear before the God of Jacob caused the ark to be carried aside to the house of Obed-edom, where it remained for three months, and God blessed the house of Obed-edom. David inquired at the law of the Lord and corrected his error and called the Levites to their work, and then bore it to Zion with great joy to the tent

BIBLE STUDIES

which he had pitched for it.

A. E. E., T. W. F.

From Methil: David's desire was highly commendable, indeed it was a noble thought, and God appreciated it (1 Kings 8: 18). Most of us were of the opinion that Nathan acted somewhat hastily in replying as he did to David. There is no record of Nathan seeking God's guidance. We took note of the gentle way that God gave Nathan a message to give to David correcting the position. David was somewhat premature in his desire to build God a permanent dwelling place [Comment 1]. God in His own time and way would permit David's son, Solomon (Heb. 'peaceable') to build Him a magnificent temple. First God would settle the children of Israel in their own land, give them a time of peace, and allow a man of peace, Solomon, to build it (Acts 7: 46-47).

David was not the person selected by God to build Him a house, because David had shed much blood upon the earth (1 Chr. 22: 8). David was a man of war (1 Chr. 28: 3). God promised David that He, the Lord, would make David a house, showing that He would establish through David the royal line. In God's kindness toward David He did allow him to prepare the materials for God's house, and this he did with all his might (1 Chr. 29). God gave also the pattern to David, who gave it to Solomon his son to build (1 Chr. 28: 19). David totally accepted God's statement as to who should build the house of God. Even Solomon acknowledged, 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it' (Ps. 127) [see Question from Leeds]. David was a spiritual man, a man of God, and a man after God's own heart. He viewed the house of God in prospect, seeing it with the eyes of faith.

David showed a right appreciation of God's dwelling place (Ps. 65). Zion was the Place of the Name. Praise waits for God there. Those who dwell in God's house shall be satisfied with God's goodness. Holiness is associated with God's house, it is the place of blessing (v. 4) and of joy (v. 13).

Neville Coomer

From Middlesbrough: On the first day of the second year of the Exodus the Tabernacle was dedicated, and the glory of the Lord filled the holy place. The Lord travelled with His

people in the wilderness. During the conquest of Canaan the ark rested at Gilgal. After the settlement of the land, Joshua set up the Tabernacle at Shiloh, and there it remained for the period of the Judges, calculated by some to be around 400 years. By that time it would appear chambers and courts surrounded it. During the reign of Saul, the ark was at Nob, and for most of David's reign at Gibeah (or Kiriath-jearim) [Comment 2].

Eventually David pitched a tent for the ark in the city of David and brought up the ark with rejoicing and God again had a house in the midst of His people. We conjectured on the condition of the ark and the state of the Tabernacle after the period of well-nigh 470 years. David's tent would lack much of the beauty and order of the original, but it was pitched in a prepared place, thought by some to be the threshing floor of Oman [Comment 3].

The ark brought disaster to the Philistines and to Uzzah, but blessing to Obed-edom, and to God's people.

David desired to build a permanent house for God, but because of the blood shed during his turbulent reign, he was disqualified from this. However, the battles fought by David led to peace during the reign of Solomon.

God values personal exercise. Although He had not asked for a house, He blessed David because he desired a fitting place for his God. It was a Spirit-led exercise. David was grateful to be chosen and was not puffed up, 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me thus far?' Therefore God gave him the promise, 'I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever'.

Saul was a great man, but had no desire for God's house. David was a man whom men passed over, but he was used by God. It was his attitude of heart to God's things that counted in God's estimation, and prompted the flow of blessing to him. David delighted to give to God, and donated much of his personal fortune to the procurement of materials for God's house and the site on which it was to be built. He also set up the service of the house of God and the courses of singers—an order that endured until the time of David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. W. C. T.

From Sydney: A house for the Lord was the heart's desire of David the king as he considered the grandeur of his own

BIBLE STUDIES

house and compared **it with the** curtains and skins **that made up the dwelling place of his** God; a mansion compared to a tent. In **Ps. 132: 1-5** David vows unto **the Lord that he will not rest until he has found a habitation for the 'Mighty One of Jacob'**. This **was to be no mere duplicate of his own house but 'the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries' (1 Chr. 22: 5).**

Forty years God **dwelt in a tent in the wilderness, over 400 years in the same tent, while the Judges and king Saul dwelt in their fine houses, and not a word was said.** God never mentioned **the obvious.** No one **had** thought of building a house for **the Lord.** One man only amongst **the thousands of God's people had that desire.** One man's **heart was fixed upon his God, yet the word came to David, Thou shalt not build the house'. If David's desire had been bred by thoughts of fame, honour, and a great name for himself, then these words would indeed have been a crushing blow to his spirit, but David's desire was grounded in an unselfish and overflowing love for his Lord. David's desire was not crushed. The place is not for man, but for the Lord God' (1 Chr. 29: 1).** and whoever **it was that God would choose to do the actual building, David was ready and eager to help in any way whatsoever. David's son Solomon was chosen to build God's house and 'David gave to Solomon his son the pattern... of the house of the Lord, as he had 'been made to understand in writing from the hand of the Lord' (1 Chr. 28: 11-19).**

In former years **David had looked upon the tent of skins as God's house and could write, 'One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple' (Ps. 27: 4); and now he was looking upon the pattern and materials that were to make an habitation befitting the Lord of Hosts. David never lived to see his desire completed, but still God's commendation stands, Thou didst well that it was in thine heart'.**

George Greig

From **Trinidad, U. S. A.:** In our study of **David's desire for a house for God, we found that the portion in 2 Sam. 7 and the record in 1 Chr. 17 agreed perfectly and this was very helpful to us. God's way and will are established by the pen of more than one witness [Comment 4].**

BIBLE STUDIES

We noticed that David's desire for a house for God was very strong and the feeling very deep. We were especially impressed by his prayer to God after being denied his desire to build the house. He saw the 'yes' even in the 'no' answer, because his son Solomon would fulfil that desire. David showed his faith, in that he thanked God for the promises He made to David (2 Sam. 7: 13, 26)—total acceptance of the divine will.

In 1 Chr. 28: 3 we found the explanation why he was not allowed to build the house—he was a man of war and had shed blood. In 1 Chr. 22: 8, in his explanation to Solomon, and in 1 Chr. 28: 3, while speaking to the princes of Israel and others assembled there that day, again his desire was stated and proved by the preparation he made and things he provided.

We were reminded of Christ's desire for a house for God today and were brought to a fuller appreciation of what He did in order to provide the material for that building. He gave His all, His life. Then after his resurrection he gave instruction to His own as to how the house should be built (Acts 1: 1-3). These instructions were written down so that they might be preserved and passed on even to this present day. Interestingly David received the design 'in writing from the hand of Jehovah, even all the works of this pattern' (1 Chr. 28: 19). *Steve Higgins, Melvin T. Williamson*

From Barrhead: The period from the placing of the holy ark in the house of Abinadab until Solomon restored it to the most holy place (the Temple) must always remain one of the greatest periods of spiritual desolation in Israel's history. For about **100** years the ark was not behind the veil, so in the forsaken Tabernacle it was impossible to keep the annual Day of Atonement. None of the Judges seemed to care about this. Neither did Saul, who appeared to have no interest in the subject whatever. It was only when the 'man after God's own heart' came on the scene that things began to move again.

David knew the story of the deserted ark from boyhood days (Ps. 132), longed for it, and waited for God's time. When he finally brought it up he used the new cart, but was quick to discern the meaning of God's displeasure and instructed the Levites to bring it to the tent he had pitched

BIBLE STUDIES

for it in the city of David.

David's own cieleo house was completed in 2 Sam. 5: 11, and he brought up the ark in 6: 17. Such was his success that ch. 7 might well have opened with the heart of David being lifted up, as was true of many of his descendants. But instead, the portion contains his longing for a permanent house for God—a magnificent temple which would combine again the divided service of Gibeon and the city of David. Nathan's reaction was that this was an obvious and lovely thing for David to do; **but** God's mind was otherwise. Nevertheless, His appreciation is shown in His speedy response to Nathan. To build the house was not God's plan for him.

We were touched at the references to God walking about with Israel in a tent, over a period of some **500** years. The heart of the Lord was greatly touched as He saw so great a likeness to His own heart in the heart of David. And arising out of David's generous offer, God gave him the unconditional covenant of the house, the throne and the kingdom—which things may shortly come into prominence again. For the tabernacle (i. e. House-lineage) of David may at the present time be fallen, but God will raise it again in that glorious day when 'the Lord God shall give unto Him (Jesus) the *throne* of His father David: and He shall reign over the *house* of Jacob for ever; and of His *kingdom* there shall be no end'.

David Fullerton, J. L. F.

From **Birkenhead**: During Saul's reign Israel did not seek after the ark of God, but David's desire was towards God. He went to bring the ark of God up from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem. David was deeply aware of the contrast, that whilst he dwelt in a house of cedar, the ark of God dwelt within curtains, and his desire was to build a house befitting God in which He could dwell. Although David was not allowed to build God's house, yet God blessed His servant and his seed after him and honoured the desire of David's heart by allowing him (a) to supply some of the materials necessary for the building, (b) a revelation of the place where the house was to be built, (c) to receive in writing a pattern of the building.

Evidence of David's desire is contained in the Psalms, and Ps. 132, one of the Songs of Ascents, speaks of events *a** this time.

It appears that whilst the ark was at Jerusalem, offerings

to the Lord took place there. During this time the tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering **were** in the high place at Gibeon, from which **place** David was barred by **the** sword of the angel of the Lord (**1 Chr. 21: 30**). *R. D. Williams*

From **Birmingham**: In 2 Sam. 7: 1 we see that David was resting after a long period of unrest with his enemies, for he 'dwelt in his house'. The ark of God had been brought back from Baale Judah, where it had been kept in the house of Abinadab, and was now in its place 'in the midst of the tent' (2 Sam. 6: 17).

David acknowledged the rest, peace and prosperity God had given him, and his desire was to render unto the Lord his gratitude for the honours God had bestowed upon him (2 Sam. 5: 11, **12**). David's **deep** devotion and love for God's house was unsurpassed by **that** of any other man of God in the Scriptures, for he could say, 'For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up' (Ps. 69: 9). The house that David longed to build for God was to be 'exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries' (1 Chr. 22: 5). God knew the love and desire in David's heart to build Him a house, yet He forbade him to go on with his purpose (see 1 Chr. 17: 4). The reason for this is given in 1 Chr. 28: 3.

It seems that in 2 Sam. 7: 6, 7, God is telling David that a tabernacle had been quite adequate for Him to dwell in, since the time that He brought the children of Israel out of Egypt until that day, and so it could serve the purpose for a little while longer. For all through the wilderness, God had not said on any occasion 'Why have ye not built Me an house of cedar?' [see Comment 1]. When God revealed to him that he was not to build the house, David must have felt a deep disappointment. But there was no arguing with the Lord, only humble submission to His will. And here is a great lesson for God's people today. It is only through submission to the divine will that access into the house of God today is provided. If many Christians would just accept the conditions God has laid down in His Word they would find themselves in 'the place of the Name'. 'If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching' (John **7: 17**).

John Watts

From Denver: It was approximately eighty years [nearer 100 years—*Eds.*] since the ark of God was taken from the

BIBLE STUDIES

children of Israel, and for **the** final three months **it** remained **at the** house of Obed-edom. After **the** error of Uzzah regarding **the ark**, David **was afraid** of **the** Lord and refrained from bringing **the ark** into **the city** of David. **But** when they **came** and told king **David** that **the** Lord **had blessed** Obed-edom and **all** his house, **David's fears** vanished and again his joy and affection **were** directed to **the ark** of God **that it might be** brought **up** to **the city** (**2 Sam.** 6: 15). **We** noted that **the city** of David and Zion **were the same place** (**1 Kings** 8: 1; **2 Sam.** 5: 7).

There was, of course, **great** joy when **the ark** of God **came** into **the city** of David **as he** and **all the people had waited** to give praise to God in Zion (**Ps.** 65: 1). **Here we see a true** picture of David's **heart**, rejoicing in **the** will of God and **full** of praise. David **was a man after** God's own **heart** and **we** see this in his affection for God's house. Nathan instructed him to do **all that was** in his **heart** for God would **be** with him. David first looked **at** himself and **all that he had as** king over God's people and **he** compared **that** with **what** God **had**. **He** wanted **the** best for God. **It** is easy in times of affluence to do **well** ourselves and forget our responsibility to God and to His house.

His desire was to **have a place** for God to **dwell**, and **he** vowed unto **the** mighty One of Jacob, 'I will not give **sleep** to mine eyes, or **slumber** to mine eyelids until I find out **a place** for Jehovah, **a Tabernacle** for **the** Mighty One of Jacob' (**Ps.** 132: 2-5). **It** is worthy of note **that he** wanted only one place. **At** this time it **appears that the** tent of meeting was **at the high place that was** in Gibeon **but the ark** of God **that** David brought **up came** from Kiriath-jearim. David's desire **was** for one thing, '**As for me, it was** in my **heart** to build a house unto **the** name of **the** Lord my God' (**1 Chr.** 22: 7).

D. Williamson

From Derby: **The sacred ark was a** symbol of God's presence and **a** type of Christ. The evidence of Scripture shows God's desire to **preserve the** sanctity of this holy chest. David **the** king entered into **the** divine purpose and thoughts, for **he** desired to **please** and to **fear** God in **all** things relating to His house. God **had** forsaken **the Tabernacle at Shiloh because** of **the** sinful condition of His people. **The ark had** lost none of its sacredness in spite of **the** light esteem in which it **was held** by most of **the** people of God.

BIBLE STUDIES

God had raised up a man after His own heart, who would do all His will (Acts 13: 22). The earthly Zion, called the city of David, was a type of the heavenly Zion wherein God had His anointed One on the throne, the Lord Jesus Christ. David is said to have established Jerusalem as the capital city of the holy land, and the centre of worship for the people of God. They sought not unto the ark in the days of Saul, who was not a spiritual man but was the people's choice. David's desire was that the ark of the covenant (or the testimony) should have an honoured place in the holy city. David made a mistake as to how the ark should be transported, but he was humble enough to receive correction. A new cart was no substitute for the shoulders of consecrated sons of Kohath (1 Chr. 15: 1-2). When the ark had found a place of rest in Jerusalem, this gave David great joy and he danced and played before the Lord, such was his joy and zeal. David had pitched a tent to house the sacred ark which had graced the holy sanctuary in the Tabernacle, possibly on the Mosaic pattern. After the ark had been protected from the gaze of the common people, David's desire was to build a house for God. David prepared with great zeal much of the material that was used by king Solomon's builders. Not only so, but many of the beautiful psalms which David wrote were used by the singers for praise and for worship of the God of Israel some expressing the love David had for God's dwelling place, such as Ps. 26: 8, 'Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth', and Ps. 122: 1 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord', and Ps. 23: 6 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever'.
A. Smith, S. R. W.

From **Edinburgh**: When Saul's reign was about to end, Samuel told him that the Lord appointed in his place a prince over the people, 'a man after His own heart'. This then was the commendation to the successor, David. During the ensuing years this was increasingly seen in his love for the things of God and in particular for His house.

David knew of the Lord's desire, that His house be established permanently in Zion. However, the house was still a tent-'the ark of God dwelleth within curtains'. And so David consulted with Nathan. The two appeared to be of one mind in the matter and Nathan went the length of saying, The

BIBLE STUDIES

Lord is **with** thee'. In our **study we were** not of one mind **as** to **whether the** Lord spoke to **the hearts** of **David** and Nathan in this **matter** [Comment 5]. Certainly **He** was **quick** to **tell** Nathan **the same** night **that David** would not **build the house**. **It is clear** from **1 Chr. 22: 8** that **David was precluded** from building because **he was a man who had shed much blood** and **had spent much of his life** in warfare. However, **there** was no **rebuke** from God. **Rather there** was **the promise** of **great things** to come. **The setting up** of **his seed** and **the establishing** of **the throne** of **the kingdom** are foretold.

We can see how **David reflects the** beauties of Christ in his reaction to Nathan's **words**. **He belittled himself** and magnified **the Lord** as **He realised the full** implication of God's promises to **him** and **his seed**. Moses **did** not enter **the promised land** and **David was not permitted** to **build the house**—two men who **were** specially chosen by God, **but were not able** to witness **the absolute fulfilment** of **their desires**.

L Burgoyne

From Galston: David's desire for a house for God sprang from **His great** love for God. In **2 Sam. 7** we read. **The Lord had given him (David) rest** from **all his** enemies round about'. **He had built himself a** house of **cedar**—no doubt an imposing building. **His days of wandering like a partridge on the mountains were over—the tent days were over for David—and his thoughts went to the God he loved**. Should **the God who had given him rest** not also **have a permanent rest in a more dignified and impressive structure than a tent?** It was good **that such a desire was in David's heart (1 Kings 8: 18)**. In **Ps. 61: 4 (which would appear to be prior in time to 2 Sam. 7)** **David speaks** of dwelling in God's tent and **taking refuge in the covert of His wings**. **He could not, of course, mean that he could physically dwell in the tent of meeting; that was impossible**. **He is expressing the deep desire of his spirit for the presence of God**. In **Ps. 65: 4 'the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee that he may dwell in Thy courts'** may **be a reference to the high priest**. This **psalm seems to be later in time than 2 Sam. 7**. In **Psalms 61 and 65 David realises the greatness of God in creation, His goodness in blessing the earth and His lovingkindness towards men that call upon Him**. It followed **that he desired to live in the presence of such a God and to build Him the best of dwelling places**. A tem-

porary structure could rightly mean that God's dwelling there was also temporary and David desired to be assured of God's presence for ever (Ps. 27: 4) and to build a permanent dwelling place. David was jealous for the honour of God and desired that God should have a house worthy of His great name. He desired to exalt God.

God said 'No' to David, but it is evident from what God says to David through Nathan that He appreciated very much what had been in David's heart. As 'David the king went in, and sat before the Lord' we enter into an appreciation of his reverence and awe for God. David expresses his gratitude to God most beautifully. David's desire was not granted but 'as for God His way is perfect'. *John H. Johnson*

COMMENTS

1. **(Methil):** I am sure our friends do not wish to imply censure. David suggested the desirability of a more permanent structure for the dwelling place of God before God asked for such a structure. This initiative on the part of David gave God great joy although He did not allow him to build. David's acceptance of God's will in this matter also gave God pleasure.
2. **(Middlesbrough):** The Tabernacle was evidently at Nob during Saul's reign and was apparently afterwards moved to Gibeon, but the ark was not in it (see Barrhead paper). The ark was at Kiriath-jearim from the time of its recovery from the Philistines until David moved it.
3. **(Middlesbrough):** David's action in bringing the ark up to Jerusalem was the outcome of deep exercise before the Lord and was, I judge, in accordance with the mind of God. David did not know the exact location of the chosen site for God's house until the events of 2 Sam. 24 took place.
4. **(Trinidad):** We cannot, with certainty, identify the writers of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles but God has emphasized the importance of these matters by giving us a double account.
5. **(Edinburgh):** I think Nathan gave his own mind on the matter feeling that the sentiments expressed by David were highly commendable. God will, however, always reveal His will to those exercised to do it, and that same night He revealed His will to Nathan. We note God's concern for the

BIBLE STUDIES

honour of His prophet in that He made Nathan the channel of divine revelation for David. *J. K. D. J.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **From Leeds:** How was David justified in wearing the ephod and allowed to offer up burnt sacrifices and peace offerings (1 Chr. 15: 27; 16: 2) when Zadok and the priests were there to do this service? (1 Chr. 16: 37-40).

It would seem David had laid aside his kingly garb to be actively engaged in the services associated with that joyous occasion. In the days of individual testimony there were many from Abel onwards who offered acceptable sacrifices to God yet they were not priests. When Israel became the people of God the family of Aaron were appointed to the priesthood and God gave more detailed instructions as to how He should be worshipped and served. In Lev. 1-3 the parts played by offerer and priest are clearly distinguished. The priests referred to by our friends no doubt played their appointed part although specific notice has not been taken of their actions. David was Israel's leader and the prime mover in this revival.

2. **From Leeds:** How do we equate the thought of men building God's house on earth with Ps. 127: 1?

The principle of men being the builders of God's house is clearly established in respect of the Tabernacle, the Temple and the spiritual house. Ps. 127 is dealing with a wide spectrum of human activity and making the general point that human effort is of little value, as far as God is concerned, unless it has His blessing and is in accordance with His will. The Lord made a similar point in John 15: 5.

3. **From Birkenhead:** Is it to be understood that the ark rested in a tent of David's provision which was not that in which Samuel served in Shiloh?

Yes. The original Tabernacle was at Gibeon, see 2 Chr. 1: 3-6 which is very explicit on this point. *J. K. D. J.*

BIBLE STUDIES

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

EDITORIAL

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Rightly, contributors have this month laid considerable emphasis on the value of the materials prepared by David for the house of the Lord, both on behalf of the nation and out of his own private treasure. It was a sacrifice of considerable value, willingly offered, and reflected the great love for God's house which David so frequently expressed in his psalms.

Of equal importance was the provision of the pattern. David had received this 'by the Spirit' and 'in writing from the hand of the Lord'. His concern that Solomon, in building the Temple, should follow it is evident. There is an echo here of the instruction given to Moses, 'See that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been shewed thee' (Ex. 25: 40). The lesson is surely clear. All who build in God's house must build to God's pattern.

R. L.

DAVID'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD

From Hamilton (Scotland): The Tabernacle in the wilderness was to be built 'according to all that I shew thee' (Ex. 25: 8, 9). Likewise David in relation to the Temple was made 'to understand in writing from the hand of the Lord, even all the works of this pattern' (1 Chr. 28: 19) and the sequel to this was that 'David gave to Solomon his son the pattern' of its construction and its service (1 Chr. 28: 11-13). He prepared the materials, the men and the methods used for the subsequent building of the Temple by Solomon his son.

It is noteworthy that the Holy Spirit highlights the munificence of David by the repeated use of the Hebrew term *rob* which is translated 'abundance' and 'abundantly' (1 Chr. 22: 3, 14 & 15). Again, in 1 Chr. 29: 2 is a list of materials given by David: gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, onyx, stones to be set, and stones for inlaid work, stones of divers colours, all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. But in v. 9 we have also recorded the spirit in which the gifts were given. Then the people rejoiced, for

BIBLE STUDIES

that they offered willingly, because **with a** perfect heart they offered willingly to **the** Lord: and **David the** king also rejoiced with **great joy**'.

David **the** king **set the** standard (1 Chr. 28: 2) for **the** remarkable cooperation of **the** people of God in **this** work.

Matthew Carruthers

From Hayes: (i) **The Site**. The site is **the** same on which **Abraham** offered **Isaac** nearly 1, 000 years earlier and on which **the** Christ was offered about 1, 000 years later. **The** purchase of **the** site by **David** was **the** outcome of **his** remorse for his sin of numbering **the** people of **Israel** and his feeling of guilt at God's judgement on **the** people whom he felt were really innocent. It was purchased personally by David from Oman for **the** price of **600 shekels** (about **6 kg**) of gold (1 Chr. 21: 25) but there was also **the** additional payment of **50 shekels** (about $\frac{1}{2}$ kg) of silver for **the** threshing floor and **the** oxen (2 Sam. 24: 24).

(ii) **The Blue-print**. God revealed to **David** the specification for **the** house in every detail, and he was able to assess the requirement of materials and labour necessary to build and equip it (1 Chr. 28: 19).

It is just as necessary for us to get from God today the blue-print for **the** spiritual house of **the** present dispensation.

(Hi) **The Materials**. Some of **the** major material items are listed for us, and may be tabulated (in metric tons):

<i>Material</i>	<i>David's collection</i>	<i>David's personal Gift</i>	<i>The Gift of the Princes</i>
Gold	3, 000	90	150
Silver	30, 000	210	300
Brass	Beyond computation	—	540
Iron	Beyond computation	—	3, 000

Beyond this there was timber, building stone and precious stones of many colours. David's personal sacrifice in giving all these tons of gold and silver for overlaying the walls of the Temple is very remarkable, and may have its counterpart in our adorning the doctrine (Titus 2: 10) by being an example in good works, in sound speech and showing good fidelity. These are reflected from the walls of the house to others.

(iv) *The Craftsmen.* David engaged craftsmen even before he died, to prepare stone, wood, precious stones into the special shapes he knew would be required, by consulting the God-given blue-print (1 Chr. 29: 2). Similarly today the spiritual house needs those experienced in prayer, worship, teaching and preaching. Training in these activities is just as essential today, and every encouragement should be given to young men to begin to exercise them.

(v) *Analogy with the Spiritual House.* An exact analogy with the spiritual house is not possible. One reason is that the physical house was prepared over a period and could not be used until it was completely finished. It was a static structure distinct from the operation of the services within it. Today, the structure is a dynamic one, 'each several building, fitly framed together, *groweth* (continues to grow) into a holy temple in the Lord' (Eph. 2: 21). Hence operation and building are fused together in a way not appropriate to a physical temple. Even so, the analogy is very valid with this proviso.

C. L. Prasher

From Kilmarnock: Recognising the site for the intended house of God, David not only prepared the material needed for the house, but began to prepare Solomon, the princes, captains, rulers and people of Israel. The Lord's house must be 'magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries' (1 Chr. 22: 5). Realising his own failings, David's desire was that God would give Solomon discretion and understanding, and that he would keep God's laws, statutes and judgements—only then would he prosper. David knew that as the work of building the house of God progressed, difficulties would arise, therefore a fully tempered man of God would be needed. Surely this is a lesson for God's people today, to be mature, not faint-hearted at difficulties or pettiness. Personal integrity towards God in service was David's desire for his son and his people. Therefore the charge was, 'Set your heart and your soul to seek after the Lord your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary'.

The pattern of the house and its furnishings, together with the specifications of material to be used, were unfolded by David and were all according to what he had been made to understand in writing from God. In ch. 29 is emphasised the personal preparation of the individual. David prepared with all his might for he had set his affection to the house of

BIBLE STUDIES

God. **He** then threw out **the** challenge, 'Who then offereth willingly to consecrate **himself this** day unto **the** Lord?'. **The** response **was immediate and** infectious. **What a** testimony to **all** nations—not only **a** building of magnificence, **but a** people offering willingly out of **a perfect** heart. No wonder **David the** king rejoiced **with** great joy. Rejoicing **was laced with awe as David** contemplated **the** insignificance of **man** in his standing before God. 'Who **am I**, and **what is** my people **that we** should **be able** to offer so willingly **after this** sort?' **J. M. R., A. M. R.**

From Kingston-upon-Thames: **Whatever** may **have** been **David's** original conception of **the Temple (2 Sam. 7: 2)** **the first** preparation for **the** building **was that** of **his heart and** mind. This **was the** work of God, who **gave David the** pattern and **a** vision of **the** house. **This** guidance ensured proper preparation and prevented **a** marring of **a** divine type, **which** could **have** occurred **had** no amendment followed Nathan's original instructions (2 Sam. 7: 3).

God's hand **was next** seen in **the** revelation of **the place** (1 Chr. 22: 1). **David purchased the** whole **place at great** cost (1 Chr. 21: 25) seeing **that the** threshing-floor (2 Sam. 24: 24) would presumably **have** been insufficient to comply **with the** pattern. **David** clearly recognised **that** no other ground would do, **and** nothing **less** than **the full price** would **be acceptable**. **A** work force also **had to be prepared and it is** interesting to note **that David used** some Gentile labour (1 Chr. 22: 2-4). **This** seems to **be part of the fruit** of victory of **the** man of **war**. It may **be seen as** an illustration of **the** sway **the** Lord **has** over unbelieving ones to accomplish **His** purposes. Those saints who today constitute God's house may **be beautified** by **life's** experiences, involving responses to actions of unbelievers.

David's provision also took account of **the service** of **the** house. Having brought **the ark** to Zion, men from **the families** of Gershom, Kohath and **Merari were prepared** for new **duties (1 Chr. 6: 31, 16: 4-7)**. Their **past** experience as burden-bearers **was replaced** by **the sweet** ministry of song. **David's** full preparation of **the** people **is** seen in 1 Chr. 28. 21. **It was,** **as** becomes God's house in **all times**, an orderly preparation involving **each** one in **his** place.

David's own generosity, proportionate to **his** affection for

BIBLE STUDIES

God's house (1 Chr. 29: 3), led him to give 'over and above' of material of quality in accord with the pattern. This provision was made both in times of affliction (1 Chr. 22: 14) and in days of prosperity and peace. Likewise, it can be the portion of saints today, notwithstanding the changing circumstances of life, to rejoice in God-ordained unity (1 Pet. 2: 5; Eph. 2: 21-22) and the ability to make spiritual and material sacrifices (Heb. 13: 15-16). They can prepare individually for eternity, dwelling with God, by laying up treasures in heaven (Mat. 6: 20), but like David, the first preparation must be that of the heart. *G. M. Hydon*

From Lagos: From 1 Chr. 22: 1-7 we would infer that David had identified the site for the house of the Lord, and his heart was wholly set to build the place of God's rest. He discerned his opportunity and role in preparing for the house which Solomon was to build (cf. 'First they gave their own selves to the Lord'—2 Cor. 8: 5), and then they offered willingly of their substance to the service of the Lord.

Ex. 25: 1-9 shows that the gifts willingly offered by the people for the building of the Tabernacle were according to what the pattern of the Tabernacle dictated. Likewise David could not prepare for the house of the Lord without the pattern; it was absolutely necessary (1 Chr. 28: 19). The all importance of the New Testament pattern of God's house would be understood by the same principle.

The offerings which David made to the Lord were not the left-overs (1 Chr. 22: 14); they were things really costly to him. 'I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart' (1 Chr. 29: 17). Said David, 'I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God' (v. 2).

'Who then offereth willingly to consecrate himself this day unto the Lord?' (v. 5) was the word of invitation to fellowship with David. The response of the people in gifts measured five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of brass, and of iron an hundred thousand talents, and precious stones. And so 'the people rejoiced... because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy' (v. 9).

S. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: The *affection* that David had towards God's

BIBLE STUDIES

house (1 Chr. 29: 3) came through the continuing years of his *affliction* (1 Chr. 22: 14) and it resulted in the bringing forth of the gold, silver, and precious stones. Take away the dross from the silver, and there cometh forth a vessel for the finer: take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness' (Prov. 25: 4, 5). God sometimes brings His people through the furnace of affliction that the dross in their lives be removed and the gold remain. (Cf. Is. 48: 10, Dan. 3: 6, 23, 30; 1 Pet. 1: 7).

As with the Tabernacle (Ex. 25: 9), so to David (1 Chr. 28: 19) the pattern was divinely given, and there was nothing of the ideas of men.

Consider the two together, David and Solomon, the Father and the Son; the desires of the father being fulfilled by the son [Comment 1]. God's challenge to us today is to build. Paul (1 Cor. 3: 9) refers to the church of God in Corinth as 'God's building'. Paul had laid the foundation, Jesus Christ (v. 11); others continued to build thereon (v. 10). All that David had prepared and gave, over and above what was required, of his own private wealth (1 Chr. 29: 3) he acknowledged was that which came from God. He was only giving back to God what God had first given to him (vv. 14 & 16). Despite what wealth we may have, or desire to have, all comes from God, and in our giving to Him the same principle applies. The work is great'... 'who then offereth willingly?' (vv. 1 & 5).

H. R. Dodge

From Melbourne: Following upon the numbering of the people and David's confession of guilt in the matter, the plague ensued. This is a reminder of the unerring principle that although upon confession the sin of the people of God is forgiven, there are the inevitable consequences in which judgement is tempered with mercy. At the word of the Lord through Gad the seer he went up to the threshing floor of Oman to build an altar to the Lord. David's request for the place of the threshing floor was for the land upon which it stood, and for which he paid Oman 600 shekels of gold. The record in 2 Sam. 24, however, reveals that in addition he bought the threshing floor itself and the oxen for 50 shekels of silver. There he built an altar and offered, the Lord signifying His approval and acceptance by fire. Here was confirmed also to David that the place which he had purchased was the accepted site of the dwelling place for the God of Israel,

for which he had purposed in his heart to prepare. We understand that the threshing floor was in Mount Moriah, which was adjacent to Mount Zion, where David had erected a tent for the ark of the covenant; but when the Temple was completed the ark was transferred to its dwelling place therein.

In David, a man after His own heart, God had found a man whom He could trust to prepare for His dwelling place and the service attached thereto. Solomon his son was the man chosen to execute the project. As we read of the gold, silver, copper, wood, precious stones and marble which he had gathered together we are much impressed by the truth of the statement made by him, 'I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God' (29: 2). 'An hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight... timber also and stone' (22: 14). In addition was his own gift of three thousand talents of gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver. Together with this was the free will offering of the leaders of the people; all revealing how the people were behind him (29: 4-9). *W. H. F., T. W. F.*

From Methil: In nothing does David's deep spirituality show itself more than in his preparations for the house of God. He prepared 'in his affliction', 'in abundance', and out of his 'affection'. What he prepared of gold, silver, brass, iron, precious stones and wood can scarcely be computed, and must have been worth millions of pounds by modern standards. However this may have been, only God Himself could assess the depth and the value to Him of the exercise of heart that prompted it all.

David himself said (Ps. 132: 2) that he 'swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob'. The spirit of the words of Eccl. 5: 1-7 must have characterised David. There can be no question that David was led by the Spirit in all this.

Just as it was with Moses (Ex. 25: 9), so here (1 Chr. 28: 11-12), emphasis is laid on the pattern. Nothing is overlooked, and although everything, it might be said, was on a grander scale, yet the principles and the divine pattern were the same and remind us of Paul's words in 2 Tim. 1: 13 and Rom. 6: 17. God has caused to be committed to writing the pattern for God's house today.

BIBLE STUDIES

All in all David is seen as a man in whom is the Spirit of Christ in all that under the hand of God he ordained, including the ministry of song. This is spoken of as the 'Songs of God' and the instruments called 'the instruments of God'.

Together David and Solomon typify our blessed Lord, for although the prosperity in Israel which made all this possible was brought about by David's having subdued his enemies, it was not God's purpose that he should build or have the ordering of its services, having been as God said 'a man of blood'. In the fact that both David and his son Solomon are identified with one another on the throne of Israel, we see a type of that glorious divine Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose sufferings and victories have placed Him on the throne of glory and of peace. *A. McIlree, Senr.*

From Middlesborough: David's first step in his preparations was to purchase the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite for 600 shekels of gold [see Answer to Question 2], and although God told him that he was not to build the house, so great was his desire for it to be built that he set about further preparations.

He firstly numbered the strangers in the land: those not of the tribes of Israel. These were the original inhabitants and immigrants from the surrounding countries whom he set to work on menial tasks. Some were set to work in forges making iron nails for the doors and couplings, others were set to quarrying stone, whilst others brought timber from Lebanon. During his life David had amassed from the spoils of war a huge national treasure, as well as a personal one of gold, silver, brass and iron. Both were used to finance the building of God's house. He informed the rulers of the people, the rich and influential, that it was God's will that his son Solomon and not himself should build the house of God. Thus David gave to Solomon the pattern for the building and also the details of the courses of the priests and Levites, and for all types of service in God's house as had been revealed to him in the Spirit.

Having donated much of his personal fortune, David entreated the rulers to do likewise. The response to this appeal was a further ingathering of gold, silver and precious stones.

J. L

From Nottingham: Although David was not allowed by God to build the house (1 Chr. 22: 8) he was permitted to prepare

the materials that would be required (1 Chr. 22: 14). This was no weary task for David, to be undertaken grudgingly and unwillingly, but just as his desire to build the house came from his heart (1 Chr. 22: 7), so his energetic preparations were the result of his affection for God's dwelling place (1 Chr. 29: 3). The motivating power was love for his God and those things which belonged to Him.

When God first gave to Moses the pattern for the Tabernacle in the wilderness the people gave willingly of their substance until there was more than enough (Ex. 36: 5). This same characteristic of cheerful, willing and abundant giving was seen as David prepared the material for the house.

It is important for those who are in the spiritual house of this dispensation to realise the importance of giving of their abilities and substance for the building and maintenance of the house. We have gifts differing according to the grace given unto us (Rom. 12: 6), and we need to sanctify these so that God may use them to His glory.

The value of the materials that went into the building of the Temple would amount, in our currency, to thousands of millions of pounds. Yet God who saw the givers looked not only on the material value but also on the willing-heartedness of those who gave. While their hearts were in a right condition to give, such action could result only in their receiving blessing. It was this principle that the apostle taught the saints in Philippi when he wrote 'Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account!' (Phil. 4: 17). Not only did David prepare the materials for the house, he also prepared his son Solomon for the great task that lay to his hand (1 Chr. 22).

In the house of God today material is necessary if each assembly forming the house is to be built up and maintained. No church of God can be planted without the required material of different sorts, and the materials are those who have bowed their hearts to the Lord and who seek to follow the divine pattern. There must also be those who, like David, look ahead and seek to encourage others who will follow on in building.

R. Hickling

From **St. Helens:** David's heart being set to build a house for God, he himself set aside much of his substance and chose skilled craftsmen in preparation for the building. We

BIBLE STUDIES

who have been highly favoured of God ought to be careful and active in promoting His glory and the welfare of His house. We ought also to be ready to do all that we can in assisting others, particularly when God has not granted us the honour of accomplishing work which He has designed for others.

As always, God was in control and created favourable conditions for the building (22: 18). He emphasized that the house should be built according to the pattern which He had given to David, and David himself was careful to indicate to his son Solomon that this should be so (28: 11-12). Only thus would God's presence be there. So now we, builded into His house by His grace, and being allowed to engage in building others into the house, must be faithful in adhering to the pattern.

Willing-hearted men of knowledge, understanding and wisdom, giving generously of their time and substance, were called to this service. Not knowledge alone was required, but wisdom as well, in order to employ knowledge more perfectly (22: 12). Such God requires now.

Commanding the princes of Israel to help Solomon, David encouraged them to 'set your heart and soul to seek after the Lord your God' (22: 19). God loves a cheerful giver, but it may be that it is not enough to be occupied in service ourselves. Should we not also, graciously, stir up others to serve, that they may joy with us in hearing, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'? First we must, as enabled, show an example. David's repeated references to his son Solomon as 'ye* young and tender' to be chosen for such a project would remind us that the young ought to be strongly encouraged to walk in the way of the Lord and be engaged in His service.

J. H. R.

From Sydney: God gave to David in writing the pattern from which to build the Temple, but whether this was by God's own handwriting or by David's handwriting 'from the hand of the Lord' does not seem clear (1 Chr. 28: 19). It appears that David's first act in preparing the materials was to set masons to hew unwrought stones, reminding us that God started to build His present house with living stones, His own Son being the chief corner stone. The stones were hewn, but the other materials were prepared. Our prepara-

tion for use in God's house commences after we have been hewn out of Satan's kingdom. To do this God provided a man-child both for David and for Himself prior to commencement of either the Temple or the spiritual house. David did not neglect the humble iron for nails, whilst looking for the gold for the altar of incense. Both were necessary then and both are necessary now. We were chosen in Christ; we were chosen for a purpose if we are in God's house today, and we should be happy to be a humble but necessary nail, if not a golden vessel, for which of these we are is God's choice, not ours.

David also sought out men whom he could bring into the service of building the house. 'Make disciples' says God to us today, for they will be used in building the house. 1 Chr. 29: 2 clearly emphasizes that any material should only be used for its chosen purpose. We have been given gifts for the same reason even though one may only be an unnoticed nail which is holding together a portion of the present house of God. Take heed now; for the Lord has chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong and do it' (1 Chr. 28: 10). These were David's words to Solomon, and are God's words to us.

B. H., G. K. K.

From Whitehills: It was a sad day indeed for David when, after revealing to Nathan the desire of his heart, he was told that he would never fulfil his plans. Yet it did not daunt him in continuing to develop and prepare for that day when these desires would be fulfilled through his son Solomon.

The Lord revealed to him the pattern of the building (1 Chr. 28: 19) and with this in mind he made preparation in abundance for all that would be required. It was to be a completely new structure in accordance with the plan of God and not just a patching up of the old plans. It was to be an exceedingly magnificent building, attracting men to it and in turn they would know more of the God of Israel.

David faithfully revealed the pattern to Solomon, who was instructed to 'be strong and do it'. There was also the promise of willing and skilful men whose hearts had been motivated by the words of king David to be involved in this great work. In his message (1 Chr. 29) to the congregation David revealed he had gathered together in abundance the things required. He gave over and above of his own personal wealth and not of his surplus. His example encouraged

BIBLE STUDIES

others in that they consecrated themselves in giving as they identified themselves with what they gave (1 Chr. 29: 5).

M. Smith

From Barrhead: David, knowing the place of the Temple, prepared the building materials in abundance. In this holy exercise David showed his deep estimation, appreciation and affection for God's holy habitation. Magnificence, splendour and glory would be characteristic of it: nothing but the best would do for the Place of God's Name. David's attitude is an inspiration for the people of God in our times. His chief desire was that he himself would build for the Lord, but this was not permitted (1 Chr. 28: 3). Nevertheless, the will of the Lord was carried out by Solomon, David's son, a man of peace and rest.

1 Cor. 3: 9 tells us very plainly that we are God's building, and great instruction is given in regard to our active service and the kind of material to be wrought by the saints within the churches of God today. Antitypical teaching is again brought out in Eph. 2: 20-21, the climax being 'growing into a holy temple in the Lord'. This truly gives effect to the whole counsel of God.

Marvellous encouragement was given to Solomon to build the Temple (1 Chr. 28: 9, 20). This reminds us of the truth brought out in the Corinthian letter, 'working together with Him' (2 Cor. 6: 1) [Comment 2].

By example and entreaty David caused the princes and leaders and the people to offer willingly. 'Of Thine own have we given Thee' (1 Chr. 29: 14). This liberal spirit should characterise the people of God today. *William Fullarton*

From Birkenhead: It was in David's heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord. God did not grant his desire because David was a man of war who had shed blood, but he was permitted to make preparation for the building. Arrangements were made for masons to hew wrought stones for the building, for iron and brass in abundance, and cedar trees without number from Tyre and Sidon (1 Chr. 22: 2-4). David also arranged for the collection of gold and silver (1 Chr. 22: 14). Besides this David made a personal contribution of gold and silver over and above all that had been prepared (1 Chr. 29: 3). His desire towards God's house resulted in the princes also making their contri-

bution (1 Chr. 29: 6-8) as well as the people with a perfect heart making their offering willingly (1 Chr. 29: 9). David also encouraged his son Solomon to become involved in the preparation of the materials (1 Chr. 22: 14). David's preparations also extended to the work-force necessary to carry through the task. Most important was David's desire that Solomon and the people in preparation for the work of building should set their heart and soul to seek after the Lord their God.

R. D. Williams

From Birmingham: David deeply loved God's house, and his love resulted in action (cf. 1 John 3: 18). His love can be measured by the richness of his provision. It was always 'in abundance', 'without weight', 'without number', 'over and above'. This was right from David's heart and the preparation was immense.

The material he gathered or gave. The plan he had in writing from God. The whole order of the house was appointed under his hand. He gathered the men for building. Indeed there was nothing of this Temple, be it the site, the pattern, the order of service, or any thing besides, that did not come by the mouth of David from God, and in every case it was the choicest of materials and the finest of workmen. Solomon, who had the privilege of building, could not be compared for wisdom, and he too was given by David. This place must have been the wonder of the world. Fitting indeed, for this is the house of the Lord God. What gladdened the heart of God and resulted in unsurpassed glory and blessing for Israel was not the grandeur of the Temple, but the love and willingness of heart that built it.

Over all his giving David desired more for his God. His zeal and vision he wished in others. 'Is not the Lord your God with you? and hath He not given you rest on every side? . . . Now set (Strong—give) your heart and your soul to seek after the Lord your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God' (1 Chr. 22: 18-19).

So David firstly called for his son Solomon, and charged him to build an house for the God of Israel. 'It was in my heart to build' David said. But he had suffered and conquered, 'shed blood . . . and made great wars'. In this he was a type of Christ. David purchased the land before any building could possibly begin, just as Christ has purchased those who believe before the house of God can be built.

BIBLE STUDIES

And so the privilege of building was not David's, but this in no way lessened his zeal. David commanded (*tsauah*, translated 'charged' in 22: 6) the princes of Israel to help his son, and lastly he said to all the congregation 'I have prepared with all my might'. What a response! David could rejoice and be glad for 'with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord'. Their giving brought joy (29: 3-9) which results in blessing (v. 10), which leads to prayer (vv. 11-19), and then worship (v. 20). The giving was over and above, and God supplied it all, the willingness and also the materials, 'for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee' (1 Chr. 29: 14). *R. Wood*

From Derby: The site on which a building is to be erected is the first essential. King David felt led of the Lord to acquire the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite as the site for the house of God, for this was Mount Moriah. David purchased it with his own private means for 600 shekels of gold by weight [see Answer to Question 2]. The first thing David did was to build an altar on which he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, calling upon the Name of the Lord, who signified His acceptance with fire from heaven. This gracious act of God gave David a sense of peace. Being assured of divine approval, he could proclaim 'This is the house of the Lord God and this is the altar of burnt offering for all Israel'. David commanded to gather together the strangers (probably the descendants of the Amorites, Hittites and Jebusites—see 1 Kings 9: 20-21). David began to prepare wrought stones and cedar trees also from the Zidonians, for he was planning something 'exceeding magnificent' for the house of the Lord. He then called Solomon his son and charged him to build the house for the Lord the God of Israel.

David gathered together all the princes and officers and the mighty men of valour unto Jerusalem and said, 'Of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons) He hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel... Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it. Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern... the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit' (1 Chr. 28: 5, 10, 11).

As regards the courses of the priests and Levites, David

had conferred with Samuel the prophet, no doubt as instructed by the Spirit of God (see 1 Chr. 9: 22-34). David said 'I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God ... stones (jewels) for inlaid work... and marble stones in abundance'. Moreover, he added treasure of his own (his own private fortune) as distinct from the fabulous wealth he had collected from the conquered nations as indemnities ... 'Who then offereth willingly to consecrate himself this day unto the Lord?' The princes of the tribes collectively added great wealth to that of David. Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly with a perfect heart. David also rejoiced, and so it was a time of rejoicing for all. It reminds us of 'The grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia' (2 Cor. 8: 1), as the apostle Paul exhorted those in the church at Corinth, 'See that ye abound in this grace also' (2 Cor. 8: 7). David reminded his people 'For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee' (29: 14).

We also can rejoice as we give to the Lord a reasonable portion of our income for the maintenance of His servants and His work, for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and He is able to make all grace abound. S. Wymer, S. R. W.

COMMENTS

1. **(Leeds):** I doubt if the idea of David as a type of God the Father can be sustained in this instance. The Methil paper suggests that David and Solomon together typify the Lord Jesus Christ since both are identified with one another on the throne of Israel, and I would tend to agree with this interpretation.

2. **(Barrhead):** In 2 Cor. 6: 1 the words '*with Him*' appear in italics; they are not part of the original text. The 'workers together' in this verse were Paul and Timothy. Similarly in 1 Cor. 3: 9—(*God's fellow-workers*)—the thought is that Paul and Apollos were fellow-workers *of* (not *with*) God, and were used by Him—in the same sense that 'ye are God's husbandry. God's building'. R. L.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. From **Melbourne:** For our own information we have made an approximate calculation of the weight and value of

BIBLE STUDIES

the gold and silver. We would be interested to see any similar calculation which may have been made by others.

A number of contributors have commented on the vast expenditure incurred in the materials prepared for the Temple, reflecting as it does, David's intense desire that the house should be a fitting dwelling-place for the Lord. The Hayes paper tabulates clearly the vast weights of the principal metals involved. So far as monetary value is concerned it is almost impossible, because of the different markets involved, to compare accurately past and present values. However, if we accept 1 talent = 30 kg, or 1058. 2 ozs, and take the current (May 1977) price of gold on the London Stock Market (i. e. **£150** per oz), then 1 talent of gold would at today's prices be worth around **£160, 000**. On this basis, David's preparation of one hundred thousand talents of gold (1 Chr. 22: 14) would, by itself, be valued at just under *sixteen thousand million pounds sterling*. His personal gift of three thousand talents of gold, and the gift of the princes and rulers of five thousand talents of gold, would add another one hundred and twenty-six million pounds to the value. The value of the other materials used was, of course, additional.

2. From Melbourne: Has it ever been suggested that the Place of the threshing floor composed the extent of the temple area?

I do not think we can accurately determine the area of the site of the threshing floor, but it is significant that David made an additional purchase of the threshing floor itself for the price of fifty shekels of silver (2 Sam. 24: 24). I am attracted to the suggestion made in the Kingston paper that the additional purchase was made because the original area of ground purchased from Oman may have been insufficient to comply with the demands of the pattern. R. L.

BIBLE STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

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Solomon's Temple was made of the very best materials by the most skilled craftsmen, and in its size and magnificence it was an evidence of the willing giving and patient labour of the king and people of Israel for their saviour God. However, all would have been in vain had it not been built according to the pattern, and this holds a perennial lesson for those who would build for God; the revealed pattern is of supreme importance. The stones were pre-shaped at the quarry to fit into their places, and the living stones built today into the spiritual house are similarly intended for a particular purpose — 'we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them' (Eph. 2: 10). Into the Temple could only be brought the riches that God had given, as David had recognised (1 Chr. 29: 14), and the two mighty pillars before the house reminded those who looked on them that the house and the nation depended on God for their establishment and strength.

Solomon confessed too that although God had chosen to set His name on the house and honoured it with His presence, He was not restricted by it, and the fact that it was in their midst was no guarantee of God's automatic support for Israel. If they turned away from God, the beautiful, costly house would not help them (1 Kings 9: 6, 7). It is salutary for us to recognise that if we build a spiritual house to the pattern, but turn from God in our hearts, we too can be 'cast out of His sight'. Arrogance has no place among the people of God.

P. L. H.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

From Hayes: It is interesting to see the part played in the building by men who were not Israelites. Hiram (or Hiram) the king of Tyre, provided the cedar wood from Lebanon (1 Kings 5: 6). This was a business arrangement but Hiram entered into it with enthusiasm because of his love and

BIBLE STUDIES

respect for **David**. Solomon **did** not compromise **but said** to Hiram 'great **is** our God above **all** gods' (2 Chr. 2: 5), and Hiram **said** 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, that made heaven and earth' (2: 12). Solomon numbered **all** the aliens in Israel (**153, 600**) and **set** them to work on the project (2: 18). Hiram sent amongst others a very **special** craftsman, also **called** Hiram, whose mother **was** from Israel (2: 14, 1 Kings 7: 14). **Perhaps** his most notable work **was** in casting the two bronze pillars (2 Chr. 4: 12) and the 'sea', the reservoir from **which** the lavers were filled [Comment 1]. Great stones were hewn both by Solomon's and **Hiram's** servants. The stones were **made** ready at the quarry and **there was** no sound in the **Temple** area of working on the stones (1 Kings 6: 7).

The description of the Temple is not so detailed as that of the Tabernacle and models **which** have been made draw a good deal on the imagination. The sanctuary **itself**, however, is **described** in some detail and **was** similar in form to the Tabernacle. It should be noted that although **all** the details are not given in **Scripture**, these were communicated to **David** in writing and by the **Spirit** (or in his spirit). It would seem that **David** drew the plans **but** God guided his hand [Comment 7]. God also revealed to **David** the weight of gold that was to be used for each article of furniture (1 Chr. 28: 15). Thus God was the architect of the Temple, as He was of the Tabernacle.

The most holy place was a cube, the sides being 20 cubits in length, overlaid with gold (2 Chr. 3: 8), and contained two cherubim of wood, 10 cubits high, overlaid with gold, whose wings touched each other and the walls (1 Kings 6: 23-28). The holy place was 60 cubits long, 20 wide and 30 high, lit with windows presumably near the ceiling (1 Kings 6: 2-4). In the holy place there were placed ten golden lampstands, ten golden tables and one golden altar. From 1 Kings 7: 48 it appears that the Shewbread was set out on one table only [Comment 8]. At each side of the sanctuary there were small rooms, arranged in three storeys (1 Kings 6: 5-6). In front of the holy place was the porch, 10 cubits long, 20 wide and, presumably, 30 cubits high. 2 Chr. 3: 4 gives the height as 120 cubits but this seems very unlikely. In front of the porch were two, free-standing bronze pillars. According to 1 Kings 7: 15, the height of each was 18 cubits but in 2

Chr. 3: 15 'two pillars of 35 cubits high'. The circumference of each was 12 cubits and they were surmounted by elaborately ornamented capitals 5 cubits high [Comment 2].

Surrounding the sanctuary were large courts (2 Chr. 4: 9): the court of the priests and the great court, no dimensions being given. In the court of the priests would be placed the altar, the 'sea' and the ten lavers. The bronze altar was 20 cubits square and 10 cubits high (4: 1) and must surely have been reached by steps, or a slope, in spite of the prohibition in Ex. 20: 26. The 'sea' was 10 cubits in diameter, 5 high, an handbreadth thick and stood upon twelve bronze oxen. It held 3, 000 baths according to 2 Chr. 4: 2-5, but 2, 000 baths according to 1 Kings 7: 26. Assuming it to be hemispherical, the present writer calculates that the 'sea' would hold 24, 000 litres. The New Bible Dictionary reckons the bath as **22** litres, which would make the capacity of the 'sea' approximately 1, 000 baths [Comment 2].

The building of the Temple took seven and a half years (1 Kings 6: 1, 37, 38). When it was ready, the Ark was brought from Zion and the Tabernacle, with its vessels, was brought up from Gibeon (1 Kings 8: 1-4). The great ceremony of dedication followed, and the cloud filled the house as the visible sign that 'the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord'.

Since the inner portion of the Temple was the same in arrangement as the Tabernacle, it would seem that the typical teaching, usually set forth with reference to the Tabernacle, also applies to the Temple. We noted that the discussion in Hebrews is based on the Tabernacle.

We were not able to find any typical teaching in there being ten lampstands, ten tables and ten lavers. The number ten is not much used in Scripture, though the ten commandments is one very important case. [See reply to question from Kingston].

We assume that, as in the Tabernacle, the people were able to approach as far as the entrance to the court of the priests and to see the sacrifices on the altar. The outer court of Herod's Temple was divided by a low wall and the Gentiles had access as far as this wall but nothing is said about Gentile access to Solomon's Temple, though they had so much to do with its construction. *C. R. Stoner*

BIBLE STUDIES

From Kingston-upon-Thames: **Dauids** spiritual greatness lay in his **attitude** to the house of God. **He had a** clear vision of a structure befitting the greatness of God. 'In His **temple** everything saith, Glory' (Ps. **29: 9**). **The Temple was** magnificently **beautiful**, in detail rather than in size. **The word 'hekel'**, meaning **'palace'** or **'temple'** is **used** equally of the Tabernacle, so bearing eloquent testimony to **the fact that** it is **the** dwelling there of God **that** imparts **the** true glory. Man builds; God hallows (**1 Kings 9: 3**). Man performs **the** outward and mechanical effort; God works **the** inward and spiritual.

The house took over seven years to **build with help** in certain skills from **the** Phoenicians who **seemed to be** culturally more advanced. **It was** constructed of limestone finished **at the** quarries (**1 Kings 6: 7**) [Comment 3]. **These were** stones **prepared, then** brought for building into **the** fabric. **The parallel** with **1 Peter 2: 5** is striking. **The covering used was** Lebanon **cedar** and **the** whole construction **was** in **three** sections comprising a porch, holy **place** and holy of holies (**1 Kings 6: 3-4, 20; 2 Chr. 3: 2-8**). **The** majestic interior is described in **1 Kings 6: 14-38**.

The place of construction **was** divinely chosen (**1 Chr. 21: 28; 22: 1**) and **the** pattern **was** divinely appointed (**1 Chr. 28: 19**). **It has** always been so with God's house and is so today (e. g. **Acts 1: 3**). **It seems** also **that the** pattern of service **was** God-appointed (**1 Chr. 24: 19** and **2 Chr. 29: 25**).

The **wealth** of store for **the** construction of **the** house could not **be measured** This is **the** loftiest form of devotion and cannot **be** calculated. In contrast when **Judas came** on **the** scene **he attempted** to **value the** ointment of Mary's love (**John 12: 5**). **The measure** by which **He** gives may **be expressed** as 'good measure, **pressed** down, shaken together, running over' (**Luke 6: 38**). This also is required of us.

Ft. I. Shaw

From Lagos: The Temple of Solomon **was** also a copy of **the true** (Heb. **9: 24**) and so **the** pattern given to David (**1 Chr. 28: 12, 19**) allowed for no omissions or additions. **The** Lord endowed Solomon with **the** blessings of wisdom and riches and honour, and in **the** fourth year of his reign **he** purposed in his **heart** to **set** about **the** building of **the** house of God. **He** identified **the** Temple site on Mount Moriah **where the** Lord **appeared** to David his **father** (**2 Chr. 3: 1**).

We observe the following details as a brief outline of major differences between the pattern for the Tabernacle and the pattern for the Temple: —

	Solomon's Temple	The Tabernacle
1. Altar of Brass	20 x 20 x 10 cubits (2 Chr. 4: 1)	5 x 5 x 3 cubits (Ex. 38: 1-7)
2. Laver	10 Lavens for different application (2 Chr. 4: 6)	1 Laver (Ex. 30: 18-21)
3. Lampstand	10 Lampstands (2 Chr. 4: 7, 20)	1 Lampstand (Ex. 37: 17-24)
4. Table of Shewbread	10 Tables (2 Chr. 4: 8, 19)	1 Table (Ex. 25: 23-30)
5. Molten Sea	Holding 3, 000 baths (2 Chr. 4: 2-5)	None

The setting of the Temple of Solomon was nevertheless very similar to that of the Tabernacle of Moses. The relative positions of the furniture such as the brazen altar, the laver, the ark of the covenant and the altar of incense were not changed. The increase in the number of lampstands, lavens and tables of Shewbread does not in any way violate their teachings nor the principles portrayed through them.

On the day of the dedication the Lord answered by fire to consume the burnt offering and the sacrifices. By reason of the glory of the Lord the priest could not stand to minister. Such was the grandeur of divine approval of the house which Solomon built for His name. That which Solomon built satisfied for the dispensation of the law. 'Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands' (Acts 7: 48). But Christ as a Son, is over God's house; 'whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end' (Heb. 3: 6). The emphasis has therefore changed from a physical house to a spiritual house with the change of the dispensation.

S. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: Determination and dedication are among the characteristics of Solomon (2 Chr. 2: 1, 4) and should be in any who have a desire towards God's house, 'whose house are we, if we hold fast' (Heb. 3: 6). David's expressed desire to build a house for God was fulfilled by his son, and the promise of God toward David (2 Sam. 7: 12, 13) was

BIBLE STUDIES

realised. Similarly, the will of the Father was fulfilled by the Son (John 4: 34; 5: 30; 6: 38).

The house was established at Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah (2 Chr. 3: 1) at the very place where David had raised an altar to the Lord. The sacrifice was made there in the acknowledgement by David, in the Spirit, that there was the house of God (1 Chr. 21: 26, 22: 1).

Abraham had earlier come to the land of Moriah and raised his altar on which to offer up his only son Isaac, upon *one* of the mountains and in *the* place, the place of God's choice (Gen. 22: 2, 9). Sacrifices were always intended to be offered with some cost to the offerer. Whatever the offering, be it a bullock, a lamb, a turtle-dove, or even a handful of meal, all were made at some cost. At the place where Solomon raised up the Temple of God in Mount Moriah, David had paid the price. Although Oman had volunteered to give the place to David, David said, 'I will not take that which is thine... nor offer a burnt offering without cost' (1 Chr. 21: 23 & 24). Today God's house is not a material structure but spiritual, and God's together people offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2: 5). Such sacrifices should be made with some cost if they are to be of real value to God (Heb. 13: 9-17; Rom. 12: 1). Let us remember that the greatest price ever paid for anything was paid by God. The altar of sacrifice was Calvary, that was *the* place (Luke 23: 33); the offering was His Only Begotten Son (John 3: 16; 1 Cor. 6: 20).

When Solomon completed the house, which had taken over 7 years in building (1 Kings 6: 37, 38), he asked, 'But will God in very deed dwell on the earth?' (1 Kings 8: 27). The house, ornate and costly as it was, would have no true value unless God was in it (Ps. 127: 1). Solomon had been encouraged by David, 'Be strong and of good courage, and do it... until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord be finished' (1 Chr. 28: 20). *H. R. Dodge*

From Melbourne: For the God of Israel to dwell in the midst of His people, the principle was the same as that which applied to the construction of the Tabernacle, when Moses was instructed to make all things after the pattern which was showed to him in Mount Sinai. The pattern which David received by the Spirit (or in his spirit) would be faith-

fully adhered to. Only thereby, Solomon knew, could he be assured of the sacred Presence, when it was completed. His knowledge and appreciation of the greatness and majesty of Elohim, the God of Israel, is expressed in the contrast (2 Chr. 2: 5, 6) between the Temple and Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. His own unworthiness in undertaking such a task would only be justified by the objective in view; that from a redeemed, grateful and worshipping people, incense and offering pleasing and acceptable to the Mighty God of Jacob would be offered and burned upon its altars. He had been encouraged and assured regarding the work of his hands by the knowledge of his father's experience at the threshing floor of Oman, the charge to himself which followed and his own experience at the high place at Gibeon when the Lord appeared to him. Solomon added to the abundance which David had provided, further abundance, including the cedar, fir, and algum trees from Lebanon.

When the work of building was completed, he brought in the dedicated things of David to be placed in the treasuries of the house. Then came the assembling together of the leaders in Israel for the momentous occasion towards which they had laboured—the bringing up of the ark of the covenant, together with the tent of meeting and the holy vessels that had been in the tent, by the hands of the priests and Levites, who were appointed to bear them. They brought the ark with its cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat into the most holy place, placing it under the wings of the cherubim. *D. McF., T. W. F.*

From **Methil**: The Temple was the first permanent building for God, and replaced the Tabernacle, a portable structure made some 500 years previously. All kinds of skills and thousands of people were required to build it, for no man can build for God by himself. In the account in 1 Kings we read that it took over 7 years, the perfect time, to build such a glorious, magnificent house. Only the best would do. Everything had to be right; distance and cost were no object—even some of the nails were gold (2 Chr. 3: 9, cf. 1 Chr. 22: 3).

The Temple was in every way larger than the Tabernacle. The cherubim had enormous wing spans; there were ten lampstands instead of one; the altar of brass was twenty

BIBLE STUDIES

cubits square, whereas that for the Tabernacle was only five cubits square. Yet with all its size and glory and magnificence, Solomon was very conscious that this great house was for sacrifice and burning of incense, and the heaven of heavens could not contain God.

Solomon could not select *any* place for the Temple; that had already been appointed by David his father as instructed by God. So he built the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah, the place of the Name. This site had been, and again in the future would be associated with sacrifice. This Temple was built to a divinely given pattern which David passed to his son Solomon (1 Chr. **28: 11, 12**). The site, the pattern and the materials were all of God's choosing. When it was completed, God was pleased to recognise the house. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

The house of God was to be associated with prayer. Many would prove the value, when in captivity, of looking toward Jerusalem and praying to God in heaven, who would hear their petitions. The Lord Jesus when on earth was to call God's house a house of prayer. *Neville Coomer*

From Whitehills: Solomon, like Moses, was not left to his own devices in building the Temple, but was given guidance and instruction by God. All the material was made ready and carefully examined, for it must comply with God's pattern. Today it is necessary that each individual 'living stone' be examined before being added to the spiritual house.

The Temple was erected on Mount Moriah, where Abraham was told to take his son and offer him for a burnt offering, and where David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings in order to divert the plague from Israel [Comment 4], The Temple was to be 'the place of the Name' for therein rested the ark of the covenant which was taken in after all was completed [Comment 5].

It was a time of joy at the end of seven years when the Temple was built. Solomon blessed God and blessed Israel. For fourteen days the people kept feast and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart. Joy always results from obedience.

At the dedication of the house (2 Chr. 6: 1, 2) Solomon said The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick

darkness. But I have built Thee an house of habitation, and a place for Thee to dwell in for ever'. He was filled with awe that God should dwell with man on earth. The glory of the Lord which had departed from the house at Shiloh had returned, thus establishing the work of the hands of men (Ps. 90: 17).

The Tabernacle was the parable for the time now present (Heb. 9: 9). The Temple is the parable for divine service in the Millennium.

To the loyal hearted Israelite the house of God at Jerusalem meant more than any other place on earth, and so should the house of God to the saints today. As David said 'Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth' (Ps. 26: 8). *James McLeay*

From **Barrhead**: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it' (Ps. 127: 1). Moses built the Tabernacle as it was shown to him on the mount, a divinely given pattern. King David also received from God a pattern for the Temple (1 Chr. 28: 11-21). 'All this, said David, have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of the Lord, even all the works of this pattern'. These two men considered every detail received from God was of utmost importance. This teaches us again to hold fast to the divinely given pattern for the house of God today and realize the importance of every detail.

In the building of the Temple two other things were noted; God chose the place in which it would be built, and the builder, Solomon, a man of peace. Solomon said of the Temple that it would be wonderful and great, for God is worthy of only the best in material and service. Some material David had in store; other material Solomon imported, but an essential in all the work of God is willing-hearted men and women. Today God needs willing hearted workers who have a love and zeal for the house of God.

Solomon gives some of the reasons for a house for God; it was a chosen place for divine worship and service, and a place of sacrifice dedicated to Almighty God. The Tabernacle was for a pilgrim people, but now there was a permanent building where the people could approach and draw nigh to God.

The Temple was completed according to the pattern and

BIBLE STUDIES

furnished with David's provision. In 2 Chr. 5: 9 (Mg) it is written that the ark was taken into the holy of holies and the staves were withdrawn. The wilderness experience was over, now there was a [permanent—*Eds.*] place for God's name. The glory of the Lord filled the temple. Well could the Psalmist write, 'And in His temple everything saith, Glory (Ps. 29: 9).

The Temple was to be a place of prayer not only for Israel but for the stranger also. The house was for the blessing of Israel and then to all the nations. The Lord Jesus Christ could say on a later day, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'. What a responsibility is ours as we consider such a high calling, to be found in the spiritual house, and to share in the worship and service, holding to the sound pattern. Paul's exhortation to Timothy reads, 'how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Tim. 3: 15). May it be as we hold fast the precious pattern entrusted to us, that in doing so the glory of the Lord may fill the house.
R. Green

From **Birkenhead**: God's people were in their own land: Jerusalem was the place of God's choice and the chosen king was on the throne. Now the erection of a house for God was to be undertaken by Solomon at God's direction. Solomon declared that it was to be 'great: for great is our God above all gods'. It was evidently an awesome task for Solomon realised that the heaven of heavens could not contain his God. Solomon entered into a trade agreement with Hiram, king of Tyre and traded grain, wine and oil in return for timber which was not available in Israel. Hiram also supplied skilled craftsmen to help the work forward.

The building was erected in seven years on the site purchased by David and was of such magnificence that the Queen of Sheba was overwhelmed (1 Kings 10: 7). The altar was sixteen times larger in area than that in the Tabernacle. The molten sea used by the priests for washing contained 10, 000 gallons of water and its weight was thought to be about 30 tons.

It appears that the ark was the only article from the Tabernacle to find a place in the Temple. The manna and Aaron's rod do not appear to be contained in it. It seems

possible that the purpose of their presence as a reminder to the people was no longer necessary and they could be dispensed with.

The completion of the Temple was a time of great rejoicing. The ark was brought along with other items of past days (2 Chr. 5: 5) and when it arrived at 'its place' (2 Chr. 5: 7) then the glory of the Lord filled the house as evidenced by a cloud. Animals without number were sacrificed. Mention is made of 142, 000 animals offered by Solomon alone.

Ps. 122 highlights the central place occupied by the house of the Lord, and mention is made of thrones set for judgement. Solomon asked that prayer directed towards God's dwelling place would be heard on confession of sin, and that forgiveness would be granted (i) for sin against a neighbour (2 Chr. 6: 22), (ii) in time of drought (v. 26), (iii) in famine or pestilence (v. 28), (iv) when taken into captivity (v. 36). Daniel in Babylon is an example of this last situation (Dan. 6: 10). God declared that He would dwell with His people as they were bringing Him pleasure. If they turned away to other gods and forsook the commandments of the Lord, He would turn away from them (2 Chr. 7: 17-22).

R. D. Williams

From Derby: Solomon purposed to build a house for the name of the Lord, and a house for his kingdom. Here we have two of the four major buildings. The house for the name of the Lord first. A house for his kingdom, an administrative suite of offices for the business of the kingdom, then a house for himself to dwell in, and a house for Pharaoh's daughter (Solomon's wife) (see 1 Kings 3: 1) [Comment 6].

Solomon had consulted with the king of Tyre, Hiram, in regard to the vast amount and variety of timber. There was cedar, algum (a species of sandal wood, a fine grained reddish wood which had a pleasant aroma), and olive wood. Olive wood was used for the woodwork in the holy oracle. It was enclosed by folding doors made of this wood, as also were the cherubim, the wings of which extended the whole width of the twenty cubits of the oracle. The cherubim and folding doors were carved and overlaid with gold.

When the oracle was finished, the ark of the covenant was brought in from the city of David which is Zion. This was a great occasion which was announced by the sounding of 120 trumpets by the priests. The Levites were the singers

BIBLE STUDIES

and with the instrumentalists made one sound. Then the house was filled with the glory of the Lord, and Solomon's prayer followed.

In ch. 7, when Solomon made an end of praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings, and the glory of the Lord filled the house for the second time. When all the people saw the fire come down from heaven they bowed themselves and worshipped.

A Smith, S. R. W.

From Hamilton (Scotland): It is noteworthy to observe the differing points of emphasis between the descriptions of the Temple as given in the books of Kings and Chronicles; for example neither the veil nor the brazen altar are mentioned in Kings, but are found in Chronicles. Furthermore, the entrance doors are beautifully described in 1 Kings 6: 31 — but no such detail is in Chronicles, e. g. 2 Chr. 4: 22.

The oracle, the innermost chamber of the Temple, was divided from the holy place by doors of olive wood, joined to the side posts by hinges of gold; the doors were 4 cubits wide; to put them in perspective, one fifth of the width of the oracle. The olive tree used for the door was a well-known symbol of beauty cf. Hosea 14: 6, 'His beauty shall be as the olive tree'; but not only were the doors of beautiful olive wood, they were also carved with cherubim and palm trees. If the olive tree was renowned for its beauty, the palm tree was well-known for its towering stature, cf. Song of Songs 7: 7, 'Thy stature is like to a palm tree'. Added to this were 'carvings of . . . open flowers' 1 Kings 6: 32—the beauty of the olive tree, the stature or dignity of the palm, and now the intricate, detailed beauty of a flower. Sterile indeed would our study of the Temple be if we did not see a prefigurement of our Lord Jesus Christ in the door, helping us to understand His words, 'I am the door'. How wonderful it is also to see in concrete terms of the Temple the beautiful spiritual reality that God indeed dwells with men and that God has his house on earth in the 20th century.

The pair of gold-covered olive-wood doors was not the only barrier dividing the holy of holies from the holy place, for there was also 'the veil of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubim' (2 Chr. 3: 14). There are many similarities between the veils in the Temple and the Tabernacle but there are two points of difference.

1. The Hebrew word *karmil* translated crimson in relation to veil in 2 Chr. 3: 14 is only found elsewhere in the O. T. in 2 Chr. 2: 7 and 2: 14. In relation to the veil in the Tabernacle another Hebrew word is used and is translated 'scarlet', cf. Ex. 26: 31.

2. According to Dr. Strong in his concordance the word translated 'fine linen' in relation to the Temple veil is *buwts* in the Hebrew, but the word translated 'fine linen' in Ex. 26: 31 is the Hebrew term *shesh*.

The silence of Scripture about the materials used for the doors of the courts should not be ignored, for it is in direct contrast with the detail of the doors of olive wood. Perhaps the lesson lies in the focusing of our attention to the overlaid 'brass'. The Holy Spirit is concise but clear in 2 Chr. 4: 9, 'Furthermore he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid the doors of them with brass'.

One tends to overlook the important place that brass had in the building of the Temple. For the creation of numerous brazen vessels, the princes of Israel gave 18, 000 talents of brass in addition to their contribution of gold, silver and iron (cf. 1 Chr. 29: 7), but even more impressive is the statement of 1 Kings 7: 47 RVM, 'The weight of brass was not searched out'.

Matthew Carruthers

From Liverpool: Solomon (i) was chosen by God to do it, (ii) was instructed by David to do it, (iii) purposed in his own heart to do it. His motive, similar to David's, was to show that 'our God is greater than all gods'. The Temple was built for (i) service to God and (ii) testimony to other nations.

The mention of Mount Moriah provides an interesting link with Gen. 22: 2, although there it was a district where Abraham offered Isaac. It was also the site of the threshing floor of Oman the Jebusite, the place where David was told to build an altar to the Lord to offer burnt and peace offerings after he had sinned [see Comment 4].

Solomon's Temple had a porch, a holy place and an inner sanctuary. It contained similar equipment to the Tabernacle except that there were ten lampstands and ten tables for the bread of the Presence, instead of one of each. Its two great bronze pillars before the porch seemed to be decorative

BIBLE STUDIES

rather than useful for support.

Solomon brought out from the city of David the original ark of the covenant the tent of meeting and all the holy vessels (2 Chr. 5: 2-5). However, the ark now only contained Moses' two tables of stone (v. 10). We wondered what had happened to the manna and Aaron's rod (cf. Heb. 9: 4). [In the absence of scriptural information this question remains unresolved; see observation in Birkenhead paper].

That God acknowledged what had been done is evident in the cloud coming down. There is no record of this becoming a regular happening, however. The reaction of the people to this was to fall down and worship.

David Webster

COMMENTS

1. **(Hayes):** Scripture does not actually say that the lavers were filled from the 'sea'.
2. **(Hayes):** A number of numerical discrepancies between 1 Kings 7 and 2 Chr. 4 are pointed out in this paper. In some cases these can only be accounted for by transcription errors in the text of Scripture. In the case of the 'sea', if it is assumed to be cylindrical, rather than hemispherical, its capacity would be 38, 200 litres, which is of the order of 2, 000 baths. However, the value of the bath is not known with certainty.
3. **(Kingston-upon-Thames):** The type of stone is not mentioned in Scripture.
4. **(Whitehills):** Burnt offerings and peace offerings did not normally serve to deal with sin, although 2 Sam. 24: 18-25 does appear to suggest that this was the case in this incident.
5. **(Whitehills):** The place was the 'place of the Name' before the Temple was built.
6. **(Derby):** It seems to me that 2 Chr. 2: 1 refers to the house of God and the king's house. The house for Pharaoh's daughter was a wing of Solomon's palace (1 Kings 7: 8).
7. **(Hayes):** The AV reads, '... the pattern of all that he had, by the Spirit' (1 Chr. 28: 12), and 'All this... have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of the Lord, even all the works of this pattern' (28: 19). The precise

P. L. H.

mode of revelation to David is not easy for us to understand, but it would seem in keeping with God's ways in revelation that the Holy Spirit should have a part (v. 12). Would not v. 19 suggest that the Lord gave David certain details of the pattern in written form?

8. **(Hayes):** I am not sure that this suggestion is justified. From 1 Chr. 28: 16 we learn that David prepared 'gold by weight for the tables of Shewbread, for every table'. This is a very specific statement, confirmed by 2 Chr. 4: 8, 19. May it be that 1 Kings 7: 48 refers to the 'prototype' from which the other tables were copied? Was there an important practical reason for the increase in number to ten tables? For when the service of the great new Solomonic Temple commenced, there would presumably be a great number of attendant priests required, course by course. To supply their needs it may have been necessary to have much larger supplies of Shewbread than formerly. It is interesting that in 2 Chr. 13: 11 and 29: 18 Abijah and Hezekiah's servants both referred to the table of Shewbread (singular). After the defection of the ten tribes to Jeroboam and his successors the number of priests needed to maintain the Temple services may well have declined.

G. P.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **From Kingston-upon-Thames:** What, do editors suggest, is the significance of the 'tenfold' furniture? Some thought, for instance, that 'twelfold' might have had a greater apparent significance. (A similar question was received from Birkenhead).

The number 10 appears fairly frequently in the Scriptures: there were ten plagues in Egypt, and ten commandments; in the New Testament the woman of Luke 15: 8 had ten coins, and in the parable of Luke 19, there were ten servants and ten pounds. In the future there will be a ten kingdom confederacy. It is suggested that the number signifies completeness; in the context of the Temple the significance might be that everything was provided for in an orderly way, according to the pattern. However, I am personally dubious about attributing significance to numbers where there is no

BIBLE STUDIES

specific warrant for it in Scripture.

2. From Leeds: 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1: 5). How then does the Lord dwell in the thick darkness? (2 Chr. 6: 1).

The purpose of the thick dark cloud at Sinai (Ex. 20: 21; Deut. 4: 11) was to shield the people from the bright glory of God. Solomon was saying that he had built a house which would provide a more fitting surrounding for the glory which was the sign of God's presence.

P. L. H.

3. From Liverpool:

(1) Why was Hiram allowed to help in the construction, which appears to be contrary to the general scriptural principle of separation? Compare the attitude of Ezra and Nehemiah to those who wished to help them build.

Ezra 7: 21, 22 and Nehemiah 2: 7, 8 show that materials were provided by Gentile authorities then, as for Solomon's Temple. The refusal of Ezra 4: 3 was because the personal involvement of alien peoples with the building of the house in Jerusalem would introduce conflicting spiritual principle, they having no enlightenment from Jehovah. Nor was their motivation sincere when they suggested helping to build.

(2) Can you explain the discrepancy between 1 Kings 7: 14 and 2 Chr. **1: 14** where the workman Hiram-abi is described as being the son of a woman of Naphtali/Dan respectively, his father being a man of Tyre.

I am indebted to Faussett's Bible Cyclopaedia for the following suggestion, which seems to me feasible:

'Son of a widow of Naphtali' but 'one of the daughters of Dan' i. e. she was by birth a Danite, and married into Naphtali. When her husband died she married again, as widow of a Naphtalite, a Tyrian to whom she bore Hiram (or Hiram). *G. P.*

BIBLE STUDIES

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

EDITORIAL

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One contributor this month observed: 'There is very little reference to the house of God in the scriptures under review'. This is admittedly the case; nevertheless the crisis which led to the separate kingdoms of Israel and Judah brings into relief certain principles regarding God's house, and forms an important sector of our overall study.

There emerges the major principle that even should God's ideal intention be marred through human failure, He may still honour the faith and obedience of a minority who maintain the standards of His house. Only two tribes out of twelve remained loyal to the divinely given revelation of God's dwelling among them in the Solomonic Temple at Jerusalem. To quote King Abijah's noble declaration, 'As for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and we have priests ministering unto the Lord, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites in their work... we keep the charge of the Lord our God' (2 Chr. 13: 10, 11). The fact that only a small proportion of the sons of Israel were still associated with God's house did not invalidate their being 'the kingdom of the Lord' (13: 8). Never again throughout the succeeding thousand years of that dispensation would there be more than a small minority of Israelites serving El-Bethel (the God of the house of God) in association with the Temple in Jerusalem. Yet whenever such a minority had opportunity and inclination to serve together in that house where God had placed His Name, their service was honoured and accepted (cf. Haggai 2: 1-9, Zech. 4: 6-10).

A second important principle is that God is willing to work among those deprived of the privileges of His house according to the degree of their personal faith and response to His word. Jeroboam established an alternative form of worship in his ten-tribe kingdom as a matter of political expediency. The less principled of his subjects readily followed his idolatrous lead. Jeroboam would do all in his power to discourage allegiance to the house of God in Jerusalem. He 'cast off' the priests and Levites who lived in his territory 'that they should not execute the priest's office

BIBLE STUDIES

unto the Lord' (2 Chr. 11: 13, 14). We read of others from his kingdom, 'such as set their hearts to seek the Lord, the God of Israel' They 'came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord, the God of their fathers' (2 Chr. 11: 16). Then there was the 'old prophet' in Bethel who entertained the man of God sent from Judah (1 Kings 13: 11), and the aged, blind prophet Ahijah in Shiloh (1 Kings 14: 2). Jeroboam's subjects were children of Abraham by natural descent. But as Paul reasoned many centuries later: They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children... That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed' (Rom. 9: 6-8). Those of Jeroboam's subjects who were divinely enlightened as sharers of Abraham's faith would have to risk royal disfavour and be prepared for personal sacrifice if they were to express loyalty to God's house. It was a day of division and testing for every God-fearing Israelite throughout the ten tribes. But one great guiding principle remained: the Place of the Name was God's Temple in Jerusalem. There alone could corporate worship be acceptably offered.

These two general principles give helpful light amidst the contemporary spiritual confusion and multiplied divisions. The Adversary has multiplied alternatives to the one divinely revealed way of service according to the New Testament pattern. If only a minority 'set their hearts to seek the Lord' and give effect to this pattern, they may in faith be assured that they are built together to form God's spiritual house (1 Pet. 2: 5). For various reasons, many who are spiritually enlightened have nevertheless been hindered from association on these principles. In response to their faith God works for them as He did for the spiritually enlightened who were hampered by the confusion in Jeroboam's kingdom. But just as some of Jeroboam's subjects found opportunity to associate themselves with the worship of God's house, so the Holy Spirit would constrain out from all alternatives towards unity in the spiritual house of our time. *G. P.*

THE HOUSE AND A DIVIDED PEOPLE— REHOBOAM AND JEROBOAM

From Lagos: All Israel were of one mind to set Rehoboam

the son of Solomon on the throne which Solomon vacated by death. The conditions imposed upon the people largely as a result of Solomon's sins (cf. 1 Kings 12: 4) they asked to be reviewed. Rehoboam's spiritual qualities of integrity and discernment were tested and he failed God and the people by his rough answer. The sequel was the secession of ten tribes in fulfilment of the judgement which God had pronounced against Solomon (see 1 Kings 11: 11-13, 26-40). Thus the people were divided—ten tribes with Jeroboam reigning from Shechem and two tribes with Rehoboam reigning from Jerusalem.

Jeroboam's vision rose no higher than himself. He saw the kingdom of Israel and all the privileges and he craved for them. He denied the God of Israel who favoured him with the kingly honour. Jeroboam built golden calves, choosing two centres of worship, Bethel and Dan; he appointed priests and he ordained sacrifices and feast times (1 Kings 12: 25-33). His devices alienated Jeroboam and the people with him from the God of their fathers. The Lord magnified His mercies in sending His servant the prophet to warn Jeroboam and the people about their sin but they were disobedient. Jeroboam therefore forfeited the promised blessings (1 Kings 11: 38).

Rehoboam set himself to seek the Lord after the division of the kingdom of Israel. 'Out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord, the God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord, the God of their fathers' (2 Chr. 11: 16). Thus peace, stability and strength at first attended the kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam. But it was short-lived, for Rehoboam turned from the Lord and from His law (2 Chr. 12: 1). The judgement of the Lord was brought about by Shishak of Egypt. At the warning of the prophet of the Lord the king and the people humbled themselves before the Lord and so mercy was extended (2 Chr. 12: 5-9). The treasures of the house of God in Jerusalem, and the treasures of the king's house were carried away by Shishak. Rehoboam replaced the captured shields of gold with brass shields. There was an evident decline in grandeur of the dedicated things (2 Chr. 12: 9, 10).

The Lord's rebuke to Jeroboam would show that although the kingdom was divided, the place of the Name to which His worship should be directed was still the same. The

BIBLE STUDIES

covenant which He made with the people was still binding (Ex. 19: 5-6). *M. Abvenake, S. Coker, E. Bassey*

From Leeds: It is sad that Solomon, who built God's house in Jerusalem, and who exceeded all other kings of the earth for riches and wisdom (1 Kings 10: 23), in his latter years turned away from God (**1 Kings 11: 6-9**). We considered Him who is called Faithful and True (Rev. **19: 11**), and that God is faithful (1 Cor. 1: 9), and that we should remain faithful unto death (Rev. 2: 10). God did not take away all of Solomon's kingdom, but allowed him two tribes, one for David's sake and one for Jerusalem's sake, which God Himself had chosen (1 Kings 11: 13).

It is evident, looking at the parallel histories of the two kingdoms, that many of the kings who reigned in Judah endeavoured to follow God, though they failed in many respects, whereas those who reigned over the ten tribes of Israel were bad, not following after God. God's promise to keep the line of David is evident right through, from David to Hezekiah. In Israel, no family reigned for more than two generations [Comment 1].

Our consideration of the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam enabled us to see the lack of a clear mind in either to follow God. Rehoboam went to his counsellors, not to his God (1 Kings 12: 6). Although the old men who had grown up with his father gave him good advice, his younger contemporaries, brought up in the sad and latter part of Solomon's reign when so many outside influences were at work, advised him wrongly.

Jeroboam, a man popular with the people in Solomon's time, was recalled to act as spokesman for the people. Although God spoke to him through the prophet Ahijah, he did not speak with God, and when he became king over Israel, he forsook the house of God (1 Kings 12: 26-33).

In contrast, the people who served in the house, the Levites, knew their rightful place (**2 Chr. 11: 13-14**), ever to serve God in the place appointed by Him. They left everything to go up to Jerusalem.

By the mouth of a prophet living in Israel, Jeroboam was condemned, and died in sin and away from the house of God.

P. M. Jefferson, H. R. Dodge

BIBLE STUDIES

From Macduff: Jeroboam **was the** son of **Nebat**, an **Ephraimite** who **was a** servant of Solomon (**1 Kings 11: 26**). Jeroboam **was a** mighty man of valour and **was put in** charge of **the** labour of **the** house of Joseph (**1 Kings 11: 28**). The prophet **Ahijah** told Jeroboam **that** God would rend Solomon's kingdom apart. **He** would **get** ten **parts and** Rehoboam, Solomon's son would **get** two, **the** tribe of Benjamin and **the** tribe of Judah, **because** Solomon **had** forsaken God by taking foreign **wives** and making idols to worship (**1 Kings 11: 29-33**).

Jeroboam **fled** to Egypt when Solomon learned of **the** prophecy. So in regard to persecution, Jeroboam's early **life was** similar to **that** of David. Upon Solomon's **death** Jeroboam returned and, **with the** children of Israel, **requested that** Rehoboam **make** their heavy burden of taxation lighter to bear. Rehoboam in **his** youthful pride and arrogance regarded not **the** wisdom of **the** older generation **but** hearkened to **the** youths and increased **their** burden. **The** children of **Israel rebelled** and **killed** Adoram when **he** tried to collect **their** taxes.

Jeroboam **was** crowned king and Rehoboam **fled** to Jerusalem. Instead of following God's divine plan of worship Jeroboam **built** two idols and **deceived** **the** people into worshipping **them**, and also took priests who were not of **the** tribe of Levi. God turned **his back** on Jeroboam and **dealt** severely **with him** and **all his** household (**1 Kings 14**).

God's words and instructions are to **be** followed completely **if we** are to **have** blessing. **He** who **gave His** well-beloved Son to **die** for hell-deserving sinners **such as we** is worthy of no **less** than our hearts, our **lives**, our **all**.

Colin Chinchen

From Melbourne: Notwithstanding **the** wisdom of Solomon, and **his** knowledge of **the** God of Israel, of **His** holiness, majesty and glory and **despite the fact that he had** been chosen to **build the Temple** of the Lord, **he was subject to the** passions and **failures** of men, **which have** so frequently marred and sometimes ruined **the lives** of God's people. **The** far-reaching consequences of **his** sin and failure, although **he had** been warned thereof, brought no **apparent** repentance. **The** rebellion of Jeroboam brought about **the** division of **the** kingdom of Israel, a national **disaster** to **the** people who were to **be a** kingdom of **priests** and an holy nation.

BIBLE STUDIES

Solomon had been warned that the kingdom would be divided in the days of his son, and no word of God is void of power.

Following upon the rebellion of Jeroboam, Rehoboam had purposed to go to battle against Israel to bring the kingdom back to the house of David, but was restrained by the prophet with the word of the Lord, 'This thing is of Me'. For the sin of Solomon and in the sovereignty of God the division of the kingdom had been permitted. For three years Rehoboam and his people, including the priests, Levites, and others of the people who had come to them from the ten tribes, served the Lord, walking in His ways. Although this is recorded concerning Rehoboam, yet the overall picture and final summary of his life is, that he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, because he set not his heart aright to seek the Lord. It is significant that the record is given, 'His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess'. She was an offspring of his father's sin in joining affinity with the nations whom God had driven out from before the children of Israel. We also find the sad record in 1 Kings 14: 22-24, that although the place of the Name was with Judah yet ere long they provoked the Lord to jealousy with their sins, building the high places and pillars to heathen deities, and practising the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had driven out before them. Because of these things the Lord brought up against them Shishak, king of Egypt who took away the treasures of the house of God, and the treasures of the king's house. According to the chronology given in some of our Bibles, this was but thirty-two years after the completion of the Temple and the heyday of Israel's prosperity. How quickly spiritual prosperity can deteriorate and turn to poverty, is a lesson which we can well lay to heart.

A. Sneddon, T. W. F.

From Methil: Rehoboam, son of Solomon, was the fourth and last king of a united Israel, and became the first king of the two tribes, namely Benjamin and Judah. His mother, Naamah, was an Ammonitess, and as such should never have been allowed in the assembly of the Lord (Neh. 13: 1, Deut. 23: 3).

When Solomon heard of the prophecy that Jeroboam would reign over ten tribes, he withdrew his privileges and

exiled him to Egypt [Comment 2]. On Solomon's death, Jeroboam therefore sought to befriend Rehoboam, but failed, and so the ten tribes were at enmity with Judah and Benjamin [Comment 3].

We see from 1 Kings 12: 15 that God divided the tribes, but He never divided the house. We today may draw the lesson that God's interests lie in the worship from one house. Jeroboam made a grave mistake in going against God's one house in things that he 'devised of his own heart' (1 Kings 12: 33), and made houses of high places, requiring man-made priests. In doing this, he deviated from God's given way, whereby all the people should worship at Jerusalem. We today should guard against such divisions, and so prevent diversion from God's place of worship. A contrast was noted here when a divided people could serve God, but today God only has one people [Comment 4].

We may look on this separation or division as an initial step in God's dealings with Israel, by which the ten tribes were carried off to Assyria, never returning, and the two were carried off to Babylon, from where a remnant returned [Comment 5]. God allowed judgement to go so far in that He allowed the people to be divided, yet did not allow brethren to fight brethren. At this point, He brought in an external nation, under the rule of Shishak. We compared this principle with that seen in Gen. 13: 8 where Abram said to Lot 'Let there be no strife... between me and thee... for we are brethren' [Comment 6].

The importance of the word of God is seen in 1 Kings 13, where it is mentioned many times. The same Word judged the ten tribes and judged the prophet, and today it is the same Word by which we must stand or fall, and so it is important to us today to learn from these men. Let us not be like Rehoboam as he substituted brass for gold, but rather let us hold fast the truths and teachings of God's one house as a united people. *Alistair G. Coomer*

From Barrhead: It is a sobering thought that within about thirty years of the building of Solomon's Temple ten of Israel's twelve tribes were diverted from it. We considered the situation that gave rise to this state of affairs and came to the conclusion that Solomon himself was mainly to blame. When Israel occupied the land after the death of Joshua, the

BIBLE STUDIES

resident nations were not totally annihilated, and in allowing some of these to live it was inevitable that their forms of worship would be retained and in due course influence the people of God. In spite of the Nation's continued serious failure it is worthy of note that up to the time of the captivity they were called 'My people' and we believe that in the days of the divided kingdom they are seen as one people—the people of God [Comment 7]. In addition there is such an expression as 'the whole kingdom' and we believe that the Nation as such can be so described right up to the carrying away of the ten and the two tribes [Comment 8].

From a spiritual point of view the Nation had always been a unity and when God split the kingdom we believe that He envisaged two kings but one common worship. On the other hand we noted that historically it was at this point that the word 'congregation' was last applied to the Nation [Comment 9]. We discussed the failures of both Jeroboam and Rehoboam. Jeroboam chose places as far north and as far south as he could, to associate with a form of service which he devised out of his own heart. All the Levites had been sent to the kingdom of Judah but Rehoboam organised a priesthood far removed from the will of God. We suggest however, that the high priest himself would still bear on his shoulders and breastplate not a list of two and ten names but a list of twelve names; indeed, we consider that even after the captivity the high priest would still bear twelve names although ten tribes had disappeared into obscurity. We thought on the fact that Israel could have been a theocracy and not an earthly monarchy [Comment 10].

Most of the lessons we talked about were obvious practical ones, which would arise naturally from such a portion as was studied this month. We do feel that the lessons could have been applied whether or not the kingdom was divided, assuming there still had been a departure from the ways of the Lord for whatever reason. We do not see for today any spiritual counterpart to the divided kingdom [Comment 11].

J. Ken

From Birkenhead: God remembered His promises to David, and even though Solomon departed from the Lord, yet God postponed judgement until after his death. The judgement resulted in a division of the kingdom with Rehoboam,

Solomon's son ruling over the tribe of Judah (and Benjamin —Eds.) alone (**1 Kings 11: 12, 13**). Rehoboam, by taking wrong advice, alienated the people of the other tribes and increased the rift between them. Rehoboam had within his territory Jerusalem, the place of God's choice, and the Temple with all its glories. He failed to appreciate his position, and when he was established and grew strong turned away from the Lord. Because of this the Lord sent the Egyptian army against him, and treasures from God's house and the king's house were taken. Realising their error Rehoboam and the princes humbled themselves, and the Lord withheld further judgement. The Scripture verdict of Rehoboam's reign is that it was evil. He failed to value rightly the things that were inherited by him, and let them go.

Jeroboam meanwhile evidently failed to appreciate that the Lord had set him over the ten tribes. He sought to maintain his position by his own scheming. When the time for the feast (possibly the Feast of Tabernacles) drew near he decided to set up new centres of worship, new objects of worship, a new altar of sacrifice, a new order of priests and a new annual feast (**1 Kings 12: 28-33**). These were aimed at obviating the necessity for the people to travel to Jerusalem from whence he felt they would not subsequently return, but remain and swell the number of those who supported Rehoboam. There were some who realised the error of this policy and they went to Jerusalem, having set their heart to seek the Lord, and strengthened Rehoboam's kingdom (2 Chr. 11: 14, 16, 17). A man of God was sent to Jeroboam to warn that God would have nothing to do with his sacrifices, and that judgement must fall. The man of God had received from God instructions concerning his journey, and because he failed to follow them out he died. He did not observe the warning that anything conflicting with the word of the Lord should be ignored (Deut. 13). The man who misled the man of God was deeply affected by events, and asked that he too should be buried with him. The sequel to these events is recorded in 2 Kings **23**.

That two men raised by God to be kings both failed to appreciate their position, responsibilities and privileges stands as a solemn warning to us today.

A E. Sands, R. D. W.

From Derby: We need to go back a little to 1 Kings **11** to

BIBLE STUDIES

discover the **cause** of **this divided** kingdom. Solomon loved many strange women **besides the** daughter of Pharaoh. **He had** seven hundred **wives**, princesses, and **three** hundred concubines: and **his wives** turned away **his heart**. **This was** in defiance of God's warning to **all Israel** (**see** Ex. 34: 16).

God raised **up** adversaries against Solomon, **thus** signifying **His great** displeasure. In **1 Kings 11: 26** we are introduced to Jeroboam **a** servant of Solomon who also **lifted up his** hand against **the king**. God sent **His** prophet, **Ahijah the** Shilonite, who found **him in the way as he** went out of Jerusalem and revealed to **him** God's purpose: **'I will rend the kingdom out of the** hand of Solomon, and **will give** ten tribes to **thee**'. **'But he shall have** one tribe, for My servant **David's sake**, and for **Jerusalem's sake**, the city which I have chosen out of **all the** tribes of Israel'. **It was 'because they have** forsaken **Me**': the word 'they' **seems** to include **the** people of Judah **as well as** their king. God **said that He** would not **take the** kingdom out of Solomon's hand **but** out of **his** son's hand, and would **give it** unto Jeroboam even ten tribes.

Jeroboam, **a** man of initiative, began to **devise** in **his** heart **a** means of making **his** possession of **the** ten tribes sure to **himself** and to **his** sons, ignoring **the** promises of **the** Lord **made** by **His** servant **as** recorded in ch. 11: 37-38. Whereupon **he** took counsel and **made** two **calves** of gold: and **this** thing **became** sin: for **the** people went to worship before **each** of them. **These he had devised** in **his** own heart, and **he** ordained **a feast** for **the** children of Israel, and went **up to the** altar, to burn incense. **A** man of God out of **Judah** came to **Bethel** and **cried** against **the** altar by **the** word of **the** Lord, and **said**, **'O** altar, altar, **thus saith the** Lord: Behold, **a child shall be** born unto **the** house of **David**, Josiah by name; and upon **thee shall he** sacrifice **the** priests of **the high places that** burn incense upon thee'. **Thus** God named king Josiah more than three hundred years before **his birth**, demonstrating **the** divine omniscience. **The** Lord manifested **His** sore displeasure in **His** judgement of Jeroboam, and also **His** mercy in **the** restoration of **the** withered hand, **despite such** great provocation. How easily Israel **was made to believe a lie!** **The fact that** Jehu, although so bitter against **the** worshippers of **Baal**, **was himself a** devotee of **the** two golden **calves** (**2 Kings 10: 31**), demonstrates **the** power **which the** Adversary **had to cause** Israel to persist in **the** worship of

Jeroboam's golden **calves**. For Jehu **came** to power nearly a hundred years after Jeroboam instituted this **false** worship. **2 Kings 17: 22, 23** shows **that** it persisted for centuries right on until **the** Lord took away **the ten** tribes out of **the** land into Assyrian captivity.

What God spoke through Jeremiah about Judah **was true** also of **Israel**: 'I brought you into a plentiful land, to **eat the** fruit thereof... **but** when ye entered, ye defiled My land, and **made** Mine heritage an abomination' (2: 7). **It may be that the ten tribes had manifested a measure** of repentance and **the** Lord **had** taken notice of it after they **had** been a **number** of years in captivity (see Jer. 3: 6-12).

G. Conway, S. R. W.

From **Edinburgh**: **It was because** of Solomon's idolatry **that the** Lord foretold of **the** divided kingdom. However, for David's and Jerusalem's **sakes** there **were to be** two redeeming features: **(1) It was** to occur in **the** lifetime of Solomon, and **(2) Judah** (in which **was situated** Jerusalem) and Benjamin were to remain **with** Solomon's heirs (**1 Kings 11:9-13**).

The financial legacy of Solomon's lavish spending **was the** imposition on **the** people of **large** levies. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, **faced** with **pleas** from **the** people to reduce **the** burden, forsook **the** advice of **the** old men and followed **the** advice of those young men who **had** grown up with him, whose counsel **was** to chastise **the** people even more severely than Solomon **had** done. A consequence of this is **seen** in **the** stoning of Adoram who **was** over **the** levy (**1 Kings 12: 18**). Whether **the** outcome would **have** been any different for Rehoboam if **he had** listened to **the** old men is **debatable**. However, **the** Lord **had** spoken and **the** kingdom **must be** rent. If Rehoboam's action in increasing **the** levy **was** unfortunate, it **was a** disaster for **the** nation, leading to **the** rebellion of **the** ten tribes against David's house (v. 19) and subsequently against **the** Lord.

The high point in Rehoboam's reign **came** when **he and the** people hearkened to **the** word of **the** Lord (**1 Kings 12: 24**). The way to **the** Temple in Jerusalem remained open for **all** Israel to worship, and **the** Levites (**2 Chr. 11: 14**) and others (v. 16) took **that** opportunity. **It was** not until Rehoboam forsook God's **Law** (**2 Chr. 12: 1**) **that** his enemies **came** upon him. **He had** sufficient knowledge of God to **humble**

BIBLE STUDIES

himself and confess to **the** Lord's righteousness and thereby knew **a measure** of deliverance. When **it** comes to weighing **up** Rehoboam's **life** before God there **is** no dubiety. **'He did that which was evil, because he set not his heart to seek the Lord'** (v. 14).

Jeroboam **had the** confidence of Solomon. **He was a** mighty man of valour, industrious, and consequently Solomon **put him** in charge over **all the** labour of Joseph's house (1 Kings 11: 28). **Ahijah the** prophet communicated to Jeroboam **the** word of **the** Lord concerning **the divided** kingdom. **The** future looked good for Jeroboam, **(a) if he** hearkened to **the** Lord's commands, **(b) walked** in **his** ways, and **(c) did that which was** right in God's eyes. God's promise **was, 'I will be with thee, and will build thee a** sure house, **as I built for David'** (v. 38). However, having been given **such** wonderful promises, Jeroboam proceeded in **his** ways. **The** Lord **had** warned Rehoboam not to **fight with** Jeroboam. **There was free access** to **Jerusalem** for **all the** people, **but** Jeroboam spurned God's promises, imagining **that the** people would turn against **him** if they sacrificed in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12: 27). **His lame excuse** to **the** people **was that it was** too much to go to Jerusalem (v. 28) in **spite of the fact that Beth-el** lay close by and **that Dan was** at the northernmost **part of the** kingdom, **the two places** Jeroboam **had set up** for idol worship. Four **places are** mentioned **as** having an important **place** in Jeroboam's kingdom; **Shechem (where** Rehoboam **had** been crowned king) and Penuel, **the** centres of government, and **Beth-el** and **Dan, the** centres of worship. **The use of Penuel and Beth-el must have** been particularly odious to God in **view of the** dealings **he had with Jacob at these places.**

The epitaph to Jeroboam **is** recorded frequently in **Scripture: The** sins of Jeroboam, **the** son of **Nebat**, wherewith **he made** Israel to sin'. **His** wickedness **was used as a** yardstick against **the evil** of subsequent kings. *L Burgoyne*

From Galston: **Israel's** love for **the** Lord **started** to wane about thirty-five years **after** Solomon **came** to **the** throne (1 Kings 11: 4). Instead of serving **the** only **true** living God **at** Jerusalem, they worshipped Ashtoreth, Chemosh and Milcom (1 Kings 11: 33). **Because of Israel's** disobedience God **caused Israel** to **be divided** into two and **made** known

to Jeroboam through Ahijah that he would reign over ten of the tribes.

Jeroboam reasoned that if the people returned to Jerusalem to worship there was every possibility that their hearts would turn again to Rehoboam and he would lose his kingdom. To avoid this possibility he placed a golden calf in Bethel and one in Dan, then instructed the people regarding their worship (1 Kings 12: 28-33).

As a result Jeroboam earned a name for himself—'Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin' (2 Kings 10: 29 A. V.) and, we fear, lost his soul eternally. Along with the idols Jeroboam made high places and priests and ordained feasts. One sin led to other and greater sins—a warning to us. Although Jeroboam heard the prophecy of the man of God from Judah and had his withered hand restored, yet he did not turn from his evil way (1 Kings 13: 33).

In obedience to God's instructions the man of God refused the invitation of Jeroboam, but succumbed to the old prophet's deception. Disobedience to the word of God cost him his life. We too must 'prove all things'. All spiritual claims should be examined and measured by the Scriptures. Delay in completing the work of the Lord is also seen to be dangerous. We noticed three abnormal things about the events which happened at the death of the man of God:

- (1) the lion killed the man and not the ass,
- (2) the lion did not kill to eat,
- (3) the ass did not run away from the lion.

We see here that God can use even animals to fulfil His will
(Ps. 119: 91). D. Gillies

COMMENTS

1. **(Leeds):** It is true that for much of the period from the division of the kingdom until the Assyrian captivity the families of the kings of Israel survived only one or two generations. But there are two important exceptions. Omri and his descendants were granted four generations, the reigns of Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram covering forty-eight years. Jehu was promised four generations because of

BIBLE STUDIES

his zeal in executing judgement on worshippers of Baal and the house of Ahab (2 Kings 10: 30); so the reigns of Jehu, Jehoahaz, Jehoash and Jeroboam II covered 102 years (see 2 Kings 15: 12).

2. **(Methil):** Does this accurately summarise the narrative of 1 Kings 11: 26-40? Inevitably Jeroboam lost his position and found himself in exile in Egypt. But it had not been Solomon's intention to send him there. Solomon intended to kill him, so he fled to escape.

3. (Methil): I had not understood that Jeroboam 'sought to befriend' Rehoboam. The very fact that the men of Israel recalled from Egypt the one who had been nominated by the Lord to rule over ten tribes suggests that they were in militant mood. The immediate rebellion when Rehoboam's harsh decision was announced, and the stoning of Adoniram confirm this. Jeroboam personified the ten tribes' deep discontent against the house of Solomon.

4. (Methil): This is a vital and helpful point. Even if God's ideal of twelve tribes under one king had to be substituted by two kingdoms for administrative purposes, it would still have been possible to maintain a uniform spiritual principle in relation to the worship and service of God's house. Jeroboam's lack of trust in God's promise (**1 Kings 11: 38**) caused him to lead the ten tribes away from God's house, to their undoing and his. But when it comes to the spiritual kingdom and house of the apostolic era, it was inherent in God's plan that there should be unity in government among churches of God, making them one united people, if principles of the spiritual house were to be put into effect. In drawing our lessons from Old Testament analogy we must discern certain inevitable contrasts, without losing the benefit of parallels of principle which emerge clearly for our learning (Rom. 15: 4).

5. (Methil): I agree entirely with the general contrast between the captivity of the ten tribes to Assyria and the two tribes to Babylon. Historically it is true that the former never returned. There is no record of large-scale return to the land such as occurred from Babylon under Zerubbabel,

though some representatives of other tribes were evidently still identifiable (e. g. Luke 2: 36, James 1: 1). **But** taking into view the perspective of future prophetic fulfilment, such scriptures as **Rev. 7: 1-8**, **Jer. 3: 11-18** and **Ezek. 37: 15-28** confirm that God knows the whereabouts of all the twelve tribes, and plans to reunite them as one in the land under their Messiah during His millennial reign.

6. (Methil): Without distracting from the thoughtful, sound point made about peace between brethren, it may be well to note that within a very short time there was in fact armed conflict between the two kingdoms (1 Kings 14: 30; 15: 7).

7. (Barrhead): I must confess to some diffidence about this view of two kingdoms as 'one people—the people of God'; at least I feel it to be unacceptable without some qualification. 1 Kings 16: 2 is the last reference to the northern kingdom as 'My people' so far as the narrative sections are concerned, right on to the Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17). Elijah refers to them as 'this people' (**1 Kings 18: 37**) or 'the children of Israel' (**19: 14**) in contexts where reference to them as God's people would have been particularly appropriate. As to the prophetic scriptures relevant to the northern kingdom during this period, there are but four references to them as God's people in Hosea 4 and one reference in Hosea 11. But God had already declared in Hosea 1: 9 'Call his name Lo-ammi' (that is, Not My people): 'for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God'. So it seems to me that whereas in some contexts all those of Abraham's seed might be broadly referred to as God's people (compare Rom. 11: 2), in the specialised sense of a people functioning corporately on the basis of God's revealed will (Ex. 19: 5, 6) the ten-tribe kingdom never qualified for such recognition.

8. (Barrhead): This is an interesting proposition, but I find it difficult to substantiate. The expression 'the whole kingdom' is used in 1 Kings 11: 34, 'I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand... but I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand'. These words were spoken to Solomon, and it was from his son that the ten tribes seceded.

BIBLE STUDIES

So the whole kingdom of Solomon was divided into two. In what sense were the twelve tribes ever again a 'whole kingdom'? I suggest that Abijah, son of Rehoboam, rightly expressed the truth of the matter in 2 Chr. 13: 8, when addressing Jeroboam and the men of the northern kingdom: 'And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the son of David'. In vv. 9-12 Abijah proceeded to spell out why his kingdom merited the distinction of being the 'kingdom of the Lord' in contrast to the northern kingdom.

9. (Barrhead): Presumably reference is being made to 1 Kings 12: 3; we should perhaps also bear in mind the much later gathering under Hezekiah of 'all the congregation of Judah... and all the congregation that came out of the land of Israel'.

10. (Barrhead): These thoughtful observations I feel to be in harmony with the great principle that 'the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance' (Rom. 11: 29). Despite the 'fall' of Israel her 'fulness' will yet be seen in the Millennium (Rom. 11: 12), and God's sovereign purpose through the tribes of Israel will be projected forward into the future eternal state (Rev. 21: 12). So whenever the ordinances of divine service in Israel's Temple have obtained, whether before or after the captivity, it would seem appropriate that each tribe should still be represented on the breastplate and shoulder-pieces of the high priest.

11. (Barrhead): While appreciating that spiritual analogies from Old Testament situations may in some respects fail to give a precise parallel, it does seem to me that lessons from the divided kingdom are particularly helpful to us in modern circumstances. Nor could these particular lessons have been derived from, say, the failures of a united Israel in their wilderness experience. It is the very fact that God's ideal of a united people was broken which points the lesson—see Editorial for development of this suggestion. G. P.

BIBLE STUDIES

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

EDITORIAL

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Further consideration of the house of God involves a continuing study of the history of the two tribes which had Jerusalem and the Temple as their centre. They were now in the special relationship with God that the twelve tribes had known from Sinai to Solomon, and their kings had a heavy responsibility under God to lead the people aright. In his address to Jeroboam, Abijah called the two tribes 'the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David' and this was certainly God's ordering of matters. God had made promises to David concerning his descendants, and that they were on the throne in Jerusalem was a testimony in itself that the two tribes were God's people, and must maintain the house and its activities. This was David's great desire and was the reason God so signally honoured his line; and the kings were approved or otherwise as they shared David's vision. Moses had said of the king over God's people that 'he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests and Levites... he shall read therein all the days of his life... to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them' (Deut. 17: 18, 19). If the kings had all made their copy of the law and adhered to Moses' instruction the history of God's people would have been happier.

It is worth remembering that the times of the three kings in our study this month coincided with remarkable happenings over the border among the ten tribes. Elijah and Elisha were showing miraculous powers and many other prophets were active too, but what God was doing through these men in no way diminished the service of His priests and people in the house in Jerusalem. However God may work elsewhere, or how spectacularly, it is the high business of God's people to serve Him in His house, where they have special responsibilities and services.

A. B. R.

PSALM 119

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm in the Bible; it is also the

BIBLE STUDIES

longest chapter in the Bible. It is composed of 22 sections—one for each letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Each section consists of eight verses and therefore the total number of verses in the Psalm is 176. Most of the verses consist of couplets, that is two phrases, the latter often depending on the former. In this respect it is very similar to many of the Proverbs of Solomon.

Each of the 22 sections is headed by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet eg. the first section is headed *aleph*, the second *beth*, the third *gimel*, and so on. In the original Hebrew the eight verses in the first section of the Psalm all begin with *aleph*, those in the second section begin with *beth*, and so on. In this respect the Psalm is similar to Jeremiah's Lamentation, in which chapter one has 22 verses, chapter two has 22 verses, chapter three has 3 x 22 verses, and chapter 4 has 22 verses. Here again there is a progressive alphabetical sequence maintained throughout.

In our English Bible there are seven expressions in almost every section of the Psalm. These expressions are: (1) Thy Word—two different Hebrew expressions; (2) Thy Law; (3) Thy Testimonies; (4) Thy Precepts; (5) Thy Statutes; (6) Thy Commandments; (7) Thy Judgements. A proper understanding of these expressions is of prime importance in understanding the Psalm, and in this brief study an attempt has been made to draw out the meaning of the expressions by considering them in their context. [Editorial comments are from other sources which may be helpful in this study article].

(1) THY WORD. Two Hebrew expressions are used, both translated 'Word'. The first is *imrah* meaning a saying or speech, and more than half of the Old Testament occurrences of this word are in this Psalm. The second is *dabar* meaning a word, a matter, a thing. This word is often used in the Old Testament. [CML in NT vol 23 likens *dabar* in v. 9 to 'an ample larder', and *Imrah* in v. 11 to 'precious nourishing food just eaten']. The most frequently occurring phrase used in association with God's Word is 'according to Thy Word'. The phrase occurs 13 times in the Psalm. The other phrase used is 'observance of. Surely the message here is the necessity of strict adherence to what God says in His Word. No matter what others may think, say, or do, let it be true of us that we are 'holding to the faithful word'.

Compare also what was said to Moses, 'See that thou make all things *according to* the pattern that was shewed thee...'

(2) **THY LAW.** *Tor ah* is the Hebrew word for law used in the Psalm, and it indicates direction or teaching. [It is from the root *arah*, to shoot, and there is instruction from following where the arrow falls]. The main thought associated with the expression 'Thy Law' is a love or delight for God's Law, and also determination not to forget it. There is a similarity here to what Solomon says in Proverbs, 'Forsake ye not My law'. It is of interest that the Hebrew word for law, viz *tor ah*, has been adopted into English as a term for 'the Mosaic Law, the book of the law, the Pentateuch'.

(3) **THY TESTIMONIES.** Two forms of the Hebrew word for testimonies occur in the Psalm—*edah* (plur) 14 times, and *eduwith* (sing) 8 times. About half of the verbs used with 'Thy testimonies' indicate that they are to be 'kept, observed, cleaved to'. Other words used show a 'joy, delight and love' for God's testimonies. Though others may forsake the clear evidences of the witness of God in many ways, those who wish to be well-pleasing to Him will not soon forget His testimonies.

(to be continued)

J. Robertson (Crowborough)

M. Macdonald (Crossford)

THE HOUSE AND THE KINGS—ABIJAH, ASA AND JEHOSEPHAT

From **Leeds:** The three-year reign of Abijah is dismissed in a few terse sentences based generally on a turning away from God.

Abijah (my father is Jah) is called Abijam (my father is light) in 1 Kings 14: 31 and ch. 15 [Comment 1]. Although he walked in the sins of his father, Rehoboam, yet for David's sake, God allowed his lamp to shine in Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 11: 36). God had chosen Jerusalem to put His Name there, the light was to shine always (cf. John 9: 5; 3: 19) [Comment 2]. Abijah knew the ways of David and that God had made His covenant with David and with his sons (2 Chr. 13: 5). He also knew, relative to God's house, the right way of approach to God and that the priests of God were

BIBLE STUDIES

to be the sons of Aaron and the Levites (v. 10).

In the great battle, half a million chosen men of Israel were slain (v. 17) because the children of Judah relied upon God to give them the victory. 'If God is for us, who is against us?' (Rom. 8:31).

In contrast to Abijam (1 Kings 15: 3) the heart of Asa (Physician) was perfect with the Lord all his days (v. 14). As David said, 'My heart is fixed O God, my heart is fixed' (Ps. 57: 7). 'Incline not my heart to any evil thing' (Ps. 141:4).

The reign of Asa is characterized by a return to God by the king (2 Chr. 14: 2) and also by the people (ch. 15). Asa renewed the altar of the Lord (v. 8) and great were the offerings made unto the Lord (v. 11). They entered into a covenant relationship with God, to seek the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul (v. 12). Asa accepted what had been clearly pointed out to him by Azariah, 'The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him . . . if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you' (v. 2), consequently, Asa brought into the house of God the offerings (v. 11) and the silver and gold (v. 18). If our hearts are right with God we can draw near (Heb. 10: 22).

In the third year of the reign of Jehoshaphat, teachers were sent out into the land (2 Chr. 17: 7). He saw the need for the law amongst all the people, preparing their minds and their hearts to seek after God. Jehoshaphat walked in the first ways of David (v. 3) and consequently the Lord established his kingdom (v. 5). Jehoshaphat knew that God's name was in His house at Jerusalem (2 Chr. 20: 9) and all of Judah stood before the Lord (v. 13). They all worshipped (v. 18) and they all praised (vv. 27, 28; cf. Ps. 84: 4, 100: 4)

H. R. Dodge, P. M. Jefferson

From Macduff and Whitehills: The Lord in mercy tolerated Abijah for three years so that His purposes in having an offspring of David on the throne might be fulfilled. This king knew the importance of the house and the God of Israel, for he said, 'The Lord is our God' (2 Chr. 3: 10). But his words were from the lips only for his heart was not right with God (1 Kings 15: 4) [Comment 3]. Asa his son succeeded him and did right in the eyes of the Lord. It might well be that some of the wicked kings would have been

acceptable to men and perhaps some men would have rejected Asa, but God looks on the heart and knows the intent of our inward being. Asa rightly saw that the most important part of his kingdom was the house of the Lord and realised that it could give God little glory if firstly the idols and strange worship were not removed. The lesson here is that there must first be a cleansing before there can be a giving unto the Lord. Asa sought to enrich the house by bringing in precious things, and God in return gave him ten years of peace. God encouraged Asa through His prophet saying, 'If ye seek Him (that is, the Lord) He will be found of you . . . Be ye strong . . . your work shall be rewarded' (2 Chr. 15: 2-7). Yet he failed when he robbed the treasuries of the house to give to the Syrians, and even after being exhorted by the seer he continued to do foolishly before God. Jehoshaphat, like his father, knew that idolatry is a great sin before God and sought to remove places of idolatry. He also realized that God's house should be a place of order and he commanded the Levites and the teachers to be in their place. So the Law of the Lord was brought out and taught in every city and the peace of God again prevailed over a God-fearing people whose first desire was to worship Him in God's chosen place. Like all men this king had his failures but it is impressive to picture him in the courts of the house of his God giving Him the glory along with a host, the people and even children. Then he exhorted them to go to battle with praise on their lips and when they returned to the house in triumph they were still rejoicing and praising God (2 Chr. 20: 1-30). God's House will be a place of prayer and rejoicing if our hearts are fully set in obeying Him.

In these kings we have a lesson for leaders today. If they fail, the people will be affected and the Lord will lose pleasure in us and will also be robbed of treasure in His house.

J. Mitchell

From **Melbourne**: Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, failed sadly in the solemn responsibility to rule for God. It is recorded that he walked in all the sins of his father. The service of the house of the Lord continued, in form at least, and he became mighty, and the Lord for David's sake gave him victory over Israel. In the day of trouble he and his people called upon the Name of the Lord, yet his heart was not perfect before

BIBLE STUDIES

Him as had been the case with David. Nevertheless he has a place in the royal line of the house of David, from which the Christ would come.

How different is the history of Asa! Coming to the throne, he saw the tendency to idolatry, and one of his early national reforms was to take away the strange altars, high places and images which had been erected in the days of his father and grandfather. Moreover, he executed judgement in his own household by removing his mother from the honoured place of queen mother [Comment 4]. She had made an abominable image for an Asherah, which he destroyed. His heart was set towards the house of the Lord, and its service was renewed and encouraged; for it had experienced dark days in the reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah. Yet the divinely inspired chronicler does not hesitate to record his failures. Amongst others, in the day of trouble, he sought not unto the Lord, but to the king of Syria and his hosts to help him against Baasha, king of Israel. In fear he had forgotten that the Lord had promised to show Himself strong in the behalf of all whose heart is perfect toward Him. But we judge that the outstanding failure is summed up in a very few words, which are also found in the Biblical epitaph of some of the godly kings of Judah, 'The high places were not taken away'. How deeply rooted in the hearts of the people was the desire to serve the Lord according to the ways of the nations in every acceptable place which their eyes rested upon! They had forgotten the divine command 'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose' (Deut. 12: 13-14).

Commendation is given to Jehoshaphat because he sought the God of his fathers, and walked in the first ways of his father David, and in the commandments of the Lord. Again, like his father Asa he sought to stem and correct the idolatrous tendency to move towards the gods of the nations. High places and images had again appeared in Judah; possibly having been restored in the later years of Asa without his knowledge. Jehoshaphat took away the high places and images. He also realised the fact that there was a famine in Judah—not of bread, but of hearing the law of the Lord. He sought to correct this by sending princes and Levites throughout the cities of Judah, having the book of the law

of the Lord with them. His own knowledge of the law caused him to set judges throughout the land who were instructed to judge in the fear of the Lord and without respect of persons.

When Moab and Ammon gathered together against him, he feared, and with his people sought the help of the Lord. Standing before the congregation in the house of the Lord he pleaded the promises made to Abraham and his seed, and in the words of Solomon cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard and destroyed the hosts that had risen against them. The overall picture of his reign is summarised by the chronicler; that he walked in the way of Asa his father, and turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. In the matter of having joined affinity with Ahab, he brought himself under the chastening hand of God, and received from the prophet the strong reproof: 'Shouldest thou help the wicked, and love them that hate the Lord?' (2 Chr. 19: 2). The separation of himself and his people as a holy nation unto the Lord had been marred thereby. A further failure is his association with Ahaziah, king of Israel, one who acted very wickedly; and for which association their joint navy of ships was destroyed. But possibly his greatest failure is summarised in those few and simple words, 'The high places were not taken away'.

D. Mawhinney, T. W. F.

From Nottingham: Israel was presented with an outstanding opportunity when Abijah addressed them with an earnest appeal to consider their ways in relation to the house of God (2 Chr. 13: 4-12). He spoke to them in bold terms of Jeroboam and his wickedness and exposed the idolatrous nature of the system of worship they followed. In contrast he showed them that in Judah expression was being given to the will of God in the service of the house of God, and because of this, joy was being experienced. The appeal was rejected. Jeroboam attacked but the Lord gave Judah the victory. In our day we do well if we appeal to those who are redeemed by the same precious blood as we, but who follow the traditions of men rather than the revealed will of God. There may be little response but we should not flag in our efforts to bring before them the truth of the house of God which is precious to the Lord and should be to us. While we

BIBLE STUDIES

note that Abijah made this earnest appeal to Israel it is important to notice that he did not associate himself with any of their evil ways. He stood on the ground of truth and reached out to others. In our outreach, separation from unscriptural associations must be maintained.

Asa followed David's example. His approach was a positive one for he destroyed those things which belonged to idolatry, albeit this would not increase his popularity in certain quarters. The contrast between the action of Asa when he was faced with the armies of the king of Ethiopia and later, when he was opposed by Baasha, king of Israel is instructive. In the former case he relied upon the Lord to give him the victory and his faith was rewarded, but in the latter case, he used the treasures of the house of God to buy the help of Ben-hadad, king of Syria (2 Chr. 16: 1-4). This shows a sad departure on the part of Asa and it is indeed a calamity when men so belittle that which belongs to the house of God that they use it for their own purposes.

When Jehoshaphat came to the throne he took action in two ways. He strengthened the defences against Israel (2 Chr. 17: 1), which was a most necessary work, that what was precious to God might be kept from blemish from outside. We remember the apostle was anxious about the same matter when he wrote to Timothy 'Hold the pattern of sound words... that good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us' (2 Tim. 1: 13, 14). Jehoshaphat realised also the vital need for the people to have knowledge of the will of God and of Himself. He set about to obey the command of God to His people as recorded in Deut. 6: 6-9. If we are to maintain the truth of the house of God we shall need to be instructed through the word of God and guard that treasure which the Lord has given to us.

R. Hickling

From Barrhead: Abijah set a very poor example of leadership, rule, authority and of that which is right and well-pleasing to the Lord—no doubt stemming from his personal behaviour and attitude of heart and mind (1 Kings 15: 3). Yet, in warning against Jeroboam, he declared the right of his cause, trusted in God and overcame because victory for the people was in the hands of the Lord (2 Chr. 13: 3-19).

Asa's reign was good. He destroyed idolatry and removed

his idolatrous mother from her office. Having peace he strengthened his kingdom with forts and armies but trusted also in God (2 Chr. 14: 1-11). After his resulting success the people flocked to him and a solemn covenant was made (15: 12). This resulted in the enrichment of the house of God and they enjoyed a long peace. Such should be our aim today in view of the Judgement Seat of Christ.

Jehoshaphat's good reign was characterised by his walk and attitude of mind in respect of the commandments of the Lord. The same should characterise the house of God today (1 Cor. 14: 37). The sending of the princes and Levites to teach in Judah (2 Chr. 17: 7) illustrates the fundamental need for sound exposition in relation to the will of God, His house, the whole counsel of God, the rule, authority and expression of the kingdom of God as manifested in the churches of God today. Apparently Jehoshaphat's spiritual wisdom was applied very effectively in regard to his selection of certain men who were endowed with prowess and talent to maintain the territories of Judah.

Overall positive good was wrought by Asa and Jehoshaphat in promoting conditions among the people which resulted in increase of praise and glory to the great and faithful God with whom they had to do. *Wm. Fullarton*

From Birkenhead: Abijah, son of Rehoboam, reigned over Judah for three years. He walked in all the sins of his father. His heart was not perfect before the Lord, but the kingdom was preserved to Abijah for the sake of his father David who was a man after God's own heart. During Abijah's reign there was constant war with Jeroboam. Abijah evidently knew the will of the Lord for in his speech to Jeroboam and the people of Israel he drew their attention to the way Israel had separated themselves from Judah and forsaken the worship of the Lord, persecuting those who were rightfully appointed to serve the Lord.

The reign of Asa which followed started peacefully because both king and people sought after the Lord. The king removed idolatrous places and practices. Cities were fortified and the army strengthened. Victory was achieved over the Ethiopian army. The words of the prophet Azariah to Asa are relevant to every age The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him' (2 Chr. 15: 2). This is illustrated in Asa's reign, for

BIBLE STUDIES

when **Baasha**, king of Israel, **came** against **him**, he went into the house of the Lord and removed gold and silver **treasures** to send to the king of Syria. **He asked** the Syrian king for **help** in the battle and **did** not rely on the Lord. To **Asa** from the prophet Hanani **came** the pronouncement that the Lord will **'shew** Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward **Him**' (2 Chr. 16: 9). **Asa** did not accept the word of the prophet and imprisoned **him**. At the end of his reign the king suffered with a serious **disease** in his feet, but even **this** affliction **did** not draw **him** back to the Lord.

Jehoshaphat, who followed **Asa**, was a great and good king. **He** cleansed the land of idolatry, organised the **spiritual** education of the whole nation, raised a **great** army, and appointed **judges** as in the days of Moses. **Yet** with all his greatness Jehoshaphat **failed** in **three** matters. Firstly, in the alliance with **Ahab** resulting from the marriage of his son Jehoram with **Athaliah** the daughter of **Ahab** and Jezebel. Secondly, Jehoshaphat went to **battle** with **Ahab** against the Syrians. Thirdly, the Lord destroyed a joint enterprise with **Ahaziah** king of Israel to send **ships** to **Ophir** for gold. In the **midst** of these sad episodes we read of victory over Moab and Ammon, **achieved** because Judah sought the help of the Lord (2 Chr. 20: 4).

The lesson of these years is that when there is failure in the sanctuary service then the people of God cannot expect success on the battlefield.

A. H., R. D. W.

From Derby: **Abijah**, son of king Rehoboam only reigned **three** years in Jerusalem. Very **little** is recorded about **him** in the book of Kings, **but** what is written in 2 Chronicles seems to be to his credit. **Abijah** faithfully rebuked Jeroboam when the king of Israel came against **him** with an army of valiant men **twice** the strength of his own [Comment 5]. **Abijah** bravely joined **battle**, confessing that God was with **him** at the head of the army of Judah. God heard their cry unto **Him** and smote Jeroboam and all Israel before **Abijah** and Judah.

'**Asa** did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God' (2 Chr. 14: 2). **We** judged that king **Asa** set in order the courses of the **priests** and **Levites** so that God's house would again be functioning as in the early days of Solomon. King **Asa** also fortified some **cities** and trained an army although **three** times it is stated that the Lord had given

him rest, and he had no war in those years. However, there came against Asa Zerah the Ethiopian with an army of a million. Asa went out to meet him and they set the battle in array, and when Asa cried unto the Lord his God, the Lord smote the Ethiopians. When Asa returned to Jerusalem God sent His servant Azariah to meet Asa and he greatly encouraged him (2 Chr. 15: 7). Asa had a purpose in his heart associated with the house of God that the Lord could see needed strengthening. Asa renewed the altar of the Lord, and gathered all Judah and Benjamin and they that fell away from Israel (ten tribes) and they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem. They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord the God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul. Ch. 16 records sad departure toward the close of king Asa's reign for when Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah Asa sought the aid of Ben-hadad. Two years before he died he was greatly diseased in his feet but he sought not unto the Lord but to the physicians.

Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead (2 Chr. 17) and strengthened himself against Israel. The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David and his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. But when Jehoshaphat had honour and riches in abundance, he joined affinity with Ahab (ch. 18). This act proved to be disastrous for Jehoshaphat was seeking to join together what God had divided, like many Christians today. Separation from evil both moral and doctrinal is the will of God in any dispensation. When the combined forces of Moab and Ammon and Mount Seir came against Jehoshaphat and Judah, Jehoshaphat stood in the house of the Lord and prayed and then God said 'For the battle is not yours but God's' (2 Chr. 20: 15) and the confederate armies were smitten. But he made yet another attempt to link up with Ahaziah king of Israel to build ships, but God destroyed them.

A Smith, S. R. W.

From Hamilton (Scotland): In 1 Kings 15: 2 we have the terse but illuminating statement concerning Abijam that 'Three years reigned he in Jerusalem'. As this phrase is repeated in 2 Chr. 13: 2 it would seem that the brevity of his reign is being emphasised. In addition in 1 Kings 15: 3 we have the conduct and character of Abijam high-lighted by

BIBLE STUDIES

the divine Spirit; (a) **'He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: '** and (b) **'his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God'**. Perhaps we would have placed (b) before (a) but the point that the Holy Spirit makes is that **Abijah was conditioned by his father's way of life and as a result of these evil ways his heart was not perfect. How tragic is that little word 'all' in v. 3.**

However we have a different portrait of **Abijah** in **2 Chr. 13**, for in **this chapter we have highly selective history, not the recording of every event in his life and reign. We have the tracing of a historical theme, 'the kingdom of God', which runs through the sacred Scriptures and is evident in the times of Abijah. 'Howbeit I will not send away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son' (1 Kings 11: 13) were solemn words of judgement.**

In **2 Chr. 13: 3-20 we have Abijah's finest hour. The scene is set in the midst of a battlefield. Jeroboam 'set the battle in array against him' and 'Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim... and said, Hear me O Jeroboam and all Israel' then continued with the plea 'Ought ye not to know the Lord, the God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever?' He then highlighted the chief instruments in the rending of the kingdom; firstly Jeroboam, then vain men, sons of Belial, then is revealed the weakness of Rehoboam 'young and tender hearted... could not withstand them. ' Finally the great denunciation to the gathering 'And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord. ' But this was only the opening of the denunciatory statement for he continues and lists a threefold catalogue of error: (1) 'there are with you the golden calves', (2) 'have ye not driven out the priests of the Lord?' (3) 'and have made you priests after the manner of the peoples of other lands?' The words of Abijah were not merely condemnatory but bore manifold witness to the truth: (1) 'The Lord is our God', (2) 'We have priests ministering unto the Lord'; (3) 'We keep the charge of the Lord', (4) 'God is with us at our head'.**

Finally the great rallying call was sent out: **'O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord, the God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper'.
Matthew Carruthers**

From Kingston-upon-Thames: **The record of Judah and Benjamin, who remained loyal to the house of David and**

hence **at least** nominally to **the** house of God, in **the** days of **Abijah, Asa** and Jehoshaphat, **is** of their difficulty in maintaining separation from **the** surrounding nations. **At** various **times** they **had** problems **with the** Ethiopians, **the** associates of **the** Egyptians to **the** south; **the** Syrians to **the** north; **the** nearby descendants of Lot, Moab and Ammon; and **the** descendants of **Esau** from **Mt. Seir**. **Such** opposition **has** a familiar sound, even to **the** present day, **but** superimposed on **such strife with** traditional enemies **was** continual friction **with** their own brethren of **the** ten tribes. Both **Abijah** and **Asa** **made** open war **with** Israel **but** Jehoshaphat, who **did** not, **came** off worst of **all** for **his** attempts at detente, in **the** marriage of **his** son Jehoram **with** **Athaliah**, **the** daughter of **Ahab**, **had** absolutely disastrous consequences for Judah (**2 Chr. 18: 1; 21: 6; 22: 2-3**).

The broad principles **applicable** to those loyal to **the** house of God today **are** **here** illustrated. **There** **has** to **be** separation from **the** world **as** depicted by **the** battle **with the** associates of Egypt. Nor **is** it **right** to **attempt** to **further the** interests of **the** 'kingdom of God by political expedients **with the** powers that **be**, **as** did **Asa** in **his** associations **with** Benhadad. Then **there** **will** always **be** **the** more localised trouble **with the** interests of **the** flesh **as** depicted by Moab, Ammon and **Mt. Seir**. **But** it **appears** **clearest** of **all** that **there** can **be** no affinity whatsoever **with** those who **are** not loyal to **the** house of God even **if** they **are** brethren [**Comment 6**].

The importance of **the** last matter **is** vividly shown in **the** case of Abijah. Unlike **his** successors **he** **was** not a good man and owed **his** continued occupancy of **the** throne to **the** place that **his** great-grandfather **David** **had** in **the** affections of God (**1 Kings 15: 3-5**). **Yet** **he** **had** a **clear** grasp (**2 Chr. 13: 8-12**) of **the** importance of **the** house of God and, against **all** the odds, God granted **him** a **decisive** victory over Jeroboam **which** ensured **the** independence of Judah and **the** continuity of **the** service of **the** house of God into **the** reigns of **his** successors. When a man **as** bad **as** **Abijah** can **see** **this** issue so clearly **it** **leaves** **little** excuse for those who profess **higher** standards. **It** **is** encouraging to note **that** of **all** the events of **his** life **it** **is** **this** that **is** detailed in **the** Scriptures in a manner reminiscent of 'then shall each man have his praise from God' (**1 Cor. 4: 5**).

The prosperity of **the** people, **likewise**, **did** not depend on

BIBLE STUDIES

their military or diplomatic prowess. It depended on their attitude of heart towards God. What God looked for in David (1 Sam. 16: 7) He looked for in his successors (1 Kings 15: 3, 14; 22: 43; 2 Chr. 17: 6) and in their subjects (2 Chr. 15: 12-15). If they relied on Him and sought Him then He was with them and gave them victory and rest (**2 Chr. 13: 18; 14: 11; 15: 2, 4, 15; 16: 8-9**). When they relied on others they did not prosper (**2 Chr. 16: 10; 19: 2; 20: 35-37**). It was, for example, the former condition rather than military preparedness that brought about the brief territorial extension of the kingdom (2 Chr. 15: 9). But not even Asa and Jehoshaphat were able to maintain their reliance on God consistently (2 Chr. 16; 18; 20: 35-37). *Ian E. Penn*

From Lagos: 'Now for long seasons Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without the law' (2 Chr. 15: 3). If the law was taught and practised as God commanded in Israel, Rehoboam the father of Abijah might not have been permitted to enter the congregation of the Lord let alone lead them (Deut. 23: 3). 'For David's sake did the Lord... give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem' (1 Kings **15: 4**). Such was the grace of God upon the kings Abijah, Asa and Jehoshaphat in their generation. The salutary word 'remember' (Eph. 2: 11-22) would serve to remind us that we are similarly heirs of the grace of life by divine mercy.

The Holy Spirit observes about Abijah that 'his heart was not perfect with the Lord' (1 Kings 15: 3). The claims Abijah made on mount Zemaraim were short lived because of divided loyalty (see 1 Kings 15: 3 and 2 Chr. 13: 11).

Asa has the commendation that he 'did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord' (2 Chr. 14: 2). The Lord also honoured Asa with peace and stability in the kingdom of Judah for many years. In Asa's reign we have a glimpse of the altar of the Lord before the porch of the Lord (2 Chr. 15: 8). Its renewal would seem to suggest that it was in ruin. In the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign the covenant to seek the Lord was made with provision of the death penalty for any dissidents.

Asa did well for God and his people until he refused to heed the correction from the Lord (**2 Chr. 16: 7-10**).

Jehoshaphat had the opportunity to learn from the life of

Asa and 'his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord' (2 Chr. 17: 6). They taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the Lord with them... and the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands' (2 Chr. 17: 9-10). Stability and peace attended the kingdom of Judah and the king was abundantly honoured with much wealth. But that Jehoshaphat should ever associate with the Lord's enemies is hard to understand. Jehoshaphat is a sad case of anyone who would underestimate the importance of the principle of divine separation (2 Chr. 6: 14-7: 1). The Lord's anger and judgement were pronounced on king Jehoshaphat although he humbled himself and sought back to the Lord.

S. Coker, M. Abvenake, E. Bassey

COMMENTS

1. (Leeds): This exposes the difficulty in spiritualising from meanings of names. Young gives these meanings, but Strong and others give Abijam—father of the sea (i. e. seaman), although Abijah—father (i. e. worshipper) of Jah, is nearer Young.

2. (Leeds): 'And unto his son I will give one tribe that David My servant may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem' (1 Kings 11: 36). Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the lamp of Israel' (2 Sam. 21: 17).

These verses seem to indicate that this curious expression 'lamp in Jerusalem' (1 Kings 15: 4) means that God had appointed Abijah, David's descendant, king in Jerusalem, and that the succession was secure. So the John references may not be appropriate.

A. B. R.

3. (Macduff and Whitehills): Our friends rightly point out that the accounts in Chronicles and Kings present Abijah in different lights, as is noted in the answer to Question 2. In Chronicles he is presented as one who is acutely conscious of being in a right position, but the account in Kings shows that he failed to appreciate the need for a correspondingly right condition. It is significant that his reign only lasted three years.

BIBLE STUDIES

4. **(Melbourne):** Maacah was, in fact the grandmother of Asa, and had been the favourite wife of Rehoboam (see 2 Chr. 11: 21, 22). It is to Asa's credit that he did not flinch from deposing her.
5. **(Derby):** The disparity in numbers is noteworthy. Those who are in conformity with the will of God are, alas, frequently in the minority.
6. **(Kingston-upon-Thames):** This point is well made and has important lessons for us today. Jehoshaphat nearly lost his life because of his alliance with Ahab, and he lost the ships he built for his joint enterprise with Ahaziah. God's displeasure at such courses of action was forcefully made known to Jehoshaphat by God's prophets (see 2 Chr. 19: 2; 20: 37), yet God was himself working through His prophets in the Northern Kingdom (see Editorial). *J. K. D. J.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **From Hamilton:** What is the significance of the words 'Kingdom over Israel' in 2 Chr. 13: 5?

This refers to God's promise that He had established David and his descendants as the rightful kings of Israel. Kingdom here means rule.

2. **From Hamilton:** In 1 Kings 15: 1 we read 'Abijam'. In 2 Chr. 13: 1 we read 'Abijah'. Please explain the difference in wording.

Different reference books and dictionaries may give different meanings, which makes it difficult to dogmatise about the spiritual significance of meanings of names. However Matthew Henry makes an interesting comment on the change from Abijam (for which he does not give a meaning) to Abijah in Chronicles; 'He makes a better figure in 2 Chronicles 13... There he is called "Abijah"—"my father is the Lord" because no wickedness is there laid to his charge. But here (1 Kings 15) we are told his faults. Jah, the name of God, is taken away from his name'. *A. B. R.*

BIBLE STUDIES

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

EDITORIAL

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In our study of the house of God in history we have passed over the reigns of Jehoram and Ahaziah; there is no reference to the house of God in the record of their lives—they walked in the ways of the kings of Israel (2 Chr. 21: 6; 22: 3).

We noted in our study last month that Jehoshaphat strengthened himself against Israel in the early part of his reign but subsequently adopted a policy of rapprochement with Israel. This latter policy was displeasing to God, and it led to the evil influence of the house of Ahab being exercised in Judah during the reigns of Jehoram and Ahaziah.

The emergence of Jehoiada the priest as a national figure marked the beginning of better days in the two-tribe kingdom. It is on record that he 'had done good in Israel, and toward God and His house' (2 Chr. 24: 16). The blessing of length of days that Jehoiada enjoyed was without doubt an expression of God's goodness towards him and towards Judah.

The words of the man of God to Amaziah clearly show that Israel did not have the special relationship with God that Judah had, and for this reason they were not to be joined together in service (2 Chr. 25: 6, 7). The men of Israel were resentful of the imposition of this restriction and the application of a similar principle in the present day often produces the same reaction.

The faithfulness of Azariah and his fellows in association with the service of the house of God is noteworthy. It is sad to relate that Uzziah failed to give heed to the words of Azariah, and God had to intervene directly in judgement.

The exhortation given in Heb. 12: 28, 29 is apposite: '... let us have grace whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire'.
J. K. D. J.

PSALM 119

(continued from October issue)

(4) **THY PRECEPTS.** The original word for precepts is

BIBLE STUDIES

piqqudim, and it occurs in the Psalm 21 times, and is scarcely seen elsewhere. [From *paqad*, which means (a) to visit and review carefully, (b) to give a charge]. In the verses where it is used the overriding thought is that of 'keeping' or 'observing' these precepts. Almost half of the verbs used give this thought. Other expressions used indicate 'a love for, an esteem for, and a delight to meditate in' these precepts. Perhaps what Paul wrote to Timothy embodies for us the real meaning of precepts — '*Hold* the pattern of sound words'.

(5) **THY STATUTES.** The Hebrew word for statutes is *choq* and gives the idea of a decreed limit, portion. It occurs 21 times in the Psalm. The main verb used with this expression is to 'teach', although 'observe', 'seek' and 'meditate' are also used. The emphasis is thus on the fact that 'statutes are things that are taught us by the Lord'. There are today certain things we must be 'taught' regarding the Faith, and to these things we must unflinchingly hold. [The statutes as in Ex. 23: 10-19 were to govern the religious life of God's people. CML comments: These are commandments of God for His people viewed as permanent (graven on stone). They differ from precepts which view our need. Statutes speak of that which is of value toward God and give Him pleasure. The same command might be both a precept and a statute'].

(6) **THY COMMANDMENTS.** *Mitsvah* is the original word used for commandments, and it is used 22 times. In the Psalm the writer uses different adjectives to describe the commandments of the Lord. They are described as 'faithful, broad, true, righteous, making wise'. The verbs show a desire not to 'wander from' these commandments, but rather to 'respect them, go in the way of them, to love them, and delight in them'. [The commandments were what God set up, not only to direct the obedient response of love to Him, but also voluntary kindness towards one's neighbour].

(7) **THY JUDGEMENTS.** 21 times in the Psalm the word *mishpat* is used and in one third of these the indication is that these judgements are 'righteous' or 'upright'. This is *in* perfect harmony with Abraham's statement 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Other expressions used show that judgements are to be 'taught and learned, to be declared and remembered'. [The judgements as in Ex. 21: 1-23: 9 were to govern the social life of the people of God].

It is of importance to notice that each of these seven expressions is usually qualified by the adjective Thy'. This shows their divine origin, and sets them on a far higher plane than the best writings of men. Over 160 times in Psalm 119 is the adjective Thy' used in relation to these expressions.

J. Robertson (Crowborough)

M. Macdonald (Crossford)

THE HOUSE AND THE KINGS—JOASH, AMAZIAH AND UZZIAH

From Macduff: Jehosheba, the wife of the high priest rescued Joash by putting him and his nurse in a hiding place in the house of God. After six years Joash was brought out from his hiding place, reminding us how Satan through Herod would have killed the child Jesus. The first thing the young king did was to have the temple of Baal destroyed and slay Mattan, its priest, thus fulfilling the agreed covenant between them that Judah should be the Lord's people. He desired that the house of the Lord should be repaired but the work was held up for some time till the king's commandment was made to put a chest at the door of the house of the Lord, the means of gathering money in abundance. While Jehoiada was tutor to Joash all was going on well, but after the priest died Joash hearkened to wicked princes, causing the worship of God to be neglected, and idolatry prevailed. Zechariah, the priest, who was son of Jehoiada warned them of their sin in departing from God. But instead of repenting they stoned him to death. When dying he assured them his death would be avenged by God: this was quickly accomplished, for Joash was murdered by his own servants.

Uzziah sought the Lord in the days of Zechariah, who was his counsellor, and as long as he sought the Lord he prospered. He built up a great army and made many weapons of war, which caused his heart to be lifted up, so that he transgressed by going into the Temple of the Lord to burn incense. Azariah, the high priest, checked him, but he took no heed and immediately leprosy began to appear on his forehead. He remained a leper till he died, living apart from others and cut off from the house of God.

From Melbourne: In order to obtain a clear background to

BIBLE STUDIES

the lives of **these** kings we must go back to the reign of Jehoshaphat, and note particularly **that which is** so very briefly recorded in 2 Chr. 18: 1. **There we learn that** Jehoshaphat joined affinity **with Ahab**. We suggest that this brief statement records a **master** move by the god of **this** world to bring about the ruin of God's purpose to bring into the world the promised **Seed which** would bruise the head of the serpent by destroying the royal line of **David** and so the Messiah. **But the** God who had promised foresaw the consequences of Jehoshaphat's **failure** and had **His plan** in readiness in order to counteract the work of the adversary. We now turn to ch. 19: 2, where we are told of the stern words of the prophet Jehu, as the king returned **after making his further mistake** in his alliance **with Ahab** against the Syrians: 'For **this** thing **wrath is** upon thee from before the Lord'. **This we** would judge referred to his whole association **with Ahab**, as the first mistake led to a second. In ch. 21: 5, 6 we learn that the affinity referred to was the uniting in **marriage** of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram **with the daughter of Ahab** and Jezebel. The latter was the daughter of **Ethbaal**, king of the Zidonians, who were Baal-worshippers. Consequently the worship of **Baal was** introduced into Israel. When Jehoram took **Athaliah the daughter of Jezebel**, who had been a worshipper of the god of her mother, she likewise sought an opportunity to introduce that worship into the kingdom of Judah. The reign of Jehoram **reveals little save that which was evil**, being under the influence of the house of **Ahab** and his wife Athaliah. We would judge that the **service** of the house of God languished during his reign. Upon the death of Jehoram his son **Ahaziah ascended** the throne, and his mother and the house of **Ahab were** his counsellors to his destruction. **All were** worshippers of Baal. **Ahaziah** reigned but one year. Following upon his death, **Athaliah his mother slew all her grandchildren—with the exception of the infant Joash**. **But the** God of Jacob, **Judah** and **David had** his servants ready for the emergency in the persons of Jehoiada, his wife, and an unnamed nurse.

Joash was followed by his son **Amaziah**, and although it is recorded that there were some good things found in him, and for a time he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet it was not with a perfect heart. In addition to the common failure of otherwise God-fearing kings of Judah to

remove **the high** places it is recorded **that** after his victory over **Edom** he brought **back** to Judah **the** gods of **Edom**, bowing down to **them** and offering incense. During **the** reign of **Amaziah** there appears to **have** been **but** little **desire** towards **the** house of God. His **death** had evidently been determined from **the** day in which he turned away from following **the** Lord (**2 Chr. 25: 15, 16**).

Of Azariah (or Uzziah), it is recorded **'he** did **that** which was right in **the** eyes of **the** Lord... Howbeit **the** high **places** were not taken away: **the** people still sacrificed and burnt incense in **the** high places'. How deeply **seated** was **the** belief **that** God could **be** acceptably worshipped anywhere, in addition to **the** place of **the** Name which **He** had chosen!

We draw attention to **the** fact **that** during **the** period which **we** have covered, **we** find **three** kingly names 'blotted out' from **the** divine genealogy of **Mat.** ch. 1. **We** suggest **that** this was because of **the** failure of Jehoshaphat in opening a door by which **Baal** worship could enter Judah; and **the** sins of his son Jehoram in following **the** ways of **the** house of **Ahab** [Comment 3]. Although Joash was preserved to ensure **the** continuance of **the** Davidic line, yet his name, together with **the** names of his **father** Ahaziah and his son Amaziah, **are** omitted from **Mat.** 1: 8. Thus **we** find **the** principle of **Ex. 34: 7** in operation, 'visiting **the** iniquity of **the** fathers upon **the** children, and upon **the** children's children, upon **the** third and upon **the** fourth generation'. Nevertheless **we** find judgement **tempered** with mercy.

R. Busby, T. W. F.

From **Methil**: The reigns of **the** three kings **we** are now considering cover a period of about **120** years out of **the** history of **the** kingdom of Judah which **lasted** for about **480** years (i. e. including **Saul**, David and Solomon; **but** from Rehoboam to **the** captivity only **364** years).

God's judgement **fell** upon **the** house of **Ahab** and his queen Jezebel some time earlier, **but** **that** family had corrupted Judah also, for **we** find in Athaliah a **daughter** of **the** house of **Ahab**, one who **was** also **the** usurper of **the** throne of Judah, **the** murderer of **the** seed royal. Despite **all** **the** corruption and **subterfuge**, God in His sovereignty used **the** faithfulness of Jehoiada **the** priest and Jehoshabeath, his wife, to preserve a **seed** in Joash, a child of one year old.

BIBLE STUDIES

We are told that Joash 'did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest', but after the death of Jehoiada, he gave way to the princes of Judah and began to serve idols. He even put to death Zechariah the prophet who had warned him and the people also because of their having forsaken God. Jehoiada stands out as a man with deep regard for God and His house, who was faithful to the charge committed to him, and whose desire was that God's people should be covenanted to Him as being His people (2 Chr. 23: 16).

Thus we see that at the beginning of Joash's reign there was a revival, though only partial, and that it was due to the counsel of Jehoiada. While he was alive, the destruction of the false worship of Baal took place, and the true worship was restored. Jehoiada lived to a remarkable age and was honoured in that he was buried among the kings—an honour which was denied the king (2 Chr. 24: 16, 25).

The succeeding king, Amaziah the son of Joash, we are told, 'did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart'. He would have allied himself with Israel who were themselves estranged from God, and in spite of the fact that he won battles against men, he lost against the devil for he brought back Edomite gods and worshipped them. We hear the words of the Apostle John: 'Little children, guard yourselves from idols' (1 John 5: 21).

Uzziah was remarkable in that he had one of the longest reigns of all the kings, whether of Israel or Judah. We are told he was a lover of husbandry, a great military strategist (2 Chr. 26: 10, 13-15), but 'his heart was lifted up so that he did corruptly'. It seems to us that through pride and covetousness of an office which belonged only to the priesthood, he went into the Temple of the Lord to burn incense. We are not told at what period of his life or reign this took place, but he was a leper till the day of his death. Note Ps. 19: 13 [Comment 1].

It is remarkable how God in His faithfulness sent prophets to warn His people and their kings. During the period we are now considering, we understand that at least Joel, Amos, Hosea and Jonah prophesied. God had put kingship into the hands of men to see what they would do with it, and the words of Ezekiel (Ezek. 21: 27) have here a deep significance.

Our blessed Lord, whose right to reign alone it is, will in a coming day assert that right, and will control the earth for God.
A McIlree, Sen.

From Birkenhead: It is evident from Scripture that the Lord has in mind that there should be order and harmony in creation and amongst the nations. At this time, although the offices of prophet, priest and king were held by different people, the actions of these people were to be in accord.

Sadly, all the kings failed on this point during their lives. Joash did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord whilst Jehoiada the priest was alive, but rejected the messages of the Lord thereafter and slew Zechariah, son of Jehoiada. Amaziah's heart was not perfect although he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. He was displeased with a message from the Lord condemning the hiring of soldiers from the army of Israel and ignored the warning concerning the worship of Edomite gods. The result was defeat in battle and eventually he was murdered. Uzziah did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord whilst a prophet named Zechariah was alive, but thereafter when he became strong and his heart was lifted up he sinned against the Lord, resisting Azariah the priest, and finished life as a leper, living in isolation. At death he was not buried in the royal sepulchre.

Jehoiada had a reverence for the Lord's house, insisting that the wicked Athaliah should be removed from the house before being killed. Joash went so far astray that he took treasures from the house to buy off the king of Syria, for which action God's wrath came upon him. In the case of Amaziah defeat in battle was linked with losses from the house. Uzziah's sin was to take on himself that which was proper to the priest's office. These incidents all serve to underline the fact that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

In contrast we are able to appreciate that at the time of the death of Uzziah the Lord was raising up the prophet Isaiah who was able to lift his eyes away from the downfall of an earthly king to a vision of the uplifting of the great King (Is. 6).
R. D. Williams

From Derby: Joash allowed himself to be led astray by the princes and he forsook the house of the Lord and turned to idolatry. God in His mercy sent prophets to bring them back

BIBLE STUDIES

again to the Lord, but they would not give ear. Finally the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, who said, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord?' But they stoned him to death by the commandment of king Joash. The Lord Jesus refers to this great sin in Luke **11: 51** in the hearing of those who were soon to become His murderers. Joash was put to death by his own servants for this crime. God was executing His judgements in His own way, so the princes who led Joash astray were slain by the Syrians. Amaziah the son of Joash reigned in his stead, and slew the servants who killed his father, but it was wrong for anyone to take the law into their own hands for God Himself hath said, 'Vengeance belongeth unto Me' [Comment 4].

Uzziah warred against the Philistines, and God helped him till he was strong. But when he was strong he trespassed against the Lord his God; for he went into the Temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. (Dr. Schofield of the 'Schofield Bible', defines the word 'trespass' as 'the intrusion of self-will into the sphere of divine authority'). Uzziah the king was smitten of God with leprosy, and he hastened out of the sanctuary. This king reigned fifty-two years and died a leper and was buried with his fathers in the field of burial which belonged to the kings (not in the sepulchres of the kings), for they said 'He is a leper'. A pleasing feature of this king's reign was the proper functioning of the priests of the Lord, who did their duty fearlessly.

S. Wymer, S. R. W.

From **Edinburgh**: David was dead. He gave to Solomon, his son, the plan of the Temple which he received from God. He also bequeathed his personal fortune. Solomon built the Temple according to the pattern and also added great riches to the treasury. Rehoboam was king in his stead, and during his reign the treasury of the Temple was raided. This happened within some 60 years of the death of David. During the next period of approximately 80 years the treasury of the Temple was again raided. During the period covered by our present study, about 120 years, the treasury was again raided on two occasions. So, within some 250 years following the death of David, the riches of the treasury had been despoiled at least four times.

The mother of Ahaziah destroyed all the seed royal, but Joash was saved by those of the household of Jehoiada, the high priest. Joash was crowned king when he was only seven years of age, and on that day his grandmother was slain. He restored and strengthened the house of God and covenanted with the people to seek the Lord. He was a king who required counsellors, and he leaned upon Jehoiada till Jehoiada died. He then listened to the counsel of the princes of Israel and forsook the way of the Lord, so much so that the son of Jehoiada was stoned to death on his orders. Amaziah was crowned at 29 years of age. He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart. In adversity he set up the gods of the children of Seir. Joash, king of Israel, overcame him in battle and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and took the treasure of the Temple. Uzziah was crowned at 16 years of age. He set himself to seek God, but when he was strong his heart was lifted up. He sought to burn incense within the holy place. This was resisted by valiant priests who saw the judgement of God fall upon him there. He was a leper till his death and was cut off from the house of God.

It was noted that a box was prepared for the offerings of the people and that this was placed at the entering in of the gate. This principle is still in evidence today since a similar procedure is observed in churches of God. The money was given by overseers to such as carried on the work of the service of the house of God. Such was the appreciation of the services rendered by Jehoiada that he was buried 'among the kings'. Again, Uzziah had a good counsellor in Zechariah who 'had understanding in the vision of God'. Uzziah was a very able organiser and did much good for the land, but 'he did corruptly'. Very sad are the words recorded: '... he was cut off from the house of the Lord'. No man can sin against God with a high hand and escape the judgement. It was not in the purposes of God that a king should also act as a priest in that day—that was in the future plans when One whose right it is shall fulfil this position (King and Priest).

T. H., W. P.

From **Hamilton (Scotland)**: According to 2 Kin. 11: 4 in the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the captains over hundreds... and shewed them the king's son'. It is

BIBLE STUDIES

noteworthy **that the showing of the king's son was** after a covenant **was made**, and an oath taken **by the** gathering. Afterwards, according to **2 Chr. 23: 3**, the great prophetic call of Jehoiada went forth: '**Behold, the king's son shall** reign, as **the Lord hath** spoken of **the sons of David**'.

When **we** study **the** two accounts of **the** crowning ceremony, **we see** not only **the** precision of **the** word of God, **but the** difference in **emphasis as each** chronicler, **guided by the Holy Spirit, selects features which must be** reinforced to **the** reader.

	2 Chr. 23: 11	2	Kin.	11: 12
1	Then they brought out the king's son		Then he brought out the king's son	
2	And put the crown upon him		And put the crown upon him	
3	And gave him the testimony		And gave him the testimony	
4	And made him king		And they made him king	
5	And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him		And anointed him	
6			And they clapped their hands	
7	And they said		And said	
8	Cod save the king		Cod save the king	

Line 1 In 2 Kin. Jehoiada is **high-lighted** by the word '**he**'

5 In 2 Chr. Jehoiada and **his** sons **are** mentioned

„ 6 In 2 Kin. 'they **clapped their hands**': how **expressive!**

In 2 Chr. **24: 2** we have revealed the motivating force in Joash's life and reign: 'And Joash **did that which was right** in **the eyes of the Lord all the** days of Jehoiada **the priest**', **but** in 2 Kings 12: 2 we have a fuller emphasis: 'wherein Jehoiada **the priest** instructed him.' **The destructive** counselling of **Athaliah had** destroyed **his father**; **the constructive** counselling of Jehoiada **directed his paths** into righteousness.

One of **the first** movements of Joash's **heart was** to restore the house of **the** Lord. Underlying **the** word 'restore' is **the Hebrew term *chadash***, translated 'restore' in 2 Chr. 24: 4, 12, 'renew' (Psalm 51: 10), 'renewed' (Psalm 103: 5), and 'renewest' (Psalm 104: 30). However in **the** 2 Kings account of Joash's **desires** for **the** house of God, **we have the Hebrew word *chazaq***, translated '**repaired**' (2 Kin. 12: 5, 7, 8, 12), **but** also in 2 Chr. 24: 5, 12. Furthermore in 2 Chr. 24: 27 we have **the** word 'rebuilding' in **the** text, and in **the** margin 'Heb. founding'. **The underlying Hebrew is *yecowd*** translated '**base**'—(Ex. 29: 12, Lev. 4: 7, 18, 25, 30, 34) and 'foundation'—(2 Chr. 23: 5, Job. 4: 19, 22: 16, Ps. 137: 7, Pro. 10: 25). [Comment 5].

Matthew Carruthers

From Kingston-upon-Thames: As a result of Jehoshaphat's attempted alliance with Israel by the marriage of his son to Ahab's daughter (2 Chr. 18: 1, 21: 6) the kingdom of Judah passed into the hands of Ahab's descendants for fifteen years, during which time the worship of Baal was introduced into Jerusalem (2 Chr. 21: 11), and possibly even into the Temple (2 Chr. 24: 7). This period was ended by Jehoiada the high priest, when he enthroned Joash, who, having been brought up by his aunt, Jehoiada's wife, was free from the influence of Ahab's wickedness. This early upbringing in the house of God left Joash under the righteous influence of Jehoiada until the high priest's death.

The reigns of Joash, Amaziah and Uzziah all opened auspiciously, and as long as they sought the Lord, God made them prosper. The commencement of Joash's reign especially was marked by a re-recognition by the king and the people of their place as the Lord's people (2 Chr. 23: 16). During the preceding reigns the Temple had been allowed to decay, and its service had been neglected, so that it had become a poor testimony to the surrounding nations (cf. 2 Chr. 13: 10-11). It was refurbished, largely on Joash's own initiative (2 Kin. 12: 7), and all the people were involved in service by paying the Temple tax.

None of these kings, however, was consistently able to persuade the people of their duties in serving God, for 'the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places' (2 Kin. 12: 3, 14: 4, 15: 4). Indeed all three kings showed themselves to be personally unsure of their position in serving God, and with regard to faith in Him when threatened by other nations. Because of this God first warned them through prophets and priests, and then removed each of them from his position as ruler when he refused to listen.

The depths to which Judah had sunk in the two hundred years after the kingdom was divided is illustrated by Isaiah's prophecies, probably uttered towards the end of Uzziah's reign (Is. 1 to 5). Worship had become a meaningless ritual; the people sinned continually, consulted fortune tellers, and worshipped idols; and their rulers were guilty of injustice and oppression. Although each of the three kings who reigned throughout the latter half of this period is recorded as having done 'that which was right in the eyes

BIBLE STUDIES

of the Lord', they had been unable to prevent the people from deserting God.

Graham Riley

From Lagos: Good names like Jehoiada, Jehoaddan of Jerusalem and Zechariah are indeed better than precious ointment (Eccl. 7: 1). They were men and a mother who were used of God to train and instruct the kings in their formative years. And when the foundation of faith was laid God withdrew the good influences of His servants so that the life of each of the kings might be evaluated in the light of His grace upon them.

Joash had much to learn from Jehoiada. The good influence of the man of God bowed the heart of the young king Joash in fear and service to the Lord. He learned to keep the house where Jehoiada had hid him, by being insistent on the repair of the breaches and the replacement of the vessels of the ministry which were lost (2 Chr. 24: 4-6, 12-14). The death of Jehoiada exposed Joash to the test of appreciation and obedience to the revealed will of God. The sad failure of the king is summarised in the word, 'Joash the king remembered not the kindness' (2 Chr. 24: 22).

Amaziah subdued the Edomites because he obeyed the word of the Lord through His servant (2 Chr. 25: 7-10). That token of the Lord's mercy should have established his heart with the God of Israel. How strange it was that he chose the gods of the Edomites in rejection of the Lord! In the wake of the Lord's judgement Amaziah took the hallowed things of the Lord's house to defend his life from Hazael, king of Syria (2 Kin. 12: 18). But Amaziah still had to pay for his sins with his life at the hands of his servants.

The Holy Spirit goes to the root cause of the shipwreck which Amaziah suffered when he underlines the word: 'He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart' (2 Chr. 25: 2). A heart wholly yielded to Him is all that the Lord looked for. The Lord found the answer in David among the sons of Jesse (1 Sam. 16: 7; Acts 13: 22). Paul emphasised the principle to Timothy both to keep and to teach 'love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned' (1 Tim. 1: 5-6).

S. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: Joash ('Jah supports') was taken from among the king's sons and it was Jehoshabeath (herself the

daughter of a king) who **kept** Joash in **the** house of God for six years. Joash **was** brought **up** in **the** house of God **and** **his** early **life** **was** characterised and formulated by **the** strong influence of Jehoiada **the** **high** priest of God. **This** godly **high** priest **was** **used** to preserve **the** **Davidic** line and to instil into **the** young king Joash, **at** **the** most **susceptible** **time** of **life**, **the** truths of God, especially in relation to **His** house. However, **it** could **be** **that** Jehoiada **was** over insistent in **this**, **just** **as** some parents tend to **be** towards **their** children, forcing Joash into **the** mould, for when Jehoiada **died**, Joash **fell** away from God, even to **the** extent of failing to remember **the** goodness and kindness of Jehoiada, and slaying **his** son (24: 22) [Comment 6].

Jehoiada **the** **high** priest **was** **the** **prime** mover in **the** restoration of **the** house of God in **his** day (23: 6) and **he** **knew** **that** only **the** **priests** and **Levites** should go into **the** house and **serve** **the** Lord. Joash **had** **the** **right** thing in mind to **repair** **the** house of God although **the** **Levites** **seemed** **lax** to respond to **his** call. Those who **did** respond to **the** doing of **the** work in **the** house of God **received** **their** pay. Those who labour for God in **His** house **will** never **lack** **reward** (John 6: 27, 1 Cor. 3: 8, 1 Cor. 15: 58, Rev. 2: 2). Although **the** people **gave** gladly, some of **the** princes amongst **them** **were** not whole-hearted and they influenced **the** king to **turn** away from God to idolatry so **that** God **used** **the** Syrians to come **up** against **them** and destroy **them** in battle.

Amaziah ('Jah has strength') **like** many other kings before **him** (**David**, Solomon, Rehoboam) **was** brought down when **at** **his** strongest, doubtless considering **that** **he** **had** **gained** victory through **his** own strength (**see** 1 Cor. 10: 12). **He** transgressed by bringing **back** and setting **up** **the** gods of **the** children of **Seir** and worshipping them. **His** controversy **with** Joash, king of **Israel**, brought about **the** breaking down of **part** of **the** city **wall** of Jerusalem **and** **the** removal of **the** gold, **silver** and **vessels** from **the** house of God.

Uzziah ('Jah is strong') **was** only a teenager when **he** came to **the** throne **but** God **was** **with** **him** **as** **He** **was** **with** **his** father and grandfather before **him**. Uzziah sought **after** God in **the** days of **Zechariah** and, **as** **long** **as** **he** sought **after** God, God **caused** **him** to prosper. God **helped** and strengthened **him**, and Uzziah **built** towers in Jerusalem and **built** **up** **and** fortified **the** walls. **He** **was** marvellously **helped**, **until** **he**

BIBLE STUDIES

was strong, and, at his strongest, he transgressed against the Lord. His transgression brought him leprosy which cut him right off from the house of God. This punishment was worse than death, for whilst he lived he could see his kingdom ruled without him and could do little but sit and contemplate on what he had come to through seeking to do things in his own strength, causing his downfall before God (Is. 30: 15, Ps. 21: 1, 2 Cor. 12: 9). [Comment 2].

H. R. Dodge, P. M. Jefferson

From Vancouver, B. C.: Amaziah had some good qualities, but did not see that God's protection of Judah and his association with the house of God would be endangered by close alliance with Israel. So today, too close an association with those who are not following God's designed pattern for worship can have an adverse effect on our relationship to and understanding of the house of God.

Like Amaziah, the Lord's people are continually tempted to adopt policies that they feel are helpful for the furtherance of the work. How striking the warning given to Amaziah by the man of God, The Lord is not with Israel, why turn to them for help? When God places His finger on those things in our lives that are not pleasing Him let us give them up with contrite hearts, forgetting the possessions we have renounced in order to serve Him according to His will. Let us listen fully to the words of God's messenger The Lord is able to give thee much more than this'.

Amaziah had gained a great victory over Edom, but instead of praising the Lord in his time of triumph, he chose the gods of Edom to worship and praise. When we have gained a victory in the Lord's things, we must be on our guard, for the adversary will come to test us in an endeavour to turn us from the Lord, and from praising Him in His house. A.S.

COMMENTS

1. (Methil): Uzziah's reign was a long one, 52 years, and it is generally accepted that this incident took place near the close of his life. Some chronologers place it about 10 years from the time of his death. Many of Judah's kings did not end as well as they began.

2. **(Leeds):** Of course it was, as our friends point out, a transgression and not merely a case of someone acting in his own strength. Success had engendered pride in the heart of Uzziah and he arrogated unto himself a function that was not his. God's judgement upon him resulted in his being cut off from the house of God for the rest of his life.

J. K. D. J.

3. **(Melbourne):** This raises an interesting point from the genealogy of Mat. 1. It was not an uncommon feature of Jewish genealogies to omit certain generations, the intervening links in the chain being by-passed on the principle that 'the heir of my heir is my heir also'. So it was not a matter of inaccuracy but of choice, perhaps in this case related to the evangelist's symmetrical presentation of three sets of fourteen generations. Just why Azariah, Joash and Amaziah should be omitted I find more difficult to understand. The suggestion offered from Melbourne is a thoughtful one, but not to me altogether convincing. I would personally feel that the failures of the three kings themselves would be more relevant than those of Jehoshaphat or Jehoram. Is it not written of Jehoshaphat that he 'sought the Lord with all his heart'? (2 Chr. 22: 9). Whereas the reversion to idolatry of both Joash (24: 18) and Amaziah (25: 14) would seem to be a possible reason for their omission from Matthew's genealogy. This would be in line with the suggestion that the tribe of Dan is omitted from the tribes named in Rev. 7: 5-8 because of the idolatry described in Judges 18: 30.

4. **(Derby):** Would not Amaziah's judgement on his father's murderers come within the scope of Rom. 13: 3-4, he as a ruler being 'a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil'?

5. **(Hamilton):** By drawing attention to the meaning of these Hebrew words in our study portions it is presumably intended to emphasise that revival in God's house involves a return to first principles of divine revelation regarding the house. This must always be so, as illustrated in the closing paragraph of Malachi: 'Remember ye the law of Moses My servant'. Right on to the close of the Mosaic dispensation

BIBLE STUDIES

God called His people back to the first principles of the Law; in our dispensation we must relate back to the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

6. (Leeds): It is a dubious suggestion that Jehoiada unwisely pressed Joash into conformity with the divine principles of God's house. Did not God enjoin through Moses the utmost diligence in instructing the young regarding His law? (Deut. 11: 18-23 cf. Ps. 78: 5-8). It not Jehoiada consistently commended in the scriptural record? (e. g. 2 Chr. 24: 16). Moreover when Joash was 30 years old he was urging Jehoiada and the priests to pursue the repair of God's house more rapidly (2 Kings 12: 6-7). This does not sound like a minor being dominated by a strong priestly personality against his will. The evidence points rather to a straightforward case of the king's voluntary zeal for God's house for much of his reign, followed by his apostasy under other influences after Jehoiada's death. *G. P.*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

1. From **Edinburgh**: 2 Chr. 24: 20; Mat. 23: 25. Do these verses refer to the same incident? Some were of this view but others did not accept that the same Zechariah was referred to in both scriptures.

It seems reasonable to accept that the same incident is being referred to in both verses (see also Luke **11: 51**). The name of the martyr and the place of the martyrdom are the same in all the references. It has been suggested that Zechariah may have been the grandson of Jehoiada and the son of Barachiah as in Mat. 23: 35. The Hebrew scriptures were divided into three distinct classes: 1. The Law, 2. The Prophets, 3. The Writings. The book of Chronicles was placed at the end of the third grouping and therefore the Lord's words appear to link together the first and the last recorded martyrs in the Old Testament Scriptures. *J. K. D. J.*

BIBLE STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

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The prophecies of Isaiah, Hosea and Micah, largely delivered during the period of our present study, eloquently underline the degree to which both Israel and Judah had departed from the Lord. The yearning of God for His people is clearly expressed in the prophecies; how little effect this had upon them the historical record of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles reveals. Yet the promise of forgiveness and blessing, if only they would 'return unto the Lord', was repeatedly given. In measure, Judah knew this under Hezekiah's devout leadership. How much more shall all Israel experience divine blessing in the future, when the promise of Hosea 14: 4-5 is at length fulfilled—'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely... I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon'.

Largely our study this month has brought out the contrasting attitudes of Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Ahaz polluted the service of the house of God with his idolatrous practices, and 'shut up the doors of the house of the Lord' (2 Chr. 28: 24). His son, Hezekiah, on the other hand, in the first month of his reign 'opened the doors of the house of the Lord' (2 Chr. 29: 3), purged its precincts and restored its services. The divine commentary on Hezekiah's work needs no elaboration. 'He wrought that which was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered'. (2 Chr. 31: 20-21).
R. L

THE HOUSE AND THE KINGS—AHAZ AND HEZEKIAH

From Melbourne: Ahaz had a father (Jotham) and a grandfather (Uzziah) who both loved the house of God. Yet by his actions, king Ahaz despised what his forefathers had treasured. Today it is possible there are some who have parents, and even grandparents, in the Fellowship, but have

BIBLE STUDIES

themselves no appreciation of God's dwelling place. Perhaps **his greatest** offence was that he 'made his son to pass through the fire' (2 Kin. 16: 3). But he also desecrated the house of God **by** removing 'the silver and gold' (v. 8), and adding an alien altar. Today **we must** earnestly contend for **the faith which was** once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3), by not taking from or adding to it.

Hezekiah: We think it is important that the name of **Hezekiah's** mother is recorded (2 Kin. 18: 2). **His** appreciation of the house of God was seen by **his** words and **his** actions throughout **his** long reign of twenty-nine years, and is delightfully summarised in 2 Kin. 18: 3-6. **This is** why we also read that 'the Lord was with him; and he prospered (v. 7 A. V.).

Prayer played a major part in **the life** of **this** king and in every crisis and problem of **life** his first action was to seek the Lord's face. He also sought **help** from God's trusted prophet **Isaiah**, and **accepted his advice** (2 Kin. 19: 2).

At the start of his reign he cleansed and repaired **the house of the Lord**. He broke down **the false altars** and **broke in pieces** the brazen serpent. **The** priestly services of God's house were restored and he encouraged **the whole** country to **keep the** Passover. It is clear that **his** actions demonstrate **the purposes of his** heart.

From **Hezekiah's** life we can learn: (a) **the value of** prayer in every situation; (b) blessing always results from giving God's things first **place** in **our lives**; (c) reliance on **the Lord** will result in victory.

D. Mawhinney, J. Bradley

From **Methil:** **Ahaz** was a wicked king of **Judah** who reigned **between two good** kings, Jotham and **Hezekiah**. **Ahaz** closed **the doors of the house of God**, while **Hezekiah**, in the first month of **his** reign, opened **the doors** again, thereafter restoring **the service and praise**. **Despite the** wickedness of **Ahaz**, God **gave him the** most remarkable sign of **the birth** of **the Lord Jesus** through a virgin (Is. 7: 14). **Ahaz** raised altars in every corner of **Jerusalem**, while **at the same time** destroying **the vessels of the house of God**. He was an idolater, and God brought judgement on **him** from **the surrounding nations**. Instead of repenting, **in the time of his** distress he trespassed even more against **the Lord** by turning to **Syria** for **help**—an **act which was the cause** of **his** ruina-

tion. The arm of flesh can never save against the judgements of God. At his death they did not lay his remains in the tombs of the kings of Israel.

Hezekiah restored both house and service, and in his day the Passover was again kept as in the glorious days of Solomon. The house was cleaned out from all its filthiness by men who were themselves sanctified. Despite his good works towards God, he still faced opposition, but this only brought him closer to the God whom he served and trusted. He spread his problems before the Lord, and God answered him.

Hezekiah's name means 'Jehovah is strength'. During his reign he both relied on God and sought to strengthen the things of 'God. His only recorded failure was during his extended life of fifteen years, when his heart was lifted up. However, he humbled himself, so that the wrath of the Lord came not in the days of Hezekiah, and at his death his people did him honour, burying him in the chiefest place (2 Chr. 32: 33).

The divine record notes carefully the attitude towards God's house and service, and it is this that weighs with God for commendation or otherwise.

Neville Coomer

From St. Helens: Jotham, a good king, who did right in the eyes of the Lord and ordered his ways before Him, nevertheless failed in one important respect. The high places were not taken away', and this had serious repercussions in the reign of his son, Ahaz.

Ahaz walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, idolatrous, sacrificing and burning incense in the high places, causing his own son to pass through the fire. Distressed by an invasion by the Syrians and Israel, he used the treasures of God's Temple to hire the Assyrians to oppose them, instead of turning to God. He forgot that 'the Lord your God shall ye fear; and He shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies' (2 Kin. 17: 39). These treasures of the Temple, so shamefully used, were the very treasures David had prepared. Visiting the king of Assyria, into whose hands he had committed himself and his people (2 Kin. 16: 7), he was attracted by the heathen altar at Damascus, and instructed Urijah the priest to fashion an altar of similar pattern. He removed the brazen altar from the forefront of God's dwelling

sanctifying themselves and the house of God. Each task was seemingly done with zeal. But an interesting addendum appears in 2 Chr. **29: 34** in that the priests being too few, and the Levites being more upright, the job was given to those prepared ones. Verse 36 of the above chapter tells us the thing was done suddenly. It *had* to be done so there was no dilly-dallying and requests for further reports. Hezekiah's renown in the kingdom was his pools and aqueducts. He brought water to his people but stopped the conduits from the enemy.

When Assyria invaded Judah (2 Kin. 18) three army officers led the troops; Rabsaris, Rabshakeh and Tartan were titles. These men were known for their work not by their personal name. It may be so in the house of God today. We close on a note of silence. Amazingly the *whole* people kept quiet on the king's advice during the oration. There is a time for God's people to speak and a time to be silent. *J. C. B.*

From **Barrhead**: The religious beliefs of the kings of Judah generally influenced the well-being of the house of God. Some promoted idolatry, some were indifferent and some were active reformers. In Ahaz and Hezekiah we have a father and son who were the complete antithesis of each other. Whereas Ahaz promoted evil, Hezekiah was a zealous reformer.

Ahaz was not a believer in the Lord and cared nothing for the house of God or its worship. He practised the hideous worship of Molech and made his son pass through the fire (2 Kin. 16: 3). In addition, he also sacrificed in places other than the place of the Name contrary to the law (Deut. 11). In times of trouble when Syria came up against Jerusalem he plundered the treasury of the house of God to buy help from Assyria rather than seek the Lord's counsel from Isaiah who was at hand. Even when invited to ask a sign of the Lord he refused (Is. 7: 10-12). Of all the furniture connected with the service of God the brazen altar was to be most holy (Ex. 29). Furthermore, it was the responsibility of the high priest and his sons to keep the charge of the altar (Num. 18). In this matter Urijah the priest was unfaithful in that he built a counterfeit altar and permitted it to displace the Lord's altar. Upon this altar the Lord's offerings were made whilst the brazen altar was appropriated for private use (2 Kin. 16: 15).

BIBLE STUDIES

Considering that Ahaz was so wicked, it is surprising that Hezekiah should prove to be a man of God. However, in spite of his father, the guiding spirit behind Hezekiah was a God-fearing mother. His mother's full name was Abijah (God is father), suggestive that she was a woman of faith (2 Chr. 29: 1). As a man of faith who trusted in the Lord, he swept away idolatry and superstition from the land. Hezekiah had a love for the house of God; his first act in coming to the throne was to repair the doors of the house and to have the holy place cleansed. He allowed nothing to mar the honour of God and a venerated relic (the brazen serpent), dating from the time of Moses, was broken up without compunction because it had become an object of worship.

Hezekiah's life of faith was not without trials; refusing to be in bondage to Assyria he rebelled. This brought a quick response from Sennacherib; the fate that had befallen Israel was to fall on Judah. The gods had failed to save the nations (2 Kin. 18: 35); the God of Judah would likewise fail. Thus spoke the envoy from Assyria. Unlike his father before him in a similar situation, Hezekiah took counsel of the Lord's prophet and spread the matter before the Lord (2 Kin. 19: 14). The prayer was heard and the answer was speedy—'He shall not come unto this city' (2 Kin. 19: 32). *L de Ville*

From **Birkenhead**: During the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah there are many references to activities in God's house. The sixteen-year reign of Ahaz saw the house deprived of much of its precious contents. Because of the king's conduct the hand of the Lord was against him. Syria came against Judah and many prisoners were taken and many people were killed. There is evidently a limit when God decrees punishment, for Oded the prophet was sent to indicate that events had gone too far [Comment 2]. The result was that prisoners were released after they had been clothed, given food and drink and anointed. Ahaz failed to realise that his punishment was of the Lord, and Isaiah failed in his efforts to encourage Ahaz to seek unto the Lord. Rather he tried (a) appealing for help to the surrounding nations to ease his problems, and (b) the worship of the gods of the Syrians who were successful in battle to see if this would bring a change. The latter resulted in an Assyrian kind of altar being placed in the Temple court and the displaced Solomonic altar being

used for divination. The scripture pronouncement on these moves is 'they were the ruin of him'.

It says of Hezekiah that there was none like him before or after of the kings of Judah. The Lord was with him and prospered him. At the commencement of his reign he reopened the doors of the house of God. Priests and Levites cleansed and purified the Temple and services were restored. An invitation was sent to all in Judah and Israel to come to the house of the Lord to keep the Passover but few responded. This was a time of great rejoicing comparable with the days of Solomon. Hezekiah was successful in repulsing the attack of the Assyrians. In his hour of deep trial he went to the house of the Lord and spoke to his God (2 Kin. 19: 1).

It is sad to read that towards the end of a great reign serious sickness came to Hezekiah which appears to be linked with his heart being lifted up [Comments 5 and 7]. Although he humbled himself before the Lord and his life was extended, yet his closing days do not appear to be as glorious as those early years. This is another warning of scripture that failure may come at any stage of our lives.

R. D. Williams

From Camberwell: Ahaz, son of Jotham was twenty when he began his reign of sixteen years. He was weak and foolish and the condemnation of the people and its leadership by Isaiah (Isa. 3) would bear this out [Comment 3]. He chose the ways of the kings of Israel and of the heathens whom God had cast out of the land before them, by reintroducing Baalism and the worship of the Ammonite god Molech (introduced by Solomon—1 Kin. 11: 7). He worshipped at high places and made Moses' brazen serpent an object of worship (Nehushtan) [Comment 6]. Israel and Syria united against Judah and Ahaz obtained help from the king of Assyria who took many of the Israelites captive, the treasures in the Temple being used to solicit this help. The troubles that came upon him because he did not please God only made him worse, and God punished Judah because of him in that they were harassed by the Edomites and invaded by the Philistines.

Hezekiah, son of Ahaz was twenty-five years old when he began his reign of twenty-nine years. *He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord.* It would appear that everything from the very start was to take second place to setting

BIBLE STUDIES

up the house of the Lord. At the outset he broke down all the altars that his father had built; smashed the brazen serpent of Moses; opened the house of the Lord and gathered the priests and Levites together to sanctify themselves and the house for service (see Num. 8: 5-12).

The people of **Judah** recommenced **the** service after sixteen days **with a** sin offering 'for **the** kingdom and for **the** sanctuary and for **Judah**'. **The duties of the Levites, the musical instruments and the singers were all set** in order, and **there was** great rejoicing among **the** people **because of the way everything had been done so quickly [Comment 4]. Hezekiah was not so overcome with his success in this matter that he forgot about the people of Israel, for he invited them to come to Jerusalem to keep the passover in the second month. It is interesting to note that, though there were very few true Israelites left in the land, a great number of people responded, including some of the Assyrian colonists (2 Chr. 30: 25).**

The commendation of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 31: 20-21) is noteworthy. He clave to the Lord and kept His commandments. Sennacherib came against Judah, and Hezekiah sent silver and gold from the Temple but the king of Assyria sent an army up to Jerusalem where they reproached the living God'. Hezekiah received a letter of threat which he laid before the Lord, and the Assyrians were destroyed by the angel of the Lord. Hezekiah's simple prayer is refreshing (2 Kin. 19: 15-19). Sennacherib died at the hand of his two sons while in the house of his gods.

Hezekiah was exalted in the eyes of all the nations and it would seem he lost his former humility. He fell sick and would have died, but he humbled himself [Comment 7] and was given another fifteen years of life in which he prospered greatly. Finally the king of Babylon visited Jerusalem and Hezekiah showed him everything. The prophet Isaiah told him that 'everything' would soon fall into the hands of that very nation.

Two distinct lessons may **be** learned from **this** study: **(1) The responsibility of those who are in a position of leadership among the people of God to direct in the way of God (2) Assyria was solicited in struggles against surrounding enemies and in the case of Ahaz he became entrenched in their idolatry. The world is an ever present enemy of the**

people of God and no compromise should be made with it.

G. Smith

From Derby: It was during the reign of Ahaz that the remaining tribes were taken captive by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. Ahaz sought the help of the king of Assyria against the king of Syria and the king of Israel. He committed sacrilege by taking silver and gold out of the house of the Lord to give to a heathen king instead of seeking the help of the Lord. In addition to this, the Edomites and the Philistines had smitten Judah, taking cities and captives, for the Lord had brought Judah low because of Ahaz. The king of Assyria came unto him and distressed Ahaz. In the time of his distress Ahaz trespassed yet more against the Lord, for he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, thinking that they must be more powerful. The tremendous judgements of the Lord which fell upon this king of Judah and the people of Judah and Israel should have been a solemn warning to future generations. They may well have been so, for his son Hezekiah was a good king.

Ahaz had shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and one of the first acts of Hezekiah was to open them, and get the priests and Levites to start cleaning up the mess.

The next thing on the heart of the king was to celebrate the Passover. But he rightly had in mind the many sons of Israel scattered abroad. The king sent posts from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh and Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Nevertheless some of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. In Judah also was the hand of God to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes by the word of the Lord. Thus there assembled at Jerusalem many people to keep the feast with great joy, for there had not been the like since the time of Solomon. In 2 Chr. 31: 20, 21, the Lord records His commendation of the work of the king in relation to the house of God. So the invasion of the Assyrians (2 Chr. 32), served but to demonstrate the reality of Hezekiah's faith in his God, and to strengthen the faith and confidence of the people. The king encouraged his people, saying, There is a greater with us than with him' (2 Chr. 32: 7). And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah. However, Sennacherib through his ambassador;

BIBLE STUDIES

sought to undermine the morale of the men of Jerusalem who were on the wall, but Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet prayed about this and cried to heaven. The Lord sent an angel which cut off all the Assyrian army, and Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, where he was put to death by his own two sons.

Then came serious illness upon the king, and the Lord sent Isaiah the prophet to him with the sad news that Hezekiah was to die. The king prayed and wept. God heard his prayer, saw his tears, and sent back His servant with a message of life. It would seem that the Lord saw pride in the heart of Hezekiah [see Comment 7]. The king was made to discern this himself, and he humbled himself. It is noticeable in Proverbs 25 that Hezekiah and his men were given the honour of completing the Book of Proverbs, for it was discovered that one hundred and thirty-seven of the proverbs of Solomon had been omitted. These are included in chapters 25-29.

G. Conway, S. R. W.

From Hamilton (Scotland): The life of Ahaz provides a lesson that evil is progressive and not static: that error leads into deeper errors; that the first step in deviation may be slight but that this leads progressively into a broad avenue of error. It is replete with warning signs for the people of God.

- (1) 2 Kin. 16: 2 'he did not that which was right in the eyes of the Lord his God'.
- (2) 2 Kin. 16: 3 'he walked in the way of the kings of Israel'.
- (3) 2 Chr. 28: 2 'made also molten images for the Baalim'.
- (4) (a) 2 Chr. 28: 3 'burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom'
(b) 2 Kin. 16: 3 'made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen'.
- (5) 2 Kin. 16: 4 'he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree'.

Such conduct did not go unpunished and judgements came upon Ahaz the king and his subjects. These are ushered in by the use of the word 'wherefore' in 2 Chr. 28: 5, 'Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of

the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away of his a great multitude of captives'. This is emphasized in 2 Chr. **28: 19** R. V. M. The Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he had cast away restraint'. Ahaz ignored the divine rod and progressed still further into error by putting his trust in the king of Assyria.

(6) For 'Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord... and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria' (2 Kin. 16: 8). But 2 Chr. 28: 23 reveals a still greater deviation 'for he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus... But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel'.

(7) Deeper still deeper Ahaz sank for surely 2 Chr. 28: 24 was his lowest point. 'Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels... and shut up the doors of the house... and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem'.

Men of the stature of Isaiah, Hosea and Micah prophesied during the reign of Ahaz yet he did not listen to the men of God for idolatry marked his reign. Not only did he allow his subjects to become engaged in pagan rites but he was personally involved. As a leader he should have been an example of righteousness to his subjects and as a legislator he should have legislated that which was right. Ahaz listened to the fears of his heart and sought help from the Assyrians, and as a result the house of God was despoiled. The lesson of Ps. 118: 8 'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man' is the word for 'the holy nation' today (cf. Deut. 7: 9). *Matthew Carruthers*

From Lagos: The beclouding spiritual darkness in the reign of Ahaz was because 'they have not known My ways' (Ps. 95: 10). 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... for the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err' (Hos. 4: 6, 12). In pity the Lord would have corrected Ahaz and brought him back to Himself but he refused to humble himself and seek help from the Strength of Israel. At the threat of the Syrian king Rezin and Pekah king of Israel, Ahaz robbed the treasures of the house of the Lord, silver and gold, to seek help from Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria. 'But it helped him not' (2 Chr. **28: 21**). The Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz (2 Chr. **28: 19**). The time came when Ahaz sold himself to idolatrous worship and he commanded the doors of God's house to be shut (28: 24).

BIBLE STUDIES

As light would be contrasted with darkness, so the life of Hezekiah provided a powerful contrast to his father Ahaz. In the first month of his reign Hezekiah opened the doors of God's house which Ahaz had shut and repaired the house and the vessels of its ministry (2 Chr. 29: 3). He gathered the priests and the Levites to sanctify themselves and then to cleanse the house of the Lord. So grand was the revival that letters from king Hezekiah were sent to invite all Israel to the Feast of the Passover in the second month of Hezekiah's reign. 'But they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them' (30: 10). Notwithstanding, on the fourteenth day Hezekiah with all who humbled themselves killed the passover and brought burnt offerings into the house of the Lord (30: 15). There was great joy in Jerusalem, answering to the joy at the dedication of the house in Solomon's day. Hezekiah 'wrought that which was good and right and faithful before the Lord... with all his heart' (31: 20-21). He subdued the Philistines (2 Kin. 18: 8) and broke the yoke of the king of Assyria from the kingdom of Judah. The fourteenth year of Hezekiah was a crucial year in his experience. Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, came with his forces and took the fenced cities of Judah (2 Kin. 18: 13). The fear of man ensnared Hezekiah in a grievous mistake. For a present to appease Sennacherib, Hezekiah destroyed from the house of the Lord, the works of gold from the doors and pillars (2 Kin. 18: 13-16). At the persistent attack of the Assyrians, Hezekiah learned to stay upon Jehovah, for 'he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord' (2 Kin. 19: 1).

Hezekiah would have died in the fourteenth year of his reign following his sickness, but God favoured him with additional fifteen years. During those added years God brought Hezekiah to the test 'that He might know all that was in his heart' (2 Chr. 32: 31).

In the matter of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon Hezekiah failed God through the pride of his heart (2 Chr. 32: 25, 31). Howbeit, the commendation credits Hezekiah with trust in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah nor among them that were before him (2 Kin. 18: 5). In death, they buried him in the ascent of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did

him honour (2 Chr. 32: 33). *E. Bassey, S. Coker*

From Leeds: In times of great stress and difficulty Ahaz transgressed even more (2 Chr. 28: 22) and all through his sixteen years' reign he did not turn to God for any help or guidance. The people of Judah followed his example and forsook the way of God. Ahaz closed down the house of God and cut into pieces all the vessels of the house (28: 24). He was not prepared to allow the services of the house of God to continue according to God's own desire but rather caused an altar to be erected which was of his own design and came himself to offer upon it (2 Kin. 16: 10-13). It is evident that those whose feet are out of step with God and who seek their own way and follow their own ideas, cannot be in the way of God (Ps. 15: 1-2; Col. 2: 6).

The kings of Syria (Rezin) and Israel (Pekah) could not prevail against Jerusalem in the dark days of Ahaz (Is. 7: 1). It was still the place of God's choice. Even when God requested Ahaz to ask for a sign he refused, nevertheless, the Lord Himself gave a sign, and in these days of darkness and wickedness it shines out as a beacon-light—'Immanuel' (God with us) (Is. 7: 10—see Luke 1: 78-79; 2: 32; John 1: 4-5). When Ahaz was buried in Jerusalem he was not placed in the tombs of the kings (2 Chr. 28: 27).

In direct contrast to Ahaz, king Hezekiah greatly desired and followed after God. In the service of the house of God, in the law, and in the commandments to seek after God, he did all with all his heart, and prospered (2 Chr. 31: 21). We can accomplish much for God if our hearts are devoted to the doing of His will (John 2: 5; Ps. 143: 10; 1 John 2: 17).

In the first month of his reign he opened up the doors of the house of God (2 Chr. 29: 3), the service of the house was set in order (v. 35), the passover was kept (30: 5, 15), and there was great joy in Jerusalem, the City of God (30: 26, 27). Such was his devotion to re-establishing and recommencing the services of the house of God that the people responded to his lead. Not only those of Judah, but throughout all the land of Israel were the people invited to come again to the City of the Great King (2 Chr. 30: 5). Some refused, with mocking and scorning, but many, realising their condition and position, humbled themselves, seizing their opportunity to draw near to God in the way He appoin-

BIBLE STUDIES

ted (2 Chr. 30: 10-11; Heb. 10: 21-25).

H. R. Dodge, P. M. Jefferson

COMMENTS

- 1. (Vancouver):** The priest who was returned to Samaria by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria (2 Kin. 17: 28), did not come to upbuild the remaining Israelites, but rather to teach the heathen idolators, who had been settled by Shalmaneser in the cities of Sam-aria, the formal observances of the religion of the Israelites. (See also answer to question 1.)
- 2. (Birkenhead):** The treatment of Judah by Israel (2 Chr. 28) appears to have been merciless—'Ye have slain them in a rage which hath reached up unto heaven'. By contrast God, although He will 'by no means clear the guilty', is 'a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy' Ex. 34: 6-7).
- 3. (Camberwell):** Does not Isaiah 3 have its primary application the future state of apostate Israel?
- 4. (Camberwell):** The prime cause of the rejoicing of Hezekiah and his people was the restoration of the services of the house of God, under the goodness of God. The speed with which the preparations were made was a measure of the exercise of king and people. R. L.
- 5. (Birkenhead):** The timing of Hezekiah's serious sickness is admittedly a little difficult to determine with precision. But I would understand that it was about the time of the Assyrian invasion rather than towards the end of his reign. Is. 38: 1 states that 'in those days' Hezekiah was sick unto death. Those days' were the days of the crisis which ended with Sennacherib's disastrous defeat. Moreover Is. 38: 6 confirms that God would deliver the city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, suggesting that the destruction of Sennacherib's army had not yet occurred. Again, the Babylonian ambassadors came because they heard that Hezekiah had been sick (2 Kin. 20: 12); he was not sick because of having shown them his treasures, and he reigned many years afterwards.
- 6. (Camberwell):** 2 Kings 18: 4 would indicate, I suggest, that the burning of incense to the serpent of brass had obtained prior to the reign of Ahaz. Nor was it venerated by the name 'Nehushtan'. It was by this term that Hezekiah denounced it when he burned it with fire: it was merely a piece of brass.

7. (Camberwell): I find it difficult to accept that Hezekiah's sickness is related to pride of heart. After he had glorified God in his sickness, the very clockwork of the universe being affected to give him a sign, and after Sennacherib had been vanquished, it is recorded that 'his heart was lifted up' (2 Chr. 32: 25). Personally I see his trial of faith in the combined stress of the Assyrian invasion and his critical illness as one of the finest illustrations of prayerful trust in the Old Testament, rather than as in the nature of chastisement. **G. P.**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. From Camberwell: 2 Kin. 17: 32, 33. In what way could the people of the land fear the Lord? What would the priests teach them (v. 28) ?

After Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, had carried away the tribes of Israel captive, he re-peopled Samaria with a colony of Babylonians, Cuthians and other idolaters. They brought with them their own idols, and in divine judgement 'the Lord sent lions among them' (2 Kin. 17: 25). Their reaction was the normal one of the heathen—'How can we appease the God of the land?' Shalmaneser returned to Samaria one of the priests of Israel who 'taught them how they should fear the Lord'. This they sought to do by performing the outward observances of the sacrifices of the Lord, using the services of priests appointed from among themselves. That the 'fear of the Lord' which they displayed was a superficial affair is made clear in v. 33, 'They feared the Lord, and served their own gods'. To them, Jehovah was only another national god, who could be appeased by the formality of sacrifice. The divine assessment of such actions is given in vv. 34-41.

2. From Leeds: It would appear from Isaiah 38: 20 that stringed instruments were used in Hezekiah's time in the service of song in the house of God. Could we not usefully employ such in our service in His house today?

From the establishment of the Solomonic Temple, musical instruments clearly had a sanctified part to play in the service of the house of God, and there can be little doubt that the praise of God's people was enriched by their use. The house of God in Old Testament days

BIBLE STUDIES

was, of course, a material building, whereas the house of God today is a spiritual house, in which spiritual service is performed. Also, there is no indication in the New Testament that the early churches of God used instrumental music in their services. In the light of this, the mind of brethren has always been that instrumental music would be inappropriate in the service of God's house today.

R. L.

The use of musical instruments in the service of the house of God by Hezekiah was strictly in accordance with the commandment of the Lord by His prophets (2 Chr. 29: 25), and an integral part of the pattern given to David (1 Chr. 28: 12, 13). Musical instruments were not taken into the holy place.

There is no mention in the New Testament of gifts relating to singing or the playing of musical instruments. We are instructed to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Col. 3: 16; Eph. 5: 19), but there is no specific reference to instrumental music. These omissions are significant.

J. K. D. J.

COST OF MATERIALS IN SOLOMON'S TEMPLE-CORRECTION

My answer to Melbourne's question (July 1977), in which I gave an assessment of the cost of the principal materials built into Solomon's Temple, contained two errors of fact, which should be corrected:

1. The current cost of gold in London is 150 U. S. *dollars* per ounce—not 150 pounds sterling, as stated. This, of course, affects the total valuation of the gold in the Temple (at the current exchange rate, 150 dollars is worth £84. 60 sterling), but even so, the figure remains staggering by any standard, and is an impressive testimony to the willing-hearted giving by David and his people.

2. The price of gold quoted is that obtaining on the *London Gold Market*, not the Stock Exchange.

I apologise to fellow-students for these errors. R. L.

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