

Scripture Truth



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John and the Family of God
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The Lamb in the midst of the throne

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Say, “Mankind”!

“This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day that they were created” (Genesis 5:1-2, NKJV).

The literal word for “mankind” in the above quotation is “Adam”, or “man”. This is God’s name for all of us. It does not eliminate gender difference, for the verse begins, “He created them male and female.” But it indicates that male and female have an essential complementarity, and therefore unity; and the name He has given them as a unit is “man”.

“Male and female” in verse 2 is the counterpart of “him” at the end of verse 1. Together they were created to be the image and likeness of God to the lower creation (cp. 1:27). Therefore the word “mankind” implies that our race has an ongoing relationship to God; but the term “humanity” carries no such implication. Perhaps the name *mankind* was given because we were created to represent the God who reveals Himself as *He*.

However, there’s a snag. Verse 3 tells us that Seth was a son in *Adam’s own* likeness and image. This change hints at the Fall (even though the divine image and likeness were not entirely erased). Thus our collective name of “Adam” also powerfully reminds us that we are participants in Adam’s fall. The term “humanity” erases memory of the Fall.

I heard recently of a Christian in Germany during the “Third Reich” who bravely refused to use the “Heil Hitler” greeting and adhered resolutely to “Gruss Gott”, the traditional (and Christian) greeting of South Germany. (As a result the outlook for him was not good but, mercifully, the war ended first.) Language is a potent instrument for compelling conformity. Let’s seek the faith generally to say “mankind”, and refuse the tyrannical efforts of our God-rejecting culture to lock God out of our language. If challenged, you can explain that your vocabulary is not about “sexism” but just that this is *God’s* own name for us; that it reminds us that we – men and women jointly – were created to be His likeness; but therefore also that all too often we only express our own badness – and that’s why Jesus had to die.

THEO BALDERSTON

Whose son is He?

Theo Balderston

“Who is this?” (Matthew 21:10, NKJV). This was what the people of Jerusalem asked when the Lord rode into Jerusalem with the crowds of accompanying pilgrims crying out, “Save now!” The answer that these crowds gave to this question displayed their limited comprehension: “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth”. But the Lord went on to do something that transcended the province of a prophet when He “went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers....” This was the Lord coming suddenly to His temple; it was the Greater than John the Baptist thoroughly purging His floor (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 3:12). Buying and selling offerings in the temple precincts was not in itself unlawful (Deuteronomy 14:24-26), but the haggling, greedy spirit in which it was presumably done defiled the sanctuary where God had consented to dwell (Exodus 25:8). God looks on the heart (Deuteronomy 5:29; 13:3 etc.).

But then the Lord followed judgment with grace. He healed the blind and the lame who came to Him in that selfsame holy place (Matthew 21:14). Instead of grasping, as did the traders whom He had expelled, He gave. Thereby He rebuked and reversed the nasty words that His great progenitor after the flesh had spoken when Israel had first seized the city (2 Samuel 5:8), and manifested the pity that had been in the heart of God ever since sin had brought suffering and death into the world (Psalm 103:14). It was a little preview of the time when “the eyes of the blind shall be opened” and “the lame man shall leap like a deer” (Isaiah 35:5, 6).

The chief priests and scribes might well have found it awkward to challenge the Lord directly about His cleansing of the temple; doubtless the abuses occurring there were notorious. Similarly, it would have been hard to condemn directly the healing of the blind and lame in the temple of “the LORD who heals you” (Exodus 15:26). But when the children noisily acknowledged the Lord Jesus as “son of David”, then the priests and elders thought that a line had been crossed, something that provided them with grounds on which to intervene (Matthew 21:15-16). In fact, and as just shown, the miracles they had just witnessed proved that One greater even than David was really present. In the context, then, the fig tree upon which the parabolic judgment was enacted (21:18-22) seems to represent these very leaders of Israel – those who constituted “the religious nation”.

This is certainly what follows in the remainder of Matthew 21. “The chief priests and elders of the people confronted him as he was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?’” (v.23) Their question was not out of ignorance on this matter. The Lord’s discourses *in Jerusalem* had addressed precisely this point (John 7:16-38; 8:12-58; 9:41-10:38). We recollect His words, “If you had known me, you would have known my Father also” (8:19; cp. 7:28, 34; 8:16, 54; 10:37-38). The chief priests and scribes had received true report of at least one of these discourses (John 7:32, 45ff); and it follows from this that they had seen, and also hated, both Himself and His Father (John 15:24). They had understood yet refused what He had claimed in these discourses. Their question, “By what authority...” must be understood against this background. Later, the high priest would pose it again, and the Lord’s direct answer would seal His own death warrant (Matthew 26:63-66). But here they shirked it.

And neither did the Lord yet choose to repeat expressly to His enemies what He had already said many times to the crowds in Jerusalem. The predestined time for His sacrifice had even then not yet fully come (cp. John 8:20). Instead He threw their question back on themselves in order to expose their own lack of authority. He raised the issue of the source of John the Baptist’s authority. Why could the chief priests and elders not answer this question? *Because they feared the people* (Matthew 21:26). Their prevarication revealed that they were destitute of divine authority (if they had possessed it, they would have answered boldly), but also even of natural, human authority (they feared the crowds). As so often, the Lord answered not the question but the questioners. And the One they sought to condemn showed Himself to be their Judge.

He followed up their self-exposing reply with two parables. The first – that of the two sons (21:28-32) exposed their real attitude to John – unbelief. The second parable re-applied to them the parable that Isaiah had told centuries before (21:33-44; cp. Isaiah 5:1-7). Here, however, it is not the vine, but the vineyardmen who are the culprits.

The key point in the parable is v.37, “Last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’”

Notice that the “son” here was already “the son” before the landowner sent him. That is the point of the parable. It was because he sent one so dear to him as his own son, and the vineyardmen fully recognised this, that their crime was so appalling. It was because the landowner had sent one so great as even his own son that they killed him, recognising him as “the heir”. He did not *become* “son” in order to go and collect the rent! Rather it was knowledge that he was

*If Christ is not eternally the Son of the Father,
there is no revelation of the Father's heart.*

son irrespective of the vineyard that told the vineyardmen of the place that he occupied in the landowner's heart. If Christ is not eternally the Son of the Father, there is no revelation of the Father's heart. Indeed, on such a doctrine "Father" itself is, like "Son", not a name to *reveal* God at all, but a title taken to *conceal* what God eternally *is* from what men and women can know. What a dreadful doctrine! How good to know that it is not true! "No-one has seen God at any time. The only Son,"¹ who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared him" (John 1:18). The "is" (lit., "the One being in...") is the eternal "is". Otherwise no revelation worthy of the word is involved in the verse. How jealous we should be of this indispensable truth!

Thus the question asked earlier in the chapter, "Who is this?" (v.10) received its answer in v.37.

Notice too the fatuousness of the tenants' belief that, by murdering the heir, they would gain title to the vineyard. This point must have struck the listeners too. Yet it accurately described the fatuousness of the Jewish religious leadership's belief, shortly to be put to the test, that if they could only execute "the prophet from Nazareth", they would be left to rule their own fiefdom according to the cosy compact they had reached with Rome. Rather, "the kingdom" would be taken from them – as it was in 70 AD – and would (eventually) be given to the nation bearing the fruits of it. For the identity of this nation, see Isaiah 27:2-6.

And the very same fatuousness possesses the minds of modern humanists in thinking that they can be done with God and assign all rights over the terrestrial inheritance to man without God. But God says, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:1-6).

¹ The alternative reading where "Son" is replaced by "God" does not rob this point of its force, because the word for "only" in the context of "the Father" has to mean "only son". The verse would read something like "God the only Son, the One being in the bosom of the Father..." Most recent scholarly translations support this translation, such as the *Good News Bible* (4th edn., 1976), the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989), and the *NIV* [2011]. The translation in the *ESV* makes the verse self-contradictory. W. Kelly, *An Exposition of the Gospel of John* (London, new edn., 1923) supported the traditional text, however, as does the *Revised English Bible* (1989). The argument that the "in" of the verse should be translated "into" is simply ignorance of the Greek of the time.

In the parable of the wedding of the king's son in Matthew 22:1-14 the Lord Jesus is the King's Son, but viewed as ascended. The parable shows that after the ascension the Jewish leaders' attitude to Him would not change. Here the messengers (at any rate the second group – 22:4ff) are evidently the apostles. The result is bluntly spelt out in v.7 The Lord perhaps included the improperly clad guest (22:11ff) in the parable as a prophetic warning to gentiles of the period after the destruction of Jerusalem not to be haughty, but fear (cp. Romans 11:20).

The Pharisees were as much the targets of the Lord's parable of the vineyard as the chief priests (22:45). Therefore they were equally anxious to discredit the One who had told it. Their question (22:16) looked like a clever one. If the Lord denied that it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, the Herodians accompanying the Pharisees would immediately have reported Him to the governor, and secure His conviction. But if He approved payment, the Pharisees seem to have counted on this discrediting Him among his own disciples and the crowds who were listening (22:33). They were thinking in very human-political terms.

And so the Lord answered them in their own coin – rather literally. He asked them to show him a coin, and the one shown Him was a denarius. Many commentators jump to the conclusion that the Lord was pointing out the incongruity of those who loudly proclaimed their loyalty to the second commandment carrying a coin whose inscription proclaimed the divinity of Caesar. But this is not the point the Lord is making. Rather, He simply exposes the fact that they found the coin in which the tax had to be paid rather convenient. In this way the gallows intended for Mordecai became their own, for they, too, accepted the fact of Roman rule in everyday life.

The Lord affirms that they should “render unto Caesar”, just as Jews after the captivity had done. See Malachi 1:8. The very fact that they based their calendar on the regnal years of their foreign overlords (e.g. Ezra 6:15; Nehemiah 13:6) had showed this; they had not maintained their own “counter-calendar” that treated a descendant of David as king. However the godly among them had also “rendered unto God”, in that they had genuinely confessed the transgressions of the covenant – their own and their forbears’ – due to which they had become subjects of foreign powers (cp. Daniel 9: 4-19; Nehemiah 9:26ff; Psalm 106). Though the Pharisees may have pretended to be contrite (Luke 18:12a) it was not real (Matthew 3:7, 8). They should indeed pay their taxes to Caesar, and also “render to God”, i.e., truly repent for all that had brought these taxes on them (Matthew 22:21). The Lord's brief request and reply unerringly diagnosed their double hypocrisy.

The Lord spelt out in chapter 23 what else the Pharisees should be “rendering to God”.

The question posed next by the Sadducees (22:23-33) exposed *them* as people who knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. “The Scriptures” spoke of resurrection (Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 25:8; 26:18; Daniel 12:2, etc.). And we must recollect that whatever God is “the God of” must in the end honour Him. He is the God of the Hebrews, the God of Israel, even the God of the whole earth, and that earth will one day be full of His glory. But that which is irreversibly extinct cannot bring God honour; rather, the reverse. So God is even the God of all who have passed out of this life, in virtue of the fact they will all be raised (John 5:28-29), and He will bring glory to Himself even by the resurrection of judgment. Therefore this core belief of the Sadducees dishonoured the living God.

In all this the Lord had shown Himself to be completely in command of each situation –shown Himself indeed to be their King. And now *He* asks the Pharisees (not the Sadducees) a question. “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?” (Matthew 22:42). Rather mechanically, one supposes, they replied, “The son of David.”

The Lord’s instant rejoinder was, “How then does David in the Spirit call him ‘Lord’, saying, ‘The LORD said to my Lord...’” The inscription at the head of Psalm 110 left no doubt that David had written it. The Pharisees evidently (and rightly) accepted that the “my Lord” of the psalm is Messiah. But David spoke of Him as his *Lord*. And the Lord’s question was, “Whose son is he?” Plainly the answer to this question solves the riddle of how David could regard his Descendant as his Lord. It does so because its right answer is that He is Son of God, and therefore David’s Lord.

The question that now arises *for us* is whether the psalm merely implies that David’s Son *would be* “Lord” to David in the *future* day when the LORD would exalt Him to His own right hand. Or was He already “Lord” to David at the time when David penned these lines? Because if He was already David’s Lord at that time, then He must already have been God’s Son at that time also; *for no other basis for David’s calling Him “Lord” is suggested by the Lord’s two questions.*

Within a few days the Sanhedrin – Sadducees and Pharisees alike – would use the fact that the Lord affirmed that He was Son of God to seek His crucifixion (Matthew 26:63-65; Mark 14:62-64), seemingly on the grounds that this was blasphemy in terms of Leviticus 24:11-23. By the Name of “Son” the One standing before them was indeed eternally God.

The Lamb in the midst of the throne

Part 4. The Lamb worshipped

George Stevens

The final article of a series¹

“And I heard a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much... And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb, as it had been slain.... And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne.

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints” (Revelation 5:2-8, KJV).

In Revelation 4:11 the twenty-four elders had worshipped God as the Creator of all things, acknowledging His right to do so for His own sovereign pleasure, and also His worthiness to receive glory and honour and power in respect of that creation. In chapter 5 we see how this last part of their doxology was to be realised.

The first verse of chapter 5 depicts the One on the throne as having a book (or “roll”) in His right hand. A strong angel called with a loud voice for someone among all the hosts of created beings to step forward and receive the roll, someone who was worthy of initiating the measures needed to bring about God’s glorification. Only One was found. He is described in terms that identified Him as Israel’s Messiah, but seen in a form that identified Him as a sacrificial Lamb. The only One worthy to be the Agent of God’s sovereign will was One who Himself had borne the judgement for earth’s sins. In verse 8 the four living creatures and the elders give voice to His worthiness. In 4:10 the elders fell down before the *throne*; in 5:8 they and the living creatures fall down before the *Lamb*.

¹ On Revelation 4:1 – 5:7 see earlier articles in this series in *Scripture Truth*, commencing January 2018.

*The only One worthy to be the Agent of God's sovereign will
was One who Himself had borne the judgement for earth's sins*

“Every one of them” (i.e., of the elders) had a harp, and a vial (i.e., a bowl) full of fragrances. Together these speak of praise and prayers. Prayers of saints through the ages were about to be publicly justified with remarkable answers and knowledge.

We find their “new song” in verses 9-10:

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

It is difficult to say whether both the living creatures and the elders are singing or not, as there are various thoughts about the translation of “us” in these verses. After a little research, it is quite conclusive that “Thou hast redeemed us” is correct in verse 9. This means that the elders are singing this section. It also shows us that the elders represent those who are classed as “redeemed” because the living creatures did not, themselves, have to be redeemed.

In most manuscripts verse 10 reads, “And hast made them unto their God kings and priests: and they shall reign on the earth.” This indicates that the living creatures are singing this part of the song. (This singing in sections by different groups often takes place in the psalms). They are reaffirming that through His sacrifice, the redeemed are kings (represented by the elders’ crowns) and priests (represented by the elders’ white garments). The living creatures’ knowledge includes the fact that the redeemed (past, present and future) would reign on the earth. I say this because only when the “everlasting gospel” has gone forth, warning of God’s impending judgment, will the whole world have heard about God requiring faith for deliverance: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (14:6-7). What a remarkable privilege believers will have in the day that Christ reigns!

*The song was a brand-new one. It focussed on the Lamb
as the One who has conquered death; who redeemed;
who made kings and priests to God*

The song was a brand-new one. It focussed on the worth of the Lamb as the One who has conquered death; the One who redeemed; the One who made kings and priests to God.

Hence we are reminded, forcibly, of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It was at the cross He was made a curse for those who had broken the law of God. According to Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13, anyone who hangs upon a tree is accursed of God. Christ died taking the judgment of sin upon Himself. 2 Corinthians 5:21 reveals that, "...He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He also took the punishment for our sins, as Isaiah 53:5 states: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities..." And 1 Peter 2:24 says, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

Hence, as 1 Peter 1:18-19 states, "...Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The blood of Christ has the power to redeem (or, "to buy"). All saints, past, present and future, depend upon its power to purchase and free the sinner from sin, the world, death, and Satan.

Returning to Revelation 5, we read in verse 11 of more than one hundred million angels praising the Lamb. Angels delight to serve the heirs of salvation now (Hebrews 1:14) and they will serve them in glory (Revelation 21:12). The holy angels will accompany the Lord when He appears as King of kings (Matthew 25:31).

This huge company worships the Lamb that was slain. Who can imagine the sound as they say, "Worthy is the Lamb"?

*Every creature finds a voice which
desires blessing for the Lamb for evermore*

This huge company worships the Lamb that was slain. Who can imagine the sound as they say, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”!

They attribute seven elements to Him as a man. *Power* is the first, because He was about to exercise it in the will of God. *Riches* are second, because everything in the physical and spiritual realms rightly belongs to Him. *Wisdom* is third, as needed in the judgments He was about to pronounce. *Strength* is fourth, because He would need it to exercise His office as Head of every principality and power. *Honour* is fifth, because He is preeminent – the Firstborn of all creation. *Glory* is sixth, because He alone is able to bear it as He reigns (cp. Zechariah 6:13). He will magnify God. Finally, there is blessing, for He will joy in His own and will be well spoken of by all (Psalm 72:17).

Finally, in Revelation 5:13 the rest of creation praise God and the Lamb. Every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea finds a voice which desires blessing for the Lamb for evermore.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

Verse 14 finds the living creatures in total agreement as they pronounce their “Amen”. The elders fall down and worship “him that liveth for ever and ever”. The Lamb is guaranteed to accomplish all the counsels of God whether with reference to heaven or earth. As He Himself brings honour and glory to God, so God will ensure that His Son receives equal honours also (John 5:22-23).

*As He Himself brings honour and glory to God, so
God will ensure that His Son receives equal honours*

A Christian's manifesto

This world has made its cause
to take from God His throne,
deny His works, denounce His laws,
and substitute its own.

Satan's old ploy again!
— to say God's rules are wrong.
But only God knows *all* the pain:
judgments to *Him* belong.

He knows our hearts within,
profanity and pride;
it's only God knows all the sin
— and that's why Jesus died.

We'll fight the gospel fight
and seek by gracious word
to turn, from darkness unto light
and Satan's power to God;

the prayer of faith sustain
for prisoners and oppressed
that God the hand of kings restrain.
That children's hearts be blessed.

We'll heed our heavenly call,
and worldly lures resist;
God's kindness seek to show to all,
the character of Christ.

By faith we'll not rely
on fallen man's resource,
but fleshly members mortify,
and make Christ our recourse.

He won for us the right
of citizens above:
we'll brighten up the earthly night
with sweet songs of His love;

the unknown hour we'll wait
when Christ will call His bride
then rule of righteousness instate;
who first for all men died.

The LORd has set His King
on holy Zion's hill,
and such as cry, "Away with Him!"
will cringe before Him still.

Father, we seek the grace
to press towards the prize,
and act in all things to Your praise
whose precepts men despise.

The Flood and why it happened

F.B.Hole

Continuing a series on Genesis that commenced in July 2017.

Another section of Genesis starts with chapter 5, the preface to it being found in verses 1 and 2. Herein the unity of the human race is again stressed, for though Adam called his wife's name Isha (2:23) and then Eve (3:20), God blessed them and called their name Adam from the outset (5:2, literally). So Eve too was "Adam", jointly with her husband. This is not surprising, when we remember that the relationship of husband and wife was designed by God as a type of Christ and the church. So, in 1 Corinthians 12:12, we have "Christ," or more accurately, "the Christ," used in a way that covers both Christ personally and His body, the church.

Until we reach Enoch the pre-flood patriarchs are mentioned without any comment beyond the age at which the son was born in whom the line of faith and promise was continued, and the total years of their long lives. Enoch was the seventh from Adam, as we are reminded in the epistle of Jude (v.14), and he was an outstanding character, as outstanding for *good* as Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain, had been for *evil*. If in the one we see the world in its rebellion and sinfulness beginning to take shape, in the other we see the believer's separate pathway through the world.

Enoch "walked with God" (Genesis 5:24, KJV), and, since God and the world "walk" on wholly different planes, the walk of Enoch was of necessity apart from the men of his age. He was no recluse, for he begat sons and daughter; and moreover he boldly prophesied, as Jude tells us (14ff). He predicted the coming of the Lord in judgment upon the ungodly men of his own age, and indeed of all the ages. When he had completed 365 years, "he was not; for God took him." The significance of this is made quite plain in Hebrews 11:5. He "was translated that he should not see death." This indicates plainly that he was removed because death threatened him. We judge therefore that Enoch's bold denunciation of the outrageous ungodliness which in his time began to fill the earth would have moved the ungodly to slay him. But when they determined to strike and sought him, he was not there, for God had translated him.

The flood was God's governmental wrath falling upon the ungodly world, and the case of Noah shows us that God knows how to carry saints safely through such a period. But the case of Enoch furnishes us with an example of how God, before His wrath falls, may be pleased to remove a saint to heaven without dying. In this Enoch foreshadows the removal of the church before the vials of

Divine wrath are poured upon the earth in the great tribulation. It is, thank God, definitely stated that “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5: 9). A simple summary of Enoch’s life would be: “He walked with God; he witnessed for God; he went to God, without seeing death.”

When we reach Noah, the tenth from Adam, the history again expands. To begin with, his father, Lamech, named him with prophetic insight. He acknowledged that the earth was under the curse of God and anticipated that his son would bring rest, or comfort (Genesis 5:29). This Noah did by building the ark at the command of God, thus carrying a few, that is, eight souls, into a new world. Noah lived apparently to the great age of five hundred years before begetting his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

As we open chapter 6 we are carried on to the later centuries of the pre-flood age, when the population had considerably increased and human wickedness began to rise to a climax. Many have understood the term, “sons of God” (6:2), to refer to men of Seth’s line – the line of faith – who fell away and married daughters of Cain’s line. But we agree with those who accept “sons of God” as referring to beings of an angelic order, as it clearly does in such Scriptures as Job 1:6; 2:1 and 38:7. We believe that Jude 6 and 7 confirm what we are saying. Sodom and Gomorrah went after “strange flesh”, committing such enormous evil as is forbidden in Exodus 22:19, and these “sons of God” in Genesis 6 did the same thing in principle, by going after the daughters of men. Thereby they apostatized, leaving their first estate, and, lest they should repeat the offence, they are held “in everlasting chains under darkness” (Jude 6) until eternal perdition falls upon them.

In Genesis, however, we are only told about the terrible effect of their act in the world of men. The monstrous men produced were monsters of iniquity, filling the earth with violence and corruption (Genesis 6:4,5). Yet man in his fallen condition is such that these monsters, instead of being considered men of infamy, were treated as “men of renown”. They were the originals, doubtless, from whom sprang those tales of “gods and goddesses”, “Titans”, etc., which have come down to us in the writings of antiquity. They are popularly dismissed as fables, but it looks as if they have a larger basis of fact than many care to admit.

*Enoch foreshadows the removal of the church
before the vials of Divine wrath are poured upon the earth*

How incisive is verse 5! Man's wickedness became great, or abundant, for he was wholly evil in the deepest springs of his being. His heart was evil; the thoughts of his heart were evil, and the imagination, which lay behind and prompted his thoughts, was evil. Note the "only": there was not one trace of good – and that continually. Thus *before* the flood we have exactly the same verdict as to man as is presented to us in Romans 3:10-18 – via quotations extracted from Scriptures which describe the condition of men *after* the flood.

In verse 6 we are told how all this affected the LORD, and here for the first time we have human feelings attributed to God. "It grieved him in his heart". Only thus could we have any understanding of such a matter, and there is nothing incongruous in it, inasmuch as man has been made in the image and likeness of God. Only, there must be an intensity and elevation in the Divine thoughts and feelings altogether unknown by man. How great must have been His grief! All good at the outset, and now all so abominable that nothing could meet the case but the total destruction of mankind, with but few exceptions, and also of the animate creation that had been committed to man's hand.

There was just one man that found grace in the eyes of the Lord. In this connection nothing is said of his wife nor of his three sons and their wives. Noah was a man of faith. Shem may have been the same. Ham, we know, was not, and of the others we have no information, but as Hebrews says, "Noah ... moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (11:7). *Faith* on his part accepted the Divine warning, which moved him to *fear*. *Fear* moved him to *act*.

How the men of that age viewed the state of things that had developed in their midst we are not told, but to God it had become absolutely intolerable, so that He had to say, "The end of all flesh is come before Me . . . behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Genesis 6:13). His Spirit should not always strive with man (v.3), and so a limit of one hundred and twenty years was set. God thus condemned the world, and by building the ark Noah "condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith".

In his second epistle Peter tells us that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2:5). It was the period when "the longsuffering of God waited," as he had said in his first epistle (3:20). Noah showed men what was morally and practically right in the sight of God, but it was without any fruit, for his hearers were disobedient; and their spirits are now in prison (3:19). Only of Noah could God say, "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1). Indeed righteousness for men was not fully accomplished until the death and resurrection of Christ, and so the verse is explained in Hebrews 11:7 to mean

that of that righteousness Noah became an heir. The believer of today is not an *heir* of righteousness, for in Christ he possesses it.

Noah was the builder but God was the Designer of the ark. The door was in the side to allow easy access by men, but the window was above, to let in light from heaven and shut out any view of the watery waste soon to be. The ark's dimensions were large. The cubit is computed to have been from 18 to 22 inches in length, and, as the ark was made simply to float and not shaped like a ship to travel, its cubic capacity must have been very great.

Instructions also were given as to all that the ark was to contain; seven of each of the clean creatures and two of the rest, male and female; with a sufficiency of food for all (Genesis 6:19 – 7:3). Nothing was left to imagination; all was ordered by God from first to last. This is worthy of note, for here we have the first illustration of salvation that the Bible furnishes. At a later date Jonah declared, "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), and how fully this is so we discover when coming to the New Testament we find unfolded the "so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3) that the gospel declares.

Genesis 6 closes with the statement that Noah was obedient in all particulars, doing just as he was told. The first verse of chapter 7 furnishes us with the first instance of how God, in dealing with men on the earth, links a man's household with himself – it contains the first occurrence of "thou and all thy house". Salvation from judgment about to be poured out on earth is before us here, but in Acts 16:31 the same principle holds good in regard to eternal salvation. How thankful we should be for that word!

When we read verses 1-16 of Genesis 7, we might be tempted to think that it contains a good deal of repetition, but we believe the passage is so worded to impress us with three things: first, the exact and careful way in which Noah obeyed God's instructions; second, the exact ordering and timing of all God's actions in judgment; and, third, that the great catastrophe was of a nature wholly transcending any ordinary convulsion of nature, and altogether an act of God.

The term, "windows of heaven," (verse 11) is very expressive. It denotes an outpouring *from God above*. Such outpouring may be blessing, as in Malachi 3:10, but here it was in judgment. The devastating waters descended for forty days and forty nights, a period that we meet again in the Scripture several times, and indicating a full period of testing. But also there was from beneath a breaking-up of the established order. What exactly is signified when we read that, "the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up," it is impossible to say. The tremendous event had never happened before, and it

To the very last day the door of the ark stood open, and nothing would have prevented a repentant man from entering

will never happen again, for we read, “neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth” (9:11). So obviously we must be content to know that there were immense internal convulsions that produced a mighty upsurge of earth’s subterranean waters, to meet the waters descending from above.

Verse 13 makes it plain that Noah and his family entered the ark on the very day that the storm broke. Noah had been a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), just as Enoch had been a prophet of the Advent. He is the first preacher of whom we have any record, and his theme was righteousness, a theme that which also stands in the very forefront of the gospel that is preached today, as Romans 1:17 declares. Only today, it is God’s righteousness revealed in Christ and established in His death and resurrection that is presented as the basis of blessing for men. Noah had to preach God’s righteousness as outraged by man’s violence and corruption, and demanding judgment. Still, to the very last day the door of the ark stood open, and nothing would have prevented a repentant man from entering, had such an one been found.

The last day came however, and each of the four men and four women took the last decisive step which ensured their preservation from destruction. The decisive step for each was when they planted one foot on the ark, and removed the other from the earth that was under judgment. It was impossible to have one foot in and one foot out. It was either both feet in, or both feet out. Which thing is a useful parable for gospel preachers today. These eight people’s action endorsed God’s judgment against the world, and expressed their faith in the Divinely appointed way of salvation.

Once inside the ark, “the Lord shut him in” (Genesis 7:16). When the Lord shuts, no man can open – not even Noah himself had he wished to do. The shut door secured salvation for the eight souls, and ensured destruction for the world of the ungodly.

In our day the gospel is too often preached as a way of escape from merited judgment, without any emphasis on the other side which is presented here. By building and entering the ark Noah “condemned the world” (Hebrews 11: 7), and today the reception – in faith – of Christ as Saviour and Lord involves just the same thing. Let us not shirk the issue, as though it could be Christ *and* the world. It must be one or the other; and may God help all who preach the Gospel to declare this with boldness.

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John and the Family of God

I. The Gospel of John

Brian Donaldson

The first of a two-part series that commenced as a Truth for Today talk on Premier Radio. See <https://www.truth4today.org.uk/home.htm>.

“She’s family!” Words like these might be said when an adopted person makes contact for the first time with their birth family. They express a relationship beyond that of friendship, an intimacy, a commitment that no other relationship involves. Even the best and most intimate of friendships are different from being “family”.

And if we believe in the Lord Jesus as the One who died for our sins and rose again, we have been born into the family of God (John 1:12). “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons [or, “children”] of God!” (1 John 3:1, KJV; Darby Trans.). John is the New-Testament writer who tells us most about this.

It is fair to imagine that John may have been the youngest of the disciples; it is at any rate generally believed that he outlived all the others. This makes his constant reference to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (see John 13:23; cp.19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20) all the more touching. Obviously Jesus loved all the disciples equally, but this tells us that John had a deep appreciation of the Lord’s love for him personally, understanding that if he had been the only disciple, or indeed even the only person, alive, Jesus would have loved him. It reminds me of Paul’s words when in Galatians 2:20 he finishes the verse by saying “... the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” And in chapter three of his Gospel John introduces us to the love of God for us, in the best-known and most-translated verse in all of Scripture, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). We can become children of God because He gave His Son for us.

And the most important object of his writings is to bring to our attention that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of the eternal God. It is in this way that he begins his Gospel (John 1:1,18). The first three Gospels, written by Matthew, Mark,

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God!”

My children will let you know exactly what I am really like! It is the Son who makes the Father known.

and Luke, give more of the incidents and episodes of the Lord's life. But, whilst recording some of the events recorded in the other Gospels, and even adding others not recorded elsewhere, John's Gospel focusses much less on the history. His primary objective is to present the Person of Christ; and he declares in John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

For this reason John's Gospel begins at the beginning (John 1:1). Not just any beginning. His first epistle also starts by talking about "the beginning" (see 1 John 1:1); and we recollect that the book of Genesis also starts with the words, "In the beginning..." Are these all referring to the same time? No, they are three very different times in history. In his first epistle John is referring to the beginning of the Lord's life and ministry – "That which we have heard, seen, looked upon, and handled" (cp. John 8:25; 15:27; 16:4). Genesis 1 goes back to the creation of the world: surely nothing can go back any further than this? It can: John in his Gospel, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, takes us back a lot further, indeed infinitely further back, to eternity itself which has no beginning.

This is something which is well beyond our imagination and which we can only believe through faith rather than try to understand. It is here that we must begin our consideration of the divine family, because John's Gospel begins with a "Family Relationship" within the Godhead, that already existed in eternity. The "Word" of John 1:1 is the "only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father" of John 1:18. That Relationship had no beginning and will have no end, and we, though weak, poor, sinful mortals can be brought into the blessing of it. What grace!

The excerpt from John 1:18 just quoted ends, "... he hath declared him." Let me start with a very basic example of something we will all understand. If I meet someone I have never met before, I can decide how much or how little of myself I let them see. Indeed, if I want I can portray myself as being something completely different to what I actually am. We can be one thing in one situation and something else in another. However, my children will let you know exactly what I am really like! Of course God the Father is never different

from Himself (Malachi 3:6), nor, indeed is God the Son (John 8:25). But it is the Son who makes the Father known (John 1:18; 14:7-9; 17:26).

And He doesn't just tell us *about* the Father. Imagine if we wanted to meet Her Majesty the Queen. We would have very little chance unless, of course, she decided she wanted to meet us. Then, if she commissioned her son to go out and find us and make the introduction, the situation would be quite different. We see this perhaps when one of the Queen's children marries and someone who previously had no claim through birth to be there is brought into the Royal Family. It is this very scenario that John wants to bring to our attention: that through knowing God the Son we can be brought into the family of God and know God the Father!

I must stress, however, some huge weaknesses in the examples that I have just given. The most important is that God the Father and God the Son, together with God the Holy Spirit, are all one, while distinct; whereas my son and I, while very alike, are not one. God the Son is eternal in His existence, divine in His nature, and distinct in His personality. And whilst we can be "children" (John 1:12), and Paul even speaks of the dignity of adopted "sons" that is ours (Galatians 4:5-7), we will never ever be "sons" in the way that Jesus is the Son. We are "children of God" on an infinitely different plane.

Yet, in the person of the Son, God the Father has chosen to reveal Himself, to bring us into His family. It is this that John primarily is given by divine inspiration to bring to our attention. He therefore begins his Gospel by telling us about a time when nothing else existed apart from the wonderful triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke we see the Lord as the King and the perfect Man respectively; therefore we are given His genealogies through His earthly parents. In the Gospel of Mark, He is shown as the perfect Servant, so no genealogy is given. But in John's Gospel there can be no earthly genealogy for a quite different reason: He *is* the Son of God. Yet He became Man, and died, so that we could become the children of God, and that, having risen and ascended, He might introduce us to His Father as our Father.

In the Old Testament we see how God showed Himself as holy, righteous, faithful, true, and indeed One who showed lovingkindness to His people; but He is not truly revealed as Father until the Son comes. In John's Gospel we see

*Through knowing God the Son we can be brought
into the family of God and know God the Father!*

the increasingly evident aim of the teaching of Jesus to be that He should introduce His followers into the knowledge for themselves of the Father. A climax of this is reached at the close of the prayer of John 17 when Jesus says, “And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (v.26). Then in John 20:17 He sends the message by Mary, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father...”

In John 14:6 the Lord Jesus clearly states, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Notice, this is not just coming to *God*, but coming to *the Father*. The apostle John is not satisfied that we come to a knowledge of God then leave it at that. He wants us to be brought into this close relationship of knowing the mighty, all-powerful Creator-God as our Father. This should therefore affect each and every aspect of our lives as we seek to live lives that please our heavenly Father, in the same way as it is only right and proper in normal circumstances for children to reverence and seek to please their earthly parents.

But having God as our Father does not displace our earthly familial relationships. As the Lord was dying on the cross and enduring extreme suffering, He could look down and see His mother Mary standing with other women (John 19:26). In that time it was very difficult for elderly women on their own to survive, and we must assume that by this point Joseph had died. So the Lord, in spite of His own terrible suffering, considers His mother, and as He looks down He sees the young disciple, John, standing near. What an impression it must have made on this young man, who had left his own father’s fishing business and followed the Lord, now to see this wonderful example of family care! The Lord then commits His mother into the care of John to look after as his own mother (19:27). Earthly family responsibilities are therefore not overlooked in the emphasis on our entering the family of God. This is a great lesson to us all: to ensure we are looking after our parents and being mindful, too, of others who have nobody to look after them.

And on the other hand, we now have brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world. John touches on what is necessary for these family relationships in his epistles, as we shall see in another article, God willing.

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The beatitudes

I. Matthew 5:1-6

Theo Balderston

The beatitudes are series of “blessednesses” or “happinesses”, pronounced by the Lord, that are found in two places in the Gospels – in Matthew 5:1-12 and Luke 6:20-23. The beatitudes in Luke are addressed to the disciples, and focus on bodily experiences – poverty, hunger, persecution. But the beatitudes in Matthew are impersonal (except for vv.11,12), and the majority focus on inward disposition (the fifth, seventh and eighth being exceptions). It is the version in Matthew that is considered here.

The word translated “blessed” in both Matthew and Luke is *makarios*, and it is also often used in the Greek version (Septuagint) of the Psalms to translate “blessednesses” pronounced on man – e.g., “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly” (Psalm 1:1, NKJV). Other examples include 2:12; 32:1; 33:12; 34:8; 41:1; 65:4; 84:4,5,12; 94:12; 112:1; 146:5.

In all these and similar OT cases *makarios* translates a single Hebrew original. There is therefore a direct connection between the Lord’s beatitudes and the verses just referenced in the Psalms. But whereas the texts in the Psalms highlight things that, we can see, indeed would make one happy, there is sharp contrast in the Lord’s beatitudes between the condition supposed and the happiness promised. The point will be returned to at the end of this article.

The eight beatitudes recorded in Matthew 5:3ff were pronounced just after enormous crowds – not just of Jews – had pressed round the Lord for healing (4:23-25). Having healed them, the Lord ascended the mountain (4:24; 5:1) – evidently alone, otherwise the disciples would not have had to come to Him. But the fact that He pronounced His beatitudes impersonally (“Blessed are the...”) must mean that they were pronounced on any listener possessing these characteristics. And indeed it is clear that others were present who also heard His words (7:28-29).

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The cross of course underlies them all, as we shall see, but the demands inherent in the beatitudes, and the attached promises, must have been intelligible to the disciples as they then stood before their seated Teacher.

Blessed are the poor in spirit (5:3, NKJV). The corresponding beatitude in Luke 6:20 is, “Blessed are you poor.” Whilst we can be sure from the miracle of Matthew 8:14, etc., that the Lord did providentially meet the needs of the disciples’ dependants, the disciples themselves suffered poverty in following Him. However in Matthew 5:3 the “happiness” that the Lord pronounces is on poorness of *spirit*.

The pairing “poor and needy” is quite frequent in the OT, and means “destitute of all resources”. See, e.g., Psalms 37:14; 39:17; Amos 4:1. This is not always necessarily meant literally: see, e.g., Psalm 86:12. On this analogy the phrase “the poor in spirit” will mean something similar, but in the dimension of the spirit, i.e., in the dimension of relationship to God. It will denote those who acknowledge that they have no claim whatever upon God’s righteousness or even mercy. It does not mean a lack of self-esteem as regards skills and aptitudes for this life, but rather a sober evaluation of *self* before God – that keeps itself to itself! This sense would surely be caused by a sense of being a sinner (Luke 18:13).

The beatitudes were evidently designed to commend attitudes that contrasted with the leading vices of the nation around the Lord and His disciples. The Pharisee in Luke 18:11 was not “poor in spirit”. Paul made the remarkable statement in Romans 7:9 that he had been “alive once without the law”, yet he had been born under the law (Philippians 3:5). This seems to indicate how lightly the Law’s condemning power

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impacted on Jews of that time. It has been surmised that they made liberal appeal to the concept of the “unintentional sin” (Numbers 15:22-29) so as to maximise the range of sins for which the offering of a sacrifice could massage their consciences. They narrowed the “presumptuous sin” (15:30-31) more or less to apostasy. But this is impossible: whilst David was intent on murdering Uriah, he had no intention of apostatising; and under the Law there was no sacrifice for murder (Psalm 51:16). Perhaps by this sort of “bending of the law” Jews of NT times shielded themselves from Paul’s awful discovery of its killing power (Romans 7:11). The person on whom the Lord’s “happiness” is pronounced will not have used such methods of living at ease with their inner selves. And there is as little, or less, evidence of “poorness of spirit” in twenty-first century society – quite the opposite in fact.

For theirs is the kingdom of the heavens (see Darby Trans). “Kingdom” here does not mean a geographical area, but “royal authority”, “sovereignty”. The kingdom of the heavens is the one Daniel spoke of in 2:44 of his book. It also has a “mystery” form (Matthew 13 – see v.11), but that is certainly not what the disciples would have understood when hearing this beatitude. “For of them is the kingdom of the heavens” means that the poor in spirit will form the stuff of that sovereignty; they will have a governmental role in it. In other words, the Lord makes a paradoxical connexion between the inward attitude of the true disciple and his or her future blessing.

Blessed are they that mourn (Matthew 5:4). “Mourn” & “comforted” strongly evoke Isaiah 61:2,3, where the two words in the Septuagint are of the same root. See also Ezra 10:6 and Isaiah 57:18.

But concordance study of the occurrences of the words for “mourn” used in the Hebrew of these verses suggest that whilst it sometimes denotes for mourning for bereavement (2 Samuel 13:37) it is generally used for mourning for the sins of the people, including the mourner himself. Even Isaiah 57:18 speaks of communal mourning; in this section Israel as a nation is being personified (see v.17). The same is true of other verbs translated “mourn”: there are clear instances of mourning for individual sin (Psalms 6:6; 38:6), but there are many more where it denotes communal mourning for sins for which common responsibility

Personal acknowledgement of personal sinfulness belongs to the first beatitude; the second is a sense of belonging to a people who have failed – and of being as bad as the rest.

is taken. This survey therefore strongly supported the conclusion that “mourn” in Matthew 5:2 denoted a deep sense of contrition for the sinful state of Israel, to which mourner’s own shortcomings were also acutely felt to have contributed. The usage of the corresponding Greek words in the NT bears out this conclusion. See 1 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 12:21; but the only instance of personal mourning for personal sins is James 4:9. Personal acknowledgement of personal sinfulness belongs to the first beatitude; the second is a sense of belonging to a people who have failed – and of being as bad as the rest.

This attitude of “mourning” was no doubt, like poorness of spirit, singled out in contrast to the contrary attitude in the Judaism of the time. The emphasis on fasting (Luke 18:12) might have been meant to signal communal contrition, but the Lord’s parable suggests that instead it was converted into a “work” that those performing were proud of. Though many Jews doubtless deeply resented their subjection to Rome, there is little evidence of the spirit of the great penitential prayers of the OT such as Psalm 106, Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, and Daniel 9. Mourning for the collapse of the moral constitution of society is little known in modern secular society too.

For they shall be comforted needs little comment. In the context in which the beatitude was delivered, Isaiah 61:3-4 is the commentary.

Blessed are the meek (Matthew 5:5). “Meek”, “inherit”, and “earth / land” are exactly as in the Septuagint of Psalm 37:11. What exactly does “meek” mean? To judge, once again, from the concordance, the Hebrew word used in Psalm 37:11 has elsewhere a range of meanings from “poor” to “meek” in our sense. But in my view the context of Ps 37:7, 9,

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34 is what pinpoints the meaning: it is a submissiveness to circumstances that is motivated by waiting for the LORD's intervention. The tenor of that psalm is governed by its opening words, "Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of workers of iniquity. For they will soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.... Commit your way to the LORD; trust also in him and he will bring it to pass. .. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him..." (37:1,2, 5, 7).

"Meekness" therefore is the converse of "fretting" (v.1). The thought of this *waiting* is prominent in the OT (also Psalm 106:13; Proverbs 20:22; Isaiah 25:9; Lamentations 3:26; Micah 7:7 – and about thirty-six other verses!) This characteristic, then, would distinguish the disciples from the zealots who plotted to overthrow Rome by force.

For they shall inherit the earth. With the interpretation of *meek* just offered, the appropriateness of the promise would be evident to the listeners. We live in a world where the very idea of a coming kingdom is ridiculed; and so we too have to encourage each other to remain in "the kingdom *and patience* of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9), even if our inheritance embraces heaven too: see verse 12, addressed to the disciples personally.

We live in a world where the very idea of a coming kingdom is ridiculed; and so we too have to encourage each other to remain in "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ".

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6). The corresponding beatitude in the Sermon on the Plain is, "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled" (Luke 6:21). It is sobering to realise that the disciples not only went without lodging (Matthew 8:20), but also frequently starved. And if His disciples starved, so certainly did the Lord of glory.

However here, as in the first three beatitudes, the Lord speaks of something inward, of hungering after righteousness. Many interpret "righteousness" here to mean "justification" in Pauline terms. The principle of justification was already known in the OT (Genesis 15:6; Psalms 24:5; 69:27; 106:30-31), so this meaning would not have been

foreign to the disciples. It is also one implication of the King's name in Jeremiah 23:6, "the LORD our righteousness". However against this interpretation stands the question of what it would mean to be "filled" with such righteousness. Since justification is something conferred by judicial *pronouncement*, one has either received it or not. It is not something one could be "half-filled" with.

The beatitude could, however, refer to the longing after personal righteousness of thought and deed, for the day when the Law will be written in the heart, and the Spirit given within to fulfil it (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26-27). Such a longing no doubt existed in the disciples' hearts.

But in my view the interpretation that best fits the context is that of longing for the righteous reign of "the King", putting down wrongdoing, idolatry, etc. and practising righteous rule on behalf of the poor. The previous beatitude concerned a meekness that could easily, if unintended, turn to apathy concerning the coming kingdom. The next beatitude prescribes mercifulness, and seems to be intended to ward off the idea, evidently never far from the disciples' minds, that judging unrighteousness was something that should occupy them there and then (cp. Luke 9:54). These two flanking beatitudes support the above meaning of "righteousness" in the fourth beatitude.

Scriptures such as Psalms 9; 10:16-18; 72; 96:11-13 (= 98:7-9); Isaiah 11:1-5; 32:1ff explain the righteousness that belongs to the kingdom. It is the final, answer to Psalm 125: 3. In summary, the desire to be "filled with righteousness" is a longing for the righteous kingdom to be manifested, plus a longing for the full inward righteousness that would be given along with it. There is a strong emphasis on man-made righteousness today – as defined by "human rights". Some of it is admirable, but its most prominent aspects seem deliberately to defy the righteousness prescribed by God for the kingdoms of men. We should

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be “hungering and thirsting” for true righteousness, both inward and in the public sphere.



If we compare these four beatitudes with the “happy man” pronouncements of the Psalms (see first paragraph of this article) we readily see how much more probing the Lord’s beatitudes are. This is because they were pronounced when “the ends of the ages” (1 Corinthians 10:11) had come. The time of Israel’s trial under the Law was ending, and its result had been to prove that man was an incorrigible sinner (Romans 3:19). “Blessednesses” were pronounced on those who acknowledged this in their own persons – who truly regarded themselves as spiritually destitute and without claim on God; who truly mourned for sins, both their own and those of the covenant people; who waited God’s time for the outpouring of the promised blessing; and who longed for both the inward and the public righteousness of the kingdom.

We notice, too, that where specific blessings are attached to the “blessednesses” in the Psalms, they generally belong to the present age: see, e.g., Ps 112:1.¹ But the “blessednesses” promised in the beatitudes would be understood to belong to the age to come. This is true even for the comfort from mourning if understood in the light of Isaiah 61:2-9. The present age was finished as far as God expecting any response from it to Himself was concerned. All the believer’s true blessings belong to the day of resurrection even if by faith we can lay hold of them now. When the beatitudes were delivered it would have been scriptural to envisage that “day” as described in, e.g., Psalm 72, Isaiah 11; 25:6ff, and Daniel 12:1-3, since “the mystery of God’s will” as outlined in Ephesians 1 – 3 was still unknown. Yet there is a glimpse of it in Matthew 5:12. We can apply to ourselves the beatitudes in the light of that further revelation. But this greater knowledge does not “wash out” the future fulfilment, as well, of these blessings in the way in which the Lord would have expected His original hearers to understand them.

God willing, an article on the remainder of the beatitudes will follow.

¹ Psalm 2:12 may be an exception, but not 94:12-13.

The judgment-seat of Christ

J.A.Trench

“Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him.” “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:9, 10, KJV). How do we get to be there? We only come to be made manifest at the judgment-seat, but we are in bodies of glory like His own. We shall be perfectly like Him – no room for fear there, for, as we know well, perfect love has cast out fear (1 John 4:18). We are made manifest there as the fruit of His perfect work on the cross in which Christ so glorified God.

You may ask, “Why are we made manifest at the judgment-seat of Christ?” It is that, there for the first time, we may know His grace fully, as we cannot know it now. All our ways will come out before Him from the cradle to the glory; and, more than that, all His ways with us. And then, what a burst of praise that will never die away will come from our hearts! I cannot imagine the full joy of eternity without that. Apart from that, how we should have wished, all through eternity, for a moment like that when we could go over all our past history in the light of his presence. It is needful that it should all come out there, in order that His grace should have its full place in my heart at last.

Reward also comes in. Eternal glory carries no thought of reward for service. It will be the fruit of the travail of His soul, that He should have us with Himself in the eternal glory. But there is the kingdom, where there will be reward, or the loss of it. Some will have all their works burnt up as rubbish, and how glad they will be that it should be so; but the solemn fact remains that they will have no reward in the kingdom – not that reward should ever be a *motive* for service; then it would be rubbish indeed. Christ must be the motive. The apostle shows how this is meant to act on our souls down here: we anticipate that day, we can walk in the full light of it when divested of all fear. What a solemn incentive it becomes to holiness! The Lord give us to walk in view of that day.

Excerpt from typescript of an address, 1891.

God, Israel, Idolatry and Christ

A Brief Exposition of Isaiah 40 to 57

by Hamilton Smith

Publication date: 24 September 2018

Paperback: 80 pages; STP price: £4.75 +p&p

Written in 1941, but never before published in book form!

This volume consists of a verse-by-verse study of chapters 40 to 57 of the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah. Emphasis is placed on the dispensational approach to its interpretation, distinguishing prophecies as already fulfilled, or yet to be so. The focus of chapters 40 to 48 is seen as the issue of idolatry; and that of chapters 49 to 57 to be the coming of Jesus as the humble servant of God, to be followed by his future return to rule. Throughout the exposition valuable practical lessons are drawn for Christians today.

From the editor's foreword:

The year was 1941 and Hamilton Smith took up a consideration of the later chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah.

What light did the prophecy cast on the events taking place as he wrote? And what did the future hold? Europe was engulfed in war. Jews were suffering unprecedented persecution and they possessed no homeland.

Isaiah's message was a stern one: he conveyed the reasons for God's displeasure with Israel; and yet, beyond all the consequences of failure, the prospect of a regathered nation, safe in the homeland of God's provision, shone through, but only to be enjoyed when the Messiah comes to rule.

In preparing the text for publication some further scripture references have been added because not all today are as familiar with the Bible as Hamilton Smith's generation. The sources of general quotations have been identified where possible, and some contemporary anachronisms have been clarified for today's reader. Otherwise the text has not been changed.

Understanding
The Old Testament

God, Israel, Idolatry and Christ



A Brief Exposition of Isaiah 40 to 57

Hamilton Smith

The unknown hour

Nothing know we of the season
when the Lord will catch away
all His saints, but we have reason
to expect a glorious day.
When the Lord will come again
— what rejoicing will be then!

We'll behold the King's own beauty,
hear Him raise redemption's song;
we'll discern the Father's glory
in the face of His dear Son;
in the well-preparèd place
evermore set forth God's grace.

Waiting for our Lord's returning,
be it ours, His word to keep.
May our lamps be always burning,
may we watch while others sleep!
We're no longer of the night:
we're the children of the light.

Being of the favoured number
whom the Saviour calls "His own",
it's not fitting that we slumber:
nothing should be left undone.
This should be His people's aim:
still to glorify His Name.

Adapted from Thomas Kelly (1769-1855).