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GLAD TIDINGS

Issue 1710

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD



"I'm Not Good Enough to be Saved!"

Warriors Without Weapons

Worship in the Splendour of Holiness

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A monthly magazine written and published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are—to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to mankind; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn people that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's worldwide Kingdom.

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EDITORIAL

"I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO BE SAVED!"



When you look at the standard of thought, speech and behaviour that Jesus Christ requires of his followers, and then you look at yourself, it's a natural reaction—"I'm just not good enough! I'll never be good enough!" The good news is, that's OK! He knows that we're not good enough.

The Standard of Perfection

God gave to His people Israel a Law, which is known as the Law of Moses, and commanded them to obey it (Deuteronomy 13:4). They did not keep the Law. Even those who tried to weren't able. When we come to the Bible's New Testament, we see that God was actually not surprised at this. He knows the standard He set is too high!

'Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin' (Romans 3:19–20).

Think about that. The purpose of the Law of Moses was not to make people righteous. It was to show that we're not capable of living up to God's standards, so that we will ask for God's forgiveness and thus begin a relationship with Him.

The letter to the Romans continues: *'But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (vs. 21–24).*

We're all sinners, we all fall short of God's standard. But God has made a way by which we can be *justified*—that is, we can be counted as righteous—by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He died for you and me (John 3:16). It's God's gift, it's not something we earn.*

In the Gospels we see the Lord Jesus interacting with all kinds of people from all sections of society. The group who were most antagonistic, and with whom he seems to have had the most confrontations, were the scribes and Pharisees. These were the upright, respectable pillars of Jewish society. They prided themselves in keeping the Law of Moses (in their own way), and despised others who did not. They thought they deserved God's favour.

Jesus diagnosed their problem, on one occasion when they derided him for associating with sinners: *"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).* God does not want self-righteous people. He wants people who know they're not good enough, because they will appreciate their need for forgiveness.

Infinite Grace

OK, we're all sinners. But some of us are worse than others. Maybe you're weighed down by some particular guilt that seems too big to be forgiven? (You're not alone, many people are.) How do I know that God can forgive even someone like me?

A quick consideration of some of the great people of faith in the Bible shows that there is no limit to God's forgiveness. Think for example of the apostle Paul, who spent his early career persecuting Christians. Later he wrote, *'The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost' (1 Timothy 1:15).*

Jesus Christ died for you and me, to save us from our sins. So, who are we to say that we're not good enough to be saved? Just think about it, that's an awful thing to say. To suggest that you're too bad for God to forgive, is to suggest that God's mercy is not good enough.

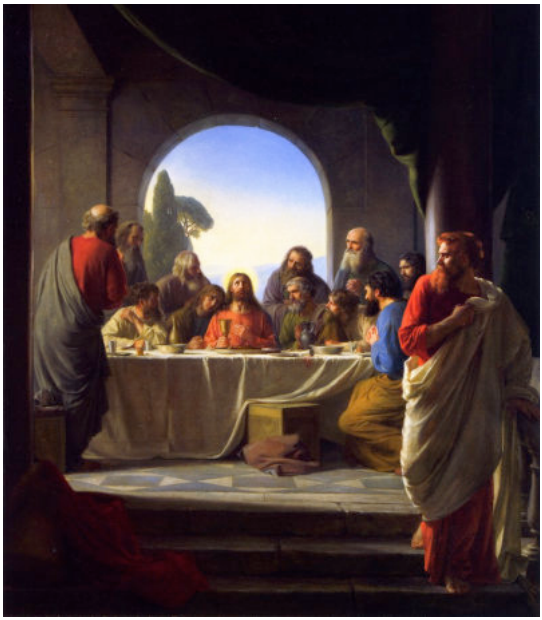
So, if you're inclined to think "I'm rubbish, why should God be interested in me?" you just need to make a small adjustment to your attitude. Instead, think "I'm rubbish, why should God be interested in me? But He is!"



* To better understand how the function of the Law was to bring people to Christ, you could read Galatians 3 and Hebrews 10.

REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

At the Last Supper, the meal which Jesus Christ shared with his disciples just before he was crucified, the atmosphere must have been really charged. All of those present knew that something was about to happen, but probably only two people knew exactly what that would be. Those two were the Lord Jesus and Judas Iscariot. By the time they reached the upper room where the meal was to be held, Judas had already agreed with the chief priests to betray Jesus, and was only waiting for the right moment (Luke 22:8–13). He could not do so until he had left the upper room, because Jesus had carefully made sure beforehand that only Peter and John knew where they would meet (v. 8).



During the meal, Jesus washed the feet of all the disciples (John 13:1–12). Presumably this included Judas. This was not only a lesson in humility, it was also an appeal to Judas to think again. A little later, Jesus offered a mark of special favour to him. *'Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot' (v. 26).* The morsel of bread dipped in the savoury sauce was a mark of special favour. Was Jesus making a final appeal to Judas not to commit the sin he had planned? If that was so, then it was not too late for Judas to repent, to change his mind.

After Judas had betrayed Jesus, he threw the fee he had received, 30 pieces of silver, back at the priests (Matthew 27:3–10). He could have done so earlier. Even Judas then was not too wicked for the Lord God to save, if only he had repented. It is the tragedy of Judas that he then took his own life, without doing so.

The Magician



Later in the New Testament there is an account of great wrongdoing which appears to be forgiven. Philip, one of the seven members of the congregation in Jerusalem who were appointed to look after the well-being of widows, went on a preaching trip to Samaria. It went well, and a number of people believed what he said. The disciples in Jerusalem asked two of the apostles, Peter and John, to go to Samaria to ensure that these new converts received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

One of the converts was a magician called Simon. He had had a wide following because of the tricks he was able to perform. (Even today magicians can have a huge audience.) Simon quickly realised that the power of the Holy Spirit enabled miracles which were much more impressive than his tricks, however convincing they were.

'Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit"' (*Acts 8:18–19*).

Peter rebuked him sharply: *"May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity"* (*vs. 20–23).*

Simon's reaction was impressive, and contrite: *"Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me"* (*v. 24).*

We are told nothing more about Simon, but presumably Peter did as he asked, so even this dreadful condemnation did not mean that Simon was beyond redemption. He could find forgiveness if he truly tried, and he appears to have done so.

Encouragement

These two incidents should encourage us. If we have been

baptised and become a child of God, then whatever the sin we have committed, whatever awful black moments lie hidden in our past, or whatever awful things we might still do, the Bible teaches that it is always possible to be forgiven, if we repent. God's principles are eternal, they do not change. So whatever the sin we may have committed, true repentance will produce forgiveness.

One of the psalms written by King David is very explicit about that. *'I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD", and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance' (Psalm 32:5–7).*

This psalm was written after David had committed at least two dreadful sins. He had committed adultery with a woman who was married to one of his top rank soldiers, and had then had her husband murdered in an attempt to cover it up. Both sins would merit stoning under the Jewish Law of Moses, but David was forgiven by the Lord God because of his true repentance. It is true that he continued to suffer the consequences of his sin, but his sin was forgiven.

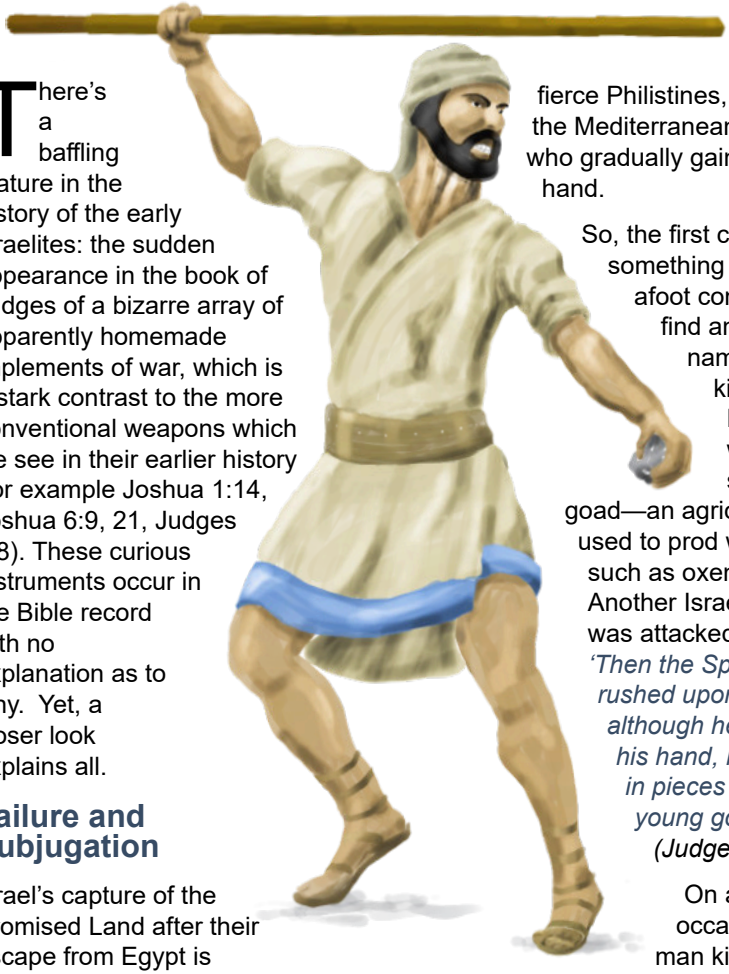
Another psalm which David wrote after his repentance and forgiveness is a poignant and moving prayer which any of us could use. *'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgement' (Psalm 51:2–4).*

The psalm continues, *'For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise' (vs. 16–17).* If it was true for David, it can be true for us also.

MARK SHEPPARD



WARRIORS WITHOUT WEAPONS



There's a baffling feature in the history of the early Israelites: the sudden appearance in the book of Judges of a bizarre array of apparently homemade implements of war, which is a stark contrast to the more conventional weapons which we see in their earlier history (for example Joshua 1:14, Joshua 6:9, 21, Judges 1:8). These curious instruments occur in the Bible record with no explanation as to why. Yet, a closer look explains all.

Failure and Subjugation

Israel's capture of the Promised Land after their escape from Egypt is related in the book of Joshua. Although a success, it was not entirely so and Israel frequently found themselves engaged in battle, particularly with the fierce Philistines, occupants of the Mediterranean coastlands, who gradually gained the upper hand.

So, the first clue that something unusual was afoot comes when we find an Israelite named Shamgar killing 600 Philistines, not with sword or spear, but an ox goad—an agricultural tool used to prod working animals such as oxen and cattle. Another Israelite, Samson, was attacked by a lion.

'Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat'
(Judges 14:5–6).

On another occasion this same man killed a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:15). Clearly daggers, swords and similar instruments were

*Adapted from *Undesigned Scriptural Coincidences* by J J Blunt.

in short supply for the Israelites at that time.

Even after this era of the Judges in the reign of the first king, Saul, the same arms-shortage is evident. The shepherd boy, David, killed the giant Goliath with a pebble and sling, the only form of combat he knew (1 Samuel 17:34–35, 38–40).

When David became a fugitive from King Saul he gathered fighting men around him. They appear to have been armed with bows and arrows and slings (1 Chronicles 12:2). There is no mention of swords or spears.

Once, when king Saul went into battle, we're told that only he and his son (out of the whole Israelite army) possessed swords (1 Samuel 13:22).

So what is going on? How is it that this once-invincible, well-armed people were now resorting to home-made weapons—jawbones, slings, bows, arrows and ox goads—to defend themselves?

The Explanation

The answer comes in two simple verses:

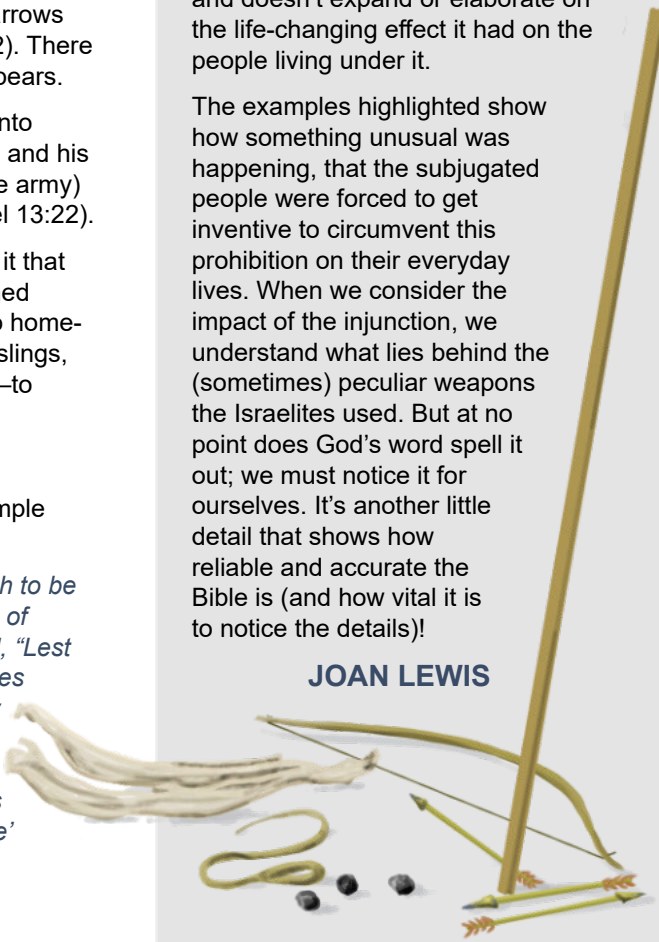
'Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears." But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his ploughshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle' (1 Samuel 13:19–20).

So, the dominant Philistines had introduced a law that prohibited the Israelites from owning any metal workshops. They were forced to pay Philistine blacksmiths to sharpen their agricultural implements for them. This kept the Philistines in overall control of both the Israelites' agricultural life and their ability to defend themselves.

It is fascinating that the Bible only mentions this Philistine 'law' once and doesn't expand or elaborate on the life-changing effect it had on the people living under it.

The examples highlighted show how something unusual was happening, that the subjugated people were forced to get inventive to circumvent this prohibition on their everyday lives. When we consider the impact of the injunction, we understand what lies behind the (sometimes) peculiar weapons the Israelites used. But at no point does God's word spell it out; we must notice it for ourselves. It's another little detail that shows how reliable and accurate the Bible is (and how vital it is to notice the details)!

JOAN LEWIS



"DON'T MAKE ME LEAVE YOU!"

Naomi had lost her husband, her sons and her place in the Promised Land. But she still had two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. Although she had lost everything in human terms, she had not lost her faith in God, and her belief that He was in control. We see this in her speeches throughout the book, and in this she is like another Old Testament character, Job, who suffered terribly but trusted God (read Job 1:20-22, 2:9-10). Both of them would eventually be blessed richly by God.



Time to Go Back

Naomi heard that the famine was over in Israel, that God had visited His people to give them food (Ruth 1:6). So she decided to return, for she knew that her hope was in God, in His promises, in His land. This is clear from the discussions that follow, as she recognises that God's sovereign will is at work and her future does not lie in recreating her family in Moab.

It's a helpful thought—how do we react when we have made a bad choice in our life? We might carry on regardless because we are too proud to admit we are wrong, or blame everyone else, even God! How much better to follow Naomi's example and recognise where we were wrong, change our ways and act to improve the situation and get closer to God. Like the lost son in Jesus' parable (Luke 15:11–32), we will find that God is a loving, forgiving father Who is waiting for us to turn to Him, and will accept us with joy when we do.

Naomi acted—she got up, packed her things and set off—her daughters-in-law with her. It reflects well on all of them that they had this

close relationship, and Ruth and Orpah had not already gone back to their families. They were clearly attached to Naomi.

"Please Turn Back"

Despite this, Naomi pleaded twice with them that they would go back to their families and stay in Moab. Maybe she didn't want them really to turn back but was doing what she thought was best for them. It would be very hard being a Moabite in Israel, with no family for sustenance or protection, with a new way of life and a new religion.

'Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept' (Ruth 1:8–9).

At that time, the mother's house would be the appropriate place for an unmarried woman. Note that Naomi uses the formal name of God ('Yahweh', generally written as LORD in the English Bible), emphasising the uniqueness of the God of Israel.

At first, both Ruth and Orpah refused to leave her: *"No, we will return with you to your people" (v. 10).* It's a very loving, honourable, and emotional response, but there was no mention of God or His Promises.

The second plea comes next, in vs. 11–14. Naomi's tone is tender but firm. She didn't have any other sons for them to marry, and even if she had more babies, the young widows wouldn't wait for them to grow up. Naomi here is alluding to a provision in the Law of Moses, sometimes called 'levirate marriage'. The instructions are in Deuteronomy 25:5–10: if a man married but died childless, then the nearest eligible male family member should marry the widow. The firstborn son of that union would be named as the dead man's offspring to continue his family line and his inheritance. This is important in the developing story of Ruth.

This time Orpah (one meaning of her name is 'back of the neck') left and returned to Moab. But Ruth was different.



Ruth Goes with Naomi

Verse 14 is a turning point, and we read that Ruth stayed, and held tight to Naomi. It's a strong expression and reflects how tightly a husband and wife should hold on to each other. Naomi tried one last time to send Ruth back, reminding her of her Moabite heritage, her Moabite family, her Moabite religion. But Ruth had made up her mind.

Ruth's response in vs. 16–17 is quite wonderful and has given joy to many, even being used in wedding services. It's the commitment of a true believer:

> **Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.**
>
> *Ruth 1:16–17*

"My decision is made; I am committed to you; I will follow your example as well as your footsteps; I want to go in the same direction as you." She wanted to live where Naomi lived and embrace God's people of promise as her people. She recognised that salvation is with the God of Israel, and used Hebrew names for God, which Naomi must have taught her. When she said that she would die where Naomi died, she was making this allegiance for the whole of her life.

She was leaving behind everything from Moab—her home, her family, any future children, and her financial security. She was putting her confidence in the God of Israel and travelling to be among His people, in His land. She had learned from Naomi and been converted, had stated her faith and was putting that faith into action. That statement in vs. 16–17 is powerful, and perhaps one worth writing down and memorising, or putting somewhere where we see it often.

In a similar way, Jesus explained that following him may be difficult, as we turn our trust away from the things of this world, which are ultimately transient. It will cause a fracture in our lives, which he describes in Matthew 10:34–39. But there is a great promise: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you' (Matthew 6:33).*

Ruth's mind was made up, and she had said her piece. Naomi could see it, and they journeyed on together towards Bethlehem, and their destiny.

Arriving in the Promised Land

When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was astir.



The family were well known, probably they had been wealthy, and they all knew about their ill-fated journey to Moab. But what had happened, they asked? They barely recognised Naomi, with the ravages of time and the effects of tragedy and hardship, and she told them to call her Mara (which means 'bitterness') rather than Naomi (which means 'pleasantness') (Ruth 1:20).

She told them how God had witnessed against her and afflicted her, implying that she saw her sorry state as a punishment from God. The good news, she would find out, was that God was indeed in control, and would eventually make her story a happy one.

Naomi saw the hand of God at work and recognised that all the conditions of her life, good or bad, were not chance but came from God and for a reason. It's another point for us to ponder—when we're unsure of why things happen to us or why things don't go to plan, we can trust that God knows best, and if we let Him, He will shape our lives and characters to bring us to His kingdom. Followers of God can have great confidence in this. Read Romans 8:18–39.

We are presented with Ruth as a young woman with no means of financial support, with no family other than Naomi, with no future in human terms; she had no natural right to be there at all, had no birthright to the promises and would be despised by the Israelites. She is even described as *'Ruth the Moabite… who returned from the country of Moab' (Ruth 1:22)*. For much of this story, Ruth would not be allowed to forget where she came from, and neither are we as readers.

But God had a wonderful future planned for Ruth, both then and eternally. She represents anyone who wants to be part of God's family and share in His promises for the future. So Ruth's story can be our story.

'Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ' (Ephesians 2:12–13).

ANDREW HALE

(to be continued)

"SHOW US THE FATHER"

In John 14:6 Jesus' apostles heard their Lord declare: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* By this he meant that he is the living channel by whom God is known and approached. All other paths to a knowledge of God are partial and incomplete compared to that which Jesus embodied.

For some people that is not enough. For at least one of his apostles that was not enough: *'Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us"' (v.8).* Philip wanted a more direct vision of God, perhaps of the kind that had once been granted to Moses, Ezekiel and Isaiah in the Old Testament, and he assumed that Jesus had the power to grant the same to his disciples. In other words, he wanted the certainty that comes from the direct evidence of the senses, just as a similar mentality in our own day wants positive proof of God's existence before they will believe.

> "WHOEVER HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER. HOW CAN YOU SAY, 'SHOW US THE FATHER'?"

But Philip's request showed a profound misunderstanding of what Jesus was trying to teach. His answer to Philip, therefore, and to all who want a direct knowledge of God was: *"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (v.9).*

There were many who *saw* Jesus: scribes and Pharisees, Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod. But none of these recognized in Jesus a reflection of the character of God. The words of Jesus mean more than seeing him physically with the eyes, they mean seeing with the eye of faith. Throughout the ages many have never seen him in a physical sense but have recognized in the record of his earthly life a reflection of the divine. In healing the sick, reaching out to the marginalized, forgiving the penitent, challenging the self-righteous and calling upon his followers to make costly sacrifices for his sake we see a reflection of the character of the Father. There was perfect harmony of will, character and purpose between Father and Son. In that one human life God has, in a unique way, revealed Himself to us: *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works" (v. 10).*

PAUL WASSON

WORSHIP IN THE SPLENDOUR OF HOLINESS

'Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.'

(Psalm 24:3–4)

More than once in the Psalms that were composed for temple worship, King David revealed his innermost emotions, especially when he wrote, *'Worship the LORD in the splendour of holiness' (Psalm 96:9).*

This phrase is set amongst other worship criteria which climax in the greatness and majesty of God. It is an acknowledgement of God's powers and wonders and how He has wrought victory for His people in overcoming their enemies. It also encapsulates God's supremacy over all the 'no-gods' of the nations. *'Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales' (Isaiah 40:15).* It is as if the 'splendour of holiness' encapsulates the very being of God Himself when He is praised and glorified for what He was, what He is and what He will be with His unchanging and flawless character, for such are His ways.

What Does it Mean?

The phrase *'splendour of holiness'* occurs three times in the ESV translation of the Bible (which is used in the *Glad Tidings* magazine), all in the Old Testament. These three references are found in 1 Chronicles 16:29, Psalm 29:2, and Psalm 96:9. Different versions of the Bible offer different translations. You may have a Bible which develops the meanings by additional marginal notes. Some different meanings offered for *'the splendour of holiness'* are:

(1) in His glorious sanctuary

(2) in holy array, or in holy garments

(3) in the splendour of His holiness

(4) on the holy mountains

(5) in His holy courts

(6) in the splendours of your saints

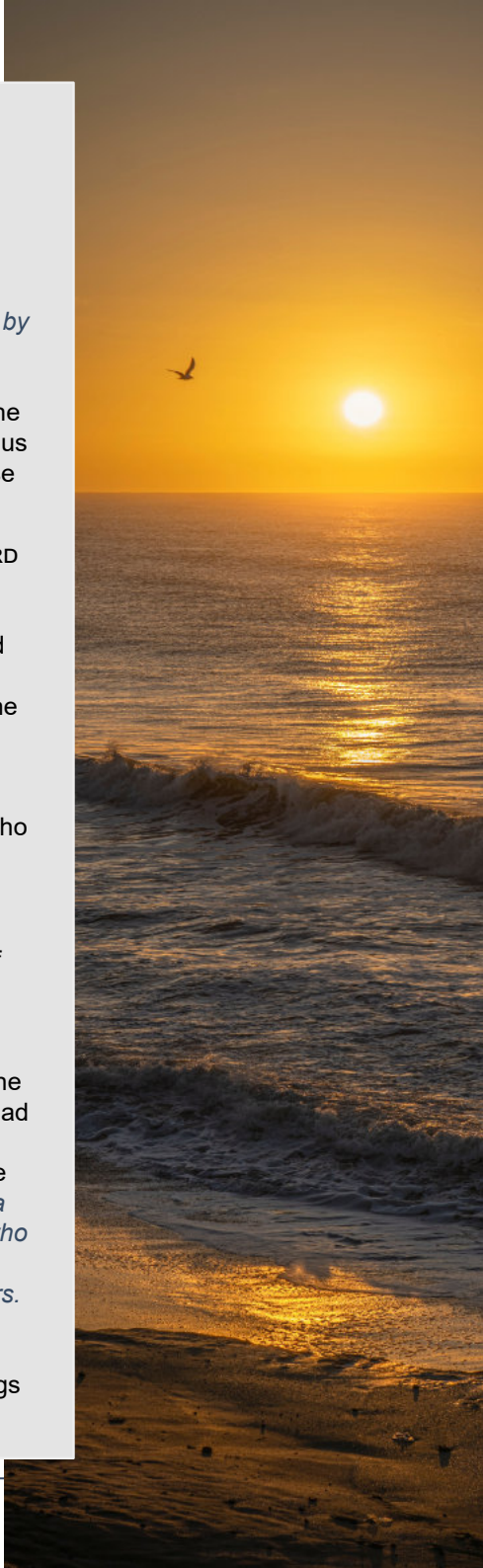
(7) arrayed in holy majesty.

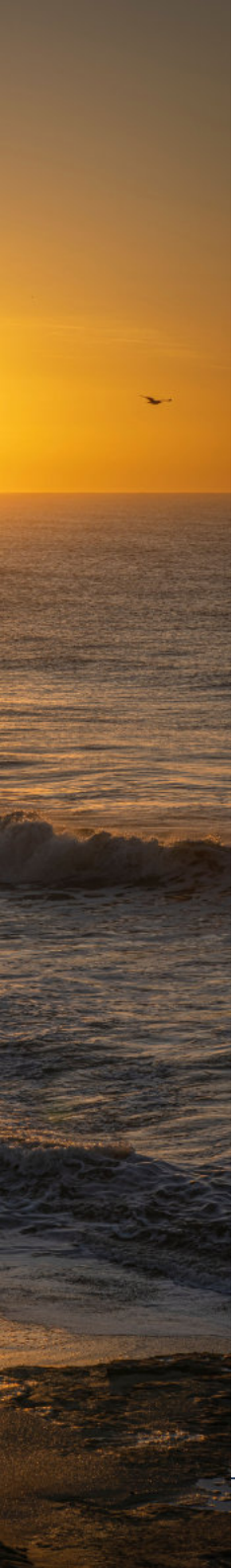
It seems there was some difficulty in translating this phrase, and although some of these meanings do not appear to be consistent, we should accept that *'all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16)*; that is, when God speaks in the Bible, He reveals His true and faultless mind to us for our benefit. So, what are we to make of these variations in meaning?

What strongly emerges is that praise of the LORD is offered by those who have access to the "glorious sanctuary" and are clothed in "holy garments". This may remind us of the dedicated and God-designed garments of the High Priest, who served before God in the tabernacle and the temple, for God said to Moses, *'You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty' (Exodus 28:2)*. It is offered by those who are called "saints"—that is, people who are trying to be set apart to God.

King David and the Ark

In 1 Chronicles 13 to 16 we read how the Ark of the Covenant, the gold-clad chest which was a symbol of God's presence, was brought into Jerusalem by King David. David's preparations were thorough and thoughtful. The ark was borne on the shoulders of appointed priests, as God had said it should be. It was accompanied by music and singing performed by the Levites, who were also correctly clothed. *'David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as also were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers. And David wore a linen ephod' (1 Chronicles 15:27).* David knew from reading the Law of Moses that these were the right things to do. It was a joyful occasion with freewill





sacrifices and offerings of thanksgiving, music, singing and dancing. It was joyfully holy and pleasing to God.

David had prepared for the building and worship in the temple which Solomon his son would build.
1 Chronicles 16 records what he had planned. We are told in verse 7: *'Then on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the LORD by Asaph and his brothers.'*

The song that follows contains parts of at least six psalms (96, 105, 106, 107, 118, 136), the full versions of which were later included in the Book of Psalms in the Bible. The longest sections are from Psalm 105 (vs. 2–15) and 96 (vs. 1–13).

So the phrase *'Worship the LORD in the splendour of holiness'* has its origin in the arrangements which were made for worship in the new temple, and the events surrounding the carrying of the ark to Jerusalem and its accompanying worship and joy.

King Jehoshaphat's Deliverance

The next occurrence is in a time of war. Judah was outnumbered and about to be invaded. The account is in 2 Chronicles 20. The Jewish King Jehoshaphat offered a fervent prayer to God, and an answer came in v. 14 from the prophet Jahaziel (who was a descendant of David's musician Asaph). He told them they would not need to fight this battle—God would destroy their enemies.

'And when [Jehoshaphat] had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures for ever."' (v. 21).

Psalms of Praise

The two psalms 29 and 96 both describe the majesty and power and knowledge of God in many and different ways, especially over His natural creation and the people of the earth. God is greater, He is supreme over all, with steadfast truth and righteousness. The people are encouraged to sing and to praise Him and to fear before Him *'in the splendour of holiness'*, and to declare to the world that God is King and reigns over all.

These two wonderful psalms look forward to God's glorious Kingdom when the Lord Jesus has returned to the earth.

Psalm 110 is a prophecy about Jesus Christ when he has returned as King. In v. 3 we read, *'Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.'*

So far, we have suggested that the phrase refers to the holy garments of the priests and the Levites, which were worn during the tabernacle and temple services. But Psalm 110 describes the new nature that will be given to those who have been faithful, when Christ returns (1 Corinthians 15:50–55). They will be given the strength of everlasting youth. They will be granted *'divine nature'* by the Lord Jesus Christ following lives of work and love in his service in the days of their mortality (2 Peter 1:4).

This is the great climax, the apex of God's purpose of redemption. He is preparing His people for everlasting lives of continual praise and love and joy in His kingdom. This is why they *'offer themselves freely'*, because they are accepted and changed to be made like *'his glorious body' (Philippians 3:21)*. They will now serve with him and for him and do whatever he says, and follow him wherever he goes (Revelation 14:4). The immortality given to them is likened to *'the dew of your youth'*, as they are invigorated, never again to feel tired, or weary or to experience death. *'They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint' (Isaiah 40:31).*

VIC AUCOTT

(to be continued)

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THE PEARL OF GREAT VALUE

The Lord Jesus said, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it"* *(Matthew 13:45–46).*

The 'Kingdom of Heaven' is a term the Bible sometimes uses for the Kingdom of God on earth. It is called the 'Kingdom of Heaven' because it's the Kingdom of the God of Heaven (Daniel 2:44).

Why did Jesus compare the Kingdom of Heaven, in this parable, to a pearl of great value?

Certainly, being a follower of Christ is a great privilege and offers amazing benefits for those who believe in him and the Father. It offers immortality when he returns: *"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (v. 43).*

The apostle Paul said, *"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30–31).*

On that day, the faithful will enter into the Kingdom (Matthew 25:34).

How to Get the Pearl

Paul in his letters says a great deal about how Christians should follow Christ and obey his commandments. For example, Romans 8 is a chapter full of guidance for those who have embarked on the new life in Christ:

'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For





God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God' (vs. 1–8).

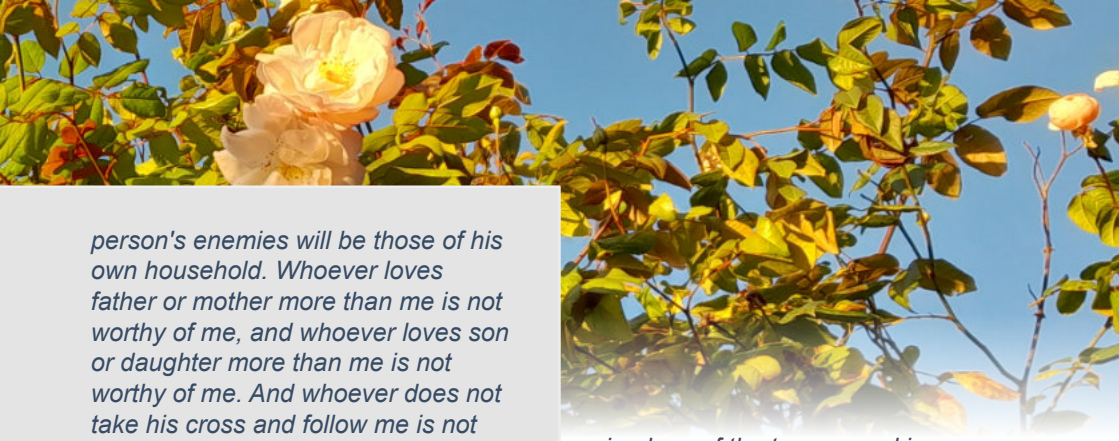
There is a glorious future awaiting those who are granted a place in the Kingdom of God.

Paul continues, *'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us' (v. 18).* In this verse, he is looking forward to the time when there is going to be a regeneration and restoration of the whole world, when Christ returns. We learn that at that time God's glory will fill the whole earth (Habakkuk 2:14, Isaiah 6:3, 66:12,19, Psalm 72:19). There will be world peace, and no more war (Isaiah 2:4); nature will be changed, animals that were once predators will be in harmony with the creatures they preyed upon (Isaiah 65:25). This is the great prospect for the faithful to look for in their lives—on that day the Lord God will restore His creation back to how it was in the beginning (Genesis 1–2).

Not an Easy Life

In the meantime, we are told life in Christ will not be easy. Paul said, *'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22).* The record in Acts shows us the difficulties that beset him as he preached the Gospel. He describes some of them in 2 Corinthians 11:16–33. Many followers of Christ have suffered and still do suffer for their faith. This suffering is described as chastening, to teach patience and obedience (Proverbs 19:18, Hebrews 12:6–7).

Jesus himself told his disciples he was not bringing peace, but trouble: *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a*



person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" *(Matthew 10:34–39).*

The Hope of the Faithful

The hope of all Christ's faithful followers is to be granted eternal life and become inhabitants of the Kingdom of God. And despite the trials and tribulations their faith might bring upon them, they must hold their faith to the end: *'Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful'* *(Hebrews 10:23).* In so doing they will be like their master Jesus Christ, *'who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God'* *(12:2).*

Jesus, by his death on the cross, opened our way to reconciliation with the Lord God, so that He can become our Heavenly Father. *'For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility'* *(Ephesians 2:14–16).*

Indeed the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life in the Kingdom of God, is the great privilege the Lord Jesus has bestowed upon those who look for his appearing from heaven, to establish the Kingdom upon Earth again (Matthew 26:26–29, Acts 1:6–11). This is the pearl of great value for all who seek the Kingdom of God.

GRAHAME A COOPER

Questions? Comments?

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YOUR QUESTIONS

What is the scriptural backing for worship on Sunday and not on the seventh day Sabbath?

EE → DMP

It was the custom of the First Century church to meet together on Sundays (see Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2), or possibly on Saturday evenings after six o'clock (for Jewish believers this would have been Sunday, because the Jewish day starts at 6pm). Gentile Christians were not expected to keep a Saturday Sabbath. When the letter about essential rules was sent to them in Acts 15:28–29 there is no mention of keeping the Sabbath. And the apostle Paul says nobody should be censured for not keeping Sabbaths or other days from the Law of Moses: *'Let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ' (Colossians 2:16–17).*

Are the laws and ordinances of the Old Covenant on unclean meat and holy days still valid for Christians today?

DMP ← EE

Colossians 2:16–17 gives a clear ruling on this topic. The Law of Moses pointed forward to the coming of Jesus, but once he had come, the Law was no longer in force. *'The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian' (Galatians 3:24–25).* The new wine of Jesus replaced the old wine of the Law (Matthew 9:17). The book of Hebrews addresses this subject.

WORDSEARCH

L	E	U	M	A	S	R	U	J
X	E	Z	E	K	I	E	L	E
L	Z	M	J	L	P	T	D	R
U	U	A	I	S	F	E	T	E
G	F	A	A	S	Z	P	N	M
W	Z	L	P	G	A	H	L	I
J	M	A	L	Z	O	I	G	A
S	Q	B	N	J	S	Q	A	H
E	J	T	S	U	S	E	J	H

BALAAM
EZEKIEL
ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
JESUS
JOHN
PAUL
PETER
SAMUEL

Helpful references:
Numbers 23:18–19;
1 Samuel 15:28–29;
Isaiah 9:13–16;
Jeremiah 14:13–15;
Ezekiel 13:3–9; John 18:37;
2 Peter 2:1–2; 1 John 2:26–27;
Acts 26:24–25.

(The book is Psalms.)

Truth is a very important concept in the Bible. The grid contains the names of nine men who said things about truth.

Match the names with the following statements about them:

- Two who while on trial claimed to be speaking words of truth;
- Two prophets who said that God cannot lie;
- Three prophets who criticized false prophets who lied;
- Two apostles who warned about false teachers in the church.

Hidden in the grid there is also the name of a book of poetry in the Bible, which refers dozens of times to the truth of God and His word.

ANNA HART



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