

Scripture Truth



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Compassion
Spiritually alive!
Ten Years' Debts

Using our Talents
The Lord is our Keeper
Beauty and the Beasts

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

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Ten Years' Debts

With this issue the undersigned completes ten years as editor of *Scripture Truth!* I hope and pray that the magazine may have proved its worth in hearts and lives over this period, and am grateful for the numerous expressions of appreciation that I have received. The trouble is that, the readers being Christians, criticisms and reservations are probably suppressed. And this leaves out the people who have decided not to be readers. I would like to hear from both these parties as well.

I have many debts of sincere gratitude to acknowledge, something that is seriously overdue. I am extremely grateful to faithful and exercised contributors who regularly send me articles; to Julia, my wife, who uncomplainingly does the proof-reading every time it is suddenly dumped on her; and to the cheerful efficiency of Ruth Ollerhead and others at the STP office in Crewe who distribute the magazine, and deal with the subscriptions and inquiries. And I particularly wish to acknowledge the collaboration of someone who never gets a mention, Dr John Rice, trustee of STP, who every quarter receives my "Word" files of the contents for the next issue, strips them of their formatting, then reformats and fits them to the 28 pages available, produces the covers, and deals with the printers – and produces a thoroughly professional-looking magazine. He has been doing this for 20 years.

All of these do it for the Lord, and not for me – that is what gives their labours the value they have.

"... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:14-16, NKJV).

I hope and pray that with the Lord's help *Scripture Truth* has, and will continue to have, its own tiny part in this living, wonderful process.

THEO BALDERSTON

The Lord is our Keeper

Psalm 121

David Anderson

When the writer composed this meditation in early autumn 2015 he was unaware how personal it was about to become to him and his family. It has already been used as part of a Truth for Today talk on Premier Radio (<http://www.truthfortoday.org.uk/>) in December 2015.

The thought behind Psalm 121 is that God Himself was, and will be, Israel's Shepherd and Israel's Keeper: "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock" (Jeremiah 31:10, NKJV). Addressing his fellow Israelites, the writer of Psalm 121 affirms, "The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand" (Ps.121:5). The Keeper is Israel's Shepherd, who totally cares for, or keeps (that is, He guards, protects, attends to) His sheep. And David can personally proclaim, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1).

But the LORD (or, "Jehovah" – the covenant-keeping God of Israel) is also *our personal* Shepherd today, because the Lord Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament (see Romans 10:9-13 with Joel 2:32; and Philippians 2:10 with Isaiah 45:23). The Lord Jesus stated that He is the Shepherd of His flock (John 10:14-17). Peter assures us that we are being "kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5). The following promises in Isaiah are also fulfilled to us by "Jehovah-Saviour".

- "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (26:3).
- "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You" (42:6).

In Psalm 121, the psalmist's central thought is that the Lord is our Keeper, and this can be verified by the six occurrences of "keep" in the ESV:

"I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time
forth and forevermore."

Psalm 121 is the second of the fifteen ‘psalms of ascent’. Psalm 120, the first “psalm of ascent” concerns the dangers and difficulties of life: “In my distress I cried to the LORD, and He heard me” (NKJV). In Psalm 121 the psalmist’s natural instinct, or human urge, was to flee to the mountains (verse 1) for they were Israel’s natural defences. But this instinct is countered by his question, “But where does my help actually come from?” In response his thoughts immediately leap to the LORD, the Creator of the universe! “My help comes from the LORD who made heaven and earth” (v.2). In Him is wise and immeasurable help for every godly person. Consider also:

- “In the LORD I put my trust; how can you say to my soul, ‘Flee as a bird to your mountain?’” (Psalm 11:1, NKJV)
- “Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever” (Psalm 125:1-2).

Some commentators think the “psalms of ascent” were sung by the pilgrims of Israel as they went up to the Feasts in Jerusalem three times a year (see Exodus 34:23). The Jerusalem of the psalmist’s time was about 2500 feet or 760 metres above sea-level (and the shore of the Dead Sea is about 429 metres below sea level!). Jews had to go *up* to get to the temple! In Exodus 34:24 the LORD promised to protect their land (and by extension themselves, their homes, and their kinsfolk) from the hostile nations who surrounded Israel, whilst they were on their pilgrimages.

Yes, the LORD, the Creator, unaided by natural or man-made defences, is able to keep His people safe! He is their Protector! And John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1:2-3 identify the Creator to be the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that *He* holds all things together and that He sustains all things by



*From where
does my
help come?*



*My help
comes from
the LORD*




*He who
dwells
in the
secret place
of the
Most High
shall abide
under
the shadow
of the
Almighty*


His powerful word (Colossians 1:17 & Hebrews 1:3). He is our all-powerful Protector who will keep us safe on our Christian pilgrimage to heaven!

As the singing pilgrims reached Psalm 121:3, they would encourage each other, “[The LORD] will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.” This personal care and protection from their God is promised in other psalms, for example: “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (91:11-12). It’s the godly person’s reward because of his total trust in God. The secret of this promise is found in verses 1-2 of the same psalm: “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.’”

Psalm 91 is messianic, meaning that it applies primarily to the Lord Jesus, who encountered the Devil and other opposition during His life (see Matthew 4:6; Luke 4: 10). However other psalms also give expression to the urgent pleas of ordinary believers, made in prayer to God, as they experience hostility from the world, in whatever dispensation they live. For example:

- “Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust” (16:1).
- “Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings” (17:8).
- “Keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You” (25:20).
- “Preserve my life, for I am holy; You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You!” (86:2)

Still other psalms provide us with the assurance that the psalmist actually experienced the LORD’s keeping, or preserving, power:

- “The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies” (41:2).
- “He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked” (97:10).

- “The LORD preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me” (116:6).

Having mentioned at the end of Psalm 121:3 that the LORD never sleeps, the singers then boast of the faithfulness of their covenant-God in verse 4. “Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” He is Israel’s God, who, unlike the gods of the nations, has no weaknesses or needs. Awake and alert at every moment, He can bring instant help to His own. He’s easy to find at all times and provides (according to verse 5-6) a 24/7, round-the-clock care! He guards you by day and He guards you by night, even from the most overpowering and insidious of foes. “The sun shall not strike you by day” reminds us of how it beat down upon Jonah – and thus of the necessity of living in the will of God to get the practical benefits of the promises of verse 6. Truly, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

In Psalm 121 the singers do not just celebrate truths concerning the character of God; they address each other in a personal way. This is especially true of verses 5-8. “The LORD is your keeper.” We each can say that the Lord Jesus is *my* Keeper (verse 5), who will keep me from all evil or harm (verse 7a). That especially applies to my soul, or inner life (verse 7b), and includes the dark-valley experiences of Psalm 23:4.

Verse 5-7 of Psalm 121 parallel Psalm 91:3-10, from which many believers have received real comfort and consolation, especially when they are facing extreme circumstances, or enduring terminal illnesses, or facing death by martyrdom. For example, it was very precious to believers living in London during the Blitz:

“Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
 And from the perilous pestilence.
 He shall cover you with His feathers,
 And under His wings you shall take refuge;
 His truth shall be your shield and buckler.
 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
 Nor of the arrow that flies by day,
 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,



*The Lord
 preserves
 the simple;
 I was
 brought
 low, and
 He saved
 me*



*Israel’s God
 provides
 a 24/7,
 round-the-
 clock care!*



Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you.
Only with your eyes shall you look...
...No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling.”

Psalm 121 ends with the LORD guaranteeing the total safety of the pilgrims each and every time they undertake their pilgrimages to Jerusalem (v.8). The Lord Jesus also will keep every one of us, whatever we face throughout life, and whether we go out into the perilous world or return to our own homes or assembly fellowships. For Christians, our pilgrimage is on-going until we reach our heavenly home in eternity. But even in our own earthly homes we are not safe from the enemy. We can link Psalm 121:8 with Psalm 91:5. As we can go out into a hostile world, He prevents “the arrow that flies by day” from harming us; and as we come back home He protects us from “the terror by night”. Both “the arrow by day” and “the terror by night” speak of those fiery darts of the wicked one which would contaminate our hearts and minds.

During 1980s & 1990s, I had a poster based on the NIV translation of the first part of verse 8 on the wall of the entrance-porch of our house. It read, “The LORD will watch over your comings and your goings.” It was a great encouragement to all the family, for it seemed to cover all our enterprises. That period was one of busy family life: our four children were growing up and attending school each day; my wife was looking after both them and the home, whilst I held down a very demanding job. But the accurate translation is, “The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in” (ESV). That reminds me that my last movement in life will be upwards to my heavenly home, where I will “enter in” to what is “within the veil”, where Christ, my Forerunner, already is (Hebrews 6:19-20). Yes, we have the wonderful assurance that the Lord Jesus will keep us safe throughout life on earth until He calls us to His Father’s house in heaven above, where “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6; John 14:3).

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
To God our Saviour,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen.”

(Jude 24-25)

Spiritually alive!

The lessons of David's last words

Paul Thomson

This heart-warming and challenging article will encourage every reader to be a giver and a worker for the Lord; to be a worshipper; and to desire the same for our families. It originated as a Truth for Today talk broadcast in April of this year.

Last words are often treasured. Sometimes they reveal the character of the person who has just passed away: their interests, their concerns, their hopes, their aspirations for their children and grandchildren, and their hearts. David's last words are like that. They are recorded in some detail in the Bible, and can be found in Psalm 72, 1 Chronicles 29, 2 Samuel 23, and 1 Kings 2. In this article I have space only to focus on one of these – 1 Chronicles 29. I trust that the Lord may touch your heart as we consider this chapter together.

But first we need some background to the words recorded here, and will find it in the previous chapter, where David addressed the chief men of Israel. He imparted to them how the LORD had told him that, because he was a man of war who had shed blood, he would not build the house of God, i.e., the temple (1 Chronicles 28:3). Rather, his son Solomon would build it (v.6). Without any sign of jealousy, David tells this to Solomon (vv. 9-10), and passes on to him the plans for the temple, its furnishings, and its administration, plans which he had received directly from the LORD Himself (vv.11-13). The details of these plans were to be carried out exactly. Verse 20 is a lovely verse, in which David encourages Solomon,

“Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD” (KJV).

You too can be encouraged by this verse. God promises to be with us in everything we do for Him.

And now to our chapter. In the first five verses of 1 Chronicles 29 David addresses all the people, and what he says affects their hearts. The temple was to be a palatial structure for the LORD God and not man, but Solomon, whom God had chosen to be king, was young and inexperienced for the great task of building it. Therefore David had got on with providing “with all [his] might” (29:2) the materials required for building such an amazing structure.

David was a very rich man; he was the king of Israel and he had wealth in abundance. He was prepared to use all the resources that God had given him in service for Him. In addition to the materials needed for the construction work, he was going to give his treasure to the house of God (v.3). In verse 16, David will acknowledge that everything that he and the people had prepared came from God's hand. It all belonged to God in the first place. God had blessed David and the people of Israel in many ways, and they, in turn, were willing to give everything back to God.

There is a lesson for us here:

1. We need to remember that everything we have has been given to us by God: our lives, our families, and our goods. And
2. If God gives us a task to do we should do it well, put our hearts into it, and be willing to use everything we have.

Why was David willing to do this? In verse 3 we read that David's *heart* was devoted to the LORD and to the task of preparing all the materials required. He said, "I have set my affection to the house of my God." In his final years he was absolutely determined to complete what God had asked him to do. Dear friend, can I ask you if your heart and your affections are always right when you serve the Lord? Can you say that you are devoted to the work of the Lord? David had the right attitude of heart. He was not boasting to the people by telling them what he had given; rather he was exhorting them to give willingly.

For in verse 5 David turns to the people and asks, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?" The next verse recounts the response from the chiefs, the princes, the captains, and the rulers. They all offered willingly by giving their treasures to the treasury of the temple of the LORD.

Then verse 9 gives the reaction of the ordinary working people of David's kingdom – people like you and me. It is a great verse. The people rejoiced at the willingness of their leaders to give, and then they too offered willingly with a perfect heart.

A perfect heart does not mean they were sinless; it means that the attitude in which they gave was without grudging. Because of their attitude the people rejoiced. Dear friends, there is joy in willingly giving yourself and what you have to God. I was reminded recently of Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living

If God gives us a task to do we should do it well

The act of giving made the people rejoice

sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” In another translation it reads, “...this is your spiritual act of worship.” God demands your life and your substance: remember He has given us all things (Romans 8:32).

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”¹

Are you willing to devote yourself and everything you have to the Lord who died for you? David the king also rejoiced when he saw his people's willingness to give. Dear friends, God knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts (see Jeremiah 17:9-10). His heart will also rejoice if He sees that our attitude and desires are pure. What does God see in your heart? Only you can answer that question.

The act of giving made the people rejoice (and giving will make you rejoice too); and it made king David rejoice, so that he began to praise the LORD in the presence of all his people. I want you to notice the order of the way that David's heart was turned to the LORD.

1. First we have David giving, the leaders giving, and the people giving (vv. 3-8)
2. Then we have the people's joy and David's joy (v.9)
3. Then David blesses the LORD God of Israel (v.10)
4. Then comes David's prayer of worship, thanksgiving, and petition for the people and for Solomon (vv.11-19)
5. Finally, in 1 Chronicles 29:20 we have worship.

David's heart was perfect before the LORD, and it moved willingly from giving himself and his treasure to an overflowing with joy (points 1 & 2). This leads to him blessing the LORD (point 3). To bless is an act of adoration; David adored the LORD. David prayed, and as he considered the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty of the LORD, he bowed down and worshipped Him. Verse 13 is a lovely verse: “Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.”

If your heart is like David's, you will also be moved at times when you consider the LORD. There will come an outburst of praise from your lips. You just can't

¹ Isaac Watts (1674-1748).

*If your heart is like David's, you will also be moved
at times when you consider the Lord*

help it; you feel you just want to give God the glory, the honour and the praise. David sees the LORD exalted high above and head over all things; the whole universe is His kingdom. David is fully aware that any riches and honour he had were given by God. David said to the LORD, "You are the ruler of all things." Even although he was the king of Israel, he acknowledged that the LORD was much greater than he was. David had great power in his hand but this was not to be compared with the power and might of the LORD. David was a great man, but he was fully aware that it was the LORD who made him great. Contrast the attitude of Nebuchadnezzar. As Nebuchadnezzar walked through his palace, he boasted of the great Babylon that he had built! Before the words had even dropped from his lips, God swiftly removed the kingdom from him! (See Daniel 4:31)

In 1 Chronicles 29:14 David is so moved by the greatness and the glory of God that he becomes aware of his insignificance and smallness. "But who am I, and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own hand have we given thee." As you and I consider the greatness of God, well might we say, "But who are we?"

God is not only a mighty God; He is also a loving God. In 1 John 4:9 we read of how God showed His love to us: He "sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, was sent into the world to be the Saviour of the world (v.14). When you consider the greatness of God and then you consider His love for you, you cannot help but feel humble in His presence. On Lord's Day mornings, as we gather to remember the Lord Jesus in His death, we often sing the lines,

"Father, this mystery of love
Must all our praise excel:
No human, no angelic tongue
Its wondrous depths can tell;
For what were we that Thou on us
Such love shouldst ever pour?
We bow, and filled with joy and awe,
Father and Son adore."²

Often my heart responds in worship to God when singing and contemplating these words.

² Miss C. H. von Poseck (1859-1953).

*How short our lives are in comparison to eternity!
Remember the next time the sun is going down and
you watch your shadow lengthen, then disappear*

David, in 1 Chronicles 29:15, takes his place with his people. Although he is the king, he classes himself with them as strangers and sojourners. He humbly acknowledges how insignificant he and his people are in relation to an eternal God. Their comparatively short lives on this earth are just like a shadow passing in time. This thought really struck me, for we often think our lives are really important, and we feel indispensable at times. How short our lives are in comparison to eternity! Remember the next time the sun is going down and you watch your shadow lengthen, then disappear. James 4:14 says, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

How important it is that we spend our time wisely! It is also important to recognise God's greatness and His sovereignty. But, on the other hand, although we feel very insignificant, God has a plan for our lives. He has work for you and me to do. God needs you! You represent Him here in this world. You are His servant; His work is done in this world through you and me. The feeding of the five thousand is a good example of this. Someone, possibly the little boy's mother, made up the lunch box; the little boy willingly gives his lunch to the Lord; the Lord does the miracle; and the disciples have the joy as they distribute the food and collect the leftovers! So although you feel insignificant, don't make that an excuse. Get on with what service God has given you the privilege of doing!

In verse 17 of his prayer David acknowledges that God tests the heart. Having an upright heart is really important as we serve the Lord. Our motives must be right and we must have no unconfessed sin in our lives. God sometimes tests our hearts to see just how willing we actually are. The Christian pathway is a continual battle with self, sin and unrighteousness. David prays (verse 18) that the people in future generations will also have hearts with a right attitude

*But, although we feel very insignificant,
God has work for you and me to do. God needs you!*

before God. Unfortunately, we see by looking through the history of Israel that this was seldom the case. But God's love never changed toward them, although He was frequently disappointed. He always forgave them when they repented. Thankfully the same applies to us today.

In verse 19 David turned from petition regarding the people to petition regarding his son, Solomon. It is a key verse. David did not ask God for greatness for his son Solomon, but only that Solomon would have a pure heart, keep the commandments of the LORD, and build the house of the LORD with the materials that David had provided. Every parent reading this should be challenged!

Can I ask you what you desire for your family? Do you want them to be rich? Do you want them to be great in this world? I pray that you share David's heart. Our desire should be that our children continue to go on for the Lord, that they will be obedient to the Bible and serve the Lord with willing hearts. But you can't wait until your deathbed to give a great speech and tell them what your desire for them is. You must begin being an example to them daily. Your life must show them that you love the Lord and your desire is to serve Him. Solomon did continue in his father's footsteps, though, sadly, only for a little while.

Just as a warning to us all, remember Eli in 1 Samuel 2:30. God accuses Eli of honouring his sons above God, and in tragic circumstances we read what God said to Eli, "For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." May God give us grace to honour Him in all our ways!

Then in verses 20, "David said to all the congregation, 'Now bless the LORD your God.' And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads and worshipped the LORD, and the king."

That's worship! For us, "the King" is "great David's greater Son", the Lord Jesus Christ, the King who not only *will* reign in righteousness in this world (Isaiah 32:6), but who already *is* "crowned with glory and honour" at God's right hand (Hebrews 2:9). "Blessing and honour and glory and power be to him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13). Amen!

*Them that honour me I will honour,
and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*

Compassion

C.H. Mackintosh

A searching article, even if few of us are employers! We can all give, and we should all avoid gossiping.

“And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; *thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger*: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19: 9, 10, KJV).

This ordinance unfolds the precious grace of Israel’s God. He would think of “the poor and stranger,” and He would have His people think of them likewise. When the golden sheaves were being reaped, and the mellow clusters gathered, “the poor and stranger” were to be remembered by the Israel of God, because Jehovah was the God of Israel. The reaper and the grape-gatherer were not to be governed by a spirit of grasping covetousness, but rather by a spirit of large-hearted, genuine benevolence, which would leave a sheaf and a cluster “for the poor and stranger,” that they, too, might rejoice in the unbounded goodness of Him whose paths drop fatness, and on whose open hand all the sons of want may confidently wait (Psalms 65:11; 72:12f).

The Book of Ruth furnishes a fine example of one who fully acted out this most benevolent statute.

“And Boaz said unto her [Ruth], At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not” (2:14-16).

Most touching and beautiful grace! Nothing can surpass the exquisite refinement of the words, “Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her.” It was, evidently, the desire of this noble Israelite that “the stranger” might have abundance, and have it, too, rather as the fruit of her own gleanings than of his benevolence. This was the very essence of refinement. It was putting her in immediate connection with, and dependence upon, the God of Israel, who had fully recognised and provided for “the gleaner.” Boaz was merely acting out that gracious ordinance of which Ruth was reaping the benefit. The same grace that had given him the field gave her the gleanings. They were both debtors to grace. Let us now turn to another statute of the same section. “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob Him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning” (Leviticus 19:13). What tender care is here!

*The poor are the special objects of God's care.
Again and again He makes provision
for them in His statutes*

The High and Mighty One that inhabiteth eternity (cp. Isaiah 57:15) can take knowledge of the thoughts and feelings that spring up in the heart of a poor labourer. He knows and takes into account the expectations of such an one in reference to the fruit of his day's toil. The wages will, naturally, be looked for. The labourer's heart counts upon them; the family meal depends upon them. Oh! let them not be held back. Send not the labourer home with a heavy heart, to make the heart of his wife and family heavy likewise. Give him that for which He has wrought, to which he has a right, and on which his heart is set. He is a husband, he is a father; and he has borne the burden and heat of the day that his wife and children may not go hungry to bed.

Disappoint him not. Give him his due. Thus does our God take notice of the very throbbings of the labourer's heart, and make provision for his rising expectations. Precious grace! Could anyone read such passages and dismiss a poor labourer, not knowing whether he and his family have wherewithal to meet the cravings of hunger?

Nothing can be more painful to a tender heart than the lack of kindly consideration for the poor, so often manifested by the rich. Oh! it is terrible. It is most offensive to God, and to all who have drunk, in any measure, into His grace. If we would know what God thinks of such acting, we have only to hearken to the following accents of holy indignation: "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them that have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (James 5:4) "The Lord of Sabaoth" hears the cry of the aggrieved and disappointed labourer. His tender love tells itself forth in the institutions of His moral government. God will not suffer the claims of the poor to be heartlessly tossed aside by those who are so hardened by the influence of wealth as to be insensible to the appeals of tenderness, and who are so far removed beyond the region of personal need as to be incapable of feeling for those whose lot it is to spend their days amid exhausting toil or pinching poverty. The poor are the special objects of God's care. Again and again He makes provision for them in the statutes of His moral administration; and it is particularly declared of Him who shall, ere long, assume, in manifested glory, the reins of government, that "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight” (Psalm 72:12-14).

May we profit by the review of those precious and deeply practical truths! We live in a heartless world; and there is a vast amount of selfishness in our own hearts. We are not sufficiently affected by the thought of the need of others. We are apt to forget the poor in the midst of our abundance. We often forget that the very persons whose labour ministers to our personal comfort are living, it may be, in the deepest poverty. Let us think of these things. Let us beware of “grinding the faces of the poor” (cp. Isaiah 3:15). If the Jews of old were taught by the statutes and ordinances of the Mosaic economy, to entertain kindly feelings toward the poor, and to deal tenderly and graciously with the sons of toil, how much more ought the higher and more spiritual ethics of the Gospel dispensation produce in the hearts and lives of Christians a large-hearted benevolence toward every form of human need.

True, there is urgent need of prudence and caution, lest we take a man out of the honourable position of honest industry. This would be a grievous injury instead of a benefit. The example of Boaz should instruct in this matter. He allowed Ruth to glean; but he took care to make her gleaning profitable. This is a very safe and a very simple principle. There is no bread so sweet to the taste as that which is nobly earned; but then those who earn their bread should get enough. A man will feed and care for his horses; how much more his fellow, who yields him the labour of his hands from Monday morning till Saturday night.

But, some will say, “There are two sides to this question.” Unquestionably there are; and, no doubt, one meets with a great deal amongst the poor which is calculated to dry up the springs of benevolence and genuine sympathy. There is much which tends to steel the heart, and close the hand; but, one thing is certain – it is better to be deceived in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred than to shut up the bowels of compassion against a single worthy object. Your heavenly Father causes His sun to shine upon the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust. This is to be our model. “Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:45, 48). It is only as we set the Lord before us, and walk in the power of His grace, that we shall be able

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every possible form of human misery.*

to go on, from day to day, meeting with a tender heart and an open hand every possible form of human misery. It is only as we ourselves are drinking at the exhaustless fountain of divine love and tenderness, that we shall be able to go on ministering to human need unchecked by the oft-repeated manifestation of human depravity. Our tiny springs would soon be dried up were they not maintained in unbroken connection with that ever-gushing source.

The statute which next presents itself for our consideration, exemplifies, most touchingly, the tender care of the God of Israel. “Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:14). Here a barrier is erected to stem the rising tide of irritability with which uncontrolled nature would be almost sure to meet the personal infirmity of deafness. How well we can understand this! Nature does not like to be called upon to repeat its words, again and again, in order to meet the deaf man’s infirmity. Jehovah thought of this, and provided for it. And what is the provision? “Thou shalt fear thy God.” When tried by a deaf person, remember the Lord, and look to Him for grace to enable you to govern your temper.

The second part of this statute reveals a most humiliating amount of wickedness in human nature. The idea of laying a stumbling-block in the way of the blind, is about the most wanton cruelty imaginable; and yet man is capable of it, else he would not be warned against it. Truly, the Lord knew what was in man when He wrote the statutes and judgements of the Book of Leviticus.

Verses 16 and 17 demand special attention. “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.” This is a most seasonable admonition for the people of God, in every age. A talebearer is sure to do incalculable mischief. It has been well remarked that a talebearer injures three persons – he injures himself, he injures his hearer, and he injures the subject of his tale. All this he does directly; and as to the indirect consequences, who can recount them? Let us carefully guard against this horrible evil. May we never suffer a tale to pass our lips; and let us never stand to hearken to a talebearer. May we always know how to drive away a backbiting tongue with an angry countenance, as the north wind driveth away rain (cp. Proverbs 25:23).

In verse 17 we learn what ought to take the place of tale bearing. “Thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” In place of carrying to another a tale about my neighbour, I am called upon to go directly to himself and rebuke him, if there is anything wrong. This is the divine method. Satan’s method is to act the talebearer.

Abridged from the writer’s Notes on the Book of Leviticus (London, Morrish, [1st edn, 1860], new edition), pp. 289-96; and excerpted by him in Things New and Old, iii (1860), pp.12ff.

Using our Talents

Yannick Ford

“Lord, what will You have me to do?” This article offers a most helpful answer to a question that has perplexed many believers.

As Christians, we do not want to waste our lives. We know that our inheritance is in heaven – “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”, as we read in 1 Peter 1:4. What should we do to ensure that our lives here are worthwhile, and that we are investing in that heavenly kingdom? Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:7 that “we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (NKJV). Nevertheless we can prepare ahead for heaven, even as the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:20, “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”. The two parables in Matthew chapters 24 and 25 give us some valuable instructions on how we can do this. The thrust of these two parables is that God has given us many resources, and He may also have given us specific tasks. The faithful servants in the parables show us how we can be faithful in our tasks and with our resources.

As we read Matthew 24:45-51 and 25:14-30, two scenarios are brought before us. In the first, the servant is given the particular task of providing his master’s household with “food in due season.” In the second, the servants have relative freedom to trade with the talents committed to them. The same two scenarios are often true for us. On the one hand, we may have been given a specific charge or responsibility; whilst, on the other hand, we certainly have many resources that we can use for the Lord.

Regarding the first scenario, we are given some examples of specific charges or responsibilities in the Scriptures:

- Timothy was told not to neglect the gift that was in him (1 Timothy 4:14). Evidently Timothy had a specific gift and ministry that he needed to concentrate on.
- Archippus was told, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfil it” (Colossians 4:17). Archippus must have had a particular area of service that he needed to devote himself to. It is good that the Bible does not specify what that ministry was, since it means that we can all be encouraged and challenged by the exhortation to Archippus!
- Peter was given a charge by the Lord Jesus, “Feed My lambs”, “Tend My sheep”, “Feed My sheep” (John 21:15-17).



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*We also
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to us*



In the same way, we too may know that we have a particular responsibility to fulfil for the Lord. Often, this particular responsibility may flow out of our natural relationships – if we are a mother or a father, husband or wife, grandparent, employer, and so on, we have definite responsibilities and instructions relating to these in the Bible. But we also have freedom to use the general resources and gifts that God has entrusted to us, just as we read in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. In this second scenario we are stewards of what God has placed in our care, and a key passage for stewards is 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, “Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” Let us therefore consider these two scenarios in more detail.

In Matthew 24:45-51, the servant had been entrusted with the job of giving food to the other members of the master’s household. This was a very important and necessary task – if the other servants did not get fed, then they would not be able to do their work. They may even have drifted off elsewhere, where they could get some food. Therefore this task needed to be done well and consistently. No indication of advancement or possible promotion was given – the servant giving the food out was not going to be promoted to catering manager and then to director of household affairs. He just needed to keep at the task in hand. But the reward would come when the master returned home and found the servant “so doing”. At that point there certainly was a promotion: “Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.”

We can take heart from this parable when we think about the specific tasks and responsibilities given to us. Focus and dedication will be rewarded by the Lord. The emphasis is not really on “success” – although a well-fed household would be an evidence

of success – but rather on the servant “so doing”. This parable is particularly encouraging for all who seek to feed their families and God’s people with spiritual food, by reading and expounding the Bible. God’s servants – His household – need feeding so that they can go on with their particular service. Thus the task of feeding others from God’s Word is one that needs to be persisted in. Peter, who was given the charge “Feed My lambs”, “Tend My sheep”, and “Feed My sheep,” was a good example of someone who was found “so doing”, as we can see from his second epistle, chapter 1:12-15: “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”

When we come to Matthew 25:14-30, the situation is slightly different. Here the servants were given talents, “to each according to his own ability”, and there appeared to be considerable freedom in how those servants were to trade with these talents. Bishop J.C. Ryle made a very helpful remark on this parable in his commentary,¹ and I will paraphrase it a little here. We have all been given much:

- our parents and our country of birth
- our physical health
- our other attributes
- our personality
- our financial resources
- our spiritual gifts

In the main, these things are gifts. All of these things can be used for God’s glory and for the blessing of others.



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¹ J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (London, 1856ff; reprinted many times). See under Matt.25:14-30.


*God
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It's worth thinking a bit about what a "talent" was. Strictly speaking, a talent is a unit of weight, just as we would say a kilogramme, or a pound. The talents that the servants were given may have been the equivalent of a weight of silver, because in verse 18, where it states that the wicked servant went and hid his lord's money in the ground, the Greek word used for money is "silver"; so perhaps that meant silver coins. As I was reading around this subject I came across some references to talents of silver in the Old Testament, in 1 Kings 16:24 and 1 Kings 20:39. In the first reference, we read that Omri, king of Israel, bought the hill of Samaria for two talents of silver. In the second, we see that one talent of silver was the ransom for a prisoner-of-war's life. What these passages tell us is that a talent of silver was evidently a substantial financial resource. Therefore in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, even the wicked servant who was given just one talent was in reality entrusted with a very big sum!

It is very interesting that the use of the English word "talent" for a special ability, as when we talk about a talented musician, apparently comes from this parable in Matthew 25.² However, biblically-speaking, our talents are not necessarily special skills but are rather all the areas of our life, circumstances and attributes that we have been given, as I listed above. Like the three servants, we too have been entrusted with many resources.


The master in the parable evidently knew his servants well, because he gave "to each according to his own ability" (verse 15). This is very encouraging for us. God does not expect us to do what we cannot do. That was the wicked conception of the evil servant: "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed" (verse 24). In truth, God wants us to use what we *do* have. In 2 Corinthians 8:12, where Paul is dealing with financial giving, he writes, "For if there is first a

² Chambers Dictionary of Etymology, 1988.

willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.” I think it would be reasonable to extend this principle to the use of all our talents. On a personal note, I have wasted a lot of time and energy worrying about whether God wanted me to do things that I thought I couldn’t do, which meant that many precious resources that I did have were lying unused. Let us encourage one another to use what we *have* got, so that we can be like the two faithful servants who each doubled their talents. “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). We may know some people who are multi-talented, like the servant who was given five talents. Others of us might we feel we are definitely not like that, but let’s remember the substantial worth of even just one talent – it was by no means a trifling sum!

We have a similar thought in Romans chapter 12. In the first verse, we have the general exhortation to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Then in verse 3 we are to think about what God has given to us as individuals: “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” We are reminded in verse 4 that we do not all have the same function, but verses 6-8 encourage us to use faithfully the gifts that we do have. “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ...” (verses 6&7).

In conclusion, let us remind ourselves of the thrust of the two parables in Matthew: God has given us many resources, and He may also have given us specific tasks. The faithful servants in the parables show us how we can be faithful in our tasks and with our resources. This will help us to make sure that our lives are worthwhile.



*Let us
encourage
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what we
have got*



Beauty and the Beasts

The future of Europe Part 2

George Stevens

“Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do...?” (Genesis 18:17, KJV) And God did not hide it from Abraham, but told him of the judgment He purposed upon the cities of the plain. As a result, Abraham *prayed* – the first intercessory prayer in the Bible, pleading with God for Sodom and for the righteous within it (18:22-33).

God also revealed to king Nebuchadnezzar “what would be in the latter days” (Daniel 2:28). But at the end of the book Daniel was simply told to “shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end” (12:4, 13). However the instruction to John regarding *his* book was the opposite of the instruction to Daniel. In Revelation 1:3 a blessing is pronounced on him “that readeth, and [them] that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.” We are those “upon whom the ends of the world [i.e., the ages] are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). The implication is that Christians are to live out their present lives in the knowledge of the judgments that God will bring upon this world. God is not yet judging the world; this is the unparalleled day of His grace. But we are to live now, and speak the gospel of His grace now, in the knowledge of the black cloud that hangs over the world, even if it has not yet started to discharge its torrents.

In the previous article¹ we saw from Revelation that John was given to see a frightening “beast”, embodying features of the three empires that preceded it (Revelation 13:2 with Daniel 7:4-6), and representing a Roman empire that existed in John’s time and will exist again in time to come. We also saw that the name of “beast” also referred to the last awful ruler of that empire. “Beast” was capitalized when it bore this meaning.

We also saw that this empire and its ruler will themselves be exploited by a ghastly “Beauty”, the gaudy “whore”, Babylon (Revelation 17, 18), a religious system that will profess the name of the one God, but contain no real faith; and that in fact will deny the name of the living God by persecuting His people. It has its forerunner today in so-called Christian churches that incorporate idolatry and reject the divine authority of the Bible. We saw that God will use the “Beast” and his allies to destroy that system, shortly before they themselves are judged.

¹ *Scripture Truth*, April 2016, pp. 72ff.

Later in the article we shall consider that judgement. But firstly we must consider the third principal human actor in the events of these dreadful days – the Beast from the earth.

The Beast from the earth

The first Beast of Revelation 13 arose out of the sea (v.1). But another Beast of the same chapter arises from the *earth* (v.11). If the sea speaks of the Gentiles (see previous article), then the earth speaks of Israel. Therefore, this second beast has a Jewish background. He is likened to a lamb with two horns. A lamb speaks of innocence, and the two horns speak of the realms of Judah and the rest of Israel (Ephraim). The fact that he is called a “lamb”, the same word as is used for “the Lamb” in Revelation 5:6ff, also strongly suggests that he is the Antichrist. However, this “lamb” speaks like a dragon, revealing that he is total deception, and is really a tool of Satan. He will rise to lead politically; but also leads religiously because he is elsewhere called the “false prophet” (Revelation 16:13; 19:20). The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of him in this way in John 5:43: “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.”

This false prophet, like the first Beast of chapter 13, will be able to perform supernatural miracles and hence deceive people into believing in him (13:12ff). In the middle of Daniel’s last seven year-period (Daniel 9:27) the false prophet even encourages the people to make an image of this Roman leader, and he is able to cause the image to speak. He also decrees that any who do not worship the image should be killed. As if that is not enough, he insists that everyone should receive a mark in their foreheads or in their right hands (Revelation 13:16) imprinting the Beast’s name or the number of his name. Without this mark, no-one will be allowed to buy or sell.

Hence life will become extremely difficult for faithful believers who refuse this form of identification. However, their reward will be substantial, for we read in Revelation 20:4,

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

But those who *did* receive the mark of the Roman beast come under the wrath of God, for they shall be stricken by a “noisome and grievous sore” (16:2). It almost seems that the act of placing or scanning the mark will result in a terrible ulcer. Furthermore, their final punishment is already described in Revelation 14:9-11: they will experience torment in fire and brimstone for ever and ever.

We find further details concerning this “beast from the earth”, this “false prophet”, in Daniel 11.36-39.



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“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.”

This king will have unconstrained power and be accountable to no man. Self-exaltation will be his driving force. He makes himself greater than any other god, and brazenly and expressly defies the living God – the God of gods. In this way he will have rejected the God of his ancestors. The phrase, “the God of his fathers” (v.37), occurs elsewhere in Scripture (e.g. Exodus 3:13) to describe the God of Israel, confirming that this man will be a Jew.

He will also reject “the desire of women”, a phrase which speaks of the Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ whom every faithful woman since Eve looked to give birth to, the One who would defeat Satan (Genesis 3:15).



At first sight, the statement that he would honour the God of forces (Daniel 11:38) seems to contradict the statement that he will have no regard for any god. However, the god of forces represents the head of the revived Roman Empire whose image the Antichrist raises up and demands worship to (Revelation 13:15). When Daniel 11:39 describes this god as a “strange [i.e. ‘foreign’] god”, this suggests again that the king is a Jew, and lends credibility to this other “god” being Roman.

But this “king” will only prosper, or advance, for a limited time, that is, until God’s “indignation”, or fury, against the apostate of Israel has ended (v.36). The clause, “until ...that determined shall be done” reveals that the all-knowing God has set the events according to His will and is in overall control. We shall return to this in the final part of the article.

And this “king” is the same as the personage described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 as the one who

- is the son of perdition (v.3)
- opposes all that is called God (v.4)
- is the man of sin (v.3)
- exalts himself above all that is called God (v.4)
- presents himself as being above God (v.4)
- sets himself forth as God (v.4)
- is called “that Wicked [One]” (v.8), and
- is empowered by Satan (v.9).

Daniel 11:36ff, John 5:43, 2 Thessalonians 2:3ff, and Revelation 13:11 all speak of the same person, who in 1 John 2:18 is spoken of as the Antichrist.

The Closing Warfare

The “time of the end” in Daniel 11:40 relates to the closing era of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24), i.e., the era which is ended by the appearing of Christ. So the events about to be described lead up to the battle of that great day of God Almighty at Armageddon.

The false prophet will raise the “abomination of desolation” in the rebuilt Jewish temple. This is the “abomination” mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:15), and it will be the image of the Roman “Beast” being installed in the holy place. At the same time, the actual Roman “Beast” will break his covenant, or treaty, with Israel (Daniel 9:27) that was described in the previous article – the covenant that, while it was in force, afforded the faithful remnant in Israel a measure of protection. In breaking the treaty the Beast will cause the sacrifices that had been offered in the rebuilt temple to cease (Daniel 9:27). Nevertheless, the Beast will still



The false prophet will raise the “abomination of desolation”. It will be the image of the Roman “Beast”





*The
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have the backing of the false prophet (i.e., of the “king” of Daniel 11:36, the Antichrist), for, as we have seen, this person will have turned the hearts of the mass of the Jewish people toward the first Beast (Revelation 13:12ff). The faithful ones of Israel will flee for their lives. This is described by Christ Himself in Matthew 24:15-22.

To piece together the political and military interactions of that most dreadful of times we must read Daniel 11:40ff and Revelation together. The king of the South (Egypt) will take advantage of the cessation of Israel’s covenant with the first Beast and attack Israel. However the king of the North will move to prevent this attempt to take possession of Palestine. He will sweep down through Israel like a whirlwind and attack Egypt. On the way, he will enter various countries besides Israel, conquer, and pass on. He will be the prophetic fulfilment of “the Assyrian” who, according to Isaiah 28:14-15, is the “overflowing scourge” used to punish the idolaters of Israel.

“Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through...”

But Judah’s godless defensive arrangements will be useless; her “alliance with death and with hell” will not stand (28:18). Instead the desolating king of the North will rampage onward, making the treasures of Egypt his own. He will then be surprised by news from the east and the north, causing him to return to the land of Israel (Daniel 11:44-45).

What “news”? We also read in Revelation 16:12 that at this time the river Euphrates will dry up, so that the way of the kings of the east (literally, “of the rising sun”) might be prepared. This refers to the great army we find in 9:13-21.² It consists of a “cavalry” of two hundred

² Note the strong similarities between the descriptions of events under the “trumpet” judgments and the “vial” (or, “bowl”) judgments.

million men from beyond the Euphrates slaying one third of people in their path. Their campaign will last for an hour, a day, a month and a year, and presumably involve the ravaging of countries between themselves and Israel. We are not told in Scripture, but they may well be seeking to conquer the revived Roman kingdom.

This news of an invasion across the Euphrates is most likely to be what the king of the North hears (Daniel 11:44), for at this time God will be gathering the nations to Armageddon in northern Israel, in preparation for an attack upon Jerusalem (Revelation 16.13-16). The news of these armies moving on Jerusalem will bring fear to the king of the North. As a result, he will go back to Israel and camp between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea (Daniel 11.45).

It is there, at Armageddon, that Christ will suddenly appear as King of kings, and all the armies gathered there will be destroyed (Revelation 19:11-21). In these verses Christ is called “Faithful and True”, and it is said that “in righteousness he judges and makes war”. The armies which were in heaven will follow Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. From out of His mouth there will go a sharp sword with which He smites the nations –surely His own word: see Isaiah 11:4. Kings, captains and mighty men and common people will be slain. Both the Roman “Beast” and the false prophet will be captured and cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Revelation 19:20). The lake of fire burning with brimstone expresses the torment of “hell” which is itself a place of ruin. It is also called the “second death”, which speaks of an eternal separation from God (20:14).

This brings us back to Daniel 2:34 (see previous article). The Stone, the true Shepherd of Israel (Genesis 49:24) had fallen on the feet of the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, causing it to disintegrate. This Stone soon becomes a kingdom in its own right; a kingdom that will glorify God and last for a thousand years. At the



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*Bewildering
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immutable*



end of that time, the Christ, the Son, will hand the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

As for the king of the North, it is simply recorded that he comes to his end and there are none to help him (Daniel 11:45). This appears to occur at the time when the feet of the Messiah once again touch the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4). As He does so, a great earthquake splits the mountain in two, and the resulting cleavage links the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean. The encampment of the king of the North will, most likely, lie in the path of this earthquake, as will many cities of the nations (Revelation 16:19).

What of the devil? In Revelation 20:2-3 we read of his temporary imprisonment:

“And he [the angel] laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

However, after a final, unsuccessful, rebellion at the end of the thousand years, we read:

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

Bewildering European events may swirl over our heads, but the purpose of God is immutable, and is a better guide to how we should live our lives now than any of the fallout from “Brexit”. Our task is to *pray*, interceding for the heedless lost; to speak out the gospel of the grace of God in the knowledge that this “day of grace” will not last for ever; to order our own lives through this world according to its character as revealed in its destiny; and to teach our children how they should order their lives too.

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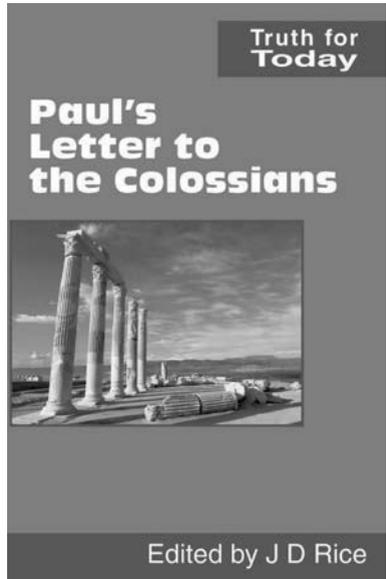
Philip writes:

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George Stevens provides an overall introduction to the letter, followed by a look at the beginning of the first chapter, culminating with the great statement that Christ is pre-eminent in everything. Douglas Pettman explores the subject of reconciliation, and the secret of the Church and its future with its Head. Ernie Brown opens up the simplicity of the Christian message: nothing but Christ is necessary, for Christ is everything. This has practical implications, and George Bell looks at the reality of what it means when Paul writes that Christ is our life. Gordon Kell explores the way in which service for Christ is worked out in our families and occupations. Finally, David Anderson closes the studies, underlining the way in which prayer is necessary to under-pin actions and speech which testify that Christ is, indeed, everything.



Father, they'll hear it in the news!

Father, they'll hear it in the news!
The world shall be undone!
For many will have disappeared –
rising to meet Your Son!
The wise shall have no answer, Lord,
the ruling class shall wail.
A great distraction You will send,
and men the truth shall fail.

A woman in bright raiment dressed
the saints of God oppressed;
She sits a queen o'er many souls
but causes much distress.
Her name of "Babylon the Great"
reveals a whore of hate.
Idolatry is the device
that brings kings to her gate.

The "Wicked One" shall rise to reign
within Immanuel's land;
the Antichrist shall be received
As You before had planned.
A Roman leader shall ascend
Who darkness shall increase.
Under the devil both combine
that faith in You might cease.

Jerusalem shall be attacked!
The Northern pow'r displayed!
"Come, gather to God's battlefield" –
the cry to nations made.
To Armageddon they shall come
where Christ their hosts shall slay.
The Beasts are taken by Your Son
and Hell shall have its prey.

The Scourge of Israel is destroyed
when Christ takes up His crown;
then Olive's mount shall tear in two,
the Northern host put down!
The King of kings and Lord of lords
shall have His throne that day.
The faithful remnant that survives
shall praise His name for aye.

G. E. Stevens (May, 2016)