

# 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...

**"But the word of God is not fettered."**

Paul, the apostle, was in prison when he wrote those words to Timothy, his young protégé in the faith. It came as part of a letter that Paul wrote to him that was designed to bolster and strengthen Timothy's faith and to remind him of the real blessings of his relationship with Christ. "Do not be ashamed of testifying to our Lord"; "Follow the pattern of sound words I have taught you." "Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you." "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." All words that Paul uses in recognition of the wonderful truths that he had embraced during his work of ministry for Jesus and that he was determined to pass on to Timothy.

We live in a society where it sometimes seems that if a switch could be thrown and all reference to Christian principles abandoned, the majority of people would be happy. That those principles of living that Jesus taught us that perhaps, just sometimes, gnaw at the conscience, could be put back into the box and forgotten, never to trouble people again.

But thankfully Jesus and his gospel quite simply won't go away. In terms of eternity to speak of 2000 years of witness being a long time is a nonsense, but the reality is that 2000 years after the death of Jesus a significant body of people are still determined to carry the torch and express their love for, and commitment to, God and His Christ. Sometimes it doesn't seem this way, and in some societies it is at the expense of enormous personal danger and physical threat, but the gospel, the word of God, is not fettered. Paul was in prison sure enough; he was trussed up and restrained like a criminal; his personal liberty to preach the gospel was impaired; but he still retained a massive determination to make sure that the message of saving grace was put before those who needed to hear it, and reinforced to those who had already accepted the gospel and needed to remain faithful. "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory."

Through our determination to work together with, and support, our fellow Christians, and in our attempts to bring others under the sound of the gospel and into the family God, we too can play our part in keeping alive the gospel of redeeming love, so that even today in a skeptical and irreligious society, it can be truly said: "But the word of God is not fettered."

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# STUDIES IN GENESIS 4 ~ THE FLOOD

(Ian S Davidson, Motherwell)



The flood is an unforgettable event in the history of the world. In all, it lasted 371 days. Indeed, a number of writers see the flood and the incarnation as the two most outstanding events of Divine interposition in the affairs of the world. I think they are right.

## NOAH

Noah is no fictional character. Jesus believed in him (Matthew 24: 37,38). So did Peter (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5) and the Hebrew writer (11:7). Both Jesus and Peter also refer to the flood (Matthew 24: 38,39; 1 Peter 3: 20,21; 2 Peter 2:5 & 3: 5,6). We read: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8) and "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God (6: 9b). The Hebrew word for "grace" is *chen* and for "just" it is *tsaddiq*. This is the first time these words are used in the Old Testament and they are used of Noah.

Noah saved himself and his family by building an ark. He saved a lot of animals too. He tried to save a lot more of his fellow human beings, but to no avail. Peter clearly reveals that he was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2: 5). All Noah's pleas fell on deaf ears. And no wonder, because we read that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). In other words, the people then had no time for goodness. They were bad all the way and all the time. Truly, they deserved the punishment God brought upon them.

## THE ARK

The ark was like a floating barge. It was approximately 438 feet long, 73 feet wide and over 43 feet high. Therefore, the total volumetric capacity of the ark was 1,400,000 cubic feet, which places it well within the category of fairly large ocean-going vessels today. There is no doubt that there was room for, say, 75,000 land animals (large animals probably represented by young) and approximately 1,000,000 insects. It could well be that many of the creatures on entering the ark "settled down for a year-long 'sleep' in their respective 'nests' in the Ark" (Morris). In short, Noah and his family had a floating zoo with them. It must have been quite an experience for all the family.

I much admire the writings of John C. Whitcomb. In his book *The Early Earth* he writes: "The enormous size of this flat-bottomed, square-sided barge really settles the question of whether the Book of Genesis intends to teach the concept of a universal Flood; for such a structure would not have been needed for saving animals through a localized flood situation. In fact, there would have been no need for an ark at all, for Noah's family (to say nothing of the animals) could easily have been directed by God to migrate to some region unaffected by a local flood. Since God does not give men commands that are foolish and unnecessary, we may be sure that

the ark was essential for the survival of air-breathing creatures through this great, year-long catastrophe". (Whitcomb, together with his colleague, Henry M. Morris, were the authors of the famous work *The Genesis Flood*, which was first published in 1961 and has hardly been out of print since. I personally have read it through countless times. It is a book that truly changed my thinking on geology.)

## GEOLOGY

The geological implications from the universal flood are enormous. The flood caused tremendous erosion from rainfall; enlarged ocean basins; volcanic and seismic upheavals; unprecedented sedimentary activity; and the formation of fossils. All this is in contrast to the so-called Geological Time Table taught by many scientists today. They teach the Archeozoic, Proterozoic, Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic eras; and periods such as the Cambrian, Silurian, Devonian, Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous, Tertiary and Quaternary. They supposedly cover the period 1,800,000,000 years ago to 25,000 years ago. So we see that Flood Geology and Uniformitarian Geology differ completely. "The Biblical doctrine of the Flood cannot be harmonised with the uniformitarian theories of geology" (Whitcomb and Morris).

I met a gentleman recently who is studying geology at Aberdeen University in Scotland. He is being taught the usual uniformitarian stuff. I know some people who have lost their faith as a result of their being subject to the indoctrination of uniformitarianism and evolution. Tragically, these subjects are taught in the name of "science". There is nothing scientific at all about these theories. They are the atheist's way of trying to explain the existence of all things. Both of them are false and deserve rejection by all good Bible-believers.

## POPULATION

It is difficult to estimate the population of the earth at the time of the Flood. However, it has been conservatively estimated that the figure was not less than 1.03 billion. The number is based on a supposed population growth in the antediluvian world of less than 1.5% per annum. The figure is conservative because the present rate of world population increase is approximately 2 per cent per annum. Dear reader, think of all those people being washed away in the Flood and the few (eight souls), who survived because of the grace of God and the grace of His servant Noah.

## A DIFFICULT PASSAGE

We read: "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism also now saves us..." (I Peter 3:18-21a). The way I see this is this. God did not give these people a second chance. In other words, Jesus did not preach to them when He Himself went to Hades. But God did preach to them when they were alive – through Noah. Their spirits are now subject to imprisonment. They are in that section of Hades, if you like, reserved for the wicked. The departed righteous ones are in paradise or Abraham's bosom and there is a great gulf between them and the wicked (Luke 16: 19-31). Remember, "It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgement..." (Hebrews 9: 27).

# ASSURANCE IN THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

(Frank Worgan, Corby)

It is true that all the letters in the N.T. were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is also true that they vary a great deal both in their tones and in what they teach. You need only think of the difference between Paul's letters to the troubled, problem-ridden Church in Corinth, and the intimate, gentle tone of his letter to Philemon concerning the converted runaway slave Onesimus.

All of the letters are important and have something important to teach us, but I suggest that, if there is one letter which is more powerful than the rest it must be Paul's letter to the Romans, not merely because it is the longest letter in the New Testament, with 16 chapters comprising 433 vv. - (1st Corinthians also has 16 chapters but is 17 verses shorter) - but because the theme which runs through it is the problem of sin and the manner in which the grace of God has dealt with it.

- > In Chapter 1, after his opening personal greetings, Paul declares that the Gentile world has fallen into sin and has even denied the evidence of God's very existence, thus bringing it under His judgment and condemnation.
- > In Chapter 2, he points out the unpalatable fact, that the Jewish world is no better than the Gentile, because, although it possessed the law of God, it did not keep the law.
- > In Chapter 3, he therefore concludes that '*there is therefore no difference*' between Jew and Gentiles, "**all are under sin**", because, "**all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.**"
- > In Chapter 4, he continues to expand this theme, pointing out that it is impossible for Man to free himself from the guilt of sin. He cannot *work* his way out, and he cannot *merit* forgiveness. Forgiveness has to come through faith in the Grace of God.
- > Chapter 5 then opens with the well-known statement: "**Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**", and,
- > In Chapter 6, he describes the change that occurs when we become Christians: "**You were the servants of sin, but you obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine that was delivered to you, and, being made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness**".
- > Chapter 7 describes the experience of a man who is held in the power of sin and, in verse 24 he finally exclaims, "**O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord**".

We then come to what I believe is one of the most important statements in this letter – perhaps the most important in *any* of the letters - because it expresses the joy that we experience as Christians, and the assurance and confidence that we have in the knowledge that our sins are forgiven because we have entered into a right relationship with God through what Jesus has done for us.

## Chapter 8:1-2

**"There is therefore now no condemnation, for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, for the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death."**

The grand message these verses contain is the message that, as a child of God, your future is secure and you possess the Assurance of Salvation.

## Important Words

There are certain words in this statement, which need to be examined and emphasised: words that should be weighed: words to savour, in fact.

**“There is THEREFORE... NOW... NO CONDEMNATION... FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS...”**

These then are the words:

- THEREFORE
- NOW!
- NO CONDEMNATION.
- FOR THOSE IN CHRIST JESUS.

## 1st Notice the ‘Therefore’

Whenever in the scriptures you come across the word “*therefore*”, there is always a “*Wherefore*”. There is always a reason. Whilst “*Therefore*” announces a conclusion, “*Wherefore*” announces a consequence. It tells you *why* that conclusion has been reached.

Remember that in chapter 7, Paul has been discussing the problem we all face, that is, the problem of sin and its effects, and he makes that well-known statement in v.21: **“When I want to do good, evil is present in me.”** Almost the entire 7th chapter is painful to read because it reveals the terrible hold that sin has on every one of us. Paul even expresses what was his personal experience when he recognized himself to be a sinner, and he reveals the depth of his agony when, in v.24, he cries; **“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me...?”**

To expose the consequences of sin in our lives he uses a very graphic, horrifying illustration. It is an illustration that relates to a gruesome ancient practice with which his Roman readers were no doubt familiar. At one period in history, the corpse of a murderer’s victim was tied to the guilty individual so that he had to drag the dead body around with him as both a constant reminder of, and witnessed to, his crime.

In other words, the criminal was compelled to carry his guilt wherever he went because he could never escape from the rotting, foul-smelling corpse to which he was tied! Obviously, this was an exhausting and draining punishment! In fact, the word ‘*wretched*’ is the Greek word ‘*talaiporos*’, which describes someone who is exhausted through hard labour, so that what we have here is a *cry of anguish*; a *wail of agony*. Literally translated the text exclaims, “*Wretched man, I!*”

## The Divinely–provided Solution

But then, in verse 25, Paul reveals the solution. The agony turns to joy. **“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** And this is where the word ‘*Therefore*’ comes in!

Let me say that I think it is a great pity that the translators started a new chapter at that point, because the statement should have continued without interruption – without a break. Leave out the heading “Chapter 8” and read the letter as Paul wrote it. **“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”**

## 2nd Notice that word ‘Condemnation’

“No condemnation.” The two words mean “*no penal servitude*”. No sentence to be served.

If you look at vv 33-34 of the same 8th chapter – and you really should! – you will see that Paul *simply cannot let go* of this glorious fact: **“Who shall lay anything to charge of God’s elect? He is talking about you and me! We are God’s elect!**

But now listen carefully, because he then asks a rhetorical question – and you know that a rhetorical question is a question, which needs no answer, because the answer is obvious! **‘Shall God – who justifies?’** Then: **‘Who shall condemn? Christ – Who died? – Who rose again and is now at the right hand of God making intercession for us?’**

Do you understand what Paul is saying? This question – which is really a statement – says: When *GOD* justifies us, who can lay any charge against us? And if He does not accuse us who will dare to accuse us? Certainly *not* the Lord Jesus, *Who died for us; Who also rose from the dead, and Who is even NOW at the right hand of God as our Intercessor!*

### **3rd Ah! That word ‘Now’!**

This is emphatic! Positive! Notice the use of the present tense! Paul is not talking of something that will happen sometime in the future! Or, *‘in the sweet by and by!’* as the old hymn says! He is talking about something, which is *the present experience and possession* of every child of God – every Christian. He is speaking about the fact that there is, *at this very moment - Right NOW* - no sentence to be served by us, because, through the sacrifice and mediation of the Lord Jesus, we know that our sins are forgiven and we are justified before God and *by* God.

In a word: No-one can lay *any charge* against us, because God Himself justifies us. And no one can *condemn* us, because Jesus has died for us. And the Result? Look at v.37 of the same chapter: **“In all these things we are more than conquerors -** (‘over, over comers’, is what the text says), **- through the One who loves us”.** And, therefore: **“I am convinced that neither life nor death nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come... Shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

### **4th And who possesses this Assurance?**

Paul writes: **“Those who are in Christ Jesus”.** How do we get into Christ Jesus? Well, listen again to Paul when he writes to the Christians in Galatia, recorded in Gal: 3: 26-27: **“We are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus, for as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”.**

This often quoted – and misunderstood – statement declares that it is those who have come to be *‘in Christ Jesus’*, *according to the principle of faith, who are the children of God*, and they are the ones who receive the blessings. It does not teach that people become children of God *‘by having faith in Christ Jesus’*. It *locates* Sonship with God. It declares that this relationship is enjoyed by those whose faith has led them to *‘put on Christ’* – which means much more than claiming to believe in Him. And how do we put on Christ? **“For as many – (no more and no fewer) - as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”.**

Let us rejoice in the knowledge that God has **“blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”** Eph.1:3. And: **“In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”** Col.1:14.

But remember, also, how Romans 8:1 continues. Here is the one essential and logical conclusion: **“who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”**

So long as we walk ‘in Him’, our salvation is guaranteed and our assurance is secure.

# INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE FIRST CENTURY

(John H Diggle (Nottingham))

## STUDY 3 – THE CLASH BETWEEN JEWISH & GREEK CULTURES

**“Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom.”**

Paul was generalising of course but accurately so in terms of what was widely known to be characteristic of these two ethnic groups. In fact since Greece was essentially a federation of city and nation states, the term ‘Greek’ itself is something of a generalisation. Spartans, Athenians and Achaeans had distinct identities of their own and in some respects differed considerably from one another. For a considerable time the history of Greece had been one of internecine conflict and the fact of the coming together of such disparate cultures to become a single, identifiable and predominant force across the wider world, is one of the greater triumphs of unity in diversity.

### **Cultural overview**

We have seen in the first article in this series how Rome sufficiently admired the structures, culture and thinking of the Greeks that she were only too willing to incorporate them into those of her own empire when she succeeded Greece as the world’s superpower, rather than obliterate them. If Rome was the resultant empire’s might and muscle, its mind was still largely Greek.

Politics, democracy, philosophy and wisdom are not merely words of Greek origin in an etymological sense, but in that of conception too. Similarly, though the Greeks cannot be said to have invented logic, they were certainly at the forefront in developing coherent systems of synthesis and analysis.

It never was the purpose of these articles to be any kind of text on the strengths and weaknesses of the classical world, however. The object is to reflect upon those aspects of the predominant background that impinged on the development and progress of the early Church.

Without proposing any implication at all that the Jews were intellectually challenged, it was nevertheless the case that they were far less inclined to view religious matters in intellectual or philosophical terms than their Greek, or Greek-influenced peers. Nor is this simply a question of their relative inclinations towards mental athleticism. To the Greek way of thinking, matters of practical morals and ethics were to be derived from first principles, by process of logical deduction; a process that regularly began with speculative hypothesis and, via analysis and synthesis, was developed into a formal argument in favour of a particular course of conduct.

Jews generally took their moral and ethical direction from revelation, at least in theory, if not consistently in practice. They attributed inspiration to the movement of the Spirit of God and regarded it as carrying dynamic effect, on the basis of the words written in Genesis, “God said let there be... and it was so”.

In so far as Greeks were prepared to attribute inspiration to any source other than their own intellectual brilliance, it would be to the stirring of the various fates, furies, muses and demigods, depending on which sphere of thought was under consideration.

Consequently it came rather more readily to Jews than to Greeks to acknowledge the

authoritative validity of scripture and, unsurprisingly, this was at least a potential arena in which they might be expected clash.

At different stages of the Church's development it is evident from the New Testament that we must consider three different types of congregation – those that were entirely composed of converts from Judaism, those that were predominantly Gentile and those that were mixed in a variety of proportions. Jerusalem, Corinth and Rome are respective examples of each category. In addition to that, it increasingly became the case that the attention and allegiance of individual congregations was competed for, between factions, within and without, who sought to draw them, to their own credit, into the sphere of their influence and particular brand of spirituality. This was a dangerous and threatening development not only to unity but also to that concentration on faith in Christ that is its only legitimate foundation.

In its most sinister form then the clash between Jewish and Greek culture resulted in much more far-reaching consequences than the local spat between Grecian and Hebraic Jews recorded in Acts 6.

You may be beginning to feel that this material has, so far, been too remote from that which is a matter of scriptural record for your taste, but bear with me if you will because the implications of it proved to be profound, not only in the short or medium term, but for the Church of the second, third and subsequent centuries, right up to, and including, our own times.

Competitiveness for the attention, acknowledgement and influence over congregations had a tendency to push those who sought them to extremes of both rigidity and forcefulness of application in their teaching. It should be said that this was rather truer of Jewish than Greek culture, the latter taking not inconsiderable pleasure from the process of debate rather than arrival at any definite conclusion. Those Jews who loved to argue over fine legalistic points found a willing ally however in those Greeks who just loved to argue, whatever the topic. The letters to the Colossians, Timothy and Titus all contain references to this perception, that greater holiness and spirituality, or at least the reputation for them, could be won out of picking ever finer nits.

## **Alliances against Christianity**

It frequently became the case, as has been mentioned in the previous article that there was a significant willingness to set aside differences between themselves, for the sake of the formation of a more potent alliance against orthodox, pure gospel, Christianity. It is intended that Gnosticism should be the subject of a future contribution to this series and, as a form of teaching that had enormous repercussions for the "faith once for all delivered to the saints", it is worth noting that it was in this very form of odd alliance that it made its first inroads into the consciousness of believers.

Since it raised enormous doubts and objections to the truth of Christ's deity, a concept that large numbers of Jews also continued to have a vested interest in denying, it is possible to see how that encouraged the adoption of common ground for that common end, even though in most other respects there was little similarity of purpose between them. Although it was not only Greeks who were Gnostics, it became the force to be reckoned with that it did become, very much as the result of the Greek style of thought and logic described above.

Since it was largely in an effort to counter the influence of this Gnostic form of false teaching that John set down the factual record of God's truth both in his gospel and epistles, and that Paul wrote Colossians and part of the letters to Timothy, a significant proportion of the New Testament is coloured by this background and thus merits the kind of attention being given to it here, and to be given later.

Clashes then were not the only form in which relationships between Jewish and Greek culture affected the early Church. This example of making of common cause against it was



in some instances an even greater threat.

## Paul debates the resurrection

It would be a far from adequate treatment of this topic though to neglect reference to what was perhaps the most public of clashes between these two styles of thinking as they apply to spiritual and religious questions; I refer to the incident reported by Luke in Acts 17 between Paul and the Aeropagites inflamed largely because Paul "preached Jesus and the Resurrection". Once again this proves an instance in which rival groups of philosophers, Epicureans and Stoics, turned their mutual fire on a common opponent.

The purpose of assembly at the Areopagus, Mars Hill, named for the god of war and standing directly beneath the temple of Athena was chiefly indulgence in gossip and the pleasures of intellectual debate. It was a talking shop in other words, possibly somewhat similar to Hyde Park Corner, as a nursery for pocket philosophers and embryonic orators. Taken there by those with whom he had begun to dispute in the market place, Paul used the opportunity as one for preaching the gospel. In the course of his lesson he wisely connected what he had to say with what he had learned of his audience by observation and previous knowledge.

Greeks were renowned for the multiplicity of their gods, but, in common with the great majority of non-Christian religions, the relationship between man and god was one of almost craven fear. That is reflected in Paul's comment about the altar to the unknown god, against whose possible wrath they looked to protect themselves in case the deity had been unintentionally slighted for lack of a named shrine in its honour. Being very religious, and there is no hint that Paul was being at all sarcastic in saying as much to them, still amounted to little more than rather primitive superstition on their part. Again like the majority of non-Christian religions, they attributed what they were otherwise incapable of understanding, to the activities of gods whom they cultivated for the purposes of maintaining some semblance of contact between themselves and that which determined the course of life. Being a society that depended on agriculture and military might for its success, it should come as no surprise to learn that the majority of their gods were those who superintended the forces of climatic conditions and warfare.

There are not a few commentators who have expressed the opinion that this was not Paul's finest hour as a preacher; that he chose the wrong ground and the wrong style of presentation in locking philosophising horns with those better equipped for such debate than him. In my view, that is wholly unjustified criticism. In fact, the very opposite of the truth of the matter. It was the narrowness of their philosophy that meant there was an inability to find space within it for handling the notion of resurrection from the dead. Notice that this was a difficulty faced by some at Corinth too (see 1 Corinthians 15:12)

On this occasion, as on many others, Paul showed himself to be a model of sticking to the point, the truth that is the gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than wrangling over inconsequential points with those whose agenda seldom included arrival at any definite or binding conclusions. May that not be a lesson that we could do well to learn from him? In that light, the words of 1 Corinthians 15:13ff may well have even greater significance for the determination of what and how we preach than we already knew it to have - **"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures and that He appeared to Peter and then to the twelve."**

Go head to head with the philosophers if you want to; mix it with the evolutionists if you must; but if you are to be advised by Paul, it would probably be best to head quickly for the empty tomb. Dionysius the Aeropagite was convinced, along with a few others, and I tend to believe that there are still a few of his kind out there, even in our own hard-bitten times, who need to hear the **HE IS RISEN.**

# Understanding the Seasons of Life

## Lesson 7 - The Season of Waiting

(David Yasko, USA)

We finish our series on **Growing Through The Seasons Of Life** with the **Season Of Waiting**. "Have you ever felt like you were playing phone tag with God?" You know, you've made the call and left a message on his machine but you wonder if He is going to get back with you? There have been times where I felt like I was trying to wade through God's voice mail system. *"If you want a new job: press 1. If you want better kids: press 2."* Have you ever had your eye on something; maybe it's a new car, or a job or a husband or wife. And we're just not in the position to go out and get it. And we're praying about it, and God, in his wisdom hasn't said yes or no. God, in his wisdom has said, "wait." And that's why the season of waiting is so difficult. Because it goes against what we think is best for us. So how do we handle it and grow when God puts us in the season of waiting.

### WHY DOES GOD MAKE US WAIT?

I think that's a legitimate question. If God could create the world in six days, why do I have to wait 6 months to get a job? Doesn't that make sense? If God can do it all immediately, why do we have to wait? I think it's because of what waiting does to us. Something happens inside of us when we wait and God's uses that as a great tool for growth. In fact, let me show you three things waiting does in our lives:

- **WAITING RENEWS OUR STRENGTH.**

**Isaiah 40:31: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."** Have you ever run out of gas emotionally? Waiting is one of the ways God refills our tank. How would you like to run and not be weary? I'd just like to be able to run. How would you like to be able to walk and not wear out? How would you like to do things you never thought you could do? Waiting forces us to stop so we can do that. We were made to have seasons of waiting so we could recharge.

- **WAITING REFINES OUR CHARACTER.**

**Romans 5:3-4: "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us — they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us."** God uses a formula to do this. We have problems so we can learn patience and so that we can develop character. When problems come and when we respond with patience, God responds with strength of character. If we understand waiting like we should then we'll see God made the season to develop the positive side of our lives. So why wait? Because God loves us enough to want to develop us, not just give us what we want.

• **WAITING REFOCUSSES OUR PURPOSE.**

**James 5:11: "You have heard about Job's patience, and you know the Lord's purpose for him in the end."** Job was the gold medalist in the sport of waiting and his records still haven't been broken. On the other side of patience is purpose. After Job waited through those terrible times in his life, he found more blessing and purpose than he had ever had before. This makes sense. If God is going to help us better the direction in our life, first he's got to get us to stop. After he's stopped us he can get us going in a better direction so we can take advantage of the better blessings he has in mind for us.

The problem is: We want what we want when we want it. But God doesn't give us what we want when we want it. In the Old Testament there was a woman named Hannah who waited for children. The difficult thing about this was that her husband had another wife named Peninnah (Pen-eye-nah) who had children. And Peninnah wasn't very kind to Hannah. The Bible says that she "made Hanna cry so hard she couldn't eat." *I have never been that upset.* Now, how would that make you feel? You can't have children but your husband's other wife would look at you and say, "What about you Hannah, look at what I have and look at what you don't have." And this went on year after year. Peninnah had more children; Hannah had none. And Hannah would go to the temple and beg God to send children in her life. And she waited and waited and waited. And one day God answered her prayer and sent her a son.

Now let me tell you something interesting. The Bible doesn't tell us the name of any of Peninnah's children. We do know the name of Hannah's son. It was Samuel. Samuel became the great priest of God who told Saul and David, "You are going to be the next king of Israel." Now, why did God make Hannah wait? Because while she was waiting, her life was developing. She was developing patience. She was developing a prayer life. She was developing a trust in God. And it is obvious by looking at Samuel that Hannah passed down her traits. So to develop a Samuel, whom Israel needed so badly, God had to first develop a Hannah and he developed her through the season of waiting. She had to wait for the best. Sometimes we have to wait for the best. And we love to say that to our kids but don't we hate it when God says it to us. But it's true. Now, I'm sure some of us are thinking, "Wait a minute. I've been waiting a long time and none of those things have happened to me." Well, how we wait is just as important as waiting. So it's not just waiting, it's how we wait. **HOW CAN I GROW THROUGH A SEASON OF WAITING?**

The truth is we haven't learned how to live until we've learned how to wait. Let's face it, we spend a lot of time in life's waiting room, so why not make the best of it and learn how to profit from it. Let me give just three simple ways to profit from the season of waiting:

## **1 LEARN TO WAIT FOR THE LORD.**

*Isaiah 49:23: "Those who wait for me will never be ashamed."* Isn't that a great verse! Let me ask a question. When we wait, are we waiting for the Lord or are we waiting for the answer? Now let's think this through because it's incredibly important. The Bible says, "Wait for the Lord." We tend to wait for the answer. We've tried everything else, haven't we? So we might as well talk to God about it. Well, the Bible gets personal and says, "Don't wait for answers; wait for God." And that means to make our waiting less goal oriented and more God oriented. That opens us up to see

the big picture because God has bigger plans for us than we could ever dream of. Do you think Hannah realized what God was saving her for? Her son saved Israel. That's why our season of waiting is our greatest opportunity to really develop a deep trust in God. Look at *Isaiah 64:4*: **"Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God like ours, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him."** So the secret isn't to wait on the answer, it's to wait on God to act on our behalf. And while we're waiting, God is working.

Now sometimes we get it in the wrong order, where we are working and God is waiting on us to slow down. That's what trust is all about. We need to learn how to wait in another language. In English, the word wait means stop; in Hebrew, the word wait means **trust**. Psalm 37:7: **"Wait and trust the Lord. Don't be upset when others get rich or when someone else's plans succeed."** Can you relate to that verse? I can. Here I am waiting on God to bless me and he's ignored me and given *them* what I was asking for. And I start thinking, "God, there must be a mistake. I am obviously more spiritual than they are. I just want this one little thing, and they got it." And it messes with your mind, doesn't it? The Bible says, "Don't worry about them." One of the biggest things that occurs to make us stop waiting on God is when other people get what we want. So don't worry about what they get. And then learn to wait on the Lord and not on the answer.

## 2 LEARN TO WAIT IN A GROUP.

We are not alone when we wait. And isn't there a big difference between waiting alone and waiting with a group of people we love. You see, you can be in a crowd and be miserable. Recently I flew to Indiana to hold a series of meetings and when I got to Intercontinental, lined up at my gate was the entire Kingwood Intermediate School Marching Band and Drill Team, about 120 of them, all hyped up. I want you to know, that was a long flight. Nothing against Junior High kids, but there are some crowds we can get in that make waiting 2 hours seem like you've been there 2 weeks. The group I want to wait with is full of people who love what I love; dream what I dream; and who've been where I am. Because they make the time fly by.

Now, there are a couple of groups we wait with. One of them is found in the Bible. The Bible is crowded with people who knew the secret of waiting on the Lord.

- From Abraham, in the Old Testament, who waited for a son (Isaac), To Zechariah, in the New Testament, who waited for a son (John the Baptist).
- From Genesis, where you read about Noah who waited for a flood, to Revelation, where you read about John who was exiled to an island called Patmos who was waiting for a revelation.

They're in there. *Paul, Nehemiah, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joseph, Mary, Peter, Ezra, David, Elijah, Aaron, Adam, Esther, Ruth, Hannah, Hosea, Gideon, John the Baptist, Sara, Leah, Martha, Lazarus (he waited in a tomb for four days, that was some kind of waiting.) Joshua, Samuel, Caleb, Naaman, Job.* Now, we may be thinking, "well, that was Abraham and he was this great man of faith." In fact, Hebrews 6:15 says: **"And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised."** God said, 'You're going to have a son.' And Abraham had to wait 25 years for that son to be born and while he was waiting, he struggled. He said, 'God, I don't see any son being born here, let's make it easy and just transfer the title you wanted me to have to my nephew.' God said, 'No, wait.' Once, when God renewed his promise to Abraham and Sarah, they just laughed. Then there was the time Abraham decided he was going to take matters into his own hands and had a

son by another woman. But that wasn't the son God wanted. So he had to wait. And when you read the New Testament you read about this great example of faith and patience, Abraham who waited patiently on God. That tells me it must be OK to struggle while I wait.

We are going to have stumblings but the real test is did we trust God through to the end. Abraham kept coming back to God and that made the difference. Faith and fail start with the same three letters. The difference is in the ending. And when it comes to faith and waiting, the ending is what matters. If you're struggling in your wait, let me welcome you to our club. The difference is the group we wait with. Hebrews 12:1: **Since we have such a huge crowd of men of faith watching us let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us.**" Remember that list of names I just read out. They're up in heaven pulling for us to keep on running with patience so we can develop like they did. That's a good crowd to be with. There's another group we wait with. Us right here, waiting together. Our task: 1 Thessalonians 5:11 describes it as, **"Encouraging and building each other up."**

### 3 REMEMBER: GOD WAITS FOR US!

2 Peter 3:9: **"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."** One thing we can do is remind ourselves of just how patient God is with us. God is patient with us because he wants to change my mind and heart. If you're like me, we tend to make the same mistakes over and over again. And God patiently helps me grow and patiently forgives me again and again. Here's what God wants to do: Colossians 1:11: **"God will strengthen you with his own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will be patient."** God wants us to grow so much he'll give us the power to do it. Isaiah 30:18: **"The LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you his love. Blessed are all who wait for him!"** God is waiting for you to come to him right now. He wants so badly to show his grace to us, but we've got to let him. I don't care how much we've blown it or ignored Him, today he waits. Please don't make him wait anymore.

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## JOSIAH AND THE BOOK OF THE LAW

(Rosemary M Payne)

After many bad kings, Judah at last had a good one, Josiah. His arrival had been foretold many years before (1 Kings 13:2) as one who sought to turn the nation back to the true God (2 Kings 22:1, 2). It is inspiring to read how he had the temple repaired in Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:5, 6) and cleared all the idols out of the land (2 Kings 23). But, alas, it was really too late. There is a hint in Jeremiah 3:10 that the mass of the people did not genuinely repent. The punishment that was to come upon the nation for their disobedience was only deferred during Josiah's reign, not cancelled (2 Kings 22:15-20), and his successors went back to idolatry (2 Kings 23:32). Finally many of the people were taken captive to Babylon as had been foretold. Was all his work in vain?

One thing of vital importance that took place in Josiah's time was the rediscovery of

the Book of the Law in the temple (2 Kings 22:8). It appears to have been the first time Josiah found out what was in this book (2 Kings 22:11). Nor was the high priest acquainted with it, for he allowed vessels used in the worship of Baal to be in the temple (2 Kings 23:4). So if the king and the high priest were equally ignorant of the requirements of the Law, what chance was there that the ordinary people knew anything of it? Moses at the end of his life had delivered these scriptures to the Levites and elders of the nation, and ordered them to have them read to all the people every seven years during the annual Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 31:9-13). This requirement had been neglected since the time of Joshua (Neh. 8:17).

Copies of the Law were evidently very rare at this time, after so many years of idolatry. It seems likely, however, that the Samaritans also had a copy because of the return of an Israelite priest to teach them, as related in 2 Kings 17:27, 28. The destruction of religious books was a real possibility, for soon afterwards Josiah's own son Jehoiakim tried to suppress the word of the Lord as given to Jeremiah (Jer. 36:22-24) by burning the roll on which it was written, but the Lord simply told Jeremiah to write it out again with additions (Jer. 36:28 & 32). But there are some books mentioned in the scriptures (1 Chron. 29:29) which once existed but were evidently not strictly necessary for God's purposes and so he did not have them preserved. The finding of the Law in Josiah's time generated an interest in the scriptures (2 Kings 23:2) and we may guess that some new copies were made during this reign.

About twenty years after the death of Josiah the original temple of Solomon was burned to the ground (2 Kings 25:9) and all the valuables removed to Babylon (2 Kings 25:13). It would have been a calamity if this copy of the Law as given to Moses had still been in some forgotten corner of the temple and had been burnt in the general destruction. How could the prophets tell the nation to observe the Law if they had no proper record of what it contained, except for hearsay?

However, when the people went into exile they did take copies of this book, for we read that they lived by their own law and not those of the country (Esther 3:8). Also Ezra was a scribe in the Law of Moses, and he came from Babylon (Ezra 7:6). Those who returned to Jerusalem had to rebuild the temple from its foundations, and they no longer had any priest able to tell them of God's will by the old method of consulting the Urim and Thummim (Ezra 2:63), but they did still have their scriptures. The Feast of Tabernacles was reinstated in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra, and the Law of Moses was read to the congregation for seven days (Neh. 8:18). It was probably necessary to translate it from the original Hebrew into Aramaic, which the people had learned during their exile (Neh. 8:8).

Josiah's reformation had not been in vain, for God had used it to bring the scriptures out of the temple and circulate them among the ordinary people, so that Paul could later write that it had long been customary for the Law of Moses to be read in every synagogue in every city on every Sabbath day (Acts 15:21). The effect of this was somewhat like the Protestant Reformation, when the people once again had the scriptures available in their own language.

It was entirely logical for God to tell Moses and the prophets to write down His word in books, because any message simply handed down by word of mouth becomes changed and corrupted over time. Nor, contrary to what some claim, can we expect the Lord to send a personal revelation to each one of us, considering how many millions of people this would have involved all down the ages. We do not have any original documents in the actual handwriting of the authors, and this again is a wise provision, for unfortunately human beings have a tendency to worship relics, and the

parchment and ink would surely have attracted misplaced veneration. They were carefully copied, and we cannot imagine that the Lord would have overseen the preservation of misleading works, full of "**cunningly devised fables**" (2 Peter 1:16) as part of His word, when they could so easily have vanished into the rubbish pits of antiquity.

Jesus promised that His words would survive (Matt. 24:35) as well as the old law (Matt. 5:18), although He wrote no books Himself and it is not recorded that he told his followers to write anything. The Holy Spirit prompted them to do so at the right time (2 Peter 1.15). The whole story of the preservation of the New Testament, in spite of its being burnt and banned at times, is another example of God's care for His word, and one can only wonder at those people who presume to sit in judgment on the contents of the scriptures instead of accepting them in faith.

## Obituary Bro. Paul Jones

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Bro. Paul Jones on June 15th. Paul was in his 86th year and living in Berrystead Nursing Home at Syston Nr. Leicester. He was confined to a wheel chair these last few years and found this very frustrating, having been such an energetic and active man.

Paul was baptized at Summer Lane, Birmingham and served the church there as deacon and then as elder. He also served other churches as visiting speaker. In 1967 he moved to Scotland to work with the Slamannan District Churches as evangelist. We remember the sacrifices that Paul and Florence made and the wholehearted commitment he gave to the work. Paul brought his usual energy and drive not only to teaching and preaching but also in leaflet distribution and advertising. He recently described this time 'as the good days' and we too remember the encouraging times we shared together with Paul and Florence. During this period Paul was also treasurer for the Scripture Standard, a commitment that he maintained for over 20 years.

In 1978 Paul & Florence returned to Birmingham and then later, for a well-earned retirement, they moved to

Syston to be near their daughter.

We are thankful for having benefited from his ministry and rejoice that, in Christ, he has gone to be with his Lord. Our prayers and thoughts are with our sister Florence and her family at this time.

The writer conducted the funeral service at Loughborough Crematorium.

**John Kneller**

## Question Box

Once again readers are reminded that any questions that arise in discussion or from personal study can be forwarded to Bro. Frank Worgan for his consideration. At the moment the Question Box is empty and the feature will not appear in the SS until Frank has questions that he can usefully answer. Our policy is that only genuine reader's questions will be answered and that questions will not be fabricated just for the purpose of continuing this feature of the magazine. We are lucky to have the benefits of Frank's long experience and study at our disposal and I hope that through your questions we can get him back to work on your behalf as soon as possible. Please forward your questions directly to Frank by post to: Frank Worgan, 11, Stanier Road, Corby, Northants NN17 1XP or by email to: Frank@fworgan0.talktalk.co.uk

## Coming Events

### SATURDAY EVENING MEETINGS AT STRETFORD

To be held in the Green Hut, 538 Kings Road, Stretford, Manchester. Each meeting will start at 7.00 pm and will consist of:

**A Gospel Topic**, followed by **Light refreshments**, concluding with **Open Discussion**.

**Dates and speakers:**

22nd September 2007

*Mark Hill, Loughborough*

20th October 2007

*Ernest Makin, Wigan.*

### EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WORKSHOP

**Thursday 30th August to Saturday 1st September 2007**

We are pleased to announce that we will be holding our Second European Christian Workshop at Lancaster University.

The Theme will be:  
*Growing Strong Hearts  
And Strong Churches*

Last year we had 53 people from 11 countries and they enjoyed the

experience. **DON'T MISS OUT!!**

The speakers that have been confirmed so far are:

*John Mooney (UK),*

*Vince O'Donovan (UK),*

*Jason Sneathen (UK),*

*Alexander Malirrytos (Greece),*

*Randy Lowery (USA),*

*Terry Briley (USA).*

We are also planning to hold Ladies' Classes as well.

**Early Bird Offer: The fee will be £95 if you book before 30th April.**

After this the fee will be £105.

If you want further information then please contact:  
Stephen Woodcock - (01942) 211479  
Or E-mail:  
stephen.woodcock@hotmail.co.uk

**LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE**

### PETERHEAD, SCOTLAND

**Social Weekend,  
29 & 30th September 2007**

Saturday Meetings:  
3.00 pm and 6.00 pm  
Sunday services as normal.

All welcome.

Speakers: **Bert Ritchie (Coleraine)**  
and **Graham McDonald (Cumbernauld)**

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**EDITOR:** ROBERT MARSDEN, 4 The Copse, Orrell Road, Orrell, Wigan, England, WN5 8HL. Tel: 01942 212320 E-mail: bobmarsden@bulldoghome.com