

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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*"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"*

## BE INSPIRED...

### By the Majesty of God

"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!" Those are the words of the Psalmist David as he reflects on the nature of God and wonders at His concern for mankind. "When I look at the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou has established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?" (Psalm 8). Elsewhere in this issue in our article on John's gospel we will comment on the closeness of the relationship that Jesus, God in the flesh, enjoyed with his disciples. But just for moment consider the majestic glory of our God.

Isaiah, speaking about the eternal nature of God and His holiness, depicts an awe-inspiring 'vision' of God. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled temple." He was accompanied by the dazzling seraphim and his voice shook the very foundations of the building as he called Isaiah to duty (Isaiah 6:1ff). Uzziah died but our God is eternal in nature.

Solomon built a temple to the Lord as he had promised his father David. He employed huge numbers of skilled craftsmen and utilized the finest and most precious materials available to him and it was to be "great, for our God is greater than all gods" (2 Chr. 2:6). Yet even as he dedicated the temple to God, Solomon reflects on the fact that even this magnificent edifice is no match for God. "But will God dwell indeed with man on earth? Behold, heaven and highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!" (2 Chr 6:18).

In a different context the majesty of God is revealed through His workings with mankind. None of us would want to have been in Job's shoes but after all of his trials it was Elihu who had 'something to say on God's behalf. "Behold God is mighty and does not despise any" (Job 36:5). "Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God" (37:14). But eventually it was God himself who brought to Job's mind His creative power and authority in a wonderful expression of His majesty (Chapters 38-41). "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" Job eventually came to this realization, and it is one that in this world that is very skeptical about God that we will do well to keep in mind: "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted."

Let us glory in the majesty of God.

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# INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE FIRST CENTURY

(John H Diggle (Nottingham))

## STUDY 8 – the ministry of Paul to the GENTILES.

To say the least, anyone who was to be charged with the kind of responsibilities that God placed on Paul's shoulders, faced some abrupt and dramatic changes of both thought and lifestyle. The requirements of an apostle being what they were meant that it was all but inevitable that they should be chosen from among those of Jewish origin, and as Paul himself volunteered, he was the most Jewish of Jews.

It would be difficult to overstate the gulf of hatred that existed between Jews and non-Jews, especially in matters religious. Many are said to have thanked God daily that they had not been born a woman, a dog or a Gentile; others went further still with this absurd intolerance, to the outrageous extent of affirming that God had only created Gentiles for the purpose of fuelling the fires of hell.

The apostles, or any other servants of God for that matter, should never be seen as His convenient pawns, to be used and discarded, without consideration for their own eternal good. We have already seen how God so worked in Peter that the form of his personal growth in maturity was caused to coincide with that which was of particular benefit to the requirements of the gospel's progress.

In a similar way, the dramatic reversal of attitudes towards the Gentiles, whose inclusion in His kingdom God intended, was both mirrored and shown possible in the staggering changes that He worked in Paul (see 1 Timothy 1:12-16).

So remarkable is Paul's ministry, both as to its origins and performance, that it prompts serious questions about the kinds and levels of motivation that proved sufficient to sustain it.

What Paul wrote to Timothy in the passage just referred to, along with a number of similar such statements, attributes everything that he either attempted or achieved, squarely onto the grace of God, and his amazement that one such as he should be the recipient of it. It is surely reasonable to conclude, though without any of the negative connotations often associated with the words, that Paul was obsessed with, and possessed by, grace.

### **PAUL EMPHASISES GRACE**

2 Corinthians is as close as we will ever come to finding Paul's autobiography, and in passage after passage he demonstrates that God's grace is "sufficient for him", whatever the circumstances in which he has found himself. Even when he is reluctantly provoked into 'boasting' it takes the form of praise for that glorious grace that has carried him through a catalogue of dreadful circumstances, which few others would have been prepared to endure for any cause (2 Corinthians 11:21-30).



Both during his lifetime and subsequently, people's responses to the personality of Paul have tended to extremes. He has seemed to prove, in practice, a character difficult to read objectively; on the one hand he has been all but deified, on the other hand, demonised.

Paul was nothing if not plain-speaking; he had neither time nor patience for sophistry or its practitioners – see 2 Corinthians 4:1,2 and Colossians 2:4. On the face of it that makes him ill-equipped for effective communication with a world dominated by Greek patterns of thinking,

yet his experience as a Pharisee may well have exposed him to processes of thinking that were no less convoluted, for all the fact that they were steeped in legalistic Judaism. Whether that is so or not, the 'mind transformation' of which he writes in Romans 12:1,2, being that which truly appreciates the quality of God's mercies, and corresponding with the mind of Christ implanted through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, was that on which he relied for both method and message in his preaching. It is worth remembering that when we read the word 'mind' in Paul's writings, it translates one word which does double service, for both intellectual reasoning and attitude or demeanour (see Philippians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16).

Having said that, we should never come away with the impression that there was anything lacking in Paul's educational or intellectual credentials; if those were to be that criteria for our estimation of him, he thoroughly deserves to be ranked highest among the world's theologians. Yet sharp and penetrative as his mind was, he never depended on that for the force of his argument. We have seen this before in the case of his dispute with the Athenian philosophers, and the letter to the Colossians is, as we shall see in a future article, a model of restraint in its refusal to become entangled in the knots of speculative philosophy being woven by his opponents, so that at all costs those faithful Christians, for whom he had his greatest concern, should be spared the unedifying spectacle of 'great minds' as it were 'slugging it out'.

Likewise in writing to the Corinthians he pointedly, yet without condescension, demands that they follow him in regarding true wisdom as the pursuit of that which is inspired by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:16). While he was more than capable of demolishing most, if not all, intellectual pretentiousness, he was also wise enough to recognise that that would often simply be to 'win the battle and lose the war'. Intense faith in God's all-powerful grace, wisdom and provision in Christ was, to him, a force with which no amount of reasoning power could begin to compare. The power that was adequate and effective for the demolition of strongholds and pretensions was nothing if not divine in his estimation (2 Corinthians 10:1 –5).

### **PAUL'S APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY**

Paul made a great deal of his apostolic authority and did not hesitate to invoke it when that was what the circumstances required. A considerable proportion of the first two chapters of the letter to the Galatians is devoted to just that end. Was that then because he was unsure of himself, or feeling in defensive need of the means of self-justification? Not a bit of it; the whole course of his defence of his apostleship is first of all in terms of its origins in God's revelation, and then secondly, in vivid consciousness of what was at stake, that if any disrespect was intended towards him personally, it should not be allowed to diminish the regard in which the true gospel of God was held.

As God-provided for and appointed, Paul equally recognised the aims, scope, effectiveness and methods of his ministry as God-directed. Obligated as he declared himself to be to "Greeks and non-Greeks, wise and foolish" in Romans 1:14, that was simply because he knew that he carried in his hands that which is "...the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." He knew and acknowledged with equal humility that he had this treasure in a "jar of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7). As God's fellow-worker Paul taught, implored, chastised, explained gently, demonstrated, sacrificed, persisted in the face of devastating opposition and hardship, reasoned with the reasonable and stood firm in the face of the hard-headed and hearted, was regularly misrepresented and slandered and then, regardless, preached the word in season and out of season, whenever, wherever and to whomsoever he had the opportunity of doing so. Why? How? It would be as well to let him answer that for himself, don't you think? 1 Timothy 1:12-16 is worth another look and Ephesians 3:1-13, Romans 11:13, 2 Corinthians 3:7-18, 1 Corinthians 9:22 all deserve careful reading.

If we have read, studied and understood Paul's ministry with any sensitivity to what it has to say about that to which God has called every one of us, his words to Timothy, at the time of his 'departure' ought to weigh heavily in our consciousness, and especially so the instruction to "discharge all the duties of your ministry" (1 Tim. 4:1-8).

# STUDIES IN GENESIS 9

(Ian S Davidson, Motherwell)



This short series on Genesis makes me realise that there is so much in the great book. I am not surprised, therefore, that some commentaries run to nearly 800 pages. Very few have really done the book justice.

Agatha Christie is a well-known author of murder and suspense. In each book the plot always thickens until the criminal or criminals are exposed in the final chapter. We do not need to read the final chapter of

Revelation to discover who is the villain of the Bible. He is revealed in the third chapter of the first book! Satan is his name and sin brings him fame. Actually, he is not famous at all, but infamous. He is the one behind all the real troubles in the world like greed, hate and war. He is the one out to destroy all the plans and purposes of Almighty God. He is crafty, sly and cunning. He is also the murderer in the whole story, which is not fiction, but fact. Indeed, Jesus said of Satan on one occasion: **"He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him"** (John 8:44). Jesus spoke the truth on this matter because He is The Truth, The Way and The Life (John 14:6).

In Genesis chapter 3 we read these words: **"And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life: and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"** (14,15). I see here a promise fulfilled in Jesus. He is the one, born of a woman, who would engage in mortal combat with Satan and emerge victorious.

Satan knew the Messiah was coming one day and so did everything in his power to prevent His being born into the world. He pulls out all the stops again and again and comes close on numerous occasions. He wages war with the seed of Adam, the seed of Shem, the seed of Abraham, the seed of Isaac, the seed of Jacob, the seed of Judah, the seed of David, and so on. The Old Testament contains many a cliffhanger, believe me. (The account in Esther is a case in point.)

## GENESIS 49

I like Genesis chapter 49. From Jacob's prophetic utterances, Satan knows that the tribe of Judah is critical to God's plans. We read: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (10). Shiloh means "The One Who Brings Peace". It is no surprise to me, therefore, that, in future, God protects the tribe of Judah. It even survived exile in the land of Babylon. Jacob also spoke of Judah as **"a lion's whelp"** (9a). It is interesting to note that Jesus in the book of Revelation is described as **"the Lion of the tribe of Judah"** (5:5).

Thanks be to God that Judah and Benjamin did not face the fate of the ten-tribe

kingdom in the north. The Assyrians took this kingdom into captivity, and we know the rest. Judah survived as Judea. And it was in Judea that Jesus was born – Bethlehem of Judea to be precise. Of course, not long after Jesus was born, Satan tried to kill Him. The death of the innocents at the command of Herod is one of the saddest and most tragic events recorded in the New Testament. Satan never gives up! Indeed, he is still at it.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The book of Genesis is a foundational book. It gives many answers to many questions. It deals with history a long time ago, but not millions of years. Many modern historical works are poisoned by evolutionism. Consequently, much of Genesis is regarded by many as mythological. Modern sceptics laugh at anyone who looks upon this great book as scientific, historical and true. But it is! It is part of the written revelation of God. No human being was present when God created the heavens and the earth. But the Bible tells us how it was done and, to me, it is all wonderful and marvellous. I am an unashamed creationist. I believe the Biblical record – all of it. The account of creation in Genesis makes sense to me. The many hypotheses of so-called scientific experts leave me cold. I have read Darwin. I have read Dawkins. I have read Zimmer. Dawkins, for example, has written: “It is absolutely safe to say that, if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I’d rather not consider that)”. This is not the voice of science, but atheistic fundamentalism. To me Dawkins’ recent book *The God Delusion* is just a rant. I enjoyed two of the books in response to it: “*Deluded By Dawkins?*” by Andrew Wilson and “*The Dawkins Delusion – Atheistic Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*” by Alister McGrath. Another book that has been published to please the anti – theists is: *God Is Not Great - The Case Against Religion* by Christopher Hitchens. In it, he rails against Jonathan Wells’ fine work *The Icons of Evolution*. And so the battle goes on. I know a lot of Christians who care not to follow these exchanges, but I think they should and keep up to date with the thinking on both sides.

I am on the side of God. I love Him. He is my Creator, Helper and Saviour. He is the power behind the universe and He is the power in me. I cannot live without Him. As Paul once said: “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). I cannot live without Him physically and I cannot live without Him spiritually. He is my everything; He is my all. Atheists, I think, are in trouble and are a troubled people. They must be because they oppose what is real and true. God is real and the Bible is true. They stand to theism and Christianity as darkness stands to light. Is darkness anything? Is blindness anything? Is unbelief anything but the repudiation of evidence?

The Bible starts with God and concludes with the grace of His Son. It assumes His existence: “In the beginning God... (Genesis 1:1a). This phrase was a good way to begin the book of Genesis and it is a good way to end this series of articles.

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*(I think that readers will, once again want to join with me in thanking Bro Ian for his efforts in this series on Genesis. Ian has been one of stalwarts of the SS for many years now and I’m delighted to say that he is willing to continue writing and for the immediate future will be freed from the ‘shackles’ of writing to a specific topic and will be contributing articles of his own choice. Editor.)*

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# If I Had My Life To Live Over

By Erma Bombeck — written after discovery of her terminal cancer

I would have talked less and listened more. I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained and the sofa faded.

I would have eaten the popcorn in the "GOOD" living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.

I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage.

I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.

I would have cried and laughed less while watching television and more while watching life.

I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there for the day.

I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment realizing that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.

When my kids kissed me impetuously, would never have said, "Later, now go get washed up for dinner." There would have been more "I love you's" ... more "I'm sorry's" ... but mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute ... look at it and really see it ... live it .. and never give it back.

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## QUOTES FOR LIFE

We must be the change we want to see in the world.

There's no traffic jam in the extra mile.

Don't let life discourage you; everyone who got where he is had to begin where he was.

10 rules for getting rid of the blues – go out and do something nice for someone else, then repeat 9 times.

I know what the future holds but I know who holds the future.



**QUESTION:**  
“Regarding Philip’s daughters who prophesied: would this imply that only unmarried females could prophesy in the Church?”



An interesting topic has been brought to my attention by a group of brethren who are studying the book of Acts, and I must admit that the question they have raised is one that I have never before considered.

The question is based on Acts 21:9, where we read that **‘Philip had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy’**. This is how the ‘Authorized Version’ reads. The rendering in the ‘Revised Standard Version’ is somewhat different. There we read, **‘He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophesy’**.

Their question is: **“Would this imply that only unmarried females could prophesy in the Church?”**

As you see, the verse reveals two significant facts about the four daughters of Philip.

First: They were ‘virgins’.

Now, the word *‘parthenos’* tells us not merely that they were unmarried. It reveals that they had *never been married*. This is the word that is also used to describe Mary, the mother of Jesus, in Luk.1: 27.

The use of the word ‘virgin’ *does not* tell us that it was their unmarried state that gave these four young women the authority, or the right, to prophesy – either in the Church or anywhere else, for that matter - but it *does* tell us something about their spiritual zeal and their commendable desire to serve their Lord.

Let me try to explain what I mean.

In 1st Cor.7: 34, Paul reveals that in the New Testament Church there were women who *chose* not to marry, in order to be able to devote themselves more fully to the service of the Lord. This was a purely voluntary act on their part, because there is nothing in the Scriptures to suggest that to remain unmarried was either commanded or even approved by the Lord. On the contrary, the normal state was marriage, as the Lord implied when He stated that, because God created male and female, a man should leave his parents and ‘cleave’ - (*‘kollao’* = be joined to) - his wife Matt.19; 4-6.

It is the fact that the daughters of Philip the evangelist *chose* to remain ‘virgins’ in order to be able to serve the Lord without being restricted by the inevitable responsibilities and duties of marriage, which reveals that their dedication was exceptional, because, in Jewish society, marriage was considered a sacred duty, so important that any man or woman who remained unmarried after attaining what was regarded as ‘marriageable age’, was looked upon as failing to achieve life’s purpose. Jewish teachers said that a man who did not have a wife was *‘less than a man’*, and was said to *‘diminish the image of God in the world’*.

Therefore, only in very special circumstances, and for a very special reason, would a devout Jewish man or woman remain unmarried. This is why, in 1st Tim.5: 14, Paul declares that the younger women should marry and become good and faithful wives and mothers.

There is also reason to believe that these ‘virgins’ - these women who, for religious reasons chose to remain unmarried – performed useful service in the life of the early Church. I have recently been reading the letters written by Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, during the two years of his governorship of the province of Bithynia, which would be about 103 A.D., and in Letter



10, paragraph 6, Pliny mentions that certain women whom the Romans described as '*ministrae*', were 'serving' among the Christians.

This does not mean that they had any 'official' role in the ministry of the Church. They were simply Christian women who gave help wherever and whenever it was needed, and in whatever way they could, and it reveals the wonderful spirit of fellowship that existed among Christians, in an age when, even in Roman society, there was no real care or concern for the poor and needy.

## No Ready-made Organisation.

We must bear in mind, that, in the first years of its existence, the Church had no regular, established or formal organisation. It did not come into the world equipped with a ready-made system of government. Several years passed after the Day of Pentecost, before the Holy Spirit, by means of the letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus, gave instructions for the appointment of Elders and Deacons, and directed that they should be appointed in every church (see Titus 1:5).

What could be more natural, therefore, in the years of the Church's infancy, before there were Elders or Deacons, than that the devout daughters of Philip the Evangelist should remain unmarried in order to dedicate themselves to helping their father in his work of preaching the Gospel and establishing congregations of believers? It is with this background that we should consider the second fact revealed about these four young women.

## Second: They 'prophesied'.

Incidentally, you may be interested to know that Eusebius, who lived in the 3rd century A.D, in his "Church History", quotes another early writer who states that the daughters of Philip '*were buried in Heirapolis, where Philip himself is buried. And they were 'prophetesses'.*

Now, many people struggle with that word '*prophesied*', because in the popular mind, it has to do with predicting, foretelling or forecasting future events. And *that* is a serious mistake, because amongst the Old Testament prophets there were some whose writings contained no predictions of future events.

The word '*prophetei*', which gives us the word 'prophesied' – simply means '*to speak forth*', and, when it is used in a religious context, it means '*to speak forth on behalf of God*'. All of the words in the family of words, 'prophet', 'prophecy' and 'prophesy', have to do with the act of 'proclamation' rather than 'fore-telling', so that the prophet was a forth-teller, rather than a fore-teller

If we look at the Hebrew words that are translated 'prophet', we find that he was one who spoke on God's behalf. This fact marks the difference between a priest and a prophet. Whilst the priest spoke from Man to God, the prophet spoke from God to Man. Or, again, the priest was the mediator on Man's side, whilst the prophet was the mediator on God's side.

Furthermore, the prophet was a man who spoke under divine compulsion. The message he delivered was God's message and not his own. I use the word 'compulsion' because, in the example of Jeremiah (ch.20; 7-9), we see that he found himself unable to contain the message God had given to him. He could not refrain from speaking. He had to speak because the message was like a fire in his bones.

Hence, the Hebrew word, '*nabi*', prophet, means '*to bubble up*', and it reveals that he was a man in whose heart the message 'bubbled up' so that he found that he had to speak, regardless of the consequences..

## Therefore:

- A 'prophet' was *one who* 'spoke forth' for God.
- A 'prophecy' was *the message* 'spoken forth' by the servant of God who spoke as he was given words to speak by the Spirit of God.
- And 'prophesy' denotes *the act* of speaking for God.



All of these words cover both *delivering* the message of God - (that is, preaching) - and *teaching* God's Word.

In the case of the daughters of Philip, we should understand that they were enabled to speak on God's behalf. They had been granted the gift of prophecy, and we should not be surprised at this, because, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter reminded his hearers that Joel had spoken of the coming of a time when: **"Your sons and daughters shall prophecy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams"** (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28).

The crucial question is simply this; where, and when, did the daughters of Philip exercise this gift of 'speaking forth'? Certainly they did not speak in the assembly, because even those women upon whom the Holy Spirit had bestowed spiritual gifts were not allowed to exercise their gifts when the Church met together. The rule that governed the conduct of *all* women in the Church is explicit. **"As in all the churches of the saints women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak"** (1st Cor. 14:34). **"I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent."** 1Tim 2:12. Note that the reason for this prohibition follows in the next verse. (These quotations are from the R.S.V.)

Of course, as I have indicated, this rule applies to the occasions when the entire Church comes together and there were no exceptions. But! There was nothing - THERE is nothing - to prevent a woman from teaching other women, or from teaching non-believing men, for that matter!

The conclusion.

Therefore, we conclude that these gifted daughters of Philip had dedicated themselves to the Lord's service and, in the early days of the Church's history, exercised their ability to '*speaking forth*' for God by speaking to, and teaching, other women. In so doing they contravened no law laid down by the Lord, but rendered perfectly acceptable service.

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## Our Deepest Fear

Our deepest fear is not that we are  
inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are  
powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness  
That most frightens us.

We ask ourselves  
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,  
talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you *not* to be?  
You are a child of God.

Your playing small  
Does not serve the world.  
There's nothing enlightening about  
shrinking  
So that other people won't feel insecure  
around you.

We are all meant to shine,  
As children do.  
We were born to make manifest  
The glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us;  
It's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,  
We unconsciously give other people  
permission to do the same.  
As we're liberated from our own fear,  
Our presence automatically liberates  
others.

*By Marianne Williamson.*

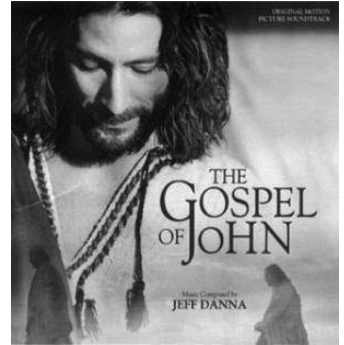
# Understanding the Life of Jesus

## Jesus washes the disciples feet.

(Robert Marsden, Wigan)

### Introduction

Last time in this series we looked at the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany and the deeply personal nature of that act by an extremely close friend. The raised Lazarus had been present at that supper and it was still the news of the raising of Lazarus from the dead that was dominating events around Jerusalem. Learning that he was in Bethany a 'great crowd' of Jews gathered not only to see Jesus but, more specifically, to see Lazarus – no doubt something of a celebrity by now so far as they existed in 1st century Jerusalem. Many Jews were turning to Jesus and believing in him to the extent that the Pharisees by this time were conceding that with news of this seminal event spreading amongst the people it was going to be harder than ever to put the genie back into the bottle so far as Jesus was concerned. **"You see that you can do nothing; look, the world has gone after him."**



It is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on some of matters that John records between the anointing of Jesus by Mary, an act that Jesus allowed as it reflected His worth, and Jesus act of humility in washing the feet of his disciples.

It seems that news of Jesus' actions had spread amongst some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for Passover because some of them approached the disciples asking to see Jesus. It is difficult from the record to establish whether it was to his disciples and this group of Greeks or to a more eclectic gathering of people that Jesus makes his final public statement about his mission and foretells the events that were shortly to unfold in Jerusalem. In this short but powerful narrative (12: 20 – 36) Jesus reaffirms many of the foundational truths of his mission:

- ❑ The Son of man is to be glorified (v23);
- ❑ It is necessary for Jesus to die for salvation (v24);
- ❑ He reaffirms that the Father's purpose will be fulfilled (v27);
- ❑ The Father, once again, testifies to His Son (v28);
- ❑ Satan, the 'ruler of this world' is to be defeated (v31);
- ❑ He (Jesus) is to be crucified and usher in a universal salvation (v32, v 36).

And then in a final statement of his identity, Jesus declares one more time his association with Father, that He is sent by the Father and doing the work of the Father. Over this series we have seen that at almost every opportunity throughout these 'events' that we have reviewed, Jesus has sought to establish this foundational truth.

## Jesus ‘loves them to the end’

From this point on the narrative once again takes a much more private and intimate course and I believe that we are now allowed a privileged insight into the way that Jesus prepared his disciples for the traumas that were shortly to unfold. It is of course significant that until this point whenever ‘the hour’ or ‘the time’ of Jesus has been mentioned it had always been in the context of that hour not having been arrived at or not ‘fully come’. We are though now in the final hours of the earthly life of Jesus and just as he had shortly before publicly stated that his hour had come (12:23), now in this private gathering Jesus acknowledges in his own mind (13:1) that his hour to depart had come. Love becomes the dominant theme of the actions and words of Jesus and the whole emphasis of these final moments with his disciples is encapsulated in John’s phrase that “he loved them to the end” (or to ‘the full extent’ as some translations prefer) – a love so overwhelming that it was to take him to the cross.

How can we best characterise the love and humility that Jesus shows to his closest confidantes? Even as the Son of God, the agent of creation, the Saviour of the world, the one who had come from God and was going back to God arose from supper, he knew that one of those whose feet he was about to wash already had it in his mind to perform the greatest act of betrayal that the world had ever known. Thankfully, and certainly as far as sinful mankind is concerned, the love of Jesus is unconditional. It wasn’t a case Jesus saying that because the disciples had loved him he would do what was expected of him. The actions of Jesus are not reciprocal – they are unconditionally those of a loving Saviour. But let us take this scenario a little further. Jesus has associated himself with God; he has said, and the Father has confirmed, that God’s glory is being revealed in Jesus; Jesus has said (5:19) that he only does “What he sees the Father doing”. There is nothing in this action of Jesus that is in conflict with what the Father would do and so in this act of servitude, even to his betrayer, we can know that God too is like this – a God of unconditional love and a God who too ‘washes feet’. Glory be to His name!

## Service in action



According to John it was love that motivated the actions of Jesus (v1) and his knowledge of his mission (v3). The actions of Jesus are those of a servant and the norm would have been for this type of role to be undertaken by a servant to his master, a wife to her husband or a child to its parents. The mechanics of the action that Jesus performed were straightforward enough. Jesus took off his outer garments, probably leaving himself clothed in undergarments (the normal dress for slaves when serving a meal), poured a basin of water, put a towel around his waist and proceeded to wash and then dry the, no doubt, dirty, dusty and, yes, probably even smelly feet of his disciples. It was normal for people to bathe before attending a formal meal occasion but of course in making their way to the meal the feet of the disciples would inevitably have become dusty and dirty. Even

though the actions of Jesus were extraordinary (in that he performed them), it seems that the disciples, with the notable exception of Peter, were quietly compliant in the process. Perhaps they were simply too astonished at the unfolding events to react in any kind of meaningful way.

In the ancient world slaves were looked down upon and the way that Peter reacts suggests that he cannot easily cope with the thought of his teacher doing the work of a slave. So, when Jesus approached Peter with the basin, he, perhaps the only disciple daring to reflect the general view of the group as a whole, asks Jesus, **"Lord, do YOU wash MY feet?"** (The emphasis is mine but reflects the emphasis on 'you' and 'my' that is consistent with the Greek text. Ed). Jesus rather enigmatically replied with words that effectively confirmed that he didn't expect Peter to understand his actions at this stage, following which Peter asserts, "You shall never wash my feet". Peter's reaction here reminds me very much of his reaction when Jesus first told the disciple of his impending suffering and death (Matthew 16: 21-23). Then Peter had said, **"God forbid, Lord. This shall never happen to you"**, and Jesus reacted by rebuking Peter and insisted that nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of his divine purposes. In this instance Jesus made an equally emphatic response by declaring a spiritual truth that was perhaps still lost on Peter and told him that unless he allowed his feet to be washed "you have no part in me". Some have interpreted this as indicating that the foot washing is to be seen as a type of baptism and that if Peter did not allow Jesus to wash his feet he would be excluded from the brotherhood of believers. Later, in his final discourse with his disciples, Jesus talked of the unity within the Godhead into which the disciples were enjoined and perhaps it is this unity that Peter would have no part of if he continued to resist Jesus. These are speculations, but whatever the real truth is, we can be sure that the foot washing had a far greater significance than that of a mere ceremonial washing. Jesus implies that the disciples are already 'clean' and it seems to me that even at this stage they are considered by Jesus to be in a saved state (see 17:2 where Jesus says to the Father, of those that he had given to Jesus, 'none of them is lost save the son of perdition'). At the very least, the example of given by the 'servant King' was nothing short of the finest example of the type of serving community that Jesus expected his disciples and future followers to become. Think about the words of Jesus to James and John after their mother asked Jesus to command that her sons should sit at his right and left hand in the kingdom. Jesus called James and John aside and told them, **"It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"** (Matt. 20: 26-28).

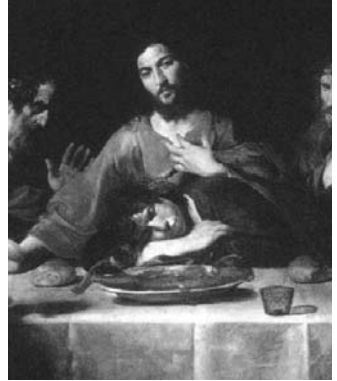
The example for a community for love

In typical Peter fashion he leaped from one extreme to the other when Jesus told him that if he continued to stand in the way of his purposes he risked losing everything. As eager as ever to demonstrate his undeniable love for his Lord, Peter went to the other extreme and exclaimed, **"Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"** It is on the back of this exclamation that Jesus reinforces the point about their spiritual cleanliness and then takes the opportunity to announce to the gathering that one of their number was 'unclean' and would betray him. Having

resumed his place at the table Jesus once again drew the attention of the disciples to the example of loving service that he had just demonstrated.

We can only reflect privately as to what impact this might have had on Judas and I do not intend to dwell on the issues that arise out of Judas's betrayal of Jesus. I think it is sufficient to say that Satan had a greater influence on the actions of Judas than did Jesus. It seems that Jesus answered John's question about the identity of the betrayer very quietly and without fanfare. When Jesus dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, he knew that the game was up and he slipped quickly away from the gathering leaving the majority of disciples questioning why he had left.

In this part of the narrative though I find one image to be particularly poignant especially as we know that these were the final hours that Jesus would spend with his disciples before his death. John (probably speaking of himself) records that, **"One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved (agape, spiritual love), was lying close to the breast of Jesus"** (v23). Jesus and the others at the meal would be in the normal position of reclining on their sides at the meal table. What a beautiful picture is painted here of the intimate friendship relationship and brotherly love between Jesus and those with whom, for three years, he had been through so much together. As Peter beckons to John to ask Jesus the identity of the betrayer, so, **"lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus"** (v 25) John asks him the question. It is no dispassionate, remote and disinterested Saviour that we have, but one who here again offers another blinding example of the human touch embodied in the divine presence.



We started this review of this incident by stressing the love of Jesus for his disciples and it is on that theme that we are compelled, by the sheer centrality of its importance to the message, to end. After Judas had left the gathering, Jesus referred again to his glorification – a theme that runs right through his final discourse. He reminded them of something that he had already told the Jews - that his departure was imminent, but leaves them with a glorious affirmation of what his glorification means for them. **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this means all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"** (v34, 35). How important is this statement? Well think of it like this. After three years of ministry, many acts of healing, all the disputes and debates with the Jews, all the words that had been spoken about his identity and the deeds performed in his name, at the impending parting hour, the most important command that Jesus gave to his disciples is simply this – you must love one another. Readers, the religious and indeed the Christian world is torn apart with disputations and opinions about so many matters. And yet amidst all of our searching for 'truth' the most compelling need in the Christian world today, as it always has been, is to follow the command of Jesus – that you love one another; show it in humility and service; and become a community of foot-washers.

# The Background to the Book of Job

(Rose M Payne)

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It is helpful to compare modern translations of this particular book with the Authorised Version because the language often puzzled earlier translators and the later ones can sometimes shed more light on the life and times of Job. It is supposed that he lived at about the same time as Abraham, or perhaps a little before that. He lived in the land of Uz (1:1), somewhere to the East (1:3) of the place where the book was eventually written. He is stated to have lived 140 years after his trials were over (Job 42:16), so he apparently belonged to those generations who lived soon after the Flood and whose lives were unusually long. Like Abraham, his wealth chiefly consisted of his flocks and herds (1:3), but Job presumably lived a settled life in a house, for his children certainly did (1:4).

For a man who remained in one place, Job possessed a large number of beasts of burden, namely camels and asses, so possibly he supplied them to travellers and merchants. This would account for Job enquiring of his friends if they have asked questions of travellers (21:29), which would enable them to find out much about other countries. Life was certainly not primitive, for Job was quite familiar with the idea of law courts and wished to put his case before God in such a place (9:32) (23:3-5). He also talked of the mining of metals. (Incidentally, a Bronze Age copper mine may be seen at Llandudno, which nicely illustrates his description in chapter 28:1-11.)

In chapter 9:5 & 6, Job declares that God moves mountains, and it is only recently that we have heard about the tectonic plates, which do indeed keep mountains very slowly on the move often accompanied by earthquakes. How could a man of Job's generation have known this, except by revelation handed down through his ancestors?

Job offered sacrifices himself (1:5), as did Abraham. There is no mention in the book of later developments such as the Law of Moses. The persons in the story do not refer to any scriptures, although they had a system of writing in that country (19:23, 24). Their way of learning about God was to inquire of the older generations who were still alive (8:8-10) (15:18), and those ancestors had lived long enough for information to be easily passed down from Noah and his sons. The Flood would have been a fairly recent memory and modern translations of the book contain several references to sudden floods (27:20).

In spite of not yet possessing scriptures, they were very well informed about the things of God. For instance the passage in Job 24:14-15 mentions murderers, adulterers and thieves, and the Ten Commandments as given to Moses also condemn these in the same order. Job knew of many ways of doing good to his neighbours (29:11-16) and things to avoid (31:5-40). In fact the principles behind the commandments were well understood, except perhaps keeping the Sabbath, although they apparently divided time into a seven-day week (2:13).

Evangelicals have queried whether Job really understood that he was a sinner like all mankind. Certainly his friends knew that no human being was perfect in God's sight (15:14-16), so presumably Job realised this too. But Job had made the proper sacrifices for sin and then served God with such diligence that the Lord himself had commended him (1:8). His conscience was as clear as any mortal man's could be.

Some Bible critics teach that religion evolved, and that mankind began by believing in many gods and monotheism began with the Hebrews under Moses. They even suggest that the Hebrews while in Egypt may have borrowed the idea from Pharaoh Akhenaton, who for a while

rejected the many animal gods of Egypt and worshipped the sun. The book of Job, on the other hand, shows that all the speakers believed in one God, and they did not need to talk of "our God" or "my God", for it was understood that there were no others. However, Job does mention that idolatry had already begun for (31:26-28) some people had started worshipping the sun and moon by raising their hands to them. In later times Pharaoh Akhenaton had simply returned to an older form of idolatry, but had not invented anything new.

It is also suggested that Job and his friends knew nothing of the after-life, and for that reason they expected to see rewards or punishments in this present world. However, there is more than one passage in which Job appears to be quite sure that there will be a resurrection, namely chapter 14:13-15 which reads (AV) **"O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee."** There is also (13:15) **"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."** There seems no point in these statements unless Job expected some kind of existence after death.

Another one is (19:25) **"For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."** At least one modern translation obscures this passage, so that it reads as if Job expected the Lord to appear on earth, while Job was still hanging on to life in spite of his skin disease, in order to prove his innocence in some kind of courtroom situation. But Job had already said (9:32, 33): **"He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."** "Daysman" is rendered as "Arbitrator" in modern translations. So Job appears to be speaking in chapter 19:25 of the advent of the Messiah and the final Judgment.

Job had never received any direct communication from God himself until the Lord answered him from a whirlwind (42:5), and then he realised that, even with his good understanding of the power and authority of the Lord, he had been unable to comprehend the reality.

Job was not, however, told of Satan's intervention in his affairs. None of the speakers directly attributes Job's sufferings to the work of Satan, although one of them, Eliphaz, claims to have been informed in a vision that there are such beings as fallen angels (4:18). It is left for the writer who copied out the book later to explain (2:6) that Satan was the cause of the trouble, insofar as he was allowed by God to afflict Job. But Job does realise that **"The earth is given into the hand of the wicked"** (9:24).

Job's friends' false interpretation of God's justice meant that they had no sympathy for anyone suffering misfortune, because they took it to be caused by sin. Likewise, it allowed them to be self-satisfied, imagining they must be better people than those who were so afflicted. Job was finally restored to prosperity in this world in order to demonstrate to them that he still enjoyed God's favour.

In the time of Jesus this question was still being asked (John 9:2). A man having been born blind, the disciples assumed that someone must have sinned. If his parents had sinned, why did the punishment land on their son, or how could the son have sinned before he was even born? It was God's justice being questioned again. Jesus explained that it was not a punishment for sin at all, but to demonstrate the works of God, which were way beyond the understanding of the disciples. He then restored the man's sight.

These lessons still have a modern application. Anyone inclined to ask "Why does God allow it" about some event could well profit from a reading of the book of Job.



## Obituary Sis. Mary Murdie

### Haddington, Scotland

The church at Haddington regrets to report the sad passing of sister Mary Murdie on 1st November 2007, in her 57th year, after a fairly long illness.

Mary was baptised into Christ on 5th March 1967 and was firmly faithful during each of the forty years until her death. She took a positive attitude towards her illness and even as the end came, she drew up her own funeral arrangements.

Mary will, of course, be a great loss to our small group (our fourth loss in recent months) and we shall miss her pleasing personality and lovely singing voice as much as her ready service and faithful example.

She was of good report locally, and this was reflected in the large attendance at her funeral in Edinburgh, ably conducted by Brother John Kneller, on the 7th November 2007.

**James R Gardiner**

## Sis. Barbara Draye

### Kelso, Scotland

The brethren in Kelso sadly report the passing of Sister Barbara Draye, a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus, who died on the 13th October aged eighty-eight. Born in Northern Ireland she had a lovely soft accent, which complimented her gentle nature. She was a quiet and reserved person who avoided the lime-light but diligently sought the truth. Her manner and way of life testified to her faith and endeared her to all who knew her.

A widow for ten years she was ably cared for by her daughter Helen, during the last few years, when her health began to fail. We commend her children, Helen and John, and all those who mourn her passing to our Heavenly father.

**John Kneller**

## Coming Events

### EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WORKSHOP

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

THURS 28TH AUG –  
SAT 30TH AUG, 2008.

*(More details to follow later)*

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