

Scripture Truth



Inside:

Christian Marriage
Vigilance in prayer
Creation in the Psalms
The Father and the Son

Where is wisdom found?
Psalm 118 – Acclamation praise
Trembling at God's word

July – September 2012

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

Editor: Theo Balderston

Editor's e-mail: editor@scripturetruth.org.uk

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is published every three months to expound the teaching of the Scriptures so that we “may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

Annual Subscription 2012

£10.00 Post Free UK – £12.50 Post Free Overseas

Contents

Vigilance in prayer	1	Creation in the Psalms – Part 1	17
Christian Marriage	2	The Father and the Son	24
Trembling at God's word	8	Where is wisdom found?	Back Cover
Psalm 118 – Acclamation praise	14		

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Authorized (King James) Version (KJV). Rights in the Authorized Version are vested in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the Crown's patentee, Cambridge University Press.

Scripture quotations marked (RV) are taken from “The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Translated out of the Greek: Being the Version Set Forth A.D. 1611, Compared with the Most Ancient Authorities and Revised, A.D. 1881”. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1881

or “The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments translated out of the original tongues : being the version set forth A.D. 1611 compared with the most ancient authorities and revised”. Oxford: University Press, 1885.

Scripture quotations marked (Darby Trans.) are taken from “The Holy Scriptures, a New Translation from the Original Languages” by J. N. Darby (G Morrish, 1890)

Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved

Front cover: Ancient olive grove in the Galilee, Israel ©iStockphoto.com/pushlama (Noam Armonn)

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is the imprint of the Central Bible Hammond Trust

Registered Charity No. 223327

All business correspondence and orders should be addressed to:

SCRIPTURE TRUTH Publications

31-33 Glover Street, CREWE, Cheshire CW1 3LD

Tel: 01270 252274

Fax: 01477 587454

Vigilance in prayer

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance...” (Ephesians 6:18, RV).

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

Are we being “watchful unto prayer,” or slack unto prayer? In a time when the principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, are marshalling their attacks on the minds and affections of Christians, on their grasp of the gospel and realisation of their place “in Christ” in the heavenlies, we certainly need all the armour of Ephesians 6:13-17; but it will be impotent if we are not “watchful unto prayer.”

How vigilantly do we maintain our private prayer times? our family prayer times? our assembly prayer times? How about the earnestness of our personal commitments to pray consistently for the honour of Christ’s name, for mortification of sin, for love for His people, for specific guidance, for our families, for this or that gospel work, for individuals who need to be saved, for this or that child, for young Christians in this appalling world, for that ill believer, that believer who needs divine encouragement, that erring believer, those struggling missionaries, for our own meetings and their spiritual health, obedience, mutual love, and gospel work, for the testimony to God’s truth in our land and world, for “kings and all that are in authority”? There will be few readers who do not feel checked by something in the above list – the writer certainly does – and it is far from complete.

On the opposite side, we can be “slack unto prayer” either by forgetting to pray or being perfunctory or mechanical in praying. Without doubt, sheer discouragement might be a cause. But if so, then remember that the principalities and powers have, to that extent, succeeded. “Discouragement is of the devil. God is the God of all encouragement,” said an old believer with a lifetime behind him to verify it. But “slackness unto prayer” also means an insufficient sense of need, and perhaps an anaemic interest in His interests.

“And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:44). And He left “us an example, that we should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Christian Marriage

W. J. Hocking

When sanctity of marriage is being undermined in surprising quarters, and its foundations as a union between man and woman are being destroyed, an article from more than sixty years ago affirming its essential characteristics makes very positive reading. It has been edited and abridged.

Marriage possesses the unique feature of being an institution established by God from the very beginning of human history. God's authority is therefore behind the prominent place it has occupied in man's social life throughout the ages.

Marriage in Eden

Adam was created sinless, and was surrounded in Eden with everything he needed for his satisfaction and delight. But he himself was alone, and the isolation made inevitable by his supremacy was a drawback to his perfect happiness. "And Jehovah Elohim said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helpmate, his like [or, 'counterpart']" (Genesis 1:18, Darby Trans.).

Accordingly, the woman was formed by Divine handiwork, not from the dust of the ground as Adam had been, but out of Adam himself, so that literally the woman was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (2:23). Discerning the incompleteness of Adam in his solitude, God provided for him a consort designed exactly to meet his deficiencies. Accordingly, in their marriage the two became one flesh (2:24), each being the complement of the other.

The primitive marriage in Eden was remarkably simple and exclusive. Two only shared the delights of the occasion. Adam had no choice of brides; there was but one that would suit him, one who had been prepared by God especially for him. Adam had no rivals for the possession of Eve. Each of the two found in the other everything required to complete their enjoyment and to perfect their capacities.

And this mutual reserve is a character that marriage still retains. In matrimony two hearts, two lives become one exclusively in each other. At every wedding a new little world is formed with a total population of two numerically, though administratively of one only! How happy the new experience, and how momentous!

Instituted before the Fall

It is highly significant that the marriage relationship was established between Adam and Eve while they were still in a state of innocence. Even the entrance of sin through their disobedience did not set aside the holy character of marriage which its divine origin and sanction had originally imparted to it.

This, indeed, was the ground upon which the Lord Jesus long afterwards vindicated the primeval institution of marriage and affirmed its abiding sanctity. Wedlock

was God's purpose for man from the very start of his history. So the Lord, in replying to the cavils of the Pharisees, said to them, "Have ye not read that he who made them, from the beginning made them male and female?" And had they not also read in the same connection, "And the two shall be one flesh"? (Matthew 19:4, 5)¹

Thus the fact that our Lord used what had been ordained for Adam and Eve in innocence to answer the question put to Him regarding current marriage issues showed that the holy and divinely-sanctioned character that marriage had received in the state of sinlessness survived the entrance of sin. God had made the single pair, and He made them the one for the other exclusively. This character of permanence attaches to marriage still, as it ever has done.

The human credentials of marriage

It is obvious that in Eden there were no human witnesses to the first marriage contract. But with the multiplication of the human species, there arose the necessity that each matrimonial alliance should have a propriety in the eyes of men generally, and receive public confirmation and approval. It is seemly, therefore, that Christian marriage should conform to the requirements of the law of the land. Indeed, it is expressly enjoined upon the believer to "be subject to the authorities" (Romans 13:1), and to submit "to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13, KJV). Where this is done in the case of marriage, so that the act of

¹ Note that this word of the Lord defines marriage as exclusively a relationship between man and woman. Therefore we have His authority to refuse modern redefinitions of marriage to legitimise conduct abhorrent to God (Romans 1:26-27). Moderns may claim the right to redefine words to mean what they want, saying, "With our tongue we will prevail. Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" However, "The words of the LORD are pure words..." And, "the wicked prowls on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men" (Psalm 12:4, 6, 8, NKJV). [Ed.].



*It is seemly
that
Christian
marriage
should
conform to
the
requirements
of the law
of the land*





*Feminine
subjection is
unpopular;
nevertheless
the
Christian
wife is
exhorted by
the highest
authority to
practise it*



union is formally and legally recognised, its validity is established in the eyes of all.²

The invocation of God's blessing

The ceremony of marriage required by civil laws to bestow a wedded status upon the persons concerned is distinct from the spiritual union of husband and wife which results from the exercise of God's own will and guidance upon their hearts. The latter is the more serious and yet the happier side of the undertaking. For this reason the married couple, realising the solemn nature of the initial step they have taken in the united life to which they have committed themselves, seek the fellowship and prayers of the assembly of God on their behalf. Thereby, they openly confess that in their new relationship, their joint desire is to receive divine help that they may walk together in the fear of the Lord, in obedience to His word, and in the furtherance of the glory of His name.

On the wife's part, submission

Ephesians 5:22-33 gives those who are married advice embodying the leading principles which should govern their new and special relations to one another.

The wife is enjoined to submit to her husband (v.22). This habit of feminine subjection is unpopular in this twentieth century; nevertheless the Christian wife is exhorted by the highest authority to practise it; and, however unfashionable in worldly society such

² "Let marriage be held in honour in all things... but fornicators and adulterers will God judge" (Hebrews 13:4, as translated in W. Kelly, *Exposition of Hebrews*, London, 1905, p.259). This shows the strength of the Scriptural division between marriage and fornication (see too 1 Corinthians 7:2; Exodus 22:16; Deuteronomy 22:28); and it implies that marriage must commence with some sort of public wedding (e.g. Genesis 29:21-22). If a man and woman intend to be committed to each other for life, why would they not be prepared to say so before witnesses? This is what a wedding, essentially, is, and to dispense with it is not the "trembling at God's word" that the next article enjoins. [Ed.]

obedience may be, she cannot escape her responsibility to render it as unto the Lord to whom she is accountable for her conduct.

But the submission thus solemnly enjoined is not the blind or mechanical obedience of a slave. Rather is it the glad subjection which springs involuntarily from devotion to the loved one, a ready submission to the will of the beloved man, needing no compulsion or even prompting.

To a believing woman there is one authority from which there is no appeal. Hence the apostle brings the Lord Himself before the wife in relation to this submission. She must submit to her own husband “as unto the Lord” (5:22).

The Lord Jesus is the pattern to all His people of that perfect obedience which is well-pleasing to God. “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Though continually experiencing sorrow and suffering in the course of His subjection, it was a joy to Him to obey. In like manner, the believing wife should in her love devotedly fulfil the “law” of her husband (cp. Romans 7:3).

However in this passage the injunction is coupled with the name of the Lord, rather as the One from whom her husband’s authority is derived. She is to submit to her husband “as unto the Lord” in that she is to recognize the Lord Jesus behind her husband as the directing, governing authority in family life. As the “head of the woman is the man,” so the Head of every man is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3). Thus the godly decisions of the husband will express the will of the Lord for her, and to these she will render obedience with all readiness and cheerfulness. “As the church is subject unto Christ”, so will the devout Christian wife be subject to her own husband in everything (Ephesians 5:24).

On the husband’s part, love

Just as the distinguishing feature of the wife’s conduct should be subjection, so that of the husband’s should be love. “Husbands, love your wives” (5:25). The form of both exhortations in the original tongue indicates that both the submission of the wife and the love of the husband must be continuous habits, not occasional occurrences.

In this passage, the husband is instructed to regard the intimate relation of Christ to His church as the model of his own relation to his wife. Two features of this relation may be mentioned specially in this connection, Christ’s self-sacrifice, and Christ’s devoted care.

In the first place, the husband is to practise his love in the form of entire self-surrender in order to secure his wife’s highest welfare, for, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” The blessed Lord surrendered up Himself altogether, without reserve, to ensure the present blessing and future glory of the church of His choice. This self-surrender is set up as the model for the husband’s imitation. In the ideal marriage of scripture, therefore, the wife becomes the

devoted object of her spouse's affection to a degree which deepens in intensity as the years pass.

But, secondly, the husband's love should be manifested by a continual care for the well-being of his wife. Guided by the lofty standard of Christ's concern for His church, the husband studies to promote the welfare of his wife, as his own body (verse 28). He helps her, first of all in her spiritual life, in the exercises of worship and prayer and service in the home. He lightens her labours in household affairs, shoulders her burdens of family responsibility, shields her from anxieties and fears, comforts her in hours of sorrow. Neither will he forget to note her acts of devotion to himself in response to his love, nor to praise her many excellences, as the scripture enjoins – if he should be so negligent as to need this injunction (Proverbs 31:28, 29).

Making a new home

Another feature of godly marriage given prominence in this passage is that it involves establishing a new household. The apostle says, "Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh" (verse 31, Darby Trans.). By entrance into marriage, two parental homes are vacated, and a new Christian home is set up.

The advantages and far-reaching influence of a truly pious home cannot be over-rated; and they are now rare in our country. It is a striking testimony to God's estimation of the home, that in the scriptural history of man, family life is given precedence over national life. A great part of the book of Genesis is devoted to the record of family life set apart in the world as a witness for the living and true God against the corrupting influence of idolatry; while national history does not begin until in the book of Exodus.

This form of effective witness for God is sorely needed today. And it devolves upon the newly-married couple to organize a home which shall in its primary purpose be entirely controlled by the will of the Lord. Under such management, the home will become a centre from which the light of God's truth will shine upon the darkness and ungodliness of the surrounding world. Its occupants will be recognized as the servants of Christ.

An architect plans a house, but love and order construct a home. It is important that in the new Christian home an agreed policy between husband and wife should predominate: "and the two shall be one flesh." Particularly in things God-ward concerted action should prevail. The former spiritual habits and activities hitherto practised by each need not cease; only they may now be prayerfully pursued with the enhanced energy that concord and consultation supply to Christian service. The two happy persons will unite as they never could before in "labour for and with the Lord." And the former effect for good and blessing will not diminish, but

will rather be increased by the intimate wedded union of two hearts devoted to the Lord.

The daily offering of praise and thanksgiving to God has fresh fervour to which each contributes from a grateful heart. The joint prayers of husband and wife are the more powerful in their intercession, seeing they are offered from the hearts of those whom God has joined together. In service to the Lord each is strengthened by the other, and what otherwise might be lacking in either is supplied. New forms of service become possible through joint desires and efforts. When an Apollos needed instruction in the things of the Lord, the house of Aquila and Priscilla was opened to receive him; and the husband and wife united in expounding the way of God to him more perfectly (Acts 18:24-28).

Joys doubled; sorrows halved

The shepherd in our Lord's parable sought in solitary places for the sheep which was lost, and finding it was a joy to him. But in the loneliness of the wilderness this joy was restricted. He wanted some hearts to share his joy. And "when he cometh home", he calls his friends together, saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6, KJV). Home is the sphere of joy, especially of private and personal joy. The joys of married life are more than doubled in intensity just because they are shared by the two who have become one, and who are now everything to one another. Small matters bring great joys in the intimacies of home life, in which strangers may not meddle.

New homes are so bright, fresh, and joyous that it may seem churlish to suggest that some day sorrow will be an uninvited visitor. But it must be so. Tribulation of some sort is inevitable in every household; but if the Lord is there, its members will have His peace. Moreover, in married life there are two hearts to bear one sorrow, each striving to take the greater share of grief and loss. Men and women are made strong in hours of sorrow by sympathy; and there is no sympathy so choice and so effective as that which dwells in the Christian home-life.



*Christ also
loved the
church.*



*This self-
surrender is
set up as the
model for the
husband's
imitation*



Trembling at God's word

F.B. Hole

Disregard of Scripture is undermining Christian witness on many fronts, with professing Christians, for example, colluding in the undermining of marriage norms (see introduction to the previous article). This (edited and abridged) article from Scripture Truth, January 1924 diagnoses the cause of this persistent malaise – an absence of “trembling” at God’s word.

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, we are deeply conscious that the need of a reviving in the whole church of God is as great as ever. Our hearts rejoice in all that God has done and is doing, and we gratefully acknowledge His mercy in still converting and saving souls out of the world which steadily marches forward to judgment; yet we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is frequently much ignorance of the Word of God, and, what is worse, often a deplorable spirit of indifference, and even open disobedience, to the plain injunctions of Scripture. The church of God particularly needs a revival which shall take the practical form of a great awakening to *simple-hearted obedience to the Word of God.*

Naturally we are all of us adepts at finding out plausible reasons why we

may ignore the commands of Scripture, not one of which will prove to be valid when the hour of testing comes. Scripture must of course be read in a spirit of prayerful subjection, so that we may each become “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). Then having intelligently ascertained the mind of God, nothing is needed but simple obedience. There is nothing more damaging to spiritual prosperity, or disastrous in its final results, than disobedience to the Word of God.

If we turn to the Old Testament, that faithful mirror of the human heart, that wonderful instruction-book which is “able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:16), we shall find forcible illustrations of this.

Saul

Take first of all the case of king Saul. Here you have a man of splendid physical proportions who began his reign well. Elevated to the throne quite suddenly, he displayed both modesty and generosity in the opening months of his reign, and yet only a few years had passed before we find him a rejected

The church of God particularly needs a revival of simple-hearted obedience to the Word of God

man. Why was this? The answer is, in one word, *disobedience*.

Let us look at the second, definitive case of his disobedience. There had been an earlier case (see 1 Samuel 13:1-14); disobedience to the Word of God is a habit that grows upon one. Now we have God sending Saul a special word through Samuel, as to the destruction of the Amalekites (15:3). Saul partially carried out the instructions, and then elected to use his own discretion as to certain details, preferring his own opinion to the Word of God.

Without a question the Biblical modernist of today would altogether agree with Saul. To his way of thinking the Divine instructions were the product of a barbaric age, and Saul's action represented the dawning of higher ethical ideas. Saul's excuses, however, were not based on ethical grounds. He would have liked to preserve the best of the belongings of the Amalekites for himself, and do it under cover of devoting them to the service of God.

Disobedience which springs from carelessness or indifference is bad; that which is sheer wilfulness is worse. Worst of all is that which, while springing from wilfulness, yet arrays itself in a cloak of pretended piety and zeal for the interests of the Lord. It was this of which Saul was now guilty, and hence the strong and drastic way in which God met it through the lips of Samuel. "Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord? ...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of

*Disobedience to
the Word of God is
a habit that grows
upon one*

rams. ...For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:19, 22, 23).

For what Saul avoided doing was unquestionably the Word of God, for there, staring him in the face, were the divine instructions of Deuteronomy 25:17-19, that the very remembrance of Amalek be blotted out from under heaven. His presumptuous disobedience (cp. Psalm 19:13) resulted in his ruin and death.

Solomon

Let us now turn from Saul to Solomon. How very different the circumstances! The former was a petty king struggling to maintain his feet. The latter was firmly established in his kingdom as the fruit of the faithfulness and obedience of his father, David. Solomon was an overlord to the kings of the surrounding nations, prosperous, and marvellously blessed of God, and possessing every inducement to continue in a path of obedience. Yet in spite of all this, and of the special wisdom with which he was endowed (see 1 Kings 3:5-15), he was guilty of flagrant dis-

obedience to the plain commands of God as recorded in the books of Moses; consequently he grievously damaged himself, and sowed the seeds of the total ruin of his splendid kingdom.

The incident of the Queen of Sheba's visit gives us an idea of the extraordinary magnificence of Solomon's court and kingdom. The enquiring Queen of the south had her breath completely taken away; "there was no more spirit in her" (10:5). In the latter part of the chapter many further details are given which impress us yet more with the splendour of those days.

Yet towards the end of this striking chapter a few remarks are quietly made which tell their own tale to the thoughtful reader. We begin to be suspicious; and when we turn to chapter 11 and note the significant "But" with which it opens, our suspicions are turned into a sad certainty that something is seriously amiss. First of all, we notice that all this magnificent accumulation of gold, silver and ivory, of articles of value, and objects of art and vertu, was designed for his own pleasure and gratification. How different he

*David fully
recognized that he
was but a steward of
all that had been
entrusted to his hand*

was to his father in this! David truly collected immense stores of gold and other forms of wealth as the result of his victorious campaigns, but in his case Jehovah, as identified with His temple, was the Centre to which all was gathered. He could say, "I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold... and the silver... and all manner of precious stones..." (1 Chronicles 29:2ff). Further, having enumerated all these things, David had gladly confessed, "Of Thine own have we given Thee" (v.14), showing that he fully recognized that he was but a steward of all that had been entrusted to his hand.

Solomon was quite on different lines. All that he got he heaped up for his own benefit.

Secondly, we notice in the end of 1 Kings 10 that Solomon went largely in for horses. He "gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen" (v. 26; cp. v.28). This is the more noticeable inasmuch as up to this point Scripture hardly mentions the horse in connection with the history of Israel. Absalom, even in the battle for his usurped throne, only rode upon a mule (2 Samuel 18:9); and David had caused Solomon to ride on his own mule (1 Kings 1:33).

Thirdly, we come to that very significant "But" of 11:1. "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of

the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go into them, neither shall they come in unto you." Solomon's outrageous polygamy involved breaking the commandment which forbade intermarriage with the surrounding nations, lest the infection of their idolatry should spread amongst the tribes of Israel (Exodus 34:16, etc). This commandment applied to the people universally, and Solomon should have known that as the leader of and example to the people, it applied fully to himself.

But there was more than this. In Deuteronomy 17 there lay clearly before him the most positive and clear commands from God on all the three points we have just noticed.

In verses 14 and 15 of that chapter it is foretold that a day would come when, settled into their own land, Israel would propose to set a king over themselves; and in view of this eventuality certain instructions are given. The LORD said, "He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold" (verses 16, 17). In the days of Moses the all-seeing eye of God had already traversed the centuries, and foreseen the future kings of Israel and their special dangers; and He provided the needful warning in

*He shall not
multiply horses
to himself.
Neither shall he
multiply wives
to himself*

His Word. Moreover, God added to this the special safeguard that the future king should write his own copy of the law, and have it always with him so as to read therein all the days of his life, and so turn not aside from the commandment (see verses 18-20).

Yet, as far as Solomon was concerned, these commandments might as well never have been written! It is hardly possible that he was ignorant of what God had said. It is far more likely that he had arguments in his mind and reasons which he considered excellent, quite sufficient in fact to authorize him to treat the ancient Word through Moses as a dead letter. Had not the times changed? Had not military tactics advanced since the days of Moses, so that the horse had now become a necessity? – and so on. It matters little, however, just what specious excuses Solomon had in his mind. The fact remains: he met the plain directions of God's Word with flat denial and disobedience, and thereby he started rolling a snowball of destruction which did not stop until it had become an

avalanche of judgment which swept Israel away.

When first we put together Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Kings 10 & 11 we confess we were astounded. Such a deliberate infraction of Scripture on the part of a generally wise man like Solomon seemed almost incredible. To-day, however, we contemplate it without surprise. We know more of the insubject folly of our own heart, and we have observed, too, the free and easy way in which professed Christians, and even real ones, treat the injunctions of the Word of God. Apparently they are to be obeyed or not obeyed at these Christians' own discretion, for they are far from trembling at the Word of God (see Isaiah 66:2).

The old prophet of Bethel

A third striking illustration of our theme occurs almost immediately after the days of Solomon. In 1 Kings 13 we have the incident of the man of God out of Judah who went by command of the Lord to prophesy against the altar at Bethel which Jeroboam had made. The man courageously executed his mission in every point, save one. He had received very strict instructions

not to have the smallest fellowship with the people against which his prophecy was directed. "Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest," was the word (v.9). He disobeyed the first part of this instruction.

But whereas with the previous cases the disobedience was of an open and deliberate kind; with him it was not. He was decoyed into it after obeying at first. Remarkably enough, his punishment seemed far more drastic (v.24), and certainly was far more immediate, than in the case of the other two. This was doubtless because as a prophet and man of God he was in closer contact with God than the others; and to whom much is given in the way of privilege, of them more is required (Luke 12:48).

The world's violent threats had not deflected this man of God from his path of obedience, nor had the world's patronage (vv. 4, 7). And even when, a little later, he had started back he had used another way – in accordance with the Word of the Lord (vv.9-10). And when the old prophet of Bethel tempted him to, "Come home with me and eat bread," the man of God at first refused (vv.15-16). How difficult to refuse the kindly invitation of one's fellow-prophet; yet he did it!

This, however, was immediately followed by a wicked act of *religious imitation*. The old prophet of Bethel, having paraded before the man of God his own prophetic credentials, then claimed a special angelic revelation that completely nullified the visitor's

*The man
courageously executed
his mission in every
point, save one*

*Have no fellowship
with the unfruitful
works of darkness,
but rather
reprove them*

original instructions. The old prophet claimed to have been told, "Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him" (v.18). And through this deceit the man of God fell.

Oh, why did he listen! Surely a few moments' reflection would have sufficed to put him on his guard. Does God usually fail to foresee the end from the beginning, and consequently have to countermand His instructions before His enterprises are finished? If originally God gave him his instructions *direct*, would He now communicate further instructions only *indirectly*?

What a powerful voice all this has for us! The servant of God to-day may on occasions be called to go into strange places to render a word of testimony to His Lord, and thus find himself in unusual surroundings; yet he must be very careful as to his associations, and see that he fulfils the Divine Word, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesian 5:11). To have such

fellowship is to become compromised oneself.

To entangle us, the adversary will spare no devices. If one does not succeed he will try another. It is a sad reflection that for this dirty work no tool comes so readily to the devil's hand as a false professor of religion or a true child of God terribly back-slidden. The old prophet of Bethel may have been one or the other; which, we cannot determine.

The sum of the matter

The sum of the whole matter is this: there is nothing so good and safe and pleasing to God as full and unquestioning obedience to His Word. All necessary instructions for the man of God are found in it, as 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 affirm. Let us then accept the Old-Testament warnings with searchings of heart, and so be made wise unto salvation from the sin of disobedience to the Word of God. The Lord has said, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth at my Word*" (Isaiah 66:2).

*There is nothing
so pleasing to God
as full and
unquestioning
obedience to
His Word*

Psalm 118

Acclamation praise

John Weston

This uplifting little article concludes our occasional series drawing lessons for the Lord's Supper from the "hallel psalms" (113-118), commonly sung at Passover time.

What a wonderful psalm this is with which to conclude the hallel psalms! It bursts out with the mercy of the Lord.

“Let Israel now say, ‘His mercy endures for ever’” (v.2). Moses told the children of Israel, long years before, “The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people. But because the LORD loved you...” (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8, KJV). In similar vein, and having partaken of the Lord's Supper, our hearts too are overwhelmed by the mercy of the Lord, and gratefully give thanks to the Lord. Obeying the biblical injunction, we too “now say,”

For what were we that Thou on us
such love shouldst ever pour?
We bow, and, filled with joy and awe,
Father and Son adore.¹

Having given thanks for the LORD's mercies, and calling upon all that fear the LORD to do likewise, the psalmist now reviews once again all that the LORD has delivered the nation from (verses 5-18). Deliverance is, after all, the great theme of the Passover celebration. This testimony once again confirms the greatness of the love of God and of His salvation. It is a testimony of deliverance that we too in our way can share.

Out of this testimony the psalmist can emphasise that with the LORD on their side they have nothing to fear from what man can do unto them (v.6). The result, of course, is rejoicing and praise. The LORD is their strength and song (v.14).

¹ C. Helena von Poseck (1859-1953).

Again and again, as we have seen throughout the hallel, there is a strong reflection from the Passover celebration to our own time of worship at the Lord's table as we gather together in His presence. The Jewish celebration is but a shadow of our reality, and, in a way, looks forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The whole basis for our gathering, for our worship, for our thanksgiving, for our rejoicing, is to be seen in the emblems before us on the Table, and all that they represent.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh... let us draw near” (Hebrews 10:19-22).

In a number of places Psalm 118 appears to be prophetic of the Lord's sufferings: and there can be no doubt that the stone rejected by the builders, which became the chief cornerstone (v.22), is one such (see Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7). Some nineteenth-century Jews called their newly-established Palestinian settlement “Rosh Pinna,” or, “corner stone.” To-day this is a sizeable town in the Galilee. They chose the name to recall the setbacks encountered by the original project² – still, sadly, heedless of its true meaning.

One of the many expressions in this psalm that I love is in verse 24. “This is the day which the LORD has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.” Surely, this verse found its fulfilment on the occasion of the Passover held in the Upper Room. Although the words were sung at about 11pm on that Thursday night, this was the start of the day of crucifixion. When God created the world, He declared that the evening and the morning constituted the day (Genesis 1:5, etc.). Man turned it on its head and decided that the day consisted of the morning and evening. However the great Jewish festivals allocated to

² See Wikipedia entry for “Rosh Pinna.”



The Jewish celebration is but a shadow of our reality, and, in a way, looks forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb.





*“This is the
day that
the LORD
has made.”
We should
rejoice in it,
and
continue
our work
for the
Lord,
before night
descends
upon this
world.*



a particular date still commence on what we would call the previous evening. I am sure that this is the implication of the day of Pentecost having “fully come” (Acts 2:1). Week by week the Jewish people begin their celebration of the Shabbat on the Friday evening. How peaceful it is to walk along the Mea Shearim in Jerusalem in the dusk with no traffic, but with boys and girls strolling along in their best clothes, fathers hurrying to the synagogue, whilst mothers at home prepare the special Shabbat meal! How much better it would be for us if we recognised God’s ruling, and commenced our Sundays at dusk on the Saturday evening! I believe it would make a difference to our worship on the Sunday morning.

And so, in the upper room the next day had already commenced – the day on which our Lord was crucified, the day on which the great veil was to be torn down, the day before whose end our Lord’s body would have been laid in the tomb, the day of our redemption. Thus, despite all its sorrow, could the Lord and the disciples truly sing, “This is the day that the LORD has made” – the day that had been foreordained before the foundation of the world.

In another sense, of course, “the day” that we are living in is also “the day that the LORD has made.” We should rejoice in it, and continue our work for the Lord, before night descends upon this world.

The psalm closes with a truly worshipful peroration:

“Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee: Thou art my God, I will exalt Thee. O give thanks unto the LORD; far He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.”

To which, we add a resounding AMEN and AMEN.

Creation in the Psalms

Part I

David Anderson

So much Old-Testament doctrine is found in concentrated form in the Psalms! This article starts an authoritative and instructive series on their witness to the Creator-God.

Overview

Psalms are the songs of Israel, by which they worshipped and glorified God, and appealed to Him in their distress, both individual and national. This worship and glorification of God was founded upon who God is, as He had revealed Himself to them. Therefore they often celebrate the fact that He is the only God and the sole Creator of all things. They express a constant awareness that “All the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens” (Psalm 96:5, ESV). Israel’s safety depended on the reliability of the promises made to them by this Creator God. Therefore the godly Israelite could “lift up [his] eyes to the hills,” asking where his help would come from (Psalm 121:1). The answer was, not from the hills themselves or anything *inside* creation, but “from the LORD who made heaven and earth” (v.2).

Similarly Israel’s national hopes for deliverance rested on their covenant-

God, who could control nature, who had performed miracles in Egypt, divided the sea in rescuing them from Egypt, and miraculously produced water from the flinty rock to sustain them in the desert (e.g. 77:11-19; 114).¹ And yet, amazing as creation is, and as clear as is its witness to the compassion of the Saviour-God (e.g. 65:5-13; 145:15-19), it does so incompletely, due to sin. Therefore some psalms also celebrate the creatorial power that will introduce the glorious rule of Messiah, when there will be abundance of corn even on the tops of the mountains (Psalm 72: 3, 16).²

In this article, and two that will follow it (God willing), I shall look at some psalms where these creation-related themes are especially prominent.

Psalm 8: Establishing the Creator’s praise

Psalms 1-8 can be viewed as introductory to the entire Psalter. As concluding

¹ In addition to psalms to be discussed in this article and its sequels, see also 111:5b-9; 136; 66:5-7; 68:7-10 & 32-35; 74:12-17; 78:12-16, 23-29 & 42-55; 105:12-16 & 26-41; 106:8-11; 115:12-18; 135:4-12. Other psalms extolling the creatorial greatness of Israel’s covenant God include 46 and 115:12-18.

² In addition to psalms to be discussed in this article and its sequels, see also Psalms 89:3-28 & 35-37; and 93, 96-98.

How excellent is Thy name in all the earth!

this “introduction”, Psalm 8 provides the basis for all the creation themes found in all five books of Psalms. Primarily it celebrates both the glory of creation and man’s (Adam’s!) position in it. Its theme is *global praise*, as is shown by the fact that the opening and closing phrases of the psalm are identical, “Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!” (vv.1a & 9, Darby Trans.)

Tom Summerhill identifies three spheres wherein the Name of God is exalted – the earth, the starry heavens and the heaven of heavens (vv.1, 3, 5).³ But verse 1 finishes with “who hast set Thy majesty above the heavens.” “Majesty” suggests the visible manifestation of the Presence of Jehovah (1 Chronicles 29:11, Psalms 45:3 & 93:1), a majesty which, as we now know, will be displayed in the physical kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (cp. 2 Peter 1:16-19). So, viewed prophetically, Psalm 8 anticipates the climax of this present creation – the universal reign of Christ as the Son of Man. Where Adam failed in administration and stewardship, Christ will succeed when He is set over all the works of

God’s hand, not only in this terrestrial creation where Adam failed, but also over the astronomical and heavenly creation (cp. Ephesians 1:10 & 22).⁴ However, as Tom Summerhill asserts, “Meanwhile, God’s glory remains unchallenged in paradise and in the astronomical universe.”³ Meanwhile, too, verse 3 reminds us to take account of the order God has established throughout His creation so that praise issues from our lips; for praise of the Creator is appropriate from saints of every dispensation! This leads us to Psalm 19.

**Psalm 19:1-6:
The incessant creation hymn**

Look up into the skies, especially at night, and what do you see? Verse 1 says that you will see undeniable evidence of the work of the Creator’s hands in the beauty and splendour of the heavens: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork” (ESV). No one can ever deny their unfailing witness, for “Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge” (v.2). That is true even though “There is no

³ Tom Summerhill, “Some observations on Psalm 8,” *Grace & Truth Magazine*, May 2009.

⁴ For detailed expositions of Psalm 8 see two articles entitled, “The Son of Man,” in *Scripture Truth*, by Yannick Ford in October 2007, and by me in October 2008; also “God’s glory in creation,” *Grace & Truth Magazine*, May 2009.

The earth is the LORD's and the fulness thereof

speech, and there are no words, yet their voice is heard” (v.3, Darby Trans.). The message is universal – there never has been, nor ever will be, a single member of the human race who is not confronted with the everlasting gospel of creation. “Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (v.4a, ESV). Yet mankind continues in obstinate denial of the Creator! (cp. Romans 1:19-23)

In verses 4b-6 the sun is suddenly brought into focus. “In them He has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat” (ESV). If the vastness of the galaxies seen in the night skies points to the power and greatness of the Creator, the poetic language of vv.4b-6 witnesses to His nature and character. In His goodness He sustains every part of His world through the existence of the sun. He is its Source and the world’s great, impartial Blessor (cp. v.6b with Matthew 5:45)!

One day, the rejoicing of the heavens and the earth will bear testimony that the LORD is coming to judge the earth – those peoples who have not listened to the testimony of creation (Psalm 96:11-

13). But that dreadful Day has not yet come. Meanwhile, God has left another, fuller, witness to Himself alongside creation – His written word. Appropriately, then, verses 7-13 of Psalm 19 extol this other testimony.

Psalm 24: Creation – it’s all His!

The thought of the coming Day when God will reclaim His terrestrial world leads us to the theme of Psalm 24. The LORD is the King of glory who will claim the kingdom because He has moral, official and personal rights to it – but, most fundamentally, because He has creatorial rights to it. “The earth is the LORD’s and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers” (vv.1-2). Creation belongs to Him, the Sovereign One (“the LORD’s” in v.1 and “He” in v.2 are emphatic words in the Hebrew). The earth with all its fulness and populations were designed to give satisfaction and bring glory to their Creator. This will actually be so during the Millennium, when “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14; cp. Isaiah 11:9).

God’s ownership of creation is mentioned or implied in other psalms; for example:

The LORD sitteth as king for ever

- “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession” (2:8).
- “For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine” (50:10-11).
- “Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet; Judah is my sceptre. Moab is my washbasin” (60:7-8 & 108:8-9).
- “The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them. The north and the south, you have created them; Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name” (89:11-12).
- “Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (100:3).

This ownership by the Creator is emphasised in repeated descriptions of the LORD as the Maker of heaven, earth and sea (e.g. 95:5).⁵ Yes, “he is our God” and we must listen to his voice (95:7) –this leads us to Psalm 29.

Psalm 29:

God’s voice and creation

Verses 3-9 describe the various physical effects that His voice has on His creation as the reason to ascribe glory to Him and to worship Him (verses 1-2). Where there is no fear of Him, He has, and will, preside over His creation in judgement: “The LORD sat as king at the Flood; yea, the LORD sitteth as king for ever” (v.10, RV; cp. Psalm 18: 7-8, 13-15).

But Psalm 29 ends with a faithful promise for future Israel: “The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace” (v.11).

Psalm 33:

God’s word and Creation

Psalm 29 describes the effects of the LORD’s voice; Psalm 33 celebrates the power of the LORD’s word. Verses 1-5 call the saints (“the righteous”) to praise the LORD, *firstly*, because His word is “upright”; it has such moral power that “the earth is full of [His] steadfast love.” He made it; He has obligated Himself to it. In other places the psalms delight in “the steadfast (creatorial) love of the LORD” towards His creation, but especially towards the forgotten needy and disadvantaged of mankind. For example:

⁵ See also Psalms 96:5; 115:15; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6.

Great are the works of the LORD

- “God... the hope [ESV; “confidence”, NKJV] of all the ends of the earth... You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it... You crown the year with your bounty [ESV; “goodness”, NKJV]” (65:5, 9, 11 – but read the whole Psalm!).
- “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children” (103:13-17, ESV).
- “Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendour and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures for ever. He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear Him...” (111:2-5a).
- “The LORD is good to all, and his mercy [ESV; “tender mercies”, NKJV] is over all that He has made... The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works” (145: 9, 14-17).
- “[The LORD] made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (146:6-9, ESV).
- “He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry” (147:8-9).

He spoke, and it came to be

Secondly, Psalm 33 calls on “the righteous” to praise the LORD because His word is all-powerful as well as upright. “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made” (v.6). He simply used *His word* to bring the creation into existence. What He commands is immediately accomplished and what He says stands fast (vv.6-9). As Psalm 68:33 declares: “[He] rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold He sends out His voice, His mighty voice.” Verses 6 & 7 of Psalm 33 underline the “God said...and it was so” statements in Genesis 1;⁶ and interpret them for us. The Genesis account means what it says: that is, the days are literal days. Psalm 33:6 states that His word brought about the immense heavenly universe and reminds us of Isaiah 40:26: “He...brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power not one is missing” (cp. Psalm 147:4-5). Psalm 33:7 gives an interesting insight into Genesis 1:9-10. God is so great that He gathered the waters of the seas together as a heap [literally, “a wineskin”, “bottle”] “by the breath of His mouth.” The depths of

waters were placed in storehouses, or treasuries, to be there for His own disposal, for example, at the Flood.

“He spoke, and it came to be” (verse 9). But Hebrews 1:3 also says that the Creator (God’s Son) continuously *upholds* the entire creation by the word of His power. This echoes a truth that runs, if in other words, throughout the Psalms – in the sense that He is in total control of His creation, even over the greatest of land or sea creatures (74:14 & 89:10). He also practically controls the environment, climate, and weather, so that His creatures have the resources to sustain them through life on earth (e.g., 36:6b below).⁷

Given the omnipotence of the word of the LORD, all the earth should fear Him (33:8). And this introduces the *third* motivation for praise in this Psalm: So powerful a God “brings the counsels of the nations to nothing... Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD” (vv.10, 12). But the nations do not fear Him. About these verses Derek Kidner comments: “[For the psalmist,] to speak of nature’s obedient glory is to be reminded of man’s blatant defiance.”⁸

⁶ Genesis 1:3, 6-7, 9, 11, 14-15, 20, 24 & 26.

⁷ See also Psalms 104:27-29; 107:23-31 & 35-38; 135:5-7; 136:4-9; 145:15-17; 147:15-18.

⁸ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, (London, 1973), p.137.

How excellent is Thy lovingkindness!

But the LORD whose omnipotent *voice* brought all into being can by His omniscient *eye* properly assess everything “the children of men” do, because He individually constituted each of them and so understands them through and through (v.15; cp. Psalm 14:2-3). As a result, they have no power against Him (33:16-17); and His eye, which assesses the hearts of the nations, also watches over those who fear Him and hope in His steadfast love (v.18). So the psalmist infers that His love is equal to His power. Yes, the Creator is also the Sovereign, the Judge, the Saviour and the Consummator! This steadfast love will be fulfilled in the Millennium, for which the believing soul waits (v.20).

Psalm 36: **How excellent is Thy lovingkindness!**

Like Psalm 33:5, Psalm 36:5, 7 also celebrate the steadfast creatorial love of the LORD. In verses 5, 6 David uses the grandeur of creation as similes of the moral greatness of God. His mercy is as immeasurable as the skies; His faithfulness is as high as the clouds; His righteousness is as immovable as the mountains; and His judgments are as fathomless as the depths. Contemplating these makes this “servant of God” (see title of psalm) exclaim (v.6b), “O LORD, You preserve man and beast”

(NKJV). And this thought of the Creator’s benevolence causes him then to burst into praise, “How excellent [“precious”, ESV] is Thy lovingkindness, O God!” (v.7, KJV); saying, “God” rather than “LORD,” because all peoples, and not just the covenant nation, depend on their Creator, and should also discover Him to be their Protector. And not only is there loving protection, but also fulness of supply, lasting satisfaction, joy, life, and light (vv.7b-9). In verse 8 “the river of your pleasures” calls to mind the river coming out of Eden (Genesis 2:10-14), and anticipates the Millennial river-scene of Ezekiel 47 (cp. Psalm 46:4; Joel 3:18; Revelation 22:1). The Creator-God continues to provide of His goodness for all of mankind throughout their entire history (cp. 1 Timothy 4:10). David dwells on the greatness and goodness of God in conscious contrast to the arrogance and inventiveness of the wicked (vv.1-4). And so at the end He prays for that steadfast love [lovingkindness, NKJV] to continue to those who know Him, and His righteousness to the upright of heart, so that they do not fall victim to the arrogant rejecters of God (vv.10, 11). A similar motivation for prayer occurs in 1 Timothy 2:1-5.

The Father and the Son

Theo Balderston

“And we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only-begotten from beside a father” (John 1:14, Kelly¹)

The more common translation is “as of *the* only-begotten of *the* Father” [KJV, etc.]. But W. Kelly’s translation (like the Darby Trans.) takes account of the absence of the definite article (“the”) in the original before both “only-begotten” and “Father”. Thus John’s phrase focuses not so much on the identity of the Persons as on the kind of relationship that the Word-made-flesh gloriously displayed – that of a son who had come from a father. When the disciples considered Him, they realised that they were witnessing one side of an unearthly relationship, for the One whom they saw drew their attention in all His ways to Another whom they could not see by the natural eye – His Father. The word translated “only[-begotten]”² also tends to suggest a child uniquely loved by its parent(s): compare Hebrews 11:17 with Genesis 22:2; and Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38.

So understood, this verse encapsulates a primary theme of John’s Gospel – the Lord’s declaring of the Father’s Name (17:26) out of His relationship as His Son. Sometimes the phrase, “and we beheld His glory,” is thought to refer solely to the Father’s declarations at the Lord’s baptism and transfiguration. But this is a mistake; it refers to His whole life on earth. It involves His works (John 14:9-10), but of course His words also. His earliest recorded words were, “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49, NKJV); His last recorded words, in the same Gospel, were, “Father, ‘into your hands I commend my spirit’” (23:46, NKJV). It was not unknown among the Jews to call God, “Father” (cp. John 8:41; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:19), but when *the Lord* said it, it was different. There was an intimacy, yet gravity, in the way in which He mentioned His Father that was unlike anyone else speaking about God. When He said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” the Jews took Him to be saying that God was *His own* Father, (Kelly, cp. Darby Trans., RV., ESV), that is, as claiming a unique and unheard-of relationship with God, and in doing so to be making Himself equal with God. Therefore they sought to kill Him (John 5:17-18).

¹ W.Kelly, *An Exposition of the Gospel of John* (London, new edn., 1923 [1st edn. 1898]), p.19. See similarly Darby Trans.

² Strictly, “Only one.” The underlying word means “pertaining to being the only one of its kind, unique” according to a standard lexicon. It does not carry the meaning of “begetting.” A false etymology was deployed to import this meaning into it by later upholders of our Lord’s Deity, who, in trying too closely to interpret divine Relationships by human, devised the doctrine of “eternal generation.”

There is therefore something special about the words “my Father” on the Lord’s lips: they always draw attention to this same unique, unprecedented relationship of the only Son with His Father. They occur some 46 times in the Gospels, about 26 of them in John, and sixteen in Matthew. Before proceeding to look at a few of these, I must note that in John’s Gospel the words “the Father” occur far more often – about 77 times; though infrequently in the other three Gospels. I believe a difference can be detected. Broadly speaking, as I hope to show, “my Father” emphasises relationship, and “the Father” emphasises revelation.

I shall now seek to illustrate this proposition from a very few examples, before applying it to Matthew 26:39, 42 in order to find what kind of relationship between the Father and the Son this prayer of prayers exposes.

In John’s Gospel the words “my Father” first occur in 2:16. By them the Lord was claiming His relationship to the Father as authority for His drastic actions in the temple – the authority of the Only Son. It was not so much a statement concerning the Father as a statement about His relationship to the Father. In this simple phrase, then, suddenly the glory of the Only-One from the Father blazed forth.

Similarly in the next occurrence – John 5:17, already referred to. But from that point on in John 5 until verse 43 the Lord speaks about “*the* Father.” Was He now speaking about the Father disconnectedly from the Son? Not so, as a reading of vv.19-20 abundantly shows. But in speaking of “*the* Son” and “*the* Father”, the Lord says something about Himself and His Father that no mere human could.

My son is son only to my wife and me. He is certainly not “the son” as far as everyone is concerned. Similarly, I am not “the father” to everyone. Therefore the Lord’s employment of “the Father” and “the Son” in John 5:19 makes a unique claim about the nature of God that every living person should acknowledge. However, He did not mean this in the sense that His Father is Father to everyone; far be the thought that He was presenting Himself as everyone’s Son. Rather He was saying that everyone is obligated to acknowledge Him as *the* Son of the Father, and acknowledge *the* Father as the Father of the Son. In the day of judgment, indeed, all will have to do just this (v.23). The contrast between “my Father” in John 5:17 and “the Father” in subsequent verses thus illustrates the proposition that “*my* Father,” emphasises relationship, whereas “*the* Father” and “*the* Son” (though sometimes perhaps less emphatically) carry the sense of revelation of who God is.

*“My Father,” emphasises relationship,
“the Father,” revelation*

*By saying, "My Father,"
the Lord was appealing to His Father's love*

In John 5:43 our Lord reverted to saying, "my Father." He could well have said, "I have come in *the* Father's name." But here, as in 2:16, He was underlining His own authority as having come as His Father's Son, and greater than a prophet come "in the name of the LORD." The significance of "Do not think I will accuse you to *the* Father" (NKJV), in verse 45 is not so clear. But the Lord could have said, "God" (cp. John 8:47, etc.). The point seems to be that, even if the Jews refuse the revelation of the Father in the Son in this life, they will certainly be confronting it at the judgment.

Space forbids examination of all variations between "my Father" and "the Father" in John's Gospel. Anyone with a concordance could examine them, and would, I believe, find the above analysis borne out. In 6:27 the Lord says, "... which the Son of Man shall give you: for Him has the Father sealed, [even] God" (Darby Trans.³). If the Lord had said, "Him has *His* Father sealed...", the emphasis would have fallen on the close relationship, in this world, of "the Son of man" with His Father. But in saying, "Him has *the* Father sealed...", He emphasised the seriousness of disregarding the sealing which the living God, now revealed as *the* Father of the Son, had effected. Contrariwise, when in John 6:32 the Lord said, "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven" (NKJV), He emphasised His relationship with the Giver, as against Moses's.

All of the eleven occurrences of "Father" in John 16 use the form, "the Father." In this chapter the Lord seems to be using His final moments with the disciples to "declare the Father's Name" (17:26), as also the character of His own mission, as One who had come from *the* Father to the world and who would leave the world and return to *the* Father (16:28).

The final occurrence in this Gospel of "my Father" is in 20:17. First the Lord says to Mary that He ascends to *the* Father (so Kelly, modern versions), that is, to the One whom He has revealed as the Father; but then He tells her to say to "His brethren" that "I ascend to my Father and your Father," thus distinguishing His own relationship to the Father from the relationship into which He is bringing them.

Matthew's Gospel is second only to John's in its emphasis on the name of "Father" (though with only some 45 occurrences as against about 119 in John). Surprisingly,

³ Similarly Kelly, p. 132. Other translations, "God the Father."

the first sixteen references in Matthew to “Father” concern the disciples’ relationship to God: they are all of the form, “your [heavenly] Father.” Not until the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in 7:21, do we encounter the phrase, “my Father.” And here it occurs in conjunction with the first reference in the Gospel (3:3 apart), to Jesus as “Lord”. It is as if to say, “Some may lightly say ‘Lord, Lord’ to Me. But they must know that I, to whom they say it, am the only and beloved Son of my Father.” And if the Lord had said, “... but he that does the will of *the* Father,” His Lordship would have sounded disconnected from “the will of the Father.” However, the will of the Father and the will of the Son are one. The Lord identifies *as* the will of His Father teaching that He emphatically claims as His own (e.g. 5:22; 7:24) (vv.24-27). Small wonder that those who heard these words “were astonished at his teaching. For he taught them as one having authority”! (vv.28-29)

And if we consider the second occurrence of “my Father” in Matthew (10:32), we find something similar. For our name to be mentioned to the Queen by a palace official would be a greater honour than for it not to be mentioned, but how much greater? She might forget it in ten minutes. But for our name to be mentioned to her by her nearest and dearest, *that* would be an incalculable honour for an ordinary citizen. In this verse, “the Father” would have emphasised revelation, and the greatness of the One before whom the confessor’s name is mentioned. But “my Father” is employed to emphasise relationship.

Next we come to the great statement of 11:27. “All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son, except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal him.” If the Lord had said, “All things have been delivered to me by *the* Father,” He would not have said *why* they had been delivered to Him. But in saying “my Father,” He concisely emphasises the reason: because His Father loves Him (cp. John 3:35), and there can be no reason ulterior to that.

But the Lord also went on to say in the same verse, “No one knows *the* Son, except *the* Father.” He made clear that “my Father” is “*the* Father,” and, consequently, He Himself is “*the* Son.” “Father” and “Son” are given here as Names of revelation, Names of Godhead. It is true that the Father is known in a way that the Son can never be known;⁴ but the Names are revealed.

Bearing in mind, then, what has just been shown about the special nuance of “my Father” on the Lord’s lips, we approach the most weighty and poignant occurrence of this phrase in the Gospels. “O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). By saying, “My Father,” the Lord was emphatically appealing in His distress of mind to “His own Father” (see John 5:18), and His Father’s love. The Name of “Abba” given in Mark 14:36 would have the same force.

⁴ On this see T.Balderston, *Confessing the Son* [Stockport, 2006], pp. 26-27. Available through the publishers of this magazine.

Surely, then, these words of address, “My Father,” mean that in His agony (see Luke 22:44) our Lord’s prayer appealed to the deepest depths of His relationship with the One to whom He prayed? Surely He was appealing to His Father according to all that had bound Them to Each Other from all eternity? Perish any other thought: but some seem to deny it. Some say that the Names (more properly, on this theory, “titles”) “Father” and “Son” constituted a relationship between Persons of the Godhead that was only assumed at the incarnation for the purposes of the Lord’s mission in this world. But if they believe this, they cannot then see in this prayer an appeal to the deepest bonds binding the One who prayed to the One to whom He prayed. For the Lord prayed, “my Father,” and they limit the meaning of this Name of love. They might claim that such bonds did actuate the prayer even although they could not be expressed. But such a claim would, on their theory, be pure invention; for (on their theory) the Scripture does not say it. This doctrine, then, limits a prayer to whose depths there are no limits.

But others will say that the question should not be made an issue of: it’s of secondary importance. However, if the meaning of “Father” is unimportant, there is little meaning in our Lord’s having commenced this prayer of prayers with “My Father.”

And might not our actions, rather than what we say, proclaim that we set little store by the words, “My Father”? 2 John 9-11 warns us about this.

Similar considerations attend verse 42 of Matthew 26. Does the equally emphatic “My Father” express the infinite and eternal love for the Father out of which the Son’s submission to the cross came, or limit it to something much less? The same question may be posed regarding John 14:31. “But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do.” Does this verse say that the cross reveals the eternal love of the Son for the Father, or that the cross cannot say anything concerning this?

John 1:18, 16:28; 17:5; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 1:2, 10-12; 1 John 4:14, etc., unite to testify to our Lord having been Son before incarnation and in eternity. This short article obviously cannot meet the various objections lodged against their testimony. But I hope it might affectionately say to any reader inclined to doubt or slight so great a matter: stop and think about Matthew 26:39, 42! I believe that if they did this, their own renewed heart would teach them.

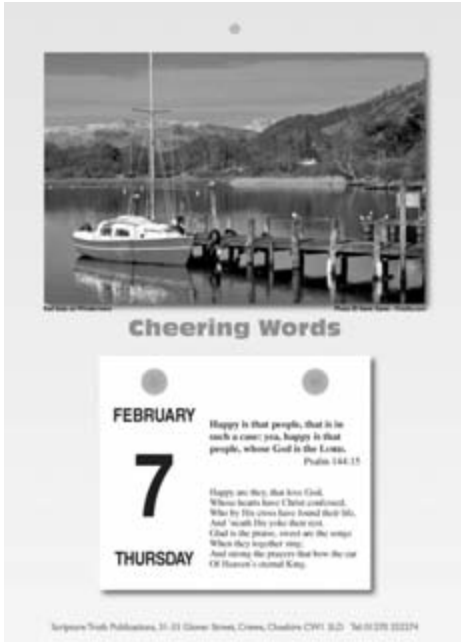
Stop and think about Matthew 26:39, 42!

Cheering Words Calendar 2013

The 2013 calendar is now available from STP, with two pictures (one on either side of the calendar back):

Red boat on Windermere

Cottage, St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly



Individual calendars are priced at **£6.00** plus postage. Postage and packing for a single calendar to one address costs **£2.50** to the UK, **£4.50** to Europe and **£5.00** to the rest of the world (by surface mail).

For prices and postage costs for larger quantities, please contact STP at the address inside the front cover, or refer to our web site:

<http://www.scripture-truth.org.uk>

from which a price list and order form may be downloaded.

Where is wisdom found?

Job 28:12

Tell me, where is wisdom found?
In extreme technologies?
in CERN's deep mines underground
where no beast finds, vulture sees?

Wisdom has eternal springs,
Wisdom, God's Artificer.
"Long before created things,"
Wisdom tells us, "I was there."

Wisdom came from heaven to earth;
who descended? God's Son did!
Son eternal – human birth,
in Him all God's treasures hid.

Sinner enters Simon's hall
– supercilious elite!
wisdom's child confutes them all:
contrite, she kissed Jesus' feet.

Wisdom this world's rulers missed
when they nailed Christ to the tree;
wisdom made Him not resist,
working wisdom's mystery.

Wisdom in the preachèd cross,
whereby Christ's our righteousness,
wisdom, holiness, release –
leaving us no boast for flesh.

Wisdom in the Spirit's word
none by nature can receive;
things by man unseen, unheard
told to sinners who believe.

Secret sure to us Gentiles
outside covenantal scope:
If such Jesus reconciles,
Christ in us is glory's hope,

grace in wisdom can abound,
tell the secret of God's will:
Christ, the Head of all things crowned
in the times that time fulfil;

and may we, God's wisdom lent,
learn how great our hope, our call:
Christ's loved bride and complement
– Christ's, who filleth all in all.

Wisdom is as wisdom's meek,
pure, entreatable, and kind,
peace-like, keen good works to seek,
undissembling, sweet of mind.

By the Trinity made strong,
may we, with all saints below,
more than wisdom wide and long
learn the love no mind can know.