

# **Bible Studies**

**A magazine for the exploration off the Word of God (Act 17. 11)**

**STUDIES IN THE PSALMS**

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# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Act 17. 11)

## EDITORIAL

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This year we are considering some of the Psalms, and students will have noted from the syllabus the wide range of subjects in the songs and poems that compose the Book of Psalms. Whatever the subject personal or doctrinal, the Holy Spirit gives to these songs an equal weight with the other inspired writings of the Bible. It is the psalter of Israel, and we are grateful to those who have submitted articles to help us understand some of the rules of Hebrew poetry.

We know our study will help us individually as we consider the writing that records and grows out of personal experience, and we trust also that the collective exercises of disciples will be richer as we study the range of God's works and wonders. Our subject this month is 'Creation' and as disciples study the grand design and wonderful detail of the cosmos they must find it easy to worship more carefully the Creator of it all.

C. H. Spurgeon said: 'The delightful study of the Psalms has yielded me boundless profit and ever growing pleasure', and we pray fellow students will enjoy similar rewards.

A. B. R.

## THE PSALMS—A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. In a study of the Psalms it is significant to note the way in which the Psalms differ from all the other books of the Bible: in all the other books we have predominantly God speaking to man, although there are Psalms in which God speaks to men.

They teach us truth from God not in an abstract way but in terms of human experience, appealing not only to men's minds but also to their hearts. The common tendency is to apprehend truth as a set of propositions to which we give mental assent, akin to scientific knowledge, but the truth of God is not like this; it must be learned experientially and with the heart.

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David, who wrote many of the Psalms, was brought to know the truth of God's greatness as he viewed the heavens, and declared that they manifested His glory, and made known His handiwork. He learned the truth of God's holiness by being brought to realize his own exceeding sinfulness and God's abhorrence of sin; he also learned the truth of God's mercy and love by being forgiven, and the power of God to save from every foe by being delivered from all his enemies. Thus he learned the doctrine of the Lord experientially.

The Psalms are a rich repository of experiential knowledge. The tender expressions of worship and the exuberant expressions of praise found in them have little place in the hard core of human experience today, yet they present true worship and praise acceptable to Jehovah. Most of the Psalms speak of and to Israel, although the principles of God's truth transcend the nation and the age in which they were written, and are like God Himself, established in heaven, and unchangeable. Much of the mystery of the poetic language of the Psalms becomes unfolded as we turn the light of the New Testament Scriptures on them. Basically, as Peter wrote of the prophets (1 Pet. 1: 11), they speak of the sufferings of the Christ and the glories that shall follow.

In their praise and prophecy alike the reign of God is supreme, and the voice of the universe speaks of and to Him. The Psalms contrast man's transitory existence with God's eternal existence, and reveal how God in grace has made provision for man to share His eternal existence.

There is one psalm of suffering in each of the first four books of Psalms, each perhaps portraying a phase of the sufferings of Christ as presented in the four Gospels respectively, these are Psalms 22, 69, 88 and 102. There is no suffering Psalm in the 5th Book; in it we have one grand paean of praise unto Jehovah. Priests are to praise Him, angels, kings, princes, and a redeemed people are to exalt His Name. The moon, and even the mountains and the hills, beasts, and creeping things, young men and virgins, children and old men are all: —

'To praise the name of Jehovah, for His Name, alone  
is exalted,

His glory is above the earth and the heaven. '

This theme of the fifth book of Psalms corresponds with the book of the Revelation, where after all opposing voices have been silenced, and every foe destroyed, we hear the voice of a great multitude sing,

' Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigneth.  
Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give  
glory unto Him. ' *J. Paterson, London (Ontario)*

2. Hebrew poetry, of which the Psalms form part, derives its character not from rhyme or the number of syllables but from a combination of stress on vital words (metre) and its system of parallelism. The metre is generally obscured during translation but the parallelism usually is preserved. The forms of parallelism are given names by Bible scholars; a brief description (without names) may help in a study of the Psalms to gain an understanding of what the author was seeking to convey. There are six generally defined forms: —

- (1) The same idea is expressed in the two parts of a sentence, e. g. Job 33: 4, "The Spirit of God hath made me, the breath of the Almighty giveth me life. "
- (2) A contrast of ideas, e. g. Prov. 15: 13.
- (3) A simile or metaphor repeats the idea expressed in the first, e. g. Ps. 103: 13.
- (4) The idea in the first part is taken up and developed in the second, e. g. Ps. 96: 7-9.
- (5) The idea in the first is repeated and used as a point of departure for new development leading to a high point, e. g. Ps. 29: 1.
- (6) Concerns four points: the first and fourth and the second and third are in parallel, e. g. Ps. 137: 5-6.

Another feature of some of the Psalms is the use of an acrostic, i. e. the first letters (in Hebrew) form some pattern. Ps. 119 and Ps. 34 are examples where the first letters of each stanza or of each verse form the Hebrew alphabet.

### *Psalms*

The word 'Psalms' comes from the Greek word 'Psalmos' and originally referred to the music played on a stringed

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instrument. Latterly it came to describe the song that the music accompanied. In the Hebrew Bible it was called 'the book of Tehillim', a word that comes from a similar root to Hallelujah and means praises, i. e. the book of praises. It broadly expresses the content of the book of Psalms.

To refer to this collection as the book of Psalms is really a misnomer for the collection consists of five books. Each book has a doxology, with Psalm 1 (and some think also 2) being an introduction, and Ps. 150 being an overall doxology. The five books are Psalms 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150. It is thought by scholars that the collection was formed from a number of smaller collections which were in circulation among the Old Testament people of God. There is a degree of duplication in the book of Psalms, i. e. Ps. 14 and 53, 70 and 40, 13 and 17, and Ps. 108 has elements found in Ps. 57: 11 and 60: 5-12.

The importance of the Psalms is that broadly they deal with the relationship between God and man with reference to the effect on other men. This contrasts with 'Proverbs' which broadly deals with man's relationship with man with consideration of God. That the Psalms held a special place in the affections of both the Lord Jesus and the New Testament writers can be clearly perceived. The Lord Jesus used two of the Psalms to express His experience on the Cross at Calvary (Ps. 22: 1, 31: 5). Many of the Messianic statements in the New Testament come from the Psalms (Heb. 10: 7 from Ps. 40: 7). In fact, of the 283 New Testament quotations from the Old Testament, over 115 come from the Psalms!

D. G. Rafferty (*Nottingham*)

### **CREATION—Ps. 19: 1-6; 104**

**From** Hayes. In Ps. 19: 1-6 the writer extols God in the creation He has made. This creation tells or declares God's glory and the nature of His greatness. David the psalmist is saying that the creation is really a universal language which however varied in its form, is speaking to the creature (v. 3) whatever may be his own spoken language. Man can learn from creation of the greatness and power of God, His infinite wisdom and knowledge being seen in His handiwork. From Rom. 1: 18-23 it is seen that God's greatness in creation also condemns men in their wicked works since creation tells of 'His everlasting power and divinity' (Rom 1: 20).

The universality of the sun as seen in Ps. 19: 4-6 is a picture of the power of God and the omniscience of God. Ps. 104 shows that the greatness of God revealed in creation should call from the creature homage, praise and thanksgiving. There is marvellous and striking imagery describing the work of God in creation, and His absolute control in what He does (vv. 2-9). The providential care of God for His creatures is described in wonderful language (vv.10-23). The Psalmist praises God for the varied nature of His works and the wisdom evidenced in the riches of creation (v. 24). He speaks of the dependence of creation on God to sustain it (v. 27-29). This is a continuous care for His creation (v. 30) and calls forth spontaneous praise and homage to God (v. 31). The psalmist is joyful in his contemplation of God and dedicates himself to sing and praise God as long as he lives (v. 33). In contrast, those who are sinners are really unprofitable to God and he calls for their destruction, but as for himself he will bless God and praise Him (v. 35).

*R. F. Robertson*

**From Leeds.** There is a *visible* creation and an *invisible* creation and God is the creator of both in Jesus Christ (John 1: 1-3, Col. 1: 16-17).

There is a *spiritual rebirth* when a man can be described as being a 'new creation', if he is 'in Christ' (2 Cor. 5: 17). This also is the work of God, through the Holy Spirit. As all creative acts are the *sovereign* work of God, our spiritual rebirth is His work alone, and praise must be given to God, from Christians. Ps. 104 (vv.1-10) describes the greatness of God and the relationship of creation to Him. Physical light itself is only a garment, adding nothing to His Person, creation is here seen to be serving Him.

Verses 11-23 describe the finger marks of the Master Workman. The living creatures that He has made have all their needs of food and shelter supplied. The foxes have holes and the birds of the heaven have nests' (Mat. 8: 20).

Vv. 24-26, the greatness of God is as the sea, 'great and wide'.

Vv. 27-29, creation is totally dependent upon God, not only for food, but also breath, i. e. life.

Vv. 30-35 reveal to us the justice and mercy of God. Sin has no part in God's perfect creation and cannot be tolerated

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for ever. Renewal is possible for helpless sinners. We know that through the Cross comes 'sovereign grace o'er sin abounding'. It was impossible from the physical creation of nature alone to appreciate fully God's mercy, love and kindness until Jesus **had** made them known during His life on earth and, by being the atonement, securing our redemption.

*Gilbert Grierson*

### From **Liverpool**—*The Glory of God*

These Psalms were composed for worship and praise. A study of creation reveals God at work in majesty and power. The order and layout of our solar system is surely the work of a Master Workman: Ps. **19: 1-6** speaks of the witness to God's greatness in the order and precision of our world and its sun, bringing reliability in time, tides and dates. These have remained with only two recorded interferences in their constant motion by God Himself (Josh. 10: 12-14 and 2 Kin. 20: 8-11). Ps. **104** is a more detailed yet still obviously poetical account of the creation including the earth, its creatures, the ocean and marine life.

### *The Witness*

Even when God has not revealed Himself to men by His prophets, or by His word, He has left witness to Himself in creation, 'For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them' (RSV) (cf. Acts 14: 17 and Rom. 1: 19-20). Ps. 19: 2-4 speaks paradoxically of the sublime silence of the order enshrined in creation which eloquently testifies to its Instigator. Ps. 104 shows the concern of God for the day to day provision and comfort of His creatures; water for the beasts (v. 10-11), grass for the cattle (v. 14), wine and bread for man (v. 15), the pleasant things of life provided by a generous Benefactor. Seasons and routine work, too, are part of God's overall plan (v. 19-23).

We believe that 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Gen. 1: 1). God demands that we do this by faith (Heb. 11: 6). God expects us to look at His witnesses and believe that He exists. As scientific discoveries advance, so we should be all the more impressed by the absolute wonder of the greatness of our God.

*David J. Webster*

From London (Ontario). In Psalm 19 we read of God's two books: first the book of nature (vv. 1-6) in which He speaks to the minds of men, then the book of the Law (vv. 7-14), in which He speaks to the hearts of men. Creation is the earliest witness of God to man, and although man turns his back to it in his folly, the witness still remains.

*Psalm 104.* This is a Psalm of creation and, in anticipating the great work, the psalmist speaks to his own soul and says (v. 1): 'Bless the Lord O my soul', and then goes on to express the greatness of the Lord by saying: 'Thou art very great'.

The first four verses describe God before He laid the foundation of the earth, as being clothed with honour and majesty and covered with light. He is the mighty One that stretches out the heavens and layeth the beams of His chambers in the water and walketh upon the wings of the wind. Then in v. 5 the psalmist refers to the time spoken of in Gen. 1: 1, 'God created the heaven and the earth'. We suggest this was the original creation, for Is. 45: 18 states: 'He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited'. V. 6 of our Psalm shows 'The waters stood above the mountains' and v. 7 reminds us of Gen. 1: 9 when God divided the waters and made the dry land to appear [Comment 1].

We suggest that those things which God called forth already existed, and only those animals, birds, and creeping things, and last of all man made in His own image, God created anew.

What is declared in Ps. 104: 9 is clearly stated in Jer. 5: 22, 'Fear ye not Me, saith Jehovah... which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea... that it cannot pass it though the waves may toss themselves.' Having thus prepared the earth for His creatures, for His cattle, and His birds, we now see the wonderful provision He made to sustain them. Grass for the cattle, herbs for the service of man, wine to make glad his heart, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart.

In viewing all the work of God's hands the psalmist exclaims in v. 24: 'O Lord how manifold are thy works! In wisdom thou hast made them all.' So let us say with the

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psalmist in v, 31: 'Let the glory of the Lord endure for ever; let the Lord rejoice in His works'. Before the Psalm closes reference is made to His judgement. In v. 32 we read: 'Who looketh on the earth and it trembled; He toucheth the mountains and they smoked' and finally in v. 35 he states: 'Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more'. As the Psalm commenced so does it finish: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord'.

*J. Paterson*

From Melbourne. In Gen. 1 we have a brief summary of the six days' work, as revealed to Moses by the Creator through His Spirit; and from v. 1 we learn that the heavens and earth that now are were brought into being by the Word of His power. The divine title Elohim is the plural of Eloah (God) and occurs about 2, 500 times in the Old Testament, while in the first chapter of Genesis it is found 30 times. Here we have the work of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, brought before us, the Trinity acting in unity (Newberry) [Comment 2]. Creation was for the eternal glory of the Creator, and outstanding in His purposes was the creature whom He was eventually to place upon the earth which His hands would fashion (as recorded in chapters 1 and 2) with the purpose in view that in future eternal ages might be revealed His love and kindness towards that creature. The second person of the Godhead, the eternal Son, would take upon Himself the form of that creature formed from the dust of the earth, not only to condescend to dwell among men on earth, but to pass through death which man had brought upon himself through disobedience and thus annul the consequences of that disobedience.

'In the beginning' takes us into a past eternity, unmeasured by time, and incomprehensible to human thought. Eternity can only be comprehended by Him who inhabits it 'whose Name is holy' and who could say: 'Before Me there was no God formed.' We are aware that various views have been expressed regarding the length of the six days, whether of 24 hours or creative periods, and we make no venture to comment thereon; but we are inclined to accept the view that between verses one and two of Gen. 1

there lies an undefined period which leaves room for the calculations of the astronomer and geologist [Comment 3]: and from v. 2 onwards we have the heavens as the psalmist surveyed and considered them, proclaiming the glory of Him who is the first great Cause of all; the expanse thereof displaying His handiwork. Creation speaks no human language, yet its words have gone out throughout all the earth, and to all mankind, as day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night doth teach knowledge. This is the language that speaks to man otherwise uninstructed, and declares to him the everlasting power and divinity of the Creator.

In Ps. 104 the writer opens with a doxology of praise to Jehovah Elohim who covers Himself with light as with a garment (the light unapproachable). His thoughts soar above the earth to the mysteries of the heavens. The clouds are His chariots to carry the waters to the parts of the earth where He has commanded them to fall. His ministers are those mighty created heavenly beings who do Him service, whether it be to carry comfort and succour to earthly beings of much weaker degree in flaming fire or to bring judgement upon the enemies of Jehovah, as is foretold in Rev. 19 and elsewhere. Concerning the covering of the earth with the deep as with a garment, it has been suggested by some that this applies to that first state referred to in Gen. 1: 6, 7.

Others see this portion as describing the deluge brought upon the world of the ungodly in the days of Noah. Then as the waters dispersed to the low places of the earth, they became the seas to which He has set a bound. He provides the springs of fresh water for the beasts of the field, and causes the growth of the trees in which the fowls of the heaven find a habitation. He causes food to grow for the needs of cattle and man. The heavenly bodies have a divine appointment to control the tides, the seasons, the day and the night. The seas and their innumerable inhabitants wait upon Him, their Creator, for life and the means of existence; He is the source of their supply. We believe the Psalm was given by the Spirit of God and we have a summary of God's wondrous works in creation. Exultantly the psalmist meditates thereon and a further doxology of praise bursts forth: 'Let Jehovah rejoice in His works' -

*D. McFarlane, T. L. Fullerton, T. W. Fullerton*

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**From Methil.** David is the writer of Psalm 19. What beautiful thoughts he must have had as he gazed up at night at the starry skies while faithfully shepherding his flock of sheep. David had time, and peace and quietness to consider God's handiwork. His thoughts must have been similar to those of Isaiah (see Is. **40: 12-13**).

God has spoken to men throughout all ages through His creation. Wherever men live, whether nation or tongue, 'the heaven declare' (to them) 'the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.' Creation is a universal witness to God's power and wisdom so leaving all men without excuse. Yet many refuse to have God in their knowledge (Rom. 1: 18-23). The heavens and the firmament are silent yet powerful testimony to the Almighty God. The very evidence of creation demands a Creator, One who made all things (John 1: 3), and He is God.

David uses beautiful pictorial language as he describes the sun in its circuit as a bridegroom, rejoicing as a strong man.

Ps. 104 meditates upon the majesty and providence of God, not only in His power to create all things but also His goodness in maintaining His creation by opening His hand to all. In this Psalm all God's creatures are fully satisfied with His gracious open-handed provision and care. The earth is satisfied, the trees are satisfied, all beasts and birds are satisfied. How good is the God we adore.

Psalm 104 appears to be one of a series of Psalms. The one before it shows that God satisfies the individual, while in Ps. 105 God satisfies His people, and in Ps. 107 God satisfies all mankind. The Lord Jesus in Mat. 6 told His listeners similarly that the birds of the heaven sow not, nor reap, yet our heavenly Father feedeth them; the lilies of the field toil not, yet even Solomon was not arrayed like one of these; and so He said: 'Be not anxious therefore what ye shall eat.' The apostle Paul, in preaching to the men of Athens, acknowledged that God made the world and all things therein, He being Lord of Heaven and earth, and then he continued by informing them that God Himself gives to all life and breath and all things. 'In Him we live and move and have our being'. Clearly the God that created, also in His goodness sustains us.

We note God's infinite care for the birds. The psalmist

gives details of their habitat, where everything is provided; where they drink, where they eat, where they nest, where they sing. And He finishes this Psalm, 'I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.'  
*Neville Coomer*

From Nottingham. Although there are differences in the two portions studied one thing stands out. Each meditation evoked a response from the heart of the psalmist as he considered the power, majesty and care of the Creator, God. 'Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer' (Ps. 19: 14), and 'I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to Him, for I rejoice in the Lord (Ps. 104: 33-34, RSV). It appears that some of the 'words of my mouth' that are acceptable are 'songs of praise', and 'meditations of my heart' that please come from a rejoicing heart.

Ps. 19: 1-6 tells of the creative work of God (Heb. El—mighty One) and is a parallel passage to Gen. 1: 1, 2: 4. The second part of Ps. 19: 7-14 in the next study concerns the Lord (Heb. Yahweh—He who is; the covenant God of Israel). Ps. 19: 1 introduces the heavens and the firmament which shows forth His greatness. These do not speak through spoken words but through the senses to man's heart. V. 4 is quoted in Rom. 10: 18 and it is confirmed in Rom. 1: 19-20, that men have been shown God's nature through creation and so they are without excuse if they fail to honour God as God. The 'glory of God' was considered with the expression found in Acts 7: 2 where it is recorded that the 'God of glory' appeared to Abraham. Both Abraham and the psalmist saw and considered the work of creation and hence sought to know and obey Him.

In Ps. 104 we find 'light' and 'life' linked together as they often are throughout Scripture (Gen. 1, John 1: 4). The Psalm describes created life and the provision made for it by the Lord (Heb. Yahweh—the maker of the earth and the heavens Gen. 2: 4). The ways that His creation interlocks are described that all might have water to drink, food to eat, and a place to rest (Mat. 8: 20). We do well to 'look at the birds' and 'consider the lilies' and so remember

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God's promised care for us (Mat. 6: 26-34). 'Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who have pleasure in them' (Ps. 111: 2, RSV).

Two opinions were put forward about Ps. 104: 9, 'Thou didst set a bound which they should not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth' (RSV). One view considered this to be related to the creation account in Genesis, with the flood being a suspension of the normal order for that occasion. The other viewpoint considered it to be descriptive of the promise given after the flood (Gen. 8: 21-22, 9: 12-17) with vv. 7, 8 being descriptions of the tremendous changes which must have happened when 'God made a wind blow... the waters subsided, the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed ... the waters receded from the earth continually.' At the end of 150 days the waters had abated... and continued to abate until the tenth month (Gen. 8: 1-5).

*Dave Rafferty*

From Paisley. The opening verses of Psalm 19 deal with the witness of creation in respect of the glory and handiwork of God. The emphasis is upon the silent witness of the heavens which declare the glory of God in the language of light. By this David shows that the night sky as much as the sun bears witness to the existence of God. There is also no distinction, for the astronomical bodies shine as lamps of testimony in all parts of the world.

Even Israel in time past were not exempt from worshipping the host of heaven. In Jeremiah's day, for example, there were some who were determined to exchange the worship of Jehovah for the baking of cakes in honour of the moon, whom the worshippers had personified with the name 'the queen of heaven' (Jer. 44: 17).

In the epistle to the Romans Paul develops the principle of universal evidence as a means of world-wide condemnation. The apostle indicts the entire human race on the grounds that 'the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen' (Rom. 1: 20). Therefore, where there has been no faith, man's naturally depraved response to this witness together with his contempt for the moral law of God had led to God's shutting up 'all under sin' (Rom. 11: 32).

In the context of the Psalm the reference to knowledge in v. 2 suggests divine knowledge. Thus the night sky indicates an infinite Intelligence who has created and shaped the universe. As we also know from Gen. 1: 14, God has set the heavenly bodies 'to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years'. With the vast increase in knowledge the wonder of what David writes is better appreciated in modern times. Man has discovered that his world is a tiny speck in an immeasurable cosmos of retreating galaxies. The only tragedy is that in the face of so many dazzling wonders this knowledge has not led men to glorify God. And so, like those of old who 'refused to have God in their knowledge' (Rom. 1: 28) men today have fallen into all the sins of a reprobate mind. It is little wonder therefore that this modern age excels in the excesses of the flesh.

In the case of the sun, there is the perfect combination of light and heat. If men walk in the light of the sun they will not stumble. Rather if men walk in the truth of God they will not stumble spiritually. Thus the psalmist says: 'The commandment of the Lord is pure enlightening the eyes' (v. 8). We can also see that the heat from the Sun of Righteousness should kindle a reciprocal warmth in the hearts of men. Therefore to those who love the Lord the light is sweet (Ecc. 11: 7). *T. Summerhill*

From Birkenhead. It would appear that both Psalms were written by David and were written at a time when David could view creation and the fall of man in a world which physically was little different from the form it now takes. Although the words were written by David and can only have been produced after an exercise of acute perception with regard to creation, it is important to remember that these writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and as such must contain much indisputable information which we have about the purpose, manner and result of God's act of creation and, more importantly, information concerning the Godhead.

The verses under consideration in Psalm 19 lay before us the limitless extent of God's glory as reflected by the heavens. David's observation is that they proclaim the work of His hands, display knowledge, and speak to all the earth.

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The order of creation is restated in Psalm 104, but beyond this the framework and order behind creation and the 'balance of nature' is emphasised. Everything is attributable to God. Not only did He create by His Word everything that has been made out of nothing (Heb. 11: 3) but He sustains all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1: 3). All created things have a purpose and function, and the wonder of it all serves to emphasise the power and glory of the Creator.

Parallels were drawn between the first nine verses of Psalm 104 and the first three days of creation, and some discussion took place with regard to the suggestion that: —

- (a) Gen. 1: 1 and 2 onwards relate the sequence of creation as it happened day by day.
- (b) That after Gen. 1: 1 there was a gap during which a disaster occurred, resulting in the earth being waste and void, and God worked again in the following verses.

The latter view was supported by Is. 45: 18 [see Comment 1 ].

Consideration of Ps. 104: 30 led to the conclusions that whilst the Godhead cannot be regarded as divisible in any way, there are certain functions undertaken by One that are not necessarily identified with another. For example, the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate.

*R. C. Halpin, R. C. M. Bolt*

From Derby: Ps. 19: 1-4. *The Heavens Speak Without Words*

There is a continuous silent proclamation of God's glory in His creation. Here the emphasis is on the ordered regularity of it all. The precise movement of the earth, sun and moon is a silent witness to all people everywhere of God's glory. 'His invisible nature has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made' (Rom. 1: 20, RSV).

vv. 5, 6—*The Sun*

The sun has always attracted man's attention and interest. It provides us with light and heat—raw energy. There has been sun-worship, but there is none of that here, the emphasis being that He has set a tent for the sun. It all proclaims the glory of the Creator.

Ps. 104: 1-4—*The Lord Above All*

We look up and see a great expanse of sky. Somewhere far beyond that is the Lord. He is very great. He is clothed with honour and majesty. These are things which His creation reveals to us about our Creator. He wears 'light' like a garment—symbolic of His purity and holiness.

vv. 5-9—*Creation of Major Land and Sea Features*

This is not a scientific explanation of how God created the earth. Rather, it is to be treated as poetry. The question being answered is not 'how' but 'who'. God's command (thunder) has to be obeyed (v. 7—cf. Gen. 1: 9, 10, RSV).

vv. 10-13—*Water Supply to Maintain Life*

The springs gush out to provide a continuous supply of water as drink for all animals and as life to the trees which provide shelter. The fact of our absolute dependence on God is emphasised here, yet that should not lead us to fear but to absolute trust in Him and His care. The earth is *satisfied* with the fruit of His work. '

vv. 14-18—*Provision of Food and Shelter*

The clear teaching is that God takes a personal interest in each individual of His creation. He has not just set the world in motion and left it to get along on its own (like winding up a clock). He feeds us and He provides our shelter.

vv. 19-23—*Seasonal and Daily Routine*

The emphasis changes now from the subjection of the universe to mankind and animals in the provision of our needs. We also are subject to the routine and regulations of the universe.

vv. 24-30—*Meditation*

Having considered all the works of the Creator we see great variety and wisdom in it all. He has made such a tremendous variety of living things.

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### vv. 31-35—*Supplication*

Is God satisfied with His world? Having considered all of God's work and His concern over His creatures then the psalmist stops and makes his plea to God: 'May the Lord rejoice in His works' and later, more personally, 'May my meditation be pleasing to Him.' *Paul Webster, G. W. C.*

## COMMENTS

1. London (Ontario). The Psalm is a poetic description of the creation, and vv. 6-8 describe poetically the sequence of events which geology also reveals, in which the sea covered vast areas which were subsequently uplifted and subjected to erosion. In this way God's self-revelation in His Word and that in His creation go together. However, this does not necessarily imply acceptance of the 'gap theory', for Is. 45: 18 may well refer to the final completed creation, not to its first form.

2. (Melbourne). Most authorities think 'Elohim' is a plural of majesty, rather than an adumbration of the Trinity.

3. (Melbourne). H. L. Ellison in 'A Bible Commentary for Today' says of the rendering 'the earth became without form and void' in Gen. 1: 1, that it 'flies in the face of Hebrew syntax'.  
*P. L. H.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Derby. What is leviathan?

An aquatic animal, probably the whale (see Bible Dictionary, e. g. IVF). *A. B. R.*

'Leviathan' is a transliteration of a Hebrew word which occurs in only five passages in the Old Testament. It appears to apply to some kind of aquatic monster, not necessarily the same kind at every appearance. In Job 41: 1-34 it is generally thought to be the crocodile which is referred to, but in Ps. 104: 26 it seems more likely to be a whale. Scripture uses the word as we use the word 'monster', sometimes generally, sometimes defining the type more fully.

*P. L. H.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

8002

The written revelation of God perfectly complements His self-revelation in creation, which we studied last month. However, it affects men more personally, for while creation reveals 'His everlasting power and divinity', the written revelation displays His moral attributes, and His demands upon men. These are sometimes thought of as negative demands—'thou shalt not...' but the passages considered in this month's study show that God's law is a positive, life-enhancing thing. It does indeed restrain evil, but it also leads forward those who meditate in it to wisdom and joy in the knowledge of God. In affliction or persecution, the assurance that God's 'word is settled in heaven' enables us to receive His strength, and in uncertainty His 'word is a lamp' to our feet.

Several contributors have commented on the various words used by the Psalmists to refer to God's word—law, testimony, precepts, commandments, judgements and ordinances. It is difficult to be dogmatic about the exact meaning of each one, and readers may consider the suggestions made. Each refers to the use of the Word in a different context, and taken together they show God's complete provision for the spiritual needs of His people. **P. L. H.**

Editors welcome the continuing interest in points raised during our previous study.

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### CORRESPONDENCE

#### (1) DISORDERLY

I wish to question the assumption of the Liverpool contributor (B. S. 7912, p. 189) that the R. V. gives a wrong impression by using the word 'disorderly' in 2 Thes. 3: 6. It is correctly stated in his dissertation that the Greek word *Ataktos* means 'to play truant break rank, or be out of step.' But surely, each of these courses of action is disorderly?

An authority on Greek states that *Ataktos* (adv. and adj.) and *Ataktea* (verb) come from an original word meaning riot or rebellion. Ellicott says: The word is rendered unruly in 1 Thes. 5: 14 . . . possibly military metaphor . . . out of rank.'

Strong renders *Ataktos* as 'unarranged, insubordinate (religiously), unruly.'

Bullinger's Critical Greek Lexicon translates it: 'Not keeping the ranks (as of soldiers), not in one's place, out of order, neglectful of duties.'

Each of these is most descriptive of that which appears to be disorderly. I would suggest that a more severe application of the word is indicated in v. 6 and less severe in v. 11. It is quite possible that Paul had in mind in v. 11 those who were truants from work and who had become vagabonds to the detriment of the Testimony. But v. 6 seems to infer a more serious form of disorderly conduct; one that was continuous and ultimately resulting in internal discipline. There might have been those who were not only escaping their daily work responsibilities but were becoming militant, rebellious, insubordinate and undisciplined.

In summary, v. 6 seems to provide a comprehensive application of the word, but v. 11 a more restricted one. Both forms of conduct are disorderly, not commendable for a Christian.

*R. Darke*

(This view is shared by editors).

**(2) 2 Thes. 2: 6-7**

Further to the recent consideration of this portion, the writer would offer the following possible explanation. The words 'that which restraineth' and the 'one that restraineth' refer to the 'falling away' and the 'man of sin' respectively. This also explains the distinction between the use of the neuter article *to katechon* and that of the masculine article *ho katechon*.

Applying this interpretation to the respective verses, we have the apostle saying in v. 6 that the falling away is preventing the day of the Lord and that this falling away will be with a view to the man of sin being revealed. By the same reasoning, the one who restrains in v. 7 is none other than the man of sin who must be taken out of the way prior to the day of the Lord. In other words, Paul is referring to the man of sin being taken and cast into the Lake of Fire at the Lord's coming to the earth (Rev. 19: 20).

This now brings us to the problem of the 'one that restraineth now', suggesting that he is already in existence. The possible solution to this may lie hidden in the preceding words 'the mystery of lawlessness doth already work'. In these the writer sees the Devil's hidden plan whereby he intends to empower the man of sin, that the world may worship him as God (vv. 4, 9). But although this is his intention, he is at the moment inhibited by the absence of the man of sin yet to come. This means that at the time of writing, the one who is preventing the coming of the day of the Lord is none other than the man of sin. Nonetheless, he is part of the mystery of lawlessness and exists as a determined idea in the mind of the Devil.

Summarising these various points, the writer would therefore suggest that though Satan is already progressing this hidden plan to deceive the world, he is inhibited by the absence of the man of sin. Meanwhile, Satan is striving to achieve the apostasy which will make the coming of the son of perdition effective. Until these two objectives are attained, the day of the Lord cannot come. But when the lawless one is taken out of the way at the Lord's coming to earth, then he will be revealed as the counterfeit he

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is, despite **his** previous deception of **the** world by **'signs** and lying wonders' (v. 9). **After** this **the** day of **the** Lord **will** come in **its** fulness, when they which received **the** working of error **shall be judged** (vv. 11, 12).

*T. Summerhill*

Surely, in the context, the full expression of lawlessness—'the falling away'—is that which is restrained, not the day of the Lord. The apostle says that lawlessness is already working **but** is being restrained by someone. I cannot see how lawlessness can restrain itself, or how the revelation of the lawless one can be restrained by himself.

*P. L. H.*

### (3) 2 Thes. 2: 6-7

Looking over several translations **we** find **that** 2 Thes. 2: 7 reads: —

**RV, ARV**, 'only **there** is one **that** restraineth now **until he be** taken out of **the** way. '

**J. N. Darby**: 'only (**there** is) **he** who restraineth now **until he be** gone. '

**NIV**: '**the** one who now holds it **back** will continue to do so until **he** is taken out of **the** way. '

**RSV**: 'only **he** who now restraineth it will do so until **he** is out of **the** way. '

**Rotherham**: 'only until **the** one restraining **at present** may happen to **be** out of (**the**) midst. '

**Englishman's Greek New Testament**: 'only (**there** is) **he** who restrains **at present** until out of (**the**) midst **he be** (gone). '

I cannot see why **we** should **depart** from **the** commonly held view **that the** One who restrains '**the** mystery' of lawlessness' is **the** Holy Spirit. **He came** into **the** world in a particular way **at** Pentecost with **a** twofold aim: —

1. To convict **the world** of sin, of righteousness and of judgement (Jn. 16: 7, 8);
2. For **the** baptizing of believers into **the Church the** Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 13).

When that particular work is complete He will withdraw to work again as He did in Old Testament times.

When the Church, the Body, is taken away, and the present convicting power of the Holy Spirit, then lawlessness will upsurge unto the coming of the man of sin, and the time of the great tribulation.

I would agree that the One who restraineth now is the Holy Spirit in whatever way He works. G. Jarvie

### THE WORD—Ps. 19: 7-14; 119: 89-112

**From Leeds.** The Lord gave the word (Ps. 68: 11). 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1: 14). The word of God reveals the Divine mind and expresses the Divine will. In Old Testament times, God spoke through (and to) men, through His prophets (Heb. 1: 1). No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not *at any time* (AVM) by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1: 20, 21 AV). In New Testament times, and as now, in the day of His grace, God speaks through His Son. The personality (character) of God was expressed through His Son, who was in the world as The Word'. The Only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him (shown Him forth) (John 1: 18). 'He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God' (John 3: 34), and so the Lord Jesus fulfilled His title as The Word'.

In that coming day, the same One will appear, riding upon a white horse, His vesture dipped in blood, He who is called Faithful and True and, although He has a name that no man knows but He Himself, His name is called (revealed) The Word of God' (Rev. 19: 13).

When God gave the law through Moses He wrote with His own finger (Ex. 31: 18) and also spake and gave commandment (Deut. 5: 22). The words God spoke through men and through His Son are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and they appear to us in written form. They are as a whole divinely inspired (God-breathed) (2 Tim. 3: 16). God never goes back on His word: having spoken, it remains.

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'For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven' (Ps. 119: 89). We noted many important references to the word of God in the Lord's own prayer in John 17, in vv. 1, 6-8, 14, 17, 20, 26. He truly declared the Father; He ever spoke of Him. Thy word is true from the beginning' (**Ps. 119: 160**; AV John 1: 1). May we all say 'I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil' (Ps. 119: 162).

H. R. Dodge

**From** Liverpool. A word is the vehicle through which the thoughts of the mind are expressed. Heb. 1: 1 tells us of various ways in which God's thoughts were delivered to mankind. There was the spoken word, there was the written word and, finally, there was the Incarnate Word—the Lord Jesus Christ. The spoken word included the complete act of creation (Ps. 119: 89) and the written word included the Mosaic law. Deuteronomy 6 tells us the purpose for which God gave the law to His people (1) for their good; (2) to preserve them alive; and (3) for righteousness for them (vv. 24-25). The emphasis is always on doing and not just hearing—see also the Letter of James.

The word of God is a heritage (v. 111). We must value it and hold on to it to pass it on to others. The word of God is a lamp (v. 105) not a light showing miles ahead, but a lamp to show us one step at a time. The word of God reveals to us the moral glory of God and in its widest context is the whole revelation of God to us.

*About the Word.* It is perfect (19: 7), trustworthy, right (8), enlightening (8), sure and altogether righteous (9), more precious than gold (10), sweeter than honey (10), eternal, stands firm (119: 89).

*The reaction of the Psalmist:* God's Law is the Psalmist's delight (119-92), he sought out God's precepts (94), loved His law (97), meditated on it all day long (97), obeyed it (100), took an oath to follow it (**106**), it was the joy of his heart (111) and his heart was set on keeping God's decrees (112).

*The word gives:* Light (8, 105), wisdom (7, 98, 100), warning (11), and understanding (104).

*Obedience to the word gives:* Revival to the soul (7), joy to the heart (7), great reward (11), and life (92, 93).

*David J. Webster*

**From London, Ontario.** Having viewed the opening portion of Psalm 19, wherein we see God's book of nature speaking to the minds of men declaring the Glory of God, so that as nothing is hid from the heat of the sun so nothing is hid from the glory of God, we now come to the latter part which first speaks to the hearts of men, while the last two verses are a prayer.

Verse 7 states: The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. ' This refers to the Law in its entirety. Its whole purpose is to restore the soul. It speaks to those who have wandered from God and whose soul is in danger of judgement. By listening to the Law and obeying it, the soul is restored or converted.

Then we read: The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. ' This again refers to the Law given to Moses as recorded on the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God and put into the Ark (Ex. 25:16). These contained the Covenant Jehovah made with Israel, and were preserved as a witness to them that Jehovah their God was true; and great blessings were theirs who believed them, besides 'making wise the simple' [Comment 1].

Then we read in v. 8: The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. ' Here is the source of great joy; to keep the precepts of Jehovah. Precepts are a teaching, or rules, of life and in obeying them is great joy. The commandment... is pure, enlightening the eyes. ' Naturally our eyes are blinded by the god of this age, the devil, and in obedience to the command of Jehovah our eyes are enlightened to see ourselves as God sees us and to behold the wondrous grace manifested toward us.

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever.' This is what we are exhorted to possess, and we must be clean, for defilement destroys communion with God, and thus it is the real element of endurance and is in harmony with the mind of Jehovah.

These five principles were given to Israel not for salvation but as ways wherein they might walk, and in giving heed to

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them they would be well pleasing unto Jehovah their God.

The Lord in Mat. 5: 7 took the same laws and while referring to them He added: 'But I say unto you'. Israel obeyed them outwardly, and He who was the first Law-giver, emphasized that they were to be obeyed from the heart, and indicated that to think evil was to be guilty as if it had been done.

*J. Paterson*

**From Melbourne.** The writers of the Psalms were men with deep spiritual experiences who had direct dealings with God. These experiences were taken up by the Spirit of the Lord for the instruction, edification, comfort and blessing of His saints of future ages and generations; these writers knew the effect upon their own souls of those parts of the living word which had already been given, and as a result they walked with God in varying degrees, while living in the midst of men whose portion was in this life, who had no knowledge of God. They had learned moreover that the word laid up in their hearts was like inoculation against disease as expressed in the statement 'Thy word have I laid up in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.' 'Hidden thus, they could draw upon it through meditation both by day and by night. Memorising of the Scriptures was evidently vital to these men of God as they prayerfully pondered them for the enlightening of the understanding; and no prayer for such has ever failed to reach the ears of the Eternal One. It has always been essential for the man who loves the word of the Lord to endeavour to search out the inexhaustible treasures found therein, and the more deeply that God's saints dig, the more is found.

*The law of the Lord is perfect.* In the pathway trodden by God's saints of all ages, the law of the Lord sheds its light upon that pathway revealing the dark places abounding with pitfalls. When a saint comes to a step of uncertainty he must stop and wait for the commandment: 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path.' and again, 'The commandment is a lamp and the law is light.'

*The testimony of the Lord is sure.* We suggest that we find the testimonies of the Lord in the written records of His dealings with men and nations in past ages; and by these

testimonies God's saints are instructed in wisdom and knowledge, so that they have more understanding than their teachers, who may have acquired only earthly knowledge. Those who have accepted them as true and meditated therein know more than the aged who have leaned upon the instruction given by the wise of this world.

It has been suggested *'His precepts'* contain personal instruction for the individual saints of the Lord. All saints are not alike, neither God's plans for them, but (if the suggestion be correct), each one as he meditates upon His precepts will receive personal instruction regarding the path which the Lord has chosen for him during the days of his life on earth. *The Statutes of the Lord*, it is suggested, are details arising out of commandments, which require diligent attention; this appears to be signified by 'instructions', found for example in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. *The judgements of the Lord* are true and righteous altogether; these are His all-wise and unerring decisions regarding all matters coming before Him for arbitration. The fear of the Lord is not a slavish fear but the reverence due to the holiness of Jehovah in contrast to the fact that men of this world have 'no fear of God before their eyes.' It is clean, affecting those who have a knowledge of the great Jehovah, and thus producing reverence and, as a result, a becoming godly manner of everyday living [Comment 2].

*Gordon Munday, T. W. Fullerton*

From **Methil**. The Lord Jesus said: 'The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.' He Himself is the life, and eternal life and the 'Word' is one of His many titles. As such He is the very expression of the mind and will of God, both in creation and in redemption, and through Him God has wrought in both of these spheres (Col. 1: 16; 1 Cor. 1:30). What we have in these two Psalms is the word of God viewed from different standpoints as being expressed in the law, testimonies, precepts, commandments, judgements, statutes and ordinances, each of these words having its own particular shade of meaning.

In Psalm 19 we can discern three things—the word, work and word of God. One sense of the word 'glory' in Scripture is that of moral and spiritual 'weight'. This is what

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lives behind our word 'worship'.

The Law had to do with teaching and direction, and was the will of God for His earthly people. Statutes seem to speak of that which is unalterable; judgement of divine decisions arrived at in God's unerring mind; testimonies both in the Old Testament and in the New, of what God has made known of Himself both in creation and redemption. 'Commandments' is that which carries with it the thought of the authority of God. Young's Concordance gives 'precept' the sense of 'commands', 'a thing set up', 'a charge' or 'charges'. The construction of the word seems to mean something before conceived in the mind of God, in distinction to what the Lord spoke of as the 'precepts of men' (Mat. 15: 9).

It is very noticeable that, however often the Psalmist in Psalm 119 uses these different words, he always comes back to say 'Quicken me according to Thy word.' Like the God whose word it is, it is life-giving (see 1 Pet. 1: 23, James 1: 18, Heb. 4: 12, Neh. 9: 13, Heb. 1: 1, Prov. 30: 5, Ps. 12: 6). *A McIlree (Sen. )*

From Nottingham. In our study portion for the previous month we considered the manifestation of the might of God in creation. Majestic though this revelation is, it is a wordless one. The God of heaven shows Himself in the works He has made but also reveals Himself to His creatures in His word, and in the second part of Psalm 19 we are directed to the Scriptures. Several synonyms are used, bringing out different aspects of the word of God and its effect if applied in human hearts and lives.

Considering some of the synonyms used, we have in 19: 7 the law. Without doubt this is the law of Moses but, believers in this dispensation, although under grace, are required also to carry out the expressed will of God [see Comment 2]. Adherence to this will 'restore', that is, turn, bring back or restore the obedient one. It was rebellion against the command of God that led to the entering of sin into the world (Gen. 3: 1-7), and the truth expressed in Psalm 14 about man seeking his own way is amply demonstrated by events in the modern world.

The testimony of the Lord is sure. This speaks to us of

the witness-bearing by God on all matters which affect His creatures. In contrast to the thoughts of men's own minds without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that which God teaches us is true and certain. The word 'sure' has the thought of 'being faithful' or 'steadfast'. When we think of the witness of God we are reminded of such scriptures as 1 John 5: 9. Then v. 8 of Ps. 19 instructs us that the commandment of the Lord is pure. According to Dr. Young the word 'pure' has the sense of 'clear'. How true this is of those commands given by our Lord Jesus Christ and recorded for us in such scriptures as Mat. 28: 19, 20. Then such simple yet profound instructions as 1 Cor. 11: 24 come to mind. The noting and observing of the commands of the Lord enlighten the eyes. The word 'enlighten' in v. 8 means 'to cause light' and we realise that a simple obedience to the will of the Lord brings with it an entry to the vast panorama of enlightened spiritual truth that lies behind the teachings of the word of God.

There is a simple but vital statement in v. 102 of Psalm 119, 'Thou has taught me'. This is ever necessary if we are to understand the ways and will of God. The teaching must be from the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who have never known the new birth cannot understand the things of the Spirit; compare Luke 24: 45.

*R. Hickling*

From Paisley. The Psalmist commences his praise of the Word of the Lord by speaking of its spiritual nutrition value. He tells of the restoration of the soul with which he also deals when he praises the Lord as his Shepherd (Ps. 23: 3). David therefore confirms the principle of the law's giving sustenance to the soul for 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' (Mat. 4: 4).

David also shows that the written testimony endows the simple with divine wisdom. From this we would conclude that it is essential to approach the Word with an uncomplicated, straightforward and honest mind, if the soul is to be instructed in the wisdom of God. A crafty, subtle or philosophical mind will only become wise in its own conceits and will thus controvert the truth of God to satisfy the lusts

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**of the flesh** [Comment 3]. Only an **upright heart will** rejoice in **the precepts of the Lord**; a corrupt **heart will be** deeply **grieved by them**. **Because the** commandment of **the Lord** is **pure**, it does not **appeal** to those who **are not pure** of heart. Though God's word is infinitely **deep**, yet it is **free of all guile** (**1 Pet. 2: 2**).

The reference to **the fear of the Lord** (**v. 9**) emphasizes **the** reverence evoked by **the Word of the Lord**. Thus **it was that** men who heard **the voice of the Lord** **trembled as** did **Israel** when they **heard the** Voice of words (**Heb. 12: 19**). **We also read** commendation of 'those **that tremble at the** commandment of our God' (**Ez. 10: 3**). Therefore, though **we** cannot hear **the** audible voice of **the Lord**, **we** should **read, hear** and handle **the** Holy Scriptures with **the** utmost reverence.

The Psalmist **tells us that the** Lord's judgements '**are true** and righteous altogether'. This last word indicates **that the** Lord's judgements **are** consistently righteous in every **part** without variation. This confirms **that every part of the** Bible is **true** altogether without conflict **between the Hebrew** and **the Greek** testaments [Comment 4]. Also, **the** Divine judgements **are** without partiality, unlike human judgements which **make large** allowance for friends and relatives.

**The** reference to **the** honey again stresses **the** sweetness of **the** purity of **the** Word, and honey is one of **the** purest of foods. Being already digested in **the** stomach of **the** bee, it gives immediate goodness and energy upon ingestion. Thus, **the pure** commandment of **the** Lord enlightens **the** eyes **as the** eyes of Jonathan **were** enlightened when **he** tasted **the** honey on **the** tip of his rod (**1 Sam. 14: 27**). Therefore, to **the** Philistine question '**What is sweeter than** honey?' (**Judges 14: 18**) **can** come **the** reply, **The Word of the Lord.**'

*T.*

*Summer*

*hill*

**From** Vancouver, **B. C.** '**Abram** obeyed my voice, and **kept** my **charge**, my commandments, my **statutes** and my laws (**Gen. 26: 5**), and '**I have** known him, to **the end that he** may command his children and his household **after** him, **that** they may **keep the** way of **the** Lord, to do justice and judgement' (**18: 19**), and blessing would **be** theirs. The terms used in **the** Psalm **were** not altogether new as it is evident from **the**

beginning that much was known to man through faithful witnesses in each generation.

In Christ we have the Word of God manifest in flesh 'full of grace and truth'. It is with much pointing to the mercy and loving kindness of God that the Psalmist refers to the Word. The greater Light shining on the mountain slope could say: 'Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time' (Mat. 5: 21) long before Moses—but 'I say unto you'. Our Lord Jesus Christ the 'Word', said things that superseded the former word, revealing more of God's will.

The Psalmist could say such words of affection for God's words, that he loved them exceedingly, greatly rejoiced, delighted, desired greatly, panted after, praised them, was comforted, warned, saved, restored, and quickened by them. They were his means of sight, very sweet, very tasteful, very precious, in fact words seemed to fail as he tasted the good word of God and the power of it. So we believe in the Son of God, hidden in the Psalm but to spiritual sight revealed, 'whom not having seen ye love, on whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable (words fail) and full of glory' (1 Pet. 1:8).

*H. McLeman*

**From Birkenhead.** Psalm 19 is attributed to David as shown in the inspired heading, but the writer of Ps. 119 is not identified, although it is suggested that it was written at a later date, possibly by Jeremiah or Daniel. It is clear that the writers of both Psalms were men of God who had experiences with God which had deeply affected their lives. What is also clear is the high regard in which they held the Scriptures which were available to them (Pentateuch, Job, and some of the prophets). It is reasonable to assume that men of God committed many passages to memory, as there would be few copies of Scripture available.

A number of Scriptures were referred to, showing the prominent place that God's word is intended to have in the lives of disciples. The Scriptures were given as food to help growth and good health in our spiritual lives. They also provided a weapon in our dealings with the adversary (John 17: 14, Jer. 15: 16, Col. 3: 16, Eph. 6: 17).

In the two passages under consideration, God's word is

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shown as being made up of different types of 'instruction' which are meant to be for our benefit and, consequently, to give satisfaction to God.

*Law*—from the Hebrew 'to point out', having the thought of a map.

*Precepts*—instructions from one who knows to one who needs to know or needs help, e. g. doctor to patient.

*Testimonies*—the record of God's dealings with men in the past.

*Ordinances*—decrees.

*Statutes*—ordinances binding on the whole congregation, the keeping of which give God pleasure.

*Judgements*—ordinances, those things concerning which God has come to a decision.

*Commandments*—inclusive term for God's instruction.

Psalms 19 reveals David seeking the help of God in being cleansed from hidden faults and kept from presumptuous sins. His writings should act as a warning to us. If such a man of God was faced with these difficulties, then so should we be watchful to avoid contravention of God's will or lowering standards to such an extent that sin is no longer apparent to us as such.

These Psalms provide a timeless presentation of human experience.

*R. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams*

**From** Derby. Words come into our consciousness very early in life and then become our means of thought and of communication. Our own words acquire a measure of permanence in our written or recorded expressions of them. God communicates with us sometimes in our spiritual being even without words. Some similar communications to the spiritual men of the past have been written down by them and we are able to perceive and receive these as the word of God.

David had been able to see God's communication with himself in such spiritual writings as had preceded his own

writings. An expression of this experience is found in Psalm **19: 7-14**. He also felt an awareness of God's activities in the natural world of space and time with their wonderful orderliness. This he expresses in **Psalm 19: 1-6**, where he regards this activity as speech (v. 2) **but** without language (v. 3).

In Psalm **19: 7-11** each 'word' is referred to by its nature and so we have law, testimony, precept, commandment and judgements. Some of these words overlap in their meanings and it is difficult to define them. Perhaps the law included all that indicated man's duty to God. The testimony would be God's declaration to man. Precept would be the teaching for behaviour. Commandments would be that which left no room for avoidance—except in sin; while judgement is linked to punishment in this connotation.

The writer of Psalm **119** is not named, but the repeated use of the first person singular seems to indicate a single writer.

Neither Psalm deals with 'The Word' in its profound sense as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. This use is seen in the first three verses of the epistle to the Hebrews and in the first five verses of John's Gospel. Finally John, in his vision in Patmos sees the victorious Lord Jesus Christ and finds Him named as 'The Word of God' (Rev. **19: 11-13**).

*N. Bramfitt, G. IV. Conway*

## COMMENTS

1. (London, Ontario). The tablets given to Moses contained the Ten Commandments (Deut. **10: 4**), and they are called the 'testimony' in Ex. **25: 16**, as the contribution points out. However, the word may not always be quite so restricted in its application (cf. Ps. 81:5).

2. (Melbourne). Melbourne friends ask for some comment on the various terms used for God's revelation to His people. There is no general agreement on their exact meaning but the following may be helpful; see also the Birkenhead contribution.

The 'law' (Heb. *torah*) can refer to the whole range of divine teaching, not only to the legal code. The use of the word varies with the context; in some cases it refers to the

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Pentateuch alone. The 'testimonies' are God's covenant terms for His people to observe. 'Precepts' are detailed rules of life. 'Commandments' express the directing will of the Lord God of Israel. 'Statutes' are rulings laid down and prescribed for permanent observance. 'Judgements' are rulings of the divine Judge, shown in His actions in history.

**3. (Paisley).** A 'philosophical mind' is not necessarily evil; it is only so if it takes the wrong premises for its arguments.

4. (Paisley). If reference to the Old and New Testaments is intended, then this statement is of course true. However, there is some conflict between the various Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old Testament available to us, and it is the work of textual critics to attempt to determine which is likely to represent the original. It cannot be assumed that a Greek version such as the Septuagint is invariably correct.  
*P. L. H.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

*(Carried over from B. S. 8001)*

**From Nottingham.** In Gen. 1:2 'Darkness was upon the face of the deep—and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.' Were 'the waters' and 'the deep' different things or did God, whose first words concerned light and whose nature is light (1 John 1: 5) co-exist with the darkness on the face of the waters/deep?

I think we must read the 'deeps' to be waters. There are a number of ways in which Christians interpret Gen. 1, but whether the widely held 'gap theory' is advanced (which involves a judgement on the original creation) or some other creation theory, it is not necessary to think that God, who is over all His creation (of which earth is only a part) is in the darkness of Gen. 1: 2. Only the earth was in darkness [see Comments 1 and 2, B. S. 8001, p. 16]. *A. B. R.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

## EDITORIAL

8003

Although written centuries before His birth, Psalms 22 and 69 so accurately foretell the experiences of the suffering Messiah that they cannot be explained apart from the wonder of inspiration. What was true of the prophets—'men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1; 21)—was true also of David. The Lord Jesus Himself once asked, with reference to Ps. 110, 'How then doth David *in the Spirit* call Him Lord?' A number of contributors have commented that, although writing so poignantly of the experience of his greater Son, David touched on matters of which he would himself necessarily have little or no understanding. However, the Spirit of God is the possessor of all knowledge. The function of David (and, indeed of all the prophets), was simply to act as a channel through which that knowledge might flow to us.

Contributors have this month felt keenly the holy solemnity of our subject. We have all been aware that we have been handling divine mysteries. That God should not spare His own Son, but deliver Him up for us all, will be a wonder to us for all eternity. That the Son should so willingly yield Himself to the experience of Calvary, will be the source of our praise for ever.

'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood... to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen' (Rev. 1: 5, 6). *R. L.*

## CORRESPONDENCE (Gen. 1: 2)

Disagreeing with the view expressed in the quotation from H. L. Ellison in Comment 3, p. 16, *B. S.* 8001, Harry King has sent the following comments: —

The word translated 'was' in Gen. 1:2 is translated 'become' or 'became' in many places in the Scriptures; one example is Gen. 3: 22 . . . 'the man is *become* as one of us.'

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Further examples are: —

Gen. 2: 24 . . . 'and they *shall be* (become) one flesh. '

Gen. 24: 67 . . . 'and she *became* his wife. '

2 Sam. 7: 24 . . . 'and Thou, Lord, *becamest* their God. '

It seems reasonable to conclude that the word should be translated 'became' in Gen. 1: 2.

**Research into this problem** on behalf of Editors has proved inconclusive, Hebrew scholars being divided on the issue. It should be noted, however, that all the main translations such as AV, RV, RSV, and NIV retain 'was' in the text.

## THE SUFFERING MESSIAH (Psalms 22: 1-21; 69: 1-21)

**From Birkenhead.** The two portions under consideration in connection with the sufferings of Christ are from psalms written by David, but some discussion surrounded the question of inspiration. It was stated that the Old Testament writings were inspired by the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1: 11). This did not indicate any difference between the inspiration of these scriptures and others (2 Tim. 3: 16). Psalm 22 is clearly Messianic and it is more appropriate to associate this with the Spirit of Christ, which is a title of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8: 9) [Comment 1].

It is clear that some of the events related were experiences of David, but it is equally clear that some were not. There is evidence of New Testament writers quoting scriptures from these two psalms, which directly refer to the sufferings of Christ. On the other hand such a verse as Psalm 69: 5 could not relate to an experience of the Lord Jesus.

Much can be learned of the human nature of Christ from these words which appear to spring from the experience surrounding His death on the Cross. Psalm 22: 2 reveals the patience of Christ calling on God and awaiting His reply. We also see His trust, which is not unfounded, and the faithfulness of God in the face of those whose derision was heaped upon the Messiah.

From our study of the two portions we see that the physical sufferings of Christ, although severe, seem to have been of secondary importance. The mental and spiritual agonies which He endured are emphasized and form the basis of the theme. Not only do we read of His isolation from other men but also His experience of being forsaken

by His God. Throughout His life on earth the Lord suffered the mocking of those He came to save. At the end of His time He was severely mocked and scorned and derision was heaped upon Him. However, this was all preparatory to the forsaking by God, which took place at Calvary; of which Christ spoke the words: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Even in the face of this supreme anguish we can read of the faithfulness of God to those who trust in Him, and this cannot be more evident than in the experience of the Saviour. One of the keys to waiting on God is contained in the words 'in an acceptable time' (Psalm 69: 13).

*G. H. Roberts, R. C. Hatpin*

From Derby. The chosen sections of the two psalms are in many respects exceptionally descriptive of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, but they are initially the experiences of their writer, David. Nevertheless, the apostle Peter (Acts 2: 30) makes it clear that David was a prophet. In Psalm 16, which Peter quotes, v. 10 definitely applies to the Lord Jesus while the rest of the psalm is the experience of David.

There are scriptures more directly prophetic of the suffering Messiah. Examples are Isaiah 53, and Zech. 13: 7. This latter is quoted by the Lord Jesus in Mat. 26: 31.

Psalm 22: 1 was certainly the experience of David, but the Lord Jesus used this verse as His own cry of agony on the Cross. Vv. 2-5 appear to be only David's experience [Comment 2] but vv. 7 and 8 seem to be entirely prophetic, being fulfilled in Mat. 27: 43. Likewise vv. 12-15 are in part David's experience and are also descriptive of the Lord's experience. Vv. 16-18 are outstandingly prophetic; surely they would not apply to David?

Psalm 69 is almost entirely the experience of David, particularly from v. 22 onwards; but in vv. 20 and 21 again there is a prophetic statement of the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ [Comment 3].

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

From **Edinburgh**. In looking at those two passages we must bear in mind that 'no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke *from God* being *moved* by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1:21). It was therefore probable that God

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and the Holy Spirit used David's own experience when he wrote those psalms [see Comment 1].

The question is posed: 'How much did David and the other prophets know about the Saviour when they wrote?' Certainly David must have known that the Saviour was to die and be resurrected (Acts 2: 30-31) for 'All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms' (Luke 24: 44), but we wonder just how much they understood as they wrote? They had the opportunity to seek and search (1 Pet. 1: 10) but did they appreciate what was written, or what *they* wrote, or did they write blindly out of their own experiences as the Spirit led them? [Comment 4].

Looking at both those passages we get a broad survey of the life of Christ whilst on earth.

- (1) His dependence upon God from the beginning (Ps. 22: 10).
- (2) The rejection by His kindred after His reading in the synagogue (Mk. 6: 3; Ps. 69: 8).
- (3) His weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19: 41; Ps. 69: 10).
- (4) The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up' (Ps. 69: 9) quoted after the cleansing of the temple (John 2: 17).
- (5) The characteristics of the people surrounding the Cross (Ps. 22: 12, 13, 16 and 17).
- (6) The reproaches flung at Christ while on the Cross (Ps. 22: 6-8) especially v. 8 which is the insult quoted in Mat. 27: 43.
- (7) The thirst of Christ on the Cross (Ps. 22: 15).
- (8) The piercing of His hands and feet (Ps. 22: 16).
- (9) The awkward physical position caused by being on the Cross revealing all the bones of His body (Ps. 22: 17).
- (10) The heart-break with which Christ died (Ps. 22: 14).

Those two psalms, written by David when he was feeling depressed and probably himself suffering physically, foretell graphically the sufferings of the Christ throughout His entire life, but especially on the Cross. They are not the only psalms which speak of the Messiah but more than the others they stress the physical aspect of His sufferings.

*Neil C. McLachlan*

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**From Leeds.** Our consideration of these psalms was divided into two parts. Firstly, how they applied to David himself and his own experiences, and secondly, how they applied to our Lord Jesus, that great Son of David.

Throughout David's life there were occasions when he was afraid. Prior to his kingship he had known fear many times and his comments about bulls of Bashan 'beset me round' and 'I am poured out like water' illustrate this. It is evident that he could refer back to previous writings and stories and realize the trust that God's people had in Him (22: 4-5). Certainly David was able to write these psalms from his experiences and how much he was himself able to project forward and apply to Messiah is debatable [see Comment 4]. Writing under the Holy Spirit's guidance of things he never suffered, his work is to us a vision of Messiah. When He was on earth the Lord Jesus referred many times to His suffering and in particular He referred the Scribes and Pharisees to David's writing in establishing Himself as Messiah (Luke 20: 41-44). There can be no doubt that the Lord in taking to Himself some of the psalms, was preparing the way for his disciples, then and now, to accept Him as the suffering Messiah as opposed to the triumphant Messiah expected by Israel. In that time there were many who accepted His claim (Mat. 9: 27, 12: 23, 15: 22) even though the claims He made were rejected by the rulers.

We are left with the words of the Lord Jesus at the end of Scripture confirming His kingly line from David and confirming Himself as Messiah. 'I am . . . the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star' (Rev. 22: 16).

*Philip Jefferson*

From Liverpool. People who wrote parts of the Old Testament never experienced some of the things they wrote about, but were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1: 21). David also wrote of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2: 25-28). The Spirit of God spoke through David of the coming Messiah, through *words* not experiences [Comment 5].

Only parts of the psalms are applicable to Christ; e. g. Ps. 69: 5 does not apply. But it is an easy option to pick and choose. There are two views of this verse: —

1. The Lord Jesus had no sin and therefore there is no

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application.

2. **He was made sin for us and identified with sin as in the offerings** (e. g. hands were laid upon Christ, **as upon the offerings**). **The** latter view is consistent with using **all parts of the portions under discussion** [Comment 6].

**Is there a distinction between Psalms 22 and 69?** **The** former is obviously Messianic, **whereas Psalm 69** is not as obvious, although **there are beautiful pictures of the Lord Jesus**. **But** some verses could not come from **the lips of Christ** (e. g. Ps. 69: 2-29) although these could **be viewed as referring to the coming judgement when people ask the rocks to fall on them rather than see the Lord** [Comment 7].

**The psalms give us a glimpse into the awful death of crucifixion which would otherwise be unknown to us. Its effects** ('I may tell all My bones', 'My bones are out of joint') **were so bad that** no Roman was condemned to **such a death**.

Ps. 22: 2 gives a glimpse into **the six hours of light and then darkness on the Cross**.

'Why hast Thou forsaken **Me?**' (22: 1). **The** Lord Jesus enjoyed men's company and loved to **be with them and have them** around Him. **All the** disciples forsook Him when **He** went to **the Cross (except for a few—Jn. 19: 25-27)**. **The** loneliness which Christ experienced must **have been** terrible. **The** Lord Jesus would **have expected** His disciples to **leave** Him, **due** to their **fear of the** might of Rome and **the** religious hierarchy of **Israel, but what** wounded Him deeply **was that** God **had** forsaken Him **as well**. **Israel's** forefathers **had** been **heard** for their crying (Ps. 22: 3-5), **but** Christ **was** not. **He** **suffered** separation in **the** absolute—a separation from God **that was** not **just** physical. **There** was complete loneliness **there** with no one to **help** Him (Ps. 69: 20). 'Why hast Thou forsaken **Me?** . . . **but** Thou art holy'. **We** should **have** experienced this, **but** will not (Heb. 2: 9).

**We** are not **aware** of our broken fellowship with God, yet **we** can know restored fellowship. **The** Lord Jesus enjoyed complete fellowship with **the Father** throughout His life, **but** on Calvary it **was** broken. This **was** never our experience, **but** God restored **all that was** lost in **the Fall** (Ps. 69: 4). **The** Lord Jesus restored to God **what** sin **had** taken away. God's '**rest**' **had** been restored, and God now

rests in the work of His Son. Christ has finished the work He came to do (cf. Heb. 1: 2, 3).

*Peter Barrett, David Webster*

From London, Ontario

**Psalm 22: 1-21.** This psalm is the first of the four psalms of suffering found in the first four Books of the Psalms, and portrays that aspect of the sufferings of the Christ found in Matthew's Gospel.

The absorption of the psalms into the Person whom he represents is so complete that it is difficult to realize that any human being could pass through the experience. David himself is entirely out of the question as well as any others. There is but One to whom it can refer—the Christ of God.

The psalm presents the sin offering aspect of the Atonement which was the first offering required by God from those who went up to worship Him. Here was the Lamb of God's own providing being put to death for the sin of the world, bringing forth the cry: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

There was power to create the world; He Himself had power to heal the sick and even raise the dead, but there was no power to cancel sin. The conflict was real, the agony intense, and no way could be found, but He must drink the bitter cup of the wrath of God for us and bear in His own body the iniquity of us all. He asks the question: 'Why art Thou so far from helping Me?' and proceeds to give the answer in v. 3 'But Thou art holy' and the Prophet enlarges on this (Heb. 1:13) by saying, '... Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil'.

Thus the darkness of the midnight hour when God dealt with His Son, and plunged the sword of judgement into His bosom. No eyes beheld Him then; darkness hid Him from human eyes. He cried upon the One, as the verse states, 'that inhabitest the praises of Israel'; the One whom the fathers trusted, who were delivered when they cried; but there was no deliverance for Him. To strengthen His cry He said in v. 10, 'Thou art my God from my mother's belly'. The agonies He suffered were so great and so intense that He said His heart was like wax, His strength was dried up, dogs compassed Him, the assembly of evil-doers enclosed Him and they pierced His hands and His feet.

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All this suffering which it was prophesied the Christ was to suffer was not only physical suffering but v. 20 states: 'Deliver my soul from the sword'. It was soul-suffering because of the weight of sin His Father laid on Him. All this spoken prophetically concerning the Christ He passed through, and blessed be God v. 21 states: Thou hast answered Me'.

*Psalm 69: 1-21.* This Psalm is also a suffering Psalm and it presents Christ as the Trespass Offering. It is the great Atonement chapter where iniquity, sin and transgression stand out in their moral ugliness and are dealt with.

Here we see the dark shadow of the Cross falling on the Saviour's path and what He endured to put away the sin of the world. We divide these 21 verses into four sections: —

V. 1-6. We see the things He suffered for our sins; as v. 5 states our sins He took as His own sins and said: 'O God, Thou knowest *my* foolishness and *my* sins are not hid from Thee'. [See answer to question from Leeds].

No person ever endured such deep-seated sufferings for sin as He did, even praying while they nailed Him to the Cross to His Father: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'.

Then He declared Jehovah knew His reproach, shame and dishonour and declared the greatest of all His suffering. His heart broken, He looked for some to take pity and found none, and in v. 21: They gave Me gall for My meat and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink'.

Because of such sufferings we who are in Christ, in reading these words, realize our true state before God, and realize it was for us He suffered those things. May we respond in obedience to God's will, and so give Him all the glory. -

*J. Paterson*

**From** Melbourne. In both Psalms 22 and 69 are doubtless found some of the personal experiences of David, as by the Holy Spirit he recorded some of his own sorrows. Yet led by the Spirit of God he foretold the future sufferings of the Christ both physical sufferings inflicted by the hands of men, and the deeper sufferings endured by bearing sin which was laid upon Him by His God. Psalm 69 appears to speak specifically of His sufferings at the hands of men and the sorrows which beset Him as He heard the re-

proaches which surrounded Him and with which He was taunted throughout His life on earth. Here is seen a fore-taste of the cup of sorrow He was about to drain to the dregs on behalf of mankind. He looked for comforters but found none, save for the few faithful disciples who surrounded Him.

In Psalm 22 we find mainly a summary of His experiences when forsaken by His God. We are not prepared to speculate as to the time when David had an experience answering to this in some degree, but it was about the end of the three hours of darkness that we understand the Lord Jesus uttered the words: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' During the preceding three hours of darkness the death sentence was being executed upon Him, the divinely provided substitute. This was death in its most awful and deepest sense, and experience of separation from God never previously known by Him. These words have been described as 'Immanuel's orphan cry', that we might never die the death described in Rev. 21: 8. From that death we look forward to the scenes depicted in Rev. 7 and elsewhere, when not only from Israel, but from all tribes and peoples, and nations and tongues, there will be a great multitude which no man can number, proclaiming 'salvation unto our God' and 'Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain' to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour and glory and blessing.

*W. H. Fullerton, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil.** We noted that David in Ps. 22 reveals the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on or about the time of His crucifixion, whereas in Ps. 69 he deals with the sufferings endured during His public ministry.

Ps. 22: 1 reveals the words of the Lord Himself: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' (Mat. 27: 45, 46). In taking upon Himself our sins and iniquities, the Lord found Himself far from His Father, God, and so He cried: 'Why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?' This was the cry of God's holy Servant, Jesus (Acts 4: 30).

In vv. 4-6 David contrasts the experiences of the people of Israel with those of the Lord. Their trust in God never went unrewarded, but at Calvary the Lord, feeling like the

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lowly worm, felt the reproach of men, even of His own brethren, and this reproach eventually broke His heart (Ps. 69: 20). Vv. 7-13 describe the sufferings He endured as men mocked and taunted Him upon the Cross (see Mat. 27: 43), and as He stood in the judgement hall. In vv. 14-17 we are given some insight into the terrible physical experience of the Lord on the Cross at Calvary, where He was crucified through weakness (2 Cor. 13: 4). His bones were out of joint, His suffering increased until His heart was like melted wax and His body like dried pottery. In vv. 20-21 we witness the Lord as He called in His extremity to His Father, that He might deliver Him out of the mire of death. Such was the cruelty of men to the One who had come to redeem them that they could only be compared with lions, bulls of Bashan or dogs.

Ps. 69 opens with the cry of extremity, as the Lord experiences the waters of death flooding into His soul. It was the cry of One who knew that He must suffer the death of crucifixion, from which there was no turning back; 'who in the days of His flesh... offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death' (Heb. 5: 7). The Father was able to save Him, and yet He knew that, in order to redeem the world, He must go forward. However, in Ps. 69 David does not dwell upon the Lord's final suffering, but relates to His daily suffering and daily crying to His God. Continued crying or supplication to God in the experience of the believer is surely an exhausting thing and so much the more in the experience of the Lord Jesus Himself, as He daily suffered among men.

Vv. 5 and 6 we felt bore no relation to the Lord Himself, but appeared to relate to David's view of himself and his own sin. In time of extremity we often become aware of own sin, and are often at such times nearer to God our Father.

*A. R. Smith*

**From Nottingham.** As we approach this month's study we do so in the spirit of Ex. 3: 5 'the place whereon thou standest is holy ground'. We are contemplating a great mystery, that of God incarnate suffering for His creatures' sins.

Our study portions, which speak of the Lord's sufferings, are closely associated with other psalms which speak of His glories. For example, in Ps. 22: 1-21 we read of His sufferings, then later in the same psalm and in Ps. 24 of His glories. In Ps. 69 we are presented with the sufferings and in Ps. 68 with His glories. Thus we are reminded that the One who suffered is the One who, although co-equal and co-eternal with God, yet made that tremendous stoop, the extent of which we cannot gauge, that He might save us.

There appears to be some element of obscurity in the Hebrew text of Ps. 22: 1, latter part. The RV margin has 'Far from my help are the words of my roaring'. The AV margin reads: 'Why art thou so far from my salvation?' Young's Literal Translation reads: 'Far from my salvation the words of my roaring [Comment 8]. This line of thought is extended in the verses that follow, where the speaker remembers the deliverance wrought by God for His people and yet on the Cross there could be no deliverance for Himself if salvation was to come. The reason is contained in v. 3, Thou art holy....'

The second part of v. 9 also has other renderings. The AV margin giving 'thou keptest me in safety when I was upon my mother's breasts'. Compare this with the RV. 'Thou didst make me trust when I was upon my mother's breasts'. Certainly safety and trust are closely associated and it is natural for babes to trust their mothers but we suggest we have something much deeper here in that from the time of His birth the Lord trusted His God and Father. This agrees with the first statement of v. 10. Some scholars consider the basic meaning of the Hebrew word '*Batach*' to be 'to lie prone'. From this we have the translation used in the NEB, 'who laid me at my mother's breast' and in the 'Jerusalem Bible' 'you entrusted me to my mother's breasts'. Both of these renderings convey a different thought from that of the RV.

In Ps. 69 we have a vivid picture of the persecutions that surrounded the Lord during the days of His flesh. The deep mire, the deep waters and the overflowing floods would have, we suggest, a two-fold aspect. For the sinless One to come into a sinful world and to see the effects of sin on every hand must have been a dreadful experience. Surely the whole state of the human race as a result of the out-

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working of sin was then, as now, like a deep mire into which the Lord, in a figure, sank.

Of course, His own person was never tainted by sin. Yet the experience of Calvary must have been the same for Him and there the floods indeed flowed over Him.

Ps. 69: 4 is interesting: Then I restored that which I took not away'. Young's Literal Translation renders it 'that which I took not away—I bring back'. Man's original relationship with God was not taken away by God but was forfeited when man turned to his own way. Yet, in passing through the flood waters, whether as experienced in life or on the Cross, the Lord restored to us that which He took not away.

*R. Hickling*

**From** Vancouver. Christ was the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Anointed King. David was anointed to be king by Samuel and knew much suffering during his life. Perhaps some of the sufferings spoken of in Ps. 22 and 69 would describe his own sufferings. However, we can reverently say that Christ, though anointed King, suffered far more than any other person. How true the words of Isa. 53: 3 'He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Scripture does not state any suffering prior to His being thirty years of age when He became God's messenger [Comment 10]. From thirty years on He suffered much from the leaders of Israel, from his brothers, from the satanic forces and then at last on the Cross from His Father God when He was made to be sin on our behalf.

Ps. 22: 1-2 describe His terrible anguish and suffering when His father forsook Him and the weight of all our sins was laid upon Him. No doubt there may have been some who, when crucified and hung for days, experienced physical suffering to a greater degree. Being criminals they deserved punishment but Christ was sinless and was suffering on our behalf, not His own.

Vv. 3-5. The reason for His Father forsaking Him is given here: 'Thou art holy'. Thus as the perfect Man He cries 'Our fathers trusted in Thee... they cried unto Thee and were delivered'. Of Himself He could say: 'I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people'.

Vv. 11-13. Christ speaks of the strong bulls of Bashan

and a ravening roaring lion. At the beginning of Christ's ministry the Devil did his best to cause Him to sin. Then in Christ's final hour, weakened in body by the treatment of wicked men and the forces of evil, Satan and his host would do all possible that He might know defeat. Despite all they could do He conquered over all His foes.

Vv. 14: 15 describe the utter weakness of body that Christ knew as He hung on the Cross and described it as water poured out and melted wax. What a contrast to things that are firm and erect. Though weak He accomplished the work God gave Him to do.

Vv. 16: 18. Christ was subjected to the cruel callous treatment of the Roman soldiers. He describes them as dogs. They pierced His hands and His feet and divided His garments among them and just sat there staring at Him.

Vv. 19-21. These are heart-rending words from the crucified Saviour. He appeals 'Deliver my soul'. There is an answer, 'Thou hast answered me'.

Ps. 69: 1-4. The great waves of God's wrath because of our sins overwhelm Him, and Christ feels there is no standing in the mire. The Lord Jesus was fully aware that He had been hated, not by one or two but by as many as the hairs of His head.

Vv. 7-9 and 19-21. Oh! the sorrow of reproach, shame and dishonour, but He bore it for His Father's sake. Normally these are the rebuke of those who have sinned, but He was harmless and sinless. In v. 4 He says He was hated without a cause and in v. 9 states that the reproaches of Israel against God fell on Him.

Vv. 10-13. Could these words indicate that Christ was recalling His manner of life as a man? He was meek and lowly, despised and rejected. He became a byword and the song of the drunkard [Comment 9].

V. 20. 'Reproach hath broken My heart'. The disciples forsook Him and fled. Normally when one is in distress there are some that would pity and give comfort. As He hung on the Cross there was none to comfort. His comfort was 'He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied' (Isa. 53: 11).

V. 21. On the Cross He said: 'I thirst'. They gave Him vinegar which would only increase His thirst. They gave

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Him gall, a poison to kill pain, but He refused it.

How appropriate the words of Lam. 1: 12, 'Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger'.  
*J. Bell*

## COMMENTS

1. Birkenhead. I am a little unclear regarding the point Birkenhead friends are here making. Every Scripture is inspired of God (i. e. God-breathed—2 Tim. 3: 16, AV). 'Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1: 21). David was conscious that he himself had been so used. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was upon my tongue' (2 Sam. 23: 2. See also Mat. 22: 43).

2. Derby. Ps. 22: 2-5, although not specifically quoted by the Lord Jesus at Calvary, has always seemed to me to be part of the unspoken cry of His heart, especially as v. 6 refers to Him. Clearly, however, we must not lose sight of David's own experiences in these verses.

3. Derby. Many Bible students see much in Ps. 69: 1-21 which refers to the sufferings of Christ; for example, do not vv. 1-2 tell us of the cries of His heart to God as He suffered on the Cross? Also v. 9 is quoted as finding its fulfilment in the Lord Jesus, both in John 2: 13-17 and in Rom. 15: 3-4.

4. **Edinburgh.** A number of papers raise the question of the degree to which prophetic writers appreciated the greatness of the divine truths of which they wrote. This is a point on which we cannot safely be dogmatic. 1 Pet. 1: 10-11 indicates that they were aware that they wrote of a day and of experiences yet future. Their appreciation of what they wrote however must have been limited.

5. Liverpool. This point is a valid one. Nevertheless, much of what was penned by David in the portions under study was borne out of his own experience.

6. **Liverpool.** We must guard against the temptation to 'pick and choose' in our interpretation of any passage of Scrip-

ture. Each portion must be interpreted in the light of other Scriptures. Regarding the two views presented here, see answer to the question from Leeds.

**7. Liverpool.** Much of the latter part of Ps. 69 had no direct fulfilment in the experience of the Lord Jesus. However, v. 21 is clearly Messianic in application (see Mat. 27: 34).

**8. Nottingham.** Any textual obscurity which may exist does not affect the clear application of these words. In each of the versions quoted, they convey the deep desolation experienced by the Saviour on the Cross.

**9. Vancouver, B. C.** Ps. 69: 10-13 undoubtedly refers to some of the Lord's experiences during the years of His life on earth. Many students, however, will see in v. 12 a reference to men's attitude to Him as He hung on the Cross. *R. L*

**10. Vancouver.** Certainly the Gospels say very little, but there are passages in several psalms which may describe the Lord's life as boy, carpenter and neighbour. Remembering that He used no special powers of the Spirit, as He did after His baptism, it is perhaps helpful to meditate on such Scriptures as Ps. 129: 1, 2; 88: 15; 38: 12-21. *A.B.R.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. From Leeds. If Ps. 69 is classed as a full Psalm referring to Messiah, what sins are referred to v. 5?

The Psalms were written out of the experiences of men, and although some of them, such as 22 and 69, make clear references to the Messiah, it would be wrong to assume that each statement in them necessarily refers to Him. Ps. 69: 5 cannot possibly refer to the Lord Jesus, for He 'did no sin' (1 Pet. 2: 22). These sins were surely those of the Psalmist, of which he had become intensely aware. *R. L*

Most contributors seems to regard this verse as not applying to the Lord Jesus (London, Ontario excepted), but it may be helpful to suggest considering it in the con-

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text of 'suretiship'. 'He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure' (Prov. 11: 15). See Prov. 6: 1-5; 20: 16; 22: 26, 27. When the debt is claimed the guarantor is called before the judge to pay what is owed by another, and the Proverbs scriptures show it is foolish to 'be snared with the words of thy mouth'. The 'sins' are 'guiltinesses' (RVM) for which the guarantor has bound himself to be legally responsible. The setting is the debtors' court and gives poignancy to the words of v. 4 which shows the true debtors hating their benefactor and now his 'enemies wrongfully'. In this setting and for these debtors He 'restored that which I took not away'. Cf. 2 Cor. 8: 8 '... He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor....' A. B. R.

2. From Melbourne. The question was asked: 'When was sin laid upon Him?' It has often been stated that it was during those hours of darkness. If so, what is conveyed to us by the literal rendering of 1 Pet. 2: 24, 'Who His own self bear our sins in His own body *up to and upon the tree?*'

The marginal reading of 1 Pet. 2: 24 (RV) gives us an alternative rendering, 'carried up . . . to the tree'. Space does not allow a full examination of the uses of the Greek verb *anaphero* (bear) in various NT references. However, it should be noted that, on those occasions where the thought of movement from one place to another is in view, *anaphero* is followed by the preposition *eis* (into). In the verse before us, the preposition used is *epi* (upon). It was while on the Cross that the Lord Jesus was made sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 6: 21). We refer readers to *Needed Truth* Vol. 10, pp. 161-164 for a very helpful and comprehensive examination of this very point by the late Dr. Luxmoore, in which he concludes that the RV marginal reading is 'a serious misrepresentation of the original.' R. L.

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

8004

Several contributors **have** pointed out that there are seven psalms commonly classed as penitential psalms; these are Ps. 6; 32; 38; 51; **102; 130** and 143. **The** two psalms selected for study this month **are** included **in** this grouping.

It is not possible to **be** definite about **the** circumstances in David's life **that** occasioned **the** writing of Psalm **6**, and various possibilities **are** discussed in **the** contributions to **the** subject. **It** is evident, **however, that he** was conscious of **the** chastening hand of God upon him when **he** wrote it.

**The** titles or headings of **the** psalms, although not part of **the** inspired text, **are** helpful and can usually be relied upon. **The** intense emotion **revealed** in Psalm **51**, and the specific points **made** in it, confirm **that** it relates to David's experience in **the** circumstances **referred** to in the heading of **the** psalm.

David was **a man** who enjoyed **sweet** communion with God throughout **the greater part** of his life. Sin breaks communion however, and so in **the** period following the great **sin** of his life David experienced many months of silence, misery and lost communion. Eventually God, in grace, took **the** initiative **and** sent Nathan **the** prophet to confront David with his sin through **the** application of the parable he told. **Psalm 51** records David's **frank** confession of his sin to God, and **the** words of Psalm **32** were written in the **sweet** enjoyment of divine forgiveness.

**In** like manner our communion **with** God is broken by sin, **but** confession of known sin to God results **in** forgiveness and **the** restoration of fellowship **as** 1 John **1: 6-2: 2** so clearly shows.

J. K. D. J.

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### CORRESPONDENCE

**From** Hamilton (Scotland). In Bible Studies 8001 Comment 2, p. 16, it was stated that 'Most authorities think "Elohim" is a plural of majesty rather than an adumbration of the Trinity.'

- (1) Who are these authorities?
- (2) What weight can be given to their findings?
- (3) Is the plural of majesty used in every reference to Elohim?  
*M. Carruthers*

Prof. F. F. Bruce states: 'I should say that those who find in *'Elohim* an adumbration of the Trinity are reading a later revelation back into the word (Answers to Questions 1972, p. 208). ' He also quotes from H. L. Ellison (The Bible Student Oct. 1953): The plural will have been used from patriarchal times, partly as a mark of respect—"the plural of majesty"—partly because the true God sums up in Himself all the divine powers, implied by the word itself. ' Dr. E. F. Kevan (New Bible Commentary, 2nd Ed., 1954, p. 77) comments 'Heb. *'Elohim*. Many derivations are suggested for this word. The meaning seems to be "He who is in the highest degree to be revered. " The plural word *'Elohim* is a plural of intensity, sometimes called a plural of "majesty". ' Prof. R. A. Finlayson (New Bible Dictionary, 1962, p. 475) writes 'Some see in the use of the plural a remnant of polytheism, others an adumbration of the Trinity. It is more likely to be an instance of a usage common in Hebrew by which the plural serves to intensify or enlarge the idea expressed in the singular. It would thus draw attention to the inexhaustible fullness of the Godhead. '

All of those quoted are respected evangelical commentators. To be able to assign 'weights' to their statements one would have to be of comparable status and knowledge, which one is not. The references are to the word *'Elohim* in general, not to one particular occurrence of it.

*P. L. H.*

**CONTRITION—Ps. 6; 51**

**From** Melbourne. The psalms are not given in chronological order and, although some would place Psalm 6 prior to Psalm 51, the suggestion is made that the former psalm would fit into the experience of Psalm 3, where the introduction indicates that it was written as a result of Absalom's rebellion and David's flight. There are other circumstances in his life which could also have caused him to express himself thus, such as his persecution at the hands of Saul, or his failure in numbering the people as recorded in 2 Sam. 24. Psalm 51, according to its introduction, expresses David's deep contrition following the appearance of Nathan the prophet. The Lord had sent Nathan the prophet to him with a parable to stir up a righteous indignation against the traveller of the parable. David pronounced summary judgement upon the offending traveller, thus enabling Nathan to bring home to David his guilt and the heinousness of his sin. This was followed by pronouncement of the inevitable consequences of judgement upon him and his house on the basis of the principle that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' David was immediately convicted of his sin, bringing forth from his heart the humble confession 'I have sinned against the Lord.' This was followed by the assurance from Nathan that the Lord had put away his sin. In the words of the psalm David now reveals the deep workings of the Spirit of the Lord within his heart; this is no mere confession with the lips. He acknowledges that God's condemnation of his actions is righteous; and although he pours out before the Lord the facts of inherited and indwelling sin, there is no attempt to excuse himself. He has lost the joy of salvation, and his ability to teach transgressors the ways of the Lord. Although it will take time, he prays for the restoration of that which he had lost. Sacrifice and offering are readily available to him, but while he may offer according to the law, the true sacrifices which he knows are acceptable before the Lord, are those of a 'broken spirit and a contrite heart' [Comment 5].

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*Psalm 6.* If this was the result of **David's** experiences, as recorded in 2 Sam. ch. 13 and 18, we have here the fulfilment of the words of Nathan found in ch. **12: 10, 11.** His sin had been forgiven, but the consequences must follow. His experience is continually one of rebuke and chastening, and the Psalmist is sore vexed, and asks: 'How long will these things last?' He pleads for deliverance. There is the possibility of sudden death, for his enemies seek his life to take it away from the earth. If he goes down to Sheol, he cannot give thanks to the Lord. Yet in his weariness and crying he is at last assured that the Lord has heard him, and those who have sought his life to take it away will receive just retribution. Evil men may be used to chasten the people of God, but when they exceed that degree of chastening which God has decreed, they in turn must feel His hand in righteous anger and retribution upon them.

*Malcolm McFarlane, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil.** Contrition means humiliation, penitence, remorse, repentance, self-reproach, sorrow. Evidence of such a condition is seen in the life of David through Psalms 6 and 51, both written by him.

In Ps. 6 we are not told how he had failed; it is a matter between God and himself. He cried out to be healed. Such was his condition before the Lord that his whole being was affected. Not a night went by but he soaked his bed with tears. Despite David's state, he knew the Lord had heard his weeping. He firmly held on to the knowledge that God would receive his prayer and answer him. The first five verses of Psalm 6 show David's supplication, while verses 6 and 7 emphasize his complaint. The end of the psalm is in triumph, showing David's confidence in God.

In Ps. 51 we do know that David was calling on God to show mercy because he had sinned so grievously in going in to Bathsheba. The full account is given in 2 Sam. 11 and 12: 1-14. David was aware of the tender mercies of God and on the basis of such mercy he asked God thoroughly to cleanse him and to blot out his sins.

Psalm 32 reveals that while David tried to hide this matter, God's hand was heavy upon him day and night, but then he confessed his sin to the Lord and was forgiven. All sin is ultimately against God and so he says: 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned.' Because of the Fall, David, like all others, had been born in sin. This did not excuse him with regard to the consequences of his failure, but it does demonstrate the weakness of man.

God can certainly use men again after failure when they have been fully restored. Peter who denied the Lord, when he had turned again, was greatly used to establish his brethren.

The sacrifices that God looks for from a truly repentant man are a broken and contrite heart. It is not easy for a man to acknowledge his guilt before God, but the Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and will save such as be of a contrite spirit (Ps. 34: 18).

*Neville Coomer*

**From Nottingham.** Contrition means broken-heartedness for sin, penitence (so it is clear why the editors of *Bible Studies* chose Psalm 51 under this title), but what of Psalm 6? Iniquity or a synonym for it does not even appear in Psalm 6 (except with respect to the sin of other people, v. 8). Could not it be an account of physical suffering (consider vv. 2, 6 and 7) with a 'troubled soul' being a result of the bodily infirmity? Yet men have listed it under the grouping 'The Penitential Psalms' (others being Psalms 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and **143**). Three observations were made which vindicate the choice of Psalm 6 under the title 'contrition': —

- (1) Consider v. 1 . . . in Thy anger (RSV) . . . in Thy hot displeasure (RV). Why is the Lord angry? 'Ungodliness and wickedness of men' leads to God's wrath (Rom. **1: 18—RSV**) and Ps. 7: 11 (AV) tells us that 'God is angry with the wicked every day', but note Nahum 1: 2, 3.
- (2) Consider verses 2, 6, 7. Compare these with: —
  - (i) Ps. 32: 3 'When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groanings all day long.

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For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me  
... (RSV).

- (ii) Ps. 41: 4 'Heal me for I have sinned against Thee'  
(RSV).

Unconfessed sin **has a bad effect** upon health. We do not mean, of course, **that** someone with particularly **bad health** must **be** harbouring a lot of unconfessed sin (see John 9: 1-3, Acts 9: 36-37# 2 Kings 20: 1-20).

- (3) Consider Ps. 38. As always, **scripture** is **the** best commentary upon scripture with **Ps. 38** filling in **the** missing reasons for **the** statements in Ps. 6. **The** first verses **are the** same and Ps. 38: 2-4 shows why bones and soul **are** troubled... 'because of Thy indignation', '**because** of my sin', 'For my iniquities **have** gone over my **head**; they weigh like a **burden** too heavy for **me**'.

**The** psalmist was sure **that the** Lord **had heard** his supplication and **accepted** his prayer (v. 9). This could not **have** been so **if he** still 'cherished iniquity in his **heart**' (Ps. 66: 18 RSV).

Consideration of Ps. 6: 5 led us to ask **if the** psalmist was mistaken in thinking 'in **death there** is no remembrance of Thee (**the** Lord)', especially with Ps. 139: 7, 8. Two points **helped** us to gain an understanding of **the truth** conveyed in **the** statement: —

- (1) Remembrance (**Heb. zeker**) means **a** memorial, not **that the dead** fail to **remember** anything about **the** Lord. **It** is similar to **the** use of 'remembrance' in 1 Cor. 11:24. In both cases **the dead** cannot join in **the** service of thanksgiving.
- (2) **The** second **part** of **the** verse 'In Sheol who can **give** Thee praise' (RSV) ('thanks' RV) shows **that** praise and thanks do not ascend to God from **there**; Ps. 115: 17, Ps. 88: 10-12, Is. 38: 18 confirm this. **Yet** it should **be** noted **that** it is **a place** of **peace** and comfort for **the** righteous (see Is. 57: 1-2 and Luke 16: 19-31).

In Psalm 51 there is no pretending, as both God and David are aware of his sins and of the effect these have had in standing in the way of fellowship. The teaching in 1 John 1:6-7 expresses the effect of sin: 'If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us (lit. keeps on cleansing us) from all sin' (RSV). Hence to say we have no sin is self-deception, and the often used conditional promise of 1 John 1:9 assures us that forgiveness and cleansing is on the basis of God's faithfulness and justice—good news indeed!

*D. Rafferty*

From Vancouver, B. C. Contrition, a vital feeling and way of life for the Christian, is nevertheless one too rarely felt and less often displayed. David had a firm grasp on it.

It has been suggested that Psalm 6 was written as a result of the altercation and subsequent rift between David and Absalom. Two reasons for the need for contrition could be advanced. The workers of iniquity of v. 8 are too near, either (a) because they are on the attack (David is questioning whether he has caused the attack), or (b) because David has succumbed to temptation to be too much like his enemies, responding kind for kind. The word 'grief in v. 7 really means 'anger'. Could David be contrite for an unwarranted display of anger? In any case he has come to the right place. He looks upward and shows true repentance (vv. 3, 6, 7), and he sees in God the equal blend of justice (v. 1—anger at sin) and grace to heal (vv. 2, 4).

Psalm 51 brings us to another great incident in David's life, revealing at the same time a weakness and a strength. David is at the end of himself here. So often in this psalm he requests action of the Lord. This passivity on his part gives us a great truth about repentance. It is a state of the heart. Repentance is not penance as some would have us believe. True there is a restitution and restoration, but they follow.

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It has been said that there are four main aspects of prayer and they should be included in all prayer. Three are touched on briefly in this psalm (1) *Praise* (vv. 14-17), (2) *Thanksgiving* (vv. 8, 12, 13) and (3) *Requests* (vv. 10, 18, 19), but they are present. The fourth, *Confession*, is naturally the theme of this prayer. David directs his comments to God because he is aware that all sin ultimately and primarily is against God. However long David dwelt on his sin we do not know, but it was probably not very long, and as soon as he opened his mouth in prayer he did not have to castigate himself any longer [Comment 2]. Not only does he come to know forgiveness immediately but that forgiveness was complete. No guilt, real or unreal, remained. What a happy example to follow!

In conclusion, we get two tableaux painted in these two psalms. The first is of a penitent in agonized prayer, steeped and immersed in it until he has reached the plateau of forgiveness. The second takes us deeper. The penitent is now acutely aware of being immersed in the cleansing blood and it has been the first scene that has taken him there [Comment 1]. There develops an intimacy with the forgiver now that cannot be rivalled. This state of forgiveness through the agency of contrition is a pre-requisite of abiding in Christ.

*James C. Bell*

From **Birkenhead**. Although both psalms reflect a state of utter contrition in the heart of David as he wrote them, it was not clear in the case of Psalm 6 what had prompted this response.

Psalm 51 clearly related to David's deep regret following his adultery with Bathsheba and the consequent death of Uriah. In Psalm 6, however, we were unable to establish the exact cause. Something had affected David, but whether it was distress at the spiritual condition of those around him or the fact that they were oppressing him, we were unable to determine.

We saw quite clearly the emphasis which was heavily laid upon the fact that all sin is against God. Although David's act harmed others, the sin was directly against a

righteous God. This realisation evoked a deep response from David in that it heightened not only his awareness of sin against God, but also his own sense of wrong-doing. The depth of this feeling is the essence of words such as 'regret', which compose the dictionary definition of 'contrition'.

There is much descriptive language used to show the extent of David's feeling and his consciousness of this is evident from Ps. 51: 3, where we learn that whilst David's awareness was bitter and deep on many occasions, it may have been less evident at other times; but his past sin and failure were a continuous presence in his life.

David's faith in the Lord shows through when he places himself at God's mercy in asking for sin to be blotted out and for the presence of the Spirit to be retained in his life.

Psalm 51 ends with a statement of God's joy in the repentance of David. This must have been greatly valued by the king, since for the sin in question there was no sin offering provided—the penalty was death. David's broken spirit and broken and contrite heart were what God would desire and accept.

*R. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams*

**From Derby.** Contrition is a state of mind arising from the consciousness of wrong which has been done. One can be contrite without approaching the wronged person at all. Penitence is nearly the same but seems to involve the presentation of oneself in sorrow to the wronged person. Both states are presented in the two psalms, though neither noun is used. Instead there is a reference to a contrite heart in 51: 17; also the use of the word heart suggests *feeling* as distinct from *knowing*.

There is no direct reference in either of the psalms to the main cause of David's need for contrition; but the heading of Ps. 51 suggests that the reason was David's sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah. In 51: 4 David says: 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned'. In Gen. 39: 9 Joseph resists seduction by Potiphar's wife, describing the proposed adultery as a sin against God.

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The contrived death of Uriah was murder and was a sin against God in the broken commandment of Ex. 20: 13. David was aware of his guilt in respect of Uriah's death and this is shown in Psalm 51: 14.

To wrong one's fellow man is also a sin against him. This is clear from Mat. 18: 15 and 18: 21.

The prophet Nathan in 2 Sam. 12: 10-11 makes it clear that although David's sin against Uriah was forgiven, there would nevertheless be future consequences. Despite forgiveness, the past projects into the future!

David's contrition led him to pray for mercy (6: 2) and deliverance (6: 4). Similar prayers are found in 51: 1, 6, 7 and 8. Outstanding verses which can apply to all God's children are 51: 10 and 51: 17.

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From** Edinburgh. The contrition of David in Ps. 51 derived from his deep sorrow for his sin against Bathsheba. David was guilty of coveting, adultery and the murder of Uriah. Consequently his prayer life was affected, for he prayed: 'O Lord open thou my lips' and 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation' (Ps. 15: 15, 12).

Contrition derives from a root meaning 'to be bruised' or 'to grind to powder' and includes repentance and the forsaking of sin. As referred to in Psalm 51, the word refers to David's severe guilt and remorse and his spiritual, physical and mental collapse. See Ps. 31: 9-10; 38; 40: 12-13; 102: 1-10. The experience of contrition and forgiveness is described in the first five verses of Ps. 51. David acknowledges his sin (v. 3), knows it is against God (v. 4), confesses his specific sin (v. 3), as well as his original sin as a human being (v. 5), and appeals to God for mercy, washing and cleansing vv. 1-2. David contrives no excuse for his sin; he confesses and throws himself upon the mercy of God. Today, these few simple verses are our guide along the path to acceptance by God after disobedience [Comment 3].

The rest of the psalm reveals more of God's character than of David's. God breaks and heals the contrite. God

transforms the contrite spirit and creates the new heart, renews the right spirit, restores joy and brings praise to the lips of David. There are three aspects to Ps. 6: David, his enemies, and God. There is no mention of sin or confession by David. His condition derived from his problems with his enemies. There is no evidence of contrition in Ps. 6. We suggest that contrition is not an ingredient of the experience that David describes in Psalm 6 [Comment 4].

*Paul Merchant*

**From Hamilton** (Scotland). 'Contrition' is a word that does not appear in the AV; however, there are a few occasions in the Old Testament where we find Hebrew terms are translated in the AV or RV as 'contrite'. The doctrine of and the reality of contrition, permeate the Old and New Testaments. Self examination is a part of the event of contrition; without a basic humility and a humble recognition we can never come to the experience of contrition. Contrition is an experience of profound sorrow for our failure and at the same time an intense awareness of the holiness of God.

In Psalms 6 and 51 we have the hidden thoughts of David revealed for our instruction. The Holy Spirit opens to our gaze the hidden citadel of David's heart and mind. Let us look more closely at the powerful, poignant words of David in Psalm 6.

### *David's Cry*

- (i) O Lord, rebuke me not (v. 1).
- (ii) Neither chasten me (v. 1).
- (iii) Have mercy on me (v. 2).
- (iv) O Lord, heal me (v. 2).
- (v) Return O Lord, deliver my soul (v. 4).

### *David's Condition*

- (i) I am withered away (v. 2).
- (ii) My bones are vexed (v. 2).
- (iii) My soul also is sore vexed (v. 3).

### *David's Contrition*

- (i) I am weary with my groaning (v. 6).
- (ii) Every night I make my bed to swim (v. 6).

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- (iii) I water my couch with my tears (v. 6).
- (iv) Mine eye wasteth away because of grief (v. 7).

### *David's Confidence*

- (i) For the Lord hath heard the voice of my *weeping* (v. 8).
- (ii) The Lord hath heard my *supplication* (v. 9).
- (iii) The Lord will receive my prayer (v. 9).

This psalm of David was created by the Holy Spirit in the crucible of David's intense sorrow and pain; as a result of his failure. We cannot place precisely the point or event which caused him such pain but there is no doubt that the lesson was profitable.

*Matthew Carruthers*

**From Leeds.** In a time of physical weakness and sickness David asks that he might yet be spared so that he might continue to offer praises to God—for the dead have no voices (Ps. 6: 5). Similarly, in Ps. 51: 15 he says: 'Open thou my lips and my mouth shall show forth thy praise'. As in things natural, so in things spiritual, the one who sins has broken communion with God; he is dead (cut off).

Those who are sincerely contrite are those who are bruised with sorrow unto repentance and who show a deep regret for their sin. The Lord Himself is near unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit (Ps. 34: 18).

David ever had cause to remember the visit made to him by Nathan, the prophet of God (2 Sam. 12). About a year had passed since David had taken Bathsheba and their son had been born, and possibly David considered that his sin remained hidden as before God. However, when Nathan said: 'Thou art the man', the shaft went deep into David's heart. David immediately acknowledged: 'I have sinned against the Lord' (2 Sam. 12: 13).

According to the law his penalty was death (Lev. 20: 10) but Nathan said: 'The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die' (2 Sam. 12: 13). How well did David play and sing (Ps. 32: 1, 2, 5). 'Blessed (happy) is he whose

transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.... I acknowledged my sin unto Thee and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin'.  
*H. R. Dodge*

**From** Liverpool. *Definition:* Contrition is deep sorrow for sin and is brought about by a recognition of the absolute holiness of God and the failure of a person to live up to that standard.

*Was Psalm 6 written as a result of some sin?*

We noted that there is no confession of sin in Ps. 6, yet all the marks of the writer being troubled by sin are there—reference to God's anger (v.1), plea for God's mercy and an acknowledgement that he is languishing ('withered away'—RV) (v. 2), his tears (v. 6) and grief (v. 7). Perhaps the Lord was allowing David trial and suffering and maybe the 'workers of evil' (v. 8) were the instruments of God's chastisement.

*Cur off in death (6: 5)*

We wondered about the meaning of this verse. Even the saved of O. T. times seem to have feared death: '... all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage' (Heb. 2: 15 RSV). It was thought of in terms of obscurity and blackness, a place to which they did not want to go!

*The feeling of forgiveness (6: 8-10)*

Forgiveness would be felt in an emotional experience of relief. God would make it real, with the feeling as of a burden lifted after perhaps a long period of misery.

*The detailed confession in Psalm 51*

There was no sacrifice in the law of Moses for David's sin. David felt the abhorrence against himself that he would have felt about seeing those sins in the lives of others. Specific sins need to be specifically confessed and we are assured: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just

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and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9 RSV). Whilst recognising that there are many occasions when we sin without realising it, or when we soon forget about a small sin, for which we must ask God's forgiveness in general terms, it was felt that 'blanket coverage' confession ought not to take the place of detailed confession of sins that trouble our consciences and affect our communion with God.

### *Who was sinned against?*

David says: 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned'. Yet was not Uriah sinned against? He was, and when we sin it can be against both God by breaking His laws, and against our fellows too. Two explanations of the phrase 'Thee only' were suggested: —

- (a) It was to emphasize the fact that sin is primarily against the very person of God;
- (b) Sin is in fact a breaking of God's laws, not men's. Sin may affect others but we do not sin against them but against God.

### *The inheritance of sin (51:5)*

This verse does not imply any immorality on the part of David's mother but rather points to the fact that he shared in the sin common to mankind. The NIV translation is very helpful: 'Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me'.

*David J. Webster*

From London (Ontario)

*Psalm 6.* In this psalm of contrition we have revealed the great depth of anguish the Psalmist felt under the hand of God when he was rebuked. Being ever conscious of his sinful birth he pleads with Jehovah in v. 1: 'O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure'. So the Psalmist pleads and pleads, bearing the grief of his sins on his own body, speaking of it wasting away, and the quaking of his bones: but not only in these does he feel the weight of the Lord's hand in his rebuke but says in v. 3: 'My soul also is sore vexed'. Still conscious of being rebuked by the Lord, yet he acknowledges the Lord

is full of loving kindness. Could it be because he lived with the workers of iniquity that the Lord rebuked him, for we note after he commanded them to depart he states in vv. 8, 9: 'For the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication and will receive my prayer [Comment 6].

*Psalm 51.* While this psalm may in a general sense have an application to sin in the preaching of the Gospel, it points more directly to the failure and restoration of the saint, for verse 12 states: 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation'. Therefore the Psalmist is speaking of having known the joy of God's salvation which, because of his sin he lost, and pleads with God that it might be restored to him.

David further acknowledges that sin commences in the inward parts as he goes on to state in v. 10: 'Create in me a clean heart O God', and continuing he pleads for the renewal of a clean spirit within. Finally, having yielded to God's judgement he declares in v. 16: 'Thou delightest not in sacrifice else would I bring it', but states in v. 17: 'The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise'. *J. Paterson*

## COMMENTS

1. (**Vancouver**, B. C. ): It was as the the evidence of death that the blood was so important in the Old Testament as in the New. For us the cleansing is a cleansing of the conscience by the knowledge that God's own Son died for us; and this knowledge comes through the blood.

Dr. C. M. Luxmoore goes so far as to say: 'The thought of a person being washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether to remove his sins or for any other purpose, is utterly foreign to the Scriptures' (NT. Vol. 28 (1921) p. 169). *E. A.*

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**2. (Vancouver, B. C. ):** The period of time from the committing of the sin until it was confessed was probably about one year. Nathan's visit took place after the birth of Bathsheba's child. Our contributor, however, is probably referring to the period after Nathan's visit.

**3. (Edinburgh):** It is true that similar principles are involved. Furthermore, we have the assurance given that confession on our part will ensure forgiveness and the restoration of fellowship. *All* our sins (past, present and future) have been atoned for by the death of Christ and therefore God's faithfulness and righteousness guarantee forgiveness and cleansing (**1 John 1:9**).

**4. (Edinburgh):** See the points made in the contributions from Nottingham, Birkenhead and Derby, which support the selection of Ps. 6 as a psalm of contrition.

**5. (Melbourne):** It has been pointed out by several contributors that for deliberate sin such as David's there was no sin offering provided under the Law; the penalty was death, yet God in mercy forgave him. *J. K. D. J.*

**6. (London, Ontario):** The 'workers of iniquity' were David's adversaries, who directed their iniquitous works towards him. He is telling them to be gone, because the Lord will save him. *P. L. H.*

## ERRATUM

In General Introduction (2), Bible Studies 8001, p. 3, item 5, the scriptural reference should have been 29: 1-2.

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

## EDITORIAL

8005

We know best those with whom we talk most, and to know God and His ways it is imperative that we spend time in His presence in prayer. Yet many, if not most, Christians find that prayer is a difficult service and takes much learning and patience. Without prayer we wither, for it is communion with our God which supports Christian life in a world contrary to our new nature. Experience teaches us our dependence on God and, equally, that He is gracious and merciful in providing for our benefit. Our hearts and lives are bare before God but the very expression 'Throne of Grace' gives us confidence in seeking His presence. In humility we bring our petitions and our praise, but there is a strengthening in the service. Study of the prayer experiences of men like David in Psalm 86 reveals the heart of the true petitioner and we can feel every confidence in using the Spirit-given words he uses, and the form of petition recorded. We can certainly feel the blessing in the reading.

*ABR*

## SWEET PSALMS OF ISRAEL

The psalms are song-poems that were written over a period of hundreds of years and collected together. They are shaped by forms and conventions which, in the original language, added intensity to the words. Translation of poetry is always difficult because the original poem depends upon context and emotional content both in form and language. If the context included music, and the music is no longer available, it is important to acknowledge the fact.

Language gives form to thought. It is a way in which we attach symbols that we can share with other people. We take the responses that we make to the world we live in and we attach these shared symbols so that a part of our experience can be communicated.

Language gives form. It also has form. It follows rules.

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Without grammar it would not be possible to share a language. Language also has conventions, usual ways of doing things. Conventions change with social usage or need. That is one of the reasons for new versions of the Bible.

Sometimes language is used so that word meanings are intensified. There is a speech by Iago in Shakespeare's 'Othello'...

'Not poppy nor mandragora,  
nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,  
shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep  
which thou owedst yesterday. '

Each word in this passage has more meaning because of its context. The use, for example, of long, open vowel sounds, 'o', 'or', 'owe'; the use of 'medicine' as a verb; the image of a troubled man being drugged to a 'sweet sleep'; and the thought of owing to yesterday emphasize the assurance of Iago's triumph over the great naive Othello.

The English version (AV) of Psalm 127: 1 reads: —

'Except the Lord keep the city,  
the watchman wakes but in vain. '

The English word 'keep' is the word that was used for the safe tower in the castle. The first line of the couplet is slow, full of the same open vowel sounds that we noted in Othello, but the second line has short, closed vowel sounds, 'wake', 'vain', that introduce urgency into the verse.

The psalms are poems that were sung to music. Many of the titles refer to the director of music, or the choirmaster. They also refer to tunes which, we presume, were well known. Psalm 22 was sung to 'The Doe of the Morning'. Other titles refer to musical instruments and to musical terms whose meaning has been lost [Comment 5]. Music communicates feeling. Sometimes the intensity of language in a song is lessened to accommodate the conventions of the music, but a new dimension is added by the relationship of words and music. That is why we prefer to sing a hymn to one tune rather than another. The repetition in the last line of: —

'When by His grace I shall look on His face  
That will be glory, be glory for me. '

(Gospel Songs No. 166),

is required to fit the musical form.

There is a whole new experience waiting for the reader who approaches the psalms with an awareness of the relationship between form and content, and who is ready to search for and share the symbols in which the psalmists communicated their inspired knowledge of God. That experience is one thing which may help to reactivate a gift that is very precious and very scarce—the gift of reading Scripture aloud. A reader should be well acquainted with the text before he can deliver it for the understanding and enjoyment of an audience. A well-read psalm is powerful and truthful.

There are two more points that should be made before getting down to the individual psalms that will be used to provide examples and illustrations. Hebrew poetry gave form to a poem with an idea-scheme instead of a rhyme-scheme. One of the most usual schemes can be seen in the second psalm, which falls into four stanzas of three verses each, the first and last stanzas reflect each other, and the middle two reflect each other. This is known as 'chiastic structure'.

Hebrew poetry also used a form in which an idea was repeated once or twice. We call it 'parallelism'. It is exciting to see how the psalmists have used this technique. Sometimes it presents a contrast, sometimes an emphasis, and sometimes it turns a thought to present a different facet.

Psalm 1 is a good example of the 'chiastic' structure that was described. It is a short psalm which was used to introduce the first theme of the psalter. The first phrase of Ps. 1 and the last phrase of Ps. 150 provide a contrast that illustrates the theme progression throughout the book.

The form of the psalm requires that there should be an intentional relationship between the first and the last stanzas.

'Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.... the way of the wicked will perish. '

The first stanza describes the way of the righteous, beginning by describing the negative—the 'way of the wicked' in which he does not walk. The last stanza describes how the Lord watches over the 'way of the righteous', finishing by describing the negative consequences of the wicked way. The middle stanza is made up of two parts that reflect

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each other, and provide the same contrast that was noted in the others. We are given two similes, one of a tree rooted by water, fulfilling its purpose, living and thriving; one of the chaff, rootless, purposeless, dead and drifting. Even in a small poem like this, there is an intricate relationship of words, thoughts and form... the blessed man will not 'stand in the way'... or 'sit in the seat'... 'the wicked will not stand in the judgement' or be 'in the assembly'. The structure is integral to the poem.

With this illustration in mind, we can look at two longer psalms, 9 and 10. In some versions they are printed together. The Septuagint treats them as a single psalm. The structure suggests that there are two separate poems, each with a first and last stanza, each with a middle part that falls into two reflecting themes. The psalms deal with the same theme, but the reason for their close association is that, from verse 1 of Ps. 9 to the last verse of Ps. 10, with only one or two minor irregularities, every second verse begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. An acrostic design was used in a number of psalms, most notably in Ps. 119, and was a valuable aid for the memory.

Both psalms discuss the issue of a world where the helpless, the weak, the deprived, the widows and orphans, the oppressed millions are mistreated and abused by the arrogant, evil, strong and rich. Although they are alike in form and theme, they deal with the issue very differently. Both psalms express the faith that the Lord is not insulated nor unconcerned, and that the forces of oppression will be caught in their own net. The psalmist is sure that God will intervene for the oppressed multitudes. Psalm 9 treats the subject in a universal way and talks of large, collective numbers. Psalm 10 is full of singular nouns. Ps. 9 concludes: 'let the nations know that they are but men'. Ps. 10: 'in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.'

Ps. 9 uses the word 'nations' or 'peoples' frequently. It is a difficult word to translate in English. It is the 'goiim', a noun that should be easily recognizable to readers of Jewish literature. It is also translated 'heathen' and 'Gentile'. It should not be interpreted in a political sense because when the psalms were written the word had no such flavour.

It describes groups of people who are antagonistic to the Lord and equates with 'the wicked'.

Psalm 9 falls into distinct sections or stanzas. The first two verses are marked by a commitment to praise. 'I will' occurs four times. Vv. 3-6 form a section in which God is praised for the personal vindication of David. In vv. 7-9 and 9-12 there are two stanzas that broaden the theme to the universal justice of God. In the centre of the city there was a strong tower, a fortress. When danger threatened the rich and the powerful gathered in the fortress, but the weak and the poor stayed outside to take their chances. The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed'. 'He does not ignore the cry of the afflicted'. These six verses from 7-12 are the centre of the chiasmic structure of the psalm.

The next two verses illustrate how, although the psalmist followed some recognized form, there was always freedom to distort or abandon it when necessary. The poet, on this occasion, halts the development of the psalm to insert a prayer, identifying himself with the 'afflicted'. Then he returns to the scheme in which the final section reflects the opening section, but in a triumph of joyful praise and faith.

Psalm 10 begins with a very different feeling. It accuses the Lord of being far off and indifferent to the needs of the weak.

'Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?' David says in the first stanza.

'You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted;

You encourage them, and you listen to their cry, the last stanza begins.

The psalm falls into two halves. Up to verse 12 we are in a world where the Lord is far off. It is dominated by men who 'have no thought for God'. They crush their victims. Verse 12 to the end presents the other side of the coin. The poet begins with a prayer: 'Arise, Lord, ' that turns before he has finished into a statement of prayer fulfilled. The last stanza beginning: 'The Lord is King for ever and ever', is the refutation of the opening stanza and of the statements of the wicked.

In this world of ours, where the refugees are shuttling unwanted from country to country, where the weak are abused and the poor misused, where children and old

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people are forced to pay the price of the folly of societies, the message of the two psalms is loud and clear. If we share David's concern for the innocent, the helpless, the fatherless and the oppressed, we can also share his faith that the justice of the Lord will not allow the inequities and the mistreatment to continue indefinitely.

The Lord is King for ever...  
defending the fatherless and the oppressed. '

*L. Home (Ontario)*

(NOTE—Scriptural quotations in the foregoing article are taken from the **NIV**).

### PETITION—Ps. 86

**From** Leeds. One dictionary definition of petition is simply an asking or a supplication, bearing the thought of 'asking humbly'. Although the word itself does not appear in the psalm, its theme is dominant throughout and manifests itself in every verse of the prayer of David as a true supplication of an individual before God. Although David had a high position in the eyes of men, as king, before God his heart was ever contrite, and his humility and lowliness in this psalm reveal the innermost thoughts of a man who recognised his true position before God: 'I am poor and needy' (v. 1). In v. 5 he speaks of a God who is: —

- (1) Good;
- (2) Ready to forgive,
- (3) Plenteous in mercy;

and as he continues his meditation and supplication, he amplifies this in v. 15 and speaks of a God who is: —

- (1) Full of compassion;
- (4) Plenteous in mercy;
- (2) Gracious;
- (3) Slow to anger;
- (4) Plenteous in mercy.
- (5) Plenteous in truth.

David's confidence (boldness) is in a God who *will* answer (v. 1) and he asks for a whole (undivided) heart 'to fear Thy Name' (v. 11). The unfailing faith of David is brought before us in many of the verses, and the way he addresses the Lord makes it certain that he had proved his faith time and time again in his everyday experiences (1 Sam. 17. 37, 1 Sam. 30: 8, 18-19. 'In the day of my trouble I will call

upon Thee, for Thou wilt answer me' (v. 7—see also vv. 5, 8, 15). These are not the outpourings of a man unsure of himself before God, but rather of a man who knew himself through and through and who was very conscious of his own faults (v. 1, Ps. 6: 2, Ps. 51: 3).

We noted that David claims to be holy, the only person in the Bible, apart from God, to make this claim [Comment 1]. The psalm is purely a supplication of David to God encapsulating David's problems and experiences acquired through his life as a 'servant' of God (vv. 2, 4, 16). It is such a very private and personal thing, and so we have, by the grace of God, our own personal insight into the heart of the king of all Israel.

*P. J. Dodge, H. R. Dodge*

From Liverpool: 'Petition' means asking, supplication or request, a prayer for a favour from God. David prays (i) 'answer me' (v. 1), (ii) 'Preserve my soul' (v. 2), (iii) 'Save thy servant' (v. 2), (iv) 'Be merciful unto me' (v. 5), (v) 'Rejoice the soul of thy servant' (v. 4), (vi) 'Give ear unto my prayer' (v. 6). These petitions are based on: —

(1) *His needs*: not prayer for a good life, but for deliverance from murderous enemies (v. 14).

(2) *Faith*: he has no doubt that God will answer him (v. 7).

(3) *His confidence* in God's nature. David's experience of God had taught him that God is (i) good and forgiving, full of compassion and gracious (vv. 5, 15); (ii) plenteous in mercy, slow to anger (vv. 5, 15); (iii) unlike any other god (vv. 8, 10); (iv) alone able to do great things (vv. 8, 10). David describes himself as 'godly' (v. 2). We thought of this as one whom God favours, see NIV 'for I am devoted to you' [Comment 2]. The word does not imply self merit on David's part, nor does '*Chasid*' (Heb.) mean 'set apart for God's use', rather 'kind' or 'merciful' [Comment 4].

We noted that even in a prayer of petition there is a constant praise to God, seven out of seventeen verses containing a note of praise. David prays for an undivided heart (v. 11), the heart having no object but God, forgetting all the things around it. It is possible to have a heart with its affections divided; half set on the things of God and half on the things which take the place of God, which leads

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to hypocrisy. Instead, David pleads his own lack of merit before God and his willingness to submit to God's way (v. 11): —

- (a) In praying 'Teach me Thy way' David was submitting his mind to the mind of God; John teaches that this is the principle upon which prayer will be answered (1 John 5: 14-15). We must always ask according to the will of God.
- (b) Walking in the truth would be the manner of life that is shown from observing and understanding God's will. Pilate asked: 'What is truth?' The Lord Jesus prayed: 'Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth' (John 17: 17). So by observing the word of God we can walk in the truth (see 3 John 4). God has revealed Himself to us. It is our responsibility to reveal Him to others by our way of life.

*P. G. Barrett, D. J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** Petition arises from a sense of personal need or the need of others. It is no mere request of the lips, but arises in and flows from a burdened heart. It may be the result of failure and sin committed, followed by the desire for pardon and restoration of fellowship with God. It may be in circumstances of trial, or a cry for deliverance from danger. In fact the circumstances under which petition to God is made are innumerable; but it is always because the petitioner is very aware of human helplessness and weakness, and of the omnipotence and mercy of the God to whom he cries. The most outstanding example of petition is found in the prayer of the Lord in Gethsemane, when in the agony of His soul He cried: 'Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will but Thine be done' (Luke 22: 42). In His case the answer came through an angel from heaven strengthening Him for that which lay before Him. Likewise with the saint of God, it may not be always the removal of some trial but grace and strength to bear it.

We are not aware of the circumstances in the life of David which led him to cry thus to Jehovah. He expresses himself as 'poor and needy', and his soul is cast down. His cry has been no mere fleeting and soon forgotten one, it is 'all the day long'. Saints of God are not limited to seasons

of 'morning' and 'evening' prayer but are privileged to have access to the ear of God at all times. 'Pray without ceasing' is the reminder to needy saints of God. The bended knee and bowed spirit are indicative of an attitude of humility before Him, which is needful if our petitions are to be heard by Him in His dwelling place on high. David said 'I cry unto the Lord with my voice, and He answereth me out of His holy hill' (Psalm 3: 4). Even in the midst of work, or business, or travelling, or in the night seasons men may cry in humble petition to God, bowing in spirit in His presence in realised weakness and need. The cry arises since they are conscious that there is none other save Him to hear and answer. There is no stipulated formula of approach for the suppliant; the Lord understands the need which is behind the petition and, although the psalmist elsewhere speaks of 'ordering' his prayer before the Lord, the distressed spirit thinks not of a 'correct' manner of speech. He is conscious of the fact that 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust' (Ps. 103: 13, 14).

The result of answered petition will be increased joy in the Lord and a desire to understand His way more fully. To those around there will be a 'token for good' because the Lord has answered, and helped, and comforted.

*7. W. Fullerton*

From **Methil**: Psalm 86 is a prayer of David, a petition to his God. The word petition means an appeal, entreaty, prayer, request, supplication, or as a verb to ask, beg or crave. All of these indicate that David cannot order God to give him anything, nor can he claim anything as of right, but he does recognize himself as a subject of God's grace. He admits he is poor and needy, but he does belong to God. He says 'Oh Thou my God save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee'. David knows the character of God; that He is a merciful God. His request was based on this knowledge of God's merciful heart.

We thought of the contrast of the saints in Laodicea who were so independent and far from God they did not realise how needy they really were. David has the right attitude

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to receive an answer from his sovereign Lord. His intense desire and desperate longing for God's help are evidenced by the fact that he cries all the day long, lifting up his soul to the Lord. He is not asking something from a vague shadowy stranger; he knows that the Lord is good, ready to forgive and completely merciful to all them that call upon Him. In v. 7 David knows from experience that God will answer in the day of trouble. He lives in close touch with God every day, trouble or no trouble, but in this day of trouble God will speedily answer him. There is a parallel in Heb. 11:6, 'He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.' David knows and tells God that there is none like Him. He is sure that God is supreme and cannot fail. Thou art great and doest wondrous things; Thou art God alone. '

He calls on the Lord to teach him His way and reaffirms that he is willing to walk in the way of truth with singleness of heart, an undivided heart to fear God's name. In vv. 8-10 he appreciates God's greatness and mercy in general, but in vv. 12-13 he appreciates and presents God's goodness and mercy to him personally, specifically remembering that God had already saved him. This leads him to glorify God with all that he has, and this is surely the whole purpose of creation, to declare the glory of God.

It is only in the last four verses of the psalm that we learn the reason for his petition. Proud, violent and godless men were against him, even trying to kill him. In the time of his trouble and deep need he calls on the Lord to save him and to show him a sign of His favour which his enemies will also see and realise that God has in fact helped and comforted him.

*Neville Coomer*

**From Musselburgh:** We often feel like echoing the words of the disciples when they said: 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11: 1), 'for we know not how to pray as we ought' (Rom. 8: 26). We learn many things about the practice of prayer by studying the recorded prayers of men like David, who knew the secret of effective prayer.

Psalm 86 illustrates a pattern that may be discerned in other recorded prayers. It contains not only requests, but reveals the supplicant's knowledge of God derived from the study of His Word. David had a wonderful knowledge

of God. In verses 5 and 15 he speaks of God as a God of mercy and a God full of compassion. Jonah also had this knowledge of God when he disobeyed the command he was given to go to Nineveh. He knew that if the men of Nineveh repented when he preached the message of judgment to them they would be forgiven by God, and his prophecy concerning the overthrow of the city would not be fulfilled.

In v. 8 David compares the Lord with the gods of the nations and he is compelled to declare: There is none like unto Thee... O Lord. ' We know that Dagon fell before the ark of God, and at a later time the Lord and Baal were put to the test on Mount Carmel to demonstrate to Israel that 'the Lord He is God' (1 Kings 17). David also compared the works of men with the works of God to the detriment of the former. The contemplation of God's works filled David with wonder and with awe as Ps. 8 and Ps. 19: 1-6 show.

We noted with interest the prophecy David made in v. 9 that all nations will come and worship the Lord. This will be fulfilled during the future reign of Christ (Zech. 14: 16).

The value of a united heart and a whole heart are stressed in vv. 11, 12. God wants this kind of heart, for if He gets it He gets the whole man. The Pharisees in Christ's day glorified God with their mouths, but their hearts were far from Him.

In concluding his prayer in v. 17 David may have been thinking of the time when he played before King Saul who, moved with jealousy, cast a spear at him twice. God overruled and saved David from harm on those occasions showing him a token for good, and causing Saul to be afraid (1 Sam. 18: 11, 12). *S. Ramage, J. K. D. J.*

From **Sydney**: To petition is to supplicate or to ask humbly. In Psalm 86: 1-4 David is very aware of how much he is in need of God. At the end of v. 1 he tells the Lord just how poor and needy he is. We know he was a wealthy man on earth but he was aware that what his God had to offer was far above what earth had to offer. David asks God to preserve his soul for he is godly. The communion David had with God must have been so close that David was able

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to say to God: 'I am godly' (v. 2) [see Comment 1]. David asks God 'Be merciful unto me O Lord; for unto Thee do I cry all the day long' (v. 3), and 'Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer' (v. 6). David knows God is high and lofty and he is poor and needy. He did not only call upon God as in v. 7 ('In the day of trouble I will call upon Thee') but he says 'Unto Thee do I cry all the day long' (v. 3). This crying unto God is the calling unto God, putting his petitions to God in a correct manner, humbling himself, praising God and giving thanks. David trusted God completely. He knew that through continuance in prayer and faith in God he would be heard. This is positive thinking, for at the end of v. 7 David states, not in a proud or pompous way, but with a confidence in God, 'For Thou wilt answer me.' In v. 11 David says Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth: Unite my heart to fear Thy name.' One can feel David's heart-longing that no matter how much he learned of God's ways, there was still more to learn. David again had no doubt in his mind as to what he would do when he was taught the way of God. He said: 'I will walk in Thy truth.' David humbles himself, but then he also acknowledges the goodness and power of God, as we see in these following verses: —

'For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy' (v. 5).

'None like unto Thee' (v. 8).

'All nations... shall glorify Thy name' (v. 9).

Thou art great, and doest wondrous things: Thou art God alone' (v. 10).

'Great is Thy mercy' (v. 13).

'But Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth' (v. 15).

David did not have things easy. The proud are risen up against me . . . violent men have sought after my soul' (v. 14) and They which hate me' (v. 17).

*R. Case*

From **Birkenhead**: Psalm 86 is one of the five psalms described in their headings as prayers (i. e. 17, 86, 90, 102 and 143). Having been written by David, it is a very personal communication with God. The general tenor of the psalm

is that of request; it is an earnest plea, a petition. David was a man who knew the Scriptures that were available to him and must have meditated on them as this particular psalm shows. He was a man saturated in Scripture who addressed God in the light of his knowledge of Him.

The psalm breaks readily into four portions; verses 1-5, 6-10, 11-13, 14-17. Each of these is composed firstly of requests to God and then deals with an aspect of God's character, which is particularly relevant to that request. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit David presents his petition, which deals with his own need and condition, and describes God's attributes which have been so impressed upon him as to give rise to his request.

Throughout the psalm David recognizes his weakness and hopelessness, which can only be strengthened by the work of the Spirit within him. He acknowledges God's greatness and his own insignificance and sees that through God's love and mercy he can present his petition. Apart from his spiritual condition he is also troubled by the circumstances of his life and seeks God's help and a sign, that it might be evident to his oppressors that he is supported by the God he worships.

It is very evident from the substance of the petitions, however, that David had a strong desire to obey and serve God as closely as possible. He equally realised that his own nature could preclude such service and he sought God's help as in v. 11, 'Teach me Thy way . . . and unite my heart'. The outworking of such a request, when granted, would result in the service and worship of verse 12.

David varies his form of address to God throughout the psalm, reflecting his appreciation of the different facets of His being: Lord or *Jehovah* (He that was, is, and ever is to come) [Comment 3], Lord or *Adonai* (Lord, Master) and *Elohim* (Creator).  
R. C. Halpin, A. Hyland

From Derby: This psalm is a prayer in which David begs to present a petition and he lists the attributes of God that have impressed him. Each thought-out petition has a reason for it to be granted. We see great persistence in v. 3: 'For unto Thee do I cry all the day long.' We see the sincerity and whole-heartedness of the prayer when he says 'For unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul' (v. 4)

## BIBLE STUDIES

There are two essential elements to be observed when a petition is presented: —

- (1) The petitioner must recognize his or her need.
- (2) The petitioner must recognize the power and the goodness of God.

We are dependent on His mercy if we are to have our petition granted.

David says: Teach me Thy way' 'I will walk in Thy truth'. So before he asks for the specific petition he is willing to do whatever God asks of him. Just as it is no use asking for wisdom in a double-minded way (Jas. 1:5-8) so no good will come of a petition presented in a double-minded way. Our petition must be asked for in faith and we must be prepared to accept the answer, otherwise we are double-minded men.

It has been said that True prayer, the prayer that must be answered, is the personal recognition and acceptance of the divine will.'

G. VV. Conway

From Hamilton, Scotland: It is instructive to contrast the terms used to describe the petitioned and the petitioner. The One who is petitioned is the eternal, powerful, covenant-keeping God of heaven. The petitioner is poor and needy.

- (a) *The Petitioned.* The word 'Lord' in verses 1, 6, 11 and 17 is a translation of the Hebrew term '*Jehovah*'; in verses 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 15, the word 'Lord' in Hebrew is '*Adonai*'. In verses 2, 10, 12, 14, David invokes God: Hebrew, *Elohim*, but note the significance of the change of usage in v. 8 where *elohim* is translated 'gods'. Lastly we have the Hebrew term '*El*' translated 'God' in verse 15. How wonderfully David gives us an insight into the personality and being of the God whom he petitions; a God who is eternal, infinite, all powerful and plenteous in mercy.
- (b) *The Petitioner.* What a contrast we discover in the words used by the Holy Spirit to describe the petitioner and his needs.
  - (i) Poor v. 1 cf. Ps. 9: 12, 18; 1012, 17; Prov. 3: 34; 14: 21.

- (ii) Needy v. 1 cf. Ps. 9: 18; 12: 5; 35: 10; 40: 17.
- (iii) Godly v. 2.
- (iv) Servant v. 2, 4.
- (v) Troubled v. 7.
- (vi) Delivered v. 13.
- (vii) Attacked by enemies v. 14.
- (viii) Seeking mercy v. 16.
- (ix) Seeking a sign v. 17.

In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament we find that the Greek term *Ptochos* is the translation of the Hebrew *Ebyon* which underlies the English word 'poor' in Psalm 86: 1. This word does not describe the struggle of the labouring man to make ends meet but describes abject poverty, not genteel poverty but real acute destitution. In the Hebrew language we have stages of meaning from simply 'poor' in the sense of lacking in this world's goods (Deut. 15: 4, 11), then it develops into meaning 'down-trodden and oppressed' because they were poor (Amos 2: 6, 8: 4). Then there is a leap in meaning where he has no influence or power or prestige on earth. He cannot look to man for help but only his God (Ps. 12: 5).

- (c) *The Petition*. How concise yet how gripping are the pointed petitions of David in Psalm 86. 'Answer me' (v. 1); 'Preserve my soul' (v. 2); 'Save Thy servant' (v. 2); 'Be merciful unto me' (v. 3); 'Rejoice the soul of Thy servant' (v. 4); 'Give ear, O Lord' (v. 6); 'Hearken' (v. 6); 'Have mercy upon me' (v. 16); 'Show me a token for good' (v. 17).

*Matthew Carruthers*

## COMMENTS

1. (Leeds): We must not make too much of this statement which only carries the thought that David was one of God's chosen people. The word is used for 'saints' about sixteen times in the psalms alone, e. g. Ps. 30: 4, 50: 5.

2. (Liverpool): This comparison of the versions shows opposite points of view, and the NIV certainly conveys the thought of merit, which is a wrong view of 'His saints'. See Ps. 85 and especially v. 8. Israel were His people and were 'saints' by divine choice and covenant and not by merit.

*A. B. R.*

## BIBLE STUDIES

3. **(Birkenhead):** *Yahweh*, translated Jehovah, or in AV and RV represented by LORD, is the personal name of God, as distinct from the other modes of address, which are titles. Its use emphasizes the personality of God, and His specific will as a person. In Hebrew usage the name represents the character of the person and is far more than a mere label. Birkenhead friends, of course, are quite correct in their statement of the nature of that character.

4. (Liverpool): Heb. *chasid*, translated 'godly' in Ps. 86: 2, has its roots in the word *chesed*, which occurs often in the psalms. This is translated 'loving kindness' in the older versions, and 'steadfast love' or 'unfailing love' in the newer; it refers to the covenant love of God which continues in the face of non-response. *Chasid* refers basically to one who is the passive recipient of the Lord's loving kindness, as in Ps. 4: 3. K. Delitzsch interprets the word as 'united to Him in the bond of affection', while A. A. Anderson uses 'bound to You by the ties of Your covenant'. As an extension of this there is also an active sense, for example, in 2 Sam. 22: 26 and Ps. 18: 25, where *chasid* is translated 'merciful' and is used of God. In Ps. 145: 17 it is paralleled with Heb. *tsaddiq*, 'righteous', and translated 'gracious'. Used of men, the word can also have the active sense of 'pious' or 'of godly character', in such instances as Ps. 12: 1 and Mic. 7: 2. Opinions differ as to the extent to which status (as one of God's chosen people) or behaviour are in view. It is worth noting that a different word (*qadosh*) is used to mean 'set apart' or 'holy', and I incline to think that there is some suggestion of pious character in the passage studied.

P. L. H.

5. **(Sweet Psalms of Israel):** The musical directions given in the heading of Psalm 22 in our Bibles may be, in fact, a subscript belonging to Psalm 21. The practice of placing the musical directions at the end of a psalm is illustrated in Hab. 3. A thoughtful contribution on this subject is given in B. S. Vol. 3 pp. 53, 68, 84. J. K. D. J.

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

8006

Psalm 40, the subject of this month's study was evidently written by a man who had experience of the delivering power of God. David's life included the exaltation of the kingship of Israel and deep communion with God, the humiliation of being hunted through the wilderness and deposition from his throne, and the moral failure of the taking of Bathsheba. He had learned in all the moral things that if he called on God in meekness and repentance, God would hear and restore him. We can share his confidence, as we approach the same God, whose loving kindness remains constant from David's time until now.

The quotation of vv. 6-8 of this Psalm in Heb. 10: 5-7 raises the question of the extent to which such passages were understood to be prophetic by their author and immediate hearers. When a specific event is predicted, such as the fall of Babylon, the hearers know it to be prophecy and look for its fulfilment; this is the only meaning of the words. However, I suggest that in cases such as the Psalm studied at present, the prophetic meaning, although intended by the Spirit of God, who inspired the writers, is not the meaning originally intended by the writer. His writing was guided so that he would use expressions descriptive of the experiences of Christ, but it arose from his own experience. This explains why in the same Psalm we encounter clearly Messianic passages, together with some which cannot possibly apply to Him, (e. g. Ps. 40: 12). In exegesis of these Psalms, therefore, we must bear in mind this dual meaning. It is a matter for discussion as to how far the psalms are intentionally prophetic; 1 Pet. 1: 10-12 indicates that 'the prophets' had some knowledge of the future significance of the things which they wrote. Readers might like to contribute something on this point.

P. L. H.

## BIBLE STUDIES

### DELIVERANCE—Psalm 40

**From Melbourne:** The Psalms of David are rich in personal experience and especially so when we can turn to some portion of the Scriptures where the circumstances are recorded out of which such experiences have had their origin. We would judge that for the experiences of Psalm 40, we would find the circumstances in 1 Sam. 18 to 27, and 2 Sam. 15 to 18 [Comment 1].

We would suggest that the patient waiting for the Lord may have been for at least five years, ere he was assured that his cry had been heard. During the three years or so in the court of Saul he had been conscious of design against his life, but had been comforted by the friendship of Jonathan. When he was compelled to flee for his life (and there are at least seven such flights over a period of about five years prior to the death of Saul) he waited patiently until Jehovah answered his cry, and brought him up out of that almost continual danger which he describes figuratively as 'a horrible pit' and 'the miry clay'. At the time when he fled to the land of the Philistines (1 Sam. 27: 1), he was very despondent as he said, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul'. The throne of Israel for which he had been anointed appeared then to be a very remote possibility.

But as we pass over the years of exile in the land of the Philistines, and the death of Saul, we can understand the thoughts of his heart as he ascends the throne of Judah and is led to record the words of triumph, 'and He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings and He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.' In v. 4 he speaks of the man who put his trust in the Lord, and then turns his thoughts to the treacherous who had plagued him during his reign; they were men who had been great in their own eyes including his son Absalom, his one time counsellor Ahithophel, Shimei and Joab.

In the midst of praises and giving of thanks to Jehovah Elohim, the Spirit of the Lord takes David up as a prophet to speak of the coming Messiah and his work in vv. 6-8. It was David's great delight to publish the praises of Jehovah in

the great congregation gathered around the tent in which had been placed the ark of the covenant. But how much greater will be the praise of the great congregation of the redeemed of every nation, and people and tongue, as from successive ages they will be gathered around the Lamb, for we suggest that He will be the great leader of praise in their midst during coming ages [Comment 2].

*A. E. Edwards, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil:** The Psalmist David looks on his experience of answered prayer, when he had waited patiently for the Lord, and he acknowledges that God heard his cry and delivered him. David exercised patience, and he cried to the only source who could help him - the Lord. He would be patient *until* the Lord answered. God's answer to his cry for help was to bring him up, set his feet upon a rock, and establish his goings. Now his mouth is filled with a new song, for the praise of God. That song is his testimony to the power and grace of God.

This Psalm demonstrates the benefit of confidence in God. Now instead of fearing he trusts in God. 'God is unto us a God of deliverances' (Psalm 68: 20) - not one, but many deliverances. David acknowledges God's wonderful works, and God's thoughts are to "*us-ward*", so many that they could not be numbered. We thought of other godly men who knew their God, such as Daniel and his friends, men who could say, 'Our God is able to deliver.' Even Nebuchadnezzar had to learn that 'No other God is able to deliver after this sort' (Dan. 3: 29).

In vv. 6-8 we have a prophetic reference to the Lord's coming to this earth to do God's will. He was to be the perfect servant, whose ears were opened, absolutely delighting to do God's will all the time. The Lord was obedient even unto death: God's law was within his heart. God's will was that he should offer himself without spot or blemish as the once-for-all sacrifice. Everything about the Lord Jesus was totally acceptable to God.

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Matt. 26: 55 confirms that the Lord Jesus constantly taught and published righteousness in the great congregation. David also led and fed Israel and neither the Lord Jesus nor David kept this good news hidden in their hearts, but openly declared God's faithfulness and salvation.

Vv. 11 and 12 cannot apply to the Lord; therefore they are true experiences of the Psalmist David [Comment 3]. He very simply asks God not to withhold his tender mercies. By this very request he shows that his only hope is in God and that there is no strength in himself. His Psalm ends with joy (v. 16). The joy of the Lord is the experience of all those who love God's salvation and who can say, The Lord be magnified. 'I am poor and needy', he confesses, yet The Lord thinketh upon me! God's one time leader of Israel could say to God Thou art my help and my deliverer.

*Neville Coomer*

**From Nottingham:** The Psalmist cites past deliverance (vv. 1-3), and blessing (vv. 4-6). He pleads for present mercy, help and encouragement in vv. 11-17. We can do the same too, reminding God of His promises for His help and protection. Heb. 10: 5-9 clearly shows that vv. 6-8 were the words of the Lord Jesus Christ when He came into the world. The rest of the psalm cannot be so clearly linked with the experiences of the Christ. Verse 12 especially could not be associated with Him as One who committed no sin (1 Pet. 2: 22).

There seems to be a number of practical lessons on the subject of deliverance:;

1. Patiently waiting. Patience is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22), and waiting is part of God's plan for us. It is one of the commands found in Ps. 37 (RSV), as we have in v. 1 'Fret not yourself', v. 3, 'trust in the Lord', v. 4 'take delight in the Lord', v. 5, 'commit your way to the Lord', and v. 6, 'Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him'. In verse 9 the promise is that 'those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land.' But note that the psalmist was one who cried as he waited (Ps. 40: 1, and compare Ex. 2: 23). It is not wrong for us to cry to the Lord while we wait for Him.

2. 'He brought me up... and... set my feet upon a rock. ' When God lifts us up it is to place us upon a firm place.

3. We are either those who 'trust in the Lord' or those who 'turn to the proud who go astray after false gods. ' There is no middle ground for the disciple at any instant. A false god is that which would dim our view of, or draw us away from, the Lord God.

4. While God's wondrous deeds and thoughts are beyond compare and without number, yet His promises can be counted in His Word.

5. The testimony of vv. 9 and 10 must surely challenge us. How easily the fear of man brings a snare to trap us into concealing God's salvation!

6. How can the Lord be magnified? There is no way in which we can make the Lord greater than He is. We can however make Him appear larger in someone's eyes or make Him seem closer. Let us exalt His Name together.

*David Rafferty*

**From Vancouver:** Those who have known deliverance find the words of Ps. 40: 1-3 very precious, because they have tested their meaning by way of experience. How fitting that the verb 'waited' is coupled with the adverb 'patiently', for waiting indeed requires patience [Comment 4]. There appears however to be a two-fold application of these three verses. Firstly, in the matter of salvation, the cry of the sinner is met by immediate response by the Lord, and the evidence of 'inclined' and 'heard' is contained in that which immediately follows - 'salvation'. These words are often quoted in worship by those who have known great joy in their deliverance from sin. Secondly, after salvation it seems that one must often wait on the Lord for deliverance from situations which are totally beyond one's control. Now however, there is the precious assurance, that the Lord will 'hear' one's cry. Then the patience comes as a result of faith in His inevitable answer. 'Waiting' would seem to spring from a form of expectancy, the meaning of which is included in Dr. Strong's definition of the Hebrew word for the verb 'waited'.

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Psalm 40 reveals the thought of complete deliverance. When Moses and those who had crossed the Red Sea looked back and saw the fact of their deliverance, Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord'... (Ex. 15: 1). When those of a future day have known deliverance from the beast, they will sing the song of Moses... and the song of the Lamb. (Rev. 15: 3). God has put that new song in their mouth; it was not there before. The old song springs from Satan, the new from the Lord, and what a dramatic contrast is heard!

When one cries unto the Lord, there is always the sense of expectancy. We know He will 'incline' and 'hear'. That sense of expectancy was always exhibited by Joseph. On the day of his death, he gathered his brethren together and said from a long life filled with expectancy, 'I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob' (Gen. 50: 24). This revealed his faith and resulting patient expectancy, that His God would hear.

R. F. Lundwill

**From Birkenhead:** The psalm breaks readily into two parts: vv. 1-10 *thanksgiving*, and vv. 11-17-*prayer and petition*. The theme of petition which is evident throughout has the more impact on the reader as David uses the contrast between his former condition and his new circumstances. The most obvious example is seen in v. 2, where the pit and the miry clay refer to his position before deliverance, and the rock upon which his feet were set displays the security and solidity of his standing. As readers, we can view this psalm in the knowledge of such a deliverance from the penalty of sin through our Saviour, Jesus Christ, but much discussion took place on the nature of David's spiritual experience. It was stated that David, as with other Old Testament saints, was called by God, and his experience with God was based on his faith in the God with whom he had such a deep relationship.

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In speaking of his past experience David relates the way in which he patiently waited on the Lord. He was anxious for the deliverance to come (v. 13, 'make haste to help me O Lord'), but his anxiety did not affect his patient faith. David's appreciation of God's care for him and for His people is expressed in vv. 5 and 6., where he is conscious of all God's concern and care, which is beyond anything that David can understand. The statement in v. 6, 'mine ears thou hast opened', was explained as admitting that God guided and controlled. The idea of linking these verses with the scripture in Deut. 15: 17, where the servant's ear was bored, indicating his willingness to serve, was offered as an explanation, but we felt that support for such a view was rather slender.

Words used in Ps. 40: 6-8 in the Septuagint are quoted in Hebrews 10 and speak of the Lord Jesus. These were clearly written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The verses speak of the coming of the Messiah and refer to a body prepared for Him, expressing the voluntary nature of Christ's coming and of His sacrifice for us.

*Ft. C. Halpin, A. E. Sands*

**From** Derby: Deliverance is the freeing from the unwanted grip of persons or circumstances. In Psalm 40 the deliverance is almost entirely that of David as an individual, the psalm being written in the first person singular. David was oppressed many times and vv. 1 and 2 show his patient attitude followed by deliverance. Deliverance brought joy (v. 3), the response of fear and trust by others (vv. 3, 4), and praise (v. 5). Verse 6 can show the sentiments of David and his sense of distinction between the ritual sacrifice and the reality of sacrifice in life itself. Heb. 10: 4 and the following verses show the same distinction, and at the same time reveal that Ps. 40: 6-8 is prophetic of the Lord Jesus. Vv. 9-11 however are best regarded as showing David's own experience. Certainly 40: 12 is David quoting his own circumstances and preparing to look once more to God's deliverance. Vv. 14 and 15 fit in with the violent times in which David lived. The Lord Jesus in Mat. 5: 38-48 sets a higher standard. This in David's day would have been almost unattainable.

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With the danger past, David writes (vv. 16 and 17) about the outcome of the accomplished deliverance.

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Edinburgh:** (1.) Vv. 1-5 speak of thanksgiving for past deliverance. This can be subdivided, 1-3 speaking of past experience and 4-5 the new song of deliverance put into David's mouth. It was considered that 2-3 spoke of the personal experience of the sinner receiving salvation. We did not think that we could pinpoint a time in David's life when he underwent this experience [Comment 5].

(2.) Vv. 6-10 Dedication under God's will. 6-8 speak of the supreme offering and are clearly applicable only to the Cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ. V. 7 was never to be said about David [Comment 6]. 9-10 speak of public testimony and the declaring of God's wondrous dealings in the past.

(3.) Vv. 11-17 speak of supplication for deliverance from troubles yet to come. 11-13 salvation of the soul. 14-17 deliverance from danger-yet David's assurance is in the Lord, his help.

David was a mature man when this psalm was written. The words indicate many times of deliverance experienced in the past, and he had learned to be patient under the hand of the Lord. This had given David a hidden strength. In his deep experience and trust he spoke in witness to his God. David had always a view of God's house and sought thereto. We are part of the great congregation that worships in the heavenly sanctuary. As we experience the grace and mercy of God so we can reach out in prayer for all believers.

*Ian Renfrew*

**From Hamilton (Scotland):** How descriptive are the opening words of Ps. 40, 'I waited patiently for the Lord!' The Hebrew verb - *qavah* - which underlines 'I waited' is repeated for emphasis, and is translated 'patiently'. In some

editions of the A. V. it is translated 'in waiting I waited'. The object of this point of emphasis seems to be the highlighting of time during the Psalmist's period of darkness and distress.

How emotive are the words of v. 2, 'an *horrible* pit', which describe his spiritual plight! While the word 'pit' suggests darkness and danger, the Hebrew word translated 'horrible' conveys not only visually perceived 'horror' but a sense of 'horror' perceived aurally. It is translated

- (i) tumultuous: Is. 13: 4, AV; tumult, Jer. 48: 45, RV
- (ii) noise: Ps. 65: 7, AV; roaring Is. 24: 8, 25: 5, RV
- (iii) like the rushing of: Is. 17: 12, 13.

When we interpret Ps. 40: 2, 'out of the miry clay' in the light of Ps. 69: 2, 'I sink in deep mire where there is no standing', this helps us to arrive at an understanding of the following words, 'he set my feet upon a rock', compare also Ps. 69: 14. This portrays to us David experiencing insecurity, instability and finding deliverance from the Lord **which resulted** in his security and stability in a scene of change.

In verse 12 however he returns once more to his dark experiences of distress and danger:

- (i) 'innumerable evils have compassed me about'
- (ii) 'mine iniquities have overtaken me' and in verse 14:
- (i) 'that *seek after* my soul to destroy it'
- (ii) 'that *delight in* my hurt'

It appears that the attack was two-pronged: personal failure from within bringing feelings of guilt and inadequacy; and enemies seeking to hurt and destroy.

*Matthew Carruthers*

**From Hayes:** Vv. 1-3: *A record of past deliverance.*

David speaks of waiting patiently for the Lord in Psalms 27 and 37 also. We know he waited patiently for some years for God to give him the kingdom and refused suggestions to bring it about by his own hand. In this psalm, however, he waited patiently for deliverance from a specific trouble.

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In the accounts we have of David's life there is no incident such as described in v. 2. Is the verse to be taken as poetical and metaphorical? (*Probably so - Eds*). Perhaps when David was in such trouble as at Ziklag? Or it may be that the pit and miry clay may speak of his shame when he realised the degradation to which he had sunk over Bathsheba. Whatever the occasion, his deliverance and the new song that followed must have been very evident, since they caused many to fear and to trust in God.

Vv. 4 and 5: *God's kindness in thought and deed*

Vv. 6-8: *A prophecy of the Messiah*. These verses are quoted by the writer to the Hebrews (10: 5), with a significant alteration: 'a body didst thou prepare for me' in place of 'mine ears hast thou opened.' The N. I. V. gives a footnote explaining that 'a body you have prepared for me' is in the Septuagint, whilst the Hebrew text has 'but my ears you have pierced (or opened)'. New Testament quotations from the Old Testament are normally worded as in the Septuagint. Some commentators have taken the 'pierced' alternative and linked it with Exodus 21: 6. Others have connected the verse with Isaiah 50: 4 [Comment 7].

We can appreciate that formal sacrifices offered by a people who were not loving or obeying God could not bring Him delight. Could God get no delight in sacrifices because they were made necessary by man's sin? Some sacrifices, however, were freewill offerings and expressed the worshipper's devotion. Of Noah's sacrifice it is said 'the Lord smelled the sweet savour.' 'Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required' presents difficulties since God certainly did require them under the Old Covenant and God could not be approached in worship apart from them. In 1 Sam. 15: 22 we are told 'to obey is better than sacrifice.' The words of Christ, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God' brought more joy to the Father than any ritual sacrifice could have done [Comment 8].

Vv. 11-17: *Prayer for deliverance*. The Psalm starts with praise for past deliverance but David has many difficulties still. They are around but also within - 'mine iniquities have overtaken me. ! The Psalm ends hopefully, 'the Lord thinketh upon me: Thou art my help and my deliverer'.

C. R. Stoner

**From Leeds:** 'Wait on the Lord: be strong and let thine heart take courage; yea wait thou on the Lord' (Ps. 27: 14). David waited patiently for the Lord and as a result he obtained a seven-fold blessing:

God (1) inclined (leaned) towards him, (2) heard him, (3) delivered him out of the pit, (4) delivered him out of the miry clay, (5) set his feet upon a rock, (6) established his way, and (7) put a new song in his mouth.

Although David initially waited patiently for his deliverance, at the end of his psalm he cries, 'Make no tarrying, O my God', In Psalm 22: 4, 5 David says, 'Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered, they trusted in Thee and were not confounded.' The position of David (Ps. 40: 2) is that of one deep down in a horrible and noisome pit, sinking in miry clay where there is no firm standing. Old Arabic translations read 'In a pit of perdition, and in the mire of corruption.' Man could not deliver himself from such a situation; God alone could deliver him.

We noted that David says 'Mine ears hast thou opened' whereas in Heb. 10: 5 the writer quotes 'A body hast thou prepared me.' Ears opened, by digging out, as the word implies, reminds us that the Lord Jesus ever had His ear opened unto obedience to the doing of His Father's will (Is. 50: 5). The good and faithful servant must be the one with the ever open ear to the doing of his master's will. 'Behold My Servant, whom I uphold' (Isa. 42: 1). 'I delight to do Thy will O My God' (Psa. 40: 8). 'By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all' (Heb. 10: 10). Ps. 40: 6 has also been referred to the servant surrendering himself completely to his master so that he might be his bond-servant for ever, having his ear bored through as an evidence of his willingness to this. (Ex. 21: 2-6) [Comment 9].

*H. R. Dodge*

**From Liverpool:** *David's experience of waiting for God to act (Vv. 1-4)*

There is a lot of Biblical encouragement for waiting patiently for God to act (cf. Is. 40: 31; Ps. 27: 14; 37: 7). From David's deliverance he realised the position from

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which he has been rescued - from clay (unstable and not permanent) to rock (solid and permanent). The Lord Jesus spoke similarly of the opposite foundations upon which we can base our lives (Matt. 7: 24-27). As a result of his experiences of God's deliverance David first of all gave praise to God and as a consequence was able to tell others about it.

### *Sacrifices and offerings (v. 6)*

Did God not desire sacrifice? Perhaps this is a use of exaggeration for effect (cf. 1 Sam. 15: 22 in which obedience is set above sacrifice). We know that obedience required sacrifice, yet such anticipatory ritual could never take away sin (Heb. 10: 4). Sacrifice was a reflection of the attitude of the offerer (see Prov. 21: 3, Ps. 51: 17 and Mai. 1: 10). Note the contrast between the ritual of verse 6 and the condition of heart in verse 7.

### *The open or pierced ear (v. 6)*

The open ear (R. V., R. S. V. ) would signify listening to what God has to say. The alternative translation of 'pierced' ear (R. V. M., N. I. V. ) is reminiscent of the practice recorded in Ex. 21: 5-6 by which a slave affirmed his loyalty and devotion to his master - the effect of both was obedience (Ps. 40: 7, 8).

### *The Hebrews dilemma (v. 6 and Heb. 10: 5-7)*

The Heb. 10: 5 translation differs markedly from that in Psalm 40. The reason is that our Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew text, whereas the quotation in the New Testament was from the Septuagint Greek O. T. This is generally regarded as a less reliable version than the Hebrew texts. Did the Lord and the early disciples base all their teachings on an inaccurate translation of the O. T. ? If so, it would appear that the Holy Spirit even uses inaccuracies to convey spiritual truth! [Comment 10]. The pierced ear and the prepared body each spoke of a willingness to serve God.

### *Repetition of Psalm 70 (vv. 13-17)*

We wondered whether there were originally two Psalms, which became joined into one, or if this is the original Psalm but later 13-17 were made into a separate Psalm. In this

section was David being vindictive towards his enemies, or was his motive a wish for their repentance? [Comment 11].

*Peter G. Barrett, David J. Webster*

**From London, Ontario:** The 40th Psalm is truly a Deliverance Psalm having as its theme the perfect obedient One, the Lord Jesus, who surpasses the sacrifices and the offerings of The Law declaring: 'in the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God. '

It is significant to note that before the Deliverer is manifested the natural state of mankind is made known - in a horrible pit with feet are fast in miry clay, a picture of hopelessness. Realizing his true condition he states in v. 1: 'I waited patiently for Jehovah'. There is no other source of deliverance apart from Jehovah, and the reference to physical conditions conveys the spiritual condition of our souls. Jehovah looked down from Heaven to view our true condition and we read in v. 2: - 'he brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay; and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings'. This is the beauty of the Psalm - it looks beyond the natural and views the innermost reaches of the heart, and the above statement shows the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, that must be delivered from the horrible pit. The rock which is set out in contrast with the miry clay is Christ. Our deliverance is centred in Him, and in the things He said (e. g. John 5: 24) and he hath put a new song in my mouth even praise unto our God' (v. 3). It is a song of many wonderful works Jehovah has wrought for us as v. 5 states 'they are more than can be numbered'.

Then the psalmist reveals the very heart of the Deliverer in vv. 6-8; he speaks of the sacrifices and offerings, which were only temporary and states: - 'then said I, lo, I am come; in the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God'.

*J. Paterson*

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### COMMENTS

**1. (Melbourne):** The Psalm has no reference to any historical events which would enable us to connect it with particular experiences in David's life. Those which Melbourne friends suggest may be correct, but others make different suggestions, and there is nothing which would enable one to judge between them.

**2. (Melbourne):** It appears from Rev. 5: 12, 13 and 22: 1, 3 that the Lamb is the recipient of praise, rather than its leader.

**3. (Methil):** The whole Psalm is the experience of the Psalmist primarily. Vv. 6-8 express the knowledge that David had, founded in bitter experience, that 'the sacrifices or God are a broken spirit'. Because he had known deliverance previously, he was able to look for the tender mercies of God in forgiveness, even while he was very conscious of his own sinfulness. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit takes up vv. 6-8, in the Septuagint translation, as spoken by the Lord, because they are applicable to His attitude. The fact that some verses can be used in this way carries no inference that the rest of the Psalm can be so used.

**4. (Vancouver):** A literal translation would be 'Waiting, I waited'. See the contribution from Hamilton (Scotland).

**5. (Edinburgh):** Vv. 2, 3 can certainly be applied to the feelings of a sinner when he has received salvation to eternal life, but one would not think that this was their original reference.

**6. (Edinburgh):** I suggest that vv. 6-8 were based on David's own experience (see Comment 1) and had a meaning for him as he wrote them. This does not in any way detract from their prophetic nature (see Editorial, and answer to question.)

**7. (Hayes):** The use by the writer to the Hebrews of the LXX rendering here has some bearing on the acceptable explanations of the verse. Heb. 10 takes up the theme of the Lord's body as a sacrifice, the means by which men can appear before God. R. V. text conveys the thought of the willing servant ready to do his master's will; he would give his body in service, but not in death. In David's own experience, he gave his body in service to his God. One cannot say definitely whether the Heb. 10 reference is an extension of this idea from the LXX rendering, legitimated by the Holy Spirit, or whether the Massoretic text is in error at this point; there are numerous differences between it and the LXX.

**8. (Hayes):** In the case of David himself, perhaps the words of v. 6 were overstatement for the sake of emphasis. He knew the provisions of the Law, but had come to realize that an obedient heart was the root of all that the Lord required. The figure of speech enabled the Holy Spirit to take up the words as those of the Lord Jesus, and apply them to His supersession of the provisions of the Old Covenant.

**9. (Leeds):** Several papers make reference to this possible connection, but it does not seem very likely that this was intended to be the reference in v. 6, in view of the way in which the quotation is used in Heb. 10: 5.

**10. (Liverpool):** The New Testament writers, who were Greek-speakers, either as a first or a second language, used the version of the Old Testament Scriptures which was available to them, which was most frequently the LXX. Since they wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it must be assumed that the words they quoted were an adequate representation of the sense of the original. The translation may not have used the same form of words, but this is inevitable in any translation; a direct transcription of words

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in one language into words in another would not produce an accurate translation, because of the differences in idiom and grammar between languages. The fact that the LXX is quoted does not of course, give it divine authentication *in toto*.

**11. (Liverpool):** In vv. 14, 15 David was asking the Lord to vindicate him. He would not take the law into his own hands, but he prayed that justice should be seen to be done as the workers of evil received their deserts. God is right to keep covenant with those who love Him and destroy those who hate Him (Deut. 7: 9, 10).

*P. L. H.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

From **Birkenhead:** Ps. 40: 7 - in which book is it written of Him?

The RV marginal reading has 'prescribed to' me. I suggest that David was thinking of his duty to serve the Lord God as taught in the book of the Law, the Pentateuch; e. g. Deut. 11: 1, 18 'therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep His charge and His statutes and His judgements and His commandments, alway... therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul. ' This accords with the reference to the Law in v. 8 In the prophetic application of the verse, it could apply to all the relevant Old Testament scriptures taken up by the Lord Himself after His resurrection.

*P. L. H.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

## EDITORIAL

8007

To live a life well-pleasing to the Lord is surely the desire of all believers, and yet how readily do we find ourselves doing precisely what the 'blessed' man of Ps. 1 does *not* do. i. e. walking in the way of the wicked, standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful? A number of contributors this month have rightly drawn attention to the similarity of the experiences of Lot and Peter to the pattern of behaviour we are here taught to avoid. The warning of such examples is clear; if a deeply spiritual man, such as Peter, could fall into this error, how much more must we beware. The corrective is equally clear-'His delight is in the law of the Lord', etc. The one positive antidote to backsliding and worldliness is meditation on the sacred writings. This is a matter to which we all require increasingly to give ourselves, remembering always that meditation involves much more than simply reading.

The perfect example of the 'blessed' man is found in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and Ps. 1: 1-3 provides a sweet reminder of the perfections of His character. Truly, He was 'holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners' (Heb. 7: 26). And who can doubt that 'His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth He meditate day and night' is a description which can be accurately applied to Him? Is. 50: 4 provides further evidence of this. In this, as in all other matters, He left us an example, that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2: 21).

*R. L.*

## EDITORIAL CHANGE

Mr. A. B. Robertson relinquished his editorial responsibilities on the completion of issue 8006 of the magazine and editors wish to put on record their sincere appreciation of the conscientious way in which he carried out his editorial duties during the past seven years. His

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written contributions to the magazine in the form of special articles, editorials, comments and answers have proved helpful to many students of the word and remain as a record his labours in this sphere of service over the years.

Papers on the *monthly* subject should still be sent to Mr. E. Archibald. All other articles or correspondence should now be sent to:

Mr. P. L Hickling,  
10 Regent Road,  
Birkdale,  
Southport,  
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*Eds.*

### **THE TEN-TRIBE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL:**

'My People' or 'Not My People'

*When did the Northern Ten-Tribe Kingdom lose its place as part of Jehovah's people?*

Discussion of this interesting question developed when Editors received observations from a group of fellow-students regarding Comment 7 in Bible Studies (Vol. 45, p. 143). These observations offered helpful discussion for consideration, as outlined below.

#### *Introductory*

The question is—Did the term 'the people of God' embrace the twelve tribes of Israel after the division of the monarchy, particularly in view of the setting up of the idolatrous arrangement by Jeroboam? Or did the ten tribes forfeit their position? The two areas for guidance are (1) the historical books and (2) the Minor Prophets.

#### *The Historical Books*

The relevant portions are, inter alia, as follows—

1 Kings 14: 7 Of Jeroboam, the first king over the twelve tribes, God says, 'I made thee prince over My people Israel'.

14: 16 God prophesied that by reason of their provocations He would one day scatter them beyond the River, and in that day 'shall give Israel up'.

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- 1 Kings 16: 2 God says of Baasha, the third king over Israel, that He had raised him up and 'made thee prince over My people Israel'.  
18: 31 Elijah said to Israel, 'If the Lord be God, follow Him', then took twelve stones 'according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel' and with them made an altar; and in v. 36 he prayed 'O Lord... the God of Israel'.
- 2 Kings 9: 6 Elisha anointed Jehu king over the ten tribes saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel'.
- 2 Chr. 29: 24 Hezekiah's sin offering was for 'all Israel',  
30: 1 Hezekiah's passover was available to the ten tribes as to the two.

### *The Minor Prophets*

Hosea prophesied to Israel in the days of Jeroboam II, probably some sixty years or so before they went into captivity to Assyria, so that the ten-tribe monarchy had been in existence for some 180 years.

Hosea 1: 4 Because of the sin of Jehu God says He will cause the house of Israel to cease. This would appear to indicate the approaching captivity of the ten tribes. With this in view He says in v. 9 'Ye are not My people'. This would indicate that throughout the 180 years or so of her monarchy Israel had indeed been, with Judah, God's people, but the relationship was to cease, apparently at the carrying away.

- 4: 1 The Lord had a controversy with Israel for there was no knowledge of God in the land. Therefore He says (v. 6) 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge'. And again (v. 12) 'My people ask counsel at their stock'.
- 7: 10 God laments that Ephraim has not turned to the Lord their God.

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Hosea 11: 7 Although God says of Ephraim 'My people are bent on backsliding', nevertheless He cannot give them up and set them like the Cities of the Plain.

Amos prophesied to the ten tribes around the same period as Hosea. Certain quotations are relevant.

Amos 7: 15 God sent him to Bethel and said to the priest there, The Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel'.

8: 2 Again the Lord said to him The end is come upon My people Israel'.

With respect therefore to the view expressed in Comment 7 on p. 143 of 1977 'Bible Studies', it appears to us from Scripture that despite their appalling idolatry the ten tribes were still recognised by God as His people. This continued until at least the reign of Jeroboam II, with the word of Hosea 1: 9 becoming effective at the carrying away to Assyria, when the ten tribes finally experienced the alienation from the covenant of Sinai. We appreciate of course the last four lines in Comment 7, but is it not a fact that God hewed the ten tribes with the words of the prophets in a constant effort to draw them back from idolatry, and never denounced them in Scripture as cut off from His people until Hosea 1: 9?

(to be continued)

### **INSTRUCTION—Psalms 1; 49.**

**From Vancouver, British Columbia:** These two psalms contain certain instruction, but of a very different nature.

Psalm 1. 'Blessed is the man,.....his delight.....'. This psalm would clearly be directed to an individual, for the whole sense seems to indicate the singular. Psalm 49: 'Hear this, all ye peoples; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world'. This Psalm seems to convey the 'plural' sense. The words are addressed to the world.

Psalm 1 contains 'instruction', for the man, as to his walk and his meditation. The results for the 'one' who follows the instruction of vv. 1, 2, are summed up in v. 3. The way of the ungodly is revealed by contrast in vv. 4-6.

At the dawn of history, God set out a distinct difference. In Gen. 4, the genealogy of Cain is recorded. Jude v. 11, refers by way of sober warning to those who followed this way, 'they went in the way of Cain'. *Walk* and *way* are very important words to heed. The sinners have their way, (the way of Cain) [Comment 1], and the saint his way, 'then began men to call upon the name of the Lord'; as says the last verse of Gen. 4. In the following chapter is a genealogy of these men, and one man stands out quite sharply. 'And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him, (Gen. 5: 24). In contrast Cain dwelt in the land of Nod, which means 'wandering'. He who walks with God, as did Enoch, will not wander, for it will be a God-directed way, and there will be few who will find it (Mat. 7: 14).

How sad the result for the one who heeds the counsel of the ungodly! He hears, and he walks, and then he stands 'in the way of sinners', and finally we see him 'sitting' in the seat of the scornful. The effect of one's meditation will be seen in one's walk. Enoch's meditation was upon the Lord, and as a result his walk was 'with' the Lord.

The Lord Jesus Christ set the complete and full example, in His walk and His meditation. He did always the things that pleased His Father. His walk was a pathway of subjection to the will of His Father. His meditation was ever on His law. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The result of this pathway is beyond one's comprehension.

What instruction is contained in Psalm 49! This would seem to be summed up in the words of vv. 6-8. 'They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; (for the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be let alone for ever') [Comment 2].

Today we are seeing one of the grim side effects of the very troublous times in which we live. The price of gold and silver is soaring on every stock market in the entire world. This, along with the soaring values of temporal commodities, will mean the amassing of untold wealth for many. But this will be insufficient to purchase even an hour longer in their life span, let alone purchase their redemption for

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the days are drawing closer and closer to that future 'Day of the Lord'. Money will never purchase the safety of men from His coming judgement for 'their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord' (Ezek. 7: 19).

God has made a provision for man's redemption, based on the finished work of His Son at Calvary. Man in his pride scorns His provision of salvation through faith in Christ. In a future day it will be grimly told out how man's own efforts will fail. How precious is the assurance that one can join with the faith of the psalmist and say as he did, 'But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; for He shall receive me' (v. 15).

*R. F. Lund will*

From **Birkenhead**: The idea behind these two Psalms is that of instruction, i. e. the 'building in' of knowledge. The construction of Psalm 49 is such that it allows for pauses (Selah) for consideration of what has gone before.

Psalm 1 starts with the statement that a man following the guidance of the passage would be blessed, or possessed of happinesses. The warning is against association with the wicked who pay no heed to God's law. The use of the words 'walk' 'stand' and 'sit' indicate the progression by which the attraction of the world can draw the faithful away from service to God until, by degrees, they 'sit' in the seat of the scornful. The instruction is also given in two differing ways, i. e. negative; to keep away from the worldly-wise, and positive; to delight in the law of the Lord [Comment 3]. The result of following this teaching will be the building up into one who is 'prosperous' in faith and service. This will be the result of the meditation or study mentioned in verse 2, which will cause the Christian life to flourish. The Psalmist contrasts the case of the wicked, who will not stand in the judgement.

Psalm 49 would appear to be part of the service of song and starts by appealing for the attention of those to whom it is addressed. These are not limited by class or possession, but include rich and poor, high and low. Again the instruction is to meditate on the law and not to be obsessed by wealth. It is pointed out that trusting in wealth has no spiritual value and riches cannot be the means of the ransom

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of the soul. Redemption of the soul cannot be secured by human means; it must be let alone for ever because the cost is too great.

The Psalm continues with warnings of the transitory value of wealth and worldly esteem. Those who are revered by men and do not uphold the law of God are likened to the beasts, whose appreciation is strictly limited to the present. They live for now and have no thought for the future and no spiritual understanding.

To summarize, the instruction is to pay heed to God; to meditate and study His Word; to develop and flourish in spiritual things by these means. No amount of wealth can achieve redemption of the soul, nor influence the judgement into which the wicked must come.

*Ft. C. Halpin, 7. M. Hyland*

**From Derby:** Psalm 1 contrasts the life, the attitudes, and the final outcome of the righteous and the wicked. The wicked are those who have left God out of their thinking and are separated from Him by sin. Therefore their advice (counsel) is not to be followed as the rule of life. The righteous man in contrast is to have his thinking and attitudes moulded by continual meditation on, and delight in, the law of the Lord. The pictorial language is of a tree planted in an ideal setting drawing water from the stream, growing and fruitful. It is the unseen action of the roots which enables the tree to grow-so it is with meditation. The prosperous and fruitful life of the righteous man is the outcome of his inner life. The New Testament counterpart of this is seen in Rom. 12: 2 (RSV), 'Do not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. ' It is the final outcome of the wicked that shows clearly the issues at stake. They will not stand in the judgement, but will perish. However, the Lord knows the way of the righteous and that seems to imply more than just knowing about them but having a concern and love that makes their future secure.

Psalm 49 contrasts rich and poor, with death seen as the great leveller. All must face death eventually, and so death is used to examine the value of a man's life. A similar thing is seen in Luke 16: 19-31.

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Ps. 49: 6 speaks of those who trust in their wealth and verse 13 shows this to be a foolish confidence with death the outcome. V. 15 shows that the writer is not trusting in any such thing, but in God who will ransom his soul and will receive him. The theme is that a man without God, no matter how rich, has nothing, whereas a man with God, no matter how poor, has everything, 'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?' (Mat. 16: 26 RSV).

*P. Webster, G. W. Conway*

**From** Hayes: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2. Tim. 3: 16, 17 AV). For 'instruction' the RVM gives 'discipline'. Instruction has to do with discipleship; with being taught and trained in the way we should go; the things we should not do; the way we should live. The prophetic word says the Lord Jesus had his ear opened morning by morning to hear as they that are taught, or as disciples (Isa. 50: 4 RVM).

Ps. 1 speaks of two different ways of living, the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. The way to true happiness and spiritual prosperity has both a positive and a negative side. The negative side-walketh not, standeth not, sitteth not, in the counsel of the wicked, the way of sinners, the seat of the scornful - is not sufficient to provide true happiness. The positive side is equally necessary, i. e. his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law doth he meditate day and night. This is where instruction as to the way of happiness is found. Whereas the Psalmist had only the earliest books of the Bible we have the whole Book to read and meditate on.

The parable or illustration of the tree shows the effect on the man himself and on others. He receives nourishment from the word of God (instruction sometimes contains the idea of nurture), his leaf does not wither, and others benefit as he bears fruit in season. He stands against the wind in contrast to the wicked who are like chaff which the wind drives away.

In Psalm 49 is instruction for all mankind, for people

in all walks of life. It provides a message of warning, of the need to have things in perspective, to have priorities right. On the one hand are riches, material things, fame and the praise of men, sometimes coupled with wickedness. On the other side is the redemption of the soul. The theme is the futility of riches where the redemption of the soul is concerned, the folly of making preparation for this life only and forgetting the life to come, the folly of leaving God out of account.

We cannot mistake the likeness of the people pictured in Ps. 49 to the man who planned to pull down his barns and build greater (Luke **12: 18.** ). The writer points out the error of the idea that all that matters is to make a name for oneself, that will be remembered for generations to come. The assurance of eternal life is much more important than wealth, fame and the praise of men.

On the one hand there is trust in God, on the other trust in wealth. As in Proverbs 9 wisdom on the one hand calls with a message of life. Folly on the other hand calls with a message of death.

*J. A. H. Robertson*

### **From Liverpool: *True Happiness***

Psalm 1 is a brief guide to true happiness. It is a Psalm of contrasts between the way of life of a person who follows God's ideals and the wicked who will perish in the end. We saw the Lord Jesus as the ultimate blessed man whose way of life was perfect before God; whereas the future Man of Sin will be the ultimate wicked man whose way will perish. There is a progression of thought in the first verse. Walking leads to standing and standing leads to sitting as the attractions of sin pull us away from God. We thought of Lot in this context, a righteous man who walked towards the sinful city, then dwelt there, and finally sat in the gate with them.

### *Meditation*

The Psalmist found delight in his meditation upon the law of God. This seems strange to us today, as the books of the law with prohibitions, statutes, and ordinances would not ordinarily be the subject matter for our meditation [Comment 5]. Yet scriptural support for the same idea

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can be found in Jer. 15: 16-17 and Rom. 7: 22. The result of this meditation can be compared to the evergreen tree, in which there is always evidence of life.

### *Priorities*

In Psalm 49 we have instruction on getting a true sense of priorities. The Lord said 'Where your treasure is there will your heart be also', and there is warning to the rich (vv. 5, 12) and to the poorer (v. 16). We know from Luke 16 the result of a rich life without God and the parable of the Lord Jesus concerning the rich man with plans for the future, but who left God out of his reckoning is also pertinent (Luke 12: 13-21). The Lord is seeking to steer us away from being too materialistic. Paul has a similar appeal 'Seek the things that are above... set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are upon the earth' (Col. 3: 1-3).

*David J. Webster*

**From Leeds:** Psalm 1 would appear to speak of instruction in general terms and Psalm 49 of one particular issue.

Ps. 1: 1 sets out the counsel of evil instruction, that is, to those who are (a) ungodly, who cast off their fear of God, (b) sinners, who live in rebellion against God, (c) scorners, those who scoff and make fun of sin and God. Satan seeks to clothe the sinful ones in righteousness; a false righteousness to hide the evil as he seeks to touch every facet of our lives, our walk, our talk, our doings. Those who are of God should be as described in Jas. 1: 22-27, and like the man who lives on to the end in the life that God created for him.

V. 2 shows that the good source of instruction is the law of God, but to us, the Bible, (the whole counsel of God) is profitable (Tim. 3: 16, 17) [Comment 4]. The word of God to the godly has two effects. Firstly, he delights in reading it, since obedience to it will (a) be well-pleasing to God (John 14: 15, 21) (b) find us close to God (John 14: 23). Secondly, the godly man meditates day and night in it, he discusses it with others like-minded, until it forms his manner of life, and finds an abiding place in his heart (Mark 7: 14-23).

Vv. 3-4 deal with the resulting actions of both sets of instruction; the evil, having no root in the important

matters, is soon blown away, whereas those that live and who have God's word in them will stand firm and flourish, bearing fruit (John 15: 1-8). Vv. 5-6 show that those who adhere to evil instruction will have no answer to God's judgments at death.

In Ps. 49 we have a universal call for all people to hear: all the inhabitants of the world (ages, as in Ps. 17: 14). All must realise their need of redemption. Those who continue to trust and to boast in material riches show a fool's confidence, as all material things perish (Luke 12: 15-21). The ransom (*kopher*) price for man's redemption is one that must satisfy the One who claims it. We are not considering here the redemption of property or land, but of the soul. The redemption price cannot be met by riches or by any corruptible things such as gold, silver, or precious stones, but only by the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1: 17-23). The man who is richest in material things only comes to death and leaves his riches to others (v. 10). The richest man can take no more to the grave than the poorest of men; nothing (v. 17) (see 1 Tim. 6: 7).

*Ian Gardiner, H. R. Dodge*

### **From Melbourne: Psalm 1**

We would judge that the substance of these two psalms summarises the main causes of departure in heart from the Lord, or from living in fellowship with Him, whether it be under the Old or under the New Covenants. In Ps. 1: 1 the counsel of the wicked is such as referred to in Prov. 4: 14-17. Such associations have been the cause of the downfall of many of God's saints who from early days have received instruction in the word and will of the Lord. The commandments, statutes, and judgements given through Moses were to be taught diligently by parents to their children. It was their responsibility to talk of them whilst sitting in the house, when walking by the way, when lying down and rising up. They were to be written in and on prominent places in their homes. To have the law of the Lord in such prominence as we find in the instructions of Deut. 6: 4-9, was not to be a formal matter. It was intended that they be written also upon the heart because of what Jehovah had done for them in bringing them out from the house of bondage, and in constituting them as a holy

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nation. They **were to be separate** from **all** other nations unto **Himself** for **all** generations if they would obey His voice. **Such** instruction would **be the basis** of preservation from **the** influence of **such** counsel **as referred to** in Prov. 4. **The** downward **steps** of **verse 1** are instructive. Walking by **the** way in **the** company of **the wicked** and **godless** is dangerous; **but** to stand in **their** presence would **appear** to indicate **that the** attention **has** been gained, and **there is** a listening **ear for further** counsel in unrighteousness. Then **there** follows an invitation to enter **and sit where** scornors of **the** word of **the** Lord **are** found. **Departure** from **the** Lord **has** always been a **gradual** process, **whether it has** been under **the Old** or under **the New** Covenants, and **here three** stages of **such** departures **are** clearly outlined.

In v. **2** the antidote to **such** departure **is** given, and the one who **receives** and **heeds** **such** instruction is blessed or happy: **he** delights in **the law** of **the** Lord and meditates **therein** day and night.

### *Psalm 49*

If **the** Korah **referred to in the** introduction is **the** Korah of **the** rebellion recorded in Num. **16**, this emphasizes **the** mercy of **a** God who **is** gracious and **full** of compassion towards **the** children and descendants of transgressors [Comment 6]. In **this psalm** of instruction they emphasize **the** inadequacy of **wealth** and earthly possessions. **Wealth** can produce for **its** possessors **the** necessary things of **life** and often many unnecessary things; **but it** cannot **reach** beyond **the** grave and Sheol, **save where** it has been **used** to lay **up** in store or **purchase** eternal **treasure laid up** against **the** time to come. **The** redemption of **the** soul **is** beyond **its** reach, and **the** honour **which** it brings to its possessors **is** valueless. They who boast **themselves** of **the** possession of **either** **wealth** or honour, **and** understand not **its** limits, **are** like unto **the** beasts **that** perish. When **seen** from God's standpoint, they **are** not to **be** envied. **The** response of **the** godly to whom **God** has given **riches** and honour and who **use** **them** aright **will be** to echo **the** words of **David**, 'Both **riches** and honour come of **Thee**, and Thou **rulest** over all;... Now therefore, our God, **we** thank **Thee**, and **praise** Thy glorious Name... and of **Thine** own **have** **we** given **Thee**' (1 Chr. 29: 12, 14).

W. *Sneddon, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil:** Psalm 1 teaches that separation from all that is evil, and all who are wicked, with real delight in **the** word of God is the secret of true happiness. The man who is blessed of God does not walk with wicked men or listen to their advice. 'Walk with wise men and be wise' is sound counsel. Nor does such a man stand, even for a moment, in the way of sinners. To stand with sinners links one with them. To sit with sinners denotes a still closer relationship. Lot did this when he went to Sodom and ultimately sat in the gate. From this association he had to be rescued. Peter, just before denying his Lord, first of all stood, then sat with wrong company (Luke **22: 55**). Both Lot and Peter would look back on these events and view them as bitter experiences. 'Evil company doth corrupt good manners' (1 Cor. 15: 33).

The happy man delights in the law of the Lord meditating on it continually day and night. He is always thinking about what God has said, and this affects his life. His instruction is from God and he delights in it. This makes him like a fruitful tree that is planted by streams (N. B. plural) of water. This suggests an abundant supply always, and so, like the tree, the life of man is fruitful. The leaf is evergreen; it does not wither, suggesting continuous communion. Thus, the person who is constantly in touch with the infinite God has true success in life. Everything he does prospers.

In one short, terse sentence, (v. 4), the psalmist simply says, 'The wicked are not so.'

The tree is established, planted. It endures, but the wicked are like chaff that the wind blows away, they do not prosper, but perish. The Lord knows which are which. The Lord knoweth them that are His' (2 Tim. 2: 19)..

Psalm 49 is for the instruction of all peoples, and is therefore of universal application. Its message is to demonstrate the foolishness of trusting in riches. Wealth and the multitude of riches can lead to pride in the hearts of men. They boast, as Nebuchadnezzar did, but he soon learned, as others have, that his dependence was entirely upon God (Dan. 4: 30, 37).

All the world's wealth put together could not redeem one soul. Riches have a very limited value. Our redemption is by the precious blood of Jesus (1 Pet. **1: 18, 19**).

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Although men may not say so openly, they frequently think inwardly that their houses and lands will last for ever. They even call their lands after their own names. They overlook the fact that like beasts, they perish, but, in the case of men, judgement follows (Heb. 9: 27). **The** psalmist exposes the folly of such men and of those who listen to them.

*Neville Coomer*

**From Nottingham:** Psalm 1 stands like a sentinel at the gate of the Psalter. It presents to us fundamental truths regarding the walk of man before God, and introduces the reader to the wealth of instruction given in the book.

One is reminded of the words, 'There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death' (Prov. 14: 12, 16: 25). Over the centuries man has been confronted with two ways and has taken one of two different courses. The one who has walked with God has been the one who has been blessed, which word in verse 1, as the R. V. margin shows, could better be translated as 'happy'. The first part of this verse can correctly be rendered as 'Oh!, the happiness of the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked!' This is a timeless situation which has been true of any period of God's dealings with men.

The man who spurns the counsel of the wicked, which may be described as the negative side of the picture, can know also a positive side, to delight and meditate in the law of the Lord. His choice so to do is a result of divinely enlightened instruction.

In verse 1 we have the counsel of the wicked, that is in his thoughts and words; the way of sinners, that is his behaviour; and the seat of the scornful, that is his association. The one who refuses the light of the word of God walks a downhill path. One is reminded of Lot who 'beheld all the Plain of Jordan, that it was well watered' and 'dwelled in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom.' (Gen. 13: 10, 12). Later, he 'sat in the gate of Sodom', (Gen. 19: 1). Thus Lot moved first towards Sodom, then into Sodom, and then Sodom moved into him.

In contrast we have the picture drawn in Psalm 1 of a tree planted by the streams of water and we are taught that

the one who draws from the living word is the one who will flourish before God. So we are reminded of Joseph who was a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a fountain. But let us note 'his branches run over the wall' (Gen. 49: 22). Therefore not only was his fruitfulness seen by God, but it was manifested to the refreshment and benefit of others. So it is with the man who delights and meditates in the Word of God. What a contrast to the counsel of the wicked, the way of sinners and the seat of the scornful!

Psalm 49 is addressed to all men so that anyone who is willing can receive divine instruction through the psalm. While much of God's word contains teaching directed to His people, the Scriptures are replete with instruction which will benefit any man who heeds.

The main burden of this psalm is to show the futility of trusting in riches. All men, rich and poor, die as do the animals, but men, unlike animals, after death pass to judgement (Heb. 9: 27).

The well known verses 6-8 show how useless it is for men to trust in their wealth for the redemption of their own or other people's souls. Man has ever sought to reach and even surpass God by his own efforts, as witness the attempt at Babel (Gen. 11: 1-11). The riches with which man attempts to redeem his soul may not be measured in money but, especially in these days, in invention and discovery and in the wrong use of accumulated knowledge.

*R. Hickling*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Vancouver):** The way of Cain is the way taken by men who reject the word of the Lord, as Cain did. Cain's 'works were evil, and his brother's righteous' (1 Jn. 3: 12). Cain's evil lay in bringing to God of the fruit of the ground, rather than the blood of a sacrifice. That is, he sought acceptance with God on the basis of works rather than shed blood. Today, many follow in his way.

**2. (Vancouver):** Vv. 6-8 are frequently quoted words, and our Vancouver contributors are right to point out that they form a central theme of Ps. 49. However, we should remind ourselves that v. 8 is parenthetical, and v. 9 completes the

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sentence. That he should still live away, that he should not see corruption.'

3. **(Birkenhead):** Our friends here rightly draw attention to a consistently applied principle of divinely - given exhortation or teaching. When the Lord gives a prohibition on any matter, He invariably provides a positive alternative for the disciple to follow. Two NT. examples of this are found in Col. 3: 5 (*Mortify* therefore your members) and v. 12 (*Put* on therefore.. ), and in 1 Tim. 6: 11 (But thou, O man of God, *flee* these things; and *follow* after.. ). The contribution from Hayes also makes a helpful reference to these positive and negative injunctions.

4. **(Leeds):** The whole counsel of God is not the Bible itself. There is, however, no doubt that for our day the whole counsel of God is contained in the Bible. We take the point made in this contribution from Leeds, that we today have a revelation of the will of God that is much more comprehensive than the Psalmist could ever know.

5. **(Liverpool):** The believer will not find it strange to meditate on the books of the Law. Certainly, divine truth for our day is primarily established in the New Testament Scriptures, and we must acquire a thorough knowledge of the principles and practices expounded therein, but the Old Testament, including the Law, contains much for our instruction. To know the whole counsel of God, we must meditate on the whole word of God.

6. (Melbourne): It is generally understood that when the Lord executed Judgement on Korah and his fellow-rebels (Num. 16), the sons of Korah were mercifully spared, and, being Levites, continued to officiate in the Tabernacle. Some of them were appointed by David to guard the doors of the Temple and sing the praises of God (1 Chr. 9: 19). Several psalms, of which Ps. 49 is one, are ascribed to them.

R. L

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

## EDITORIAL

8008

The three psalms that form our study-portion in this issue were all written by or for the sons of Korah. In choice language they convey to us an appreciation of what Zion meant to the Israelite who loved it because it was the dwelling place of God. The description given of Zion in Psalm 48 would have a particular relevance in the days of Solomon, and it will have a future relevance in the millennial reign of 'great David's greater son'. Isaiah depicted that glorious future scene so beautifully when he wrote:

And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it (Is. 2: 2).

It is sad to record that a review of Zion's history reveals that for long periods God's people lost the vision of Zion portrayed in these psalms, and eventually God forsook His 'beautiful house' because His people had forsaken Him.

The vision was regained by an exercised remnant after the captivity, but the rebuilt house was also forsaken by God in due time for the same reason.

There are parallels to be drawn and lessons to be learned from this study in relation to the spiritual house of today and our contributors have drawn attention to some of these in their papers.

It is vital to the continuance of the spiritual house in our day that we learn the truths associated with God's house, put a high value on them, practise them in our lives, and then pass them on to others (Ps. 48: 13, 2 Tim. 2: 2).

The joy and satisfaction experienced by the worshippers in Zion are reflected in the words of Psalm 84. They had been 'satisfied with the goodness' of God's house (Ps. 65: 4). We too should find service in the house of God a joyful experience.

**J. K. D. J.**

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### NOTE

The syllabuses for next year's study were sent out with issue 8006.

We are grateful to contributors who have sent in suggestions for future study subjects. We are always pleased to have the views of fellow-students and we give due consideration to them.

We would encourage study groups to send in contributions regularly. There is much profit derived from the sharing of what has been gleaned with others through the medium of the magazine.

Please note that papers should reach Mr. E. Archibald *two months* before the date of publication. It may not be possible to publish papers that arrive at a late date.

*Eds.*

### **THE TEN-TRIBE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL: 'My People' or 'Not My People'**

*When did the Northern Ten-Tribe Kingdom lose its place as part of Jehovah's people?*

*(continued from p. 100)*

Incidentally, although no absolute proof lies in the matter, it would seem strange if mighty prophets like Elijah and Elisha were not among the people of God. Particularly so in the case of Elijah who stood habitually in the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel, and through whom God sent the letter of rebuke to Jehoram, charging him with walking in the ways of Israel's kings and causing Jerusalem to go a whoring as the house of Ahab did (2 Chr. 21: 12). To these two prophets the Lord Jesus referred in Luke 4. May it not be that there were far more in the ten tribes who remained faithful to the house and service of God than we have ever imagined, that idolatry lay at the root of the declension in both monarchies, and that only at its dispersion did the ten tribes cease to be part of the people of God?

Editors' response to this submission is now given, so that fellow students may make a comparative study section by section.

*The Historical Books*

- 1 Kings 14: 7** When God **made** Jeroboam ruler over **the** ten tribes **they were** indeed part of 'My people Israel'.
- 14: 16** **'He shall give Israel up'** might equally mean an immediate renunciation of their status within **the** Sinaitic covenant position (Ex. 19: 5, 6).
- 16: 2** **Baasha was** king over God's people, **we suggest** in relation to **the** patriarchal covenant **but** in **what** sense could a kingdom in **such deep** apostasy answer to **the** people of **the** Sinaitic covenant?
- 18: 31** Elijah's symbolic **act related rather** to **the** patriarchal covenant-in this case with Jacob (**vide** v. **31**)-than to **the** Sinaitic covenant. Similarly his prayer in v. **36** was towards **the** God of **the** patriarchs.
- 2 Kings 9: 6** Jehu **had** been anointed king over Israel for **the** destruction of **the** house of Ahab. In **what** sense could **the** Ahab-Joram regime **be the** 'People of **the** Lord?' **Had** not Jehoshaphat been **rebuked** for alliance with **Ahab** (**cf.** **2 Chr. 18 : 3** and **19: 2**)? **The** northern kingdom **was the** people of **the** Lord in **the** sense of racial affinity through **Abraham**, Isaac and Jacob; **but** Judah **was the** kingdom of **the** Lord in relation to **the** Sinaitic covenant.
- 2 Chr. 29: 24)** Would not **the** 'offering for **all** Israel'
- 30: 1)** effectually **relate** only to **the** minority **of the** ten tribes who **had** responded to **be** identified with **the true** worship of Jehovah in **the** house **at** Jerusalem?

*The Minor Prophets*

- Hosea 1: 4, 6, 9. **The** suggestion **that** v. 9 would come into **effect 60** years **later at the** captivity of **the** northern kingdom is interesting **but** debatable. **Does** not v. 9 simply **state** God's estimation of

the northern kingdom at the time and as He had regarded it for the previous 180 years? The cessation of the kingdom is predicted (v. 4), mercy is to be withdrawn (v. 6)-there is no point in Israel clinging to the hope that they are God's people, for God does not recognise them as such at all (v. 9). In the sense of Ex. 19: 5, 6 they had long since forfeited that status, although even after their captivity they would remain His people in relation to the Abrahamic covenant (see Dan. 9: 19 & Rom. 11: 2), just as they had been racially God's people before Sinai (Heb. 11: 25).

Hosea 4: 1, 6, 12) After declaring Israel *not* to be His people in Hos. 1: 9 these other references in Hosea and Amos would seem to be in the sense of the wider covenant.

*(to be continued)*

### **ZION - Psalms 48; 84; 87**

**From Birkenhead:** Zion was the place of God's choice for His dwelling place on earth. It was impressively situated on hills and was a place of beauty and strength for God's people with its towers and bulwarks. God's people were to take particular note of the outstanding greatness of Zion so that future generations should have a true appreciation of the place where God dwells (Ps. 48: 12, 13). 1 Tim. 3: 15 was used to stress the point that we have a similar responsibility in God's house today. There are truths which can never be overthrown which are held dear by those within God's house. God's people knew prosperity, peace, and plenty while they worshipped the Lord. Special request was made that the Lord would look on their ruler as one who was leading them in the right ways (Ps. 84: 9) [Comment 6]. When their spiritual life went astray their unity suffered; they knew defeat (Lam. 2: 15). Today we need to exercise our privilege of appearing before God in the spiritual Mount Zion (Heb. 12: 22). To fail in this aspect

of our spiritual lives will open the possibility of following in the steps of Israel when they failed to walk uprightly. God's people were to love the place of God's dwelling with their whole being. Singers were constantly engaged in the service of God's house (1 Chron. 9: 33). They were conscious of their blessings and praised the Lord (Ps. 84: 4).

It was required by the Lord that His people should appear before Him, and the fulfilment of this is visualised in Ps. 84: 7 where the journey saw the party growing ever larger as it approached the city. They would sing the songs of Zion as they went.

Ps. 87, Is. 2 and Zech. 2: 10-13 indicate that Zion will flourish again. There will be those numbered in her people who are not Jews by birth (Ps. 87: 4-6).

It seems from Hebrews 11 that there must have been some revelation given to Old Testament saints such as Abraham of God's future glorious purposes for His people.

*R. D. Williams*

From Derby: The study of Zion includes spiritual, national and geographical considerations.

The national and geographical can be considered together. Israel did not effectively subdue the inhabitants when they entered the promised land and consequently David came into conflict with the Jebusites who occupied Jerusalem. The account is in 2 Sam. 5: 6-9 and 1 Chr. 11: 3-9. David took the stronghold of Zion and, dwelling there, called it the city of David. Zion was then a fortress city. It was part of Jerusalem.

Before this, the ark of God had suffered various vicissitudes starting with Eli in 1 Sam. 4: 11 and reaching the house of Obed-edom in 2 Sam. 6: 10. In v. 12 is recorded the bringing of the ark of God into the city of David i. e. to Zion. Zion thus became the spiritual as well as the national and political centre.

David wanted to do more than the above but he had to leave the building of the Temple to his son Solomon. This done, Solomon brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Zion into the Temple in Jerusalem. (1 Kings 8: 1). Thus Jerusalem with Zion became the centre of Israel's nationhood and of their spiritual life.

There are very many references to Zion in the Old Testament beyond those in the three psalms suggested for study.

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*Psalm 84* relates to personal experience and is written largely in the first person singular. It deals with things on earth but the truths expressed are spiritual. The Zion considered is that of the ark of God rather than the fortress Zion, though reference is made in verses 8 and 12 to the Lord of hosts. Verses 1 to 8 seem to deal with the journey to Zion and verses 9 to 12 with the circumstances of the completed journey.

*Psalm 48* is a psalm of Zion the fortress, the centre of the nation of Israel. It is the people who are speaking of the power and presence of the Lord of hosts. This is particularly so in verses 1 to 8. Verses 9 to 14 are more about comfort than of power; but the outlook is limited to the earthly situation. The last verse suggests national permanence but for the individual it is 'unto death'.

*Psalm 87* is one of intense nationalism and its centre is Zion the city of God.

Most of the New Testament references to Zion are quotations. Is. 28: 16 is quoted in 1 Pet. 2: 6 almost unaltered but in Rom. 9: 33 it is much altered [Comment 7].

Heb. 12: 22 refers to Zion without using a quotation. The whole paragraph, verses 18 to 29, is a matter of revelation and contrasts the earthly Zion with the heavenly city of God. Both titles '*Zion*' and '*the heavenly Jerusalem*' are spiritual in character and although much of the meaning of verses 22 and 23 is difficult it does seem that the heavenly Jerusalem extends from eternity past into the eternal future. The statement 'Ye are come to... the heavenly Jerusalem' links well with Rev. 21: 2 though again there is much meaning still to be revealed [Comment 1].

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Leeds:** Zion today is generally thought of as being the city of Jerusalem but was originally only one fortified hill of five in the area. Of the five, Beretha, Ophel, Moriah and Zion, it is clear that David took and held the stronghold of Zion (2 Sam. 5: 7), and from there for about thirty three years reigned as king over Israel and Judah.

Our discussion made it clear that the references to Zion in the Psalms are as relevant today for us as they were to the sons of Korah who wrote them under God's guidance, and to the people of God who used them in their praise and worship.

Israel was able to come to Zion because they recognised it as God's dwelling place. We come to our spiritual Zion (Heb. 12: 22), to God the Judge of all, to Christ our mediator. They came with blood; we come through Christ's blood. We had some difficulty in reconciling this with the paragraph in Gal. 4 where the bondwoman Hagar is likened to the earthly Jerusalem and Sarah the freewoman to the Jerusalem which is in heaven [Comment 2].

Psalms 84 was a message to Israel to remind them of their fourfold position before God. They should have been always crying to God (v. 2), dwelling in God's house (v. 4), relying on God (v. 5), and using God as their shield (v. 9).

As well as a Psalm in praise of the city of God in David and Solomon's time Psalm 48 seems to point forward to a future day to a time when the city will be established forever (v. 8), the centre not only of Israel but of the world, with kings afraid of its power and its King. The beauty of the future Zion where Christ will reign is very evident, where love and righteousness will rule and rejoicing will be evident. That God is our God for ever is true for believers today. We can echo with the children of Israel the songs of Zion appreciating today a spiritual city; looking forward to the new Jerusalem [see Comment 1].

### **From Liverpool:**

#### 1. *What was Zion?*

The S. W. hill of Jerusalem, the older and higher part of the city; it is often called the city of David' (Robert Young). Although originally only the hill, it later became a name of the city itself, and then progressively it became identified with the worship which went on there. The first mention of Zion and how it was conquered under King David is found in 2 Sam. 5: 6-10 [Comment 3].

#### 2. *What was so great about Zion?*

The authors of these Psalms, the sons of Korah, were appointed to a place of singing when the worship of God was re-organised under David. This attitude of praise comes over in these Psalms as a dominant theme (48: 1, **9-11**; 84: 11-12; comp. Ps. 65: 1). There is praise (a) for who God is and (b) for what He has

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done, and so Zion is first linked with the worship of God.

Secondly, it was a place which God chose Himself and loved (see Ps. 132: 13; 87: 2). Unlike other places chosen by God, e. g., Shiloh, Zion was to be a resting place for ever. Just as the sparrow and the swallow found a place to rest (84: 3, but we mustn't think that there were bird's nests *on* the altar!) so Zion is a resting place for the people of God. It is a place of safety and security (48: 3-8; 84: 3-4) [Comment 4].

Zion is represented as the dwelling place of God (84: 1; Ps. 9: 11) and was special for what was to be found there - the house of God, the ark of the Covenant, the service of God, the sacrifices, the altar and the priesthood. It was regarded as a wonderful place (48: 12-14) and it was good to be there (48: 2; 84: 2, 10). The joy experienced by those in Zion (48: 10-13) can be contrasted with the despair of those away from it (Ps. 137: 1). Joy was expressed when the ark was taken up to Zion by David (2 Sam. 6: 12) and it was evidently worth experiencing the difficulties of 'Baca' (whatever it was) to get there. Because of its geographical location the pilgrims went up to Zion singing songs of Ascents as they went to encourage each other.

We noted the greatness of Zion was conditional (see Lam. 2: 15).

### 3. *How does it relate to us?*

The truth of Zion is brought over into the New Testament. Refer to Mat. 5: 35 which emphasises the fact that Zion is a place of great importance due to the fact that God was associated with it. The true Zion is in heaven (Heb. 12: 22) where the foundation stone of which Peter speaks is laid (1 Pet. 2: 6), who is the Lord Jesus. In their spiritual experience the Christians, to whom the epistles were addressed, were giving Him the place on earth that God has given Him in Heaven, and thus constituting a holy nation, they could enter the heavenly Zion (a privilege not enjoyed by the people of God in the Old Testament except through their high priest).

P. G. Barrett, D. J. Webster

**From Melbourne:** We have traced the history of Zion from the days of Abraham as revealed in the book of Genesis and on into the millennial age. Although in the early references the name of Zion is not used the location is pointed out. From the first references to the location, until it is referred to by name, there is a period of nearly nine centuries. To follow these references has been both interesting, profitable, and instructive.

The first reference to the actual location is, we understand, found in Gen. 14, where we are introduced to Melchizedek king of Salem (a word meaning peace, and which later developed into Jerusalem). This man was priest of God Most High and blessed Abraham. From the record of the existence of such a priest, it would appear that there were worshippers of the true God in Salem at that time. In Gen. 22 we have the record of the testing of Abraham's faith in the promises of God when he was told to go to a place in the land of Moriah and offer up his son as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains 'which I will tell thee of. He obeyed, and 'on the third day saw the *Place* afar off. It was here that Abraham said prophetically in reply to Isaac's query, 'God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son', and later further called the name of the place *Jehovah Jireh*. or, 'the Lord will provide'. We now pass over about three hundred and fifty years to the rehearsing of the law by Moses, and the giving of further instructions regarding the will of the Lord for them. In Deut. 12, emphasis is laid upon the fact that when they entered the land of promise they were not to offer up their burnt offerings in every place which they saw, but in the *Place* which the Lord their God would choose, and where He would cause His Name to dwell, and they should rejoice before the Lord their God. During the first three hundred years in the land, the place of sacrifice where the Tabernacle was erected was Shiloh, in the land of Ephraim. It has often been suggested that this was a tribute to the name of Joseph and his faithfulness *in* Egypt, but it was not God's purpose to leave His dwelling place at Shiloh permanently. In Judges 1: 21, we are

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told of the failure of the children of Benjamin to drive out the Jebusites who dwelt in Jerusalem. The following four hundred years or so is a sealed book so far as divine history is concerned regarding Zion. In 2 Sam. 5 during the early years of David's reign, we find the first use of the name of the Jebusite fortress as Zion. This is the first of probably 150 or more occurrences of the word in the Old Testament. Its occupants considered their stronghold to be impregnable. They had some cause for thinking thus, as their ancestors of Judges 1: 21 had prevented Israel from entering. It was located at the S. W. corner of Jerusalem [see Comment 3], and they taunted David by saying that the blind and the lame would defend it from the attackers. Nevertheless David captured the fortress and it was named the 'City of David'.

We now note the chain of circumstances in David's history which linked him so closely with the fulfilment of the purposes of God, and the collective service for which He longed from His people in Zion, the place of His choice. David had pitched a tent for the ark in Zion, when he brought up the ark from its resting place in the house of Abinadab from where it had been for almost one hundred years. For nearly three decades those who sought the Lord repaired to Zion (some may have continued to go to the Tabernacle which was at the high place at Gibeon). But this condition of matters did not satisfy David; his heart was fixed in providing a dwelling place for God. The Spirit of the Lord had revealed to David the fact that God had a desire for a more permanent dwelling place in Mount Zion, and that he would have the honour of preparing the materials, but his son Solomon would build it.

Throughout the Psalms and the prophets we note the expressions which reveal the delight which the Lord found in His house and Mount Zion. It is referred to as 'the Mount Zion which He has chosen'. He calls it 'My city' the gates of which He loves more than all the dwellings of Jacob. This is the great centre of Israel, and from here the continuous song of the Lord was intended to rise; from here sacrifice and offering and sweet incense would arise to the throne of God and remind Him of the gratitude of a redeemed people. Here would be heard:

'Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised,

In the city of our God, in His holy mountain.  
 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,  
 is Mount Zion,  
 On the sides of the north, the city of the great  
 King',

and again we hear, 'Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; In whose heart are the highways to Zion'. But above all else, the services of Zion were to Him a constant reminder of the coming One whom He would provide.

Following upon the scene on Golgotha, many centuries must pass ere the song of the Lord will again arise to Him from Mount Zion, but that day will return when Israel acknowledges her sin. But we can rejoice in the knowledge of the fact that the words of the prophets must have fulfilment/And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem' (Is. 2: 2-4; Micah 4: 1-5). Zion will in that day be not only the centre and hub of Israel, but the metropolis of the whole earth. 'For the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously' (Is. 24: 23). There all nations shall serve Him.

In the New Testament are also found references to a spiritual Zion of the people of God answering to the Place of the Name of the Old Covenant. The Fellowship of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1: 9) answers to the land; and the churches of God fitly framed together according to apostolic teaching compose the spiritual house and the Mount Zion from which sweet incense is to ascend to the Mount Zion in the heavens, the dwelling place of God. This appears to be borne out by the writer of the Hebrews in 12: 22-24 [Comment 8].

*D. McFarlane, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil:** All three psalms are by the sons of Korah. Though their forefather had failed, yet by God's mercy

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Korah's sons had lived on to praise God, and the place of the Name, Zion. These men loved Zion; to them it was the city of the great King.

It was a beautiful place and also a place of refuge. When enemy kings saw it, they were amazed, they could not gain entry, they passed by together. Zion was the city of the Lord of Hosts. It was a place of rejoicing and gladness. God's people were happy there.

Well might they consider her bulwarks, her strength, and the beauty of her palaces. Having done so, they were to tell their children. God was acknowledged there for His loving kindness, His majesty, His guidance and His might. This city was the joy of the whole earth, yet there were times when Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles and ransacked. God protected His people when they behaved wisely. Zion was a refuge because God was there. It was the residence of the great King. God Himself is the defender of Jerusalem.

The Psalmist found Zion lovely, amiable, delightfully pleasant. His soul longed for God's courts; He had an intense desire to dwell there. The sparrow and the swallow had found for themselves an house and a nest - a place to rest. So also God's altars were like that *to the Psalmist*, a place of rest and security. We do not think that the birds nested in God's altars.

We beg to differ from the view that is expressed in the hymn (P. H. S. S., 2nd Ed. No. 405)

'The sparrow and the swallow there  
Find for their young a nest;  
Thine altars, O my King and God  
Provide for them a rest' [see Comment 4].

Those who dwelt in God's house were happy. For them, it was a place of praise. Those who love Zion are blessed of God. A day in God's courts was far better than one thousand spent living with the wicked. To the Psalmist it was pointless living anywhere else [Comment 5]. Trust in God was the secret of the Psalmist's happiness.

Not only should God's people love the place of God's choice, but the Lord Himself loves Zion above any other place on earth. No other place can compare with it. Glorious things are spoken of God's city by those who know it.

There are many cities of repute and people are proud of such and such a birth-place, but when the Most High Himself establishes Zion, He will take special note of those born in Jerusalem. Whether it is in David's day, or today, joy and gladness are associated with God's house. What a beautiful picture of overflowing contentment, 'All my fountains are in thee'.

Neville Coomer

From Vancouver B. C.: An overview of the three Psalms seems to give us the following picture: Psalm 48 describes the *place*, Psalm 84 the *people* and Psalm 87 the *Possessor or Proprietor*. Zion can be defined in a number of different ways. There is (1) the mountain itself; (2) by analogy, the place where God is; (3) by extension, Zion referring to all of Jerusalem; (4) by further extension the whole country or the people of God; (Can this be supported by Scripture? -Eds. ) (5) a type of heavenly Zion (Heb. 12: 22); (6) a type of the holy place for the people of God today and/or in the future, and (7) the future millennial Zion.

There exist today Zionists whose aim is predominantly political and nationalistic. They wish Israel to be preeminent and Israel is their sole reason for living. As much as this goal is unspiritual and hardly relates to God, yet therein lies an example for us, the people of God today. The spiritual Jew of the past was a true Zionist. His three trips a year to the dwelling of God were the highlight of his year. Far from it being a time of fear and routine ritual, it became for him the reality of the presence of his God among His people. With excitement and joy he saw the gates open wide to receive him and his sacrifice of worship. Do we experience the same warmth and pleasure in service in His house? Should the zeal for the House be lacking we risk the same fate as Israel of old. At least Israel has the future promise of His feet once more touching Zion as proof of their position of 'apple of His eye'.

*Psalm 48* presents us with a physical sketch of Zion. We can visualize her setting (v. 2), her aspect (v. 4-7), the details of her buildings (v. 12,13). But more important what goes on inside this so impressive a structure? Its prime function is immediately stated in v.1, praise, and restated in v. 10, but in a wider field. Although praise goes out to God 'to the ends of the earth', there is *one*

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place where His name is greatly (and collectively) praised-in the city of God. Being in the confines of Zion also causes one to meditate on the daily goodness of God in material matters (v. 9). In addition, those who study the structure of the House have its glory indelibly etched on the mind so that the following generation cannot help but hear about it (v. 13), and the resulting joy from the experience echoes on (v. 11). Total security is known within her walls because, after all, God is our God (v. 3, 14).

*Psalm 84* presents a number of historical pictures to us. Some saw David ostracized from his people. Some saw the people in captivity in Babylon longing for the Temple. Others saw David again, but this time driven out by his son Absalom. Whatever the scene, the writer is physically incapable of worshipping in or even seeing Zion. The Psalm seems to be divided into three parts (1) the spiritual and mental yearning (2) the joyful journey in the mind, to Zion, and (3) the arrival at the spot just to bask in its glory and to take the smallest role in its service. This arrival, if not physical is one of faith as it is seen as an accomplished fact in verses 11 and 12.

The little picture of the birds building nests in the altar gave some a view of the law regarding the presence of birds in the sanctuary, others an argument that the altars were not in use and so in a period of declension and still others of the simple personal memories of someone acutely familiar with every nook and cranny of God's house [Comment 4].

*Psalm 81* lifts us into a higher plane and lets us see Zion as God views it. He founded it and looks upon it with unique loving care. He repeatedly whispers sweet and glorious things about her beauty and those who have become a part of Zion, despite their origin. Zion and her people are His and He is satisfied with the travail for its inception and their conception. He counts each one as personally important and keeps track of their status and growth. Israel however maintains that privileged place. A double portion of this one and that one (v. 5) are allotted to her. The Lord also senses the returning gratitude of His people who voice their acknowledgement of where their true joys lie.

J. C. Bell

## COMMENTS

**1. (Derby):** The city referred to in Rev. 21: 2 is the New Jerusalem, which shall be the divine centre on the new earth. If the earthly Zion may be fittingly described as, 'beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth' (Ps. 48: 2), what shall we say of that glorious city in its future setting?

That city is probably not synonymous with the heavenly Jerusalem referred to in Heb. 12: 22 and Gal. 4: 26 which is a heavenly centre associated with the worship of the angelic hosts, and it may continue as such after the new earth is in existence.

**2. (Leeds):** In Gal. 4 the superiority of the New Covenant and the service associated with it as compared with the Old Covenant and its service is emphasized. In the allegory used Sarah represents the former and Hagar the latter.

**3. (Liverpool):** The following extract gives a helpful note on this point:

It is now clear that the original city, the 'Jebus' captured by David, afterwards called the City of David, was the south-east hill, This has been established by excavations south of the Temple area (which covers the northern part of this south-east hill), and indeed this fits in well with biblical details and with the description given by Josephus. There are two facts which must be clearly realized: in the first place, the original city extended considerably south of the present south-east wall of Jerusalem; secondly, this original Zion must not be confused (as it was for centuries) with what is today called Mount Zion, which is the south-west hill. Ancient Jewish tradition erroneously considered the latter to be the original city, a view supported by numbers of scholars last century.

(The New Bible Dictionary, IVP, p. 617)

The above note agrees with the description given in Psalm 48: 2, 'mount Zion, on the sides of the north.'

**4. (Liverpool):** This is a valid viewpoint and receives support in the Methil paper. Some take the view that the birds were nesting in the Temple precincts (see Vancouver's

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paper). We can, however, reject the idea that the psalmist is referring to a period during which the Temple was being neglected; the whole tenor of the psalm suggests the reverse.

Of the two birds mentioned one, (the swallow) is migratory, the other is not. We should rather emulate the latter and be constant in our association with God's house.

**5. (Methil):** Two distinct points are made by the psalmist:

- i) That one day in God's courts is better 'than a thousand elsewhere' (NIV).
- ii) That it is better to serve as a doorkeeper in God's house (the work to which the sons of Korah were appointed) than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

*J. K. D. J.*

6. (Birkenhead): Ps. 84: 9 may refer to the king, as Birkenhead friends have said. Alternatively, it may be a prayer that God, the Protector of Israel, should look with favour on His chosen people, appearing before Him in worship.

7. (**Derby**): The quotation in Rom. 9: 33 is from the LXX. Comment has been made in issue 8006 on the differences between the LXX and the Massoretic Text.

3. (Melbourne): This paragraph seems to me to go rather beyond what the Scriptures say. Does the Fellowship answer to the land given to Israel? The land was given for a possession, but was not all possessed. The Fellowship is a complete entity at any point in time, and I cannot see how part of it could be given as a habitation, but not possessed. Scripture only uses 'Mount Zion' to refer to the heavenly Jerusalem, where is the heavenly sanctuary, in which we worship. God dwells amongst men in His spiritual house, but, changing the figure, those who constitute that house, being the holy nation, ascend to the heavenly Mount Zion to reach the heavenly sanctuary.

*P. L. H.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

8009

The Songs of Ascents which are this month's study subject were most probably used by those who went up to Jerusalem three times a year in obedience to God's commandment. They express the joy of the worshippers as they approached the city of the dwelling place of God. There they would 'worship at His footstool' and 'shout aloud for joy' rejoicing in the privilege of divine service. We need to capture something of the same spirit of joy in worship; while not insincere or merely formal, we must admit that our worship is sometimes dull and lifeless.

Psalm 122 prays three times for the 'peace of Jerusalem'. Where God dwells amidst His people there should be peace 'within the walls'; peace, that is, between those inside rather than with any external aggressor. The divine teaching of a single place of worship is inseparable from that of unity of heart of the worshipping people; there is no provision for individuals to choose their own place of worship (Deut. 12), or to exert their own opinions to cause division.  
*P. L. H.*

## **THE TEN-TRIBE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL: 'My People' or 'Not My People'**

*When did the Northern Ten-Tribe Kingdom lose its place as part of Jehovah's people?*

*(continued from p. 116)*

It is appreciated that the southern kingdom was still the people of God despite the frequent lapses into idolatry; but we suggest that successive revivals in Judaea under the leadership of such men as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah made a viable situation. By contrast the northern record was one of unrelieved official

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apostasy and God's statement **was that only 7000 had** not yielded to **Baal** worship in **the** days of **Jezebel** and Ahab.

Would it not rather **seem**, then, **that the** minority of **the** ten tribes who remained loyal to Jehovah were regarded by Him **as** spiritually identified **with** His people in Judah, and accordingly they **had access** to worship **at** God's house when **this was** practicable (cf 2 Chr. 15: 9, 30: 11)?

**As** to Elijah and Elisha not being among **the** people of God, would they not come within **the** category **suggested** in **the** previous paragraph? Alternatively, is **there** really **much** more of a difficulty about this than **the agreed fact** that Daniel and Ezekiel **had** to fulfil **their** prophetic ministry outside **the sphere** of God's people, so far **as the** relationship of Ex. 19: 5, 6 is concerned?

**It seemed** to Editors **that** certain difficulties **were** inherent in **the view that the** Ten-Tribe Kingdom formed **part** of God's people in **the** Sinaitic sense, **eg—**

- a) By analogy, different groups of believers, **separated** from **each** other and some holding heretical doctrines, would form **part** of **the** people of God.
- b) **Israel**, before constitution **as** God's people **at** Sinai, and also **while later** dispersed in captivity, **were** spoken of **as** His people. Therefore unless 'people' is variously interpreted (i. e. **in** relation to **the** Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants) **a clear** analogy with **the New** Covenant people of God (**1 Pet. 2: 9-10**) would **be** difficult to establish.

**It is** also **suggested** that **helpful** light may **be** thrown on **the** current situation by analogy with **the** thought of **the** ten tribes being linked with **the** two tribes under patriarchal covenant blessing, even though they **were cut** off from blessing **as the** people of **the** Lord under **the terms** of **the** Sinaitic covenant. For under **the terms** of **the New** Covenant **all** believers **have** certain inalienable blessings, answering to **the** racial blessings vouchsafed to **the** descendants of **Abraham, Isaac** and Jacob under **the** patriarchal covenant. **But there are** certain **aspects** of New Covenant blessing which **are** available only to those disciples of Christ who respond together in fulfilment of **His** word, thereby being constituted **a** 'holy nation, **a** people for God's own possession'. Admittedly this **parallel** holds good only in broad principle. **The** term 'people of God' **seems** to **be reserved** in **New**

Covenant connotation for those associated together on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, rather than to believers generally who have not been gathered on these principles. But the fact that in regard to Israel the term 'people' is used in different senses should not invalidate the broad analogy suggested for present-day guidance.

General agreement emerged that the term 'My people' is applied before Sinai. Therefore the expression has an application to the seed of Abraham in terms of the unconditional covenant as well as to the kingdom of priests established at Sinai under the conditional covenant. This distinction seems to merit further consideration and study. The point was also emphasised that the Holy Spirit's use of the term 'people of God' in relation to New Covenant blessing has in view only the holy nation of 1 Pet. 2. The expression is not applied to all believers of the present dispensation as it had been to the people of Israel before their commitment to the will of God at Sinai.

Editors welcome opportunity for exploratory dialogue of this kind; if any readers wish to comment further on this topic, or to open up discussion on other matters, their interest will be appreciated.

*Eds.*

## **THE INTERPRETATION OF GEN. 1: 2**

In issue 8001, a comment was made on the translation 'the earth became waste and void' in Gen. 1: 2, quoting one author who said that this was not legitimate. This has prompted the study article by Mr. H. King which we print below, together with the results of further research by Eric Archibald.

### *The Hebrew word 'hayah'*

The above word means 'to be' or 'to become', or 'to come into existence'. It is never used when referring to a pre-existent state, for in such cases the Hebrew language uses no verb at all. For example in Psalm 90: 2 'From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God', there is no Hebrew word in the text for 'art', for God never came into existence at any point in time. Similarly in Psalm 2: 7, 'Thou art My Son' - there is no Hebrew word in the text for 'art', because the Son of God never became the Son of God at any point in time. Psalm 2: 7 is a statement of pre-existent fact.

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A concordance will show **the reader that the word *hayah*** in its various forms is translated in our Authorised Version, **'became'** 67 times, and **there are 505** sentences commencing with **the words 'and it came to pass'** which is **the word *va'yehi*, from *hayah***. In many cases **the *hayah*** is simply translated **'be'** or **'was'**, **but it always implies 'came to be', as for example Gen. 1: 3, 'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light'. The two verbs, 'Let there be' and 'there was' are forms of the word *hayah*** and, obviously, even to a non-Hebrew reader mean 'to become' or 'come into existence'. In Gen. 2: 24 'they shall **be** one flesh' **we have** again **the word *hayah*** and **we know that the word is translated 'become one flesh' in Matt. 19: 5.**

It would **be a big task to enumerate all such cases in the Scriptures, but one more will suffice to make the point obvious.** In **Psalm 33: 9, 'He spake, and it was done'; there is no verb 'to do' in this verse. It is the verb *hayah* and means, 'He spake, and it was', or 'came into being'.**

In view of this, how can **we make an exception in Gen. 1: 2, 'And the earth was waste and void'? The word 'was' is *hayitah*, feminine of *hayah*, and means 'became'. To assume that the verse implies a pre-existent state would require the omission of the word *hayitah* from the Hebrew text whereas its insertion, as we have exemplified above, gives the meaning of 'became'. Thus Gen. 1: 2 means that the earth 'became' waste and void, whatever our theories may be for or against a 'gap' between verses 1 and 2. Isaiah 45: 18 plainly states that the earth was not created a waste. Commentaries may vary in their interpretation of Gen. 1: 2, but the Hebrew word *hayah* cannot change its meaning.**

*H. King*

It might be objected that (1) In the majority of instances where **'*hayah*'** is translated **'became'** in the A. V. the word **'*hayah*'** is followed by the preposition **'le'**. In Gen. 1: 2, however, and in a vast number of instances the preposition **'le'** is not found, and so the A. V. uses the translation **'was'**. (2) In connection with the statement 'To assume that the verse implies a pre-existent state would require the omission of the word *hayitah* from the Hebrew text', the **'Hebrew Grammar translated by A. F. Cowley, 2nd Edit.**

para. 141i, says, '*hayah* in the sense of 'to become' still retains its full force as a verb. On the other hand such examples as Gen. 1: 2 can scarcely be regarded as properly verbal clauses; *hayitah* is used here really only for the purpose of referring to past time, a statement which might otherwise appear in the form of a pure noun clause, a description of a state'. A pure noun clause in the present normally has no verb at all in Hebrew.

Much depends on how close a parallel we seek to the word order of Gen. 1: 2.

Sentences containing And + subject + *hayah* + noun or adjective are Gen. 7: 6; 2 Kin. 5: 1; Hosea 7: 8; 2 Chr. 13: 7.

Sentences containing And + subject + *hayitah* + noun or adjective are Gen. 36: 12; Exod. 36: 7 (accents rebia, mercha match Gen. 1: 2) Jonah 3: 3

Despite the above considerations, Joseph Hayyim Karo of Prussian Poland writing in the second half of the nineteenth century in the book 'A voice saying, Cry' is quoted as saying that in Gen. 1: 2 *hayitah* means 'was changed' to waste and void; and to support this interpretation reference is made to Isaiah 1: 21, 'How is the faithful city become an harlot', apparently, however, without placing any importance on the presence of the preposition 'le' in Isaiah 1: 21 and its absence in Gen. 1: 2 (This information is from page 18 of M. Meiri's collection of commentaries on Genesis, Shapiro Valentine & Co., London 1958). So brother H. King, as well as making other valuable points, is obviously not alone in his exposition of this word.

*E. Archibald*

### **ASCENTS - Psalms 122 and 132**

**From Birkenhead:** These two Psalms come within the section of Psalms 120 - 134 known as the Psalms of Ascents or the Psalms of the Degrees. It is not clear who wrote all these Psalms, although such verses as Is. 38: 5, 8, 20 support a theory that Hezekiah may have written some, but equally verses in Psalm 132 might support the suggestion that Solomon was an author. Some, however, were written by David.

These were the songs sung by the pilgrims as they

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went up to Zion (Jerusalem) in accordance with the divine command (Deut. 16: 16). Males were to appear three times in a year and for many it was undoubtedly a hazardous journey. Despite difficulties, however, the singing of these Psalms evidenced their joy in going to the place of God's choice.

The reference to the 'testimony unto Israel' in Psalm 122: 4 gave rise to discussion as to whether this is (a) a witness to others on the part of the pilgrims, or (b) an instruction to the people. General feeling favoured the latter. [Comment 1]

The purpose of the visits was not solely confined to an act of obedience. Verse 5 indicates that judgement and administration had their place as a means of resolving disputes. Not only was this the case, but verses 6-9 show the house of the Lord as being a place of prayer, praise and petition.

The fact that Psalm 132 was constructed in two separate but complementary parts was drawn to our attention. Verses 5 & 13, 8 & 14, 9 & 16 and 10 & 17 each complement the other. In each case the writer reveals the human view in the initial verse and God's response in the latter verse. For example, David was anxious and determined to find a resting place for the ark but he knew that God's choice, which had already been made known to him, was to be his complete guide in the matter. The Psalm is certainly a tribute to the devotion of David.

Additionally, we noticed that it was clearly God's intention to be glorified in His people and for His enemies to suffer. Here again the initiative was with God.

The question of vowing, as mentioned early in Psalm 132 was discussed, and reference was made to Jas. 5: 12 as being the guidelines which God's people should follow in this day [Comment 12].

Psalm 132: 17 was linked with Luke 1: 69 and we thought of the One who was of the seed of David who would occupy the throne.

*R. C. Halpin. A. E. Sands*

From Derby: The meaning of the term 'ascents' seems uncertain. Of the fifteen Psalms bearing this title, some have an obvious connection with Jerusalem and God's

house there, while others do not. The two Psalms under consideration do, however, have a clear link with the worship of God in His Temple.

In Psalm 122 David describes the impression that Jerusalem makes on the traveller as he approaches the city. It towers above him (v. 4). The tribes go *up*. It is 'compact together' (v. 3). What does this mean [Comment 2] ? Jerusalem has deeper meaning to him, however, than just its physical appearance or its strategic value, because it is here that the house of the Lord is found (vv. 1, 9) The seat of government is also here (v. 5), but why is 'thrones' plural ? [Comment 3]. Worship by God's people and their acceptance of rule and authority are seen linked together.

Psalm 132 also contains a description showing the special place that Jerusalem has in the heart of the Jews. The writer is unknown but he makes reference to David and his great desire to build a house for the Lord his God. The important truth (v. 13) is that the Lord has chosen Zion first. That is why David's all-consuming determination was to find a place for the Lord, but in the place the *Lord* had picked. Verse 6 makes reference to two places, Ephrathah (Ephraim ?) and Jaar (Kiriath - Jearim ?). What significance do these have [Comment 4] ? Verses 8 and 14 speak of the 'resting place' for the Lord, suggesting permanence in contrast to the Tabernacle which was only temporary. David's desire was for something permanent for God. As well as God's promises regarding this choice of Zion, there is also reference to the permanence of David's throne (vv. 11, 12) and the promise of the future rule of one of his descendants (v. 17), a reference to the coming Messiah who will reign in Zion. What blessings there will be in that day (vv. 15, 16)! He will abundantly bless and satisfy and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

*P. S. Webster, G. W. Conway*

**From Leeds:** The two Psalms under consideration (122 & 132) are the two longest Psalms in the group of fifteen Psalms which are called Songs of Ascents or Degrees. They are the third last of this group. They express gladness and singleness of heart in the desire of the people of God in going up to the place of God's choice to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

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Amongst the suggested explanations of how these fifteen Psalms were used are (a) As songs sung by the people of God, en route, as they went up to the Temple in Jerusalem to worship, (b) Songs sung on the fifteen steps leading up to the Temple, (c) Songs, which, when sung, progress (ascend) musically higher [Comment 5].

The group of fifteen Psalms can be purposefully divided into five sections of three each, which share similar thoughts when so grouped:

- (1) 120, 123, 126, 129 and 132. Difficulty and distress.
- (2) Psalms 121, 124, 127, 130 and 133. Trust and deliverance.
- (3) Psalms 122, 125, 128, 131 and 134. Blessing and peace [Comment 6].

In Psalm 122 David rejoices in that others share his deep joy for the Temple of God and was glad when others suggested that they should go up the house of the Lord. This deep desire towards God's house was ever uppermost in the heart of David and is evidenced in so many of the Psalms (26: 8, 27: 4, 23: 6).

Three times a year all the males of the tribes were required to assemble (Ex. 23: 17, Deut. 16: 16) and such gatherings would fill the highways leading up to Zion, city of the King.

Peace and prosperity complement each other and are the portion of all those who love the city of God and the Temple of the Lord, the place of His down-dwelling.

As the people of God sang these Psalms they remembered David and his love for Zion, the place of God's choice (132: 13). The Lord hath sworn unto David in truth... of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne' (132: 11). This promise is to be finally fulfilled when David's Greater Son, the Messiah, the Prince of peace, sits upon the throne of David (Isaiah 9: 6-7, Luke 1: 32-33).

*I. Gardner, H. R. Dodge*

**From** Liverpool: These are two of the fifteen Psalms with the title 'Songs of Ascents'. They refer to the times when

the children of Israel went to Jerusalem to celebrate certain feasts (Deut. 16: 16-17). This occurred three times a year (Exodus 34: 23-24). Each was a family occasion. Children, wives, grandparents and other relatives all came along, not just the older men. This was still the case in the Lord Jesus' time (Luke 2: 41-43).

Mount Zion was situated on the south-west hill of Jerusalem and the people sang as they ascended the hill on their way to the feast. Hence, the term 'Songs of Ascents' [See Comment 5 and also Comment 3 p. 127 B. S. 8008].

#### *The Place to which they ascended.*

The people of God wanted to go up to the house of God and to be found praising him there (Psalm 122: 1), as it was the appointed place (Psalm 132: 13). They knew they could go to no other (cf. Psalm 120: 5). There was to be no division in the city of God but instead a unity of spirit (Psalm 122: 3), linking everyone together [Comment 7]. If this was the case, then peace would be experienced by all (Psalm 122: 6-8; cf. 4: 3).

#### *Did David go into the Temple ?*

Psalm 122: 3 may give the impression that the Temple was built in David's time [Comment 8]. However, this is not the case. David never went into the Temple. He was dead by the time Solomon had built it. The ark had been brought from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem by David, and a tent had been made for it, but the Temple was not constructed as yet. Rather David was given the pattern of the Temple (see 1 Chr. 28: 11-12, 19) and regarded it in prospect (thinking of what it would be like when it was built) such was the desire for a house in which God could dwell (Psalm 132: 2-5). His zeal for God's house was further shown in his preparation of the materials (see 1 Chr. 22: 2-5; cf. Psalm 69: 9; 27: 4). However, the pattern of the Temple was passed on to Solomon who had the privilege of building it, due to David's being 'a man of blood' [Comment 9].

#### *God's Dwelling Place*

Psalm 132 speaks of the time when David brought the ark to Jerusalem (Psalm 132: 7-8, 13-14). It was a revelation to David that God had chosen Zion as his place to dwell

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in. **The ark had** been in various places beforehand (see **Judges 20: 1, 1 Sam. 4: 3, 7: 2, 2 Sam. 6: 11**) **but wherever the ark was the Lord was**, as it was His dwelling place (**Psalm 132: 5**).

It needs to **be noted that** Israel's privileged position was a conditional one (**Psalm 132: 12**) and depended on their keeping God's covenant.

*P. G. Barrett*

**From Melbourne: Three times in the year were all the males of Israel, from twenty years old and upward to a specified age (save the infirm unable to travel), to go up to the place which the Lord had chosen and appear before Him. These seasons were - the festival of the Passover and unleavened bread; the festival of weeks, or Pentecost; and the festival of Tabernacles. Psalm 84 is very descriptive of the ascents as the sons of Korah describe this thrice yearly migration of the sons of Israel to appear before the Lord. 'Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the highways to Zion... They go from strength to strength, every one of them appeareth before God in Zion'. As they travelled the highways they sang the songs of ascents to Zion. They went from strength to strength as the highways converged and thronged with pilgrims, the volume of praise increasing until at last as a great host their feet were standing within the gates of the city of the Great King. Their songs there reached a crescendo which ascended to the ears of the God of Israel upon His throne in the heavens. There was no place here for songs concerning other places on earth. Their songs concerned the city of Zion and Him who had chosen it as His from and above every other city upon the earth. We do not know how many pilgrims would be at any festival, save for the fact that we have somewhere read that during the Roman occupation it was customary for between two and three millions to be present at the festival of the Passover and unleavened bread. Josephus, referring to the same festival, records-'An innumerable multitude came thither out of the country, nay, from beyond its limits also, in order to worship God'.**

Psalm 122 is, **we judge**, rightly attributed to David [**see Comment 8**], and **here he** expresses his joy when those of like mind join with him in **the** desire to go **up to the** house of

the Lord. We would judge that this Psalm was written after he had brought up the ark of the covenant from the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-Jearim, and pitched a tent for it in Mount Zion (1 Chr. 16: 1). The tent had, for this period, until the temple was built by Solomon about thirty years later, been sanctified by the presence of the ark and Him who dwelt between the cherubim, as the house of God of which David speaks (Psalm 122: 1). The Tabernacle made by Moses had ceased to be such since the glory departed (1 Sam. 4). The Tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering were at the high place at Gibeon, and evidently both David and Solomon, together with many in Israel, sought thereto to offer unto the Lord until the altar of burnt offering was in its proper place in the court of the house of the Lord when the Temple was built by Solomon. In this day of transition [declension - Eds], He was graciously pleased to accept the offerings of His people in Gibeon. We would welcome some comments on these facts, also the continued failure of Solomon in continuing to use the high places (we judge that this was one of his failures following upon his union with women of the nations) [Comment 10].

Although David longed for the fulfilment of the high and lofty expressions of this Psalm, we judge that much of it is prophetic and in the purpose of God will only have perfect fulfilment during the Messianic reign, when Jerusalem becomes both the metropolis and joy of the whole earth.

T. L. Fullerton, T. W. Fullerton

**From Methil:** Ascent means 'a going up'. As well as being a physical going up (Jerusalem is approximately 2, 500 feet above sea level) it was a spiritual ascent for the people of God and the purpose of these psalms was to give thanks to God in appreciation of the many blessings that He had bestowed upon His people and *especially* in appreciation of the house of God, Zion, the place of the Name. The people of God went up to worship as a nation at least three times in the year (Deut. 16).

In Psalm 122: 3 we read that Jerusalem is a city compact together which is descriptive of the unity of God's people [See Comment 2]. The result of such togetherness in the service of God was a joy and gladness. However, we noticed that certain pre-requisites underlay this happy

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state; (v. 5) 'thrones for judgement' and (v. 6) prayer. This teaches us that if we are to have peace and prosperity in God's house there must also be wise rule and continual communion with God in prayer. Verses 8 and 9 show David's concern for the welfare of his brethren and for God's house. If there is peace in the hearts of the brethren it will be good for the house of God.

Psalm 132 stresses the longing of David (recorded as history in 1 Chr. 17) to provide a place for God to dwell. In verses **8-10** we find David making his request known to God and in v. 11-18 is the answer of God to David's desire: 'for the Lord has chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation'. It is the Lord who chooses where He will dwell, not for man [and men are to build there - Eds.].

The joy of the saints (vv. 9: 16) is conditional; 'if thy children will keep my covenant'. Psalm 137 is in sharp contrast to the joy and gladness of the Songs of Ascents, 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down...' By then the children had not kept the covenant, and so the privileges of serving God in His House were lost. God looks for each generation to abide in his will and diligently keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous.

The Songs of Ascents are mostly joyful, happy psalms, reflecting the healthy spiritual condition of a people who are enjoying the benefits and privileges of fellowship with God in separation from the world.

*J. Johnson*

**From Vancouver, British Columbia:** The Psalms of Ascents were apparently those Psalms that were used by the worshipping Israelites as they moved towards the Temple on the stated 'feast days'. There is also some reason to assume that these were the hymns that cheered the pilgrims as they went to Jerusalem for the required (Deut. 16: 16) three specific holy days demanded of all the males.

*Psalm 122* - There are two divisions in Psalm 122 with the first section (vv. 1-5) telling of the preeminence of Zion while the second section teaches of the 'peace of Jerusalem' (vv. 6-9).

Verse 1: Here the key thought is 'glad'. It is a state of heart that results from telling of the eagerness to move forward and to enter into a closer position to God whose presence was in the Temple.

Verse 2: In the second verse there is the thought that each of the redeemed should stand, and live, in the reality of the close presence of God.

Verse 3: We are directed away from the passing wilderness concept of the 'tent' and begin to have unfolded the permanency of the 'city'. Perhaps the Epistle to the Hebrews makes for a clearer appreciation (Heb. 11: 16 & 13: 14).

Verse 4: The sense of unity is developed further when we see all of the tribes stimulated with the same desire to move forward to the set place of worship.

The second division is occupied with the sense of peace that comes from following the steps, in unity, to the place of worship. It is interesting to note that 'peace' is truly that sense of undisturbedness that arises from confidence in a God who hears and answers prayer as well as one who protects from all that can destroy salvation.

The first verse of the Psalm brings out the Person of Jehovah as the 'Ever-existing One' who had covenanted with man while the final verse takes us to consider Him as the One who reveals the fulness of the Godhead in the plural Name of Elohim.

*Psalm 132:* There are two divisions to this Psalm. The first part remembers David's prayers to God and his wish to build a house for God.

In v. 1 David prays to God and asks Him to remember all David's afflictions, which were many, and started in the rule of King Saul, who became prejudiced toward David and planned to have him slain (1 Sam. 19: 1). When David was king his son Absalom plotted and rent the kingdom from David his father. Later David mourned the death of his sons, Amnon and Absalom.

In vv. 2-9 David vows that he will not rest until he finds a place of habitation for the Lord, the mighty God of Jacob. He gathered chosen men to bring up the Ark from the house of Abinadab (2 Sam. 6: 1) to the threshing floor of Oman, that he had purchased for six hundred shekels of gold for a site to build a house for God in the city of David and a place of worship for the people of Israel [Comment 11].

V. 8, 'Arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting place' (2 Chr. 6: 41), which is Mount Zion.

David wanted to build a house for God to dwell in and spoke to Nathan the prophet about this task. The Lord God

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told Nathan to tell David not to build the house, that after David's days had expired, God would establish David's seed, who would build Him a house, and would establish his throne and kingdom for ever.

The second division (vv. 11-18) comprises God's promise to David. Vv. 10-12 relate to the throne of David. The author asks God not to turn His face from David, His anointed, (cf. 2 Chr. 6: 42). After Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord (1 Kin. 9: 1-5), the Lord told Solomon that if he obeyed Him as David his father had done, and kept His statutes, then He would establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

The Lord chose Zion for His habitation; there He would dwell and if His people obeyed His statutes He would feed them and care for them (Psalm 132: 15).

The Lord would not destroy the house of David for He had promised to give a light to him and his sons for ever (v. 17, 2 Chr. 21: 7). Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has redeemed His people and raised up an horn of salvation for us in the person of our dear Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 1: 68-69).

*H. Kraushev, J. Jobbins*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Birkenhead):** The 'testimony' might be the acknowledgement by the people of the nation of their covenant obligation (Deut. 16: 16). Cf. Psalm 81: 3-5.

**2. (Derby):** The words translated 'compact together' mean 'joined to itself, and may refer to the united appearance of the walled city as it was approached; alternatively, there could be a reference to the unity of those who went up there (see Liverpool paper).

**3. (Derby):** Judges were appointed to sit in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 19: 8) under the authority of the king, fulfilling his obligation to rule according to the law of God.

**4. (Derby):** The words 'the field of the wood' probably refer to Kiriath-Jearim (lit. 'city of the forests') where the ark of the Lord remained for twenty years after the

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Philistines had returned it (1 Sam. 7: 1-2). Ephrathah was the ancient name of Bethlehem, the city of David, and the singers of the Psalms may have been enacting in song David's concern for the ark, hearing of its resting place, and taking it up into Jerusalem.

**5. (Leeds):** It seems most probable that the Songs of Ascents were used by those who went up to Jerusalem to worship three times a year. As our contributors say, several other explanations have been proposed, including the suggestion that the title may refer to the literary style of some of the Psalms where each verse is built on the preceding one (cf. Psalm 123).

**6. (Leeds):** This classification does not seem completely satisfactory. For instance, Psalm 126 belongs to row 2. Psalm 130 to row 1 and Psalm 133 to row 3. Some have divided the Songs of Ascents into five groups of three, and there do seem to be some affinities between the Psalms in these groups. A danger in devising classification schemes of this sort is that one may be tempted to strain the meaning to fit the classification.

7. (Liverpool): This is an interesting interpretation of 'compact together', but one of which one cannot be certain [See Comment 2].

**8. (Liverpool):** With regard to the ascription 'of David' the New Bible Commentary says:

The ascription of Davidic authorship to Psalms 122, 131 and 133 is not recognized by many of the old versions and it cannot be strictly held (save possibly in the case of Psalm 131) on the account of many grammatical features characteristic of a much later period. None the less they echo the spirit of David'.

**9. (Liverpool):** 'A man of blood' was Shimei's slander of David (2 Sam. 16: 7-8) falsely accusing him of responsibility for the deaths of Saul and his family. The charge was one of murder, like Joab, who 'shed the blood of war in peace' (1 Kin. 2: 5). God said to David that he was 'a man of war, and hast shed blood' - which is not the same thing.

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**10. (Melbourne):** Deut. 12 makes it clear that when Israel came into the Land, they were to destroy all the high places where the heathen gods had been served, and were to worship only in the place that God chose. However, the place to be chosen by God, Jerusalem, was not taken from its original inhabitants until David's time, and the original tabernacle, which Moses made, was erected first at Shiloh (Josh. 18: 1) then at Gibeon (1 Chr. 21: 29). The ark was lost from Shiloh, and when David ultimately took it to Jerusalem he housed it in a tent he had prepared (2 Sam. 6: 17). Thus it came about that the ark of God's presence and the altar of burnt offering through which He was worshipped were in different places. This was obviously unsatisfactory and contrary to God's will, but as our correspondents say, God has accepted sacrifices offered at Gibeon, even after the place of the house and the altar had been revealed to David (compare 1 Chr. 22: 1 with 1 Kin. 3: 4). However, it is significant that after God had spoken to Solomon he offered his burnt offerings before the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem. Israel, from the king downwards seemed slow to appreciate that God desired worship in the one place which He had chosen. Worship to God in places of their own choice frequently degenerated into worship of gods of their own choice. The concept of one spiritual place of worship is as little appreciated today as that one physical place was in the past.

**11. (Vancouver):** The ark was not taken directly to the site of Oman's threshing floor, for it was not until much later in his reign that it was revealed to David that this was to be the site. With regard to the price, it is interesting to note that David initially bought the threshing floor, the oxen and the instruments for fifty shekels of silver (2 Sam. 24: 24), but for 'the place' as a whole the much greater sum of six hundred shekels of gold (1 Chr. 21: 25) was paid.

*P. L. H.*

**12. (Birkenhead):** Jas. 5: 12 specifically deals with oaths and underlines the Lord's teaching as recorded in Mat. 5: 34-37.

*J. K. D. J.*

# Bible Studies

A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

8010

Out of his consciousness of his debt to the Lord, both in spiritual and material matters, there sprang from the heart of David a constant stream of thanksgiving. In Ps. 103 he marvels at the wonders of God's person, and at the matchless mercy He had shown in His dealings with Israel as a nation, as well as with individuals. Little wonder that this Psalm begins and ends with repeated calls to 'bless the Lord'.

The theme of thanksgiving is a constant one in Scripture. In the New Testament, for example, the Apostle Paul breaks into an exclamation of thanksgiving on numerous occasions, particularly when he contemplates the Father's wondrous gift of His Son-Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift' (2. Cor. 9: 15). As some of our contributors point out, we have the weekly privilege of expressing our collective thanksgiving to God in the Remembrance of our Lord Jesus. As individuals our lives should be 'abounding in thanksgiving' (Col. 2: 7 *et al*).

Thanksgiving leads to praise and this will be the theme of our study next month, if the Lord will. Meantime let us note the exhortation of Ps. 100: 4,

'Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,  
And into His courts with praise;  
Give thanks unto Him, and bless His Name.  
For **the** Lord is good; His mercy endureth for ever;  
And His faithfulness unto all generations. '

**R. L**

The article commenced below, by brother M. A. Jones of Cardiff, presents the view that the psalms entitled 'Songs of Ascents' are arranged in ascending order of spiritual experience. The sequence is illustrated by reference to the experiences of the remnant of the exiles of Judah who

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returned to Zion in Zerubbabel's day, and it is applied to the life of the believer today. Readers will be interested to study this presentation, and benefit from the spiritual teaching brought out.

*Eds.*

## THE SONGS OF ASCENTS (Psalms 120-134)

### *INTRODUCTION*

The one hundred and fifty psalms in our Bible are so rich in spiritual experiences of men of God, that to delve into them must repay any who do so. We propose to look at fifteen particular psalms because of their unique setting. It is suggested that they are not just haphazardly strung together, but have an application which is linked with a particular historical experience in the people of God. The links are sometimes true nationally, at other times they have individual application which in reality often goes to make up what a nation is nationally, and it is with this in mind that we approach our limited consideration of these delightful psalms. Some authorities maintain that these psalms were collated during the post-captivity period and used by the remnant who returned from Babylon to Zion; being sometimes referred to as the Psalms of the Return. Nine of these songs of ascents were composed by men not named, five were by David and one by Solomon.

In Cardiff City Hall there is a painting which well illustrates the sadness of the captives in Babylon. Standing over a Welsh bard with his harp is the Norman conqueror. The bard sits dejectedly unable to respond to the request to sing and play a song; a dirge is a more likely response. In such circumstances the captives had no heart to sing, neither was it the place to express themselves. The majority, according to secular records, were at ease and in prosperity, unlikely to feel any spiritual exercise about returning, and building the house of God in Zion was viewed with little enthusiasm. They knew that the long journey was so hazardous and fraught with danger to life and limb and with privations; only the prayers of a man greatly beloved, knowing that seventy years desolations of Zion were now fulfilled, could have stirred up any exercise to rise up, journey and build (Dan. 9: 3). If this assess-

ment **of the** situation in Babylon is correct it is time to **look at the first step** or ascent **as** outlined by **Psalm 120**, **which we** propose to entitle repentance.

### **REPENTANCE (Psalm 120)**

**The** individual is in distress of soul, for too long **he has** been dwelling **with** those who **hate** peace. **He** boldly avers **he** is for **peace**, **but**, when **I speak** they are for war (**Ps. 120: 6, 7**). **Such a** background, surrounded by warlike Babylonians, who assert their sway and empire in every direction, is certainly not **the place** for **a** man now awakened to **the** longing for **peace** and for Zion, **the** city of righteousness and peace. In **such** surroundings and in **such** an atmosphere **he** cannot worship or find rest, **but a** change **has** taken **place** in **his** life and distressed **as he** is by his surroundings **he** is now realising **that he will be** unable to worship away from **the place** of **the** Name. So there **sets** in **a** determination to **make the** journey whatever **the** cost. **Such a** state of mind **leads us** to think of **the** man on his journey, enabling **us** to consider **the** next **step** or **ascent as** outlined in **Psalm 121** which **we** are entitling **faith**.

### **FAITH (Psalm 121)**

**The** background of **this psalm** is **that** of **a** person or persons on **a** journey and it is essentially **a shepherd psalm** where those who journey **are** knowing **the** keeping power of God on their journey. Ezra **was** too **ashamed** 'to **ask** of **the** king, **a** band of soldiers and horsemen to **help us** against **the** enemy in **the** way:... so **we** **fasted** and besought our God for this: and **He was** entreated of **us**' (**Ezra 8: 22, 23**). In this **psalm the** promises of God **are** very evident. They **have** been **a** means of comfort and assurance to many and **were** particularly so to those **embarked** on **the** journey. How natural for **them** to **be** fearful and to look to **the** things **that can be** seen. **There will be** no **help** from **the** mountains, however imposing. Their **help must** come from **the** Creator, not **the creature** or **created** thing. 'My **help** cometh from **the** Lord, which **made** heaven and earth'. **Back** comes **the** promise of God to **the** man of faith. '**He** will not **suffer** thy foot to **be** moved: **He that keepeth thee** will not slumber... **the** Lord is thy keeper... **the** Lord is thy **shade** upon thy

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right hand... the sun shall not smite thee. . . . The Lord shall keep (or preserve - AV) thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and for evermore' (Ps. 121: 4-8). The movement of some fifty thousand people, including two hundred singing men and singing women (Ezra 2: 65) was no mean task but they arrive safely, encouraged no doubt on the journey by the singers. They are now in a position to approach the house of the Lord and we have entitled this obedience.

(to be continued)

### **Thanksgiving - Psalm 103**

**From Edinburgh:** This Psalm, along with others (e. g. Pss. 30, 32, 34) is called a Psalm of thanksgiving. There are others which more overtly deal with thanksgiving, e. g. Pss. 105, 106, 107 and 108. The former group tell about God's character whereas the latter deal with the acts that God did for the people of Israel. The thought was put forward that Pss. 103-106 may be one long Psalm dealing with God and His acts as follows: Ps. 103 - God's great character, Ps. 104 - the greatness of creation, Ps. 105 - Israel in Egypt and dealings with Pharaoh and Ps. 106 - the journey through the wilderness.

The Psalm is about God's character past, present and future. It is written from David's point of view as well as that of God's people. It emphasises how God has in the past forgiven, healed, redeemed, crowned, satisfied and renewed [Comment 1]. These actions are in a specific order, given by the Spirit, implying that if we have not been forgiven for something, i. e. not brought it to Christ, then we will not be satisfied. In the present it shows that God is just (v. 6), compassionate, merciful and does not always punish or deal with us as we merit. Such is God's character that He has removed our sins to such an extent that they are poles apart from us. The psalmist also contrasts the ephemerality of man with the eternal nature of God - he fears Him (vv. 11, 13 & 17). This fear of God is due to a realisation of His power to destroy at will (Praise Him that He does not do so!), and causes David to love his

Lord even more. This fear is taught by God (**Ps. 34: 11**) [Comment 2] and leads to greater wisdom (Job 28: 28) which gives a much better appreciation of God and thus better worship.

The psalm opens with David encouraging himself to bless the Lord for all His attributes. The word 'bless' contains the thought of making happy or joyous, praising, glorifying. We should thank God for His character, remembering that we should 'offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His (Christ's) name' (Heb. 13: 15).

*Neil C. McLachlan*

**From Hamilton** (Scotland): Psalm 103 opens with a command to 'bless the Lord'; six times in this Psalm we find the Hebrew term *barak* in the imperative mood. These are:

'Bless the Lord, **0** my soul' vv. **1, 2, 22**

'Bless the Lord, ye angels of His' v. **20**

'Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts' v. **21**

'Bless the Lord, all ye His works' v. **22**

It is instructive to note the usage of the Hebrew term *barak* in Ps. 95: 6, where we have the plea of the Psalmist highlighted by Hebrew parallelism,

'O come, let us worship and bow down;

Let us kneel (*barak*) before the Lord our Maker',

and also in 2 Chron. 6: 13 in relation to Solomon,

'and upon it he stood, and kneeled down (*barak*) upon his knees... '.

Here we have a demonstration of the unity of man's being; the physical being a medium through which the spiritual attitude can be expressed. (Cf. Ps. **107: 21-22** and Heb. **13: 15**).

Another noticeable feature of this psalm is the use of the word *Lord* (Heb. *Jehovah*), which is the personal name for God and which is quite distinct from the generic Hebrew term *Elohim*. David fixes our gaze on Jehovah and does not use the other descriptive titles for God. However in vv. 3-5, David, by creating a chain of participles, directs our attention to the activity of the Lord.

'Who *redeemeth* thy life from destruction'

'Who *forgiveth* all thine iniquities'

'Who *healeth* all thy diseases'

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**'Who crowneth thee with** loving kindness and tender mercies'

'Who **satisfieth thy** mouth with good things'

Ps. 103 bears witness not only to **the** activity of God **but** also to **His** character. **The base of His work is found in His** character.

**'The Lord is full of compassion and gracious'**

**The Lord pitieth them that fear Him'**

**The mercy of the Lord is** from everlasting to everlasting'

One of **the** results of God revealing **himself is that his** children should praise and **bless his** name. Saints should **give heed to the** word of God given through **David** to 'forget not **all his** benefits'.

*Matthew Carruthers*

From **Hayes**: According to some commentators **each** of **the** twenty-two verses of Ps. 103 commences **with the** corresponding **letter** of the Hebrew **alphabet**, and **the** completeness of **the Psalm is** seen in **that it ends with the same phrase that it began**, '**Bless the Lord, 0 my soul**'.

This **Psalm is** intensely personal and **David calls to his** inmost being, **his** whole nature and personality, to **bless the** holy name of God. **The** opening salutation or admonition **is** repeated and **he** reminds **himself** to 'forget not **all his** benefits', **which can be translated** 'forget not any of **his** benefits'. **It has been suggested that** 'benefits' can mean an **act, work, or doing, whether good or bad. It is what** God **has** done and **this is** seen in **David's** personal experience and God's dealings **with the** nation and others in **the** verses **that** follow.

**The Hebrew parallelism is** seen in **all the** verses; **a statement is made** and **an** answering chord either **repeats it** in **a** slightly different manner, so re-inforcing **the** thought (**vv. 3, 9, 10, etc. )** or two thoughts are **made** in **a** balanced statement (**see vv. 17, 18**).

**It has been well said that** there is not **a** single petition in **the** whole Psalm. **It** breathes praise and wonder **at the** greatness of God, **His** holiness, power of healing, **the** forgiving of sins, God's care for **His** creatures (**(v. 4)**), and **the** satisfaction **He gives** to those who know Him. **The** mood changes, and **we see** God's dealing in righteousness **whether**

it applies to the individual or to Moses and the nation of Israel, which is still a lesson for us today.

The confidence of David is in God's compassion and mercy. What a God is ours, since He does not deal with us as we deserve, forgiving us our sins! As in the nature of things the east and the west can never meet, so we can have the assurance that God will never bring our sins back to confront us (v. 12). Again the picture changes to God dealing with us like a father making allowances for the frailty of his children. He knows we are weak creatures of the dust and deals with us in the light of such knowledge.

Those who fear God can know His mercy for length of days, and it is carried over to their future generations (v. 17). The necessary condition is the keeping of God's law and covenants. God's rule is over all His works and to all people (see v. 19). David goes beyond earthly creation to the angels, who ever hear God's voice and obey His word. All hosts, whether this means created beings or the heavens, have to praise God. It would appear to be the former since they 'minister' and 'do' His pleasure [Comment 3]. The phrase 'all God's works' must include inanimate as well as conscious beings; all are to praise God wherever they are found.

In conclusion, we can state that this is indeed a wonderful psalm of praise. It starts personally with the writer. It extends to God's dealings with a nation in history, and further to the heavenly angels, and overflows to all created things, that they should praise God. What a great God is ours when we appreciate (if only in a little way) what David evidently did of the greatness, majesty, mercy and forgiveness of the holy God who cares for us like a tender father.

Where do men get the idea that the God of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament are two different pictures? This Psalm refutes such a viewpoint. [Comment 4].

*R. F. Robertson*

**From Leeds:** A thankful man is one who considers the mercies of God which he has received and shows a grateful

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response. **David was a thankful** man and so many of **his psalms** are full of thankfulness and praise.

In Ps. 103, all **David's blessings** are attributed to God. **David** declares **his** gratitude for **the** forgiveness of **his** sins by opening a now-redeemed heart and outpouring a sacrifice of praise. **He** acknowledged and confessed **his** sins and earnestly **desired** a clean heart and a **right spirit** (Ps. 103: 3; 51: 10). **David had waited** patiently on **the** Lord in **his** times of oppression by Saul. God **had delivered him** out of **all** dangers and **had set his feet** upon a rock and **established his** goings, putting **praise** into **his** mouth (Ps. 103: 6; 40: 1-3). God **remembered David** in **all his** afflictions and **David** would not forget God or **all His** benefits. **David's** response **was** offered **up as** from a broken **spirit** and a broken and a contrite **heart** (Ps. 51: 17). 'By **Him** therefore, **let us** offer **the sacrifice** of **praise** to God continually, **that is, the fruit** of our **lips**, giving thanks unto **His** name' (Heb. 13: 15 A. V. ).

Not only **is** thanksgiving **expressed** to God in a **spiritual** way **but** also **takes a practical** and a **material** form. A **grateful** man's hands should **be** opened towards God in generous giving. **David laid up much** of **his** personal **wealth** for **the** house of God (**1 Chron. 29: 2, 3**), and **he** always enjoined upon others to **give** of their thanksgivings to God (Ps. 34: 3; 95: 1-2; 100: 4; 107: 21-22; 136). **The** giving of our substance to God, **as Paul** says, 'worketh through **us** thanksgiving to God' (**2 Cor. 9: 1, 7, 11-15**).

**We felt that** thanksgiving **was** something different from prayer (Dan. 6: 10; Phil. 4: 6), although they **are** often linked, and **we** should **be** continually 'giving thanks always for **all** things in **the** name of our Lord **Jesus Christ** to God even **the Father** (Eph. 5: 20).

**It is** interesting **that** in reference to **the** Remembrance of **the** Lord **Jesus Christ** (**Luke 22: 19, 20; 1 Cor. 11: 24**) **the** verb *eucharisteo* (to **give** thanks) **is** used, from **which** we now **have** the word 'eucharist', **which is** the offering of **praise** and thanksgiving to God of **the church** of God together in worship. **All** have the opportunity, **at** the Remembrance, for **the** giving of thanks in **the** offerings of our **material** substance and of our **spiritual substance**, according **as** we purpose in our **hearts**.

G. Grierson, H. R. Dodge

**From Liverpool:** *An attitude to life.* Thanksgiving is an attitude to life. Positive points are mentioned here for special praise, but we should thank God for everything. From Romans 8: 28 we learn that God works through all circumstances for our best and so we should continue to thank God even if on the surface things are bad. We ought not to forget God's blessing upon us, nor His great mercy in granting forgiveness. There is no farthest point east, nor is there a point at which the distance from heaven to earth can be measured. Equally there is no chance of God bringing up past forgiven sins to be used in evidence against us.

The opposite attitude to that expressed here was expressed by the Israelites who travelled with Moses in the wilderness. They did not bless the Lord, and they soon forgot his benefits. We wondered how we could maintain a 'Ps 103' attitude and avoid a 'wilderness' type. The answer is to count our blessings: we often don't thank God because we don't feel thankful! We ought to direct our mind and thoughts to God's love - that is why the Lord Jesus instituted the Remembrance. A result of this will be to ask 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? (Ps. 116: 12).

The Psalm shows an attitude of reflection which expresses thanks to God for everything. We live in an age in which discontent and unrest abounds - the thoughts of the Psalm are the antidote to being infected by such an evil attitude of mind.

*David's Redemption (v. 4).* We wondered what David knew redemption from. What is meant by 'destruction' (R. V. ) or 'the pit' (R. V. M. )? (i) Could it mean he was redeemed from a wasted life? If 'destruction' is correct then David could be thanking God for saving him from the hand of Saul. The difficulty here is the thought of redemption. We could not see what price God paid to buy back David's life, (ii) Could it be anticipatory of Calvary? If the Pit means Sheol this is reasonable [Comment 5]. David spoke by the Holy Spirit and wrote prophetically of the Lord Jesus. This interpretation would imply that David knew that there was something beyond the grave. Is there other evidence for this? (See Ps. 73: 24) [Comment 6]. Certainly there is no problem with the word

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'redemption' now; the offering of animal sacrifices by David would be accepted by God in anticipation of the redemption achieved by the Lord Jesus at Calvary.

*A Millennial Application.* It was suggested that much of this Psalm refers to the time when the Lord Jesus will return to reign as king. It is more than just a Psalm of David; it is the song of a redeemed people. See v. 3, 'who heals all your diseases' (R. S. V. ) and v. 19, both of which otherwise are hard to understand. The psalm culminates in praise from all God's creatures - something sadly lacking today.

*David J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** Thanksgiving is the outward expression of an inward appreciation, or the old-fashioned virtue of expressing sincere thanks to the donor of a gift, or for an act of kindness done. Some of us have often felt distressed at our own lack of the spirit of thanksgiving from an overflowing heart, when compared with the abundant overflow thereof from the soul of David; yet we have so much more for which to praise Him. In this Psalm we find a statement of facts concerning man's frail, mortal condition, and his subsequent tendency towards sin and failure, which instead of bringing forth from a righteous Lord the severity which his behaviour merits, brings forth the mercy and lovingkindness which He longs to bestow upon the creature of His hands, fallen from the estate in which he was originally created. Thanksgiving for such mercies and loving kindnesses is the response from man for which He longs. David, although spoken of by the Lord as 'A man after My heart' (Acts 13: 22) was but one of the fallen race, in whom by nature there dwelt 'no good thing'; yet he was chosen to be an object of divine mercy, and a chosen vessel among men, to declare with thanksgiving the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.

In the opening verses the Psalmist calls upon himself and all that is within him to bless His Holy Name. Out of sorrowful memories and deep meditation upon the blessings and dealing of the Lord with him, he remembers the merciful lovingkindnesses of the Lord in putting away his iniquities, whether the sin with Bathsheba, and then the death of her husband, for which there was no provision of atonement, the penalty being death; or his pride and self-will in num-

bering the people of Israel contrary to the law of the Lord. But although divine chastening followed for failures, we find him recognizing the righteous ways of the Lord in dealing thus with him, and the result was further thanksgiving instead of questioning why it should be thus. He, like Moses, understood that the ways of the Lord are perfect and righteous altogether.

The Psalmist now returns to the fact that, unrecognised by man, the throne of the Lord is established in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all created beings and things, whether in the heavens or on the earth or under the earth. He calls upon angelic beings, the hosts, and ministers of the Lord, together with all His wondrous works throughout the vast dominion over which He holds sway, to bless the Lord; and concludes his Psalm of thanksgiving with a further call upon his own soul to bless the Lord.

*W. H. Fullerton, 7. W. Fullerton*

From **Methil**: Psalm 103 is a psalm of David, blessing God for filling his life with good things. David's appreciation of the goodness of God caused him to bless God. To bless' in this context is to kneel in adoration, as an act of worship to God for His unfailing benefits to man. David's whole being, body, soul and spirit, is urgent in thanksgiving; he counts his blessings one by one. He realises the tremendous mercy of God in not keeping a record of his sins many and serious, but in forgiving them every one, and even removing them as far as the east is from the west, a distance that cannot be measured. God knows our feeble frame and remembers we are but dust, so in lovingkindness He heals our diseases. Our life is short and soon gone, but He pities them that fear Him and His mercy is never-ending. David realised that he was redeemed from the pit, and instead of facing destruction was crowned with the lovingkindness of God.

Isaiah also knew (Is. 40: 31) his youth renewed by waiting on the Lord. Naturalists confirm that eagles live to a great age, but every year cast their feathers and fresh ones grow, so that after the moult they appear young again and are in fact as active and agile as they were in their youth. The Lord meets all the needs of those who keep His

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covenant and remember to do His commandments.

God made known His ways unto Moses and Israel knew God in His mighty acts. Moses had more intimate knowledge of God than had Israel; David similarly knew the ways of God and could say 'The Lord is full of compassion and gracious'.

In the last four verses of the Psalm David calls on the whole creation to bless the Lord, whose throne is in the heavens and who rules over all. Our praise can echo David's words in this Psalm when we sing the beautiful hymn, 'Our God we call upon our souls', by A. C. Leamy, for that hymn is based on Psalm 103.

*Neville Coomer*

**From Vancouver:** The Psalm under consideration is found within the Fourth Book of Psalms and thus opens to us the counsels of God for the nations of the world as well as for the chosen nation of Israel. Although the writer is not established with certainty, it can be seen that his expression of heart is the direct result of personal experience of God's ways in his life.

The great significance in this psalm is that there is no mention of any petition or supplication, with the result that it may be entitled the 'Praise of a Pardoned People'. We may break the psalm into two basic parts. The first takes in vv. 1 to 10, while the second finishes the psalm. This method of division also takes into account the number of times the title Jehovah is used, and the method of using the title. The first part of the Psalm uses the name Jehovah exactly four times, which develops the theme of a universal application, and the second part presents the Name seven times and thus brings to us the perfections of the revealed God.

In the first division we find that the actions of Jehovah bring out the measure of change for the redeemed soul. Vv. 3 to 5 give us six illustrations that are worth looking at. We may list them as they are found, as follows: —

v. 3 speaks of forgiveness, leading into thoughts that those who have experienced such an attitude are delivered from the power of the divine court of law.

v. 3 also presents us with healing, establishing the fact that we have been brought out of the hospital or place of sickness.

v. 4 tells of redemption, which may be increased in thought by realizing that we have been delivered from the slave market and now are preserved in Christ,

v. 4 tells of crowning, which takes us into the Throne Room of the Most High.

v. 5 tells of satisfaction, which can only be found in the presence of Christ.

v. 5 also brings out the rejuvenation that is part of the Christian's position, for he finds that age, in the material sense, has no real meaning as long as we direct ourselves to the Lord [Comment 7].

The writer has based his thoughts upon his personal experiences, but also draws from the national history. The character of God is made known by His actions with Israel in Egypt, and also by His way with the nation in the wilderness.

The second section (vv. 10-22) brings out more forcefully the character of God (*Jehovah* is singular) in dealing with sin (vv. 11-13): and then takes us to consider the character of man (vv. 14-16).

Each thought that is given of Jehovah is based upon the attitude of the heart of God, best expressed in v. 13 in the A. V. as 'pity'. This word has the distinct thought of 'fondling as a parent', which changes the verse dramatically. We find that our God deals with us by calling us to Himself and then revealing His love, whilst we are continually assured of His love to us, in spite of what we often do.

The last few verses exhort us to bless, which means an act of adoration to our God. This attitude is to be found in all creation and should arise from responsive love to Jehovah from hearts rather than being forced to acknowledge His power and majesty, as Paul speaks of in Phil. 2: 9-10.

*John H. Jobbins*

**From Birkenhead:** The theme of the Psalm is stated in the same form in both the opening and closing verses. It is the personal responsibility of David as writer of the Psalm to offer thanksgiving to God. The Psalm reflects David's reasoning, as he lists some of the benefits he has received. His praise to God is, however, for all the benefits which the

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Lord **has** bestowed upon him. **He** emphasises his gratitude with an exhortation to himself - his soul - to '**bless the Lord**'. '**All that** is within **me**' is further evidence of his wholehearted and complete recognition of God's goodness to **him**. In addition to those benefits listed in verses **1-6**, **it was** pointed out **that we** are **the** beneficiaries of God's love through Jesus Christ and **that** our thanksgiving should **be** so **much the greater**.

From vv. **6-18 David** relates some of God's dealings with His people and mentions his protection of **them**. **It was** emphasised **that** whilst God's doings were **made** known to **the** people, Moses **was made** aware of His **ways** and purposes. God's dealing **with His** people is compassionate, gracious and merciful, **but** on occasions God's righteous anger is stirred and exercised against wrongdoing. None, however, **has** received **the just** reward of his sins, and God's anger does not linger for ever. **The** anger of God **was** explained **as** His righteous indignation against sin, whereas **the** anger of man is often **the** product of sin.

God's mercy **was** so real to David **that he** expressed his feeling with regard to removal of transgression by **the example** in v. **12**, representing complete delivery, and **he** contrasts **the** transient nature of man with '**the** mercy of **the** Lord... from everlasting to everlasting upon **them that** fear Him'.

From v. **19** to **the** end, **the Psalm deals** with a third **aspect** of thanksgiving to **the** Lord, **that which is due** from all creation. **The** exhortation is to His angels, hosts, ministers and works. **We** considered Ps. **19** in this connection, realising **that** creation itself, including inanimate objects, **speaks** of God's glory without a sound being uttered. **This seemed** to bring to a climax **the** idea throughout **the Psalm** of individual, joint and total thanksgiving to God, who upholds **all** things by **the** word of His power. David's responsibility **was** personal **but** his exhortation to others **was** in itself a form of thanksgiving from one who, having suffered **much**, could **see all** God's benefits to him.

No conclusion **was** reached in our discussion of v. **3** in relation to healing **all** diseases; having considered **the**

forgiving of 'all thine iniquities' the suggestion was made that this could be a spiritual healing rather than physical [Comment 8].

*Ft. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams*

**From Derby:** The opening five verses show the psalmist encouraging himself to deep thanksgiving to God for benefits in his earthly life. There are natural and spiritual aspects in this life, including forgiveness, healing in both spheres, redemption from destruction, kindness, sustenance and renewal. There is a direction to the above attitude of mind - coupled with warning - in Deut. 8: 11-14.

Vv. 6 and 7 tell of God acting in judgement on behalf of the oppressed, but especially those of Israel. At times God did judge and punish Israel for sin but vv. 9-12 show that such judgement was limited in extent and restrained.

Vv. 13-16 are of great beauty as they portray human frailty and yet associate the best of human life with the character of God.

The psalmist sees the continuance of God's mercy in vv. 17 and 18, but it is for succeeding generations and restricted to those faithful in covenant and precept. However, elsewhere, e. g. Ps 17: 14, 15, David shows an eternal hope.

Ps. 103: 19 shows God's omnipotence; and leads to the final call to universal thankfulness. Here the word 'bless' is used in the sense of thankful acknowledgement of God's power.

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Edinburgh):** That blessings from the Lord were part of David's *current* experience is suggested by the use of the present tense. And, since God's character never changes, they are part of the continuing experiences of His redeemed today.

**2. (Edinburgh):** Certainly, the Lord teaches us to fear Him, but Ps. 34: 11 would suggest that we should also

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teach the fear of the Lord to one another. This is the Psalm of the Cave, and presents a moving picture of David sheltering in Adullam, teaching the fear of the Lord to the motley company of men who gathered themselves to him there.

**3. (Hayes):** I would agree with this conclusion by Hayes friends. See Josh. **5: 14**, 1 Kin. **22: 19**, Ps. **104: 4**, Heb. 1: 14, etc.

**4. (Hayes):** The point is well made that, contrary to popular opinion, the Old Testament provides abundant evidence that the Lord is both merciful and gracious. Apart from Ps. 103, one thinks of such scriptures as Ex. 34: 6 and Mic. 7: 18, where these attributes of the Lord's character are emphasised

**5. (Liverpool):** I have always thought that David is here speaking of the redemption of his soul. See Ps. **56: 13**, which confirms that he was conscious that God had not only redeemed his soul from death, but that He was also keeping him from falling, day by day. God's mercy to sinful men in O. T. days was in anticipation of what the Lord Jesus would yet do at Calvary.

**6. (Liverpool):** David's comment on the death of the baby son, born as a result of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, further confirms this point. 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me' (2 Sam. 12: 23).

**7. (Vancouver):** David is, of course, here referring to spiritual rather than physical vitality.

**8. (Birkenhead):** I would agree with the suggestion made by Birkenhead friends that, in the context of Ps. 103, the healing is spiritual rather than physical.

# Bible Studies

A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

**EDITORIAL**

**8011**

The Scripture plainly teaches that God overrules in the affairs of men and of nations for the outworking of His purposes. 'He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?' (Dan. 4: 35) This truth was forcibly brought home to Nebuchadnezzar through bitter experience, and when he grasped it he 'blessed the Most High and... praised and honoured Him' (Dan. 4: 34). It has always been right and comely for men to praise God as the psalmist exhorts them to do in Psalm 66: 1, 2, but alas they so often fail to do this. There will, however, be a fitting response from men world-wide in millennial times.

God's dealings with His people collectively and with individuals are also reviewed in this psalm. The experiences passed through are often grievous but blessing is always the ultimate objective. Similar experiences may often be our portion as Heb. 12: 5-11 shows. How often, like the psalmist, we have resolves of heart when in distress under the chastening hand of God! The psalmist was careful to honour his vows when the period of trial ended and so should we.

J. K. D. J.

## **THE SONGS OF ASCENTS (Psalms 120-134)**

*(continued from p. 148)*

### **OBEDIENCE (Psalm 122)**

Psalm 122 breathes the spirit of divine unity. It is a lovely picture of the worshippers now returned finding others who are likeminded going up to the house of the Lord. Now Jerusalem is a city that is compact together - not only structurally, but in the fellowship (*chabar* - joined together, and elsewhere translated so, e. g. Ps. 94: 20) of

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others to give thanks to the Lord together. They had returned specifically to build the place of the sanctuary and having **done** so through blood, sweat, toil and tears they had the glorious privilege of entering into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise (Ps. 100: 4).

True leaders of men have in the main been men who led their fellows to the house of God. David as a young man undoubtedly had that vision of the divine will as he strode down into the Vale of Elah to face Goliath and destroy him. David knew that, before any place for the Lord could be found, peace must be established in Israel and Philistia must be subdued. Before we pass on to consider the next Psalm (123) it is interesting to remember that though only those of Judah and Benjamin returned to build the house of God in Zion, leaving other tribes scattered or indifferent, those who did build for God when they dedicated the House (see Ezra 6) offered twelve he-goats for 'all Israel' as a sin offering so that representatively Judah and Benjamin offered for 'all Israel' united in Zion. To return and build the House in Zion involved them in some measure of separation from both things and people in Babylon and devotion to God and thus we pass on to our next Psalm (123) which we have entitled *devoted service*.

### *DEVOTED SERVICE (Psalm 123)*

The truth of separation is like a two-sided coin. Abstention or separation *from* must lead to separation *unto*. 'Unto Thee do I lift up mine eyes, O Thou that sittest in the heavens' and the scene is drawn for us here of the servants standing in service in the presence of their master or mistress watching and waiting for the word of instruction. It was an impressive sight for the Queen of Sheba as she looked on the service of Solomon's servants outlined in 1 Kings 10 to observe

- (1) the meat of his table,
- (2) the sitting of his servants,
- (3) the attendance of his ministers,
- (4) their apparel, and
- (5) his cup-bearers.

The dedication of his servants and the happy way in which they served, standing continually before him, so impressed her, coupled with the 'ascent by which he went

up unto the house of the Lord' that 'there was no more spirit left in her! There is an impressive picture of service in **this psalm which must have its lessons for us today as we serve**; although **we** may not always do so happily.

True separation involved **them** in *persecution*, which is evident in **Psalm 124**.

### **PERSECUTION (Psalm 124)**

Men are pictured rising **up** against **them** (vv. 2, 3) but they are not given **as** prey to their **teeth** (v. 6) and encouraged by **the** prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah the son of Iddo**, they arise again and **build** after ceasing from **the** work through persecution. Thank God for valiant prophets who stirred **the** hearts of **the** leaders again, and **the** prophets joined **them** in **this** work! **What** heart for **the** work they **had**, and **a** vision **which** made **them** no **shirkers** but workers. By **example** and precept they joined hands **with** their brethren. There **is** a lovely background to **this** psalm, and **the** vision and reality of divine unity **called** forth many hands to **be** joined together in **such** happy service, even though they were persecuted. There **came** to **them** **divine** assurance **which** is so evident in our next ascent - another **step** - and they rejoiced **as** they, in **New** Testament terms, 'worked out their own salvation' - so **we** entitle **Psalm 125 present salvation**.

### **PRESENT SALVATION (Psalm 125)**

Their trust, **despite** persecution, **must be** in **the** Lord, for those who rise in **faith** though **all** seems **dark**, **will be as** Zion, **the** mount **which** cannot **be** moved. Encircled by **the** Lord protecting **them**, they carry on, appealing to **the** Lord to do good to **them** **that** are good - for does not **the** work of righteousness bring **peace**, and **the** effect of **it**, quietness and confidence for ever? **Thus**, **their** concluding prayer **is** '**Peace be** upon Israel'. **Was it** not reasonable to **expect** **the** Lord to **be** **with** **them** for they were building a house for **Him** to  **dwell** in? Around **them** **was** so **much** to discourage and there **was** always **the** danger of trouble arising from within. To weaken in **their** resolves **as** had happened, maybe, in **Psalm 124** so **that** **the** work **ceased**, would **be** disastrous, and only in giving **themselves** to

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the work on hand was **their** present salvation. Persistence maintained brought **them** through **this** critical **stage** and brings **us** to our next psalm or **step** - (126) where the refreshing experience comes. This **we** entitle *revival*.

### **REVIVAL (Psalm 126)**

After their return from Babylon, with **all** its **problems** and **fears** they **seem** to **have made a measure** of progress. They **were like the climber**, reaching **a height**, who, having ascended so many **steps, pauses, and takes breath**, for it **all seems like a dream**. Even the nations around, looking **at this little** remnant, comparatively speaking, which **had** returned, remarked, **The Lord hath done great things for them'** (Ps. 126: 2) and they re-echo **such a truth, The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad'**. There **was much** in their experiences which saddened **them** at times. They **had** sowed in **tears** but they would **reap** in joy. **At the** dedication of the House **'the Lord had made them joyful'** (Ezra 6: 22). Following **such** experiences **we** reach another **step**, entitled *blessing* (Psalm 127).

### **BLESSING (Psalm 127)**

Having built **the** house, **except the** Lord sustain **the** workers, 'they labour in vain **that** build it'. **Here we have a** delightful picture given in this **psalm** which **refers** to children **as** 'an heritage of **the** Lord'. No rising early or **late** or unbounded enthusiasm in this work will suffice. **The Lord must** build **the** house. **Have we** not known **that** in assemblies **there** is everything materially present, yet if **the** Lord is not building, **the** rosier prospects can **be** blighted? **The perfect example** of blessing **must be that** outlined by 'they went forth, and **preached** everywhere, **the** Lord working with **them**, and confirming **the** word by **the** signs **that** followed. Amen' (Mark 16: 20). **The** Lord's blessing almost certainly **leads** to *prosperity*.

### **PROSPERITY (Psalm 128)**

John wrote, 'Beloved, I pray **that** in **all** things thou mayest prosper and **be** in **health**, even **as** thy soul prospereth' (3 John 2). How lovely to **see** husband and wife walking in **the** ways of **the** Lord and fearing Him; *the husband eating*

**of the labour of his hands, the wife fruitful, and children like olive plants around their table.** Here is the family dwelling in the house; young ones finding a place within it, dwelling therein even until old age where they are seen as green olive trees in the house of God (Ps. 52: 8),

### **RETROSPECTION (Psalm 129)**

The worshipper pauses to look back with reflection so we entitle this psalm **retrospection**. Israel in its national experience had many harrowing experiences and knew what it was to be chastened by the Lord for their good, on the lines of the New Testament expression through the writer to the Hebrews, (Heb. 12: 9) 'We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us'. The chastening of God is intended to result in our reverence. Such experiences sometimes the Remnant had to undergo, but all were designed to bring out the best in them, although sometimes they responded badly. The national history of Israel reveals many deep furrows inflicted on their backs by their enemies, in the sovereignty of God, bringing forth the vehement declaration, 'Let them be ashamed and turned backward, all they that hate Zion.

### **INTROSPECTION (Psalm 130)**

If in Psalm 129 the psalmist is reviewing the harrowing experiences of his and the nation's life, he now looks again within and though distressed, he has learned that however much he failed there was forgiveness with the Lord. He learned the need to be dependent on the Lord and His word for there is mercy with the Lord. This was something he knew as an individual and which the nation had so often experienced. With Him was plenteous redemption throughout their experience. Trust in the Lord leads to **patience**.

### **PATIENCE (Psalm 131)**

Here the psalmist reveals the hidden recesses of his own soul and the disclosures stand as an all-time example for the servant of Christ to follow, and one which, had Israel as a nation put it into effect in their lives, would have saved them. Indeed what a pattern is outlined for all of us, and especially a young believer in Christ. Certainly the

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pattern was demonstrated by the Lord, reminding us of Psalm 24, 'Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity'.

The psalm shows the ideal frame of mind for the servant of the Lord seeking to preserve unity of mind and effort amongst those who returned to build; it is a lowly mind, each 'counting other better than himself; only fully expressed in the Lord who 'being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself. We now pass to the last set of three ascents; a triad of songs that bring the worshippers to the topmost pinnacle of their experience, the goal which David and the Remnant strove after and which they knew they now were approaching. David is a shining example of a man whose singular ambition was to lead men as a true leader of men should do, that is, lead men to the house of God, and this brings us to the next step in Psalm 132 which we entitle *the house of God*.

### **THE HOUSE OF GOD (Psalm 132)**

The mind of the worshipper is thrown back in this song to the bringing up of the Ark of the Covenant by David to its place, which he had prepared for it' (1 Chr. 15: 3) for commencing then was the gradual ascent of glory, which was to reach its acme in the time of Solomon. Constantly in that chapter is the recurring phrase 'thus all Israel brought up' the ark, and such a noble task found its origin in the pattern servant of the Lord, David. The destruction of Goliath in Elah's Vale was but a preparatory effort inspired by the vision that filled the lad David at that early age and paved the way for the finale; the ark of God finding its place in the house of God. Even though this servant of the Lord was not to have the privilege of completing this work, he never diminished for one moment the effort to bring this about. What transpired and was experienced by the Remnant as outlined by the previous songs of ascents, persecution, affliction, weeping, sorrows, always companions of God's servants in every part of life, were truly the experiences of David.

*(to be continued)*

## **PRAISE (Psalm 66)**

**From Birkenhead:** Psalm 66 represents praise to God in response to deliverance and blessings. Verses 1-12 deal with the praise of a people and 13-20 deal with the praise and experience of an individual. As the source of this praise our attention was pointed towards the time of Judah's deliverance and of Hezekiah's sickness and restoration. In connection with verses 4, 5 & 6 in particular we also read Isaiah 37: 14-20 and Joshua 3: 14-17. It was suggested that the passage through the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan by the Children of Israel was included in the words of v. 6 [See Comment 4].

Whatever gave rise to this praise prompted the united worship of God's people and a recognition of His power and majesty. His actions, described as 'terrible' were recognised as being those which inspired awe and as such prompted such a response from men. The words 'all the earth' twice in the first four verses suggests that this may have a millennial application referring to the time when God's authority will be acknowledged and He will be worshipped by all peoples [Comment 1].

Verse 7 was seen to constitute a warning in that whilst man exalts himself in his dealings on earth, assuming apparent control of events, this is purely superficial and comes under ultimate and divine control - 'He ruleth by His might for ever!' This control is acknowledged in the next verse with the admission that life itself is dependent upon God.

The following four verses amplify this statement by describing deliverance from danger and oppression by the hand of God but pointing out that such experiences can be used by God to refine us for use by Him. The analogy with the refining of silver as something precious lent meaning to the words.

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At verse 13 the psalmist writes in the first person and indicates a personal presentation of burnt offerings. It was explained that this had a typical significance in respect of Christ. The burnt offering was a free-will offering which had a sweet savour unto God. The death of Christ was also the result of His desire to do the Fathers will, and as such extreme pleasure was experienced by God in the offering of His Son.

The psalmist's recognition of God's grace and mercy is evident in the closing verses of the psalm, as is also his readiness and willingness to speak God's praise. There was, however, a recognition that his condition before God should be correct. Sin should be acknowledged and confessed and his praise would be received by God if offered in this manner.

*R. C. Halpin, G. H. Roberts*

**From Derby:** In everyday use praise is the expression of appreciative approval. This may be direct to the person praised or indirectly about that person. In Psalm 66 God is the subject of the praise and it is expressed in both these ways.

The word 'praise' occurs only once in Psalm 66, that is in v. 2, but there are also related words which have their own shades of meaning similar to that of praise. Verse 4 has 'worship' and v. 17 has 'extolled'. Worship is fundamentally an attitude of mind and is directed only to its object; in this case towards God.

Psalm 66, like many psalms, is a song of praise. Verses 1, 2 are a call for worldwide praise to God while v. 3 praises God's dominance over His enemies. The happier side of praise, as worship, is in verse 4. Verses 5-7 set out approvingly God's power in the physical world and the sadder aspect of His power over rebellious peoples.

Verse 8 brings in the word 'bless'. This has here the meaning of praise joined with thankfulness. Elsewhere

the word 'bless' carries other meanings which are so easy to appreciate but difficult to define.

In verses 8-12 are expressed the experiences of those who have been through difficulties, even tribulations, but are conscious finally that the outcome is a bringing to 'a wealthy place'.

Verses 13-15 are in the first person singular and are the Old Covenant expression of thankfulness. Our response is different in the ritual aspect but there is a spiritual correspondence.

Verses 16, 17 are praise of God addressed to those who fear God but verses 18-20, whilst still praising God bring in the need for uprightness in those who approach God. in prayer and praise.

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Leeds:** This particular psalm has been written with the prime objective of praise to God for His help and work for His people. The reference to rams in verse 15 points perhaps towards the author of the Psalm. In Leviticus 9: 2 the sacrifice including rams is particularly enjoined on the High Priest and in numbers 6: 14 on the Nazarite. We would, therefore, expect that it was written on behalf of the people of Israel by their representative [Comment 5].

The psalm speaks of a time of sufferings to be gone through by the people (v. 11) but also of their acceptance that, in spite of all, God still listens. Certainly we can see the events of the Captivity and Return in this Psalm [Comment 2].

Comparison with other Psalms of praise shows a continuing theme, not always because of the same human author but because of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Praise to God in the Psalms is based on what men can see of God's actions for good, both to individuals and to the People, and this Psalm with its references to miracles (v. 6) and support (v. 9) is no exception.

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We are often enjoined to make a joyful noise to the Lord. Unking this psalm with Psalms 95-98, we see a continuing injunction to sing because of God's greatness and goodness. We can echo this not only in our appreciation of God the Father but also of our Lord Jesus. In our experience, as in Israel's, God holds our souls in life (v. 9) and it is the Lord Jesus who has given us a new life in Him.

*Philip Jefferson*

### **From** Liverpool: *Making a Joyful Noise.*

Our praise to God tends to be confined to a formal and restrained acknowledgement of his goodness to us. Although in the Old Testament praise is often accompanied by shouting and dancing it was felt that there is no evidence in the New Testament of this kind of behaviour, though we noted the reaction of the man healed at the Beautiful Gate. Could this 'joyful noise' be a reference to our singing today? This would imply that the tunefulness is unimportant whilst entering into the words and giving volume is very important [Comment 3].

If we are wrongly restrained due to inhibitions, we are assured that there will come a time when any inhibitions will be removed and we will praise God freely. (Compare, vv. 3-4 which possibly have a millennial application).

### *Praise initiated.*

Praise is one of our most important services to God. We thought we may underestimate it. In 1 Ch. 16: 4 David introduced the collective service of praise, namely singing in God's house, all the leaders being experts. We discussed three ways in which we could stimulate praise to God:

1. *In Worship.* Our primary service to God is in the holies, on a Sunday morning, centring our thoughts on God and His dear Son. There is no higher service than this.

2. *Sharing Experiences,* (vv. 5-7, 16) It ought to be natural for us to talk together about what the Lord has done for us, and so we can praise God for what he has done for other people.

**3. Suffering, (vv. 10-12) The path of suffering is essential for a praise-filled life. We noted Malachi 3: 3. The refiner of silver scrapes the scum off and when it is pure it is like a mirror. The Lord, as the refiner, is to see His reflection in us. According to Psalm 34: 1 we should praise God in all circumstances (cf. Phil. 4: 4).**

***The Very Best. (vv. 13: 15)***

**The Psalmist was willing to give his best which is a costly exercise. There was no scarcity of sacrifice. This is not always so in our spiritual exercise. The same kind of animals offered again and again never became 'stale' in God's sight. Likewise our thanksgiving, though often repetitive, will never become stale as long as it is from the heart.**

***A Condition, (v. 18)***

**The Psalmist was aware that his praise would be a waste of time if he had unforgiven sin on his conscience. 1 John 3: 21 teaches us that a clear conscience gives us confidence before God. The Psalmist had obviously known forgiveness because he is confident that God had accepted his praise (v. 20).**

***Stephen Seddon, David Webster***

From Melbourne: Surely our **greatest privilege as the people of God is to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or in the words of Heb. 13: 15 to.. 'offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His name'.**

**In this month's Psalm we are urged in verse 2 '... make His praise glorious'. We do this knowing that we have '... boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus' (Heb. 10: 19).**

**'Bowing low, our praise we offer  
In the holy place above. '**

**Yet in our worship at the Remembrance how we fall short of this great objective of the psalmist! Because we come unprepared or even worse, our attitude is found in Malachi 1: 13, '... Behold what a weariness is it'. We too often fail to make His praise 'glorious'.**

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We can only give 'glorious' praise if our hearts and thoughts are centred on the 'Altogether Lovely One', the blessed Saviour who stooped from the 'excellent glory' to the suffering and shame of Calvary. Our praise to God the Father will indeed be 'glorious' if we have love for the Man who once hung on Calvary's cross with His holy hands and feet pierced and His visage 'marred more than any man's'.

May brethren be more concerned to give of our best in this matter of praise, to worship as if we meant it, to take full advantage of our high privilege. Then we will 'make His praise glorious'.

Young brethren can play a big part in praise by rising to their feet and sincerely and briefly thanking the Lord for sending his Son. This sacrifice of praise is very acceptable to God the Father.

The psalmist also wanted others to hear his praise. 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God... ' (v. 16). But God's portion must come first.

*D. Mawhinney*

**From Methil:** Psalm 66 is a Psalm of praise to God; 'make a joyful noise' literally means 'shout ye to God'. The first mention of praise is in Genesis 29: 35. When Judah was born his mother gave him a name meaning 'praise'. Of this son, not the natural firstborn, came the kingly line and in course of time the Lord Jesus was born of this tribe.

Praise is addressed to God and offered by men as they think of His glorious Name and His mighty power. God was terrible in power towards the children of men, e. g. Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and at a later date, the Canaanite nations, but His kindness and mercy were towards His people when they escaped and went through both the Red Sea and the river Jordan on dry land. God rules by His might; His power is unlimited yet men fail to recognise this. Rebellious ones should not exalt themselves for they will soon enough know God's power and judgement.

## BIBLE STUDIES

**Much** of this Psalm **has** to do with God's power, His might **His** severity, His omnipotence, His power to **hold** our soul in life and to **keep** our **feet** from being moved. The Psalmist's recognition of **the** glory of God **led** him to praise God.

God allows trouble and oppression **but** brings us through and **keeps** our **feet** in faith by His power. **At the** beginning of **the Psalm** the writer **calls** on **all** mankind to praise God, then **he** moves on to trials and experiences of God's people resulting in their praising God. In these **trials** God **was** proving His people to bring out **the best** in **them**; **the** purified silver **that** would shine in Glory. **We were** reminded of Heb. **12**, **where** God chastens His sons for their spiritual benefit. So though **all** these may **be** bitter experiences God has in mind to bring us into **a** wealthy place.

Vv. **11 & 12** and Is. **51: 23** describe some of **the** indignities which actually **were dealt** out to captives by Assyrian conquerors, these verses being not just **a** figure of speech **but** literally **true**.

In their dire distress they **made** vows or promises to God having brought him through his trial. **'I** will come into Thy house with burnt offerings, **I** will pay my vows' **He** remembers his promises to God and has every intention of honouring them. **Such** promises **were made** when **he was** in trouble. Now in praise **he** is ready to offer sacrifice of fatlings with **the** incense of rams. **He** says (v.15) **'I** will offer bullocks with goats'. Nothing **but the** best is good enough **for his God**. How unlike **the** days of Malachi **when** they brought **the halt, lame,** and blind beasts to offer. This was their attitude and it showed in their offerings.

Today our praise is to offer **the** fruit of lips which **make** confession to His name. **The** word **'Selah'** occurs thrice in this psalm - **we are** enjoined to 'praise and consider'.

**Because** his prayer **was** answered **he** knew **that there was** no unconfessed sin between him and God. **He well** knew **that if there had** been iniquity in his **heart the** Lord would not **have heard** his prayer (1 John **3: 21 -22**, Prov. **28: 9** and John 9: 31).

*Neville Coomer*

## BIBLE STUDIES

**From Nottingham:** Many of the Psalms have as their theme the praise of God. (In Hebrew the book is called *Tehillim* which means 'praises'). Perhaps the best known of such psalms are in the last six (Ps. 145-150). In the psalms, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, the thought of praise is often found linked with associated (though different) thoughts of thanksgiving, worship and singing.

In order to clarify the message of Psalm 66 an attempt was made to sub-divide it. Two ways were put forward. The first had four sub-divisions: —

- a) vv. 1-4 Praise is due to God from all peoples.
- b) vv. 5-7 Experiences of the people of Israel.
- c) vv. 8-15 Experiences of men.
- d) vv. 16-20 Testimony to others.

These divisions were in accord with the placings of the 'Selah' (see note below).

A second suggestion used only three divisions: —

- a) v. 1-4 Come and praise - for who God is.
  - b) v. 5-12 Come and see - what God has done.
  - c) v. 13-20 Come and hear - how He has dealt with me.
- which recorded the relationship of God to the world, to His people and with individuals.

The psalm tells us it is God to whom we are to make a joyful noise and that we are to sing of the glory or honour of His name (where His name declares His nature). We read of a time when 'the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy' (Job 38: 7) and there is much singing in heaven (see Rev. 4: 8, 11) [Comment 6] and much crying out to come also (see Rev. 19: 1-8). We have instructions for now too; 'Be filled (*literally 'keep being filled'*) with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father' (Eph. 5: 18-20).

The future tense in v. 4 RV & AV 'All the earth shall worship Thee' is easier to explain than the RSV 'All the earth worships Thee'.

An initial consideration of v. 6 tends to suggest that there are two events which are described there; the Red Sea deliverance and the crossing through the River Jordan (Ex. 14: 21-31, Josh. 3). However, the latter part of verse 5 'He is terrible in His deeds among men' (not His people) and 'there did we rejoice in Him' tends to suggest that the Red Sea event is being described. At the Red Sea the praise was very vocal (Ex. 15) if somewhat short-lived (15: 22-24). In Joshua there is no praise recorded to have come from the people and only His people were there [Comment 4].

A time of trial is recorded in vv. 8-12. Like Hannah in 1 Sam. 1, there was a time of affliction, but a time of deliverance followed. The end result here was a 'spacious place' (RSV), 'wealthy place' (RV): room and resources to be all that we should be (cf. Ps. 23: 2). James 1: 2-4 encourages us to 'count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations', for following on is the promise that we shall lack in nothing if we let steadfastness have its full effect. The words of Paul in Phil. 4: 11 are helpful, 'I have learned' in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content'. It would not come naturally but would grow as parts of the fruit of the Spirit, patience and meekness, were produced by the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Note on 'Selah'** The word 'Selah' occurs in the book of Psalms 71 times. It is mostly found in the first three books, i. e. Ps. 1-89. The Hebrew meaning is to 'lift-up' though whether it was directed to the singers or to musicians is not known. The 'Selah' together with other similar words and indeed the titles assigned to individual psalms were not part of the original text. They do, however, pre-date the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Hebrew text which tradition dates as third century B. C. ). The Septuagint interprets it as a musical interlude. Some of the titles and other words appear to be misplaced from their first situation.

*D. Rafferty*

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### COMMENTS

1. **(Birkenhead):** Of course the universal call to praise God is ever relevant but men will manifestly respond to this call in the Millennium.

2. **(Leeds):** This might be so, but there is insufficient evidence to be certain. Many commentators share the view expressed in the Birkenhead paper that the language and the circumstances point to the times of Hezekiah. If this is so then it is the deliverance from the Assyrian oppression that primarily prompts this expression of praise.

3. **(Liverpool):** The specific New Testament references speak of 'singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord' (Eph. 5: 19), and also of 'singing with grace in your hearts unto God' (Col. 3: 16). While emphasis is on the heart's appreciation of what is being sung there is no reason why we should not seek to be as tuneful as we possibly can. We must also remember that in all our service Godward 'reverence and awe' should be manifestly shown (Heb. 12: 28).

4. **(Nottingham):** This is an interesting point. Certainly there is no record of praise being uttered at the Jordan crossing. Most contributors, however, have assumed that the reference to 'the river' relates to the crossing of the Jordan. The A. V. gives the alternative rendering, 'they went through the flood on foot' but authorities appear to agree that 'river' is a valid rendering of the Hebrew word *nahar*. and other occurrences of this word tend to confirm this.

J. K. D. J.

5. **(Leeds):** V. 15 mentions 'fatlings', 'rams', 'bullocks' and 'goats'. These were acceptable as burnt offerings from any man in Israel (see Lev. 1: 1-13), so no pointer to the authorship of the Psalm can be seen here.

6. **(Nottingham):** Both these verses refer to 'saying', not 'singing'.

P. L. H.

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11 J)

EDITORIAL

8012

This month's subject concludes our study of a selection of topics from the Psalms by considering some psalms which speak of the divine King. It is this aspect of the psalms' message which particularly concerns us, but we should not lose sight of the fact that all of these psalms originally referred to the human king who sat on the throne of David. He was God's viceroy among His people, and it was God's desire that he should reign in righteousness. The king was the Lord's anointed one (Ps. 2: 2; 18: 50; 45: 7), whom men harmed at their peril (1 Sam. 26: 9, 11), and whose kingdom was an expression of the Kingdom of God on the earth. Unfortunately, the actual kings of God's people largely failed in practice and the worst of them were idolatrous, tyrannical and grasping. Even David, the man after God's heart, used his kingly position to commit adultery and effective murder. The glowing words of the regal psalms were more fittingly expressed to the ideal of kingship than to its actuality.

In the Lord Jesus Christ, the ideal was personified. The eulogies of the psalmist could be applied to Him without reservation, and the Holy Spirit could take up the words through the New Testament writers and reveal truths whose full meaning was veiled from their original authors. In the heavenly Zion sits the great King, the anointed Son of God, ruling with a sceptre of equity. He has entered heaven as a conqueror over sin, death and Hades, but He will leave again to be manifested as the Son of David and the Son of God in one person. Men will see what kingship should be like when He rules the world with justice and righteousness. As we contemplate these things we say, like the Apostle John, 'Amen: come, Lord Jesus'.

*P. L. H.*

## BIBLE STUDIES

### Thank You, Contributors

Editors would like to thank all assembly groups and individuals who have contributed to the magazine in the last year. As we begin the study of a new subject we would like to encourage more to join us. Study articles on any scriptural topic will also be welcomed, so please take up your pen and write.

### THE SONGS OF ASCENTS (Psalms 120-134)

(continued from p. 166)

'Lord, remember for David all his affliction'. In these words we have gathered together in one word 'affliction' the pattern of David's life and of that of the Remnant, all to contribute to one consummation - to be back from captivity to the Place of the Name, rescued from thralldom to peace, to enable them and David to build a dwelling place for the God of heaven. For him there could be no sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids, until he found out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob. A meaner man would have limited his response to providing for the building of the house but there was no such restraint with David, and 1 Chr. 29 is a fitting tribute to the amount David gave of his own personal treasure, setting an example to the nation itself to contribute. Such inspiration came from the revelation to David that Zion was not man's choice. Though the ark was at this stage in a tent, yet what joy characterized the ascent or bringing up of the ark, when God helped the Levites (1. Chr. 15: 26). It was left to Solomon to build the House, and his name means 'rest' or 'peace'. Israel as a nation reached the summit of glory in the days of Solomon and the ideal is without question presented to us in the following psalm (133) which we have entitled *the people of God*.

#### THE PEOPLE OF GOD (Psalm 133)

A lovely picture is presented here of brethren dwelling together in unity, and in view of the closing verses of the psalm with its reference to Aaron and his garments as High Priest and the anointing oil running down them, the empha-

sis seems to **be** on priesthood. The unity so evident in **this psalm** visualizes a priesthood functioning in **the** house of God and serving **the** nation within **the** house. Should not **the** people of God today **be** serving **as** priests within **the** house of God today? Nothing **seems** clearer in **the** New Testament revelation, than **that** this is **the** will of God. **The** lesson surely from **this psalm** about **the** Old Covenant people is **that** then **the** priesthood served within **the** House, and **as** we switch to **the** New Covenant nation its function should **be** within **the** present House. **We** now look **at** the topmost ascent; **we** could **term** it **the** crowning **Hallelujah** of these ascents, **each** seeking **the** upward pursuit. **We** entitle it **the service of God**.

### **THE SERVICE OF GOD (Psalm 134)**

**The** service of song which **the** sweet psalmist of Israel, David, introduced **was** an 'all day and night' effort **as** indicated by **the** words 'by night stand in **the** house of **the** Lord'. **If** we refer to 1 Chr. 23: 5 and 1 Chr. 25: 7 we can see how this constant volume of sound was operated.

**4000** instrumentalists with **288** singers operating produced a glorious **Hallelujah** because Israel's God **was** 'enthroned on **the** praises of Israel' (Ps. 22). One wonders **whether** any **such** or lesser service of song existed when **the** worshippers in **the** Lord's day wended their way **up** to Zion (**Luke 2**), when **the** Lord as a boy went with his parents. Did **the** Lord **hear** any volume of sound arising as **He** approached **the** City? **It must have** been a glorious experience to **have heard such** singing, and lifts our spirit to throw **the** mind and **heart** forward to **that** day to come, when **all the** children of God will without division **be** united in their chorus of praise to **the** God and **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ. In **that** day 'when sin no more obstructs our sight, and sorrow pains **the heart** no more' **the** Man of Calvary - **the** Man with **the** pierced hands and side - will then **lead the great** congregation - 'In **the** midst of **the** congregation will I sing Thy praise'. David **led** in his day amidst **the great** congregation, **but** now David's son, yet David's Lord, will **lead the** people of God.

**Austin Jones**

## BIBLE STUDIES

### THE EXALTED MESSIAH Psalms 2; 24: 7-10; 45

**From Birkenhead:** Although our examination of psalms under this heading puts their primary application in the future time, there is a sense in which they apply to events already past. For example Psalm 2 is quoted in Acts 4: 25-28 in reference to Messiah's rejection at His first advent.

Psalm 2 summarizes the rebellion of man against almighty God and God's derision of any attempts to usurp the place that rightly belongs to His Son. Psalm 24 leads on with the entry to heaven of the triumphant Messiah, who is worthy of all praise even to that of the gates and doors through which he enters. Psalm 45 deals with His divine excellencies and His relationship with His bride, His Church.

As with Psalm 24, Psalm 2 was written by David and its veracity is confirmed by the fact that it is quoted in the New Testament. The futility of man's rebellion even though kings and rulers of men are divinely ordained is evident from the passage. God will deal with them for their audacity in confronting His Son. This relationship of Jesus Christ with the Father is confirmed in v. 7. Christ is Son of God from eternity but there may be another sense in which as *man* He is described as Son of God, as was Adam (Luke 3: 38) [See answer to questions from Liverpool].

Psalm 45 deals with an address by a king to his son and is clearly written of someone whose attributes are well known to the writer. In our study, the application is to the Lord Jesus in vv. 2-9 and His bride, the Church, from 10-17. From v. 10 the address is to the bride who must 'hearken', 'consider' and 'incline' towards the bridegroom. She must forget any thing or anyone who would distract her from her responsibility to the bridegroom. Such action will result in the bestowal of privileges and eternal blessings upon her.

*R. C. Hatpin, A Hyland*

#### **From Derby: Psalm 2**

*Author, Unknown.* Is the assumption made by the early disciples that the author is David absolute proof of authorship (see Acts 4: 25) ? [Comment 1].

**Introduction.** Clearly a prophetic Psalm. Verses 1, 2 are quoted in Acts 4: 25, 26 and verse 7 several times (Hebrews 1: 5, 5: 5 and 13: 33), always referring to the Lord Jesus.

### **vv. 6-9 God Proclaims His Son King**

The power and authority of the Son is derived from the Father. Two parts of v. 7 cause some difficulty, 'this day' and 'begotten', An English dictionary definition of 'beget' is 'to procreate, usually of father'. This may not be of direct help in applying to the Godhead, but it, at least, tells us something of the use of 'begetting'. We speak of a man begetting a son, but of making, for example, a chair. In other words what he begets is the same kind as himself, a man. Therefore when God reveals to us His Son as the Only Begotten we must infer that what is begotten of God is 'of the same kind', i. e. God, and so begotten cannot (as it does with man) infer a starting point. The Son must always have been begotten and this reveals the relationship between the Father and the Son - a relationship of love, trust and authority. This day' cannot then be specifying a moment in time, for past, present and future are all one to the eternal God.

### **vv. 10-12 Therefore Serve Him**

Referring back to the beginning of the Psalm, rebellion against such a King is seen to be foolish. In contrast, serving Him is wise.

### **Psalm 24 vv. 7-70**

#### **Author. David**

This portion is so clearly descriptive of the honour given to the King of kings that its original purpose is lost sight of. The Lord is returning in triumph, returning from battle. Presumably the phrase, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates' (vv. 7, 9) suggests that this person is too great and the entrance too small.

### **Psalm 45**

#### **Author. Sons of Korah.**

**Introduction.** Again we have evidence of the prophetic nature of this Wedding Song in that verses 6, 7 are quoted in Heb. 1: 8, 9 as referring to the Lord Jesus.

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### *Outline, v. 1 Introduction*

The theme is one which grips the writer and his heart bubbles over.

### *vv. 2-9 In Praise of the King*

He pours out his heart in praising the King. It is good to realise that 'grace' is especially mentioned as being one of His characteristics (e. g. see Luke 4: 22).

This is an insight into the royal Bridegroom. Verses 3-5 outline his activities in battle and so link into Psalm 24.

### *vv. 10-11 Addressing the Bride*

These verses show the attitude required by the King from His bride. Her allegiance is to be total - no split loyalty.

### *vv. 12-15 Brought to The King*

The bride is made beautiful by her clothing and is brought to the King with rejoicing. Who are the companions mentioned in v. 14? [See comment 4].

### *vv. 16-17 His Praise is eternal*

The outcome is an eternal welling-up of praise for such a King. Children shall be made princes [Not while they are children - P. L. H. ] and the praise will go on and on eternally.

P. S. Webster, G. W. Conway

**From Leeds:** in these three psalms we can see the Lord Jesus in His merited position as the Exalted Messiah and portayed as the King, the One mighty in battle.

He is seen as the warrior King, the fighter (Ps. 2: 9); 'Break them with a rod of iron'; (Ps. 24: 8), 'The Lord, mighty in battle'; (Ps. 45: 5), 'Thine arrows are sharp... in the heart of the King's enemies'. The three psalms can also be viewed as three stages of a coronation: Ps. 24, the triumphant arrival of the King, Ps. 2, the crowning ceremony, Ps. 45 His loving subjects express their love for the King, as He marches out in all His majesty.

Ps. 24, written by David, begins with declaring that the earth is the Lord's. This was true from the beginning (Gen. 1: 1). The earth belongs to the Lord: He created it. it is now in rebellion against Him, being dominated by Satan (1 John 5: 19, Eph. 2: 2, 2 Cor. 4: 4). God's anointed One will finally take over the nations of the world, overthrowing

Satan, and will rule over and put all His enemies under subjection, restoring God's dominion over all, as before the rebellion started (1 Cor. 15: 24-28, Eph. 1: 10, Rev. 11: 15, Rev. 20: 1-10).

The earth and all that is therein will then be the Lord's without opposition. All will own Him as Lord of lords and King of kings (Acts 3: 21, 2 Pet. 3: 10-13, Is. 66: 22-24).

*Ps. 45* is a song of loves and is comparable in tone and expression with many passages in the Song of Solomon. The beauty of the King (v. 2), 'Thou art fairer than the children of men', describes the same Messiah who was 'marred more than the sons of men', (Is. 52: 14), the One who still bears the wounds in His hands, feet and side, the scars of His great battle.

*I. Gardner, H. R. Dodge*

From Liverpool: It is in the nature of poetry to push language to the limit. These three poems are about kings: the figurative speech is used to speak of the greater King, Jesus Christ the exalted Messiah.

#### *Psalm 2 The Futility of Rebellion*

Although we cannot connect this with a particular historical event it was written by David (see Acts 4: 25) to show the futility of rebelling against the king whom God had chosen. The church in Jerusalem quoted this Psalm to show the attitude of the Jewish authorities towards Jesus. Men who may be powerful on earth are insignificant compared with God who is all-powerful. The best course then as now was to come to God and make peace (vv. 10-12).

#### *Psalm 24 The Lord of Glory*

This Psalm could have been written for the occasion when the ark of God, being brought to Jerusalem, approached the city gates. Only figuratively could gates' heads and doors be lifted up. Whatever was coming through the gate was so great that the top piece of the gate post would have to be removed and the gates lifted up off their hinges [Comment 2]. It is unlikely that this precaution would have been necessary for the ark - it is God's glory linked with the ark which is referred to. Both Paul and James refer to the Lord Jesus as the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2: 8,

## BIBLE STUDIES

Jas. 2: 1), thus linking the psalm with Christ. It was suggested that this gives expression to His triumphant entry into heaven referred to in Eph. 4: 8.

### *Psalm 45 The royal wedding*

Seen by some as a mini 'Song of Songs' this is a poem about a bride being brought to her royal husband. Heb. 1: 8-9 directly applies this Psalm to Christ claiming deity for Christ and causing us to see in this a picture of the Church the bride of Christ.

S. Seddon, D. Webster

**From Melbourne:** *Psalm 2*. In the first three verses of this psalm we find the attitude of the nations of the earth towards God's anointed Christ from the time of His appearance as the Babe of Bethlehem, and covering the intervening ages until the scene depicted in Rev. 19. There, in v. 16, He is given His rightful place and title, King of kings and Lord of lords and in vv. 19 - 21 is described the final great rebellion of mankind together with its terrible consequences. In Psalm 2 the nations include unregenerate Israel, and in Acts 4 we find the apostles applying it thus. We feel inclined at this point to refer to Ps. 24, which speaks of the triumph of the Christ, which is recognised only by those who believe on Him, having acknowledged His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven. The first great conflict to which the Gospels refer and in which He has been the Victor over Satan, sin, death and the grave, is dealt with in the records of His death, burial and resurrection. In vv. 7 and 8, we suggest, is found a reference to that which followed His appearance to Mary as recorded in John 20: 11-17, as he ascended into heaven to present before His Father the evidence of the work of redemption finished - the marks of the cross; when everlasting gates and doors were lifted up for the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle who had conquered hell and the grave. We also suggest that in verses 9 and 10, there is a further call for those gates and doors to be lifted up for the King of Glory to enter, when He was being taken up from the midst of His disciples as recorded in Acts 1: 9, to sit down at the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens as the Lord of hosts to appear before the face of God on behalf of those whose sins He bore [Comment 3].

We now return to **the** second psalm. Many speculations have been **put** forward regarding **the decree** of v. 7. We **draw** attention to **an** article written by **the late Mr. J. Hawkins**, and found in **Needed Truth 1924**, pages **137-141** on **the subject** of **the Only Begotten**. He writes as follows: **The fourth Gospel** clearly vindicates **the deity** of **the Lord Jesus**. The Eternal Spirit **breathed** into **the author's** mind **a new designation**, **a new title** of Him who is **called** Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, **Father** of Eternity, Prince of **Peace**, namely - **Monogenes** - Only Begotten... In this majestic title, Only Begotten, **the precise nature** of **the relation** of **the Son** and **the relation** of **the Son** and **the Father** is **declared to be that** of **a genesis** or **generation**, **and this must be**, in **the very nature** of things, inscrutable and incomprehensible to men and angels. It could not **be** otherwise, for **the title**, Only Begotten of **the Father**, is such **as** infinite dignity alone could claim, and such **as the** infinite affection of **the Father** solely could bestow, and **such as no created** being in heaven or earth could possess. Thus it **is clear** beyond question **that the** divine Sonship of **the Lord** is not in any sense or measure based on **the incarnation** or on **the resurrection**, **but on the fact that He** verily is in himself, apart from **what He became**, **the Only Begotten** of **the Father**... No Scripture whatsoever **tells** of **the fulfilment** of **Ps. 2: 7**, for **the statement** therein is neither prophecy nor promise, **but simply** an oracle or utterance of **the Decree** (something inscribed or fixed) which disclosed **a wondrous and profound fact**, "Thou **art** My Son; this day **have I** begotten Thee" and involved no fulfilment whatsoever. Every expression in **the New Testament** which **emphasises** **the divine Sonship** of **the Lord**, **as this one** does, **refers** to **a period anterior** to **the incarnation**, and hence **there** is no reference to this event in **Ps. 2: 7**.

**Psalm 45.** In this **Psalm** is seen **the glory** of **the crowned** and **reigning Messiah** in **all His Majesty**. He **had dealt** righteously with His enemies; His throne is for **ever** and **and ever**. He **has** no **equal** in heaven or **earth**. With Him **is the queen** (**is she** Israel or **the church**, or both ?) [Comment 4].

*W. Sneddon, T. W. Fullerton*

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**From Methil:** Psalm 2 vv. 1-3 shows Messiah rejected on earth, vv. 4-6 His present exaltation in heaven, and the last verses His future appearing in undisputed power on earth when all will acknowledge Him.

This Psalm reveals the lawless nature of the nations of this world against God and against His anointed. Acts, 4: 23-31 is a precis of what they did to the Lord at His trial and crucifixion.

Vv. 4-6 give an insight into the heavenly scene with God looking on this earth with judgement in mind. He will send His Son and establish Him in Zion as His appointed Ruler over men and by so doing will reinstate His authority. It is noted that there is a gap between vv. 3 and 4 which we take to be the present dispensation when God is calling out a bride for His Son. The One who was rejected at the cross is still rejected, but God presents Him as the, anointed of Jehovah to be obeyed. 'Kiss the Son'<sup>7</sup> is sound advice and really means trust and obey Him. It is for us to bow and acknowledge Him as both Lord and Christ (Acts 2: 36). This Psalm covers a tremendous period of time, past to future. Those who serve Him with fear, rejoice; the nations may rage, but they are impotent in the end - they must kiss the Son or He will be angry.

*Psalm 24* vv. 7-8 is a resurrection scene - heaven's gates open wide to receive the King of Glory, almighty, victorious, invincible. This we judge was when He ascended into heaven after speaking to Mary Magdalene (John 20: 17).

The changes in wording in vv. 9-10 indicate a later point in time when He ascended from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1: 9-11, Mark 16: 19) to take His rightful place at the right hand of the Majesty on High [Comment 3].

*Psalm 45* The Sons of Korah who did not perish with their fathers, loved God's house and they write splendid things about the King. They see Him as fairer than the children of men at His first coming when grace and truth proceeded from His lips, when He came to win the world, not to judge it [Comment 5]. Vv. 3-6 depict Him as He will be in power and judgement carrying all before Him.

In vv. 7-9 the psalmist paints a picture of the magnificence of the surroundings of a mighty earthly monarch to convey to us something of the glory of the palace of the King of kings with the queen, His bride beside Him.

In the presence of the exalted Messiah there is gladness and constant rejoicing.

*N, Coomer*

**From Nottingham:** In our meditations on the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ our thoughts are often occupied with the days of His flesh, the time of His humiliation. Let us not forget, however, the glorious truth which is presented in Phil. 2: 9-10, 'Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the Name which is above every Name; that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow...' God has highly exalted Him now. God has given Him now a Name which is above every Name. He is the exalted Messiah. This aspect is not future. The manifestation of His glory and all that it entails is in the future, but it is important for us to see our Lord Jesus Christ both as the Man of Calvary and as the exalted One.

Psalms 2 and 45 draw our attention to Him in His exaltation and the revelation of His exalted Person to the nations. The opening verses 1-3 had an application at the cross and, we judge, at other times too, but their fulfilment will be on that future day when the Son of Man comes in great glory (Mat. 24: 29: 31). He will startle many nations and come in judgement.

As the R. V. margin shows, Psalm 2: 1 could read 'Why do the nations tumultuously assemble'. They have done this on many occasions. Numerous are the battles of the world. Yet we live in a day when the tumultuous assemblies have reached a peak never before attained and there is a day coming when even today's chaos will be eclipsed. One of the nations' objectives is to cast away influence which the Lord and His anointed may have on them. They do not want divine restraint. 'Let us break' is not just a suggestion but an expression of fixed determination. It also conveys the thought of flinging away the cords with contempt.

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What a striking contrast then, is introduced in verses 4-6. Men in their arrogance array themselves against the One who is described as 'He that sitteth in the heavens'. This is what God does and is. His eternal dwelling place is in heaven. His position there will never change. Man dwells on earth and wrangles against the Almighty as he did at Babel.

The severity of the judgements which will be carried out by the exalted Messiah is seen clearly in the figures used in v. 9 but, so great is God's mercy, we have the invitation of vv. 10-12.

*R. Hickling*

## COMMENTS

1. **(Derby):** Yes I would think so. The early disciples must have said and thought a great many things which were false through ignorance, but the Holy Spirit, in influencing Luke as he wrote the record, would not permit to be included anything that was erroneous (unless, of course, it was the record of a deliberate falsehood). The object of inspiration of the Scriptures was that we might use them as a guide to doctrine and practice, and if every statement by an individual could be questioned as solely the expression of his opinion, the Scriptures would be largely useless for this purpose. The whole doctrine of inspiration would thus be vitiated.
2. **(Liverpool):** This is not the usual meaning given to this expression. 'Lift up... be lifted up' is usually taken to refer simply to the opening of the gates.
3. **(Melbourne and Methil):** The dual challenge and response in Ps. 24: 7-10 is a poetic device to emphasize the claims of the One who enters. I would not think that any identification of the pairs of verses could be made with different stages of the Lord's ascension.
4. **(Melbourne and Derby):** I do not think it is possible to give all the details in a psalm such as this an exact prophetic application. There are no apparent parallels to the kings daughters (v. 9) or the companion virgins (v. 14). The psalm can certainly be used to illustrate the union of Christ and the church (Eph. 5: 27) and the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19: 7); but whether these two are

the same is a matter of some controversy, outside the scope of a short comment here.

5. **(Methil):** Does not this psalm have in view the Lord's character and glory in general, rather than any particular aspect or His appearing? There seems little reason to apply vv. 1-3 particularly to His incarnation.

*P. L. H.*

## QUESTION

### From Liverpool:

The decree of the Lord (Ps. 2: 7) is obviously very important in relation to Christ, being quoted three times in the New Testament. However, we had great difficulty understanding the implications of it, and why it was quoted at all.

1. This day' - If Christ is eternal at what point in time or over what period of time was He begotten? One answer, the idea of an 'eternal Day', we found difficult to understand.

2. 'Begotten' - In what sense can this refer to Christ at any time? Some suggested it referred to His being conceived in Mary at the incarnation. Another suggestion was that the link between the three NT. quotations was the resurrection of Christ. Acts 13: 33 refers to the resurrection. In Heb. 1: 5 the quote follows the thought of Jesus having 'sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high', and Heb. 5: 5 refers to Christ as High Priest, an office He received at the resurrection. Which, if any, is correct?

## ANSWER

The purpose of the quotation of Ps. 2: 7 in the New Testament is in each case to emphasize the status of the Son in relation to those with whom He is contrasted. In Acts 13 Paul's argument is similar to that used by Peter in Acts 2, where the Lord Jesus is shown to be superior to David, although He was David's descendant (see Mat. 22: 42-45). The words in Acts 13: 33, originally applied to the Davidic king, had far greater force when applied to the Son of God. In Heb. 1: 5 the superiority of the Son over angels is emphasized; they are servants (ministers), but He is the one who is the exact image of the Father's substance. Heb. 5 compares the position of Christ as High Priest with that

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of the Aaronic high priest. **Because Christ is the Son He has a kingly priesthood like that of Melchizedek, and is named by God to His office. In each of these cases the stress is upon the relation of the Son to the Father, rather than upon the act of begetting.**

None the less, the words 'today' (*semeron*) and 'begotten' require explanation in this context. There has always been controversy about their meaning, and there is no universally accepted explanation. Several possible explanations are discussed below; the first of these ('eternal generation') is the one which has found widest acceptance (see Article II of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England), and would be the view of many, but not all, in the Fellowship. Before presenting these views it should be made clear that none of them contests the eternal Sonship of Christ. Scriptures such as John 3: 17 make it clear that He was the Son before He came into the world. In spite of these, there have been some who have suggested otherwise, but such views are not represented here.

The following are possible explanations:

1. Time can only be measured by change, and God does not change; since the Lord is one with the Father, and the image of His substance', He also does not change. He always has been the Son of God, and that which constitutes Him the Son of God is that divine action described as 'begetting'. This normally refers to the action of the male in human generation when a new life is begun, but there is no beginning in this case, since the Son is God (John 1: 1). The point of the use of the verb 'to beget' must therefore be that of transmission of characteristics, which is a feature of human begetting, and God's begetting of His Son consists of a continuous communication of Himself to the Son. Hence 'this day have I begotten thee' is the declaration of an eternal fact in the divine nature, true of every earthly day, and true of the eternal present in which God lives, He being independent of time.

For a fuller statement of this view, see the article by J. Hawkins, **Needed Truth** Vol. 31, pp. 137-141.

The weaknesses of this interpretation are firstly, that it is difficult to see the point of the words 'today I have begotten thee' if they express something which is always

true; the word 'today' is irrelevant. Secondly, the explanation does not seem very relevant to the contexts in which the expression is used. In Heb. 1: 5, the emphasis is on the Sonship rather than the begetting, but in Acts 13: 33 the context is 'the promise made unto the fathers... fulfilled... in that he raised up Jesus; as also it is written... Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee'. Here, the words 'as also it is written' connect the raising up of Christ with the quotation. This 'raising up' is not the Lord's resurrection, which is referred to in the following verse, using a different quotation, but is raising up for service, as Moses (Deut. 18: 15, 18) and David (Acts 13: 22) were raised up. There are various opinions about when this occurred, giving rise to the alternative explanations of Ps. 2: 7 given below.

2. The Western text includes the words 'this day have I begotten thee' in Luke 3: 22 (see RSV margin), in reference to the Lord's baptism. Even if this is not to be relied on, it is clear that there is a similarity between Luke 3: 22 (and Mark 1: 11) and Ps. 2: 7. It is suggested that at the Lord's baptism He was acclaimed by God as His Son, and publicly presented to Israel as Messiah at the beginning of His ministry. Hence the word 'begotten' would refer to the assumption of a new official dignity.

The difficulty in this view is that it does not correspond to any normal sense of the word 'begotten', which is connected with the communication of being rather than the giving of office. The Son is described as the 'only begotten' (*monogenes*) (John 1: 14; 3: 16), and this conveys the special relationship which exists between the Father and the Son. The extent to which *monogenes* does imply an act of begetting is a matter which needs fuller discussion than can be given here, but it is relevant to note that the Nestle text gives *monogenes theos*, 'the only begotten God' in John 1: 18.

3. A suggestion given in the question is that Ps. 2: 7 refers to the resurrection of Christ. This can be fitted into the context in Ps. 2, and Christ is referred to as the 'first-born' (*prototokos*) from the dead in Col. 1: 18 and Rev. 1: 5. In Heb. 1: 5 the quotation follows a reference to the resurrection, and could be construed as applying to it. However, it is not the resurrection which is in view in Acts 13: 33,

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as has been **argued** above. Furthermore, **1 John 4: 9** says that God 'sent His only begotten Son into **the world**', so that if **monogenes** does imply begetting then this **must have** occurred prior to His entry into **the world**, or **at least** on it, and cannot **refer** to **the** resurrection.

4. **A further** alternative is that the quotation refers to the incarnation, when **He** who **was** previously **the Son** was begotten into **the world** - '**the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and that which is to be born (RV margin - 'is begotten') shall be called holy, the Son of God' (Luke 1: 35)**. The merit of this view is that it enables the normal sense of words 'today' and 'begotten' to **be used** in the prophetic application of Ps. 2: 7. In **Acts 13: 33** the sending of **the Son** into **the world** in this way fits **the context**, and in **Heb. 1: 6** the mention of bringing **the Firstborn** 'again' into **the world** naturally follows a reference to His first coming in v. 5. **Apart from the use of monogenes and the quotation of Ps. 2: 7, the only direct reference to the begetting of the Son is in 1 John 5: 18 - 'He that was begotten of God'. Here 'gennetheis' is a 1st aorist participle passive, which normally denotes an action which took place before the action of the main verb (keepeth), hence the translation 'was begotten'. This seems to indicate an event at a point in time, which would fit in with the current thesis. The main difficulty with this view is again the use of monogenes. If the Son was monogenes before coming into the world, and if monogenes implies an act of begetting, the thesis falls.**

**A reply has** been given to this question at some length, since it raises important and interesting points, **but there is much** more which could **be said**, and **readers** can study **the subject** for **themselves** on **the** basis of this outline. **The writer has** his own opinion, **but prefers** not to **express** it in this **case**, leaving it to **readers** to **assess the** merits of **the** various viewpoints **themselves**.

**P. L. H.**

Contributors may wish to **pursue further** some of **the** points **made in the** review of various viewpoints given in this answer.

**Eds.**