Scripture Standard

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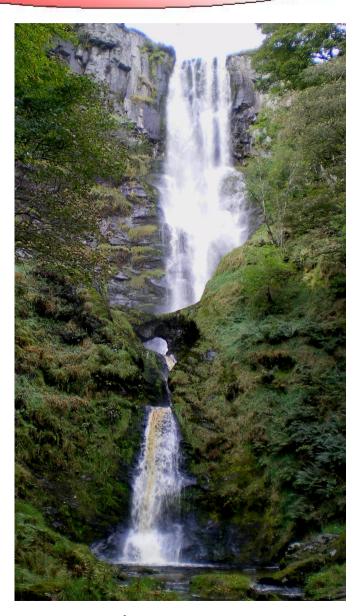
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Pistyll Rhaedar, Wales

Photograph taken by Jonathan Ashurst



A Living Water

J. Lee Roberts, Lubbock, Texas.

TO THE WOMAN AT THE WELL Jesus promises living water. John 4:10-13:

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. The water that I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

THIS PROMISE **from Jesus** comes from many Old Testament passages that speak of a NEW COVENANT, the coming of the Messiah with special blessings and the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Jeremiah 31:31-33:

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, declares the LORD. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts I will be their God, and they will be my people."

COMPARE 2 Cor.3:2-6:

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. 3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 4 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim

anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Jeremiah 17:13

O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.

Jesus' explanation in John 7:38:

"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

PROPHESIED IN:

Joel 2:28:

I will pour out my Spirit on all people...

Zechariah 13:1; 14:8,9:

On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity. ... On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem ... The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

Ezekiel 11:19:

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

TODAY LIVING WATER flows from those who are part of

God's new nation of priests and form His new Temple made of living stones. 1 Peter 2:4–10; 1 Corinthians 6:19: John 7: 38.

DOES THAT LIVING WATER FLOW FROM ME?

Right Priorities.

John Kneller - Tranent

Establishing proper priorities is important in every area of our life and especially so in our Christian life. Very often the pressure of daily life displaces our commitment to God's service. There is nothing new in this and the bible contains numerous examples of people choosing to put God first in their lives. Joshua's great challenge to Israel was, 'Choose you this day whom you will serve . . . as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord'. This is still as great a challenge to us as it was to them.

The prophet Haggai speaking to the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, charges them to establish proper spiritual and material priorities. It wasn't easy for them in Jerusalem. The temple needed rebuilding, the city was in a state of disrepair and the people who had moved into the area, during the captivity, opposed their plans. What was to be done first? What should be their priority?

Haggai tells us in chapter 1 that they decided to build their own houses first (v4 & v9) and wait for circumstances to improve before working on the temple. They said '*The time has not yet come to build the house of the Lord' v2*. It is easier for them, in the face of local opposition, to suspend work on the temple and concentrate on their own

homes and needs. When they do that, life is much easier for them. It is easier and less stressful to suspend their Godly work and not antagonise their neighbours. So they concentrated their efforts on their own homes to the detriment of the temple project.

Through the prophet God challenges them to be diligent in building the temple. He says in v4, 'Is it time for you yourselves to live in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins'? He also asks them to consider 'how they have fared' while they concentrated on their own homes. He says in v6ff 'You have sown much and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages, earn wages to put them in a bag with holes'. Put simply, Ignoring God's will was getting them nowhere. Jesus says in Matthew 6:31ff' your heavenly father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God...'

We will find it is much easier to get on with a lot of people if we don't let our Christian principles get in the way! To remain on friendly terms with them they require you to forgo your faith and neglect your salvation. It is equally true that other people will respect you because of your faith and principled life style. However we are not called to curry people's approval or disapproval but to please God. To do that we need to establish proper priorities in our life and put God and godliness first. The Jewish experience certainly contains a valuable lesson to help us on our Christian way.

Our bodies and lives are temples of the Holy Spirit. Is it a ruin or does it honour God? Paul exhorts us in Romans 12 v2:

'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.'

A Man of Action

Ian S Davidson

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were great Greek thinkers. Plato was a pupil of Socrates and Aristotle was a pupil of Plato. They have all been hugely influential in the field of philosophy. Socrates never left any writings, but we know of his thinking from the books of Plato. It is doubtful whether any philosopher has had more influence than Socrates. He is famous for the method of philosophy known as the dialectic - a method of seeking truth by a process of question and answer. Bryan Magee has written: "So he went around Athens raising the basic questions of morality and politics with anyone who would listen to him ... He would take some concept that was fundamental to our lives and ask, 'What is friendship?' or 'What is courage?' or 'What is religious piety?' He would challenge a person who thought he knew the answer and then subject that answer to examination by asking the person a series of searching questions about it."

Eventually, Socrates was put on trial on charges of corrupting the young and of not believing in the gods of the city. He was found guilty by a majority decision and condemned to die by poisoning.

PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Plato and Aristotle are as famous as Socrates. There is a well-known saying that the whole of Western philosophy

is footnotes to Plato. Amazingly, the works of Plato have survived intact. His best-known book is that entitled *Republic*, which is chiefly concerned with the nature of justice. Plato's house was known as "Academy" and it was from there he taught grown-up pupils. The doctrine for which he is best known is his theory of Forms or Ideas. To him, everything in this world was a decaying copy of something whose ideal form has "a permanent and indestructible existence outside space and time" (Magee).

Aristotle saw things differently from his famous master. He was interested in everything in this world. He was into logic, ethics, politics, metaphysics, psychology, physics, theology and meteorology. Alistair J Sinclair writes: "His output was truly prodigious. Apart from the writings that have come down to us. Aristotle also wrote a number of dialogues which have been lost apart from quotations and references to them ... He arrived at numerous insights, many of which changed western thinking for ever." Thomas Aguinas (1225-1274), the famous theologian. was the man who tried to reconcile Aristotle with Christianity. I am reminded of Tertullian's famous words: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" The apostle Paul's words also come to mind: "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom. a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began" (1 Corinthians 2:6-7 N.I.V.).

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

It was Aristotle who taught Alexander the Great. Alexander was not a man to sit around and think about things for too long. He was a man of action. I think he showed the world what a" get up and go" mentality could achieve, T.R.Glover in his book The World of the New Testament writes: "... while Aristotle speculated, Alexander was in fact so acting as to change the face of the world and to make the city-state a mere anachronism ..." Alexander would have agreed with the following statement: "Man is intended to be more an active than a contemplative being." Alexander has a lot to teach us Christians on the subject of activity. Alexander not only "talked the walk," but "walked the walk." For example, it is said he founded seventy cities. One of them is the famous Alexandria in Egypt, where the Septuagint version of the Bible was translated into Greek from the Hebrew in the second century BC. Alexander's achievements are truly staggering - and he died at the age of thirty-two or thirty-three!

CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY

Jesus is a greater than Alexander. He too died young. But, of course, He is now alive and well and reigning from heaven. I have noted these words: "The duty of the Christian is not to sit in a study and weigh arguments, but to live the Christian life in the dust and heat of the world. In the end it is not intellectual cleverness, but conduct and character which count." On judgement day, Jesus will not say: "Well said, thou good and faithful servant," but "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21a, 23a). There is no greater example than personal example and Jesus is our example in all things. Peter said of Him:

... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him. (Acts 10: 38).

I rejoice that Jesus was willing to leave the glories of heaven and come and live in an unfriendly world and die that we might live. He gave His all. In return, we must give our all for Him. How many of us live and preach as though the whole cause of Christ depends upon us? Surely, the cause of Christ is worth living for and dying for!

Anna the Prophetess

Rose M. Payne

As is usual in the scriptures, the brief details about Anna in Luke 2:36-38 convey quite a lot of information. It tells us that she belonged to the tribe of Aser or Asher, which was one of those in the northern kingdom of Israel. Those tribes were sent into captivity in Assyria by Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17:618,23) and remained there, so some ancestor of Anna presumably decided it was better to leave his own tribe and migrate to the kingdom of Judah in order to worship the true God.

A prophet or prophetess was a person to whom the word of the Lord was sent. Only a very few women were called prophetesses, and those such as Miriam and Deborah had lived in much earlier times. Anna was eighty-four, which was evidently remarkably old for those times. She had been unfortunate enough to be widowed after seven years of marriage and probably had no children. If so, according to Deuteronomy 25:5, she should then have been married to her late husband's brother, but evidently this provision had not worked for Anna. Perhaps there was no brother. She would have found life very difficult as an elderly widow and indeed she may have been living on charity. Paul has such a person in mind when he writes

(1 Timothy 5:5) "Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day."

Anna may well have been named after Hannah, who in 1 Samuel gave her son to serve the Lord in the tabernacle at Shiloh. Anna devoted her own remaining years to serving in the Temple herself "with fastings and prayers night and day". She was living on the premises but, as a woman, she would not have been able to enter the inner courts. The authorities were probably not at all happy with the idea that the word of God should be revealed to an impoverished old woman rather than to themselves, and so disregarded what she said.

It would have been an everyday occurrence for a couple to come to the temple to make the usual sacrifice for their firstborn son, as set out in Leviticus 12, when the baby was 40 days old. But one day, as related in Luke's gospel, the Holy Spirit prompted a devout man called Simeon to be in the temple to speak to certain parents who came to bring their child, namely Mary and Joseph, and foretell the great future awaiting this particular infant (Luke 25-35). Anna also came up at this moment and confirmed the fact that this was indeed the promised Messiah.

Anna now had a new message for all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. These would have been the ordinary people who hoped for the coming of the Messiah, for the rulers were anxious not to provoke any trouble with the Romans (John 11:48) Anna's great news was somewhat along these lines: "The Messiah has come at last! He is now a little baby, but wait until he is grown up, and then you will see and hear great things!"

When Jesus did begin his ministry, there must have been a number of elderly people who still remembered Anna's prophecy and also Simeon's, and who had maybe heard the shepherds telling of their vision in the fields and how they searched Bethlehem to find a baby in a manger, or the other wonderful things of that time.

Nathanael (Bartholomew)

Jonathan Ashurst, Byron, GA

"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" John 1:47

Nathanael, also called Bartholomew, was one of Jesus' twelve apostles (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:14, Acts 1:13). He was introduced to Jesus by his friend Philip, who would also become an apostle. The first chapter of the gospel of John describes their initial meeting:

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46 And Nathanael said unto him. Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel. 50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51 And he saith unto him, Verily,

verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

We see several important lessons in this conversation between Jesus and Nathanael. First, we should be careful not to make judgements about someone based on his background. Nathanael was shocked that a man from Nazareth would claim to be the Messiah. As *The Pulpit Commentary* notes, "Nathanael may have known of its [Nazareth's] mediocrity, and have been startled by the possibility of a carpenter's son, in a spot utterly undistinguished, being the Messiah..." (*Volume 17: Gospel of John,* p.39). Wherever you live, I am sure that you know of prestigious areas and poor areas. We should keep in mind that God often uses people from humble backgrounds to accomplish his purposes (1 Samuel 16:7, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

Second, we should emulate Nathanael's honesty. Despite his initial doubt and prejudice, Nathanael was a very honest man. When Jesus first saw Nathanael, he exclaimed: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47) Jesus knew that Nathanael had a truthful and transparent character. The common expression "what you see is what you get" was true of Nathanael. He was definitely not a hypocrite.

Third, we should honour Christ for his involvement in our lives. Nathanael was surprised that Jesus already knew his character. He asked, "Whence knowest thou me?" (v.48)Jesus explained that he had seen Nathanael under the fig tree before Philip called him. Perhaps this fig tree was a secret place where Nathanael spent time alone praying. Whatever was special about the fig tree, this

statement convinced Nathanael that Jesus was indeed the prophet that was to come. Nathanael confessed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."(v.49) In the same way that Jesus knew Nathanael, God knows and cares about each one of us (Psalm 139).

Nathanael (Bartholomew) went on to see many great things as he followed Jesus. From this apostle, we can learn to avoid prejudice, to be honest, and to praise Christ for his involvement in our lives.

Note: Jesus told Nathanael that he would see "heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:51) As *The Pulpit Commentary* explains, "The dream of Jacob is manifestly referred to - the union between heaven and earth, between God and man. He, 'the Son of man,' is now on earth to commence his ministry of reconciliation." (pp.41-42) Jesus' purpose for coming to earth was to reconcile God and man (2.Corinthians 5:18).

Commentary information:

The Pulpit Commentary, Volume 17: Gospel of John, edited by Spence, H.D.M., and Exell, Joseph S., and published by WM.B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950.

Faithfulness - A Joy

Andrew Sharp Easthouses

Beloved, it is believing faith, that has brought us to know the Lord Jesus and salvation. We are earnestly exhorted to keep the faith. The scriptures evoke this sentiment to all its readers. One must be faithful to the gospel, the church, and Christ. These are the rudiments of Christian living. We need to be strong in the faith, as assuredly, the 'Evil One' will always try to thwart our endeavours, given a chance.

Reliance on God, Christ and the Spirit will help us through everyday living, if we let him. We need to be faithful in our worship, prayer and praise. It is noted, Christ has promised to help us in times of need. He is faithful.

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the Fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. (Cor.1:9)

Beloved, a faithful supporter, in whatever sphere, is highly prized, often praised, and regarded in high esteem. In scripture, we see noted some of the faithful who were blessed. Paul the Apostle was blessed, he turned from sinner to saint, after meeting the Lord. He, truthfully could say:

I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. (1 Tim 1:12)

It was said of Timothy, that he was faithful.

Paul sent him to the work saying, that he speaks the truth and was faithful in all things. (1 Cor. 4:17)

Faithfulness, beloved, brings its own rewards. To those who serve, blessings in various forms.

The Bible of course, is full of characters that were faithful to the gospel of God, Christ and the Spirit.

Abraham of old is mentioned at Gal. 3 verse 9: so then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Be thankful, beloved, that we are of the faith, and truly faithful to the gospel.

One of the most upright and faithful men must be Daniel. He passed through many trials and tribulations that were set about him. He was faithful to God, but gained enemies for it.

Presidents and Princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the Kingdom, but they could find no occasion, no fault, for as much as he was faithful, neither was there any fault or error found in him (Dan. 6:4)

Beloved, oh to be a Daniel!. If honest, I don't think we could ever have the strength of such a man.

Today, in many, faithfulness is in decline, both in worldly, and spiritual terms. As individuals in Christ we must strive to be faithful in all things. So be it!

PERSONAL FACTS ABOUT GOD James Neil

Scripture is very specific about a lot of things when it comes to telling us about God ... especially when it concerns his will towards us.

Also contained in scripture are a lot of personal facts about God himself and contained in this information are a number of things which God will not do, the first and foremost of these being that God will not tolerate false gods.

Exodus 20:3-5 ... God says ... you shall have no other gods before me ... do not make for yourself any carved images or any likeness of anything in heaven ... or anywhere else ... do not bow down to them or serve them ... for I the Lord your God am a jealous God.

Jesus is recorded in Matthew 23:9 ... as saying: "Do not call anyone on earth your father, for one is your father, he

who is in heaven." Now Jesus is obviously speaking in a spiritual sense and not saying that our 'dad' should not be called father because he himself uses the word in an earthly sense on numerous occasions and God himself gives as a command "honour your father and mother"

So from God's mouth we are told that it is sinful to put anything before him ... it is sinful to make images and genuflect before them ... and yet ... there are those who do bow to graven or carved images which are supposed to represent a variety of persons from scripture often given the title ... and in the wrong context....as "saints" ... and some will refer to clerics as "father" in a spiritual sense, but ... let us not get complacent ... remember that it is sinful to put anything before God.

God will not tolerate His enemies ... Who or what are Gods enemies?according to scripture they are easily defined as being those who disobey him. Titus 1:16 speaks of people who profess to know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient and disqualified from every good work...

Notice that the word "abominable" is used here in such a way that it shows how all sin is abominable to God. Why do I say this? Well. Think for a moment what is meant by 'deny him.' What does it mean to "deny God"

Peter denied Jesus by word of mouth ... Matthew 26:72 "... I do not know the man."

Are we not told in Titus 1:16 that it is just as surely denying God to claim to be his child and then behave in such a way that we bring discredit upon him and ourself?

The Beatitudes (1)

Matthew 5:1-12

Derek Daniell

"When Jesus saw the crowd, He went up on the mountain, and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened his mouth and began to teach them, saying ..." Matthew 5:1, NASV.

Both John the baptiser and Jesus came preaching, saying "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand", Matthew 3:1-2; Mark 1:14-15. Jesus begins this sermon with eight beatitudes, which speak exclusively of the spiritual qualities of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven. There is no mention of the things that concern the world - material wealth, social status and worldly wisdom, This sermon was to be an invitation to a spiritual revolution. The "blessedness" of these qualities is different to the thinking of the world and would not occur naturally as success in this life. We learn that the kingdom of heaven is not open to the self-righteous or self-assured but to those who seek first His kingdom and righteousness and the abundant life offered to us by Jesus, Matt 6:33; John 10:10. The kingdom of heaven is not to be obtained by the mighty or wise but by those willing to yield themselves as servants of Jesus, 1 Cor. 1:18-31.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3. The poor in this beatitude (meaning to be enlarged or happy) is not speaking of economic poverty but of those who have a sense of their spiritual destitution. We must see our need of and dependence upon God. When we have this kind of spirit we will realise that we cannot impress God. This will keep us from the sin of pride, Psalm 51:17. Consider the

example of the Canaanite woman whose faith the Lord commended, Matthew 15:21-28: The word "poor" can be applied to the plea of the tax collector who prayed, as he beat his breast, "God be merciful to me a sinner" in contrast to the proud boasting of a self righteous Pharisee, Luke 18:9-14.

"Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted" Matthew 5:4. The word mourn means "to bewail, lament, mourn for" and describes the tears of laughter, Luke 6:21. There is some sorrow that must be embraced, not because it is inescapable and the struggle futile, but because true happiness is impossible without it. When we mourn over our sin when we know we have offended God we will have the joy of salvation 2.Corinthians 7:10. cp. Ecc. 7:2-4. This grief comes to us by choice, not necessity, but Isaiah foresaw that the Lord's anointed would come to, "heal the broken hearted" and "comfort all that mourn" Isaiah 61:1-2. Ultimately, God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. There will be no more mourning, Revelation 21:4.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" Matthew 5:5. Meekness is not weakness for Jesus, the Son of God is "meek and lowly in heart" and was "meek" because of His great power over all things in heaven and on earth. Meekness is not indifference to evil. Jesus endured with much patience the assaults made on Him, but He was strong to defend His Father's name and will, hating iniquity and loving righteousness Hebrews 1:9. Moses is mentioned as the meekest of men, Number 12:3 and showed his strength in his weakness.

We demonstrate our meekness when we have the attitude of Christ Jesus in esteeming others better than

ourselves and submitting ourselves as servants of God Philippians 2:1-8. It is the meek who will inherit the earth.

(To be continued)

DANIEL 9: 24 "70x7 ARE DETERMINED"

By now churches of Christ in Eire and the UK should have received A2 size sheets of these charts. If your congregation has not received one please let me have the congregation's postal address.

A2 and A1 PDF files can be downloaded. www.eusebos.eu/pdf. These may be printed but should not be sold for profit. "freely ye have received freely give." (Matthew 10:8).

The state of the s

Daniel and Artaxerxes' Decrees - Part 1 - Ezra 7:25-26. Allan Ashurst

In Daniel 9 (KJV) v.25 "determined" (CHATAK) stipulates 70x7 [years] - exactly 70x7 years with no gaps, in v.25. "restore" (SHOWB) tells us that, as well as being rebuilt, Jerusalem had to be restored to being again the centre from which the Law of GOD was to be administered to the whole nation of Israel. Artaxerxes' decree was the only one requiring this to be done.

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Questions warranting a larger audience might be printed in the Scripture Standard. But the questioner's name will not be disclosed.

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