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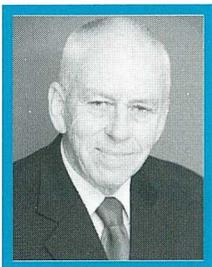
SONG OF SONGS

The Song of Solomon
Jesus and Pilate

Charles Spurgeon

How to Interpret
Scripture - Part 1

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EDITORIAL

I was fortunate to grow up in the 1950s when life was a lot simpler than it is today.

I was attending High School when we purchased our first washing machine, first refrigerator (second-hand), first car (third-hand), and we got a party-line telephone. Plastics were still unheard of; television was still a dream and ball-point pens had just been invented.

In the only restaurant in our town there was just one menu, with variations: Mutton, beef or fish, potatoes, carrots, cabbage or peas, with gravy. But we were incredibly content and happy. We had our own chooks, milked our own cows and grew all our vegetables and fruit. We had very little spare cash, but neither did most other people in our community. In spite of our poverty, out on the farm under a blue sky, with Mount Taranaki as a backdrop, we felt like millionaires.

We worked hard on the farm, but when we had a day off at the beach or football match, we enjoyed

it with the family. During the weekend my brother and I would play in the cheese factory. We knew all the workers there by name and would talk to them as they set the milk with rennet in big vats and cut the curd, then compressed it in cylinders lined with mutton cloth. We would play among the cheeses in the curing room. The factory was unlocked day and night. Anyone could have driven up in a truck and disappeared with a load of cheese—but that never happened.

I read recently where two Canadian professors of economics, Curtis Eaton and Mukesh Eswaran, said their studies have revealed that too much affluence can seriously damage a person's health. They say that once a person reaches a reasonable standard of living there is little benefit to be had from increasing their level of wealth any further. Having an income above and beyond what is necessary for life, results in people purchasing status symbols ('*Veblen goods*') with no intrinsic value, such as lavish jewellery, designer clothes and luxury cars.

One eye-opening finding in this study is that people have only so much time; the more they focus on their status symbols the less time and inclination they have to focus on others. Clinical psychologist, Oliver James, says the epidemic of 'afluenza' around the developed world is also triggering huge

increases in depression and anxiety. The richer people become, the less they enjoy life. He also concluded that a major cause of this mental sickness is our focus on our 'toys' and our consequent neglect of others.

We seem to be oblivious to the fact that our self-worth depends upon the way we treat other people. If we care for and look after them, we feel good about ourselves; if we ignore them or treat them badly we hate ourselves. Such feelings are common to everyone for that is how God made us. When our wealth makes us selfish and self-centred we unwittingly place ourselves on a downhill slide to unhappiness and mental illness.

The Lord knows all about this cause and effect, because he was the One who programmed us to be loving and caring. It was he who told the story of the rich man whose wealth increased so much he built larger store-houses for it instead of using it to help the needy. Unfortunately for him, his plummeting self-worth put him into an early grave (Luke 12:15-21).

Jesus' key sentence in this parable is: 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'

Ritchie Way

—Ritchie Way

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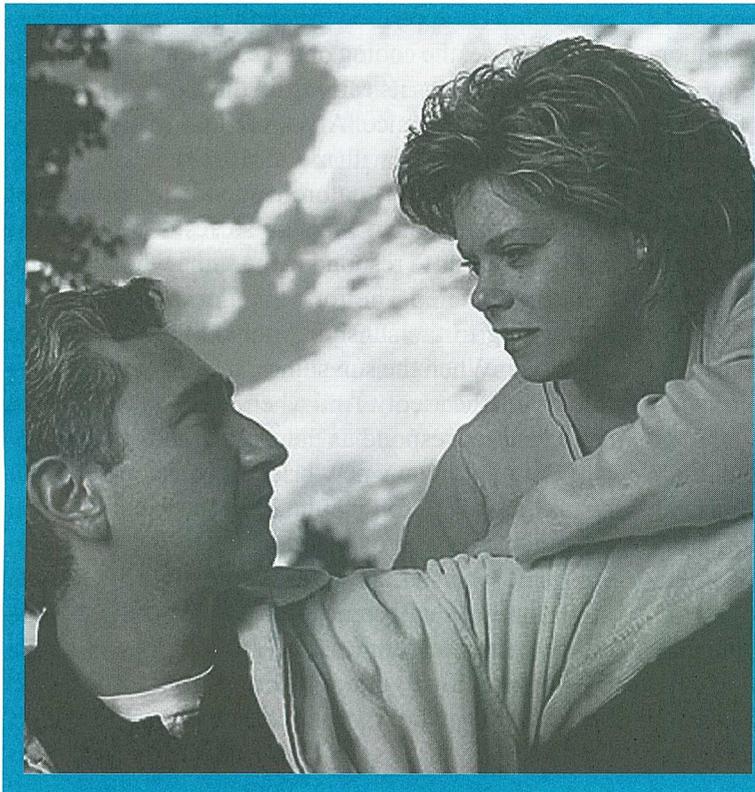
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Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all, meaning and direction in their lives by a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.

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The Song of Solomon

Smuts van Rooyen

The first time I read the book, *Song of Solomon*, I wondered, what is the sense of this Bible book? But as I have studied this *Song of Songs*, it has become a great blessing to me. I have discovered it to be perhaps the strongest affirmation of 'Christ Our Righteousness' in the Old Testament.

SCENE I

The song is a love story of a girl who was in terrible shape because her family had rejected her. There had been some kind of squabble in the family; her brothers didn't like her, and they forced her to do the work that they were supposed to do. Evidently, each child had been assigned a section of the father's vineyard, and she had been given a section to take care of too.

But the brothers made her work in their sections of the vineyard, pruning, training, cleaning. As she slaved away day-by-day in that vineyard, she came to really hate the place. The sun shone down on her, and her fair complexion became dark and leathery (1:5-6). She imagined she was no longer beautiful. She lost all confidence in herself and became shy and retiring. This is how the book, *Song of Solomon*, begins.

So as this girl was working away one day, a

shepherd tending his sheep brought his flock close to her vineyard. He walked over to the fence and began to speak to her, and she responded shyly. The next day when she went to the vineyard, she worked close to the fence and the shepherd came over again. Over a period of time, this shy, darkly-tanned, rejected girl, who had lost all confidence in herself, fell in love with this lowly shepherd.

But one day he didn't show up. She was crushed. Her time with the shepherd each day was the one bright spot in her life. So she dropped everything and rushed frantically into the town. She spoke with the daughters of Jerusalem. 'Oh, please, please tell me where it is that I can find my beloved. Where can I find that shepherd that came over to speak to me?'

And these daughters of Jerusalem replied, 'Your dad has a few goats; take the young kids and let them graze near to where the shepherds have their tents. Take them there to feed and the chances are you'll meet your shepherd who came to the vineyard everyday to speak to you.'

So she does this. She herds the kids and goes out to where the shepherds are camping and starts to inquire about her particular shepherd. She finds him, but when she finds him, he is not dressed in his shepherd garb. To her utter amazement, she discovers that this lowly shepherd is none other than King Solomon himself.

Evidently King Solomon wanted somebody who would love him for what he was, and not for his posi-

tion. He figured out that maybe he could find a wife who could love him for what he was if he masqueraded as a shepherd.

Can you imagine her shock? She has fallen in love with King Solomon, and King Solomon has fallen in love with her. He is so thrilled that she would love him for what he is that he arranges—would you believe it—their wedding!

So now, here is a lowly vinedresser about to marry King Solomon. He brings her into his glittering banquet hall where all the royal guests he has invited—kings, princes, ambassadors and dignitaries—are sitting at long tables with white table-cloths, on which are beautiful golden dishes. A really high-class affair for a poor little vinedresser! As she comes in, she is awfully self-conscious, but she's by the side of her lover. She knows she's not worthy of any of this, and she's shy because of what she is. She doesn't think she's beautiful—she doesn't have anything she thinks he would really like.

She sits down at the table. She looks around and then looks above her at King Solomon's family banner suspended from the ceiling. Embroidered on it is the family emblem, the family motto, and the family name. She suddenly realises that the banner hanging over her means that his name is now hers. Everything he is, she will be regarded as being, because she is joined to him. In the eyes of all the people there, she is no longer the vinedresser's daughter. She is the Queen. She is Mrs. Solomon. She says of her husband: 'He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love' (2:4).

SCENE II

King Solomon loves his new bride so very much that she is constantly on his heart. He calls to her one day in spring, and he tenderly says, 'Come on, sweetheart, spring is here; let's spend the day together'. 'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me. See! The winter is past; the rains are over and

gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me' (2:10-13).

Friends, just as nature responds to spring, just as nature responds to the sun, so Jesus comes to us and he wants us to respond in the same wholehearted, beautiful manner. The forsythia doesn't gripe about responding to the sunshine, nor do the roses or the dogwood. When the sun shines, they respond beautifully, wholeheartedly. And when Jesus approaches us, he likes us to respond as nature responds to spring.

But Solomon's new bride suggests instead that he take a walk. 'You just be like a deer out there on the mountains. Have a good day, OK?'

But when the night arrives he doesn't return. Well, surely he will come tomorrow morning. But tomorrow morning comes, and still he doesn't come. By the time night comes again, she recognizes that her beloved will not force her to love him. She realises the terrible mistake she's made.

So, in a frenzy of desperation, she runs out and begins to look for her lover. She finds watchmen on the wall, and she cries, 'You've been watching the streets here. Have you seen my beloved?' And one watchman says, 'Madam, you're in luck. I saw him.' And he tells her where he went. And so the girl runs off in search of her beloved. She says, 'Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go' (3:4).

SCENE III

The third scene is a very interesting one. The peasants of the village where the girl originally lived, stare far down the road at a great cloud of

dust coming their way. They look at each other and ask, 'What's that? Maybe it's an army coming!' So they send somebody to investigate, to see what it is. They can't believe the sight! It's a procession that is



And then the King speaks, and here are his incredible words: 'All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you' (Song of Solomon 4:7).

approaching! Coming towards them is no less than a pageant from the palace (3:6-10).

For this occasion King Solomon had a special carriage made for him and the Queen, all made of gold and silver with pillows of purple velvet. So here comes this procession, escorted by sixty armed warriors! Inside sits King Solomon and his new bride. And they arrive at her little town. What a sight!

Can you visualise all of the girls she grew up with, standing around, looking in? And there she sits—prim and proper—Mrs. Solomon! And as everybody looks in they become aware of the perfume that pervades the whole interior. She's covered with Solomon's perfume; she's dressed with clothes that he has purchased; she's riding in his carriage; she is protected by his presence. What's more, everything King Solomon is, she is regarded as being. They draw back their curtain, the daughters of Jerusalem look in and they see the vinedresser's daughter. Her immediate response to them is 'Look at my husband!'

And then the King speaks, and here are his incredible words: 'All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you' (4:7). Now wait a minute. King Solomon. What do you mean, 'There is no flaw in you'? She's still at heart the vinedresser's daughter; she hasn't really changed that much. How can you say, 'All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you'?

The answer is very simple: she is clothed by his presence. It isn't a matter of God treating us as forgiven sinners—that would be good enough. But God not only treats us as forgiven sinners, He treats us as if we had never sinned. You see, Jesus never sinned, and the character of Jesus is accepted by God in lieu of my character. And since God accepts it, he re-

gards me as if I had never sinned. That is truly incredible! And God says these words of us, 'All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you.'

SCENE IV

After the marriage the new bride decides to do something special for her husband. This was her supreme gift of love. Do you remember that old vineyard in which she slaved away—where the sun burnt her skin black, and where she lost her confidence and where she hated herself—that symbol of oppression and hatred? Remember that old vineyard? Now that she knows and loves Solomon a change has taken place in her life, and she says, 'I want to do something really super for my beloved. You know what I'm going to do for him? I'm going to work in that vineyard. I'm going to give that vineyard to him and I'm going to work in it. I'm going to turn out a greater profit in that vineyard than any of the other vineyards King Solomon owns.'

That is true love, isn't it? And if the vineyard can be taken as representing her hard labour, can we see that, prior to her meeting with King Solomon, the vineyard was an oppressive thing. After her meeting King Solomon, however, her labour in the vineyard became a way of expressing her love to her king.

This glorious story of a young girl, who married a king, is a symbol of your marriage to a King—the King of the Universe. Friends, are you still slaving away in the vineyard back there, or are you now working with joy in your heart in the vineyard over here?

(If you want to study the song for yourself, I'd like to recommend to you the book by Hudson Taylor: *Union and Communion*. This is a fantastic piece of literature. It can be found on: www.amazon.com). □

What chapter(s) of the Bible give the best description of:

1. The Ten Commandments
2. The qualities of love
3. Jesus' prophesy of Jerusalem's destruction
4. The resurrection of the dead
5. The Man of Lawlessness/Sin
6. The ascension of Jesus
7. David's yearning to be in God's House
8. Daniel in the den of lions
9. Life in the Spirit
10. The new-birth
11. The river and tree of life
12. The Day of the Lord
13. Faith and deeds (works)
14. The new covenant
15. The trial and martyrdom of Stephen.



QUIZ WHAT CHAPTER?

- ANSWERS:** 1. Exodus 20 or Deut. 5
2. 1 Corinthians 13
3. Luke 21
4. 1 Corinthians 15
5. 2 Thessalonians 2
6. Acts 1
7. Psalm 84
8. Daniel 6
9. Romans 8
10. John 3
11. Revelation 22
12. 2 Peter 3
13. James 2
14. Hebrews 8
15. Acts 7

HOW TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE

PART I

RITCHIE WAY

What are those dark, swirling clouds in the distance? Is it a hurricane? A forest fire? A stampede? A sand-storm? Or a locust plague? What is that gnawing pain in your stomach? Indigestion? Stomach ulcer? Hunger? Or could it be cancer? Apart from the very little we know instinctively, everything else must be interpreted. The whole of life, from conception to death, consists of making interpretations and applying the knowledge we have learned from our interpretations.

Most people manage, without too much difficulty, to correctly interpret the minor events of everyday life. But the more complex problems, such as a chronic gnawing pain in the stomach, or an unusual long-term change in the weather pattern, require an expert's interpretation.

Now many of us would like to be expert at something, so let's ask ourselves, 'How can a person be an expert interpreter? What enables the doctor and the weather-man to interpret the symptoms or signs in their work better than we can?' Surprisingly enough, the answer is quite simple. Experts, or professionals, have been trained to recognize patterns in their work.

PATTERNS

The work of scientists and professional people everywhere is based on the belief that the whole of life operates in patterns. We see these patterns in the daily sunrise and sunset, the lunar pattern from new moon to full moon, the seasonal pattern of spring, summer, autumn and winter, the pattern of the tides, the patterns in crystals and laws of motion, and patterns in behaviour, such as grief, etc. Without patterns, life would not only be unintelligible, it would be impossible.

We live in a universe of patterns, and life only makes sense as we are able to understand these patterns. A person who is unable to detect anything but the most elementary patterns of life is called a moron, while the person most adept at discerning patterns is called a genius. Your ability to detect patterns is called your intelligence quotient, or I.Q. What to one person is a meaningless mixture of facts or figures, is to a more intelligent person an exciting pattern.

Before you can solve any problem you must first discover the pattern. See if you can predict the 5th letter in this series by first discovering the pattern: **A C F J ...**

Discover the pattern and fill in the blank spaces in this puzzle:

| | | | |
|----|----|----|-----|
| 10 | 13 | 16 | ... |
| 20 | 17 | 14 | ... |

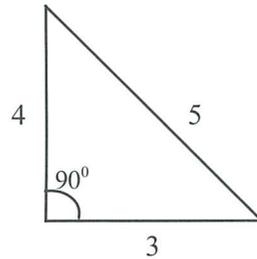
Even such a simple game as naughts and crosses depends on the ability of each player to programme a pattern of three naughts or three crosses in a row. You can't play naughts and crosses with a monkey, because a monkey is not able to recognise patterns of this kind. Every field of science, whether it is mathematics and logic, the physical sciences, the biological sciences, the social sciences, or the science of re-

demption, has its own special patterns. The real difference between a layperson and an expert is that the expert has been trained to recognize patterns in his or her particular field or profession.

Don't let the pattern in the foregoing sentence obscure its message. If you wish to become a skilled interpreter you have no choice but to train yourself to recognize patterns in your particular field(s) of interest. This set of studies, while dealing with only the most basic patterns of prophecy, will give you a foundation on which to build your own research in this exciting field.

EVERY PATTERN HAS A KEY

When I was a young lad I remember helping my father, who was a builder, to lay out the foundation for a garage. With his tape measure he measured off three units along one side from the corner, four units along the adjoining side from the same corner, then adjusted the angle between the two sides so that the third side of the triangle was exactly five units. He knew then that the building would be square.



It doesn't matter what units, or multiples of units are used—whether feet, yards, metres or cubits—the result is always the same if the formula is adhered to.

I didn't find out until many years later that builders have been using this 'magic 3-4-5' triangle for at least 4000 years. The Egyptians were using it two millennia before Christ to square the foundations for their pyramids.

About 500BC Pythagorus, a Greek mathematician, discovered the key to this magic triangle. He found that in every right-angle triangle, if you added together the squares of the two sides that make the right angle, the total would equal the square of the longest side (the hypotenuse), e.g.

$$3 \times 3 = 9$$

$$4 \times 4 = 16$$

$$5 \times 5 = 25.$$

Now that Pythagorus has given us the key to this magic triangle we are no longer restricted to the figures 3, 4, 5, or their multiples. With his formula ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$) it is now a simple matter to work out the length of the third side of a right-angle triangle if we are given the other two. For example $c^2 - b^2 = a^2$, or $c^2 - a^2 = b^2$.

PREDICTION FROM PATTERNS

One rewarding aspect of true science is that a scientist is able to make sound predictions on the basis of a key to a pattern. Dmitri Mendeleev discovered a key to the natural elements and was able to predict the existence of certain basic elements some time before they were discovered in nature.

In the 1860s Mendeleev discovered that the natural elements, such as aluminium, copper, silver, mercury, etc., formed a definite pattern on a chart when entered in the order of their atomic weights (a more accurate key, discovered later, is the atomic number of each element). For example, gold was entered next in line to platinum because it was the next heaviest in atomic weight, and so on. The vital key was the atomic weight of each element. After entering the eighty-eight known elements, he finished with several gaps in his chart.

Having identified the pattern and its key, Mendeleev found it a relatively simple matter to predict the atomic weights of the missing elements. His predictions were proven true, and the gaps were filled by the discovery of gallium in 1875, scandium in 1879, and germanium in 1886.

Now what is true in the physical world is also true in the spiritual. Two millennia ago Jesus used the known physical world to explain the unknown spiritual world. For example, a fisherman sorting his catch into good and bad piles pictured the Final Judgement (Matt. 13:47-50). A hired man who ploughs up buried treasure and then sells everything he has in order to buy the field so that the treasure will be his, portrays a person who discovers the good news about Jesus and gives up everything that prevents him from having Jesus (Matt. 13:44).

THE FOCAL POINT OF ALL PROPHECY

Jesus is the key to all Old Testament prophecy. The whole of the Old Testament points to him (Luke 24:27, 44). The major purpose of all prophecy is to turn us to belief in Jesus. If prophecy does not establish our belief in Jesus we have misunderstood it. In John 13:19 Jesus said, 'I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he.' 'For no matter how many promises God has made, they are *Yes* in Christ' (2 Cor 1:20). It is through Jesus that the promises of God are fulfilled to us.

There are several different types of prophecy in the Old Testament that point to Jesus:

1. Typical Prophecy E.g. Lev. 26:11-12.
2. Classical Prophecy E.g. Isa. 53:1-12.
3. Apocalyptic Prophecy E.g. Dan. 9:24-27.

This particular study will concentrate on Typical Prophecy. Typical prophecy has two basic sub groups: One group deals with the inanimate types of Jesus, and the other with the animate types.

Some of the inanimate types which pointed to Jesus were:

| | Prophecy | Fulfilment |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| a. Jacob's ladder | Gen 28:12 | John 1:51 |
| b. The bronze snake | Num 21:9 | John 3:14-15 |
| c. The temple | Lev 26:11-12 | John 2:19-22. |

Some of the animate types that pointed to Jesus were:

| | Prophecy | Fulfilment |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| a. The Passover Lamb | Exod 12:2-13 | 1 Cor 5:7 |
| b. Moses | Deut 18:15,18 | John 6:14 |
| c. Jonah | Jonah 1:17 | Matt 12:39-40. |

The following are examples of typical prophecy. The lives of these people were recorded in Scripture because they were prophecies of the Coming One, Jesus.

JOSEPH, SON OF JACOB

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------------|
| Gen. 37:12-14 | He was sent by his father to his brothers | John 1:11. |
| Gen. 37:5-10 | He was rejected because of his claims to rulership | John 5:18. |
| Gen. 37:18-28 | He was betrayed and sold for pieces of silver | Matt. 26:14-16. |
| Gen. 39:17-18 | He was falsely accused | Acts. 7:52. |
| Gen. 39:20 | He was unjustly condemned | Acts 13:28. |
| Gen. 40:1-3 | He was punished with two other prisoners | Matt. 27:38. |
| Gen. 40:21-22 | One prisoner was saved and the other lost | Luke 23:39-43. |
| Gen. 41:14; 39-40 | He came forth from the ground and was exalted to the right hand of the king | Eph. 1:20. |
| Gen. 41:41-44 | All power was given into his hands | Eph. 1:21-22. |
| Gen. 47:11-12 | He becomes a saviour to his people and to the Gentiles who come to him for bread, because they can't save themselves | Rom. 8:34. |
| Gen. 47:14-20 | To get this bread of life they had to forsake all | Luke 14:33. |
| Gen. 47:25 | He restored the kingdom to the king | 1 Cor.15:24. |

MOSES: (Deut 18:15; Acts 7:37).

| | | |
|----------------|--|----------------|
| Acts 7:35 | He was the promised Deliverer | Luke 4:16-21. |
| Exod. 2:1-10 | He was loaned to his mother | Matt. 1:18-21. |
| Exod. 1:22 | At his birth all the baby boys were slain | Matt. 2:16. |
| Heb. 11:24-26 | He left his royal throne to live with his downtrodden people | John 1:14. |
| Acts 7:3 | His ministry started with 40 times in the wilderness | Luke 4:1-2. |
| Num. 11:6 | He chose others to help him | Luke 10:1. |
| Deut. 34:10 | He alone has known God face to face | John 7:29. |
| Num. 12:6-8 | God spoke to the people through him | Heb. 1:1-2. |
| Deut. 34:11-12 | He delivered his people from bondage with miracles | Acts 2:22. |
| Psa. 105:41 | He gave his people living water | John 4:13-14. |

| | | |
|----------------|--|---------------|
| Psa. 105:40 | He fed them miraculously with bread | John 6:10-14. |
| Exod. 34:29-30 | He was glorified on a mountain | Matt 17:1-2. |
| Deut. 11:8-12 | He continually pointed his people to the kingdom at hand | Matt 4:23. |
| Num. 20:2-13 | He died because of his people's sin | 1 Pet. 3:18. |
| Jude 9 | He was resurrected and taken to heaven | Acts 5:30. |
| Matt. 17:3 | From there he ministers to the righteous | Acts 5:31. |

Moses predicted that God would raise up a prophet like himself (Deut. 18:15). The Jews of the first century AD looked for the new Moses who would again deliver Israel. They wondered how this new Moses would feed the people with manna, and give them laws as the first Moses did (John 6:14). They expected that he would deliver Israel from the bondage of Rome, as Moses delivered them from the bondage of Egypt (John 6:15). But the Greater Moses was to deliver them from more than the bondage of one nation—he came to deliver his people from the bondage of the whole world.

SAMSON

| | | |
|---------------|---|----------------|
| Jud. 13:1-3 | His birth was foretold by an angel | Luke 1:26-38. |
| Jud. 13:5 | He was to be a deliverer of his people | Luke 4:17-18. |
| Jud. 13:6 | He had supernatural power | John 7:31. |
| Jud. 15:13-15 | He turned every defeat into victory | Mark 12:13-24. |
| Jud. 16:15-21 | He allowed himself to be betrayed by a friend | John 13:18-30. |
| Jud. 16:21 | He was bound, mocked, tortured and imprisoned | John 18:12-14. |
| Jud. 16:28-30 | At his death he stretched forth his hands and shook the pillars of Satan's kingdom until it collapsed | John 12:30-33. |
| Jud. 6:30 | The victory he won by his death was greater than the victory he won by his life | Heb 2:14. |
| Jud 6:31 | He was unable to save himself, but he saved others | Matt 27:42. |

DAVID

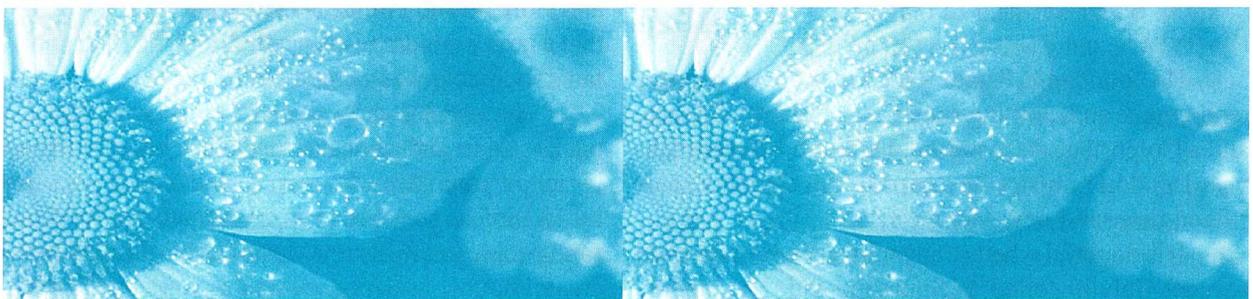
His name means 'the beloved'. He was born in Bethlehem. He was a good shepherd who became king. He was sent by his father to the place where God's people were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the enemy. Without special protection, or supernatural weapons of any kind, he there fought with the giant of evil who had been flinging taunts for forty days. He attacked him, not with sword or spear, but in the name of the Lord, and destroyed him with his own weapon (Heb 2:14). He is a mighty warrior who never lost a battle. Of him it is written: 'Why do the nations rage ... against the Lord and against his anointed One' (Psa. 2:1-2; Acts 4:25-26).

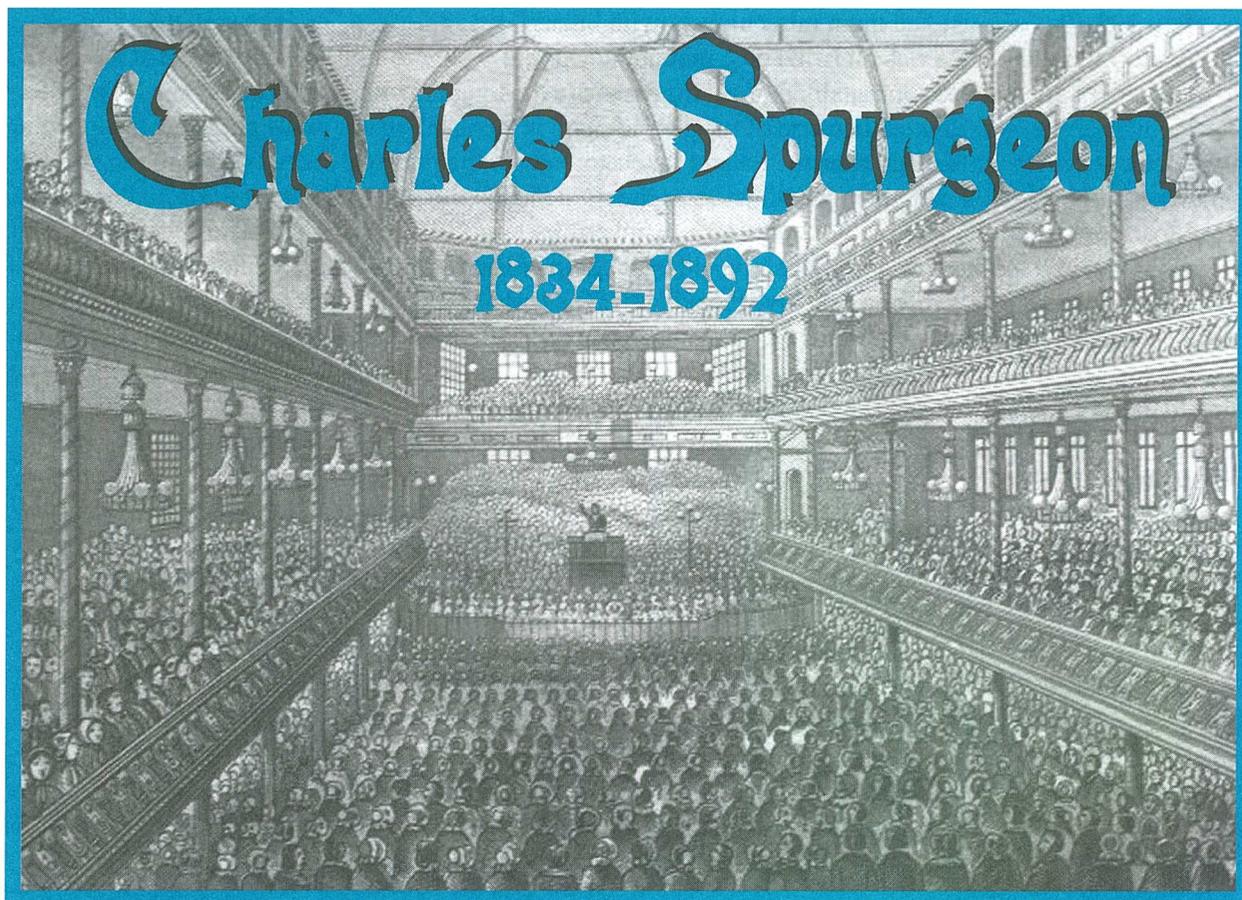
SUMMARY AND CHALLENGE

As we have seen, the key to the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is Jesus. Several examples have been given. One of the most remarkable types of Jesus, however, is Jonah. We challenge you to discover the parallels between Jonah and Jesus for yourself. If you so desire, email your script to me at ritchiew@kiwilink.co.nz. We will compile a list of parallels from the best types sent in and publish it in the magazine.

NEXT MONTH

Jesus claimed that the Old Testament sanctuary was a prophecy about him (John 2:19-21). Next month we will look at the Hebrew sanctuary to see in what way(s) it pointed forward to Jesus and his ministry. 





Desmond Ford*

Surrey Music Hall 1858
—Wikimedia Commons

If ever there was a parallel to Whitefield in oratorical skills and gospel zeal it was Spurgeon. Even today, more people around the world read Spurgeon than any other religious writer. His ministry embraced the world, though he, himself, rarely travelled further beyond the British Isles than across the English Channel. American newspapers printed his sermons, and multitudes across Europe, Canada, and Australia learned the gospel of justification by faith from the eloquent London preacher.

He founded a Pastor's College, an orphanage, temperance and clothing societies, a Pioneer Mission, and a Colportage Association. During his thirty-eight year London ministry he added to the church almost fifteen thousand new members.

It is doubtful whether any minister who ever lived (except Calvin) toiled as Spurgeon did. His labours

were almost unremitting (though he strove unsuccessfully to preserve a weekly day for a reprieve), and partly responsible for his frequent bouts of illness and early death. There are about one hundred books that bear his name as author. Many of these were compiled from his regular preaching.

He was an evangelical Calvinist, but this never hindered his free offers of grace. A bell-like voice, a mastery of language and his keen sense of humour, contributed to his fascination as a preacher. Converted through the ministry of a lay preacher when only fifteen, he was energized by the gospel to personally present justification by faith to congregations across England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Western Europe. Over several years he averaged eight to twelve outside services a week, all over the Empire, and Holland and France. His London church so grew that a larger building was needed, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle was completed in 1861.

Through his early years of ministry he faced a tide of slander and vilification, including bitter criticisms by fellow ministers who were jealous of his popularity. In 1865 he preached to approximately twelve thousand people in the Surrey Music Hall. Mischief-makers, without conscience, caused a panic by shouting

‘Fire!’ where no fire was. Seven people died in the confusion, and many were seriously injured. Spurgeon’s grief almost cost him his reason. Only the unceasing ministry of the Holy Spirit restored him, but he bore the emotional and mental scars till his death. ‘Giant Despair’ became his recurring enemy.

From November 1856 to December 1859 ten thousand people crowded the Surrey Hall meetings. London cabbies shouted, ‘Over the river to Charlie’. After the Tabernacle was completed, an average of five thousand people assembled every Sunday, morning and evening. Once a quarter he asked his own people to stay away that others might come. And come they did, jamming the vast Tabernacle. When the Tabernacle was being refurbished in 1867 Spurgeon preached in the Agricultural Hall, Islington with twenty thousand in average attendance. The elite came, including Gladstone, Ruskin, Shaftesbury, Queen Victoria, along with famous globetrotters, statesmen, soldiers, authors, artists and industrial captains. Richard Ellsworth Day in his biography, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim*, adds to the list: ‘rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief; factory girls, artisans, street women, ne’er-do-wells and drunks; farmers, carter’s boys, shopkeepers and dairy maids.’

But pre-eminently his listeners were the common people. In a letter Spurgeon wrote: ‘The Lord Mayor, a Jew has been ... the Chief Commissioner of Police also ... but better still, some thieves, thimblerriggers (a shell game), harlots; ... and some are now in the church.’ By the time of his death Baptists had become a world force. A well known Doctor of Divinity wrote a pamphlet about Spurgeon in which the following appeared—words addressed first to Spurgeon, and next to every minister:

‘You have strong faith, and as the result, intense earnestness. In this lies, as in the hair of Samson, the secret of your power. Go on, my brother, and may God give you a still larger amount of ministerial success! “Preach the Word,” the old theology, that “glorious gospel of the blessed God,” for which apostles laboured and martyrs died. In all your teachings, continue to exhibit the Cross of Christ as occupying, in the Christian revelation, like the sun in our planetary system, the very centre, and imparting to all their light and heat. Tell the people that every doctrine, duty, or promise of the Scriptures stands intimately connected with the Cross, and from that connection, derives its mean-

ing and value to us. Thus exhibiting the whole system of Divine Truth in its harmony and symmetry, what a glorious prospect of honour, happiness, and usefulness presents itself to your view!’ (W. Joseph Harrald, *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon 1854-1860*, p. 79).

Here are some fragments from his preaching:

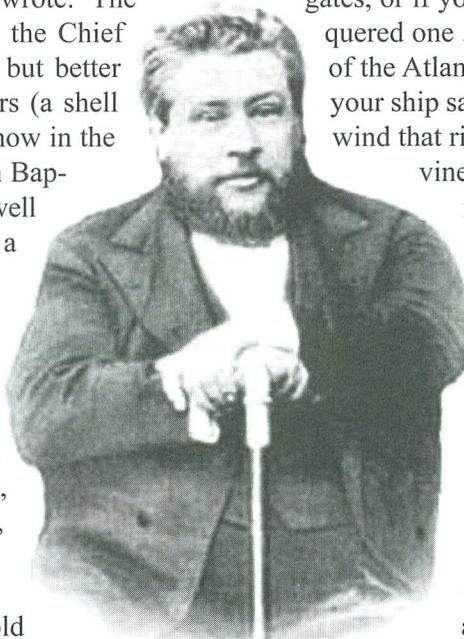
‘My Lord wore my crown of thorns for me, why should I wear it too? He took our griefs and carried our sorrows that we might be a happy people and be able to obey the command, “Take no thought for the morrow.” Ours is the crown of loving kindness and tender mercies and we wear it when we cast all our care on him who careth for us. Take but a thorn out of this crown and use it as a lancet and it will let out the hot blood of passion and abate the fever of pride. It is a wonderful remedy for swelling flesh and grievous boils of sin. He who sees Jesus crowned with thorns will loathe to look upon self, except it be though tears of contrition.

No evil can happen to me, seeming ill is but another form of benediction. If all events shall aid me, what matters in what dress they come, whether of scarlet and fine linen, or sackcloth and ashes ... the bitter is sweet and medicine is food. Courage, ye shall meet naught but friends between this and the pearly gates, or if you meet an enemy it will be a conquered one ... the winds which toss the waves of the Atlantic of your life are all sure to waft your ship safely into the desired haven. Every wind that rises, whether soft or fierce, is a divine monsoon hurrying in the same direction as your soul’s desires. ... God walks in the tempest and rules the storm.’

Spurgeon’s first words at the Tabernacle were these:

‘I would propose that the subject of the Ministry in this house, a long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist; I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist; but if I am asked what is my creed,

I reply, “It is Jesus Christ.” My venerated predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a Body of Divinity, admirable and excellent in its way; but the Body of Divinity to which I would pin and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is not his system, or any other human treatise; but Christ Jesus, who is the sum and substance of the gospel, who is in himself all theology, the incar-



Near the end of his life.
—Wikimedia Commons

nation of every precious truth, the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life.'

And now his last words just before his death:

'If you wear the livery of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like among the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold he always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the Cross lies ever on his shoulders. If he bids us carry a burden, he carries it also. If there is anything

that is gracious, generous, kind and tender, yea, lavish and superabundant in love, you will always find it in him. His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ.' 

Recommended is the two-volume autobiography *The Early Years* (Volume 1); and *The Full Harvest* (Volume 2). —Available from Koorong bookstore.

* This article is an extract from Dr. Ford's recent book, *The Coming Worldwide Calvary: Christ versus Antichrist* (2009), pp. 137 - 140.

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2:00pm Milton Hook:

'Should the Old Testament be R-Rated?'

3:00pm Afternoon Tea; informal fellowship.

4:00pm FINISH

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Programme:

10:00am Ron Allen *A bad Case of Righteousness.*

10:45am MORNING TEA.

11:15am John Shaw *Understanding our Freedom in Christ.*

12:15pm LUNCH (Food cannot be brought into Hotel).

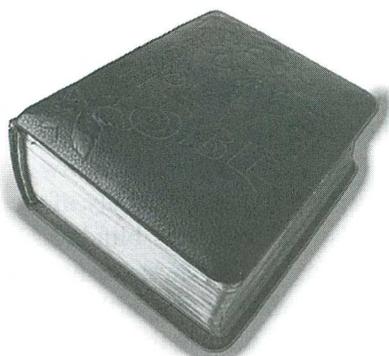
2:00pm John Shaw *Enjoying Our Freedom in Christ.*

3:00pm AFTERNOON TEA Informal Fellowship.

4:00pm FINISH.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Part 20



Jesus and Pilate

Ritchie Way

In AD26 Tiberius Caesar appointed Pontius Pilate as *Praefectus civitatum* (governor) of Samaria, Judea, and old Idumea. Pilate was to be responsible for the collection of taxes for Rome; the general administration of the province, the supervision of all large scale building projects, judicial matters and the maintenance of law and order—for which he had three thousand soldiers.

At the time of the Jewish Passover in AD30 Pilate faced the greatest test of his ten year administration. While his official residence and base of operation was in the coastal city of Caesarea Maritima, on this occasion he had come to Jerusalem to ensure that law and order prevailed during the festival. There were radical Jews intent on expelling their Roman overlords from Israel, and he wanted to be on the scene to nip such aspirations in the bud should they manifest themselves. One such terrorist, Barabbas, was already in custody awaiting execution (John 18:40b). With such a large gathering of Jews for this

festival it was important that no aspiring ‘messiah’ got the opportunity to arouse the masses to revolt against Rome.

Early on Friday morning Pilate was roused from sleep by his aide who advised him that a delegation of Jews had come to see him and were waiting outside the palace. They brought with them a prisoner whom they had handed over to the praetorian guard.

The waiting delegation refused to come into Pilate’s palace to speak with him, because they believed they would be defiled by entering the residence of a non-Jew and such defilement would exclude them from taking part in the Passover (John 18:28). So Pilate dressed and went out to speak with them.

‘What charges are you bringing against this man?’ Pilate asked. The spokesman for the delegation, trying to avoid an official inquiry into their questionable accusations against Jesus, replied elusively: ‘If he were not a criminal we would not have handed him over to you’. Pilate, knowing that ‘it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him’ (Matt. 27:18), retorted, ‘Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law’ (John 18:31).

This put the Jews on the spot because they did not have the authority to execute anyone—for something as serious as an execution, they would have to have a watertight case. They had decided that if it came to a show-down they would play on Pilate’s fears. ‘He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king,’ they said (Luke 23:2).

Pilate went back inside the palace and ordered the guards to bring Jesus to him. They opened Jesus’ cell and took him to the procurator.

‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ Pilate asked. Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place’ (John 18:36).

Pilate found Jesus’ answer disconcerting. While Jesus admitted to being a king, he did not claim any territory as his own, nor were his followers fighting men. This was not the way of revolutionaries.

Pilate, unable to fathom Jesus’ explanation, focused on his admission: ‘You are a king then!’ he exclaimed.

‘Yes, I am a king,’ Jesus answered. ‘In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world—to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’

Pilate was caught between the lies of the Sanhedrin and the truth of Jesus—the truth that would save him if he really wanted it. Instead, he brushed aside Jesus’ words with a statement that indicated he did not believe in absolute truth. ‘What is truth?’ he

snorted as he spun on his heels and went out to the Jews. 'I find no basis for a charge against him,' he told them.

It was at this point that Pilate miscalculated the temper of the crowd. Earlier that week they had been hailing Jesus as the Messiah, but he did nothing to free them from the Romans. Nothing! And now this so-called 'Messiah' appeared to be impotent in the hands of their enemy—Rome.

It was a custom of the Romans to release a prisoner at a high festival, so when Pilate foolishly gave the crowd a choice between Barabbas, the insurrectionist and resistance fighter, and Jesus, the crowd roared out for their champion of a free Israel, Barabbas (John 18:40a). It wasn't the Prince of Peace they wanted, but the man of war. And they got what they wanted.

Barabbas is an Aramaic word meaning 'son of the father.' The Jews chose the earthly son of an earthly father in preference to the heavenly Son of the heavenly Father. In choosing the earthly over the heavenly, they set themselves up to receive the rewards of the earthly rather than the heavenly.

We think they're fools for making such a choice, but we too fall into the same temptation. How many times do we choose earthly delights over the heavenly? How many times do we invest our money for earthly treasure rather than the heavenly? And aren't we also guilty of committing ourselves to upholding earthly traditions rather than heavenly truth?

Pilate, still looking for a way to release Jesus, decided to have him flogged, hoping that such a terrible punishment would appease the baying crowd. Scourging, a prerequisite for crucifixion, was so awful that many victims did not survive it. The sight of a brutalised innocent man should be enough to win their sympathy and obtain their satisfaction.

After the scourging Pilate paraded Jesus with his back bloodied and shredded, before the Jews and declared, 'Behold the man! I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him'.

As soon as the chief priests and officials saw Jesus they shouted, 'Crucify! Crucify!' They knew they had Pilate on the back foot. If he believed that Jesus was innocent, why did he have him scourged? He hadn't been strong enough to draw a line at 'No guilt, therefore no punishment', so now they would press him to move that line even further backward to include capital punishment.

The Jews insisted that Jesus had to die because 'he claimed to be the Son of God'. This news scared Pilate witless, because in pagan mythology some of the gods, such as Hercules, often appeared among

people working miracles. If Jesus really was a divine being Pilate did not want to be responsible for mistreating him. The consequences wouldn't bear thinking about.

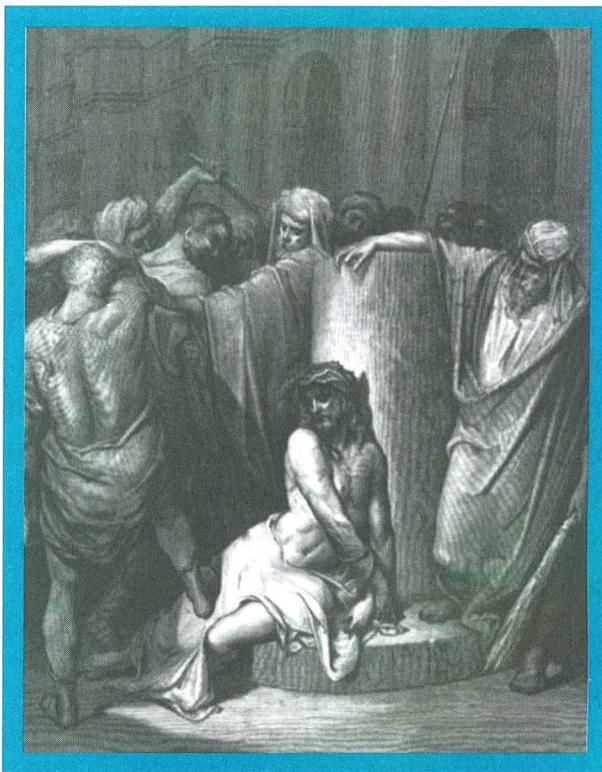
Pilate went back inside the palace to question Jesus further. 'Where do you come from', he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer.

Insulted by Jesus' silence Pilate asked angrily, 'Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you realise that I have power either to free you or to crucify you?'

Jesus answered, 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of the greater sin' (John 19:7-11).

The Jews were guilty, not only of envy and injustice, but also of deliberate blindness. The Lord came to his own, but his own did not receive him (John 1:11). There was nothing further that God could do for the Jews; they were in the process of rejecting his greatest revelation of himself.

'From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a



king opposes Caesar.'"

Pilate knew that if he released Jesus the Jews would send a delegation to Rome, and with his past history, he would in all probability get the sack. So he chose to crucify Christ to save himself.

Actor Mel Gibson, once said, 'You better de-

cide whether you're hanging on the cross or banging in the nails.' Pilate wasn't about to crucify himself so he elected to crucify Christ instead.

Each of us finds him/herself in Pilate's shoes at one time or another—the place where we have to choose between Jesus and self. We can crucify guilty self in order to save innocent Jesus, or crucify innocent Jesus in order to save guilty self. The choice is ours and the choice can determine our destiny.

Pilate went to the judge's seat—the place where he would pronounce judgement on Jesus. Just as he sat down, his aide came in with a message from his wife, Claudia Procula. She said, 'Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him' (Matt. 27:19).

People in biblical times laid great store by their dreams, and it was through Claudia's dream that God made his final appeal to Pilate. But the cries of the crowd, goaded on by the chief priests and the elders, overrode Pilate's legitimate concerns for Jesus. 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' they shouted, louder and louder (Matt. 27:24).

Pilate, covered by the uproar that was starting—the very thing he was anxious to prevent—took some water and washed his hands. 'I am innocent of this man's blood!' he shouted. 'It's your responsibility!' By this means he sought to assuage his guilty conscience. But it takes more than water to wash away sin. That can only be accomplished by the blood of Jesus.

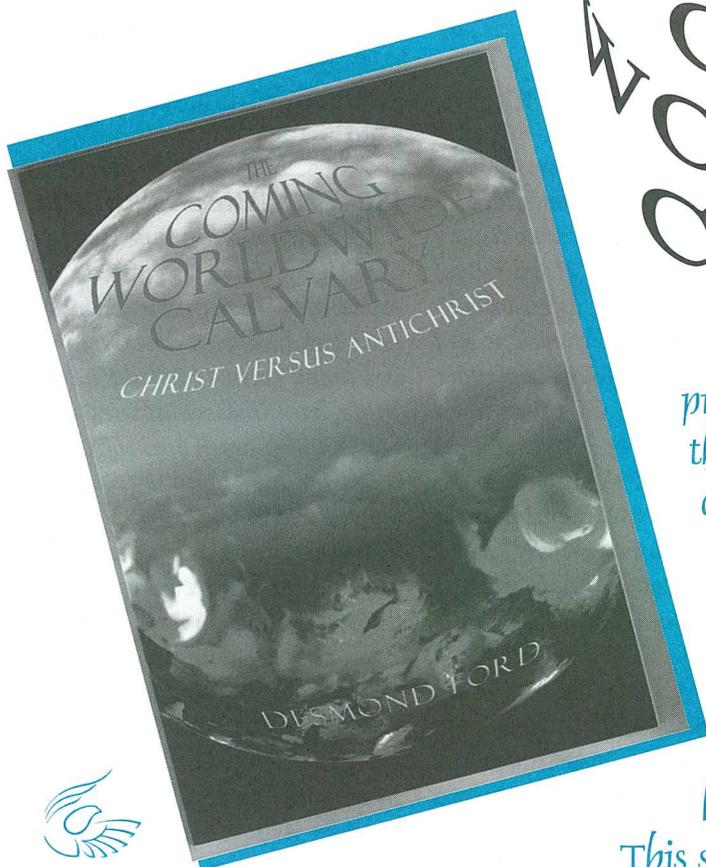
All the people answered, 'Let his blood be on us and on our children!' And it came to pass as they requested. In AD 70 the Roman 'beast' turned on the Jewish 'prostitute' and ate her flesh and burned her with fire (Rev. 17:16).

Finally Pilate handed Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified. Commenting upon Pilate's decision, the 1st century Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus, wrote: 'Christus ... suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.'

☐

☐

Dr Desmond Ford's



The most important New Testament prophecy is also the most neglected and the least understood despite our Lord's command to 'know and understand it'. See Matthew 24:15, 'The abomination standing in the holy place' launches the tribulation such as never was, bringing a worldwide Calvary that threatens to annihilate the Christian church.

This scenario is also discussed by Paul the Apostle in 2 Thessalonians 2, under the title 'Man of Sin', the Antichrist who sits in the temple of God at present restrained by the mysterious 'hinderer'.

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GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore, opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of many of our readers.

Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.

FATHER ABRAHAM

Dear Editor

When I took my son to the children's class at church last weekend the children were singing the action song: 'Father Abraham had many kids, Many kids had Father Abraham. I am one of them, and so are you, So let's all praise the Lord.'

Later I asked the teacher how they could sing those words when none of the kids were Jewish. She said she didn't know, but maybe it was because we believed in God like Abraham.

I am not at all happy about the fact that our kids are being taught falsehoods like this. I find it even more galling that this sort of thing is being done in most churches. Could you write an article about the Jews being God's people?

A. F.

Dear A

I am not the person you should be complaining to. If you still have a problem with this matter you should talk to your pastor about it.

Having said that, the children's teacher was right. The Bible makes it quite clear that the real children of Abraham are not children of the flesh but children of faith—those who believe in Jesus (Gal. 3:7, 29; Rom. 4:11).

Citizenship in God's kingdom is not based on the blood of Abraham, but on the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

True sons of Abraham are not those who are children outwardly, but

who are children inwardly (Rom. 2:28-29). Jesus made this very clear when his mother and brothers came in an endeavour to persuade him to stop causing their family embarrassment in religious circles. Although his words would have hurt his blood mother and brothers, Jesus told everyone there that his true family consisted of those who did the will of his heavenly Father (Matt. 12:47-49). His relationship to Abraham was outweighed by his relationship to God.

God bless you

Ritchie.

'THESE'

Dear Editor

Can you help us please? We've been having a friendly argument about John 21:15 where Jesus said to Peter, after breakfast on the beach, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?'

What are the 'these' that Jesus refers to? I claim it's the great haul of fish mentioned in verse 11. In other words, Jesus was asking Peter if he loved him more than he loved his fishing.

C. F.

Dear C

It is possible that there is more than one layer to Jesus' question, but his primary reference was to a conversation recorded in Matthew 26:33-34, where Peter declared emphatically, 'Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will', after which he added, 'Even if I have to die with you I will never disown you'.

By saying this Peter claimed he loved Jesus more than the other disciples did. Jesus quickly put an end to that kind of self-exaltation by telling Peter that within a few hours he would deny the Lord *three* times. That is why Jesus, in reinstating Peter to the fellowship of the disciples, asked him *three* times if he loved him.

Jesus concluded the reinstatement by telling Peter that when he was much older he *would* die for his Lord. When you read John 21:18 you will see that Jesus' prediction has two layers of meaning, the ultimate layer recognised by John who commented: 'Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.' Peter acknowledged the truth of John's interpretation in 2 Peter 1:14.

About AD67 Nero executed Peter. According to tradition the apostle was crucified upside down in Rome. By his death for Jesus, Peter revealed his deep love for the Lord.

Ritchie.

ISRAEL IN BIBLE PROPHECY

Dear Ritchie

Why don't we get any articles on Israel and what part it has to play in end times? How do you think the 144,000 fit into the Bible end-time scenario?

God bless you at GNU.

G. J.

Dear G

Five years ago we published a series of nine consecutive articles on 'Modern Israel in Prophecy', starting with the April 2005 *Good News Unlimited* magazine. Although we probably would not do a similar series again, if there is enough interest, we could devote an issue of the magazine to that subject.

Now a brief comment on the 144,000. The book of Revelation is a book of symbols; a lamb with a scroll, a man eating a book; death riding a deathly pale horse; four

angels wrestling with four winds, etc. Even the numbers in Revelation are symbolic, the figure twelve represents God's kingdom. The holy city is a cube measuring twelve thousand stadia on each of its twelve edges. The wall is twelve times twelve cubits thick. The city has twelve foundations made of twelve different kinds of precious stones, and on them the names of the twelve apostles. The city has twelve gates made of twelve pearls, with twelve angels at the twelve gates that were named after the twelve tribes of Israel. Inside the city grew a tree that bore twelve crops of fruit over twelve months. The city is the home of the twelve tribes of Israel, each tribe having twelve thousand members, making the total population 144,000.

Now God is not a God who is arbitrary in his choice of citizens for this city. He is not going to go along a line of potential inhabitants counting them off: '143,997, 143,998, 143,999, 144,000. That's all I'm afraid! Sorry that the rest of you missed out'.

As I said, the number is symbolic of everyone who is sealed with God's name (Rev. 7:2; 14:1). It represents those 'who had been redeemed from the earth' (Rev. 14:3) and who 'follow the Lamb wherever he goes' (Rev. 14:4). These constitute the true Israel of God.

Grace and peace to you

Ritchie.

THE AFTERLIFE

Dear Ritchie

What do you think people will be like in the afterlife? I mean, do you think they will be easy to get on with?

J.A.

Dear J

Here's a good test for you. Imagine that everyone in the afterlife was exactly like you, having your personality, attitudes and quirks; your helpfulness or unhelpfulness, your habits, etc.

How do you think you would manage in such a place? Would it be heaven or hell for you?

Where do you want to end up? What do you need to do about it?

Ritchie.

CONDEMNED OR FORGIVEN

Dear Brother

Thank you for the excellent articles which you have in Good News Unlimited. It's rather cool tonight but I'm still up and pondering how to express my thoughts. I do know one thing for sure: I can forget the past and move on. God has done a wonderful thing in me.

I've been on a long journey and I'm still learning. Inwardly, I'm happy because Jesus reigns in my heart. On the other hand, I feel fearful that, because of my open rebellion against God, I have caused a grave hurt to myself and others who have been close to me. I tell myself that the past is past; period! God has broken the chains which kept me bound and has set me free.

I therefore feel upset when I read statements such as: 'Anyone born of God does not continue to sin. For example, when God's Spirit comes into the life of an adulterer; that person does not continue to commit adultery. If he or she does, so denying their faith, then there is not much that can be done for them ...'

I do feel sense of distress here, mainly because I struggled with addiction to homosexuality, and was married at the same time. During that time I knew it was wrong but also wanted to accept myself. Yes, I moved out of my marriage, but after walking out that door I rediscovered I was still a child of God.

I was rebaptised but the pull of my addiction was so strong I fell many times. Did that mean that God had rejected me? I don't think so. I had to learn new meth-

ods and ways and unlearn old habits. Although my orientation is still gay, I am a child of God and his work in me is ongoing.

The good news now is that I've been free and celibate for over six years. I can only thank God for this and the wonderful work he has done in my life. At times I felt like the prostitute Hosea married, whom God cleansed and made whole only to be soiled all over again.

I'm really glad that Jesus has thrown his white robe of righteousness over my soiled soul. My wife, who loved me unconditionally all this time, has since died. We never did move back together but we became good friends. The pain I must've caused her and my family grieves me to this day. The only negative I have now is that I'm alone, and there's no one to talk to.

I'm sorry if this doesn't make sense, but the discussion point in the latest magazine caused me distress. I just need to be reminded that God is on my side and that I can move on building my relationship with him to new heights and joy. It's just that at times I do need a 'Jesus' in human form to talk to, one who accepts me without condemnation. It has been a long, hard journey but in the end I know there will be unexpected joy.

In Him I live!

K. J.

Hi brother K

After re-reading what I wrote I realised that I should have worded it much better. The way it stands had me, also, under condemnation for many years. There is often a considerable gap between what is ideal and what is real, and I did not take that into account.

One major difference between a Christian and a non-Christian, is that a Christian, although he may fall many times, always gets

up and continues his journey towards Christ; he never turns away from his Lord in discouragement and failure. His goal is always Christ and Christlikeness. Such a one, Jesus will never reject.

Thank you for your letter. I rejoice that you are walking with Jesus. May he ever be your Lord, Saviour and brother.

Grace and peace to you

Ritchie.

PREDESTINATION

Hi Ritchie

What do you make of this verse; it sounds like God is saying that some are predestined and others are not.

'For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified' (Rom. 8:29-30).

God Bless

N.J.

Hi N

God's predestination does not override our free will. He will never force anyone into heaven who does not want to go there. Besides, if he did, it would cease to be heaven.

So how does biblical predestination work? God has predestined us (chosen our destiny beforehand) in Christ Jesus. That is his will for everyone. It is not his will that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Our destiny is in Jesus. If we are in Jesus we shall be saved. If we choose not to be in Jesus we put ourselves outside of God's will, and will therefore be lost.

Notice that Romans 8:29 speaks of 'those God foreknew'. In the Bible those who have an intimate relationship with each other are said to 'know' each other. It is eternal life for us to 'know' God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3). And those

who love God are 'known' by God (1 Cor. 8:3). So the people that God 'foreknew' (Rom. 8:29) were the ones he knew would enter into a living relationship with him.

Blessings

Ritchie.

ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED

Dear Ritchie

Do you believe in 'once saved, always saved'?

X

Dear X

I cannot think of a better answer to your question than one I heard from an attendee at the last GNU Seminar in Sydney: 'I don't believe in "once saved, always saved" anymore than I believe in "once lost, always lost".'

However, having said that, it is just as hard to break your blood-born relationship to your heavenly Father as it is to your earthly father. It would be difficult, though not impossible.

Ritchie.

EVIL SPIRIT FROM GOD

Hi Ritchie

I was doing a word search the other day, looking for Old Testament verses on soul sleep, so I typed 'spirit' into a word search, and came up with a heap of verses in Judges and Samuel about God sending evil spirits to people.

For example: 'God sent an evil spirit' (Jud. 9:23); 'An evil spirit from the LORD' (1 Sam. 16:14); 'An evil spirit from God'

(1 Sam. 16:15); 'The evil spirit from God' (1 Sam. 16:16); 'An evil spirit from God' (1 Sam. 18:10); 'An evil spirit from the LORD' (1 Sam. 19:9).

It's clear from these verses that God is the one who sends evil spirits to torment people. What have you to say about that?

N. J.

Hi N

In the Hebrew culture of that time they attributed everything that happened, to God. He was the First Cause; therefore whatever he permitted happened according to his will.

Having said that, they were under no illusions about where evil came from. While God permitted it, they knew he wasn't the origin of it. Let me give you two examples to support this conclusion: In Exodus 9:12 it says, 'The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart', but in Exodus 8:32 it says, 'Pharaoh hardened his [own] heart'. And in 2 Samuel 24:1 it says, 'The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah."' The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 21:1 says, 'Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.'

Now which of the above examples was correct, and which was wrong? According to Jewish thinking they were both correct, depending entirely upon your perspective.

Ritchie.

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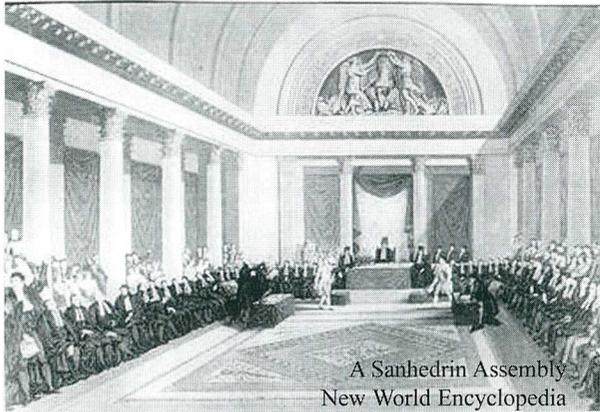
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DID YOU KNOW?

SANHEDRIN

The last true king of Judah was Zedekiah, also known as Mattaniah, whose reign came to an end in 586BC when Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity.

For the next five hundred years governors, appointed



A Sanhedrin Assembly
New World Encyclopedia

by the dominant world power, ruled Israel. Within Israel the authority of the high priest increased during this period, as did that of the council of elders, which became the people's supreme court. It is possible that this council originated with King Jehoshaphat a quarter of a century earlier (2 Chron. 19:8-11). During the period when Greece ruled the world the council was known by the Greek title *Gerousia*.

In Jesus' time the ruling council, now known as the Sanhedrin, *synedrion* = a council, (John 11:47), was dominated by Pharisees. This 'council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law' (Luke 22:66), was 'the Jewish ruling council' (John 3:1). The New Testament names three members of this council: Nicodemus (John 3:1); Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43); and Gamaliel (Acts 5:34).

During the time of the Roman procurators it seems that the civil authority of the Sanhedrin had been restricted to Judea, which is why it was powerless to do anything about Jesus while he remained in Galilee. In the time of Christ

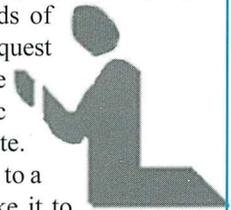
the Sanhedrin had authority both in civil and criminal matters. In Jesus' day it could pass, but not execute a sentence of death, which is why Jesus also had to be tried before Pilate. The stoning of Stephen was, apparently, an illegal act.

God had promised his people that one day he would come and dwell among them and walk among them (Lev. 26:11-12), and he did that in Jesus (Philp. 2:5-8). But the Sanhedrin rejected Jesus and condemned him to death for claiming that he was God (Matt. 26:63-66). That is why Jesus wept over Jerusalem, bewailing the disaster that would come upon the city because 'they did not recognise the time of God's coming to them' (Luke 19:44). With the consequent destruction of Jerusalem the Sanhedrin lost all its civil power, and acted from that time forward only as a religious authority. □

—Much of this information was gleaned from R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times* (Baker Books, 2005), pp. 314, 330.

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Please bring your Bible

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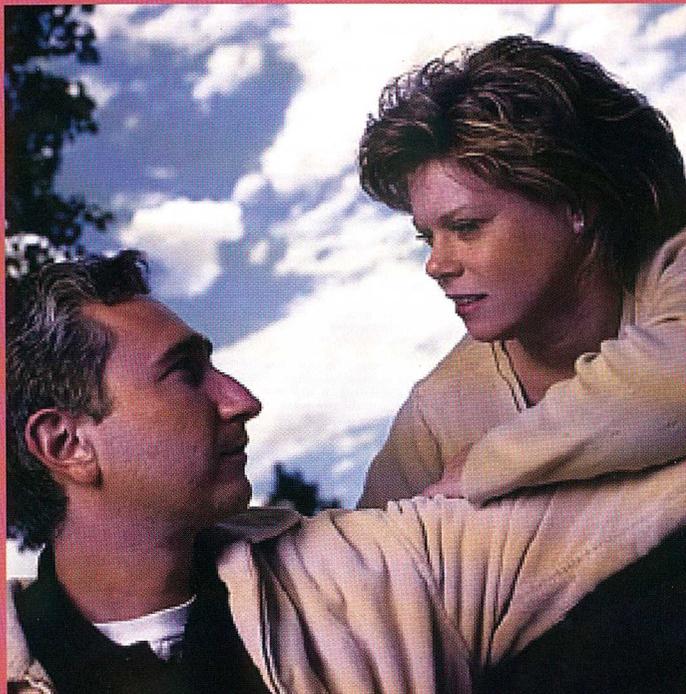
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