

Scripture Truth



Inside:

Whom I serve
The quiet spirit
Making melody
Jefferson's mistake

Beauty and the Beasts
Your way was in the sea
God's creation and God's Word

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Contents

Jefferson's mistake	57	Beauty and the Beasts	72
God's creation and God's Word: Psalm 19	58	Making melody	78
Whom I serve	64	Your way was in the sea	82
The quiet spirit	67	Here and there (poem)	Back cover

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Jefferson's mistake

Thomas Jefferson, main drafter of the American Declaration of Independence and America's third President, was a Deist. That means, he believed in a remote and inaccessible God who initially created the universe but then left it to run itself, like a clockwork clock.

According to a biography of Jefferson, both he and John Adams (second President) had the same thought when news of vaccination against smallpox swept the western world in the later 1790s. If so simple a thing as inserting cow-puss into a human wound can save so many lives why would an All-Wise Creator not have revealed this long before? John Adams was an orthodox Christian, but not, so far as can be judged from his biography, truly born-again. His reaction to the above question was to suppress it as improper.

But Jefferson viewed the invention as proof that an all-wise, benevolent God could not be continuously superintending His creation.

In fact both missed the simple answer to the question. The non-revelation of vaccination was part of the ordinance of the Fall. Then Adam and Eve had renounced dependence on their all-wise and loving Creator and His provision. Accordingly, they were left from then on to their own wisdom. All arts and sciences date from the Fall: we can see this from Genesis 4:21f. God certainly revealed to Noah the dimensions for the super-box he was commanded to make, and that he had to waterproof it; but He did not teach him the requisite elementary joinery skills. God did not leave *creation* to its own devices but He did largely leave *mankind* to its own devices except for His dispensational interventions that were designed to lead up to the cross. Mankind was left to invent its own mastery of the material world.

The error of both Adams and Jefferson was to disregard the Fall. Not surprisingly: neither had truly confronted his own sinfulness at the cross.

THEO BALDERSTON

God's creation and God's Word: Psalm 19

Jonathan Hughes

*This article originated as a Truth for Today talk
(<http://www.truthfortoday.org.uk/>) for Premier Radio in July, 2013.*

“I can't hear what you are saying because what you are doing is shouting so loud!”

What a sad indictment of someone's actions! However, this is never a charge that could be levelled at the living God. Everything that God says is fully in keeping with what He does, and all that God does confirms that which He says. We find this to be perfectly expressed in Psalm 19, where the first part considers *His works*, the second *His words*, and the last draws conclusions for *our ways*.

I. The glory of God's work in creation (verses 1-6)

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (verses 1-4, NKJV).

“The heavens declare the glory of God” (verse 1). Particularly in modern western society we have almost completely disassociated ourselves from the natural world, and have therefore lost the ability to understand the language of creation. More rural communities, however, would still retain the ability to hear creation's voice. And undoubtedly it does have a voice.

Unfortunately, one of the catastrophic consequences of mankind's original disobedience (see Genesis 3) is that we have lost our sense of perspective, particularly so far as God is concerned. We have over-inflated our own importance and ability, and “downsized” God, until, if we acknowledge Him at all, we think of Him as being not much greater than ourselves.

The first thing that creation teaches us is that God is big.

I mean really, really big, so much bigger than we have ever thought. Of course God in Himself is not material, does not belong to His own creation, and has no “dimensions”. But in some real sense He must be infinitely greater than the creation He created. And we still do not know how big His creation actually is! Man speaks about “the known universe”, implicitly accepting that there is so much more that we have not discovered yet.

In the Genesis account of creation, almost as a throwaway line, we find out that “[God] made the stars also” (Genesis 1:16). He knows each one by name (Psalm 147:4; Isaiah 40: 26), which is much more than we do! There are many, many more of them than astronomers have discovered; yet, if we were to count even those that have been discovered, at a rate of one per second, it would take us 2,500 years!

Light travels at 186,000 miles per second and there are $60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365$ seconds per year. Work it out later, but you will get a very big number for the distance light can travel in a year. And yet it would take 100,000 light years just to travel from one side of our galaxy to the other – it is so huge.

And ours is a *tiny* planet. Imagine the earth as the size of a golf ball. Then the sun, our “local” star, would be about fifteen feet across. However, even the sun is pretty insignificant in terms of star-size. If the earth were the size of a golf ball, then the star Betelgeuse would have the diameter of six empire state buildings stacked on top of each other; or, to put it another way, its diameter is approximately twice the diameter of the earth’s orbit around the sun. And on this scale the diameter of Mu Cephei would be the length of two Golden Gate bridges end to end, whilst Canus Majoris would have a diameter equal to the height of Mount Everest – relative, remember, to an earth the size of a golf ball!

Yet God measures the heavens, not by stretching His arms out wide, but with the span of His hand (Isaiah 40:12).

This tiny, tiny planet that we live on was made by God to suit His purposes, not ours. Neil Armstrong was returning to earth after his famous Apollo 11 mission to the moon, and happened to look at the earth through a window. When he held up his thumb, the earth disappeared. “However, it did not make me feel big”, he said, “but very, very



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small. All of human history – the Pharaohs, Romans, empires of the world, all of human history, had taken place on that tiny ball suspended on nothing, that we call planet earth.”

Now let us just consider the sun once more, before we see where we have got to. The surface temperature of the sun is about 10,000°F (which makes me kind of glad, even on a snowy day, that we are no closer). Yet, if we were to take the entire gross domestic product of the richest nation on earth, the USA, for the next seven million years and put that money into the electricity meter, we could only afford to power the Sun for one second! This puts the paltriness of the energy that man can harness into the perspective of what God produces through one little star. And the Bible tells us that by the word of God's mouth, all things were created (Psalm 33:6-9).

And if the earth is tiny, then we human beings are infinitesimal; nothing at all compared to the universe we live in, the universe which the Bible puts into perspective by saying that God measures it by handbreadths. How great God is! These comparisons just highlight the wonder of the fact that we should be of any significance to God. And yet He loved the world (i.e., all its people) so much, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). So great a God actually wants a relationship with *me* and even though it cost the death of His Son!

God is not only immeasurably greater than His universe. He is also a Master Craftsman. With just four nucleotides He has created the human genome, whose three billion characters, if stretched end to end, would measure six feet long. Yet the genome exists in every cell, telling a unique story that is our almost unique personality. The miracle of life is you and I: organisms with engineering and reactions of a complexity we are unable to replicate. This ought to make us understand that God is a God of ultimate power and skill.

Therefore the vastness and infinite complexity of creation tell us in the clearest sense that God is great. It reminds us of the powerful words of Isaiah 40:25f:

“To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing.”

2. The wonder of the word of God (verses 7-11)

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than

gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (verses 7-10).

What a great God we have! He not only *does*, but *says*. And, unlike the person in the opening quotation whose actions obliterate his words, what *God* says corresponds perfectly to what He does.

We live in a world where words are distrusted. Do you believe everything you read in the papers? If a politician recites some statistics to make a point, do you accept them at face value? I would be hard-pressed to find anyone who would answer "yes" to either of these questions. However, when we come to the Word that God spoke – the Bible – we come to something that is absolutely trustworthy.

David celebrates this in the psalm with the adjectives "*perfect*", "*sure*", "*right*", "*pure*", "*enduring*", "*true*", "*righteous*" (see the excerpt above). How refreshing, compared to the half-truths and lies, the temporary and changing opinions that pass for "fact" today. It is no wonder at all then that the Devil is so busy today trying to pour scorn on the Bible, casting it as some random collection of ill-founded thoughts from antiquity. The very opposite is true.

Let us be quite unambiguous. God's Law [or, instruction] is perfect, His testimony sure. It is morally perfect, factually trustworthy (verse 7). The Bible is the wholly inspired word of God (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17), unchanging, and vital at all times and in all situations. Its teachings are without fault, and form the only basis for an individual relationship with God, and for a society to prosper.

Logically, there can be no difficulty at all for God to create a big fish to swallow Jonah (see Jonah 1:17) if He is the One who fixes the stars of the Pleiades in their relative positions despite their being hundreds of light years apart from one another (see Amos 5:8). Once we "right-size" God, our lives make a whole lot more sense. And there can be no doubt whatsoever that so great a God is able to



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ensure that the message He wants to communicate to mankind has been preserved for us, in the way that He wants.

And because it is the living God who says it, it cannot but be highly relevant to us. One thing is certain: the Bible is a true and certain bedrock for our lives. I am not for a moment saying that there are not parts that are difficult to understand – Peter says as much! (See 2 Peter 3:15-16.) Nor that there are not parts that read strangely, or apparently contradict other parts. However, our lack of understanding in no way diminishes the inherent reliability of all we find in the Bible – from Genesis to Revelation. There can be no surer way to living a life that is useful, God-honouring, and personally satisfying, than simple obedience to the Bible. This is what David says in the excerpt from Psalm 19 at the head of this section. There can be no greater investment in a day than setting aside time to read for ourselves what the Bible has to say – allowing God to communicate with us directly. Too often we settle for what others say on God's behalf. We need to get back to the Bible and allow God to speak for Himself!

David said God's word "converts the soul", "makes wise", "rejoices the heart", and "enlightens the eyes". In short: keeping God's Word has results! You may be able to detect a progression in them:

- God "converts", or saves us, giving us a new life that is able to respond to Him.
- Then He shows us what He wishes us to do.
- When we simply obey Him, then we find pleasure in doing so; and
- As we increasingly live out what we learn in the Bible, we begin to understand more and more the ways of God and why He says what He does.

Christianity is a beautiful, growing, living relationship to a great God who passionately loves us, insignificant though we are, and who delights to reveal Himself to us so that we might praise Him. No wonder at all that David concludes the section by stating that God's word is more precious than gold, and sweeter than honey!

3. The effect this should have on our ways (verses 12-14)

"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (verses 12-13).

I remember, many Christmases ago, that our little son came downstairs the morning after we had put the tree up; it was the first Christmas that he was old enough to be aware of what was going on. The lights had been lit, and he just went and lay under the tree; and, looking up at the lights and wiggling his legs, said, "Wow!"

So, firstly, as we look up at the stars at night, or look along the valley by Llyn Ogwen, or look down from just below the summit of Ben Nevis, we ought just to say, "Wow". And as we get up in the morning we should marvel at the incredible complexity that allows us sight or hearing, or movement. Thousands upon thousands of chemical reactions are going on, with no thought on our part, to allow us to get up and live our day. Secondly, as we understand how vast, how eternal, how awesome God is, then we must come to realise that He must be obeyed. It is utterly ridiculous to believe that we can act independently of such a God without consequences. Moreover God is so completely God, that whatever He does is right, just because He does it. For us to evaluate matters differently is utterly foolish!

So we need to get our relationship right with Him. This only happens by means of *forgiveness*. He forgives our sins, though we can never make sufficient amends, simply because His own Son died on a cross. If such a great God has said this – and He has – then it is unreasonable for us to believe that there is some other way that we can be saved (see Acts 4:12).

Thirdly, our appreciation of the greatness of God ought to affect the way that we behave. No wonder David wanted to be kept from secret faults and presumptuous sins! (verse 13)

Lastly, do we ever doubt God? Are we ever left wondering if God is unable to work His will out in our particular circumstances? Whilst our doubts may be understandable, they are also ridiculous – to imagine that the God who made and sustains all creation, from the human genome to Canus Majoris, is unable to work in my piffling circumstances. If nothing else, let us leave Psalm 19 with a renewed sense of confidence in our God, for He will perform all that He has intended, for He truly is a great God!



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Whom I serve

S.N.Downs

Norman Downs served the Lord for many years in the central region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (as it is now called). This article is abridged from notes of a conference or houseparty address on parts of Genesis 24, and appeared in Scripture Truth vol. 35 (1945-47), pp. 263-5. The original article has been abridged and slightly edited.

It is a great thing to be the Lord's, and for Paul it was one and the same thing to be His and to serve Him. All of us should be His servants.

I suppose that for all of us here it is true that we are His. Are we serving Him? Let us put the question to ourselves each one individually.

Now in the Christian life the Lord does not want mere passengers, but servants. In John 15:15 the Lord says to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what His Lord doeth; but I have called you friends" (KJV). Then in chapter 20:17 the Lord Jesus calls them His brethren, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

"Brethren" indicates relationship. We are brethren, for we have been brought into that wonderful relationship as the fruit of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. A "friend" is one with whom you can have communion. You can tell out your thoughts and you can share his thoughts. The Lord did not say, "You are my servants," but rather, "I call you not servants," for we are more than that. Our being "brethren" and "friends" ennobles the thought of service for us. But we are called upon, every one of us, to serve Him.

The apostle Paul was a pattern servant. When he was struck down by the light above the brightness of the sun on the Damascus road, and before he could ask the Lord, "What wilt thou have me to do?" he was absolutely broken and utterly humbled in His presence. We have to get to that point where we come to an end of ourselves, of our goodness, our confidence, and all our pride, if we are really and truly to ask the Lord to show us the service

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which He would have us do for Him. Notice that the Lord’s will was to govern him. This is a personal thing which we have to settle between ourselves and the Lord.

In the story which we read in Genesis 24 we find a servant, and there are some things about him which will help us. He is not named in this chapter. It may have been Eliezer (cp. 15:2), but here he is simply Abraham’s servant, not seeking greatness for himself or putting himself forward, but simply doing Abraham’s bidding. Verse 8 indicates that he was not finally responsible for the results of his service if the woman had not been willing to follow him. We see how limited his liability was, and he had simply to understand his master’s will and do it, the final responsibility being with his master.

So it is in our Christian service. We have God’s word, and we are encouraged to discover for ourselves what God’s will is for us, and where to do it, seeking the power that we need to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then verse 10 shows that he took time to prepare for his journey. It would never have done for Abraham’s servant to arrive in the presence of Rebecca and her family with the words, “I really meant to bring earrings, bracelets, etc., but I had to come away in such a hurry that I forgot.” Abraham’s servant took time and thought, and prepared everything. So that when he got there he had everything in readiness. We are reminded of our Lord’s own wonderful service as we get it portrayed for us in the Gospels. He went about doing good, never rushing from one place to another. He knew just what to do and when to do it. There was a majesty in His actions, in His words, and in His movements. Everything was perfect in Him, and surely we can take a lessons from that for ourselves.

*If, like Paul, we have been humbled and broken, we
are entitled to ask what He would have us to do*

*I believe that, if we were each one just willing
to be servants, there would be no lack of servants
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Then, lastly in connection with Abraham's servant, there is that word in verse 27, "I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." If, like Paul, we have been humbled and broken, and our old self has been dealt with in the cross of Christ, we are entitled to ask what He would have us to do. And when we know His will He will reveal the next step. We are called to service. That service may be at our very door. In the work and witness of the Lord there is so much variety. Here is indeed something for each one of us, and that "something" may be some small service we had never thought of. If that little service be faithfully done, we shall be like Abraham's servant – putting ourselves out of the picture and letting Christ perform the work of God through us as channels of His grace.

Now a word on how this would work in a foreign field. The Lord Jesus, when He was raised from the dead, gave us a charter that we might go out to the nations. He said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me... unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Some have said, "How can you expect people of ability and training to spend their lives in central Africa?" I believe that, if we were each one just willing to be servants, carrying out what the Lord has entrusted to us, there would be no lack of servants for any part of His work, whether at home or abroad, whether Sunday-school work, visiting, or missionary work in other lands. Let us see to it that we are serving *the Lord*. Let us seek from Him to know the sphere of our service, and surely He will supply the need wherever His work is going on.

Words which are a great incentive to our service are these, "His servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads (Revelation 22:3,4). Service will indeed go on beyond this present life. And, above all, *His servants shall see His face*.

*His servants shall serve him;
and they shall see his face*

The quiet spirit

Peter's special advice to wives – and to husbands

David Anderson

Following an excellent article on “Fathers” in the last issue!

As Peter writes to wives about being submissive to their own husbands (1 Peter 3:4f, NKJV) ¹, he states that God especially notices “the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit”. It is very precious in His sight, and it highlights a facet of the Christian lifestyle very contrary to the present-day world. In contrast to the attributes of quietness and gentleness, “loud living”, including self-assertiveness and vanity, seems to be prevalent. And divine ordinances and the divine order, such as that concerning the roles of husbands and wives in marriage, are being increasingly ignored, indeed derided. Consequently, Christian women are finding it more difficult than ever before to swim against the stream as they seek to follow the practical instructions of God's word – in this case, 1 Peter 3:4. And nowadays the world puts great emphasis on a woman's outward appearance – on how well-dressed and beautiful she is. But not so God: He notices those internal workings of a person's heart that reveal themselves in that person's character.

Submission

After teaching his readers that they have been chosen to be the people of God, and that they are loved by Him (1:1 – 2:10), Peter turns to practical matters. The specific instructions to married women in 3:1-6 form one section of a general theme of “submission” that runs from 2:13 to the end of chapter 3 ². Peter is exhorting his readers to practise “submission” in various departments of life. “Submission” is used in the New Testament in relation to the orderly arrangements, with their “authoritative” character, that are established in various spheres of life for the mutual benefit of all.

Peter opens this practical part of his letter with the words, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake” (2:13). He pursues the requirement of subjection to the different authorities encountered in life (2:13-17), and then looks at “difficult situations”, such as those of servants who have harsh masters (2:18-21). He presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme example of submission for every Christian to follow (2:21-25), before in 3:1-7 asking wives and husbands to be submissive to each other:

¹ Unless stated otherwise, quotations are from NKJV.

² Finally, in 5:1-7 Peter returns to this subject in relation to local Christian churches.

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external – the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewellery, or the clothing you wear – but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” (ESV).

Peter extends this exhortation even to those women who are married to unbelieving husbands (verse 1ff). He advises them to concentrate on displaying their Christian personality rather than preaching at their spouses. In keeping with the fact that Christians are “sojourners and pilgrims” in this world (2:11), they are to resist emphasising their outward beauty by extravagant hairstyles, dress, or jewellery. Chaste conduct, rather than cosmetically managed appearance, is what matters to the God who looks beyond outward appearances into the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). He takes particular notice of the Christian lady who exhibits “the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” – it is very precious in His sight. Godly living, accepting the authority of your husband over you, and general Christian demeanour in the home can attract his attention and win him for Christ. Godly wives who find themselves in this situation will be greatly encouraged to know that God uses this method.

Youth and beauty fade with the passing of time, but the beauty of character grows, becoming lovelier and more attractive. This is achieved by fearing God. Such godly wives become the daughters of Sarah who exemplified these features when she called Abraham “lord” from her heart (Genesis 18:12). By contrast, Scripture also speaks about women who exhibit the opposite features: in a twice-repeated statement in the book of Proverbs the quarrelsome nature of a contentious wife is likened to the continual dripping on a very rainy day! (Proverbs 19:13 & 27:15 with 21:9 & 25:24) However, Proverbs majors on the benefits to a man of being married (5:18, 12:4, 18:22, 19:14); and details the excellencies of a godly wife (31:10-31).

*Youth and beauty fade,
but the beauty of character grows*

What about husbands?

However, the word “likewise” in verse 1 is used again in verse 7. In 3:7 “likewise” perhaps referred back to the “submits” of 2:13 and 2:18 (though see below). The repetition of “likewise” in 3:7 demonstrates that Peter expected husbands also to display this attitude towards their wives. “Dwell together” suggests mutual submission, a oneness of life, where prayers are not hindered; and it is the secret of order in the home. It enhances the natural relationship of man and wife, bringing stability, peace, security, and joy – as well as honouring God. The husband does not dominate, but takes an active role in family life. In order to provide fully for her, and help and support her, he must understand his wife’s material, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Peter also reminds Christian husbands and wives that they both have received the “grace of life” which gives them a spiritual relationship that will never pass away. This common inheritance enhances their natural union, which should be maintained by prayer *for* one another, as well as *with* each other.

Christ, the supreme Example

In 2:18-24 Peter presents Christ as the model to follow in this matter. Christ totally submitted to the will of God. God wants us to follow in the footsteps of our Master; this is His declared intention in calling us by the gospel (2:21). Whilst Peter amazes us with truths about our being called “out of darkness into His marvellous light” and “to His eternal glory” (2:9; 5:10), it is sobering to realise that it is a holy God who calls us to be like His Son in humility and meekness in an increasingly “loud” world (1:15ff). When Peter reviews the closing hours of the life of Christ, it is in terms of the “suffering Servant” of Isaiah 53. In 2:23 he alludes to Isaiah 53: 7. “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” He it was, who, when He was abused, did not return abuse, who, when He suffered, did not threaten; but entrusted Himself to His God, the One who judges righteously.

Nowadays we call uncontrolled or totally unacceptable behaviour, “rage”. There is road rage, air rage and so on. “Rage” describes how everyone treated the Lord Jesus when He was arrested, judged, abused, manhandled,

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condemned, scourged, and then crucified. Whilst we know that no one will ever suffer to the extent that Christ suffered, we are asked to behave in the same manner as He did. We will, however, encounter the same unjust treatment in a world that is no different now from what it was then.

He was perfect; He “committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (2:22), whereas we have a nature that is always ready to retaliate. Therefore we need to have sensitive consciences to remember what God requires, so that we can patiently and quietly endure grief, or suffer wrongfully. Peter also wants us to realise that, for the Christian, life in this present world follows the same pattern as it did for Christ: there are sufferings for us now, and glory to follow (5:10). We need to pray that each believer may gain the strength of character, the inner personality, the enduring spirit of gentleness and quietness, that can only come from being Christlike.

Perhaps the word “likewise”, or “in like manner” (RV), in 3:1 more properly refers back to 2:21, than to 2:13, 18. “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” This verse occurs at the end of a set of exhortations to servants, especially those with ill-tempered masters. These servants were to follow in the path of the true servant of the Lord. For them submission would mean that they would receive the commendation of God. The work-situation today poses many difficulties for the Christian who desires to remain faithful to his calling. There are not only overbearing bosses to contend with, but also the pressures of workloads, adverse working conditions and workers’ rights issues, along with many other “voices”.

Applications to us

It is worth stating some important issues that we face, living as Christians in the twenty-first century.

First, the modern way of life, with all the “glamour and the noise of the world”, constantly militates against godly living. There is the noise of self-importance and of self-assertiveness; and people have become “lovers of themselves” (2 Timothy 3:2). Christians can easily be caught up with the spirit of the age. For example, a Christian wife with an unbelieving husband may resort to worldly ways of winning him over. (And a single Christian woman seeking a husband may also be tempted to adopt worldly ways of attracting him.)

Second, Peter’s direct appeal to manifest this unchangeable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit is also applicable to all aspects of Christian living. Meekness,

*“The hidden person of the heart” is essentially
a replication of Christ in the life of the Christian*

humility, and submission are attributes no more applauded in our society than they were in the Roman and Greek cultures of Peter's day. However, God recognises and treasures them. If we want to please God by doing His will, then we will find ourselves to be strangers, but also pilgrims, in this world. Society is fast moving further and further away from God's standards. As it does so, its noise ever increases before Him. This outcry will soon become so great that He will intervene in judgment, as He did with Sodom in the days of Lot (Genesis 19:13 & Luke 17:28-30).

Third, "the hidden person of the heart" is essentially a replication of Christ in the life of the Christian. He is 'the hidden Person' resident in our hearts when we own Him as Lord (1 Peter 3:4, 15, ESV). He is our great example; He lived for the will of God in the most extreme of circumstances. In these circumstances He succeeded by simply "handing over" the whole matter to God, the righteous Judge (2:23). The Christian should follow in Christ's steps, even through all the difficult areas of life, irrespective of whether the world rages or the devil roars.

A constant quiet and gentle attitude should be displayed in Christian living – it should not vary with the ups and downs of life. Peter insists that the witness from consistent, Christlike conduct is a powerful addition to speaking about the Lord, especially in situations where the word of the gospel has not been obeyed. It can also provoke others to question us about the hope that is within us. We should always be ready to explain our faith to people in a courteous and respectful manner (3:15).

Finally, sacrifice and suffering in life now will result in eternal glory. This was true for Christ (1:11) and is also true for His followers. But now Christ is the glorified Lord "who has gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him" (3:22). He soon will appear in glory! (5:4) Meanwhile we are to understand that this is the true grace of God in which we stand (5:10, 12). Peter's helpful advice in 3:10-12, quoted from Psalm 34:12-16, is,

"He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

The witness from consistent, Christlike conduct is a powerful addition to speaking about the Lord

Beauty and the Beasts

The Future of Europe

George Stevens

The future of Europe is certain, whatever Britain's voters decide on 23rd June. God has given us a preview of the last state of a revived Roman empire that will surely embrace much of our continent. He has done it because we can better understand the deep dynamics of Europe now by knowing what will be manifest then (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Introduction

The future of Europe is directly linked to a dream that God gave king Nebuchadnezzar many years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. In it he saw a great image, which shone brightly, but had a form that was frightening (Daniel 2:31-35). Its head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet part of iron and part of clay. Suddenly a stone cut out without hands appeared, struck the image on its feet, and broke it to pieces. The whole image became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors. The wind carried them away. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

God told Daniel both the dream itself and its interpretation (2:6-8, 19, 36ff). Nebuchadnezzar himself was represented by the head of fine gold, because God had given him a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. But another, inferior kingdom (represented by the silver section of the image) would arise after his. Then there would be a third kingdom (represented by the brass) which would bear rule over all the earth. A fourth kingdom would follow this one. It was to be as strong as iron. It would be particularly violent. This last kingdom would become divided (symbolised by the iron and clay), as it developed into what could be considered a fifth kingdom. It would be partly strong and partly broken because the two materials could not be wholly united. Finally, God would set up a kingdom that would never be overthrown. This was represented by the stone that broke the image, showing that it would consume the previous kingdoms.

As we continue to read the book of Daniel, we find that the first three kingdoms are the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Grecian (1:21; 2:37; 8:20f).

The future of Europe is directly linked to a dream that God gave king Nebuchadnezzar

From the fact that the fourth superseded the third as the third superseded the second and the second the first, we can conclude that the fourth kingdom is the Roman empire that displaced the Hellenistic empires which developed out of Alexander's conquests. The fifth (the feet and toes) symbolises a weakened version of the Roman empire. This last (and any remnants of the others) will be destroyed by the appearing of Christ in power and great glory. He will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, as predicted in so many Biblical prophecies. All the kingdoms represented by the image had in common that they had subdued Israel. In Luke 21:24 the Lord Jesus indirectly refers to these periods as the "times of the Gentiles", as He spoke of a further dispersion of the Jews who were to be led away captive into all nations.

The uneven character of the fifth kingdom of feet and toes (the iron and the clay) speaks of the strength of the Roman empire being uneasily joined to the weakness of democracy. This follows from Daniel 2:43, "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with *the seed of men*: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay" (KJV). We live in this "feet" period today; but, reading Nebuchadnezzar's dream together with the vision of the four beasts in Daniel 7 (verses 7, 24), we can see that a "toes" period is to come, when a kingdom will rise that will have ten kings ruling concurrently – as represented by the ten toes.

The Roman empire of the past had sway over the entire Mediterranean region. On its northern shore its writ ran to the Rhine. So it is reasonable to think that modern western Europe will comprise, or at least be part of, the revived Roman empire to come, and to infer that even now, in the present state of this region of the earth, we can see the germinating seeds of a "kingdom" yet to come.

We need, therefore, to know more about this coming Roman empire, its two "Beasts" and its ghastly "Beauty". In this article we have space for only the first of these "Beasts", and "Beauty". Discussion of the second "Beast", and of the fate of all of them must be deferred to a second article.

The Beast from the Sea

The four kingdoms mentioned in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar are depicted again in Daniel 7, and here as "beasts". The figure of "beasts" emphasises the strength of these kingdoms and indicates the manner by which they conquered. For example, the figure of the leopard suggests the amazing rapidity of Alexander's conquests. But whereas the first beast was a lion, the second a bear, and the third a leopard, the fourth is simply described as dreadful and terrible.

If we now compare the "beast" of Revelation 13:1, we find that it is likened to a leopard with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. So it has adopted some

of the characteristics of the three dominions that preceded it. Inasmuch as it conforms to no specific animal, it can be identified with Daniel's fourth beast, fourth empire.

The beast of Revelation 13 has seven heads, one of which is overthrown. It was "wounded to death" (verse 3), but that wound would be healed. This portrays the future "resurrection" of the empire that existed when John was writing. The whole world will wonder at this revived empire and will worship both it (and its ruler) and the devil who energises it (verse 4).

In Daniel, the beasts came out of the sea; and in Revelation 13:1 the "beast" comes out of the sea. In prophecy "waters" depict peoples and nations (Revelation 17:15). "Seas" reveal these peoples in an unsettled state politically (Psalm 65:8; Isaiah 17:12; 57:20; Luke 21:25). So this beast "from the sea" in Revelation arises out of the disturbed state of the nations. In it there are ten kingdoms which will surrender their power to the Beast (Revelation 17:12f).

But here we have progressed from "beast", meaning an empire, to "Beast" meaning an individual and bestial monarch. This Beast will not only disregard God, but blasphemy will mark his name. This is not surprising, because "the dragon" (i.e., Satan) "gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (13:2,5f).

Indeed, even today, governments are sometimes far from pretty, and often blasphemous; however we must be subject to them (Romans 13:1). It is worthy of note that Matthew 4:8-9 indicates that the devil had been delegated (at some time in history) with power over the kingdoms of the world. But it is also true that "...there is no power but of God..." (Romans 13:1). The true God was working His purpose out in Paul's time even through a Roman empire that was under Satan's power!

The period of this bestial monarch's blasphemies and power is marked in Revelation 13:5 as 42 months. These months (3½ years) connect this passage with the "half-weeks" of Daniel 9:27, and thus with the account of the seventy times seven years given in Daniel 9:24-27. The 42 months therefore also

Even today governments are sometimes far from pretty, and often blasphemous. Matthew 4:8-9 indicates that the devil had been delegated with power over the kingdoms of the world. But the true God was working His purpose out in Paul's time even through a Roman empire that was under Satan's power!

identify the Beast with the “prince that shall come” of verse 26, whose people had previously destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD – i.e., the Romans.

At the beginning of the seventieth week (or, the final seven years) the Beast will make a covenant with the leader in Israel (verse 27). The exact conditions of this covenant are not given, but it will involve the freedom of Jews to renew their sacrificial ceremonies. We can take the first “horseman of the Apocalypse” (Revelation 6) to depict the Beast’s early conquests during the first three-and-a-half years of the seven. They will be without shedding any blood, for the rider on the white horse wears a crown and has a bow, but has no arrows (verse 2). He will be a sovereign leader who conquers over great distances using diplomacy. He will go on to rule over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. In fact, his supernatural acts will make him an object of worship (Revelation 13:7f). A little later, however, horrific war, famine, and death will follow in his wake, as shown by the other three horsemen of chapter 6 (see verses 4-8).

“In the midst of the week” (Daniel 9:27), this leader will break his treaty with an apostate Israel. He will cause the Jewish ceremonies to cease; seek to change times and laws; and encourage idolatry instead. He will then continue a further forty-two months (Revelation 13:6f), blaspheming the name of God, and persecuting the remnant who are faithfully keeping the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. His ultimate fate will be discussed in another article, God willing.

If Revelation 13 emphasises the gentile character of the beast, arising out of the sea of the nations. Revelation 17:8 emphasises its satanic beginnings, for it rises from the “bottomless pit” (or “Abyss”). It is described as the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. In other words, it represents a revived and devilish power. In verse 7 it has seven heads and ten horns, as in 13:1. Here we learn the meaning of the seven heads; they represent seven mountains (powerful kingdoms), five of which had already passed. The sixth had dominion at the time the apostle John wrote, and the seventh was to follow, before shortly morphing into the eighth (see v.11). It was the empire that “was, and is not, and is to come” (verses 8, 11) – the revived Roman empire.

As already mentioned, the beast’s (i.e., the empire’s) ten horns will be ten kings who are going to reign “one hour” with its last ruler, the “Beast” (Daniel 7:24; Revelation 17:12). For that short period, these kings are united in mind with the Beast and willingly give their power and strength to him.

The number of the name of the Roman leader is listed as six hundred-and-sixty-six (13:18). The meaning of the number may possibly be computed through the letter-to-number relationship of the name. This is called

“gematria”. For example, if we give the Greek letters for “Jesus” their numerical value, we will have the total eight hundred-and-eighty-eight. The number eight in Scripture depicts resurrection, or a new beginning. Support for this line of thinking is seen in the clause, “count the number of the beast”. The faithful who are alive in the day of this Beast should be able to calculate it for themselves. Of course, it may be simply symbolic, for the number six relates to human weakness. Man falls short of perfection or completion, which is symbolised by the number seven. So even in what seems to be the most elite of men there is (666) intense imperfection.

Beauty

So much for the first Beast; what about “Beauty”? Revelation 17 also describes a woman dressed in gorgeous garments, sitting on the Roman beast. For his own ends, it will initially suit its ruler, the Beast, to support this woman. The woman is called “a whore”, and is this in a “spiritual” sense, meaning that she will have put away the true God and adopted idolatry instead. Yet she will still hold great influence over many people. She will have already cavorted with kings, and intoxicated people with her infidelity (18:3). She may be richly and gloriously arrayed, but her motives are self-seeking: she desires to control all those who associate with her.

On her forehead is her name, “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth” (17:5). “Mystery” denotes “a secret revealed to the initiated.” It suggests her nature had been previously hidden. The name “Babylon” relates, through “Babel”, to “confusion”; whilst the ancient city of Babylon itself was famed for its idolatry. Confusion and idolatry will be the spiritual character of the coming “Babylon the great”. And, as the *Mother* of Harlots, she will breed “children” of the same nature. Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 10:18-21 against associating with demons, which must be at the expense of association with the true God. Behind every idol is a demon!

The whore’s perversity is seen in the golden cup in her hand. It is full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. Some of the “abominations of the earth” are listed in Leviticus 18. Therefore it is clear that this woman does not condemn sin as she ought to have done if she had been faithful to God. The fact that “she was drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (17:6) reminds us of the Inquisition of old, when faithful Christians were tortured and slain by an impious religious system.¹

¹ Note that the word “saints” simply means “holy ones” or “those set apart to God”. It is a noun used in Scripture that applies to *all* those who truly believe in the living God.

In the revived Roman kingdom this woman will represent a religious system which professes the name of one God, but contains no real faith at all! In reality, it denies the name of the living God by persecuting His people. Without doubt it will encourage idolatry in one form or another; hence the idea of spiritual “fornication”. It represents the final condition of Ecumenism.

Revelation 18 reveals her as a city; “city” being a symbol of administration. She is corrupted in God’s sight, being described as, among other things, the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit (verse 2). Nonetheless she will have a major part in the economic prosperity of the revived empire. Her merchandise will be vast, and is described as including slaves and souls of men (18:12f).

Yet the cry of heaven to true believers in that day will be, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (18:4). Maybe we should listen to the heavenly voice in our day in respect of separating ourselves from so-called Christian churches that include idolatry and lay aside the divine authority of the Bible.

Initially this religious system and the leader of the Roman kingdom will seem to be united in their goals, but the woman who likens herself to a queen (Revelation 18:7) will later be hated by him and his kings. So much so, the true God will use them as instruments of His judgment upon her (17:16f). This is just before they themselves are judged by Him. Her destruction comes suddenly! Revelation 18:8 declares, “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.” Her end is a violent one! In just one hour, her great riches are brought to nothing.

The principle of the Roman empire to come will be humanism personified in a man – the “Beast”. The principle of Babylon the Great will be religion that has surrendered to the desires of the rulers of mankind. Both these principles are well-developed in today’s world, and especially in western Europe (not excluding Britain!). Knowledge of things to come enables us rightly to evaluate what we observe already, and, whilst recognising that we have been “sent” into the world for a purpose, to live in such a way as not to be “of” it (John 17:11-18).

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Making melody

Donald Hill

How often do you and I make melody in our hearts to the Lord in our *private lives* from day to day? The wonders of creation, the wonders of the night sky, the greatness of God's salvation: do they move us to respond in song? Perhaps, like David, we have to ask the Lord to restore to us the joy of His salvation (Psalm 51:12).

For some years we lived alongside neighbours who were believers, and sometimes as I stepped out of my home at 8 am I could hear singing from my neighbour's bathroom. He was full of the joy of the Lord!

And how heartily do we sing in the meetings of God's people? In the Scriptures we have a number of occasions when singing is mentioned. Let us look at some of these occasions.

Job 38 is a good place to start. Was this the first song – the song of the morning stars on seeing the wonders of creation in its pristine beauty? But the singing did not last, because the whole scene was marred by sin that affected not only the human race but also the animal and vegetable kingdoms; and this, too, would need the work of the Lamb in dealing with the sin question (Romans 8:21).

Exodus 15 contains the first human song of the Bible. Redeemed by power and redeemed by blood, Israel sang on the Canaan-side of the Red Sea. In Egypt, watched by taskmasters, they had cried and groaned as day after day they made bricks for Pharaoh's show-cities. God heard their cries, and knew their sorrows; and said, "I have seen..., I have heard..., and I am come down" (Exodus 3:7-8, KJV). He came down at the burning bush, where He commissioned Moses. It is not surprising, therefore, that Moses led the singing when Israel saw their enemies dead on the sea shore. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD..." (14:30; 15:1). The song is all about what the LORD had done. They gave Him all the glory. Good for you and me when we recognise that the Lord has done great things for us, and made us glad (Psalm 126:3).

How good to know that God the Father "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins"; and that He

*How often do you and I make melody in our hearts
to the Lord in our private lives?
And how heartily do we sing in the meetings of God's people?*

has made us fit to be, in time to come, “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Colossians 1:12ff).

“And live with Thee, in life’s eternal home,
Where sin, nor want, nor woe, nor death can come.”¹

But *Psalms 137* paints a very different picture from Exodus 15! Judah had been taken captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness and idolatry; Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel give us the details. Asked by their captors to sing, they had no song – “How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land?” And if God has had, sadly, to confront us with sin in our own lives we may not feel like singing for a while either. Of course, if we have deliberately put ourselves in the wrong company and environment then our mouths will be stopped, and we will feel this in ourselves.

But the time came when Judah could sing again (Psalm 126:1f). *Nehemiah 12* tells us of this time. Not only had the Babylonians destroyed Solomon’s temple, but also the city walls of Jerusalem. When, eventually, we arrive at *Nehemiah 12*, the rebuilding of the walls and the gates is finished, and now is the time for singing at their dedication. Coming along the wall from different starting-points, the object of their coming together is to give thanks (verses.31-42). And we, too, can sing because of the restorations of our souls (Psalm 23:3).

In *Mark 14:26* we read the most touching words, “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.” About to proceed to Gethsemane, and with the infinite weight of His sufferings on His spirit, the Lord *sang!*

The “hymn” was probably a psalm. The Jews were accustomed to singing the so-called “Hallel” psalms – Psalms 113–118 – at Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles – the “feasts of Jehovah.” Psalm 113 celebrates the greatness of God, and Psalm 114 the greatness of God in delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt. Psalm 115 speaks of the folly of idol-worship and, on the other hand, of the greatness of God. When we come to Psalm 118, which is the concluding psalm of the Hallel, and the last Messianic psalm, it speaks of the sufferings of Israel both throughout the centuries and during the great tribulation. “All nations compassed me about,” but the final victory will rest in the fact that, “The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.” Verses 19-27 are Messianic: The opened gates of the city (verse 19); the rejected stone made the head of the corner (verse 22); “the day which the Lord has made” (verse 24); “blessed be He which cometh in the name of the LORD” (verse 26); the feast of tabernacles. The psalm speaks of Israel’s conversion and enlightenment – they recognise their Messiah.

¹ James Boyd, 1851-1936.

What thoughts must have filled the mind of the Lord Jesus as He sang these words! Truly He was the sacrifice of verse 27, not bound with cords to the altar of sacrifice, but willingly taking our place at Calvary, bearing all the wrath of a holy God. Suffering precedes glory. The Lord “endured the cross, despising the shame” “for the joy that was set before him” (Hebrews 12:2). The psalm reminds us of a coming day when Israel will recognise their Messiah by the wounds in His hands (Zechariah 12:10). They will say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39). In view of this, the Lord could sing, even on so terrible a night.

The songs in the Old Testament of course primarily relate to Israel, though there is always an application to ourselves too – concerning salvation, redemption, restoration; concerning God’s keeping power, His word, and so on. *Psalm 40:2f* makes individual what the nation of Israel sang in Exodus 15 and Judah in Nehemiah 12. God *brought* David up – “out of an horrible pit”, the pit of sin; *set* him up – with his feet upon a rock that is Christ and His finished work; and *tuned* him up too, putting “a new song in his mouth” – the song of salvation! The Christian can sing David’s song too:

“He took me out of the pit, and from the miry clay;
He set my feet on a rock, establishing my way.
He put a song in my mouth, our God to magnify;
And He’ll take me one day to His home on high.”²

And in *Hebrews 13:15* we have the instruction, “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”

When the Lord and the disciples sang, it was at the end of the institution of the Lord’s supper. The singing is a pattern for us too. The atoning blood, the work is complete, and what remains for us is the Lord’s “This do for a remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). What a wonderful privilege is ours as we gather together, like the singers of Nehemiah’s time, to remember the Lord in His death – and *sing*,

“To Thee, O Lord, we bring our note of praise,
To Thee, who bore for us the cross of shame.”³

Risen from the dead, the Lord Jesus leads our praises to the Father. “In the midst of the assembly will I sing praise to Thee” (Hebrews 2:12). Psalm 100 raises the question for us: Do *we* enter His presence with thanksgiving, praise, and thankfulness, blessing His Name?

² James Fitch.

³ A. von der Kammer, 1860-1951.

Beyond this, in *Ephesians 5:19* we are instructed to be “Speaking to [ourselves] in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in [our] hearts to the Lord.” We sing of “the wonderful works of God” to Him, but also to encourage and instruct each other by *hearty singing*.

Acts 16:25 illustrates Christians singing joyfully under persecution. Despite their false imprisonment, their recent flogging, and their feet being in stocks, Paul and Silas must have sung loudly, because the other prisoners heard them!

“Sing when the day is bright,
Sing through the darkest night,
Every day, all the way:
Let us Sing! Sing! Sing!

The prayers and praises of Paul and Silas brought a response from heaven – an earthquake resulting in the conversion of the gaoler and his family!

In *Revelation 5:9* we have a song whose time, strictly speaking, is still to come. The chapter opens with the sealed book – the title-deeds to the world! Who is worthy to take the book and open its seals? The Lion of the tribe of Judah is proclaimed; however John sees, not a lion, but a freshly-slain lamb. As the Lion, the Lord Jesus has the power; as the Lamb, He is the One who at Calvary laid a righteous basis for God acting in judgment. The One who Himself bore the judgment is the only One worthy to open the seals and execute the righteous judgment of all that is obnoxious to a holy God, prior to the commencement of His own righteous reign. Immediately the worthiness of the Lord Jesus to take the throne is made known, the new song begins:

“Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

We shall join in that song”!

“King of kings and Lord of lords,
Oh! What joy the sight affords...
He who once was crowned with thorn,
Crowns of glory now adorn,”⁴

Finally: in time to come God Himself will sing! In *Zephaniah 3:17* we read, “He will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.” When, in a meeting, the question was once posed, “Why should Christians sing?” the unexpected but profound answer was received, “Because God Himself sings!” How we would love to have heard the Lord’s own voice singing. How wonderful it will be to hear the eternal, triune God *sing*.

⁴ John Wilson Smith, 1842-1922.

Your way was in the sea

Theo Balderston

Both the redemption by blood and the redemption by power were needed to bring Israel out of Egypt. The blood of the Passover had to be on the door-frame if an Israelite family was to be delivered from God's judgmental passage through the land that night. The redemption by power took place at the Red Sea and delivered Israel for ever from the power of Egypt, which we may take to be a "type" of the power of sin and Satan over mankind.

The initial consequence of the judgment of the Passover upon Egypt (Exodus 12:12), was that Pharaoh wanted to expel Israel from the land (12:31f). That would have been good enough for the Israelites, no doubt. But everything God does is for His own glory and name, and He intended to harden Pharaoh's heart, and to win a far more public victory over him and his gods (9:16), God directed Israel's departure minutely, leading them by the pillar of cloud and fire (13:21f); and it is possible to trace the perfection of His plan.

Firstly, He did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines (13:7). By that coastal route the Israelites could have reached the borders of the promised land in a matter of days. This would have minimised the provisioning problem but would have brought them up against the Philistine forces – evidently formidable. This would have demoralised Israel, and sent them in full flight back to Egypt. Forty years would have to elapse, including much humiliating disobedience, before Israel would be ready for conflict.

Instead God led them "by way of the wilderness of the Red sea," presumably to the western shore of the Gulf of Suez. He could have taken them on dry land round the north end of the Gulf into the wilderness of Sinai. There were good reasons why He did not, as we shall see. He brought them, in short, to what seemed like a dead end. At the same time He hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that Pharaoh pursued them with his elite panzer brigades, plus the rest of his armies (14:7).



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and it is possible to trace the perfection of His plan*



The first good reason was that the campsite of Israel doubtless emboldened Pharaoh. Israel was trapped – the sea in front of them, the Egyptian armies behind them! Small wonder that when the children of Israel spied the pursuing armies “they were sore afraid! (14:10) If the LORD had feared that the Philistine forces would demoralise the Israelites, this was exactly what the sight of the Egyptian armies actually did to them (14:11f). Doubtless, in their terror of imminent death they were on the point of scattering to left and right – but with no way back to Egypt.

But Moses rallied them with a pronouncement of what *God* would do. “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (14:13f, RV). The “stand still” was doubtless a sharp word to stop them from scattering, for the Lord immediately told Moses to “speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” – i.e., *into* the sea! God was going to act for His own glory and honour: and because this was bound up with the salvation of Israel, His deliverance must be far more complete than they could have imagined (14:17-18).

But first “the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them”, the pillar of cloud doing likewise. It would take some time to convey two million people into the channel in the Red sea that would open up before them; and God made a perfect provision for the safety of the people while the escape was in progress! Israel and the Egyptian armies, “came not near [each] other all the night” (14:19f).

Moses stretched forth the self-same rod whose previous demonstrations had been scorned by Pharaoh, and “the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night” (14:21). Israel must have had to battle against this near-hurricane as they trudged across the sea bed, but so did their enemies. The Egyptian forces, reckless of the fact that the LORD was at work, rushed into the channel behind Israel.

They had no option if they wanted to recapture or annihilate the Israelites. For “the waters were a wall unto [Israel] on their right hand and on their left” (14:22). Ordinarily, the obvious tactic for the Egyptian chariots, and even their foot-soldiers, would have been to overtake the slow-moving Israelites, with their children and their cattle, and surround them, forcing those at the front to halt and attacking their flanks at the same time. *The sea prevented this tactic.* The watery walls that must have been so worrying to the Israelites as they plodded along with a gale in their faces, were in fact their defence. “Thy way was in the sea, and thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps were not known” (Psalm 77:19).



*One day we shall see the perfection of His deliverance,
and Him alone glorified in it*



Moreover, so sudden, so total, so shocking, and so unnatural was the Egyptian annihilation that it doubtless deterred them from mounting a second expedition into Sinai. The Red sea had brought Israel deliverance from the power of Egypt; the memory of the Red sea doubtless protected them throughout their wilderness journeys. And after. As far as I know there were only two cases of Egypt invading the land of Israel during the many centuries between the conquest and the Babylonian captivity – Shishak’s during the reign of Rehoboam, and Pharaoh Neco’s invasion in the time of Josiah (2 Chronicles 12:2ff; 35:20ff). Shishak was doubtless emboldened by the recent split in the kingdom, but was content with booty. Neco was *en route* to confronting Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish, and the LORD instructed Josiah not to interfere. And then there was Zerah the Ethiopian who must have travelled through Egypt to reach the tiny kingdom of Judah (14:9). But the wonder is that there was not constant and more intrusive Egyptian interference in Palestine in those centuries.¹ The fact that there was not, is, to my mind, telling evidence of the historicity of the Exodus, however much modernist scholars deny it; and the reason for lack of Egyptian corroboration of it is surely a deliberate national amnesia in respect of so supernatural a disaster.

Truly, “As for God, his way is perfect” (Psalm 18:30). This is supremely true of the defeat of Satan and sin in the cross and the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:55ff; Hebrews 2:14f; Romans 6:9-11, etc.). It is also true of our experimental deliverances in the Christian life. Did the Lord not lead us by the easier “way of the land of the Philistines”? It is because He has a better deliverance in mind. Did He pin us between the Egyptians and the sea? It is so that we should be brought “to an end of ourselves”, as Jacob was (rather differently) at Peniel (Genesis 32:25ff); and that one day we should see the perfection of His deliverance, and Him alone glorified in it.

¹ There was also Judah’s alliance with Egypt against Assyria (Isaiah 31:1, etc.). But then the question is: why did Egypt not seek better control of its forward line of defence against Assyria by annexing Judah?

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Here and there

Oh, *this* is a dark scene of sorrow!
For though I may smile today
my tears may flow fast ere tomorrow,
and my smiles may have all passed away:
But *there* is the region of gladness
where joys do perennially flow;
there, never a feeling of sadness
the blessed in Jesus shall know.

Oh, *this* is a dark scene of sorrow!
Sweet friendship may greet me today,
but hearts oft estrange ere the morrow,
and sympathy withers away:
But *there* is the realm of communion,
unearthly, unbroken, divine;
there Christ is the centre of union,
each breast, Lord, the image of Thine!

Oh, *this* is a dark scene of sorrow!
Though happy in Jesus today,
temptations may come ere tomorrow,
and I may have wandered astray:
but *there* is the home of my Saviour;
to sin and temptation 'tis barred;
I there shall rejoice in His favour,
and "for ever" shall be with the Lord.

Soon shall I leave *this* place of sorrow;
ah, yes, I might leave it today!
for my Lord may be here ere tomorrow,
and take His poor pilgrim away.
On Thee and Thy promise relying,
oh, keep me, dear Saviour, while here,
till "glory" my glad soul is crying,
up-rising to Thee in the air.

A.M., in *Things New and Old*, vol. 1 (1858), p.40; slightly amended.