

# Scripture Truth



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The Lamb in the Midst

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Resurrection, ascension, kingdom

The Believer's resource: The Spirit of God

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# SCRIPTURE TRUTH

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# Alone

“There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when [the high priest] goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out...” (Leviticus 16:17, NKJV).

The crucifixion was a very public event. Crowds of people were present, and mostly staring at the Lord Jesus. The Lord interacted with some of them. He prayed for the forgiveness of the soldiers, promised paradise to one of the robbers, and committed His mother to John.

And yet through all this the Lord was alone. Our Lord recalled the words of Psalm 69:21 on the cross as death approached (see John 19:28); He would also recall verse 20, “I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none.” Despite having been told (Matthew 20:28), no disciple detected what was really taking place, not even the women. Most particularly, as He died the Lord was utterly alone. No man could be “in the house”; when He made propitiation for sin (Hebrews 2:17); it was far too holy for any even to have the fellowship of sympathy with. The One who received the unceasing worship of the seraphim (Isaiah 6:3) had to be entirely alone.

But then in Isaiah 63:3, 5 we also read the solemn words,

“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me... I looked, but there was no one to help... Therefore my own arm brought salvation.”

None in heaven or earth will be found worthy to open the book of judgment except the slain Lamb (Revelation 5:3-7). He will tread the winepress *alone*.

Finally, we read in Genesis 45:1 that Joseph said, “Make everyone go out from me.’ So no-one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers.” This may prefigure the Lord’s making Himself known to penitent Israel in time to come, but to us surely it can prefigure the rapture. There shall truly be no-one else “in the house” on that secret, wonderful day when we see Him as He is.

THEO BALDERSTON

# Resurrection, ascension, kingdom

## What the psalms say

Peter Ollerhead

*This article originated in 2015 as an Easter-time talk on the “Truth for Today” programme for Premier Radio (see <https://www.truth4today.org.uk/>)*

In his book, *The Cross in the New Testament*,<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris stated, “The cross dominates the New Testament ... it is referred to as summing up the content of Christianity: ‘We preach Christ crucified’; ‘I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified’ (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2, KJV).

These are just two Scriptures of many that Morris uses to concentrate our attention upon the cross. He goes on to state, “Each New-Testament writer writes as one who has come to know salvation by the way of the cross. He writes, moreover, as one who longs to bring others into the same knowledge of salvation ... because they are convinced that there is no other way of salvation than this alone ... The cross dominates everything they write.”

A chorus that was popular when I was much younger says,

“There’s a way back to God, from the dark paths of sin,  
There’s a door that is open and you may go in,  
At Calvary’s cross is where you begin,  
When you come as a sinner to Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps readers also remember these simple lines. They remind us that the cross is God’s only answer to the seeking sinner.

However if the cross is central to the Christian gospel, so is the resurrection. It, too, was at the very centre of the gospel preached by the apostles. I recall once talking to a young student brought up in a Christian home, who said that the most important element of the gospel was that Jesus had died for our sins, not that He was raised from the dead.

Such an idea is entirely unbiblical, as two Scripture passages will show.

The first is Acts 2:14-39, Peter’s first sermon, delivered at the feast of Pentecost following the resurrection. Its main point was that the Crucified One has been raised from the dead. Peter proclaimed that,

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<sup>1</sup> L. Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Exeter, Paternoster, 2nd edn., 1967), p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> E. H. Swinstead (1882-1950).

“...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men” (v.23, ESV).

But he immediately continued,

“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”

Further confirmation of the centrality of resurrection to the gospel is found in Paul’s famous statement of “the way of salvation“ in Romans 10:9-10,

“Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

I would suggest that this passage alone is sufficient to show the importance of our realising that the Lord Jesus is alive, and that His resurrection is an essential part of the historical events of that first Easter. These are truths that enable us, in the power of the Spirit, to have a relationship with the living God.

I now wish to consider this further by considering statements in two psalms. The first of these is in Psalm 16, one of the psalms that Peter quoted in the sermon just cited.

The disciples had been witnesses to the Lord’s resurrection. They were now, as led by the Spirit, seeking to convince the crowds that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah of God according to the prophetic Scriptures. The Lord Himself had used the Psalms to this purpose (e.g. Mark 12:35-37), and Peter was following in His footsteps. Peter quoted the following passage from Psalm 16:

“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fulness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore.” (Psalm 16:10-11, quoted in Acts 2:27-28).

These words, as Peter pointed out, had been written by king David (see Psalm 16, title), but (as Peter also pointed out) David could not have been speaking

*If the cross is central to the Christian gospel,  
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*“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death,  
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about himself, for he, indeed, was simply dead, as the presence of his tomb in the city of Jerusalem testified. David, therefore, must have been prophesying about the coming Messiah, who, Peter argues, was Jesus of Nazareth. The psalm spoke in the above quotation of someone who had not been abandoned to “Sheol”, (i.e., the place of the dead), nor allowed to “see corruption”; therefore these verses could only refer to the Jesus of Nazareth whom God had raised up, as the apostles had all witnessed (see Acts 2:29-32). *He* was the promised Messiah.

For clarity’s sake I ought to emphasise that Peter and the other apostles did not need these verses from Psalm 16 to initiate them into the truth of the resurrection of the Lord. *They* had seen and talked with Him at various locations in the days and weeks following His death on the cross. They had no doubts that He was alive again. Mark records, for example, that,

“And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you’” (Mark 16:5-7).

And, as the apostle Paul described,

“...he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:5-7).

Therefore Peter did not cite the above verses in Psalm 16 as proof that Christ had risen. The disciples’ own eye-witness testimony was proof of that. Rather, Peter was using the fact that the resurrection had been foretold in Psalm 16 to validate the claim that the Lord Jesus was the promised Messiah.



And the Lord had not only risen: He had ascended. During His earthly ministry He Himself had, according to all three synoptic Gospels, used the prophecy of His coming ascension in Psalm 110:1 to enforce the truth of His Messiahship. I have already alluded to this:

“And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, ‘How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet. David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?’ And the great throng heard him gladly” (Mark 12:35-37).

The psalm commencing with the words, “The Lord said unto my Lord...” is 110, and it is also one of David’s psalms, as the Lord’s listeners well knew. Therefore it is David himself who called the One invited to sit at God’s right hand, “my Lord”; and someone whom David acknowledged to be greater than himself could only be the Messiah. The divine invitation to “sit at my right hand” implies *ascension*, and the disciples who would see the Lord in resurrection would also, forty days after His resurrection, witness Him ascending to heaven (Acts 1:1-3, 9). This fulfilment of Psalm 110:1 would show that Jesus was indeed the “my Lord” of David’s psalm: He is the Messiah.

Another Old-Testament prophecy of the ascension of the Lord is found in Psalm 68:18,

“You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.”

This tells us of the victory, over Satan and his forces and over hell itself, that the ascension represents.

I am of the opinion that the ascension of the Lord Jesus is a neglected truth among us Christians. We emphasise (and so we should) the cross and, usually, also the resurrection of the Lord, yet rarely centre upon His bodily ascension back into heaven itself, where He is waiting for that glorious day when all His enemies will be made the footstool of His feet (Psalm 110:1 as alluded to in Hebrews 10:12-13). Peter also quoted from Psalm 110 on the day of Pentecost to show that “God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:34-36). He had said just previously, “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of

*The ascension of the Lord Jesus is a neglected truth among us Christians. The truth of the ascension is not some academic exercise to tease the minds of theologians. We have One in the presence of God who is the great High Priest.*

the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing” (Acts 2:33).

One of my favourite verses in Hebrews is 9:24, “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.” Note that last phrase, “...now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.” The truth of the ascension is not some academic exercise to tease the minds of theologians. Rather is it a practical and important aspect of our Christian life and faith. We have One in the presence of God who is the great High Priest over the house of God (cp. Hebrews 10:21).

At one time the BBC used to play a hymn on Ascension Day, often

“Hail the day that sees Him rise,  
To His throne beyond the skies;  
Christ, the Lamb for sinners given,  
Enters now the highest heaven.”<sup>3</sup>

Such words speak a spiritual truth that puts a spring in our step, especially as we face the start of a new working day.



The right hand of God is the place of power and honour (cp. Exodus 15:6; 1 Kings 2:19; Psalms 20:6; 45:9 etc.). That is the place to which Christ has been exalted by His ascension (Ephesians 1:20ff). This leads me, finally, to mention the kingdom of the Messiah, also a theme of Psalm 68.

“O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice. Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the skies. Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel – he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God” (verses 32-35).

These closing verses of the psalm are some of the many in the Old Testament that refer to the kingdom which will be set up when the Messiah reigns. They tell us that, since the kingdom (or, kingly authority) of the Lord extends to all nations, He is calling upon those very nations to acknowledge His sovereignty. Calvin’s comments on these verses are quite pertinent: “...the psalmist argues, that should God liberally supply the wants of His people, the consequences would be to increase the fear of His name, since all ends of the earth would, by

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Wesley (1707-1788).

what they saw of His fatherly regard to His own, submit themselves with greater cheerfulness to His government.”

However, “we do not yet see everything in subjection to [Jesus]” (Hebrews 2:8). The Lord is not now acting in royal power in this present world, for there is far too much evil and wickedness for us ever to sing that He reigns here now. This is the interlude of His matchless grace and forbearance towards sinners, the period before the “until” of Psalm 110:1 is fulfilled and His enemies shall be made His footstool. Such is, in effect, the gist of Peter’s sermon at Pentecost (see Acts 2:34-37). In common with other contributors to this magazine, I believe that all of these “kingdom” Scriptures have yet to be fulfilled. Only on the day when the Lord Jesus returns and reigns as the Messiah in Jerusalem will the fulness of the Kingdom of Heaven be known.

Meanwhile we can pray that “His kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10, Luke 11:2), while we wait for His appearing. The kingdom now is in “mystery” form (Matthew 13:11), and hidden in the hearts and lives of His people. I write “hidden”, and yet the effects of the rule of the Lord Jesus in our hearts should be visible in the lives of each one of us. He should dominate our thoughts and affections, for He is the Lord, supreme and glorious in the heavens. He has been into this world to suffer and die to release the love and power of the living God into the lives of His believing people. He dominated death, and rose victorious to ascend to the throne of all power and might.

I conclude this article with a couple of questions:

1. Do we believe in the Lord Jesus who died on the cross, then arose victorious from the grave to ascend into heaven; and are we waiting for that day when He will return in glory?
2. Do we allow Him to reign in our hearts now in the power of the Spirit of God, thus enabling us to live as His disciples?

He is the risen, ascended Lord of All, shortly to return to this world where He will reign as King! So let us kneel before Him in adoration and worship.

*The Lord is not now acting in royal power in this present world, yet the effects of the rule of the Lord Jesus in our hearts should be visible in the lives of each one of us.*

# The Believer's Resource: The Spirit of God

## 2. The impediments on our side

**Anthony Brett**

*A previous article in this moving and challenging series appeared in the January issue.*

Christians are the most favoured of all people in all time. Never before have God's people been indwelt by God the Holy Spirit as they are in this gospel day. Many times in the Old Testament we read that "the Spirit of God came upon" men like Gideon (Judges 6:34), Samson (Judges 14:6), Saul (1 Samuel 11:6), Azariah (2 Chronicles 15:1) and king David (1 Samuel 16:13). But it was a temporary thing, and David even prayed in Psalm 51:11, "Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me."<sup>1</sup> These men and women in the Old Testament were empowered by God's Holy Spirit for particular tasks at particular times. But the Lord Jesus, just before He went back to His Father by way of the cross said, "I will not leave you orphans" (John 14:18).

Being orphaned at a young age is such a powerful picture of vulnerability and weakness. Is this the situation that the Christian has been left in? Not at all! Jesus said He would not leave us orphans, but God the Holy Spirit would dwell with us and dwell in us, and never leave us. We would in fact have another Helper in addition to the Lord Jesus, who intercedes for us in heaven. And this other Helper is none other than God Himself, the Holy Spirit.

So then we have within us God the Holy Spirit. Is there anywhere in the entire universe a greater power, greater wisdom, or greater resource available to us? And yet I am reminded of a passage in Mark's Gospel when the Lord Jesus was visiting His home town of Nazareth. We read that "He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:5-6). This is the same One who created everything! He had raised the dead back to life; He had given sight to those who were blind, and healed lepers. But "He could do no mighty work there"! It wasn't that Jesus just didn't or that He didn't want to. No, the Bible, (not I!) says He couldn't! Why? How can this possibly be true?

<sup>1</sup> ESV. This is the translation mainly used in this article.

The answer is in Mark 6:6 – “unbelief”! The unbelief of the villagers hampered the blessing from flowing.

So is it also possible today that I can hinder the work of God the Holy Spirit? Clearly the answer is yes! Yes, I can hinder the work of God the Holy Spirit. Just like the folk at Nazareth hindered the work of the Lord Jesus through their unbelief, we too can hinder the work of God the Holy Spirit.

Maybe the first clue as to how this can happen is in the Name. Constantly in the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is referred to as just that, He is the *Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit is a real Person, not a power, not an influence. Electricity is a power; it has no feelings. It cannot be offended if I am rude or sinful; its power will still flow. But I can grieve the Holy Spirit, as we read in Paul's letter to the Christians at Ephesus. A lengthy quotation will help to establish the context.

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:25-32).

We are told about not lying, not stealing, doing honest work, using only good wholesome language, not being bitter or angry but rather being kind and forgiving. But what do we have right in the middle of what we might think are very obvious Christian truths? “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...” The lesson is very easy for us to learn. The way I live, the things I do and say, my general attitude can be such that the Holy Spirit is grieved. The word means “to be distressed, to have been caused grief or sorrow.” Yes the Holy Spirit is a divine Person with real feelings and we can cause Him distress, and, if we do, we cannot expect to know His power and leading in our lives. The work of the Holy Spirit will then be directed to bringing us to repentance, confessing to God our failure; and working in us so that our thoughts, words, and actions are

*My general attitude can be such  
that the Holy Spirit is grieved*

appropriate to our calling as Christians. Only then can we experience again the leading and power of the Holy Spirit.

There is another and more serious possibility. Paul writes to the Thessalonians,

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench [lit., “extinguish”] the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-19).

The context of these verses would indicate that Paul had in mind the behaviour of the whole Christian company at Thessalonica. The way the Christians behaved towards each other, the care or lack of care they had, the respect or lack of respect they had for each other was vital. Their prayer-life and the degree of their thankfulness could not be divorced from the working of the Holy Spirit. If these, very basic, features of a Christian company were out of kilter, there was the dreadful possibility that they would “quench” or “extinguish” the work of the Spirit of God in that company.

Paul is not writing here about the way the meetings or services are conducted. He isn't arguing for the use of this or that hymn book. No, rather Paul is writing about our feelings, attitudes and actions towards our fellow Christians that we meet with week after week. This is so important! We all, I am sure, want to see God's richest blessing in our churches. We pray for and plan various initiatives, but if our attitude towards each other is wrong, we will quench the work of God's Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament we read of “a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” (Song of Solomon 4:12), conveying a rather bleak picture of a source of life and refreshment that is locked or barred, so that its benefits cannot be enjoyed. The opposite picture is drawn in the New Testament when Jesus cries out on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39).

Two simple, yet powerful pictures! Which one do we choose to be?

We must understand that the Holy Spirit will never leave us. Jesus Himself said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17). He will never leave us; but we can grieve or cause Him sorrow, and as Christians together we can even extinguish His working in our churches.

That is not the note I want to end on! As Christians we have no personal resources in ourselves and we live in a world or society that cannot feed or help us live for the Lord Jesus. But are we without resources? Never! We have the gift of the Father within us – another Comforter, the Holy Spirit who can and will fill, lead and empower us for the glory of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

But before we think about this I will read about a Man who always moved in perfect harmony with the Holy Spirit.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'" (Luke 4:18-21).

As we read the story of Jesus in the four Gospels we come across texts like, "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1); and, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee" (Luke 4:14).

Let's underline these phrases. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, He was led by the Holy Spirit and He acted in the power of the Holy Spirit. Exactly the same possibility is open to us. What do these expressions mean?

What is it to be "full of the Holy Spirit"? I suppose if we take a very simple picture, a glass that is full of water has no room in it for anything else. If I am filled with the Holy Spirit there can be no room in me for selfish motives or my own will, nor will I be seeking to promote myself or my own interests. The Lord Jesus could say, "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8; cp. Hebrews 10:7). And also Jesus said in relation to God His Father, "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). Imagine that! To have God's interests and honour at the very heart of all my thinking, speaking and acting! Surely this is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

But we also read that Jesus was "led by the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1). And in the Acts of the Apostles – a book that someone has very aptly said would be more

properly named, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit” – we read the story of Philip (Acts 8:26-40). Philip was working in the city of Samaria, preaching the good news of Jesus Christ and being greatly blessed in it, so much so that “there was great joy in that city” (8:8). Can you imagine Philip’s surprise when the Lord said to him, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert place” (8:26). He was being called away from a very successful ministry to go to a place that is specifically described as desert! But Acts 8:27 reads, “He arose and went...” It didn’t make sense to Philip, but he was obedient. He was led by the Spirit of God. He consequently was in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. And so, because of his obedience, the gospel is introduced into the land of Ethiopia.

We have also read that the Lord Jesus acted in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14). Peter subsequently testified that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38).

Remarkably, Jesus said about His disciples that they would do “greater works than these” (John 14:12), because He, Jesus, was returning to His Father in heaven and the Holy Spirit would be sent to dwell with and in His followers. We should be hugely encouraged by this. In a day of great weakness, as the Old Testament was drawing to a close we read the words, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

We could also read that wonderful Scripture in the book of Isaiah:

“Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint, nor is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:28-31).

This is a power and resource that goes way beyond what is natural. It is undiminished by the passage of time, and infinite in its capacity.

So we can see that the Lord Jesus lived here anointed with the Holy Spirit. All He said and did was led by that same Person. We have seen that in the Acts of the Apostles there were those who, led by the Holy Spirit, were used by God in remarkable blessing for others, and there have been down through the centuries men and women who, through the Holy Spirit, have achieved wonderful things for God. We, too, as Christians have the Holy Spirit within us, and we, too, can be used by God in His service.

# Genesis 3

F.B.Hole

*We only know ourselves by understanding the Fall. The world believes in the moral ascent of humanity, so it does not know itself.*

Genesis 3:1 introduces the serpent. But not until the last book of the Bible do we get the clearest identification of the serpent with the unseen actor working through it – “that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan” (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). And in 2 Corinthians 11:3 we read that “the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty” (KJV). But in Genesis itself we only gather that he was “more subtil” – of a higher order of intelligence – than any other beasts of the field, doubtless explaining how, when energized by a supernatural power, speech was possible.

The devil is the originator and instigator of that fearful thing, sin, that has invaded this fair creation. Let us mark how he did it.

His first move was to throw doubt on the Word of God. Very little had as yet been revealed, but on one point God had spoken clearly and decisively – namely, regarding which trees’ fruit could be eaten (Genesis 2:16-17). The serpent questioned that revelation, expressing the divine prohibition in a way that could make his insinuation of doubt more plausible – “Has God said?” Moreover he addressed himself, not to the man who was primarily responsible, but to the woman. Of the two links in the human chain she was the weaker, and the adversary struck just there.

In her reply the woman maintained that God had indeed spoken, but she fell into the error of adding to His words, for He had not said, “Neither shall ye touch it.” To add to God’s words is as mischievous a thing as subtracting from them (see Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18). The more one realizes the overwhelming authority of the words of God, the more careful one would be in quoting them. It looks as if that authority was already weakened in the woman’s mind.

Having gained this initial advantage the serpent struck a far heavier blow, as recorded in verse 4. He boldly denied the truth of the word of God by flatly denying what God had pronounced to be the inevitable consequence of eating the forbidden fruit. Then he supported this denial by the audacious assertion

*The serpent’s first move was  
to throw doubt on the Word of God*

## *Then the devil blackened the Divine character*

that the real reason for the prohibition was that God knew that man would be immensely elevated by eating the forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve's eyes would be opened, knowing good and evil and becoming "as gods". Though man would not become the LORD God, yet he would become an independent being and an object of veneration himself.

Thus the devil blackened the Divine character by representing God as desiring to prevent man from becoming a possible rival to Himself, and as keeping man from what was to his advantage. The devil practically asserted that deity in a modified form was a possibility for man. The way of disobedience was seductively dressed up as the illuminated highway to enlarged knowledge and vastly increased importance.

Whereas in truth it proved to be a dark and depressing road to utter disaster. Knowledge of good and evil there would be, but without power to do the good or to avoid the evil. Whoever commits sin becomes the slave of sin, as our Lord said so emphatically in John 8:34.

All this sheds particular light upon our own times. During the eighteenth century the fact of Divine revelation in the Bible came to be questioned, and this led to the so-called "higher criticism" of the Biblical text. Second, there came the denial of the ruin of man and of the fact that death is the wages of sin (Romans 6:20). The fact of death cannot of course be denied, but modern thought regards it as a debt that we all pay to nature so as to clear the way for men of an ever higher character to be evolved. Third came the bold assertion of deity – of a sort – for man. Man is considered the most god-like being of which we have any certain knowledge. This deification of man will come to a head in the antichrist that is yet to be (cp. 2 Thessalonians 2:4). The root of all this is seen in Genesis 3.

The serpent devised his trap cunningly. Verse 6 shows that the fruit of the tree had its natural appeal to the flesh: it was "pleasant" or "a desire," to the eyes. Furthermore the lie of the devil was so presented as to appeal to pride. The elements of the world – the lusts of the eyes and of the flesh, and the pride of

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life (1 John 2:16) – were all present, and their cumulative effect overwhelmed the woman. She acted independently of God and of her husband. She took and did eat the fruit. She gave to her husband, who wrongfully accepted her lead in the matter, and he too disobeyed.

This account of the Fall, given to us by God, is often refused and ridiculed. The awful evil that fills the earth cannot be denied, but, men say, to declare that it all sprang from Adam disobediently eating so small a thing as an apple is quite absurd. The absurdity however is on the part of those who think thus. The devil is far too astute to try inserting the thick end of the wedge first. Just as a railway train is diverted on to a branch line over points at first only minutely deviating from the main line, so man slipped from the line of obedience over what appeared on the surface to be a small thing. There was no shortage or need prompting this disobedience. They were not hungry. It was just pure defiance of God's command; just that lawlessness which is the essence of sin, according to the correct translation of 1 John 3:4.

The man and his wife were now creatures fallen from their original estate, and the results of their fall began to unroll.

First, in verse 7, we have the effect upon themselves. In innocence they had been happily free from self-consciousness, as we saw in the last verse of chapter 2. Now they were very self-conscious and ashamed, and stirred to feeble and ineffectual attempts to hide their shame. We say “ineffectual”, because verse 10 shows that immediately Adam found himself in the presence of God he confessed himself as naked, just as though the fig-leaf apron had never been made. And by attempting to cover his nakedness he uncovered his sin.

Second their relations with God were ruined (v.8). Gone was the happy footing that had existed for so short a time between a beneficent God and His innocent creature. Alienation had come in. The presence of the LORD God inspired them

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he uncovered his sin*

with fear and not pleasure. Their one idea was to hide themselves from Him, and for that purpose they would use the very trees of the garden which had been given to them for their food and pleasure. Verses 7 and 8 are full of gloom. A ray of light however appears in verse 9. The LORD God might instantly have consigned the guilty pair to their doom. Instead He came down and sought them out, a sure indication that He had plans for their ultimate blessing. His call was, “Where art thou?” (v.9).

In response to this Adam had to reveal his whereabouts. Where *is* man, now that he has broken loose from the Divine control? What is man’s position as a fallen sinner? This is the first question of the Old Testament, and the rest of it works out the answer in all its hideous detail, till we come to the closing chapter of Malachi, ending with the significant word, “curse”.

However we open the New Testament, and not without design do we find that the first question on record is, “Where is He...?” (Matthew 2:2) – concerning “the King of the Jews”. We read on to discover the glorious answer to this and, reading still further, we close the book of Revelation with Jesus as the Coming One, the bright, morning Star, and meanwhile His grace resting as a benediction upon all His saints. The contrast is complete.

Having constituted Adam as the responsible head, the LORD God dealt directly with him, and challenged him as to his disobedience (Genesis 3:11). Adam admitted it, and what he said in verse 12 was true. But he stated it so as to cast the blame on Eve, and even in an indirect manner upon God Himself – “the woman whom Thou gavest to be with me” – the implication being that if God had not presented Eve to him all would have been well. Man’s deep-seated sinful instincts are at once revealed. If he cannot deny his guilt he will blame somebody else, and if possible blame God.

In turning to the woman the LORD God asked a second question – “What is this that thou hast done?” (v.13) The first question had concerned man’s state; now the second challenged man’s acts. Eve admitted she had eaten of the tree but blamed the serpent. Like Adam she told a true story, but clearly with the aim of shifting the onus of the act from herself to the serpent.

This being so, the LORD God pronounced the judgment, beginning with the serpent and working back to the man. The serpent is recognized as the originator of the mischief; hence for him it is all judgment without a ray of light. The woman and the man were his victims; hence the only gleam is reserved for them. The solemn words of verse 14 apply entirely to the serpent as a creature which God had made. It is degraded from the highest to the lowest place in the scale of creation.

## *The Second Man was always first in the thought of God*

The opening words of verse 15 likewise apply to the serpent as a creature. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman”. The average man, if he espies a snake, has only one thought – to kill it! The second part of the verse has in view, however, the great spiritual foe who was operating through both the serpent and “his seed”. The devil’s “progeny” are those who are of his order in a spiritual sense. They with him are in deadly enmity to the “Seed” of the woman.<sup>1</sup>

In the mention of her Seed in Genesis 3:15 we have the first intimation of the great Deliverer, the Christ, who was one day to come. The first prediction of the Christ, then, came from the LORD God Himself. It contains at least four striking features.

Firstly, all through the realms of creation from man downwards, seed appertains to the male and not the female. Hence the “Seed of the woman” is not according to nature as we know it. It is something outside the creation as it had just been constituted, and points forward to a new creation. The Lord Jesus was born of a virgin and here we have the first intimation of that fact, which is a vital one. No taint of the Fall attached to Him. He was not merely innocent, as was Adam at the start; He was holy.

Secondly, this announcement of the Seed of the woman was given before any “seed,” or race of Adam had appeared. That did not happen until the start of chapter 4, and a sorry start it was! Adam is recognized in Scripture as the first man and the head of the race that sprang from him through the woman (cp. 1 Corinthians 15:47). Christ is the Second Man and the Leader of God’s chosen race. But the Second Man was always first in the thought of God, and we find evidence of this in the mention of Him here before the birth of any of Adam’s children.

Thirdly, the conflict between the two seeds is to end in the complete victory of the woman’s Seed. He is to “bruise,” or “crush” the serpent’s head – the head being the seat of its life and intelligence. The bright gleam of hope, given at the very moment of the entrance of sin, also contained the announcement of the Deliverer’s full victory over the author of the disaster. How much our first parents understood of this is another matter. But there the announcement stood right from the outset.

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<sup>1</sup> Cp. John 8:37-59. [Ed.]

*This overwhelming victory cost the Victor some suffering.  
It was when He first touched the earth  
in His holy Manhood that the Victor suffered.*

Fourthly, it was intimated that this overwhelming victory should cost the Victor some suffering. In the process of the conflict the serpent should bruise His heel. When walking, the heel is the first part of the foot to come into contact with the earth. The figure of speech is a telling one, for it was when He first touched the earth in His holy Manhood that the Victor suffered. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death – the very death that was instigated by the craft of Satan in the garden of Eden.

Having dealt with the serpent the LORD God turned to the woman. A twofold governmental judgment fell upon her future course through this life. Childbirth was to become a time of sorrow and suffering for her, and she was more definitely made subject to the rule of her husband. There has been much scheming in our day to get rid of both these things, but nothing can really abolish them.<sup>2</sup>

Then Adam came up for judgment, and the governmental effects of his sin are more clearly seen. He had listened to the voice of his wife instead of to what God had said, and now he must face the fruits of it. The ground is cursed for his sake. He must earn his livelihood from it with sweat and sorrow until death should overtake him, when his body should return to the dust out of which it was taken. Nothing is said here as to his soul and spirit, for it is the governmental consequences in this life that are in view. There is an equal amount of scheming to get rid of the sweat and toil, and men may think they are going to achieve it. But “we work or we want”, “we sweat or we starve;” for we can no more dodge that part of the curse than we can escape death.

It was at this point apparently that Adam gave the name of Eve to his wife (Genesis 3:20). She is the mother of all living. Ages had to pass and another woman be found before the Seed of the woman appeared.

*From Scripture Truth 36 (1948-50), pp.60-64.*

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<sup>2</sup> The revolt against the latter is well under way in 2018! The “rule” of Genesis 3:16 is a necessary condition of lifelong marriage between fallen people with clashing wills (for “rule” having a right sense, cp. Genesis 4:7). Male abuse of this was one big reason for the women’s revolt once childbearing could be limited. But has it benefitted children? [Ed.]

# The Lamb in the midst of the throne

## Part 2. The seven lamps and the four living creatures

George Stevens

Chapter 4 of Revelation sets the scene for chapter five. In chapter 4 John was in spirit rapt up to heaven, and the first thing He saw was the throne of God. Round the throne, on twenty-four lesser thrones sat the elders. A previous article discussed these.<sup>1</sup>

### The seven lamps and the sea. Revelation 4:5-6

Verse 5 begins with lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Lightnings and thunderings announced the presence of the Lord as Judge, as at Sinai of old (Exodus 19:16; 20:18). His presence is holy and, if necessary, He may use lightnings to put down his enemies – as in Psalm 18:14. The “voices” show the existence of another company of intelligent beings that have been delegated authority in the Lord’s judgment.

The description continues with the seven lamps in front of the throne. The “seven lamps of fire” represent the fulness of the Spirit in righteous judgment – “fire” representing the testing judgment of God, and “lamps” showing that the fire is self-sustaining. The seven lamps are explained as the seven Spirits of God, this signifying that judgment is pronounced according to the attributes of Isaiah 11:2-3, namely,

“And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither approve after the hearing of his ears” (KJV).

*The seven lamps are the seven Spirits of God,  
signifying judgment pronounced according to the  
attributes of Isaiah 11:2-3*

As we shall see in another article, God willing, the “seven horns and seven eyes” that form elements of the description of the Lamb, are likewise described as “the seven Spirits of God”. So there are three aspects to the fulness of the Spirit. The first – the “lamps of fire” – is righteous judgment (as in Isaiah 11:2-3). The

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<sup>1</sup> See the first article in this series in *Scripture Truth*, January 2018, pp. 243ff.

second is power – the horns (e.g. 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 89:17). The third is discerning judgment – the eyes (Zechariah 4:10).

It is worth interrupting the study of Revelation 4 to note that the Spirit of God, being One of the three Person of the Godhead, has a mind, a will, and emotions. He has

- a mind: Romans 8:27 states, “And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is *the mind of the Spirit*, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God”;
- a will: “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally *as he will*” (1Corinthians 12:11) and;
- emotions: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with *groanings* which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26). See too Romans 15:30, “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the *love* of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me”.

*The Spirit of God,  
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Returning to Revelation 4, we note that verse 6 describes a sea of glass like crystal, situated before the throne. In general, “the sea” in the Old Testament represents the instability of the nations (Isaiah 5:30; Jeremiah 6:23; 50:42; 51:42; Ezekiel 26:3; Daniel 7:2-3); and “the troubled sea” represents the wicked who cast up mire and dirt (Isaiah 57:20). However this sea in Revelation 4 is made from glass. It is both stable and pure. Crystal is known to be like ice for its clearness. There is nothing hidden here. Overall it represents absolute purity and peace.

In Revelation 15:2-4 the faithful saints from the tribulation period are seen standing triumphantly on a sea of glass mingled with fire. They sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb,

“Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

*...a sea of glass like crystal,  
situated before the throne.  
Crystal is known for its clearness.  
There is nothing hidden here.*

### **The living creatures. Revelation 4:6-11**

In the verse 6 we are also introduced to the four living creatures. They are probably seraphim (as in Isaiah 6:2) since in verse 8 they are said to have six wings, whereas cherubim have two. These seraphim are seen “in the midst of and around” the throne. They are guardians of the throne’s holiness and executors of God’s cleansing judgment.

Similarly in Isaiah 6:3 they are found proclaiming, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” In the same chapter Isaiah confesses himself as a man of unclean lips. Then we then read of one of the seraphim being used in cleansing him, “Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (vv.6-7).

The fact of there being *four* living creatures tells us their jurisdiction is universal. “Four”, representing universality, occurs in, e.g., “the four corners of the earth”, and, in the Bible, in the “four winds of heaven” – see Revelation 7:1; Daniel 8:8.

Next, these four living creatures are distinguished from each other. “And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle” (Revelation 4:7). The lion-like appearance of the first speaks of strength in majesty. The resemblance of the second to a calf (or “ox”) speaks of enduring strength in service. The fourth was like a flying eagle – speaking of speed (e.g. 2 Samuel 1.23; Job 9:26). The remaining living creature had a face like a man – speaking of intelligence (Ecclesiastes 8.1). In the living creatures God shows us the enduring strength, majesty, intelligence, and speed with which His judgments should be executed. The living creatures were also “full of eyes”, showing that they were constantly alert and discerning.

Revelation 4:8 shows that the living creatures were perpetually active in worship that declared the threefold holiness of the Lord God Almighty. Their

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with a spiritual intelligence.  
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and providential glory of God.*

worship declared the thrice-holy One to be He “which was, and is, and which is to come” – that is, as the Eternal One, the I AM THAT I AM of Exodus 3:14.

Clearly the beginning of verse 9 reveals that these seraphim said much more, because they also gave glory and honour and thanks to the eternal God. When they did so, the four and twenty elders fell down to worship Him as well, and, knowing that their authority was dependent upon God's, they cast their crowns before the throne. Their worship was to the God who created all things. The motive that prompted Him to create was simply His own pleasure. This shows that He did so in accordance with His own counsels and purposes. The elders entered into God's intrinsic worthiness with a spiritual intelligence. They understood both the creatorial and providential glory of God.

There is a direct manner in which the fourfold appearances of the seraphim display the glories of Christ. The lion speaks of Christ as the King, both as King of the Jews and as King of kings. This relates to the Gospel according to Matthew. The ox reveals Christ as the perfect Servant of God, the One who could say, “The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Isaiah 50:5-7). This aspect relates to the Gospel of Mark where the Son of God is described as a Servant. The face of a man reminds us that He, being God the Son, became man in order to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This relates to Luke's Gospel. The eagle's flight reminds us of the heavenly One, the Son of God, and relates to John's Gospel in particular.

*The lion speaks of Christ as the King;  
The ox reveals Christ as the perfect Servant of God;  
The face of a man reminds us that He became man;  
The eagle's flight reminds us of the heavenly One*

# Speaking in the assembly:

The rationale of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:8ff

T. Balderston

*The fourth in a series of articles on a very contested subject.*

*The meaning of “speak” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 is more precisely defined than almost any other word in the New Testament*

The meaning of “speak” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 is more precisely defined by its context than almost any other word in the New Testament: the word it translates (*laleō*) has already occurred twenty-one times in this very chapter. These occurrences all denote some aspect of speaking in meetings of the church, particularly praying audibly and prophesying, whether in “tongues” or in plain Greek. The entire chapter is about “speaking in the assembly”! The first listeners to the letter would therefore have concluded that by “speak” in verse 34 Paul certainly meant audible prayer and prophesying, asking questions (v.35), teaching, and all the other types of speech during meetings of the assembly (e.g., v.26). Many attempts have been to evade this conclusion, whether by arguing that verses 34-5 are a later interpolation, or a Corinthian opinion, or “culturally specific”; or

contradictory to 1 Corinthians 11:5, Galatians 3:28, or even 1 Timothy 2:8-14! These claims were examined in the first three articles in this series<sup>1</sup> and found wanting.

These former articles considered *what* the apostle Paul required of women in meetings of the assembly and other public meetings. Now it is time to ask *why*.

The reason Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 14:34 is, “... but they are to be submissive”. The first answer therefore to the above question must turn on the definition of “submissive”. It is remarkable that neither in respect of the verb “to submit” here, nor in respect of the noun “submission” in 1 Timothy 2:11, does Paul specify to *whom* or *what* the submission is due. By contrast, every other occurrence of submit / submission in the NT clearly indicates the person or object to whom or which submission is due. Surely, then, this omission is significant. Many consider that the submission required in 1 Corinthians 14:34

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<sup>1</sup> See “Speaking in the assembly”, *Scripture Truth*, 59, pp.191ff (July7, 2017), 219ff (October), pp.219ff. (January, 2018), pp.247ff.

*In my view, “be submissive”, should be translated as “be unassertive”*

and 1 Timothy 2:11 is to the *men* of the congregation, but it is certainly not Scriptural teaching that every woman must be subject to every man: the wife has to be subject to *her own* husband (Ephesians 5:22; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1; Colossians 3:18).<sup>2</sup> In my view, “be submissive”, without an indirect object, should be translated in a way that does not demand an object, such as “be unassertive”.<sup>3</sup>

The meaning of “unassertiveness” becomes clear once we consider the range of vocal activities that Paul included in his prohibition. The feature common to all of them is that an individual speaker requires the entire congregation’s attention. In that sense, therefore, and irrespective of the content of the speech, the act of speaking in the assembly is not “submissive”. It involves self-assertion, and is, therefore, not for women, says Paul.

But what about communal singing? Ephesians 5:19 reads (lit.), “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...” This verse is part of a section of Ephesians that commences with 5:1. In it Paul is addressing the entire congregation including the various subgroups that are then separately addressed in verses 22ff. This means that the entire congregation, including the women, were to speak to *themselves* in psalms, etc.; i.e., that the women also sang. True, in this verse Paul uses the word “speak” for “sing”, because he is focussing on the benefit that the words sung communally would bring to everyone present. But there is no contradiction between Ephesians 5:19 and interpreting “speak” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 to exclude communal singing. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul never refers to communal singing. The phrase “...have a hymn” in 14:26 may possibly signify an individual teaching the others a new hymn by singing a solo, but not communal singing; and verse 15 is in the singular. Communal singing does not involve self-assertion before the congregation on the part of the singer.

We can therefore describe the range of “speak” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 as “all the vocal activities during meetings that Paul regulates in the chapter”. Of course Paul would doubtless have objected to background chatter as

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<sup>2</sup> This being so, in my view “headship” in 1 Corinthians 11:3 is a matter of rank or pre-eminence (as a duke ranks ahead of a marquis, or a gold medallist ahead of a silver) rather than of authority.

<sup>3</sup> One leading scholar offers the translation “keep their ordered place” in 1 Corinthians 14:34, showing the linguistic permissibility of a translation which dispenses with an object.

*Communal singing does not involve self-assertion on the part of the singer*

incompatible with “decency and order” (v.40), but his subject here is the kinds of speaking intended for the entire congregation to listen to.



Paul corroborates his apostolic requirement of submission with the phrase, “as the law also says”. He does not place his readers under the Law, but cites it as corroboration of his apostolic instruction. What did he mean by “the law”?

- Many have argued that Paul was referring to the penalty imposed on the woman in the last part of Genesis 3:16. There are various difficulties with this, not least that this text concerns marital relations, and it is hard to see how this can be generalised to meetings of the assembly, or other public meetings since (as said above) Scripture nowhere places every woman under the rule of every man she might meet.
- The same difficulty faces those who wish to interpret 1 Corinthians 14:34 in terms of Genesis 1:26 – 3:13 alone. On the basis that these verses teach a pristine “head-helper” relationship between Adam and Eve, they argue that Paul excluded women from teaching but from few other forms of vocal participation in assembly meetings. But would the Corinthians really have understood Paul to mean, “...as the law (excluding Genesis 3:14 – Malachi 4:6) also says”? Paul himself founded his instructions in 1 Timothy 2:8ff on both creatorial precedence *and* the Fall (see vv.13-14). This arbitrary constriction of the meaning of “the Law” cannot be used to override the clear meaning of “speak” in 1 Corinthians 14:34.
- The best identification of “the Law” is the entire Old Testament, since that meaning is closest to the meaning he gave to “the law” in verse 21 of the same chapter (where he actually cites a passage from Isaiah 28!) In this, rare, case, Paul required the saints to follow OT practice.

The tenor of the entire OT corroborates Paul’s requirement in 1 Corinthians 14:34. The OT never mentions any woman commanding the attention of the entire assembled congregation of the people – which Paul presumably regarded as the OT foreshadowing of the local assembly in the NT. The various Scriptures cited to show the contrary do not in fact show it, with the single exception of Deborah, whose leadership was allowed as a rebuke to the men’s lack of leadership.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> On this see the third article in this series in *Scripture Truth*, January 2018, pp. 251-2.



Having sought to define the meaning of “be submissive” and deduce its relevance to the speech activities of 1 Corinthians 14, we should now ask why such submissiveness was required *in the meetings of the assembly* and other public meetings.

1 Corinthians 14:34 occurs in a passage concerned with the operation of the Spirit in the assembly, where harmonious, edifying, God-glorifying vocal contributions, without prior human arrangement, would bear eloquent witness to the Corinthians’ union by the Spirit with Christ risen, a union so close that the believers can even be simply termed “the Christ” (12:12). However, Paul implies, even as this testimony is being borne, it needs to be balanced by acknowledgment of the fact that we are not yet risen as to our bodies (when there will be no gender differences – Matthew 22:30), but are still male and female as God created Adam and Eve. Our bodies still bear the image of the man of dust, though they shall shortly be conformed to the image of the heavenly man (1 Corinthians 15:49).

And indeed 1 Corinthians 14:34 is almost immediately followed by chapter 15 – not by accident, in my view. The change of subject between 14:40 and 15:1 may not be as absolute as many translations make it; rather, the “moreover” of the KJV/ NKJV aptly makes a bridge between the two chapters. Presumably those who denied future bodily resurrection (15:12) held that Christians already have all the resurrection they shall ever have (cp. 2 Timothy 2:18), and that believers are already in all respects genderless in God’s sight. So it has been suggested that perhaps some advocated a “gender-blind” attitude towards participation in meetings of the assembly. These could be the self-styled “spiritual party” whom Paul admonishes in 14:37.

Today, too, anaemic understandings of the Christian hope may weaken awareness of being not yet risen. Most Christians merely hope “to die and go to heaven”, a hope that the apostle Paul characterised as a desire to be “unclothed” (2 Corinthians 5:4). The true Christian hope is *bodily resurrection and conformity to the image of God’s Son* (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15: 48; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2). In that day, as regards gender, we shall be “as the angels” (Matthew 22:30). If we were as “eagerly awaiting” that day as Paul was, we would the better recognise the incompleteness of our salvation now, and understand why, as long as we are in these bodies, we are still subject to what *God* has laid down regarding that old creation.

*If secular society now promotes a “gender-blind” policy even on marriage, we are so much the more obligated (not less!) to acknowledge the rights of the Creator.*

*Silence in meetings of the assembly is how the women publicly proclaim this vital testimony.*

And if (on very different grounds from the “spiritual party” of 1 Corinthians 14:37), secular society now promotes a “gender-blind” policy even on marriage, we are so much the more obligated (not less!) to acknowledge the order that still governs the terrestrial creation; and hence the rights of the Creator. “Male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). Silence in meetings of the assembly is how the women do this, and in doing it they publicly proclaim this vital testimony for our times. Be the subject of our meetings ever so sublime, ever so heavenly, the stark fact is that we have this solidarity with the rest of mankind that, as to our bodies, we are still part of the old creation. This still needs constantly to be acknowledged.

And not only in meetings of the assembly, as was argued in a previous article.<sup>5</sup> Paul’s instruction in chapter 2 can therefore be considered to apply to all types of public meetings (e.g., Acts 19:9), but not to the private type exemplified by Acts 18:26.



But why do the *women* have to do the acknowledging? Undoubtedly this is the most difficult part of the matter, and Paul gives an answer in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 so blunt as to make us wince. Verse 13 implies that men are “the senior sex.” There is a reason inscribed in creation for the requirement laid upon women. But verse 14 also brings the Fall into the matter. Contrary to common opinion this verse does not teach that silence is imposed on women because they are more gullible. Paul’s entire ministry was dogged by deceived *men*! (See, e.g., Galatians 3:1). The emphasis of verse 14 falls on the verb of its principal clause, “Eve... fell into transgression”, i.e., she deliberately flouted the only known commandment. She knowingly asserted herself against God (see Genesis 3:3, 6). In this passage all women are viewed as “in” Eve (see 1 Timothy 2:15), and on this account too, says Paul, it is they who have to bear the witness to the Fall by being “submissive”, i.e., unassertive, by not commanding public attention through public, vocal, prayer or teaching.

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<sup>5</sup> See the second article in this series in *Scripture Truth*, October 2017, pp.223-4.

1 Timothy 2:14 chimes with Paul's appeal to "the Law" in 1 Corinthians 14:34. All but the first two chapters of the Old Testament concern mankind as fallen; and "the Law", in its narrower sense of "the commandments", was given because of sin (Galatians 3:19; Romans 5:20). "The law" (i.e., the Old Testament) to whose corroboration Paul looked in 1 Corinthians 14:34 almost entirely concerns sinful mankind. And we too, though redeemed, still bear the consequences of the Fall. Though "our life is hid with Christ in God," yet in this life we still have to "mortify our members which are on the earth" (Colossians 3:3-5). The soil is not more fertile for the Christian farmer, nor are the weeds weaker; the pains of childbirth are not less for the Christian mother (Genesis 3:16-18). The wording of 2 Thessalonians 3:10 is closer to Genesis 3:17 than to Genesis 2:15. We already have "the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead", but not yet that resurrection itself (Romans 8:11); we are "saved in hope", but still "groan" (v.23). It is up to us to acknowledge the sentence passed on the old creation, whilst in Christ we are already a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is what 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:14 teach.

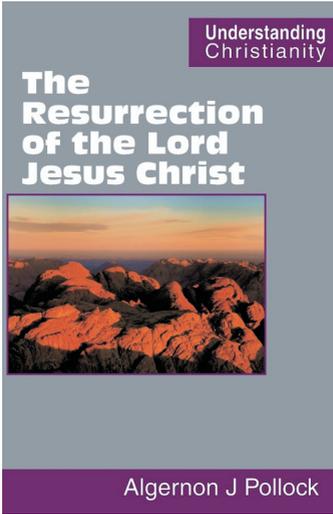
Women are certainly less conspicuous sinners than men (how many female Stalins or Hitlers have there been?), and the modern mind is not sympathetic to the doctrine that we are implicated in our forbears' errors. But the creation of man and woman, and the Fall, are undoubtedly the seminal events in human history! God has decreed that the sisters' silence in acknowledgment of creation and the Fall should be the powerful, wordless witness before a world that wishes to airbrush them both out of its history. Paul's rationales in 1 Timothy 2 certainly test where we stand regarding the reality of the early chapters of Genesis!

In verse 15 the "she" is Eve, and if the salvation that she is promised was still future when Paul was writing, he must have meant her eternal salvation, not just her preservation through childbirth as some think. By ending with verse 15, he emphasises that the restrictions on the women (note the switch from "she" to "they") are temporary, and he focusses their minds on the Christian hope, when Christ will "transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Philippians 3:21). Eve's own childbearing, though made harder by the Fall, would one day result (*via* Seth) in the birth of the true Seed, "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5), who would bruise the serpent's head by giving Himself a ransom for all. And so she would be saved "through the childbearing" (and all believing women with her).

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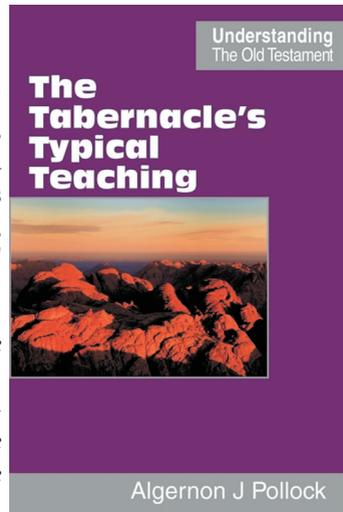
falls to the ground. So it is with the Deity and Manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ, His spotless life, His atoning death, His resurrection, and His ascension. These are all linked up together, making one complete whole. If one part fails, the whole of Christianity fails."

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# My Belovèd

*Song of Solomon 5:9*

Oh, what is thy Belovèd?  
they oft inquire of me;  
and what in my Belovèd  
so passing fair I see?  
Is it the heavenly splendour  
in which He shines above?  
His riches and dominions  
that won my heart's best love?

Though higher than the highest,  
most mighty King Thou art,  
Thy grace, and not Thy greatness,  
first touched my rebel heart;  
Thy sword, it might have slain me,  
Thine arrow drunk my blood;  
but 'twas Thy cross subdued me,  
and won my heart to God.

Thy sceptre rules creation,  
Thy wounded hand rules me;  
all bow before Thy footstool,  
but I the *nail-prints* see:  
aloud they sound Thy titles,  
Thou Lord of lords most high;  
one thrilling thought absorbs me –  
this Lord for me did die!

Oh, this is my Belovèd,  
there's none so fair as He;  
the chief among ten thousand,  
He's all in all to me;  
my heart, it breaks with longing  
to dwell with Him above,  
who wooed me first, and won me  
by His sweet dying love.

From *Hymns and Sacred Poems* by J.G. Deck (London, 2nd, edn., Broom, 1889), pp. 64-66.