

# Scripture Truth

July – September 2008

El Shaddai

Alpha People

Who? What? How?

The Bread of Passover

Learning from the life of David

"How long shall I cry and Thou wilt not hear?"

# SCRIPTURE TRUTH

Editor: Theo Balderston

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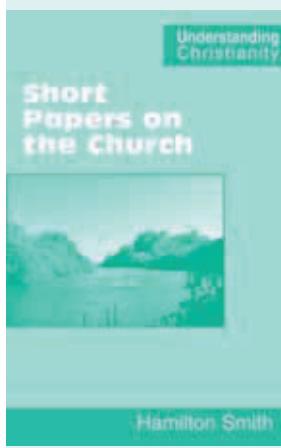
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# Who? What? How?

## Brief notes on the work of the evangelist

John Weston (sr.)

*John Weston (1886-1962) was an evangelist through whom many were saved in south-east London in the first half of the twentieth century. His open-air preaching outside Catford Town Hall regularly drew attendances of eight hundred! This memorable article is based on obviously heartfelt notes (perhaps jotted down after an address he gave in Hammersmith in 1948). However I hesitated about publishing it, partly because it reflects a sadly bygone era when straightforward gospel services attracted many listeners (although even now the number is far from nil!); and partly in case some of the forthright views of the period put young preachers off! However, although the method of collecting people to hear the gospel may have had to change, what has not changed is the centrality of the preaching itself. And I am sure that Mr Weston would have wished young preachers, who hear God's call to this task, to be encouraged regarding the greatness of the work they are doing; and also by his central point, namely, that the preacher's work is, after all, extremely simple! [Ed.]*

The importance of the work of soul-winning hardly needs to be emphasised for, as C.H. Mackintosh puts it, “the sheep must be gathered before they can be fed and how are they to be gathered but through the earnest preaching of the Gospel?” You must either evangelise or fossilise. These are blunt words, but words that must be taken seriously.

J.N.Darby wrote, “I believe that at all times, blessing within is in the measure of the spirit of evangelism. The reason is very simple. It is the presence of God that blesses, and God is love; and it is the love which makes one seek souls. And if we do not seek them, He will set His testimony elsewhere”.

The work of soul-winning is the duty, not only of the evangelist, but of every other Christian. Sisters, who are not called to be evangelists, would otherwise be debarred from this glorious service. “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19 KJV) is surely a word for all of us. But not all are called to be evangelists. This is where, I think, we have erred. The denominations make one man responsible for nearly everything. We make *all* men responsible for almost anything. The system we adopt of asking *anyone* to preach, I hold to be quite

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or fossilise*

wrong, being unscriptural and detrimental to the work of the Gospel. [However, we also have to make opportunity for gift and exercise in preaching to develop – Ed.]

### The preacher

The “evangelist”, or preacher, is someone who is under an obligation to the Lord to proclaim the gospel. There is no such thing in Scripture as the brethren or the assembly being responsible for the Gospel. The evangelist is not responsible to any man or company of men as to the methods he uses in bringing the gospel to the congregation. Never aim at pleasing men, not even the brethren. *Try not to displease them of course:* their fellowship and prayers you can hardly do without.

*Don't  
preach  
unless  
you can't  
help it*

*None but God* can make a man a preacher. “How shall they preach except they be sent?” (Romans 10:15). Paul said, “Christ sent me... to preach” (1 Corinthians 1:17). Preaching is a special work. Don’t preach unless you can’t help it. An evangelist has a mighty passion for souls – a clear vision of what it means to be eternally lost.

An evangelist is always on the brink of hell. An evangelist is always on the brink of hell. An evangelist clearly understands the gospel and has great confidence in its power to save every poor sinner. Where all this creates a burning desire to tell others the way of salvation – there you have the evangelist

Every gift develops by use. Make full use of the gift. But if someone is not walking with God, these feelings, etc. will be lacking in intensity.

If the Lord has gifted you as an evangelist, don’t allow man’s opinion or criticism to hinder you. I am told that

a horse can be inoculated to take a thousand snake bites. Ask the Lord to inoculate you spiritually to take a thousand criticisms from your brethren. “Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not” (2 Corinthians 4:1).

### The preacher’s message

“Evangelist” means “one who proclaims the gospel”. And “gospel” in Greek simply means “a good message, good or glad tidings”. Sometimes one feels it necessary to say to some preachers, “Preach the gospel!” for there are those who think that their mission is to amuse, interest, educate or moralise.

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It is most important that we should firmly get hold of the great fact, that it is the Word of God that is *living*. “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth” (James 1:18). “The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached...” (1 Peter 1:25). The more Scripture our gospel address contains, the better.

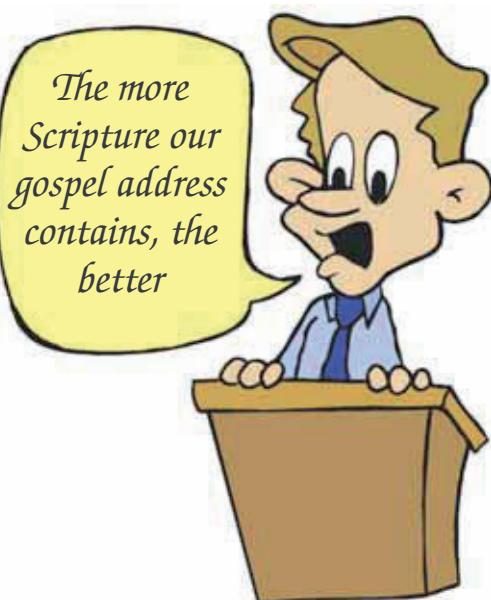
Hell forms no part of the Gospel but, as Paul said, it is the doom, “according to my gospel”, of all who refuse God’s grace (Romans 2:16). Of course, we should warn people about hell but always with the tenderest pity.

The message committed to us, then, is a good one, the like of which was never heard before, and never will be heard again. Therefore the preacher’s message is to proclaim the Gospel. If this is lost sight of and “a teaching gospel” to the saints is substituted, the work of evangelism declines.<sup>1</sup> It is a great pity that the time has come when you cannot be sure you will hear a simple gospel message in our halls.

### **The preacher’s objective**

The evangelist’s great desire is to see sinners saved under his preaching. The sermon is but a means to an end – the saving of sinners. Some make the sermon the end to preaching and are quite satisfied if they have delivered a good “sermon”. There may be a temptation, if some of the “big” brethren are present, to show what we can do or what we know: *never* yield to this.

We should always aim at the salvation of the lost. How many preach *about* sinners instead of preaching *to* them! In Acts 2: 38 Peter declared, “Repent and be baptised every one of you ...and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”. Always aim at the simple presentation of the gospel. How often have we heard, “I so much enjoyed the children’s talk”! C.H. Mackintosh said that the evangelist does not seek to unfold the truth so much as to reach souls. The preacher’s vocation is not



<sup>1</sup> Perhaps one could paraphrase: if an unbeliever is unexpectedly in the hall, change your message to a “simple gospel”! [Ed.]

to instruct the saints. That is the work of the teacher. (I have no doubt, however, that the saints thoroughly enjoy the gospel word, and that it does their souls good.)

We should preach for a verdict. When people heard the great Roman orator, Tully, they said, “How finely he has expressed himself”. When, in an earlier day, people heard the great Greek orator, Demosthenes, they cried, “Let us rise and march against Philip”. He so spoke that his audience was stirred into action. Whether we see the results or not, we should look for them every time we preach.

At the same time it is almost certain that none of us will be allowed to see the full results of our labours. Some do the ploughing so well that the Lord seldom sends them to reap. In any case heaven will be the safest place to hear the results of our labours. We shall then be proof against pride. But let us constantly make Paul’s aim ours – “That I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

### How to choose what you will preach from

Some passage or text impresses itself on the mind as one is continually looking to the Lord for guidance. This will often occur when reading the Word or perhaps a book. (*Do make sure that your text is in the Bible!*) However it is meditation that alone will provide one with original matter.

There are three important principles to bear in mind when preparing the subject for the following Sunday.

- *Perspiration:* Preaching that costs nothing, accomplishes nothing.
- *Preparation:* The brother who “never knew what I was going to say until I stood up and opened my mouth” had the effect that, when he finished, no one knew what he had been talking about. Some think God cannot give you the subject until five minutes, or less, before you are to speak. This is limiting the power of the Holy Spirit.
- *Presentation:* Make sure that your discourse is orderly; and few can achieve this without well constructed notes. Dividing the subject into headings can be very helpful. Use illustrations: these are the windows of your sermon and will let the light in.

### The preacher’s delivery

We used to hear it said that it does not matter “who”, so long as it is the Word that is preached. But when a man speaks, he speaks twice – by what he says and by the way he says it. We have heard some excellent men who have ruined the message through a monotonous delivery – everything said in one tone. For

*To be an effective speaker, you must be intensely natural*

example, the falling inflection at the end of sentences, so very common, depresses a congregation.

To be an effective speaker, you must be intensely natural. Of the great eighteenth-century evangelist, George Whitfield, it was said, “Read his words – they are nothing; but these very words as uttered *by him* shattered men”. Human eloquence has been defined as “the faculty of speaking so as to move the feelings of those who listen”. In the things of God this faculty comes from the power that the subject of the Gospel has over your own mind. It comes to this: there is all the difference between preaching from the heart and preaching from the head. Intensity of thought and

feeling – if these are present you need not worry much about delivery. Fervour should never be absent from Gospel preaching. This does not necessarily mean shouting or thumping. Spurgeon said that if he were asked what the first essential quality is in a preacher’s delivery, the answer would be *earnestness*. The second quality would be the same, and the third the same again! It is said that [Thomas] Chalmers<sup>2</sup> was quite a dull and ineffective preacher, until, during an illness, he became aware of the littleness of time and the greatness of eternity.

Most of us are born imitators. Very few of us are sufficiently in earnest to be natural.

#### The venue

Where should the evangelist preach? In the open air? Or in our own halls? Both of course; but often the latter present the problem that the evangelist has, at the most, the opportunity of three consecutive Sundays. So often the listeners are lifted up to heaven on one Sunday and when on the next they bring an unconverted friend, there is a different preacher who is impossible to listen to, so that their friend never comes again.

If the assembly’s hall is unsuitable then one should consider hiring a suitable hall. In Great Yeldham, where there was no evangelistic outreach, a village hall was hired and a programme of community hymn singing was publicised. This was immediately well supported and after an interval became a weekly Gospel service.

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<sup>2</sup> Prominent Scottish evangelical minister in the early nineteenth century.

### Practical tips on presentation

Never prolong the conclusion; in other words, don't get to the last sixty seconds until you are there! Never go beyond the set time. I listened once to one of the best addresses to Christians that I have ever heard, but the hour being up, everybody became restless and much of the good done was lost. An old preacher's prayer was, "Lord, fill my mind with worthwhile stuff / And nudge me when I've said enough!"

Take care with closing prayer. Do not make it another sermon, or use it for telling God the way of salvation. Prayer is essential and you must have prayer meetings for the Gospel. But, during the service, long prayers are wearisome to the unsaved.

Take care with your manner. Hands should be kept out of sight, unless you can forget that you have hands. So often they attract attention and therefore distract the attention that should be given to the message. Never place your hands in your pockets. Spurgeon said that such a stance shows an utter contempt both for the subject and for the audience.

### Conclusion: power and prayer

The evangelist is a special gift from the Lord to the church (Ephesians 4:11). Covet earnestly this best of gifts! And if the Lord has graciously bestowed it upon you, be very humble and diligent in the use of it. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach... the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). So said one of the most gifted of preachers.

But all our service will be busy idleness without the power of the Holy Spirit. J.N.Darby said, "When the Gospel is preached with power, crowds are gathered together by it". If he was right, then here is a grave indictment when we consider our present attendances.

What is the answer? Wesley said, "God does nothing, but in answer to prayer". Prayer is more powerful than preaching, for it is prayer that gives preaching all its power.

*Wesley said, "God does nothing, but in answer to prayer"*

# “How long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear?”

Habakkuk 1:1-12

William John Hocking

*This is an edited version of part of an address given on 25th April 1942 in a hall in Holborn, central London. Habakkuk believed God in times when everything he valued was about to be destroyed. What this article brings out about the “life of faith” is needed more now, perhaps, than in wartime London. It is essential to read the passage first, to get the best out of this article.*

## The occasion

The words in this passage bear important and helpful lessons for us at this time.

Habakkuk was raised up by God at a particular time in the history of His earthly people. He prophesied just at the time when God was withdrawing Himself from the direct government of the nation of Israel, and committing the reins of government to a Gentile nation which had not yet appeared. A great dispensational change was imminent. The occasion was singular and had not occurred before. Consequently there was perplexity in the hearts of the godly, who observed the changes but could not discern their meaning. They were apt, as we all are when changes occur upon the earth, to feel that somehow or other there is some change in God Himself and in His purposes; and then the heart trembles, and sense of personal relationship with God is dimmed. It is often similar in crisis times in the history of individual believers and of companies of God's people. Therefore we may, by the blessing of

God, draw lessons that are applicable to our personal environment today.

Why was God withdrawing Himself? Judah (that is, the only two tribes over whom the descendants of David had been reigning since the days of Rehoboam) had had great privileges. And God had preserved them to some extent from the great apostasy that had overrun the kingdom of ten tribes. In consequence of the idolatry and foul sin of that northern kingdom, Jehovah had allowed the great Assyrian empire to carry them away captive, lay their land waste, and destroy all witness to Himself in their territories. That had been about one hundred years before Habakkuk prophesised. Meanwhile (indeed from before that time) Judah's faithfulness had deteriorated, until under Manasseh the cup of their iniquity was, so to speak, full. God now determined to take away the sceptre from the royal house of David, and the people themselves from their own land.

Habakkuk could see the people from God's point of view. Iniquity prevailed in

the land. Priests and princes were wrong, elders unrighteous, the common people neglectful of Jehovah and disobedient to His law. Habakkuk asked himself, how could this be? The slender revivals under the kings Joash, Hezekiah and Josiah had only temporarily halted the downward slide, which was now accelerating.

### Habakkuk's question

Habakkuk did what we all ought to do when we see something wrong. He did not talk it over with his neighbour or friend; he poured out his burden before Jehovah. He said, “O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why doest thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?” (Habakkuk 1:2-3 KJV)

Here we have a definite lesson. No-one can be so blind as not to observe that unrighteousness has the upper hand, not merely in the world proper that renounces the Lord Jesus Christ and God, but also among those who profess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by taking upon themselves the name of “Christians”. We see it, but what do we do about it? Do we go on our knees before the Lord and tell Him that there is iniquity and unrighteousness on our right hand and on our left, and that no effort is made, so to speak, to remove the blot, and heal the running sore that only gets worse? We fear lest the effects of it come into our hearts, homes, lives and circumstances, yet so often forget to cry

to God about the sin. But it is in the presence of God that we learn His own estimate of things. When we are before Him there is something within our hearts which turns us at once to the cross of Calvary. There we see God's estimate of sin. Beloved friends, it is no vain thing to come to God with our difficulties. There we learn the true lesson about it all.

Habakkuk had not yet learned this lesson in these verses. He only lifted up his eyes and said, “Oh Jehovah, how long?” But, as surely he did this, so should we. When we see the power of evil uprising in the world, ought we not also to lift up our hearts and cry, “O Lord, how long?”

### Jehovah's answer

Then comes the answer. Jehovah says (v.5), “Behold, ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs.” God had His scheme ready. He was about to raise up a fresh empire – the Babylonian, here called “Chaldean”. The history of Israel and Judah had known the ravages of the kingdoms of Assyria in the north and Egypt in the south, but neither of these had been able to displace the sword and sceptre which God had put into the hands of the house of David. However, now there was going to be a new Gentile Power, and God was going

to take away sword and sceptre from the house of David, and give them to this Power. The suddenness of the emergence of this new Power was astonishing. It overthrew the great kingdom of Assyria, went through the surrounding nations as a conflagration, and swept down on Judah, ultimately taking them away captive, destroying the temple, and reducing Jerusalem to ruin. God spoke very definitely of the irresistible power of this empire, but also of its character. Notice His words at the end of v. 11 "... imputing this power unto his god". Babylon was an idol-worshipper, and *power* was his god.

### Taking hold of the unchangeable God

Habakkuk pondered these words, and in his reply (vv.12-17) we read the two sides of his reaction. Firstly, that his heart, which feared God, turned at once to God to confess His supremacy and everlasting power. And, secondly, that Habakkuk expressed his amazement that God was using such an evil instrument as the Chaldean power against His own people.

The first part of Habakkuk's reaction tells us that, in spite of the dreadful news he had just received, his heart still clung to God and to His promises to Abraham, that from his seed should spring blessing to all nations. The whole history of Israel was marked with God's power. Habakkuk did not forget that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt, showed His mighty power at the Red Sea, carried them through the

wilderness, subdued kings for their sakes, and brought them into Canaan. So he said, "Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God?" (v.12) What was this upstart king who was going to subdue God's people, in comparison to the One who was from everlasting? Habakkuk's faith in his God was his anchor, the secret of his power and piety. He was not to be shaken by these Chaldeans.

This teaches us a lesson too. Whom do we trust? Is it not our very profession that we believe God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who "gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish"? Do we believe that the reins of government are *really* in His hands? Do we suppose that God has forgotten what was suffered at Calvary, and that His honour and His righteousness do not demand that the Man crowned with thorns should be crowned with all the crowns of glory in this world? We need not be moved by the things and events of this passing world! They are for a season, *but only for a season*. Our God is "from everlasting", and so we take wide sweeps in our vision and find our faith confirmed within us.

It was so with the prophet here. "Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine holy one? We shall not die." You see where his heart is. He is in living touch and relationship with the God of heaven and earth. There can be no vacillation there. There is no fear when our clasp is in the hand of God Himself.

*There is no  
fear when  
our clasp is  
in the hand  
of God  
Himself*

Habakkuk said, “My God”. It is as if there were no other person in the world but himself and God, and he was saying, “The Chaldeans may come. They may do what they wish in Jerusalem. They may sweep away the temple and carry priests, princes and people off to Babylon, but my trust is in my God. *We shall not die.* The seed of Abraham shall not perish. God has His word to fulfil. What comes out of His mouth cannot be recalled.”

This beautiful confession was not for the ears of man but for the ears of God. It is a great thing for the heart in times of crisis to take hold of the unchanging nature of God.

### **Identifying with the will of God**

*In this faith, Habakkuk confesses his acceptance of the will of God.* He sees two purposes in it: *judgment* and *correction*. “O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment: and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction” (v.12). The untoward events of life fall indiscriminately upon believer and unbeliever. A bomb falls irrespectively of the faith or creed of those beneath it. The same evil Power wreaks its vengeance on the just and the unjust. The power of evil is indiscriminate. *It is God who discriminates.* God was using this unwelcome Power for the correction of His own dear people, because of their departure from Him and the idolatry in their midst; and also for the judgment of the evildoer.

The Chaldean Power removed the captives for its own purposes. It even found in Daniel a most exemplary president,

and head of its Civil Service. It used such men for its own ends, but God was above all, carrying out His own purposes behind the ways of Nebuchadnezzar. Why was Judah taken captive by him? Because they were idol-worshippers despite the fact that God had said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). But what happened when, after Habakkuk’s time, they returned from Babylon? They left their idols behind. They had been *corrected*, and this evil Chaldean Power had brought it about.

This is a deep and difficult lesson – easy to write about, hard to learn. The unbeliever’s spirit rises with fierce resentment against the hard knocks of “fate” as he or she sees it. But God’s word to Habakkuk was, “The just shall live by his faith” (2:4). It is the greatest difficulty of old believers, as well as young, to live by faith, [i.e., believing the purposes of God even when sight seems to teach the opposite lesson]. We use faith on occasions when there is great need, distress or perplexity, but *living by faith* is another matter. God teaches us by great events as well as small, in all sorts of obscure passages of Scripture, what value He puts on faith. We like big, spectacular works, but God looks in the out-of-the-way corners of His world and His church, and He sees faith here and there, and it is in this that His soul finds pleasure (cp. Hebrews 10:38). “Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die.”

*We use faith on occasions when there is great need, distress or perplexity, but living by faith is another matter*

# El Shaddai

## The God of power, blessing and judgment

George Stevens

Since God is eternal, all His Names are also eternal revelations of Himself. This article clearly shows the significance for us of the ancient Name of El Shaddai.

### God, all sufficient in power

God has revealed Himself using a variety of Names. Each of them expresses facets of His perfect Being, His Person and His glory. One of them, “Almighty” (Hebrew “Shaddai”), is used as a name of God forty-eight times in the Word of God (the Holy Bible). Thirty-one of these are in the book of Job. It also occurs about six times in the dealings of God with the Jewish fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Sometimes “Shaddai” is linked with “El”, which means “God” in the singular form (“Elohim” being the plural form). Therefore “El Shaddai” is generally translated “God Almighty”. In Exodus 6:3 God very specifically connects this name with the patriarchs of the Hebrew nation.

“And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them” (KJV). <sup>1</sup> As we shall see, although *Shaddai* is introduced in many contexts, God particularly introduces Himself by this Name in the context of *blessing*.

The actual meaning of the word “Shaddai” is “the All-Sufficient”,<sup>2</sup> and the Name carries the idea of sufficiency of power to protect or injure. An example of “power to protect” is in Psalm 91:1. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”. Here we find the believer safe and secure. An example of “power to injure” is in Isaiah 13:6. “Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.” This text refers to the Great Tribulation period in particular. The wrath of God will be poured out on the earth during that time. Violent destruction under the hand of the

<sup>1</sup> This passage underlines the importance of the Names of God as revelation. Actually, the patriarchs did address God as JEHOVAH (e.g. Genesis 4:26). But the full meaning of that Name was not revealed until Exodus 3:13-15; 34:6ff. Similarly, God was addressed as Father in the Old Testament (e.g. Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:19). But the meaning of the Name of “Father” could not be truly known until the Son had come (John 17:26).

<sup>2</sup> See A.R. Fausset, *The Critical and Expository Bible Cyclopaedia* (London, 1891).

Almighty will, unhappily for humankind, be the order of that day. So, whether God is protecting or judging, He has the resources, power and wisdom to achieve it righteously and fully.

*Despise  
not  
thou the  
chastening  
of the  
Almighty*

In Job 37: 23, where “Almighty” occurs by itself, we find that the power is used fairly. Elihu bears witness of God that, “Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict [or, better, ‘oppress’ - NKJV].” In Job 33:4 Elihu reveals that the Almighty has the power of life. “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” Job 5:17 shows the Almighty exercising the power of discipline upon those He loves. “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.” Naomi also recognized this. “And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” (Ruth 1:20-21)

### **God blessing**

In studying the Scriptures, there is a useful principle of “first mention” which is an aid to the interpretation of a word or subject as it occurs in other parts of the Bible. The first mention of *Shaddai* by itself is in Genesis 49:22-26, and it indicates that this name is especially connected with the blessing of God. Jacob blessed his son, Joseph with the words:

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.”

On the other hand, the first mention of *Shaddai* as linked with El “(the Almighty God”) is in Genesis 17: 1-2. “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty

*I am the  
Almighty  
God;  
walk  
before me,  
and be  
thou  
perfect*

God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.” So *El Shaddai* is a sufficient God, and a blessing, covenant-making God, who also expects those who trust in Him to walk in perfect obedience.

*And God Almighty bless thee*

Blessing is the character of *El Shaddai*, when Isaac blessed Jacob. “And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham” (Genesis 28:3-4).

And in Genesis 35: 9-12, we find,

“And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.”

In these verses, *El Shaddai* blessed Jacob in a four-fold way. First, he changed his name from that of Jacob, meaning “deceiver”, to Israel, meaning “a prince with God”. (This God-given change shows the importance of names and their meanings in the Old Testament.) What a change in the heart of Jacob is suggested by this new name! Secondly, *El Shaddai* was going to increase the generations of Jacob so that the nation of Israel and other secondary nations would spring from him. Thirdly, of Jacob’s line, *El Shaddai* would produce royalty. Fourthly, the land of Palestine would be given to him and his descendants, as originally promised to Abraham and Isaac. Genesis 43:14 shows Jacob’s confidence in the protecting mercy of *El Shaddai*. The worsening famine was going to force his sons to return to Egypt for food. Judah insisted that Benjamin, the youngest, should go with the brothers, because the prime minister of Egypt (none other than Joseph) had previously accused them of being spies. Though they had denied this, the unrecognized Joseph had kept their brother Simeon as a hostage until they proved the truth of the family relationships they claimed. Jacob was understandably fearful of sending Benjamin. Nonetheless, he relents with the words, “And God Almighty give you mercy ...” (Genesis 43:14). Jacob knew that his *El Shaddai* could act for the preservation of his sons. On the other hand, he knew that the ways of God were higher than his own, and was resigned to God’s will, as expressed in the words, “If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved”. We know that the Almighty God had indeed marked out Jacob and his family for blessing. The result was that Joseph was made known to his brothers,

and Jacob and the rest of the family went to live in Egypt with him (Genesis 45: 4; 46:29).

### *El Shaddai as Judge today*

Ezekiel 10: 5 states, “And the sound of the cherubims’ wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh”. This chapter describes the glory of the LORD departing in stages from the temple at Jerusalem. The sinfulness of His people had been immense. God was disgraced by their behaviour and was leaving them. But He did so in stages, because He always allows some time for repentance.

The cherubim are those living creatures who protect the presence of God and execute His judgments. The comparison between the voice of *El Shaddai* and the sound of their wings expresses His judgment, and the speed of its implementation. True Christians have a God who will never leave them nor forsake them; but a nation like ours, that professes to be Christian, yet is totally unfaithful and corrupt, will find God deserting them. Therefore, as a nation, we can expect the kind of cursings placed upon disobedient Israel in Deuteronomy 28:15ff to fall upon us. They include:

- Failures in the city - a symbol of administration, trade and industry.
- Failures in the countryside - a symbol of farming prosperity.
- Failures in child-bearing and a decrease in the healthy offspring of animals.
- Failures in the implementation of governmental policies and plans.
- Failures in health, with increased epidemics, prolonged sicknesses and mental problems.
- Failures in rainfall.
- Failures in battling external enemies.
- Increased adultery.
- Increased calamities and pestilence.
- Increased dependence on an enemy within from whom money has to be borrowed.

It is time for Britain to repent! It is time for real Christians nationally to cry out to the Lord for help because there has not been a time of such impending disaster for centuries. People will say that God would not do these things because He is a God of love. Indeed He is, but examine the history of Israel, and see the holy hand of the Lord. His holiness is emphasized in Revelation 4: 8, where the seraphim declare the three-fold holiness of the *Lord God Almighty* and acknowledge Him to be eternal.

## *El Shaddai as Judge to come*

In Revelation 11: 17-18 we find the Almighty God being praised again in view of the setting up of His kingdom on earth. The words speak for themselves and reveal the One who is able both to injure and to bless:

“We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”

A further revealing of the character of the Almighty God is found in the song of Revelation 15: 3-4. “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints [or, better, ‘nations’ – Darby Trans]. 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.” These judgments of the Almighty are true and righteous (Revelation 16: 7). One of the final judgments of God on this world is found in 16: 14. Here called “the battle of that great day of God Almighty”, it is the Battle of Armageddon. In that day, the Lord will destroy all the nations that gather to attack Jerusalem. How? Read Zechariah 14: 12-15. It is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who will lead Judah in that day and go on to reign. Of Him it is written, “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15).

*The Lord  
God  
Almighty  
and the  
Lamb are  
the temple  
of it*

*The battle  
of that  
great day  
of God  
Almighty*  
...  
*He  
treadeth  
the  
winepress  
of the  
fierceness  
and wrath  
of  
Almighty  
God*

# Learning from the life of David

Donald Hill

What do you get out of your Old-Testament reading? This article draws lessons out of some of the “highs and lows” of David’s life. We can certainly learn “things concerning the Lord Jesus” from them (cp. Luke 24:27) – David is a great “type” of the Lord Jesus. Additionally, David’s life also tells us about ourselves. “Whosoever things were written aforetime [i.e. in the Old Testament], were written for our learning” (Romans 15:4 KJV).

*The first man is rejected by God in favour of the Second Man*

## David’s anointing as king (1 Samuel 16)

Saul was the first king of Israel, but he was *man’s* choice. He failed in his responsibilities before God when he only partially carried out *God’s* command to destroy Amalek (1 Samuel 15). Consequently, Samuel was sent by God to Bethlehem to anoint a successor. God’s choice was David, the eighth son of Jesse. God is a discerner of the heart. Samuel anointed David, surrounded by his brothers.

### Lessons

- The first man is rejected by God in favour of the Second Man. This truth is also exemplified in Abel, as against Cain, Jacob as against Esau. These examples teach us that not the first man, Adam, but the second Man, Christ, is God’s Man (cp. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

- The eighth son (1 Samuel 16:10-11) indicates a new start, just like the eighth day, the first day of the new week, the resurrection day. Nicodemus, the ruler of the Pharisees, was left in no doubt by the Lord Jesus that he needed a *new start* – namely, new birth (John 3:3).
- We evaluate one another by the outward appearance. God looks on *the heart*.
- David’s family were the first to become aware that David was God’s choice as king. Believers to-day have the privilege of recognising the claims of the Lord Jesus in a world where He is “despised and rejected by men”, and before the time when the world must “bow the knee” (Isaiah 53:3; 52:15).

## The contest with Goliath (1 Samuel 17)

The army of the Philistines, arch-enemies of Israel, confronted the Israelite army across the valley of Elah. Daily, for forty days, Goliath, the giant from Gath, challenged Israel to produce a champion for single combat. “Forty” denotes God’s testing time (can you name other such “fortys” in Scripture?) King Saul (a giant

of a man himself –1 Samuel 10:23) and all his armed men were too afraid to volunteer themselves, but not David, the shepherd boy whom his father had sent to the battlefield to supply the needs of his brothers. Hearing Goliath's challenge, and with the feeble equipment of a sling with five stones, David faced the enemy. His counter-challenge was that Goliath was defying the armies of *the living God* (1 Samuel 17:36, 45). Fighting Goliath in the strength of the God he trusted, David returned victoriously with the spoil of victory – Goliath's head.

### Lessons for us

- The Lord Jesus has met the enemy – the devil – at Calvary. He met him in weakness – led “as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7). In resurrection the Lord Jesus was the Victor who had conquered death. The believer belongs to a victorious Christ (Hebrews 2:14-16).
- Believers are the spoils of Christ's victory – delivered from eternal death and Satan's power.
- Like David, we can only face the enemy day by day in the strength of the Lord. We need to *not* rely on human weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4), but rather to rely on “the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:11).

*We need to not rely on human weapons, but rather to rely on “the whole armour of God”*

## The rejection of God's anointed king

When Israel returned from this contest, the women's acclamation ran, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7). Such words made Saul envy David, and Saul's attempts on David's life ultimately forced him to become a fugitive. For years David lived in the woods, mountains, the wilderness, and in caves. In this time he gathered loyal followers who shared in his rejection. The cave of Adullam (22:1-2), where David took refuge along with his family, was a gathering point for three groups of people who made David their leader: people “in distress”, people “in debt”, and “the discontented”. However, although Jonathan, Saul's son, sided in his heart with David, he did not become an outcast with him (20:41-42; 23:16-18). During his time as a fugitive, David refused opportunities to kill Saul (24:4ff; 26:8ff), and left God to deal with the matter.

### Lessons for us

- We live in a day when the Lord Jesus is “despised and rejected” by the world at large (Isaiah 53:3).
- Just as some people publicly sided with David and shared his rejection, believers to-day are given the opportunity to “stand up for Jesus” in the day when He is despised (Mark 9:34).
- Those who sided with David in his rejection were with him later on in his days of glory when he was publicly made king. “If we suffer with Him

[Christ], we shall also reign with Him” (2 Timothy 2:12).

*Those who sided with David in his rejection were with him later on in his days of glory*

## David's experiences in Ziklag (1 Samuel 30)

At one point in his exile, David and his men spent over a year amongst the Philistines. Achish, a Philistine lord, gave them and their families the city of Ziklag to live in. When, shortly after, the Philistines prepared for yet another battle with Israel, David and his men accompanied Achish to the battlefield, leaving their families in Ziklag! But because the other Philistine lords did not trust him, David and his men had (mercifully!) to leave the battlefield (1 Samuel 27, 29). On returning to Ziklag, they found it burned down by a raiding band of Amalekites, who had also seized their wives, children and property. David's men were so upset that they were even prepared to stone him. It is at this point that David *encouraged himself in the LORD his God* (30:6).

Having asked for guidance from God, David and his men pursued the raiders. They came across one of the Amalekites' slaves, a young Egyptian, whom they had abandoned because he had fallen ill. *On the condition that David did not hand him over to his former master*, the slave direct-

ed David to the marauders. David was able to recover everyone and everything that the Amalekites had taken, plus much more of their plunder as well.

### Lessons for us

- In the dark days of our lives *we can encourage ourselves in the Lord our God*. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).
- Like David, we need to ask guidance from God for steps along the journey of life.
- The young Egyptian would have died but for David's timely intervention. We, too, were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1), but the “true David”, the Lord Jesus, came to our rescue.
- David recovered all. Prophetically, the Lord Jesus said in Psalm 69:4, “Then I restored that which I took not away”. Through His work on the cross believers have been restored to the favour of a holy, righteous, sin-hating God.

*In the dark days of our lives we can encourage ourselves in the Lord our God*

### David acknowledged as king

Many years of rejection passed after Samuel anointed David in Bethlehem as God's chosen king. Following the deaths of Saul and Jonathan during the Philistine victory on Mount Gilboa,

David asked the LORD if he should go up to the cities of Judah? When God said, "Yes", David even asked, "Which city?" God told him to go to Hebron. In Hebron, therefore, Judah first of all, and later the other tribes, acknowledged David as king. He reigned there for seven years, and then in Jerusalem for thirty-three years. During his long reign David subdued all of Israel's enemies and surrounding nations became tributary to him and the Israelites (2 Samuel 2:1; 8; 1 Kings 2:11).

*David was specific in the requests he made of God*

#### Lessons for us

- David was specific in the requests he made of God, asking not only if he ought to travel to Judah as a general area, but even the actual city! Are we specific in our asking when we pray?
- Judah was quick to recognize David as king. Israel followed seven years later. How quickly did we acknowledge that the "true David", the Lord Jesus, has a claim over our lives? Saul of Tarsus acknowledged the authority of the Lord Jesus as soon as he saw the heavenly light and heard the voice on the Damascus road (Acts 9:6). There was no delay with him.
- The Lord Jesus, like David, will subdue every enemy in a coming day. "For He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians

15:25; see also Psalm 2: 8-9). Then, as the true Solomon, the Lord Jesus will establish His kingdom, and reign in peace. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee [Israel] with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

**Kindness shown to Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9)**

The friendship early established between David and Jonathan remained in David's heart long after Jonathan's death. It was to the house of Saul that David wished to show the kindness of God *for Jonathan's sake*. Mephibosheth, lame from babyhood, became the object of that kindness. Brought from Lodebar ("no pasture") he became a welcome guest at the table of King David, where he feasted daily on royal delicacies.

*David showed "the kindness of God" to Mephibosheth, God has shown kindness to us out of sheer mercy*

#### Lessons for us

- Just as David showed "the kindness of God" to Mephibosheth, even though

he was the grandson of the Saul who had persecuted him, God has shown kindness to us out of sheer mercy. “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:4-5).

- Mephibosheth acknowledged before David his unworthiness of the favours bestowed on him. We too are unworthy of all the blessings which God in Christ has bestowed on us. It is all of grace.
- Mephibosheth’s blessings were four-fold:

- » His fears were dismissed by the words, “Fear not”. The love of God expressed through the Lord Jesus and his sacrificial work at Calvary “casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18).
- » He received assurance: “I will surely show thee kindness”. God has similarly given us every assurance in His word (Romans 8:32).
- » All that had been lost was restored to him. *All* that was lost to mankind as a result of the entrance of sin has been restored to the believer – and more. Believers are brought into the family of God (1 John 3:1).
- » “You will eat bread at my table continually.” What a contrast to “the place of no pasture” (Lodebar)! Believers can feed on and delight in all the spiritual blessings which are

available through Christ. Moreover, Mephibosheth’s lameness was hidden as long as he was at the table! The sins of every believer have been removed from the sight of a holy God. To them He says, “Your sins... I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12). “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love” (Song of Songs 2:4).

## The recovery of the ark of the covenant

Psalm 132 begins with a vow made by David, evidently in his early days in Bethlehem (cp. “Ephrathah”, v.6), that that he would not build his own house until he had found a place for the ark, which was still temporarily housed in Kirjath-jearim (“fields of the woods”, v.6). It had been previously captured by the Philistines due to the dishonouring of the LORD’s Name by the behaviour of the sons of Eli the high priest. But the Philistines had suffered in turn for bringing the holy ark into the temple of their

*David longed to have the ark in its rightful place. Is it our desire individually and collectively to give the Lord Jesus His rightful place?*

heathen deities, and had been glad to return it to Israel. And then men of Israel had died for opening the ark and not respecting its holiness, so that out of fear it had been left at Kirjath-jearim for twenty years (1 Samuel 7:2).

The ark symbolized the presence of God among His people, Israel. It was central to the tabernacle worship. David fulfilled his intention of recovering the ark. “We found it in the fields of the wood” (Psalm 132:6). But when he did so, he allowed it to be carried on a new cart drawn by oxen. And when Uzzah steadied the ark with his hand, he died instantly for touching it. David, too, was now scared, and left the ark for three months in the house of Obed-edom, who experienced blessing for giving it shelter (2 Samuel 6:1-11).

David once again arranged to bring the ark to Zion, but this time it was carried on Levites’ shoulders to the tabernacle which had been prepared for it (1 Chronicles 15). Sacrifices – burnt and peace offerings – were offered according to the law in Leviticus.

The ark of the covenant was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the “true ark”. He is the gathering centre for His people. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst.”

### Lessons for us

- The ark was lost to the Philistines because of the sin and idolatry of the nation of Israel. The priesthood failed under Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 3, 4). The Lord Jesus, the true ark, is the centre of our
- Christian faith: is He rightly honoured by us individually and collectively?
- The heathen god, Dagon, in the Philistine idol-house, could not stand in the presence of the ark. The Lord Jesus has no rivals, He stands unique – He stands alone.
- David longed to have the ark in its rightful place. Is it our desire individually and collectively to give the Lord Jesus His rightful place?
- There was a proper, divinely-given, Scripturally-prescribed way of moving the ark (Numbers 4:15). It was not by a “new cart drawn by oxen”, and this method ended in disaster. God set out a proper divinely-given way for Israel to approach Him in Old Testament times. Correspondingly, He has set out His Divine order for the church in New Testament times. Am I in tune with God’s order?
- Blessing came to the household of Obed-edom when the ark was in his home. There are blessings for all those who enshrine the true ark – the Lord Jesus – and give Him His rightful place.
- David learned from his mistakes, when he arranged for the ark to be rightly carried the second time. “To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22). Does the Lord Jesus have our obedience? He is central to all the thoughts, ways and purposes of God. “In all things He must have the pre-eminence (Colossians 1:18).



## The Bread of Passover

Christ our Passover (I Corinthians 5:7)

**John Weston**

*A father and son in the same issue! This must be a first for Scripture Truth! This illuminating study of the middle loaf of the Passover meal complements the author's study of "the cup of blessing" in the last issue.*

"Thy flesh is meat, Thy blood, blest Saviour, shed,  
Is drink indeed;  
On Thee, the true, the heavenly, living Bread,  
Our souls would feed,  
And live with Thee in life's eternal home,  
Where sin, nor want, nor woe, nor death can come."

*Beth Lechem* ... the house of bread... Bethlehem. How fitting that this should be the birthplace of our Lord Jesus! "I am the Bread of life", He declared (John 6:35 KJV), and, as we shall see later on, in the upper room our Lord took bread and affirmed, "This is my Body" (Matthew 26:26). In the last issue of *Scripture Truth* we examined the five cups of wine associated with the Passover meal. We noted how our "Breaking of Bread service" is derived directly from this meal; and how

our Lord took the cup of blessing and emphasised its new and dramatic meaning, one that occupies our worship Sunday by Sunday.

In this article I want to look at the bread which forms an essential part of this feast of remembrance.

### The three loaves of Passover

There are three loaves on the table in the Passover meal, though they are not loaves as we know them. They are *matzot* or unleavened bread. This is the only type of bread that may be eaten during Passover. The *matzah* is eaten to call to mind the haste with which the Israelites left Egypt. “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry” (Exodus 12.39).

The fact that there are three *matzot* will at once alert some to a reference to the Trinity, and to the middle loaf pointing to the Lord Jesus.

Why three *matzot*? Two are needed for the benediction over bread. On every Sabbath, each meal opens with a benediction over two loaves. They represent the manna that fell on the ground during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and the fact that, on the day before the Sabbath, two portions could be gathered: hence the two loaves (Exodus 16:22, 29).

The extra loaf, the middle one, commemorates the Exodus. Early in the meal, this loaf is broken in two. One half is eaten, while the other half is concealed until the end of the meal. This broken piece of *matzah* is known as the *afikomen*. This word has the connotation of “the coming one”, and it is the last food to be eaten after the Passover meal.

Now comes the amazing interpretation!

### The middle loaf represents the lamb

When the temple was destroyed by Titus in AD 70, the lamb could no longer be sacrificed and therefore lambs ceased to be eaten at Passover. In its place, the *afikomen* came to be a symbolic reminder of that lamb.

Thus today, at every Passover meal, the Jewish people are sharing this piece of *matzah* – the piece that represents the lamb that once was sacrificed!

It was this very piece of *matzah* that the Lord took, and said, “Take, eat; this is my Body” (Matthew 26:26).

How wonderful this is! The Jewish people, as they celebrate their deliverance from Egypt, share that which reminds them of the lamb that was slain and of the blood under which they sheltered from the judgment. The believer, to-day, as he meets with other believers around the Lord’s table, shares the broken loaf – recalling the *afikomen* which the Lord blessed, two thousand years ago, as a symbol of His body

– the Lamb of God sacrificed for us and whose blood was to save us from judgment.

Having shared that broken half of the middle *matzah*, which had been given the new emphasis by the Lord, the disciples then shared the cup of blessing. As we saw in the previous article, this too had been given the new emphasis, the new meaning.

The middle loaf is also referred to by the Jewish people as “the bread of affliction” (cp. Deuteronomy 16:3), or “the bread of poverty”. How relevant this is to our present study! Our thoughts go back to Ecclesiastes 9:14-15, which details the deliverance of a besieged city. “Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.” The apostle Paul reminds us of “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

#### **“The travail of His soul”**

Might I include here, finally, a further thought? It is also worth remembering that, just before Calvary, our Lord took His disciples to Ephraim for a few quiet days (John 11:54). Ephraim is the present-day Taibah, and, sitting there on the last vestige of grass before the wilderness takes over, one has a wonderful view of the Jordan valley. Turning your head around and looking up, you can see the Mount of Olives in the distance.



*The believer, to-day, shares the broken loaf – recalling the afikomen – the Lamb of God sacrificed for us*

But why “Ephraim”? It’s a good biblical principle to go back to the “first reference”, and so we turn back to Genesis 41:52. “And the name of the second called he [i.e. Joseph] Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction”.

How very true this is of our blessed Redeemer. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah 53.11).

“O Jesus Lord, who loved us like to Thee?  
Fruit of Thy work, with Thee, too, there to see  
Thy glory, Lord, while endless ages roll,  
Thy saints the prize and travail of Thy soul.”

What a gathering it will be when that “travail” – the redeemed – surround the throne of God and of the Lamb!

“Heaven’s vault with praise shall ring  
Louder and yet more loud;  
Millions of saints Thy worth shall sing  
Each heart in worship bowed.”

Yes, how true “Ephraim” is! I well remember sitting on the hills of Taibah conducting a bible study. We saw a shepherd coming out with his flock of sheep – *leading* them, not driving them, as is the practice of our shepherds. Having arrived at the selected spot, he, together with his dog, divided them into separate folds, according to their needs, e.g. ewes, young lambs, etc. Later in the afternoon, we saw him bring them all together into one flock, and lead them back to the village. This was such a beautiful example of John 10:16, where a better translation reads, “And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd” (Darby Trans.).

To sum up. As, week by week, we gather in worship around the Lord’s table, partaking of that which was the middle *matzah*, and sharing in that third cup – the “cup of blessing” – may our thoughts go back to the upper room and hear afresh the Lord saying, “This is my Body...This is my Blood”.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh... LET US DRAW NEAR!” (Hebrews 10:19, 22)

# Alpha People

## Aaron

**George Stevens**

*An alphabetical series of short studies in Bible characters will be included, God willing, from time to time. You could hardly get nearer the beginning of the alphabet than “Aaron”!*

“And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart” (Exodus 4:14 KJV).

Aaron was a son of Amram and Jochabed and, therefore, a brother to Moses. He was a Kohathite and of the tribe of Levi (Exodus 6:16-20). His name means “Enlightened”. The verse above shows God was angry with Moses. He was commissioning him to go and deliver Israel from Egypt, but Moses made the excuse that he was a poor speaker. God had already shown him miracles by changing a rod into a serpent and by making his hand leprous and healing it again; but Moses asked God to send someone else. It was then that the Lord spoke these words of Aaron, “Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well.” Moses was

without excuse. This also shows that God knows our abilities and that if He asks us to do anything for Him, He will also provide the resources for the work. Aaron was obedient to God and ended up as Moses’ spokesman before Pharaoh (Exodus 4:30; 5:1). He must have spoken powerfully, and thereafter he played a major part in God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The lesson here is that we should “trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus; but to trust and obey.”



Once saved from Pharaoh, and in the wilderness, there was an occasion where the leadership of Aaron failed the LORD. He allowed the people to build and worship a golden calf in the

*It is surprising how “people pressure”  
(even from fellow believers) diverts us  
even when we are “out and out” for the Lord*

absence of Moses (Exodus 32:1-6). It is surprising how “people pressure” (even from fellow believers) diverts us even when we are “out and out” for the Lord.

The tribe of Levi later became workers for the tabernacle system (Numbers 4). This was a privilege, but also hard work. When the Lord gives us a service for Himself then, be assured, it will involve hardship of one kind or another.

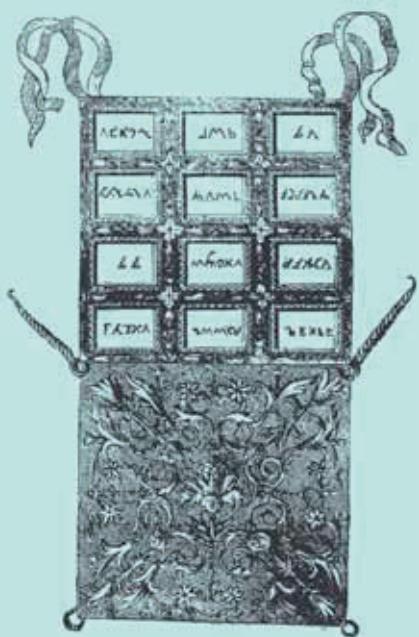
The family of Aaron became worshippers. They were the priestly family for the whole of Israel (Exodus 28:1). This office did not come about without disension. There was disagreement among the people as to Aaron's family being chosen. The people thought Moses was favouring his brother. So God ordered the people to set sticks, or rods, before Him, and the family's rod that budded was to provide the priesthood. It was Aaron's rod that budded, proving that he had been chosen by God and not by Moses (Numbers 16, 17). Aaron had God's approval. Let us not be envious of those whom God has placed in the church to be leaders, such as “elders”. They deserve to be honoured and doubly so if they do the role well (1 Timothy 5:17).

Of course, Aaron is a well-known type of Christ as our great high priest. He was clothed with a coat, robe and ephod that match the garments of glory and beauty with which Christ is honoured (cp. Hebrews 2:7).

Both Aaron and Jesus were sanctified. “Sanctified” means “set apart for the possession, purposes and pleasure of God” (Exodus 28, 29). The mitre-plate on Aaron's head-piece said, “Holiness to the Lord” (Exodus 28:36). Christ is the Holy One. He is God Himself.



It was Aaron who offered up the sacrifice of day of atonement each year (Leviticus 16). He did this for his own sins and those of the people. Christ offered up Himself without spot by the eternal Spirit in order to purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:7,14).



As Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel upon his breastplate

(Exodus 28:15-21), so Christ bears our names on His heart in order that we may appreciate His love and His will for us. As Aaron bore the names of the tribes of the people of God on His shoulders (28:9-12), so Christ bears our names on His shoulders – the place of power. Christ will bear the government of this world on *one* of His shoulders (Isaiah 9:6). But He places every sheep He has found upon *two* (Luke 15:5), assuring us of an all-the-way-home salvation.

Unhappily, Aaron, like Moses, was not allowed to enter into the promised land. He died at the age of 123 years on Mount Hor in Edom (Numbers 33:38-9).

*But our great High Priest has entered into heaven itself and, unlike Aaron and succeeding priests, lives after the power of an endless life. He supports, sympathises with, and succours all those who trust in Him (Hebrews 7:16,25).*

*Christ will bear the government of this world  
on one of His shoulders,  
but He places every sheep He has found upon two*

# Cheering Words Calendar 2009

The 2009 calendar is now available from STP, with a choice of two pictures:

**Beadnell Harbour,  
Northumberland** (shown on  
the right)

or

**Poppy Field in Shropshire**  
(shown below).



Beadnell Harbour, Northumberland  
Photo: Grahame Morrison

## Cheering Words

JANUARY

**26**

MONDAY

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.  
1 Corinthians 9:24

Therefore ... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.  
Hebrews 12:1-2

Scripture Truth Publications, 31-33 Glover Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3LD Tel: 01270 252274

## Cheering Words

FEBRUARY

**3**

TUESDAY

I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck.

Hosea 11:4

I've found a friend, oh, such a friend! He loved me before I knew Him. He drew me with the cords of love, And thus He bound me to Him. And though I might have the desire Those ties which ought can sever, For I am His, and He is mine. For ever and for ever.

Scripture Truth Publications, 31-33 Glover Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3LD Tel: 01270 252274

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The above items are available from STP at our **new address** inside the front cover

# Seen and heard

*'Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen.' (Luke 2:20).*

*'For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' (Acts 4:20)*

You could have been there too,  
you could have smelt the hay,  
you could have felt the rough-made side  
of feed-trough where Christ lay.

You could have sensed the fear  
in Mary's panicked heart,  
heard in that temple seminar  
Jesus' amazing part.

You could have stood, while John  
would not at first baptize,  
and heard God single out His Son  
in voice from opened skies;

have leper seen implore,  
seen pity Christ's face fill,  
have watched Him touch the loathsome sore,  
and heard His word, 'I will'.

You could have heard Christ teach,  
tell of the sheep amiss,  
tell of the lost son's part-said speech  
and of the father's kiss.

You could have seen Christ die;  
heard His forgiving plea,  
and unimaginable cry,  
'My God! forsaken me!'

*But not have seen Christ risen*  
if not with God made right:  
God hid from unbelievers' vision  
such man-condemning sight;  
but in time soon to be  
shall every mouth be shut,  
for that long told them shall they see  
— the Lord whom they forgot.

Soon shall this grace-day close,  
now is salvation's date;  
full is the proof that Christ arose:  
Doubt, and you'll be too late.