



Volume 99 No. 2

AUSTRALIA

April—June 2016

CRUCIFIED AND RISEN

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:5-6)

At this season of the year, the thoughts of every Christian turn to the events in Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago. There it was that the man Jesus was put to death on a Roman cross; there He suffered and died, *“the just for the unjust”* (1 Pet. 3:18); there all the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning His fleshly existence found their fulfilment; and there it was that the hopes of some initially evaporated: *“And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:18-27).

The dismay Cleopas experienced was a result of the hope Jesus’ disciples held when He was alive, that “at last” the promised Saviour had come, the One who would “redeem Israel”. And not only redeem Israel but indeed the One whom John the Baptist had earlier announced as *“the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). As Cleopas declared, in spite of Him not being honoured by

everyone, He was regarded by some as *“a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people”*. He was the basis of their hope. However while they recognized Him as *“mighty in deed and word before God”* it is apparent Jesus’ disciples did not fully understand the significance of the moment.

A sequel to the Passover

Historians differ slightly regarding the precise time frame of the events that immediately preceded Jesus’ death. It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the minute details of the timing of events and any differences relating to them, but to focus on the significance of His death and the privilege of all who believe He was the Saviour of the World.

Approximately six days before His crucifixion Jesus instructed Peter and John *“to go and prepare the Passover”*, and as they entered the city they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water: *“And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover”* (Luke 22:8-10).

Jesus’ disciples were familiar with the Passover because it had been practised by their predecessors since Israel’s exodus from Egypt. Their exodus was

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preceded by some amazing miracles, culminating in the angel of death passing over the Israelites' houses as identified by the blood of a lamb that the Israelites had painted on "the side posts and upper door posts" of their houses in accordance with the instructions the Lord had given to Moses: *"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever"* (Exodus 12:1-14).

The passing over of the Israelites' houses by the angel of death was not only miraculous but it also foreshadowed some of the key events in God's plan, and hence the Israelites were commanded to remember their deliverance every year, regardless of their abode: *"And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses..."* (Exodus 12:24-27).

Sustenance

Israel's exodus from the land of Egypt was only the first step in them completely throwing off the burden of slavery. It was followed by a long period of meandering through deserts until they reached the land God had promised to their father Abraham. During their meandering they required food which God miraculously provided (the Israelites called it manna) and water from a rock (Exodus 16:1-15; 17:1-6). Both of those phenomena were not only significant as the means of sustaining the Israelites during their physical escape from Egyptian bondage but they also have a spiritual significance for God's people who have lived since Jesus' death. Jesus introduced them to some of this significance when He ate the Passover with them on the night before His crucifixion: *"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave*

thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:13-20). Jesus' reference to the Passover was an implication that His sacrifice superseded the passing over of the angel of death when Israel was delivered from their slavery in Egypt; the blood of the lamb would be replaced by His blood.

Deliverance

Jesus' reference to the Passover also links the effect of the sacrifice He was about to make—the giving of His life—with the deliverance the initial Passover effected for Israel. The first Passover memorial related to the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery whereas His Passover sacrifice was the means by which the whole world of mankind will be delivered from their bondage to death: *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression... But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead... the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"* (Rom. 5:12-19).

The ransom

Another concept applicable to Jesus' sacrifice is that of "ransom". A ransom is a price paid by one party for the benefit of another; in the case of the release of Israel from Egypt it was the blood of the animal on the doorposts, and in the case of Jesus it is His blood at Calvary: *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"* (1Tim. 2:5-6).

Remembering Him

The annual observance of the Passover was a long-

standing practice for the nation of Israel. Likewise the instructions and procedures He gave to His disciples now have a long history of repetition, being observed by Christian people world-wide, year after year, and even more frequently in some circles. Consequently there might be a temptation to regard the procedures as a ritual and thereby lose sight of the significance of His sacrifice. All who remember His sacrifice each year and attribute Him with being the ransom for the whole world of mankind should do so in sobriety and with reflection.

And so it is that Christians remember Him by keeping the simple Memorial service which He instituted in an upper room. The Christian's memorial service is not celebrated by killing an animal but by partaking of unleavened bread and drinking of the "*fruit of the vine*" (Matt. 26:29). The unleavened bread is representative of Him who is the "*Bread of Life*" and the fruit of the vine is representative of His blood.

Through the elements He prescribed, Christians reflect on the shedding of His blood—His life—so that the whole "*creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*" (Rom. 8:21).

Children of God

While the long term effect will be the deliverance of all mankind from the grave, there is a more immediate and privileged effect at the present time: "*the glorious liberty of the children of God*".

God's provision of material sustenance during Israel's wandering in the deserts foreshadowed His sustenance in a spiritual sense of those who escape bondage from Satan's realm now: those who have "*escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*" (2 Pet. 1:4). Jesus explained the spiritual significance to His disciples: "*They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life...*" (John 6:30-35).

While at the present time the effect of Jesus' death is limited to those who have been privileged to understand the details of God's plan, ultimately it will result in every human being escaping from the bondage to death. Their escape will be realised when they are resurrected from the grave: "*Marvel not at*

this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life (Greek: zoe—life); and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (Greek: krisis—by implication justice, specifically divine law) (John 5:28-29).

Notwithstanding their resurrection from the grave, every human being who wishes to live forever will be required to prove their loyalty to God and to live in accordance with His righteous standard: "*And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people*" (Acts 3:20-23).

He is risen

Notwithstanding God's miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and all that it foreshadowed regarding Jesus' death, mankind's plight would not be any better if Jesus had not been resurrected, as Paul explained to the Corinthians: "*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures... if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins... But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept*" (1 Cor. 15:1-20). So it is that Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the key to the gospel: it is only because He was raised to life that anyone can be assured that His sacrifice ransomed the whole world of mankind from the death sentence and that they will be resurrected from the grave. The hope of eternal life for all mankind is assured not because of His death but because of His resurrection.

Understanding the essential nature of Jesus' resurrection also helps one to appreciate the joy that would have come to His disciples when they realised the essence of the angelic message: "*He is not here, He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go quickly, and tell His disciples*" (Matt. 28:6,7). Just at they would have rejoiced at Jesus' resurrection so do Christians rejoice today—it is the key to all their hopes.

Christ's resurrection is the assurance that Jesus' death was not vain, that every experience of mankind is in God's hand, and that in His due time all mankind will be delivered from the present bondage of corruption: *"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God"* (Rom. 8:20-22). *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?... For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen"* (Rom. 11:33-36).

Every year

Just as the nation of Israel was required to remember

their deliverance from slavery in Egypt by repeating the Passover ceremony every year, so also Jesus has requested Christian believers—the *"Israel of God"* (Gal. 6:16)—to remember Him every year, as Paul reminded the Corinthians: *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew (proclaim) the Lord's death till he come"* (1 Cor. 11:23-26). It is a privilege to understand the effect of Jesus' sacrifice—that indeed He brought life to light—and to remember Him at this time of the year. ■

TAUGHT OF GOD

Teaching involves two parties: the teacher (leader) and the pupil (follower), and thus may be considered to be one leading another to an interpretation or understanding.

The process will be successful only if both are willing to participate. In earlier times the nation of Israel was not willing to be taught: *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye"* (Acts 7:51). On the contrary the Psalmist (David?) wrote: *"Teach me thy way, O LORD..."* (Psa. 27:11).

The teacher also must meet certain criteria, the first being they must know the subject they purport to teach. In this respect Jesus was in stark contrast to the scribes: *"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"* (Matt. 7:28-29).

Secondly the teacher must understand the status of their pupils and adjust the level of the concepts to be taught. Jesus knew the capability of His disciples and limited His teaching to the concepts they were able to understand: *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"* (John 16:12).

However Jesus also knew that, while His disciples were unable to comprehend some concepts, when they had received the Holy Spirit they would understand: *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance..."* (John 14:26). However He knew

that the Holy Spirit would not be given until after He had risen from the dead (John 7:39).

Likewise mankind in general cannot now understand some concepts of the gospel because God has revealed them only to those to whom He has given His holy spirit: *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom... as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"* (1 Cor. 2:7-12).

Nevertheless not all things are immediately revealed to every Christian, some being reserved until they are more mature: *"For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"* (Heb. 5:14). Hence the admonition to *"grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

Teacher's disposition

And maybe above all, the teacher must be humble, realizing of whom they have been taught: *"... learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart..."* (Matt. 11:29). Indeed all are *"taught of God"* (John 6:45). ■

NOT YOUR OWN

“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For you’re bought with a price! Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s ” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

There are several factors that spur Christians on to “lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset” them, and to “run with patience the race that is set before” them (Heb. 12:1). Three of them are listed in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: that their body is part of the temple of the Holy Spirit; that it is God who has given them the Holy Spirit; and that He has bought them.

All three are enveloped by the concept that collectively they are the “body of Christ”: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). The concept of the church being the body of Christ is one of the precious truths that are a mystery to all except those to whom God has given His Holy Spirit.

There are several different illustrations in the Bible regarding the nature (character) of the Church and its development: the church is compared to sheep, to soldiers arrayed in battle, to guests at a wedding, to wheat among tares, and as wise virgins with their oil in their lamp. Each illustration is pertinent but each only illustrates the characteristic intended in that analogy; none portrays all of its characteristics. In order to obtain a complete understanding of the character of the church all pictures (or illustrations) must be combined (or aggregated). When such a complete picture is assembled, the Christian can better understand what is required of them—as body members—to “glorify God in their bodies”. In other words when they realise that they are not their own, but that they have been bought, and so are to be ministers of Him who has bought them.

One has testified: “As I walk in this narrow way, I am not my own. It implies a certain attitude, a way of looking at relationships with people and things. Going about my daily activities, it helps me determine what I should do and how I should act”.

Temple of the Holy Spirit

The first phenomenon to realise is that the members of the church are the temple of the Holy Spirit. There are two separate aspects relating to that concept.

Firstly a temple is a dwelling place: “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be

their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:16); God dwells in His temple.

Hence the concept of Christians being the temple of the Holy Spirit means that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, and they should always display that Spirit and not the spirit of the Evil One: “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 John 3:23-24).

The residence of the Holy Spirit in an individual should be manifested by their conduct: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:15-20). The realization that their every movement or action should reflect that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in them presents every Christian with a challenge, and should guide them regarding their response to every situation.

Given by God

The privilege of having the Holy Spirit is appreciated to a greater extent when it is realized that God gives His Holy Spirit only to those whom He chooses: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth... the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:7-14).

An appreciation of the privilege of having God's Holy Spirit is increased by remembering that He is the creator of the universe. There is no greater power! And it is He and no one less who has given insight into His plan for mankind. What a privilege!

Bought with a price

The privilege of knowing God's plan is further accentuated by realizing that God has bought those who are His. Buying anything means one has to contribute something—most commonly it is money but it may also be time or other goods—and to realize that God has paid a price for the ones whom He has chosen should invoke a spirit of love for Him and an unquenchable desire to serve Him. The common man cannot pay a greater price than his life—*"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). The price God paid was the life of His only Son: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

Glorifying God

When one realises their privilege the next challenge is to ensure that they glorify God, not just in their body but also in the spirit. The challenge applies to every one, individually.

Glorifying God in the body may be interpreted to mean by one's actions: actions that are seen by those with whom one comes in contact: *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation"* (1 Pet. 2:11-12). The Christian is "on show" 24 hours of every day; their actions are being watched closely by many, and especially by those who would despise the Faith.

Whereas glorifying God in one's body is visible to the world, glorifying God in one's spirit is an internal "hidden" matter, and might be more testing because of the temptation to regard it as such. Consequently the test is to guard one's thoughts as Paul explained to the Philippians: *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (Phil. 4:8).

One aid that assists one to comply with Paul's admonition is to keep Hebrews 4:12-13 always in mind: *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful,*

and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do", and that *"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he"* (Prov. 23:7).

Transformation into new creature

The outcome of continuously realising that one is not one's own, that they should continuously endeavour to glorify God, both in word and in deed, is the development of a character that reflects Jesus Himself: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Rom. 12:1-2). The Christian is not left to speculate about the nature of the "will of God": *"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful"* (Col. 3:12-15).

Sanctification

Glorifying God is both a lifetime work and a progressive work. It is progressive in the sense that, as one progresses, one should become more aligned with the Perfect Example, as may be inferred from Jesus' prayer: *"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:16-17).

Sanctification is God's desire for those to whom He has given His Holy Spirit: *"This is the will of God, even your sanctification"* (1 Thess.4:3). It is a work of purification, of rooting out *"the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes"* (1 John 2:16), and *"not making provision for the flesh"* (Rom. 13:14). Such an objective is made possible by remembering that the Christian has been bought, that he is not one's own, and that he is striving to glorify God. The reward will be glorious: *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:2-3).■

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Perhaps the example of the Galatians, and Paul's reminder to them, is a timely refresher for the Lord's people in these days when they are confronted by a multitude of temptations from many sources: "*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain*" (Gal. 3:1-4).

The temptation confronting the Galatians was to revert to the practices God required under the Law Covenant. Such regular practices and ceremonies, although onerous, provided a sense of security, and so they were tempted to abandon their venture into the "unknown". Paul reminded them of the vanity of the Law Covenant practices in an effort to encourage them to press on in their new found faith. And so it is that a review of the Christian's consecration vows lessens the possibility of them being overthrown by the challenges they will meet in their life, and to be dismayed as though "*some strange thing has happened unto them*" (1 Peter 4:12).

Counting the cost

It is helpful to continuously remember that there is a cost to Christian discipleship: Jesus offered no earthly reward of ease and prosperity.

One of the costs stemming from association with Jesus is the loss of popularity: "*Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven... (but) woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you...*" (Luke 6:22-26). The disregard one receives during this present life is to be negated by comparing it with the prospect of glory, honour and immortality in God's kingdom: "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father...*" (Matt. 13:43).

The Christian should be encouraged in their walk by remembering the parable Jesus gave about a man planning to build a tower but who couldn't complete it (Luke 14:28-30). Great strength will be derived from recalling Jesus' words: "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the*

Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10). Just as Jesus attributed His resources and ability to His Heavenly Father, so the Christian should remember that "*it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*", and further that "*He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phil. 2:13; 1:6).

Humility

Another offset that might be employed to denounce the rebukes and challenges that come to the Christian is the realisation that they understand events in the world that are mystical to mankind generally: "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Cor. 2:14). However such a realization can lead to a superior attitude.

An attitude of pride is contrary to God's will; the Christian is to develop a spirit of humility, among fellow disciples as well as in their dealing with the world in general: "*And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me*" (Mark 9:33-37).

The Christian's growth of humility is enhanced by calling to mind that their knowledge is a gift of God, and is not their own work (in the sense in which the world of mankind would claim it). Increased knowledge should promote the development of humility, and one consequence of humility is "*esteeming others better than oneself*" (Phil. 2:3).

One example of Jesus' humility is His discussion with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1-27). Samaritans were to be avoided because they were not Jews; they were Gentiles transplanted into the land from foreign countries several centuries earlier when the 10 tribes were taken captive by Assyria in 739BC (2 Kings 17:24-29). Keeping that background in mind manifests Jesus' humility in speaking to the Samaritan woman.

Worshipping in spirit and in truth

Jesus makes a distinction between worship in spirit and worship in truth. One might have the truth—know a great deal about God’s plan for mankind—but might not have the proper spirit. On the other hand one might have a great deal of the spirit—be humble, teachable and sincere—but not be able to show forth God’s praises because they do not have a sufficient knowledge of the truth.

A Christian’s worship must be in spirit and in truth, not with flamboyant outward show as was the case with the scribes and the Pharisees: *“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat... all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren”* (Matt. 23:1-8). Jesus’ words speak for themselves; no explanation is required.

Supreme love for God

Finally the Christian is to have supreme love for God. There are at least two aspects that test one’s supreme love for God.

One aspect is to be prepared to forsake and fight

against all sinful and selfish tendencies of the flesh. Jesus taught such disposition in His lesson as recorded in Matthew 18:8: *“Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire”*. In this parable the hand and the foot represent aspects of one’s character that are not in accord with the Divine Will. Just as it would be a painful action to amputate part of one’s physical body, so also discarding one or more of what the Christian might regard as one their “strengths” might well cause pain. But it is a requirement.

A second aspect of supreme love for God is that one’s love must envelope those who are also walking in the narrow way: *“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ”* (Gal. 6:2). Bearing the burden of others involves being prepared to forgo one’s own preferences in order to provide assistance in any way—physical help, provision of material goods, taking time to express emotional sympathy—whether the occasion is convenient or otherwise.

Finally, preaching to another includes actions and situations other than verbal advice or explanation, and must extend to all men: *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Gal. 6:9-10).■

HATIKVAH

The words of the *Hatikvah* (Israel’s national anthem) do not need any explanation:

“As long as deep in the heart, the soul of a Jew yearns, and towards the East the eye looks to Zion, our hope will not be lost. The hope of 2,000 years, to be a free nation, in our land, the land Zion and Jerusalem”

“Even during the darkest days of their existence, whether it was the Spanish Inquisition or the Holocaust, from Pogrom’s to terrorism, Jews have never lost their hope. They read their Bible and they **believe** that God’s word is true. *“But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await for it with perseverance.”* They persevered through centuries of despair, and nothing shook them from their faith. Today we are living in a day when we are seeing that HOPE fulfilled.”

Christian Friends Of Israeli Communities 2014

“... let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God”
(Jeremiah 31:6)

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THE PROPHECY OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

Before embarking on a detailed exposition of the prophecy relating to Jacob's trouble, it might be profitable to revise the principles to be observed when addressing Bible prophecy.

Prophecy may be defined as "history written aforetime", that is, it is a prediction that is made before the event or events occur.

Prophecy is valuable for at least two reasons:

- **Authenticity**

The fulfillment of a prophecy attests the authority of the prophet. There are many false prophets in the world and the Christian is to be aware of them and ensure they are not deceived by them. As Jesus said: *"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"* (Matt. 24:24).

- **Knowing the time**

The fulfillment of a prophecy that contains a time element identifies that time. As Jesus said: *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors"* (Mark 13:28-29). Jesus used an example from their own experience—fig trees putting forth leaves—to teach them that, just as on that basis they could confidently predict that summer would come soon, so when they saw the events come to pass about which He had told them, they could be confident that His coming was nigh (Mark 13:26).

Fulfillment

However in some cases it is difficult to know which events have transpired, which are transpiring and which are still future.

Some of the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament are explained in the New Testament. One example is Jesus' coming to earth: *"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord... And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"* (Luke 4:17-21).

Until Jesus explained that the prophecy recorded in Isaiah 61:1-2 foretold His coming it was unclear as to whom or when it referred. Thus, when proclaiming events in the world to be the fulfillment of prophecy, it is necessary to be assured that the parties mentioned in the prophecy and the time to which it refers are substantiated. In this vein Peter wrote: *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Pet. 1:16-21). Peter assured his readers that they could believe that Jesus was The Christ because of the events he and others had witnessed when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:17).

Daniel's prophecy

Daniel was not given the details regarding how one prophecy given to him would be fulfilled: *"And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand"* (Dan. 12:8-10).

While it was not given to Daniel to understand the details of the prophecy, Jesus explained that His followers would understand: *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)"* (Matt. 24:15). Nevertheless it is possible that, while some of the details predicted in the prophecy may be confidently attributed to some past events, it is possible that some aspects are still future, and therefore unclear, even in this 21st century.

False prophets

Another factor to consider is that, as Jesus also prophesied, there are false prophets: *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there*

shall be false teachers among you..." (2 Pet. 2:1). Peter's warning may apply not only to those who issue a prophetic statement but also to those who claim to be able to interpret prophecy.

Nevertheless, in spite of the uncertainty of interpreting some prophecies, prophecy is an important element in the bulwark of the Christian's hope. As Jesus said: *"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh"* (Luke 21:28). The test for the Christian is to ensure that, as far as God has revealed the meaning of a prophecy, they carefully, and prayerfully, compare the events in the world with the prophecies given in the Scriptures, and it is in that spirit that one should ponder the prophecy relating to Jacob's trouble.

Jacob's trouble

Jeremiah 30:7 prophesies a time termed "Jacob's trouble": *"Alas, for that day is great so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it"*.

Jeremiah 30:7 contains the only reference in the Bible to the term "Jacob's trouble". Consequently there is no inspired explanation of its fulfillment and so one cannot be dogmatic regarding its interpretation. However it seems to contain some important details of God's plan and so its study is warranted.

Several Bible expositors have suggested events that might constitute its fulfillment. One suggestion is that Jeremiah 30 can be divided into eight parts:

- Verses 1 and 2 are instructions to Jeremiah to record what God had told him;
- Verse 3 declares God's purpose for Israel;
- Verses 4-9 summarise the troubles upon Israel;
- Verses 10-11 describe the outcome of those troubles;
- Verses 12-15 describe the reason for Israel's dilemma;
- Verses 16 describes God's judgment upon Israel's oppressors;
- Verses 17-22 describe God's restitution of Israel;
- Verses 23-24 describe the means by which God will bring about Israel's punishment and restoration.

Jeremiah 30:1-2:

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book".

It is unclear to which "words of the Lord" Jeremiah 30:1-2 refer: the words "have spoken" simply mean that Jeremiah wrote the words after he had received them. Some scholars interpret the words to refer to

chapter 29 which records Israel's captivity in Babylon. However chapter 29 is a letter (verse 1) and hence to require Jeremiah to record those words again seems to be superfluous. Alternatively they may be understood to refer to the words that follow in chapter 30, and hence chapter 30 may be understood to describe details of Israel's regathering at some time after their return from Babylon.

The time to which verses 1 and 2 are taken to apply is important because it determines to which time the return mentioned in verse 3 refers.

Jeremiah 30:3

"For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it".

If Jeremiah 30:3 refers to the return of Israel from their captivity in Babylon it strengthens faith in the prophecies of the Bible because Israel's captivity and their release after 70 years (Jer. 29:10) is recorded in secular history—the words have come to pass!

However if verse 3 is interpreted as the return of Israel to their promised land at a later time, it may be understood to relate to the time when Israel will be regathered after their scattering: *"Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations... He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD..."* (Jer. 31:10-12).

Jeremiah 30:4

"And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah"

The naming of Israel and Judah separately in this verse might indicate that the events prophesied in this chapter occur before the reunification of the two kingdoms, and hence before the fulfilment of Ezekiel 37:15-22: *"The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the*

Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand... And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; **Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:** And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all”.

Jeremiah 30:5

“For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace”.

This verse indicates that the time period of Jacob’s trouble is different from the time period prophesied in Ezekiel 38:10-11: *“Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates”.* The expression “unwallled villages” indicates a time when Israel will be living in peace; it is possible such a time of peace has not existed in Israel since Solomon’s reign: *“Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days”* (1 Chron. 22:9).

The time when Israel will be dwelling without walls or gates has not yet come. On February 10, 2016, a segment of “*ILTV English News*” (Israel Television News) reported as follows:

“Fortress Israel”: *Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu unveils new plan to completely surround Israel with security fencing; multi-year plan will cost several billion dollars.*

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu toured on Tuesday the route of the fence being built along Israel's eastern border with Jordan.. Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eizenkot and Southern District commander Eyal Zamir also participated in the tour along the route of the anticipated 30-kilometer fence. So far five kilometers of the border fence have been erected. "The advantage of building here as well as along the border with Egypt is that there are no structures every kilometer or two next to the fence, which can be served as shafts and tunnels," Netanyahu said. "This is not the situation in Gaza," he explained. "It's also

not the situation in Judea and Samaria, where there are erected buildings next to the separation line we are considering setting up. There, when building a fence, we need to take into account they're building tunnels underneath. Whoever said it is not important to territorialize in the modern era should go to Gaza." The Prime Minister expressed his opinion that all of Israel should be surrounded by some sort of border fence. "At the end, in the State of Israel, as I see it, there will be a fence that spans it all... Will we surround all of the State of Israel with fences and barriers... we must defend ourselves against the wild beasts," Netanyahu stressed”.

Jeremiah 30:6

“Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?”.

Since a male person cannot bear children, the expression “*A man travailing with child*” is symbolic, and may describe the nature of the distress. A similar expression occurs in Hosea 13:13: *“The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children”.* Ephraim suffered as does a woman before she gives birth.

The concept of a non-female agency giving birth to a human being also occurs in Isaiah 66:6-8: *“A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who has heard such a thing! Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? shall a nation be born in one? for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children”.* In these verses “city”, “temple” and “earth” are symbolic because none of them can give birth to a physical man child. However while the verses provide some justification for attributing a symbolic meaning to the expression a “*man travailing with child*” in Jeremiah 30:6, these verses do not provide any evidence regarding the symbolism of the expression. However there is a difference between the situations in Jeremiah 30:6 and Isaiah 66:7—in Jeremiah the man suffers the birth pangs for some time but in Isaiah the delivery occurs “*before she travailed*”.

Inconclusive

While this discussion is inconclusive, maybe it will encourage each one to study the “*deep things*” of God’s Word (1 Cor. 2:10), until they are “*fully persuaded in their own mind*” (Rom. 14:5). May God help each one whom He has called so to do.■

HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED: THE MIGHTY GOD

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

The title "mighty God" reflects the status and esteem that awaits the resurrected Jesus Christ.

When He was on earth as a human being He possessed might (that is, power) greater than all around Him: *"And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached."* (Luke 7:21-22).

Jesus also demonstrated He had power over the elements: *"And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"* (Matt. 8:25-27).

Future power

The potential of Jesus' future power and glory is emphasized by the fact that He performed those miracles when He was on earth as a human being—flesh and blood—and therefore *"a little lower than the angels"* (Heb. 2:9). However now He has been exalted above the angels and is sitting at God's right hand: *"God... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things... when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels..."* (Heb. 1:1-4).

Another indication of His power is that He will rule the earth and subdue all evil; God Himself will be the only one who will not be subject to Him: *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet... For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all"* (1 Cor. 15:24-28). His power is such that God called Him "god": *"... unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever..."* (Heb. 1:8).

God

The title "god" does not mean the supreme ruler of the universe, but simply one who has strength.

As the Apostle Paul wrote, there are many gods: *"As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him"* (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

Worship

Another aspect of gods is that they are worshipped: *"They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship"* (Isa. 46:6).

Worshippers may show their subjection by kneeling, and so will the world of mankind worship Jesus Christ: *"... Christ Jesus... : Who, being in the form of God... was made in the likeness of men: And ... he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore **God also hath highly exalted him**, and given him a name which is above every name: **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Phil. 2:5-11).

Idols attract worship but they do not have any power: *"They that make a graven image are all of them vanity... Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?... the workmen, they are of men... they shall be ashamed together"* (Isa. 44:9-11). The fact that Jesus will be called "god" attests the esteem that will be His. ■

PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

ABN 23 734 654 922

Reg. No. A0022186J

*Published by the Berean Bible Institute, Inc.
P.O. Box 402 Rosanna, Victoria, Australia, 3084*

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