

# NT

A pattern for life in God's House

## Back to Basics The Bible

**Come dine with me  
Poor in Spirit  
Design and Designer**

Issue 1 2011

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Communications to the editors:

@ [editors@neededtruth.net](mailto:editors@neededtruth.net)

✉ c/o Robert Fisher, 258 West Main Street, Whitburn, West Lothian, EH47 0QW Scotland

☎ +44 (0)1501 743811

✉ or Martin Jones, 46 Herne Hill, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M9A 2X1

Editorial production team: Robert Fisher, Peter Hickling, Geoff Hydon, Brian Johnston, Martin Jones

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# From the Editors' desk

## A notable anniversary

400 years ago this year the Authorized (King James) version of the Bible was first published, and for much of this time it has been the Bible of the English-speaking world. Prior to this, there had been for many years resistance in the Papal hierarchy to translations of the Bible into the language spoken by the people, but in the 1380s John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor, produced the first hand-written English Bible manuscripts. They were translated from the Latin Vulgate, which was the only source text available to Wycliffe. The invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in the 1450s permitted the printing of Bibles in large quantities – William Tyndale was the first man to print the New Testament in English. Many Protestants were driven abroad in the reign of Queen Mary, and numbers of them met in Geneva, where a complete Bible was first published in 1560, including 90% of Tyndale's translation. The officially sanctioned 'Bishops' Bible' and the Geneva Bible competed for favour, the latter being the more popular.

In 1603 James VI of Scotland became James I of England, and agreed that a new translation of the Bible should be produced, in theory based on the Bishops' Bible, but in fact much influenced by the Geneva Bible. 47 scholars worked on the translation in six committees, and the work was published in 1611. It was produced at a high point of the English language, and it includes many memorable phrases that have shaped our speech, so that we quote the Bible unconsciously. This has led to it being described as 'The noblest monument of English prose'.<sup>1</sup> It has the advantage for study purposes that it largely follows the 'word-for-word' principle of translation. However, translators were alive to the fact that it is not good English style to repeat words in a sentence, so they did sometimes use different English words to translate the same Greek one. F.F. Bruce gives an example from Romans 5:2-3: *By whom also we have access by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience ...*<sup>2</sup> The English terms 'rejoice' and 'glory' stand for the same word in the Greek original. In Tyndale, Geneva and the Bishops' Bibles, both instances are translated 'rejoice'. Only in the Authorized Version does the translation vary between the two verses.

In conclusion, although the AV is a sound representation of God's Word, it is not the last word. Some have taken its very archaism to be an advantage, such as, 'I believe that it is correct for an English translation to preserve AN APPROPRIATE ARCHAIC FLAVOR as a way of preserving the distance between us and the biblical world. Joseph Wood Krutch used an evocative formula in connection with the King James Bible when he spoke of "an appropriate flavour of a past time".<sup>3</sup> This is not a valid argument. The New Testament was written in *koine* Greek, the language of the common people, not in some special religious language, and if we persist in using an archaic version, we run the risk of conveying the idea that we have an archaic message. This is not the case, and we commend the contents of this issue of NT to our readers, drawing special attention to our feature on the Bible in this centenary year.

*Peter*

References: (1) Lowes, John Livingston *Essays in Appreciation*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936 (2) Bruce, Frederick Fyvie (2002) *History of the Bible in English*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press (3) Ryken, Leland, *The Word of God in English*, p. 182

# Making disciples

Edwin Stanley, Aberkenfig, Wales

The salvation of lost souls is something that must surely concern all who have been awakened by the Spirit of God to the awful penalty of sin. That everyone has the opportunity to escape from the judgement to come should promote in us a deep longing to share with others the loveliness of the Man of Calvary.

Yet the salvation that all can share – Jude describes it as our ‘common salvation’,<sup>1</sup> – should not override all other considerations of spiritual service.

We find useful guidance in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. There we see that all those who were covered by the blood of the lamb, were delivered from the wrath that God brought upon Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

However, when the Red Sea loomed before the people, another decision had to be made. Would they commit themselves to God, or would they allow themselves to be subjected once again to the pursuing Egyptian army?

The covering of blood brought them out of slavery, but the covering of water was to distance them from that slavery and to bring them into the glorious truth of obedience to the will of God. 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 says, *I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

The same Lord who used Mark to write, *“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation”*<sup>3</sup> also used Matthew to write, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*<sup>4</sup>

We have to respond both to the ‘go and tell’ **and** to the ‘go and make’, for the one brings saving grace and eternal life, the other is life-saving through amazing grace. The one is not without the other: just as the covering of the blood was not to be without the covering of the water for the Israelites long ago. Each complements the other so that the child of God can *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*<sup>5</sup>

John 15 introduces us to the divine truth of fruit-bearing. This includes, and perhaps emphasizes, that fruit which is the development of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ within the life of those who are born again, and who have committed to following the King.

Israelites, redeemed by blood, and separated from their previous lifestyle by the water of their ‘baptism’, were brought to the testing of Mara where they found water too bitter to drink. Immediately afterwards they progressed to the blessing of Elim’s oasis where they found abundant palm trees.<sup>6</sup> They needed both the testing and the blessing to help them to grow deeper into the character of God. So

do we. The people grumbled in the desert, as they craved the food which they had previously enjoyed in Egypt. God’s grace brought them quail and manna bread, as they were given another opportunity to grow in their knowledge of the God they were saved to serve. Thus the water of adversity and blessing, coupled with meat and bread from the hand of God, helped them to increase in their knowledge of the ways of God. What they learned in a physical way, we need to learn spiritually.<sup>7</sup>

John 6:35-63 shows that these very experiences were a foretaste of what the disciple of today can know through the Lord Jesus.

Jesus said, *“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. ... For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him ...”*<sup>8</sup>

The more we are prepared to receive God’s feeding of our souls, the greater will be our appreciation of the Lord Jesus and the more He will be seen in us.

References:

(1) Jude 3 (2) Ex. 12 (3) Mark 16:15 (4) Mat. 28:18-20 (5) 2 Pet. 3:18 (6) Ex. 15:27 (7) 1 Pet. 2:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14 (8) John 6:48-56

Bible quotations from ESV



***We have to respond both  
to the ‘go and tell’ and to  
the ‘go and make’***

# Simon Peter

Jonny Archibald, Melbourne, Australia

I recently spent time with some other young disciples trying to establish with them the things that we know about the Apostle Peter at a ‘human level’, before we began to look together at Peter’s first epistle. It is quite possible in our Bible reading to operate with only a two-dimensional knowledge of the characters involved in God’s great purposes. To overcome this it can be useful to try to stand in the shoes, or indeed sandals, of the character in order to enter more fully into their day-to-day life and experience. By doing so we can gain a greater knowledge of the person and his appreciation of the working of God in his own life and those around him.

By understanding elements of Peter’s background we can then perhaps see how his appreciation of some of the character of God would be particularly keen in certain areas. In any study of this sort we need to be careful that we do not cross the line from a Biblical understanding into mere speculation, but a degree of spiritual deduction can take us closer to the person and so personalise their place in the service of God to our benefit. Taking various verses in turn, we learn that Peter came from Capernaum<sup>1</sup> in the region of Galilee, a despised place in Old Testament times,<sup>2</sup> and the whole Galilean area was evidently still not held in high esteem, at least in terms of its spiritual output,<sup>3</sup> in New Testament times.

Peter had his own house,<sup>4</sup> was married<sup>5</sup> (we deduce this from the fact that he had a mother-in-law), and had a partnership in fishing<sup>6</sup> with James and John prior to his call to be a disciple. From Peter’s fishing experience we could believe that he was self-motivated, used to hard work, did at least some ‘night shifts’,<sup>7</sup> showed leadership, was capable of working with others, had some patience, valued maintenance, used some basic arithmetic, had an awareness of nature and a degree of fearlessness, specifically around boats and water. All of these, and doubtless other qualities, were harnessed for the work that the Lord Jesus Christ called him to do in being a leading figure in the days of the Lord’s ministry on earth and in the progress of the early churches of God.

From a worldly perspective, Simon was a most unlikely candidate, and yet perhaps it should not surprise us that he was used for God’s glory when we lay Peter’s calling alongside the words of Paul to the church in Corinth: *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption –*

*Against Peter’s background and life experience we are better placed to appreciate the two epistles that he wrote*



*that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”<sup>8</sup>*

Against Peter’s background and life experience and allied with our subsequent knowledge of his endearingly human highs and lows during the years of the Lord’s ministry on earth, we are then better placed to appreciate the two epistles that he wrote for the education and benefit of those who had been dispersed abroad as disciples in different areas.<sup>9</sup> We know that he had the help of Silvanus<sup>10</sup> to communicate the first epistle. Peter, given his upbringing, would not have been well-educated by the standards of the academic world and yet, rather than dismissing his ability to contribute in a written and lasting form, he engaged the help of another to work with him; a display of true spiritual partnership and a lesson to us all. Most encouraging is the account of Peter’s preaching in the Acts of the Apostles: *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realised they had been with Jesus.<sup>11</sup>* We can’t miss the significance of Peter having spent time with Jesus; he was a transformed man, a true disciple and one who had a very personal appreciation of the grace of God and with such words he closed his second epistle: *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.<sup>12</sup>*

References: (1) Luke 4:31,38 (2) 1 Kin. 9:10-13 (3) John 7:52 (4) Luke 4:38 (5) Luke 4:38 (6) Luke 5:2-3,10 (7) Luke 5:5 (8) 1 Cor. 1:26-31 (9) 1 Pet. 1:1 (10) 1 Pet. 5:12 (11) Acts 4:13 (12) 2 Pet. 3:18

Bible quotations from NKJV

## Upside down values

# Poor in spirit

Gilbert Grierson, Knocknacloy, N.Ireland

How wonderful that our God should want to bless His creatures! In Genesis 1:28 God blessed the man and the woman that He had formed in His own image. He has not changed in His desires because, as the apostle John reminds us, *God is love*.<sup>1</sup>

To bestow blessings on the earth and on its inhabitants was in the divine plan for mankind from the beginning. *The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it*.<sup>2</sup> How sad that so much blessing was lost when Adam sinned. Adam's fallen race has been afflicted with the consequences of one man's disobedience from that day until this.<sup>3</sup> But thank God that another Man has appeared to put things right and to restore the blessings of heaven.

In Matthew chapter 5 we have what is sometimes called 'The Sermon on the Mount', beginning with the 'beatitudes' meaning 'blessings'. The Greek word translated 'blessed' means to be fortunate, well off, counted happy. It was a happy day when great multitudes came together to listen to life-giving words from the mouth of God incarnate. Perhaps some were only there that day for the hoped-for physical blessings: healing of bodies and minds and perhaps another miraculously provided meal of bread and fishes. But that day the table was being set with food of a spiritual nature, food that is still available!

But what was the nature of the blessings that Jesus spoke about? Come with me please on a journey. Our destination is Bethlehem. Here we are in Manger Square, and in front of the Church of the Nativity, reputedly built over the birthplace of Israel's Messiah. Let's enter! Its low, isn't it? Mind your head! This door, the only entrance into the cavernous interior, is called the Door of Humility, so-called because everyone who wants to enter needs to bend low. The medieval crusader or the proud conqueror will not ride mounted in here; and even the common tourist has to bend!

And that serves as an illustration for this, the first of the beatitudes. It indicates that the way to experience the blessings of the kingdom is reserved not for everyone, but for those who are 'poor in spirit'. The same characteristics of the persons these blessings are offered to are clearly described by God in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*But this is the one to whom I will look:*

*He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.*<sup>4</sup>

These are the poor in spirit. Biblical history could fill a gallery with their portraits, men and women who deeply felt their own unworthiness before a holy God. Let's stop

for a moment in front of Peter's portrait. Here he is out fishing on a boat on Galilee.<sup>5</sup> He has fished all night with his companions and caught nothing. Now Jesus instructs him to cast his net on the other side. Sceptical, but willing to obey, Peter lowers the net. Now look at the huge catch that almost breaks the net! Wait, Peter is getting down at the feet of the Lord Jesus, recognising that he is in the presence of holiness, of deity. He confesses, *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."*<sup>6</sup> He is indeed a sinful man, always was, but now he recognises it, as someone convicted by the Spirit of God, and so qualified to be blessed by the God he is beginning to know personally. This incident and others, especially when he denied the Lord three times, would always, throughout Peter's life as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, be a reality check as to the nature of the pit from which he had been lifted<sup>7</sup> to be the recipient of the divine blessings for which he was so totally unworthy.

Only the King of Heaven could speak with authority about the 'kingdom of heaven'. The values of this new kingdom are indeed upside down, for it is the convicted who are converted, those who die who live, those who weep who laugh, those who mourn who dance, those who are first torn who are graciously made whole, and those who are poor who are rich!

References: (1) I John 4:8 (2) Prov. 10:22 (3) Rom. 5:19 (4) Is. 66:2 (5) Luke 5 (6) verse 8 (7) Is. 38:17

Bible quotations from ESV



***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."***



## Back to Basics

# The Bible – its composition, canon and consolidation

David Viles, Hayes, England

### *In the past God spoke ...*

These first words of the Epistle to the Hebrews are remarkable. There is no obligation on God to speak – after all, the heavens already declared His omnipotence,<sup>1</sup> His creation eloquently testified to His everlasting power and divinity.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, He determined to do so. These opening verses go on to explain how this spoken revelation, supremely and finally uttered in the Person of the incarnate Word,<sup>3</sup> was formerly transmitted through the prophets. The incarnate Word Himself extends this revelation to the whole corpus of the Jewish holy Scriptures – the Old Testament (OT) – “*these are the Scriptures that testify about me*”.<sup>4</sup>

Turning to the New Testament (NT), we have the specific assurance of the incarnate Word to apprehensive disciples that a prime focus of the Holy Spirit’s work is to teach and remind them of all that Christ had said, and would say, to them.<sup>5</sup> It was the original disciples, and the apostle Paul to whom a special revelation was given,<sup>6</sup> who went on to record this material under the Spirit’s guidance.

### **The composition of the Bible**

We can be confident therefore that what we have in both Testaments is truly the word of God and the ultimate revelation of all that we need to know for practical purposes. *All scripture*, says Paul about the OT, *is God-breathed ... so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*<sup>7</sup> And yet the Bible is clearly not a work of dictation. The diverse personalities, fears, preoccupations and ambitions of a wide variety of writers across millennia are reflected and respected, and the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts. There is clear

evidence of design, consistency and purpose, with internal corroboration of doctrine, prophecy and historical fact between its component books and across the Testaments. The process of this written revelation is mysterious, and was no doubt intensely personal to those to whom it was given; we are told that *men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*<sup>8</sup> – clearly a process combining dynamism with purpose.

As all the original manuscripts were written on papyrus (of vegetable origin) or parchment (dried animal skins), we are reliant on a long succession of copyists for the texts we have today. So how can we be sure, knowing the errors of omission and addition inherent in any copying process over such vast spans of time, that we have reliable texts? Surprisingly, copies exist of parts of the Greek New Testament which predate the first authoritative collections of the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures. In fact, such was the impetus in the early churches to obtain copies of the Epistles and Gospels that the number of extant copies of all or part of the NT made before around 600 AD runs to about 5,000. This far exceeds the numbers of extant manuscripts of any other ancient text – even Caesar’s Gallic War has come down to us in only ten good copies, the oldest being from the late 10th century.<sup>9</sup> Because there are so many copies, the science of textual criticism has, down the ages, made it possible to detect and correct the minor textual corruptions to which the most careful copyists were (and are) prey.

When the English Revised Version was produced in 1884, the earliest manuscript of the entire OT available to the translators was the standard

Jewish ‘Masoretic’ text<sup>10</sup> in a copy dated 916AD. The reason for this late date lies in the extreme veneration of copies of the Jewish Scriptures by the rabbis – worn out copies were not retained and punctilious care was taken to avoid copying errors as far as humanly possible. Comparison with earlier copies discovered during the last century testifies to the accuracy of the copying process directed by generations of Jewish scholars to preserve the original Scriptures in Hebrew, which had long ceased to be the everyday language of the Jewish people. God is His own witness as to its reliability – “*I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.*”<sup>11</sup>

### The canon of the Bible

When the risen Lord instructed His disciples during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, He was careful to set God’s eternal purpose in a context which would be meaningful to them. “*Everything must be fulfilled*”, He said, “*that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.*”<sup>12</sup> This clear statement surely satisfies His disciples in every age that these three types of OT writing – together comprising the OT as generally accepted by Jewish scholars of the time – are to be regarded as ‘canonical’,<sup>13</sup> that is, reckoned as holy Scripture. Further, this statement underlines the essential continuity between the two Testaments – they are both about Him! The Lord, who was so incisive in identifying and censuring unscriptural Jewish traditions and practices, never questioned (and often referred to) the writings which had long been accepted as holy Scripture by the Jewish nation.

There were, of course, other writings – the Apocrypha – which by His time had not received this endorsement. These writings are of four types – historical, wisdom and ethical, apocalyptic, and religious fiction. While interesting, they were not accepted as authoritative by the Jewish religious establishment or, unlike the canonical OT, referred to by the Lord. The collective wisdom of Protestant Christianity has followed the Jewish tradition.

Turning to the New Testament, we are not presented with any strong rival claims to canonicity. The very few Gnostic texts which today attract a disproportionate amount of publicity<sup>14</sup> and purported gospels and epistles are datable to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD, and are clearly at odds with the NT record. The widespread and rapid acceptance of the NT Scriptures in the early days of Christianity was attributable simply to their authority. The Epistles were widely copied, collected and circulated from the earliest times because Christians knew who wrote them and were convinced of their authority as men who had known (or seen) the Lord. The Gospels followed, because their authors made it their business to write authoritatively about *all that Jesus began to do and to teach.*<sup>15</sup> Nobody imposed a canon of NT Scriptures on the early believing community – the two grew up organically together, no doubt under the guidance of Him who “*will guide you into all truth.*”<sup>16</sup>

### The consolidation of the Bible

Since 1948, Biblical scholarship has been immensely assisted by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, enabling about 100 books of the Old Testament to be partially reconstructed from fragments<sup>17</sup> dating back as far as the first century BC. Comparison of these ancient documents with the much later authoritative ‘Masoretic’ text shows remarkably few differences and, in some instances, has helped elucidate the meaning of difficult texts in the later version. The textual study of the huge number of fragments continues, and further elucidation will no doubt result. As for the New Testament, it is now possible for scholars to cross-check the text with evidence as old as the mid second century – again, there are few divergencies from later copies.

Finally, one further key factor linking both Testaments is the famous Septuagint – a Greek translation of the OT and Apocrypha made around 200 BC. As well as throwing light upon the precise meaning of abstruse Hebrew expressions,<sup>18</sup> the Septuagint provided the classical world with an

accessible version of the Jewish Scriptures, just at the time when it was required by the exploding Christian mission. It is hard not to discern the providence of God not merely in the inspiration of Scripture, but also in its dissemination.



### References:

(1) Ps. 19:1-2 (2) Rom. 1:19-20 (3) John 1:1 (4) John 5:39 (5) John 14:26 (6) Gal. 1:11-20 (7) 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (8) 2 Pet. 1:21 (9) See chap. 14 of F.F. Bruce: *The Books and the Parchments*, revised edition 1991, which includes a telling summary of the reliability of NT attestation and an explanation of how textual criticism works (10) Derived from the Hebrew word for ‘tradition’ (11) Jer. 1:12 (12) Luke 24:44 (13) From the Greek word *kanon*, signifying a measuring rod or standard (14) And the attentions of novelists like Dan Brown (15) Acts 1:1 (16) John 16:13. When the Synod of Hippo in AD393 listed the NT canon, it was merely recording what had long been accepted as authoritative throughout most of Christendom (17) There is one complete book - a parchment scroll of Isaiah – which survived in the particular microclimate of the Qumran caves (18) One well-known example is the cognate Greek words which the Septuagint translators used to render expressions connected to the Hebrew word *kipper* (atonement), which extend our understanding of the meaning of these words and their connections in Hebrew.

Bible quotations from NIV

## Back to Basics

# Reading the Bible for all its worth

Karl Smith, Kirkintilloch, Scotland

The watchman sat under the light at the front of the church hall, poring over his Bible. The sounds of night on the edge of an African city could be heard: the barking of dogs, the hum of crickets, and the occasional cry of a baby awakening in a neighbouring house. He had been learning to read at the church's adult literacy classes and at last he could read the Bible for himself.

Whilst we may take our ability to read for granted, we must never take for granted the privilege of being able to read God's own message in God's own words to us whenever we like.

### Daily reading

We should all make time to read at least something from the Bible each day. Most find that first thing in the morning is the best time to do this.

I'm not at all a morning person, but I have discovered that if you listen to God before the Devil has a chance to speak to you through the many means at his disposal, you'll be better equipped to face the day with the right attitude. It is easier to begin the day with God than to try to reclaim the day for Him later on. Time spent with the Scriptures in the morning is a briefing from our commanding officer and is essential to find out what He wants us to do for the day. Ezekiel found that, *In the morning the word of the LORD came to me.*<sup>1</sup> Isaiah, speaking for the Messiah, said, *Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.*<sup>2</sup> Sure enough, when we get to the Gospels, we find the Lord Jesus rising very early in the morning to spend time with His Father.<sup>3</sup> Some call this their quiet time, but the name isn't important. Whatever you call it, identify a consistent place for it in your daily routine and a place where you won't be interrupted.

**Top tips:** The following are some ideas people have shared with me about how to structure a quiet time. Different ones will help different people:

1. Briefly ask God to help you understand the passage.
2. Don't try to read too much at a sitting.
3. Follow something systematically, such as a book of the Bible.
4. Vary the Old and New Testament in your reading. A reading plan that takes you through the whole Bible in one or more years can be helpful.
5. It might help to read a short passage slowly and more than once so that it sinks in. I personally find this of more value than reading pages and pages.



6. Repeat the words to God, especially ones about Himself, His Son and His Spirit.

7. Look for something about the character of the Lord Jesus to treasure through the day

8. Look for a command to obey or an example to follow. It may be a negative example to avoid. Above all ask God to help you to obey it.

9. Some keep a diary noting, in two or three sentences, what was in the passage they read.

10. If a phrase or a verse has struck you, memorise it and repeat it to yourself throughout the day.

### Bible study

Your Bible reading does not work like a 'horoscope'. Each chapter you are reading is a part of the story of God's dealings with mankind. That's why a separate time of Bible study is important to get a sense of how each section relates to the whole.

At least once in your life, you should read the Bible right through from cover to cover. Read another chapter or two in your armchair instead of watching some rubbish on TV that you're not even interested in anyway, on a train or bus journey, while you're having a lie-in, just as you would read any other book. Start at Genesis and go through to Revelation. Only then can you be confident that you've read it all with a sense of the whole narrative.

More regularly, however, we need to sit down and look at the themes of the Bible. We can study a person's life, looking at the various passages that speak about him or her. We can study a place in the Bible, building up a picture of what happened there. We may want to work out what the Bible says about a particular issue we have encountered in our disciple life. On the other hand, we may wish to understand why the church does something in a particular way. We may wish to follow through a



theme that has fascinated us, like the feelings experienced by the Lord Jesus, prayers of godly people or the house of God throughout history.

One tool that is very useful in anything like this is the **cross-referencing** system in many Bibles. The little letters next to phrases in some editions of the Bible refer you to other verses where the same word or phrase is used or which deal with a similar theme. Be aware that these are only the verses that have occurred to particular editors and may reflect their denominational background. There may be many other verses you can consider on the same theme. The references are not inspired by God like the Bible itself, but are put there by human beings to help us navigate our way round the Bible.

Another tool you can use is a **concordance** or list of words used in the Bible. This is a valuable way of finding all the places in Scripture that deal with a certain topic. You can also use a concordance to see how a word that has been puzzling us in one verse is used throughout the rest of the Bible. Very often this leads to a much clearer understanding of what it means.

The Bible is a translation of Greek and Hebrew documents, no matter what language we read it in. Some concordances allow you to see which Greek or Hebrew word is being translated by every English word. This can be extremely useful for seeing that a particular word in our English Bible is normally translated by a different word in the Greek or Hebrew. You can then see where that Greek or Hebrew word is used elsewhere in the Bible in a book called a **lexicon**. Doing this links scriptures that we might not otherwise connect in our minds. Even for those of us not fluent in these ancient languages, we can still get a feel for the original text.

Other books can help us fill in the picture of what life was like at the time and see the Bible in context. Bible study has never been more accessible than in the current computer age. A number of programmes allow you to use

a concordance in several different versions of the Bible at once, a click shows you which Greek or Hebrew word has been used and another click takes you to the lexicon. All of these can be kept open on the screen in front of you – much easier than keeping your finger in several pages of a book at once! Another click points you to relevant commentaries. It's God's Word just the same, whether it appears on the screen or the printed page. Nevertheless, whilst concordances, commentaries and lexicons are useful, we must repeat again that it is the Bible itself that is inspired. The rest are simply aids to help us understand it. There are now many versions of the Bible, but, for study purposes, readers in English should find the ESV or NASB particularly good as literal (nearly word for word) translations of the original languages, while other versions may contribute helpfully by trying to express in our modern language the ideas being conveyed by the historic writers.

### What can we expect to find in the Bible?

*... you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.<sup>4</sup>*

First, the Bible teaches us how to be saved. Then, by the various processes described here, it equips us for every good work. For the Christian, the point of reading the Bible is to help us to do good to others in this world and to glorify God. Worthwhile Bible study will eventually lead to a clearer understanding of God's will and give us something to obey practically. He won't reveal more until you've obeyed what He's already given you. We will never exhaust the riches of the Bible or get tired of learning its message to us.

References: (1) Ezek. 12:8 (2) Is. 50:4 (3) Mark 1:35 (4) 2 Tim. 3:15-17 ESV

## STUDY FEATURE

1. What tests, applicable to all ancient writings, when applied specifically to the Bible, show that by any objective standard, it deserves to be considered as authentic to the original?
2. What was the significance of the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls?
3. Of course, the Bible is no mere ancient human writing. What exactly does 2 Peter 1:21 teach us about its divine authorship?
4. What arguments give the most convincing assurance as to the canon of Scripture?
5. Which of the Bible reading tips do you consider to be most helpful? Why?
6. Which is your preferred Bible study method? Which other would you now like to try?
7. Would you like to share a particular Bible study aid which you personally have found helpful?



# The book of the Judges

## A system of rule

Martin Jones, Toronto, Canada

There have been many forms of government in history – such as democracies, oligarchies (rule by a select few), monarchies and dictatorships. But a fairly unusual type, a judicial model headed by a judge, once operated in Israel.

It is best known from the period covered by the Bible book of Judges, but not limited to then. Moses was a judge leader and, in Exodus 18, we learn that (as is often the case today) his court was swamped with cases; delays and exhaustion were the result. Many more judges were appointed to help out the chief judge and each had to adhere to certain standards of integrity and impartiality. Even when the judge was replaced by the king as the figurehead of the nation and the chief dispenser of civil justice,<sup>1</sup> judges remained a vital part of Israelite life.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the first thing you might think of in relation to a judge is dealing with criminals. You may recall the famous case of Solomon, the baby and the sword. It typifies the kind of civil law justice that would have been their main focus – the resolving of disputes. There were certain important administrative functions to be performed which also oiled the wheels of social life; an example of which is the recognition of the lifelong binding of a slave to his master.<sup>3</sup> At times, they worked in tandem with the priests<sup>4</sup> and logically the latter would have been the primary experts on ceremonial law. But it would also seem that guilt in the context of criminal law was established, not by the judges, but by witness testimony of the community.<sup>5</sup>

In the book of Judges, the judges were pressed into emergency service – rescuing the people from raiding marauders.<sup>6</sup> The name of one of the famous judges, Joshua, means Saviour – relevant, of course, to his role and also a pointer to the future Saviour of the same name.

Did this model work? As we will see in our ‘pen pictures’ this year, the judges themselves were of varying calibres and there was a general dearth of strong leadership role models across the nation which meant that the moral and spiritual environment was poor. As a result, the period was very volatile and instability was never far away.

How long God would have persisted with the model is a matter of speculation, but it was the people themselves who called for a change. Their motives were largely selfish, but they were given an excuse by the unethical behaviour of Samuel’s sons.<sup>7</sup> Behind that, the people wanted a more visual and dynamic leader which would make them like the other nations.

God took this very personally – he somewhat surprisingly told Samuel that the people were actually rejecting Him. God knew full well what they were letting themselves in



for, but his warnings fell on deaf ears. Key differences in the monarchical model would cause issues over time. The main difference was that kingship was hereditary (and not raised up directly by God like the judges) and this was to cause trouble:

- many sons proved to be unsuitable candidates
- often undue influence of family members, or family battles for succession
- potential for inexperienced kings and unstable government
- focus on self-aggrandizement and passing on of wealth
- increase in political and military manoeuvring for personal gain

Ironically, these issues often resulted in less justice for the people. Despite these drawbacks, at least the highlights of the reign of David are a foreshadowing of the great King that was, and is, to come. Today, we often rightly complain about the apparent unfairness of life, the social inequalities that exist and a sense that justice is not being done. We can look forward to a future day, in the Millennium, where the Lord will reign on earth as King and Judge and we will see what good civil government really looks like:

*In love a throne will be established;  
in faithfulness a man will sit on it—  
one from the house of David—  
one who in judging seeks justice  
and speeds the cause of righteousness.<sup>8</sup>*

References: (1) see reference to David in 2 Sam. 15:2 (2) see Ezra 7:25; 2 Chron. 19:5 (3) Ex. 21:5-6 (4) see Deut. 17:8-10 (5) see Deut. 17:6, for example (6) Judg. 2:16 (7) 1 Sam. 8 (8) Is. 16:5 NIV

# Othniel

Thomas Palmer, Cardiff, Wales

Compared to some of the better known judges, there is relatively little written about Othniel, although we know he lived around 1200 BC and was the only judge from the tribe of Judah, and shared some of the characteristics of his famous uncle, Caleb.

Othniel's story is told in two parts: the first part<sup>1</sup> is the story of how he met his wife; the second is an account of his 'career' as Israel's first judge.<sup>2</sup>

The second part of Othniel's story starts with (surprise! surprise!) the Israelites doing evil and turning from God. This makes God very angry; so angry, in fact, that He sells the Israelites into captivity. After eight years, they cry out to God and He raises up Othniel to deliver them. Othniel goes to war and, with God's help, defeats Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram and restores peace to Israel for 40 years (a common biblical expression which sometimes means 'a long time' or 'a generation').

Othniel's story follows a too-familiar pattern where the Israelites turn from the Lord, realise their error and cry out to God who, in His infinite grace, delivers them from their enemies. This tragic pattern of failure ultimately leads to God replacing the Old Covenant and introducing the New Covenant that is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, who guarantees it. It is tempting to criticise the Israelites, but we must remember that we would be in captivity if it were not for God's amazing grace.

Othniel must have been a fierce warrior because he fought and captured Kiriath Sepher to win the hand of Acsah in marriage. However, the strength he used to win his wife was not the same as the strength he harnessed to deliver God's people. Like Gideon and Samson after him, this strength was a super-human strength and a special gift from God, for *the Spirit of the LORD came upon him*.<sup>3</sup>

We can accomplish some things in our own strength, but Othniel is proof that we can accomplish anything in the Lord's strength.<sup>4</sup>

References: (1) Josh. 15:17-18; Judg. 1:13-14 (2) Judg. 3:7-11 (3) Judg. 3:10 NIV (4) Phil. 4:13



# Ehud

Mark Stanley, Aberkenfig, Wales

*Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD* is a phrase that comes almost with a big sigh through the Bible book of Judges as the people swing between serving God or aligning themselves with the next new culture or gods they find. It's a salutary warning to us how easy it is to be seduced by the latest new thing, or an old habit returning.

In Judges 3:12-30 God uses Israel's enemy the Moabites to bring the people to their senses, though it takes eighteen years before they cry out to God. Ehud was raised up – a left-handed man from the Benjamites. Being left-handed was an unusual trait. Chapter 20 of Judges tells us that, of 26,700 fighting men, 700 were left-handed. God used this unusual quality to full advantage. He makes us for His divine purpose. Perhaps Ehud had been prepared by God for those eighteen years? Sometimes we have to wait for an opportunity for service, and Ehud certainly took his with both hands – well, at least a left one!

Eglon was King of Moab. He is described unflatteringly as a 'fat man', perhaps suggesting an overindulgent lifestyle. In a private meeting with Eglon, Ehud played on the self-importance of the King by declaring he had a message from God. Suddenly the moment came to strike. As Eglon rose from his seat, not expecting a left-handed man, Ehud was able to catch him off guard and slay the King. Being different meant that Ehud had the element of surprise and took his opportunity to overcome the overindulgent enemy.

Let us overcome our enemy. As Christians we should be different and be able to take opportunities to overcome, not with a steel sword, but with the Word of God that is sharper than Ehud's two-edged sword.<sup>1</sup>

*Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* <sup>2</sup> and let us take up the fight!

References: (1) Heb. 4:12 (2) Eph. 6:17 NKJV



# Design and Designer

John Terrell, Manchester, England

A distinguished professor of physics at the University of Alberta in Canada sent a letter in September 2010 to the press, including *The Times* of London.<sup>1</sup> Professor Page identified himself quite modestly as a recent fellow researcher with Professor Stephen Hawking who had just published his book 'The Grand Design' in which Hawking had concluded from his researches in cosmology and theoretical physics, that God did not create the universe. He finds no need to introduce the notion of a supremely intelligent creative Being. Needless to say, Hawking's proclamation had been widely hailed in the circles of scepticism, as virtually definitive and as a 'coup de grace' to the faith community. Science-based atheism reigns from here on in.

Or does it? Page was joint publisher with Hawking of numerous learned papers in the subjects of their common academic interests. So what had he to say? He wrote of their exciting times learning more about the universe; yet in his opinion still a long way from defining final laws which might answer some of our deepest questions. It may seem clear to ordinary people that what Page says is blindingly obvious, namely that no-one can exclude the possibility that behind the universe and its laws is a personal God as Creator. His final words are, "A grand design suggests to me, as a Christian, a Grand Designer, who could be even simpler and more perfectly powerful and good than the superbly designed universe that I believe He has created."

Now, doubtless all the readers of Needed Truth are confident about the soundness of Professor Page's approach, being fellow believers and assured from the authority of holy Scripture about God as creator and upholder of all things. There is, in fact, a wide range of men and women of very high scientific standing who are where Page is, and some of them readily entered into the fray on the publication of Hawking's book, offering in some cases quite trenchant criticism of him on the basis of clear Christian conviction and adherence to the Word of God. This gives reassurance especially to younger Christians who are systematically assailed by the scientific atheist lobby in terms of virulent rejection

of divine revelation about the person and character of God.

Many scriptures could be adduced in this matter, but we confine comment for the moment to Romans 1:18-23, which verses please read giving particular attention to 20 and 21. The scriptural truths associated there with the person of God as Creator, *are clearly seen ... even His everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks ... professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ...* It is important to note that this amounts to an allegation of wilful unbelief. The expression 'knowing God' surely implies that human beings, made in God's image and likeness with a capacity to relate to God and endowed with conscience, have imprinted in their spiritual nature, a real awareness of the existence and person of God. If this is so, the favourite cry of the atheist sceptic that there is no available or adequate evidence for God's existence, is not a matter of honest attempt to view the evidence of creation, but is in reality a wilful rejection and suppression of what the Bible calls unequivocally 'knowledge' of God. God in ultimate judgement will condemn what is a wilful act of saying "No" to a God who has imparted not just a range of evidence, but His own very being, to the human mind. Hence the complete accuracy of the repeated psalmist pronouncement, *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*<sup>2</sup> Just as true conversion is an act of human will in saying "Yes" in faith to God in His revelation of salvation in the person of His Son so, as surely, is the unbeliever's rejection an act of will. Perhaps, while always acknowledging the supreme importance of divine Spirit guidance and wisdom in our Christian witness, we should more readily be forthright in denying the aggressive atheist the refuge of an 'inadequate evidence' position. He will answer to God for an act of the will with nowhere to hide. We are back full circle to Eden and 'Hath God said ...?'<sup>3</sup> And the answer today, as then, is 'Yes' or 'No' for Hawking, Page and all the others.

References: (1) 'The Times', London, 6.9.10 (2) Ps. 14:1 (3) Gen. 3:1

Bible quotations from RV

# Come dine with me

Paul Merchant, Musselburgh, Scotland

When I was a student living away from home I enjoyed Sundays when after the church service I would be invited frequently to a family home for a meal. This was a welcome oasis in the week, a change from studying and the college campus. Later, as a single man in a small church, every Tuesday after work the same family invited me for a meal before the church prayer meeting. Also, I was influenced by a couple in a nearby church who kept aside a budget for Sunday hospitality so that they could always afford to provide a meal for unexpected Sunday visitors. From this example, for ten years my wife and I hosted a foreign student at Christmas and this experience enriched our family life as our two young sons shared their celebrations with students from around the world. How hospitality benefits the host as well as the guest! In the giving and receiving, both are enriched.

Inviting others into our homes nourishes our own spirit of generosity, and is a time of welcome, acceptance and sharing. As we welcome a person into our home it is a time to be relaxed, to accept and value the person by showing interest in them. During times of hospitality there is a time to give thanks, a time to eat, a time to listen and a time to laugh. How often it happens after a relaxing meal together that guests will share the anxieties which preoccupy them and in response we can share how Christ and His promises speak to their need. And when it is time to clear the table and tidy this is a moment for sharing with shy friends who converse more easily when away from the large group sat at the table. Hospitality may also extend our patience as we open our homes to people, even disciples in our church, to whom we may not relate easily, but to whom we show Christian care by opening our homes to them.

Christ frequently benefited from hospitality. There was the more formal occasion of His first miracle at the

wedding at Cana. He rescued a hospitality disaster! He was a guest at the dinner for Lazarus after he was raised from the dead. He always knew there was a seat for Him at the table in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany. He surprised Zacchaeus and everyone in the town when He invited Himself for a meal at the tax collector's home! Included among His many resurrection appearances He ate fish, He accepted the invitation into a home at Emmaus and prepared a breakfast barbecue for His disciples on the beach. The Lord knew the benefits of hospitality.

However, even hospitality has its own temptations. There is hospitality offered with the motive of seeking influence and position through seeking the company of those with power, status or wealth. Hospitality can be used as a tactic to advance one's own influence. Hospitality can be used to include some, but also to exclude others. Hospitality can become a competition with others by the quality and abundance of what food is provided. Christ warns about offering hospitality in the hope of a return invitation.<sup>1</sup>

Peter exhorts Christians to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.<sup>2</sup> Martha was busy, tired and resentful of other family members who were enjoying Jesus' company and not helping with the domestic tasks.<sup>3</sup> For Martha, food came before fellowship and these niggles caused tensions during hospitable occasions.

The Lord uses the example of hospitality to invite those in the church who are overcomers to enjoy a closer walk with him, *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."*<sup>4</sup>

References: (1) Luke 14:12-14 (2) 1 Pet. 4:9 (3) Luke 10:40 (4) Rev. 3:20 NIV



# Let the children come ...

An interview with Fiona Williams, Middlesbrough, England

## *Why do you think it's valuable for Christians to work in (children's) social care?*

I believe children are one of the most precious gifts anyone can have and that society should treat them as such.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, for many children this is not the case; some experience hardship, poverty and maltreatment, even the most extreme abuse. I remember a child asking me why I came to visit. My answer was because I cared about children, wanted to listen to them, and to help improve their situation. The Lord intervened on behalf of children.<sup>2</sup> I cannot see why it should be different today and indeed the law supports this.

## *How is child abuse identified?*

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, as set out by world leaders in 1989, identified the rights of all children and young people aged 17 years and under: such as the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, social and cultural life. From this world-wide recognition of children's rights, individual countries have developed their own legislation, which would not condone children having to endure activity contrary to this. Often the plight of people, including children, in many countries is such that their basic needs are not met. There are four main categories of abuse; physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect. I will never forget the scene of a three month old child on a hospital ventilator with a fractured skull and broken arm, leg and ribs. It was my responsibility to ensure that her welfare needs were addressed, so that she did not return to a position in which she could again come to such significant harm.

## *What in principle does 'safeguarding' set out to achieve as a response to that problem?*

Safeguarding sets out to ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount. Children should be treated with dignity and respect. Children must respect adults,<sup>3</sup> but an impudent child, for example, should never be an excuse for an adult to misappropriate their power and maltreat the child. Safeguarding sets out a practice and a system, by which such behaviours can be dealt with and the welfare needs of children promoted so that they can achieve their potential in adult life. Most importantly, the focus is the child and what they have to say about what is happening to them. It's emotionally draining to listen to one young person after another, telling of the intimate details of the abuse they have experienced. To later watch them grow in a safe environment is rewarding. It is sad for them when a conviction does not follow, as is frequently the case in the UK. To be asked by a young person, "Why did the judge not believe me?" when the physical and emotional evidence clearly pointed to the

truth of their experience, is one of the hardest questions to answer and support them with.

## *Surely we can trust Christians if we can trust anyone, so is this really an issue to be faced up to within Christian 'faith communities'?*

I have had the experience of dealing with incidents in faith communities. In some cases Christian people clearly did not believe the child whose testimony was confirmed by medical evidence, so bringing stinging criticism on Christians generally. While reluctant in such circumstances to think ill of fellow believers whom we otherwise regard highly, the evidence is inescapable that children can be vulnerable even in Christian circles.

## *What has been your most rewarding experience so far in this line of work?*

Among them has been enabling the leader of one faith community to accept that while the Bible teaches forgiveness, it also teaches that to significantly harm a child is wrong; and that the adult concerned has a problem which they have to face up to and deal with. The child has been wronged and what has happened to them will likely stay with them for life. The needs of that child and other potential victims must come first. To be able to help "make the difference" is the greatest reward, primarily in respect of the child.

References: (1) Ps. 127:3 (2) Mark 10:14 (3) Rom. 1:30



*It's emotionally draining to listen to one young person after another, telling of the intimate details of the abuse they have experienced*

# Miracles

Peter Hickling, Cromer, England

Has anyone ever told you that nobody believes in miracles any more? They say that unsophisticated, superstitious people could believe them, but in this modern scientific age no thinking person could accept them. Frankly, this is rubbish.

What arguments do they use? Mostly, they don't, of course; they have a simple faith that 'scientists' have the answer; that miracles are impossible. Yet science is intrinsically incapable of reaching such a conclusion. The scientific method takes a theoretical premise, or one derived from a set of data, and tests it by experiment, or against other known data. If it stands that test, it can be regarded as established for the time being; but every scientific conclusion should be open to challenge. The method relies on 'reproducibility', that is, that every time an experiment is performed it will produce the same result. Modern physics has shown that there is a random element at the very smallest level, but this does not affect the events we are speaking of. Reproducibility relies on the fact that the 'laws of nature' remain the same, and thus a miracle flouts these laws. But the 'laws of nature' are only inviolable if there is nothing outside nature which is not subject to it, and this is an assumption which science cannot make – it assumes the conclusion. C.S. Lewis illustrates it like this, in an imaginary conversation: '... the laws will tell you how a billiard ball will travel on a smooth surface if you hit it in a particular way – but only provided no one interferes. If, after it's already in motion, someone snatches up a cue and gives it a biff on one side – why, then, you won't get what the scientists predicted.' 'No, of course not. They can't allow for monkey-tricks like that.' 'Quite, and in the same way, if there was anything outside nature, and if it interfered – then the events which the scientist expected wouldn't follow. That would be what we call a miracle. In one sense it wouldn't break the laws of nature. The laws tell you what will happen if nothing interferes. They can't tell you whether something is going to interfere. ... It isn't the physicist who can tell you how likely I am to catch up a cue and spoil his experiment with the billiard ball; you'd better ask a psychologist. And it isn't the

scientist who can tell you how likely nature is to be interfered with from outside. You must go to the meta-physician.'<sup>1</sup>

A philosophical approach to the problem founders on the same difficulty. The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1766) defined a miracle as 'the transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent'.<sup>2</sup> What is a law of nature? Hume himself admits that we cannot assume that nature will continue to be regular, but nevertheless says that the Laws of Nature are codified as a result of past experiences. Therefore a miracle is a violation of all prior experience. However, Hume urges, the probability that something has occurred in contradiction of all past experience should always be judged to be less than the probability that either my senses have deceived me or the person recounting the miraculous occurrence is lying or mistaken. But this depends entirely on the reliability of the witness. If I told you that a piece of an aeroplane had fallen into my back garden you would know that the probability that this would happen would be vanishingly small; but would you therefore refuse to believe me? That would depend on whether you thought me trustworthy or not. You can only use 'exceptionless testimony' as an argument against miracles if all testimony is genuinely exceptionless; i.e. if you assume that all witness to miracles is false, assuming what you want to prove. Thus the argument is circular.

In summary, neither science nor philosophy can disprove the occurrence of miracles; examination of the facts and the veracity of the source is the only way in which they can be tested. Many claimed miracles are false, for various reasons, but this does not mean that they all are. The miracles recorded in Scripture are transmitted against a background of fact, and need to be assessed in that light.

References: (1) C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, Fount, London 1979 p.48 (2) David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, X (Of Miracles), i, 90



# Satisfied with the fullness of God's house

Brian Tugwell, Liverpool, England

'I can't get no satisfaction' was the title of a song by the Rolling Stones. The words sum up the experience of brother Joseph in the years that he was away from churches of God. Now that he is restored (and brought a group along with him) he can say,

*How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!*

*Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.*

*They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,*

*And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.*

*For with You is the fountain of life;*

*In Your light we see light.<sup>1</sup>*

So what is the story? I speak about G. Joseph, a sports teacher from Rajahmundry, who is married to Valentina and has two daughters. Perhaps the first thing that captivated him was learning that the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross had paid his ticket to heaven. It stopped all the floundering in his mind about the eternal security of his soul. This had never been presented to him up to that point. Knowing that the Lord would never cast him out, that John 10:28 assured him that Jesus had given him eternal life and that no one could snatch him from the double protection of the Father and the Son's hand brought him true rest.

The assurance of never being lost again drew him to pursue the teaching relating to the churches of God, and baptism soon followed. The breaking of bread was something special as he discovered the practicalities of worship, not by rote, but in spirit and in truth. Then, sadly, an unfortunate fallout meant Joseph parted ways with the churches of God. Need in the nearby village of Hukumpeta drew the couple's energies to providing for children, widows and sharing the gospel with as many as possible. Soon a group was gathered and sponsorship

sought, and given, from many groups mainly from the USA.

Along with the financial assistance came a variety of teaching which left a great sense of disappointment compared with the pattern of worship he had seen earlier in relation to the breaking of bread, etc. Instead of satisfaction, they experienced only emptiness. Rather like Naomi, they had gone away full, but being away from the house of bread knew a great emptiness. So they sought to return and urged that elders came to teach their new group which was now around 30 strong. They looked to the Lord who restores the years that the locusts have eaten.<sup>2</sup>

Painstaking Bible classes and study sessions followed and worship practice began. They learned that worship involved a collective approach to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus and the resulting appropriateness of addressing God in worship rather than as Father. That approach was to give praise to God and not to pray for our needs. Eagerness was expressed to be associated with other churches forming the house of God.

As yet, none of the group had been baptised and a small round tank was built for the purpose in the compound that surrounds a ramshackle breeze block building. There were many joyful smiles and advice shouted to each one as they clambered in and out the tank.

Finally the day of church planting arrived on February 21 2010. Joy was overflowing as we read, *This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it<sup>3</sup>* and *I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."*<sup>4</sup> The Psalmist summed it up well when he said,

*Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts.*

*We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple.<sup>5</sup>*

References: (1) Ps. 36:7-9 (2) Joel 2:25 (3) Ps. 118:24 (4) Ps. 122:1 (5) Ps. 65:4 Bible quotes from NKJV

