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Good News Unlimited

UNDERSTANDING
THE TRUTH



DIGGING FOR DIAMONDS

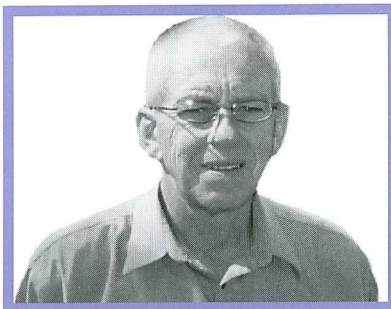
BATTLE FOR
THE TRUTH

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:
THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

THE PATTERN
FOR THE FUTURE

PAUL'S PRAYERS IN ACTION

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EDITORIAL

This year we are starting three new features in our *Good News Unlimited* magazine. Doug Martin has a fascinating series on 'The Prayers of the Apostle Paul'. I shall be presenting a series on my favourite book in the Bible—the Gospel of John—and we shall also feature a short item each month on little known facts in the Bible entitled, 'Did You Know?'

The theme for our *Good News Unlimited* magazine this month is 'The truth'. Life depends upon knowing the truth. Every doctor knows he can't fix a problem until he knows what the problem is. If a man, who has a heart problem is treated for indigestion, his problem is not solved, it is exacerbated, because the truth of his ailment has not been discerned.

Back in October, 2003, I went to my doctor because I was having tremendous night sweats. I sweated so profusely each night that my pyjamas,

pillow and bedding were saturated. Because the glands on my neck were swollen the doctor suspected that I had some form of glandular fever and sent me away for a blood test, which proved to be negative.

A few days later, while out on my daily walk with Rosemary and our dog, I was unable to get back home because I was so weak. By this time the glands around my neck had swollen up so much it appeared that I had mumps. Again I went to the doctor who was still convinced that I had glandular fever. He sent me away for another blood test, which was also negative.

A few nights later I woke up at 2.00am in excruciating pain. My liver was so swollen that each breath, which brought my diaphragm into contact with it, caused me agony. After the night-doctors at the hospital had run some tests on me, one of them asked, 'Have you been engaging in any at-risk behaviours?' 'No,' I weakly smiled, I haven't. There must be some other cause.'

When a subsequent scan revealed a mass of tumours on my liver and spleen, a doctor told me that I probably had lymphoma, i.e. cancer of the lymphatic system. They would confirm it after removing one of the lymph nodes from my neck. Later, when I asked what they had discovered, he replied, 'We didn't discover anything because the lymph node was

necrotic.' 'What's necrotic?' I asked. 'Dead! Rotten! The cancer had destroyed it. Never mind, we will drill a hole in your pelvis and extract some bone marrow. We will find some cells there which will reveal what type of cancer you have.'

After the operation I asked, 'Did you discover what you were looking for.' 'I'm afraid not,' he admitted. 'We had five attempts at extracting some bone marrow, but couldn't find any. The cancer has destroyed it all. We did, however, find two cells which may give us the answer we are looking for.' And, fortunately for me, they found what they were looking for. Once they knew the truth of my ailment, they were able to begin life-saving treatment immediately. And it was free!

The Bible reveals the truth about our condition; we are sinners and the wages of sin is death. But the Divine Physician not only diagnoses our problem, he has the cure for it—and it is free. While 'the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 6:23). 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' but, 'are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ' (Rom. 3:23).

Ritchie Way

—Ritchie Way

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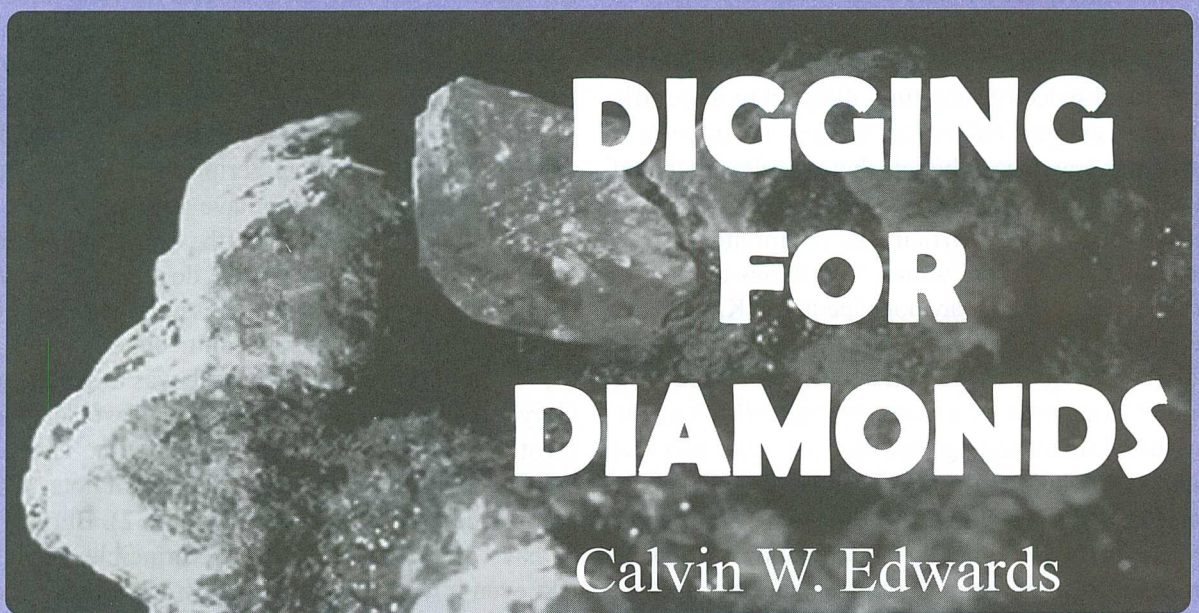
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Mission Statement

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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DIGGING FOR DIAMONDS

Calvin W. Edwards

Truth is like a diamond. It is rare, beautiful and valuable. We do not create truth, it is there before we are. Truth is reality. And we as Christians believe we have an insight into reality (truth) through the Word of God. Truth is like valuable diamonds to be dug from the pages of God's Word. In this brief article we look at how that digging should be done.

THE BIBLE

Christians believe that God has inspired these sacred writings and providentially preserved them through the vicissitudes of history. In some mysterious way God has worked on persons and communities to produce this remarkable body of literature. I firmly believe that God has been involved in the production, collection and preservation of the Bible in a way he has not with any other collection of writings.

So it is to this vast and diverse compilation of sacred works we turn in our attempt to understand truth. Realizing that this is a step of faith (but a reasonable one) and that these ancient writings do not pretend to address every issue of which the human mind can conceive, we seek to discover what God has revealed of himself, of humankind, of sin and salvation and of the world we live in.

It is a tragedy that this Bible, which is so crucial in our quest for truth, is not only the most used book in the world, but also the most abused. Too often the Bible has not been studied in a proper manner and persons have come to it with their expectations already determined, seeking only certification for preconceived opinions.

DISCOVERING THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE TEXT

The task of Bible study involves two major steps.

First, one must discover the original meaning of the text. Once this has been done one must then ask the question, 'How is this text, with the meaning we have discovered, relevant to me today?' But the second step depends upon the competent completion of the first one.

So, how do we discover the original meaning of the text? It is very rare that one can rightly understand a text (we use this word to refer to a verse, a paragraph or a larger segment) without careful consideration of its context. It has been said that a text without a context, is a pretext. None of us would feel comfortable giving another the right to lift a sentence at random out of our personal correspondence and cite it as truth. Yet we act as if the biblical writers have given us such a freedom. Statements that are true in context may be untrue out of context.

Frequently, a text removed from its context has an unclear meaning or a wrong meaning. Those of us who take Bible study seriously, will want to pay careful respect to the context; the context frequently extends to the entire book being studied, not simply a verse either side.

As one studies a passage one must take careful note of its literary form. It helps a great deal to establish meaning if one is aware of whether the literature is prose, poetry, vision, apocalyptic, drama, myth, prophecy, parable, letter, etc. Each literary form will

have its own unique characteristics and these will be influential in determining meaning.

For example, a letter must be considered as an occasional piece of literature, directed to a specific situation, at a particular time. As such, it may refer to particular practices or beliefs that are relevant to that historical situation. From our distance, some of these things may appear difficult to comprehend. In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul writes, 'All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient' (KJV). Later versions (e.g., RSV, NIV) put the first half of the statement in quote marks, indicating that there were some Corinthians who were saying, 'All things are lawful.' Understanding that this is a letter and that Paul is responding to a specific situation, philosophy helps us understand that Paul is not saying all things are lawful, he is citing others' convictions, which he proceeds to argue against with his qualification, 'not everything is beneficial' (NIV).

Absolutely critical to the whole study of a text is an attempt to understand its historical setting. For example, the interpretation of Daniel 8:14, 'For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the Sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state' is affected by the following facts that grow out of its context and historical setting: (i) It was written by Daniel, a Jew in exile in Babylon; (ii) The Jewish Sanctuary was in ruins in Jerusalem; (iii) The book was originally addressed to and read by Jews, and only later by Christians; (iv) The cleansing is necessary because of the devastating work of the 'little horn' (see 8:9-13); (v) The 'little horn' was a Greek power emerging from one of the four divisions in Alexander the Great's empire; (vi) The prophet looked forward to a time of terrible persecution of Israel, a desecration of the temple in Jerusalem and then its restoration some three years later. If one removes the text from its context and its historical setting in Israel, one can then try to make the text say whatever one pleases.

It could almost go without saying, that since the Bible was written in ancient languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek), a careful grammatical study must accompany every serious attempt to interpret a text. Generally this is abundantly clear in English translation. Checking a few modern translations can usually verify just the right wording for the text.

DISCOVERING A TEXT'S RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

When we speak about finding a text's relevance for today we are not speaking about injecting new, illegitimate meanings into old texts. We refer to the process of translating an ancient statement into a mod-

ern situation, drawing parallels and learning lessons, all of which by necessity can only be by way of analogy. In speaking of parts of Old Testament history Paul put it this way, 'these things ... were written down for our instruction' (1 Cor. 10:11). We must discover the eternal truths in Scripture and profit from the examples of those who have gone before us.

Paul says, 'Whether you [the Corinthian church] eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor. 10:31). He is addressing the Corinthian believers, but Christians are immediately struck by the fact, that if this ancient church was to seek God's glory in all their behaviour, so too should we. The statement has an eternal, universal ring to it. The very next sentence has a completely different note. 'Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks' (v. 32). But few of us have difficulty extracting the principle from this text even if we do not know a Jew or a Greek. These are the processes we must go through to discover the relevance of the text for today.

One final point on this: It is quite fallacious to say regarding prophecy, that unless it predicts events in our day it is not relevant. Most prophecy predicts events prior to the Twentieth Century. Nevertheless, the prophetic passages carry a message for today. They may contain warnings, promises, affirmations of God's superintendence of history, assurances of the termination of evil, etc. Prophecy need not be predicting events of today for it to be relevant.

THE VALUE OF STUDY AIDS

We will get the greatest value from the Bible when we stop reading it and start studying it. Much of value can be gleaned from even a casual reading, but real profit is possible only through a concentrated, intensive study of God's Word.

At this point we can learn immeasurably from the wisdom of others in the body of Christ who have studied the text before us. Many are intimidated by Bible scholarship; some even think that formal students of God's Word are more likely to be wrong than right! This retreat into medieval ignorance is inexcusable. Scholars are not inevitably right, but surely God may use them and answer their prayers for guidance and insight, in the same way as we trust he will answer ours. We need to recognize that the gifts of insight, knowledge and teaching that God has placed in the church—in the form of scholars and their publications—are there for the upbuilding of the whole body of Christ. To ignore them is to place ourselves in danger of being deceived by the fanatic, the fool and the fraud.

Study aids come in many forms and each of us will find those that suit us best. There are commentar-

ies, biblical theologies, thematic studies, Bible study guides, CDs, DVDs, Internet programmes, seminars, magazines, journals, reference works (e.g., atlases, dictionaries, concordances, etc), and so forth. We don't need to study in isolation—though at times we will want to. Often the available study aids will clarify, simplify and explain in a way we never could have done for ourselves. The purpose of such aids is not to add to Scripture, but to make its inherent meaning clear and relevant.

CONCLUSION

Our study of the Bible will soon reveal that parts of it are richer in diamonds than others. While all of it is inspired, not all parts are equally valuable for our needs. Despite the value of 2 Chronicles, few would find it as significant in their spiritual lives as, say, the Gospel of John. Some parts of Scripture address more directly the vital issues of life. Our personal study should concentrate on those passages that allow the Spirit to speak to issues of importance in our lives.

A true study will also reveal that the Bible is

Christocentric. Sterile exegesis which does not discover Christ as the heart of the New Testament is useless. There is life only in Christ and a reading of the New Testament that does not find Christ on every page is lifeless indeed.

An objective, systematic study of passages; recognizing their historical and literary contexts, will be most rewarding. Chiam Potok, an American novelist, would be horrified if we tried to explain his works by recourse to some interpretive code found in one of Shakespeare's plays. We, too, must resist the temptation to play textual leapfrog, hopping carelessly through the wonderful pages of God's Word. We must treat these valuable books with much greater integrity than that, studying each book as a unit in itself.

The task of Bible study is not to prove our prejudices. It is to discover the diamonds and see them sparkle. When we discard our preconceived opinions and allow God to use his Word as a sword, we will learn the true value of this rich and diverse mine that God has left us to dig. And these diamonds are free!



DID YOU KNOW?

The King James Version of Mark 9:3 mentions a 'fuller.' It says of the clothing that Jesus wore on the Mount of Transfiguration, 'His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.' What is this 'fuller'?

Back in Anglo-Saxon times, people were often named after their trades or professions. Thus John the farmer became known as John Farmer, Sam the baker became known as Sam Baker, Peter the gold smith became known as Peter Goldsmith, and Josh the fuller became known as Josh Fuller.

So what does a fuller do? The Hebrew word that describes a fuller's work is *kabas*, meaning 'to wash' (Mal. 3:2), and the Greek word is *gnapheus*, meaning 'cloth dresser' (Mark 9:3). Fullers washed, bleached and dressed cloth.

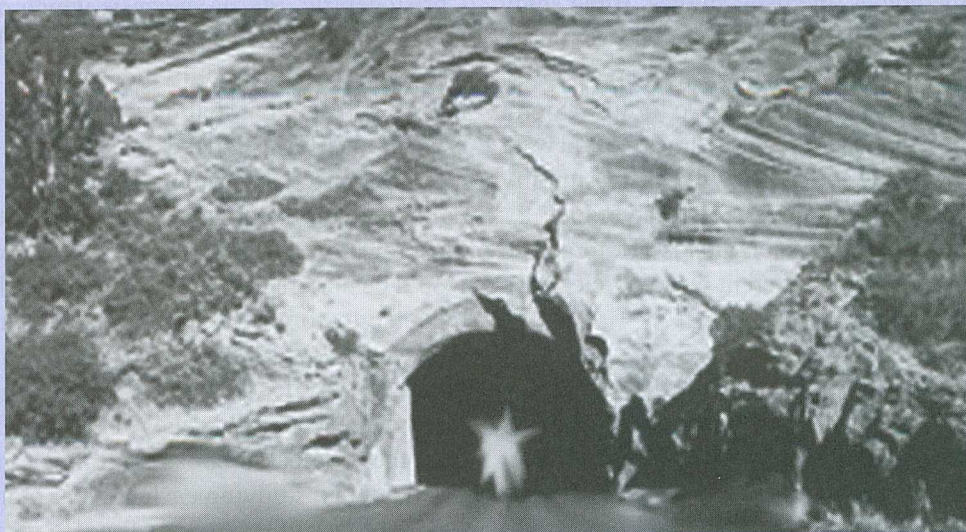
A fuller was a launderer who worked for a large portion of his day up to his knees in stinking human urine—seriously. On a regular basis the fuller's assistants would collect pots of urine from outside homes in the city. This was such a valuable commodity in the time of the early Church the Ro-

mans put a tax on it. This putrid urine was emptied into a large vat in which clothing to be cleaned was trampled underfoot by the fuller and his assistants. The ammonia produced by the urine made their eyes water, but there was nothing better in those days for drawing grease out of the clothes. Urine was particularly good for removing the lanolin from new woollen garments, thus creating the cleanest, softest cloth.

The fuller also used alkali, potash, soda, sulphur fumes and herbs in the washing and bleaching process.

Because of its offensive odour, a fuller's business was usually located in the open, outside the city. It was also situated near a spring or aqueduct because it needed large quantities of water. It was for this reason that the city laundry for Jerusalem, known as the 'fuller's field' or the 'washerman's field', was set up next to the conduit that came from the Gihon fountain in the Kidron Valley (2 Kgs. 18:17; Isa. 7:3; 36:2).





BATTLE FOR THE TRUTH

Ritchie Way

THE TANGARAKAU DIVERSION

Rosemary and I had travelled up the 'Forgotten World Highway' between Stratford in Taranaki and Taumarunui in the King Country—one of the remotest but most picturesque back-country areas on New Zealand's North Island. That road crossed five saddles over steep ranges that sweep down mainly from the north-west. Our destination for the summer holidays was Tangarakau, once a railway settlement of some 1200 people, with a village, coal mine and two teacher school, but now having a permanent population of just four people.

The ruggedness of this country is attested by the fact that the railway line adjacent to the road passes through twenty-four tunnels in just eighty-six kilometres of track. While camped at Tangarakau we were told that there was a good hike over the ridge that railway tunnel number eight went through. This tunnel was dug from both ends, and in order to get the men and machinery to the other side of the ridge, a bush railway was constructed over the ridge from the left-hand side of the line.

A cutting was made up the western side of the ridge and in this cutting were laid the tracks for the wagons that would be pulled up and over with cables. At the top was a siding along the crest of the ridge, and then another cutting was made for the bush railway down the far side of the ridge.

Rosemary and I decided that we'd follow the route of the old bush railway over the ridge. With our Jack Russell, Mitzi, out front and a good lunch in our pack, we set off along the main railroad from the remnants of the old township of Tangarakau. We crossed the bridge over the river and at the tunnel entrance we could see that the tunnel had a bend in it about forty metres in, where the tunnellers had to change direction to avoid a river of ancient semi-liquid sea mud. We didn't go into the tunnel, but turned left at the entrance and followed a track, at right angles to

the line, that went a short way up a valley to a dam that once supplied the steam locomotives with water. From there we could see the cutting, that went up the ridge parallel to the main railway line.

We set off up the cutting, now minus rails and sleepers. It was a very steep climb up one side and down the other. Much of our journey was assisted by swinging on supplejack vines that hung from the trees and tree roots that bulged out of the sides of the cutting. Due to the steepness of the ridge our trip took longer than expected, but eventually we came out at the line on the other side. It was now only a matter of turning right and returning home via tunnel number eight.

Before leaving the camp-ground we had ascertained that there wouldn't be any trains on the line before nine that evening. However, we were to watch out for a rail service vehicle, which checked the line every day for slips and tree falls, etc. This vehicle, which travelled on the rails, could be expected at any time.

It was a beautiful day, with a bright blue sky spotted with just a few small cumulous clouds. The pristine unmilled native forest that surrounded us went inland for many kilometres. Here we were in a remote paradise without a worry. The nearest traffic was many miles away, we were out of range of any cell phone tower and the only sounds were the songs of tuis and bell birds echoing in our narrow valley. All was well with the world, or it was, until we came down the far side of the ridge to the railway line.

We had climbed over the ridge through a cutting to the left of the railway line that ran through tunnel number eight. All we had to do now was turn right onto the railway line and we would be on the homeward stretch. But when we turned right the tunnel entrance was out of sight around a bend. However, when we turned left there was a tunnel less than one hundred metres away with number 8 painted

high on the left side of the entrance. We knew tunnel eight had a bend in it about forty metres from the far end, so we went closer to check it out. Sure enough, we couldn't see the tunnel exit at the far end, but we could see light down there, which indicated that the entrance wasn't too far from the bend. And, according to what we had been told, this was the only tunnel on the line with a bend like that in it.

To put it mildly, we were totally mystified. How could we have climbed over a cutting that was on the left of the railway line and parallel to it, then come back to the railway line to find that the tunnel was down the line on our left instead of up on our right? I reasoned that in order to get home we had to keep travelling in a clockwise direction. If we changed direction now and went anticlockwise we would be travelling away from Tangarakau, not towards it.

'But,' protested Rosemary, 'this tunnel is number eight tunnel! That's what it says.'

'Yes,' I admitted. But then, as an after-thought, I added, 'But that may not be the tunnel number. In fact it has to be something else, because if we go that way we'll end up at Taumarunui.'

'What about the bend at the other end of the tunnel? Only tunnel eight has a bend like that.'

'That's what we have been told, but the person who told us is obviously wrong, because this tunnel has a bend in it just like number eight. Come on, let's go up the line to the next tunnel and you will see that I am right.'

So we turned around and set off up the line. The fact that it was quite some distance to the next tunnel was disturbing enough, but when we got there we could clearly see the opening at the other end; there was no bend in it. Besides, the tunnel entrance had a number 9 painted on it. But, in spite of the fact that this tunnel had no bend in it and that it was number nine tunnel and that it was a long way from the ridge we had climbed over, I was so certain we were going in the right direction I decided to go through the tunnel by myself to see if I could find the track we had taken up to the old dam at the other end.

Before setting off into the tunnel I put my ear on the rail. I couldn't hear any screeching of flanges or rumbling of the approaching rail service vehicle, so started my trek through it. I hadn't gone far when I realised I couldn't see even my hand, let alone where I was walking. All I could do was focus on the light at the other end, and head for it. When I finally exited at the other end I hunted back and forth for the track we had taken up through the bush to the dam, but there was no sign of it. I was totally discombobulated. How could we possibly get lost on a single railway line? It didn't make sense.

When I entered and exited the tunnel I noticed an alcove in the wall where one could take refuge should a train come along. But further in these alcoves were impossible to see in the darkness, so, before retracing my track back through the tunnel to Rosemary, I cut a long toitoi (bulrush) stick that I could drag along the wall to indicate where the alcoves were. After listening to the rail again, I set off on my one kilometre return journey through the tunnel.

Back in daylight we sat down to consider the facts. It was Rosemary who came up with a theory that seemed to

provide the answer we were looking for.

'We have been assuming,' she said, 'that the cutting we used to climb over the ridge, travelled parallel to the railway line in the tunnel. If that was the case, tunnel number eight should have been on our right; but it wasn't. On the other hand, if the cutting for the bush railway crossed diagonally over the top of the railway tunnel, it would have come down on the right-hand side of the line instead of the left, in which case we should have turned left to get home.'

Suddenly 'the lights came on.' Here was a theory that made sense of the facts. So, feeling a bit more confident, we set off through tunnel number eight. When we exited the tunnel, just five minutes before the rail service vehicle came through, it was clear that Rosemary was correct, for there was Tangarakau ahead of us across the river.

FACTS AND THEORY

I learned a lot from that experience. Never make the facts fit your theory; rather, your theory should *always* fit the facts. There are so many Christians who have theories that either deny the facts in the Bible, or which are ignorant of them. I know, because I was one such Christian for many years. It was a painful process having to admit to myself, more than once, that I had been wrong, especially since I had invested many years teaching these errors. But the failure to acknowledge that I was in the wrong would have resulted in far greater pain in the long run.

We can't hide from the truth forever, because the Day is coming when every error will be exposed and every false teaching laid bare. If we are too proud to admit we have been wrong, our pride will eventually destroy us. If we take sides with error because our loyalty will be 'rewarded' in this life, that false loyalty will damn us in the next. Jesus has told us clearly, 'that anyone who loves his father or mother [or employer] more than me is not worthy of me' (Matt. 10:37).

Carl Walrond, author of the book, *Survive! Remarkable Tales from the New Zealand Outdoors* (David Bateman Ltd, 2008), wrote of an occasion when he and his companion were tramping in the Kahurangi National Park. They were unaware that they had gone around in a circle. They felt so sure they had been travelling in a straight line, they ignored the fact that the sun was now setting in the east on the other side of the valley. In commenting on this later, Carl wrote: 'The problem is that we do not only perceive what we expect to perceive, but also what we want to perceive' (p. 57).

People, myself included, have become so besotted by our false beliefs that we ignored or misconstrued obvious facts. But to do that with issues of salvation is eternally damning. To ignore the truth, to turn your back on it, is to ignore and turn your back on Christ, who is 'the Truth.'

Never make the facts fit your theory, rather, your theory should always fit the facts.

PAUL'S PRAYERS IN ACTION

Paul's Preparation for Prayer

Doug Martin

Before Saul's conversion he could rightly have been called arrogant, belligerent, a hostile fundamentalist, in fact, a first-century terrorist. 'Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison' (Acts 8:3). When it came to Saul's ears that the gospel was being preached beyond Jerusalem, he was annoyed no end. 'Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the High Priest and asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.' He was determined to end this new movement, and put an end to the dilly-dallying, pussyfooting of irresponsible leaders who were sitting on their hands.

'As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you Lord?" Saul asked.' That was a key question because Paul, as do each of us, needed to know the Lord.

The voice said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.' He no doubt spoke in Hebrew, 'I am Yeshua.' And Paul would have thought, 'Then it is true that he has risen, and is, therefore, our Messiah. He has not come to strike me down as I deserve.'

'I am Jesus.' How merciful Jesus was; how forgiving and how insightful. He saw that Saul, in spite of his opposition to the gospel, was loyal and committed. And Jesus saw what Saul could become.

As it was with Saul, so it is with us, preparation for effective prayer begins with knowing the Lord. Our understanding of the nature of God determines the relationship we will have with him, and it is Jesus who reveals him. Such a revelation will affect the kind of prayers we pray.

Jesus has all authority. He said to Saul, 'Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.' Saul is no longer in charge of his life. Jesus speaks as his Master, but not as a taskmaster! Unlike Jacob, Saul did not resist. 'They led him by the hand into Damascus.' There he fasted for three days,

The first of a
four-part series



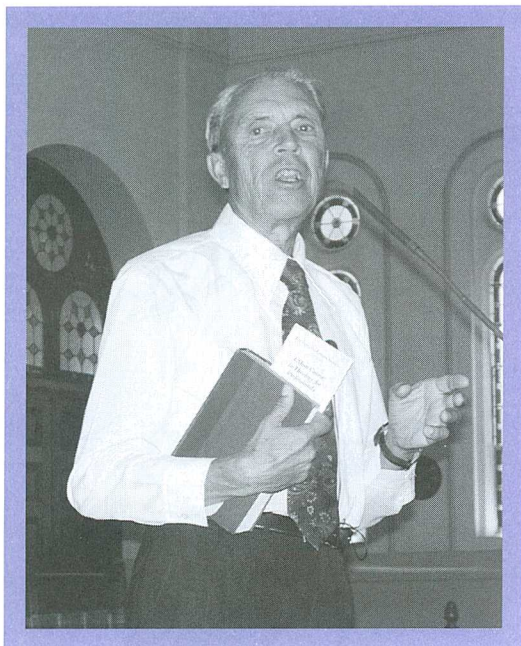
at which time the Lord told Ananias to go to him, 'For he is praying.'

What was Paul praying about? I imagine it was something like this: 'Lord, I am sorry for all the trouble and suffering I have caused your people. In mercy, forgive me. And Lord, You know how arrogant I have been. I now submit to you. Lord, you are Messiah, the One long-awaited for. You are the Son of David. How blind I was. How gracious you have been, for I am not dead, just blind. But Lord I need to see. Didn't you heal blind people? I don't deserve anything, but will you please restore my sight?' Ananias arrives as Paul is praying his submissive prayer. After three days of darkness Saul is given sight.

Following this conversion experience 'Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God' (9:20). He knew; he was submissive; he was committed; and so he witnessed. 'Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus, by proving that Jesus is the Christ.'

But Saul was opposed. They plotted to kill him and he escaped by the skin of his teeth, by being lowered over the city wall in a basket during the hours of darkness.

Where did he go? He went into the wilderness where God met Moses, Elijah and Jesus. And now it was Saul's turn. He did not go up to Jerusalem to consult with man, 'but ... went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus' (Gal. 1:17). There in the wilderness he meditated upon the Scriptures that foretold the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David, and he communed with Jesus. And it was there that he came into an understanding of the gospel. 'I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ' (1:12). That is the gospel he preached and that is the gospel that transformed his praying.



DR DESMOND FORD VISITS The United States and Canada

Several months ago I was asked by a medical specialist in Canada if I would come over to give the wedding homily for his son who was to be married in September. When *Adventist Today* heard that I was coming over, they arranged that I speak for the Richard Hammill Lectureship at Campus Hill Church in California before going to Canada.

Then *Good News Unlimited* in the United States arranged meetings for me in Banff and Toronto. A prominent scholar at Loma Linda also asked if I would participate in two television presentations. I was happy to agree to all of these.

I had several weeks to contemplate the coming itinerary to the USA and Canada. In that period, several near accidents suggested to me that the prince of the power of the air did not want me to go.

On one occasion a thoughtless driver backed out of the alley from his garage at a furious pace as I was walking by. The car just missed me. One night I almost stepped into a large hole from which a huge post had been removed. Continuing my stroll I gave thanks I had not broken a leg. Not long after that there was another minor accident—which could have been major.

But the real test came when, just days before I was appointed to leave, I caught a very serious viral infection, which led to constant vomiting and heavy coughing. Strength, appetite and sleep left me and my doctor told me I should not travel.

Both Gill and I felt the Lord intended me to go, so I set off, still coughing—but not vomiting—with no appetite and little strength.

At Los Angeles I was picked up by Elder Larry Christoffel, a fine gospel minister whom I have known

for years. He took me to a small clinic run by dear friends I had known in the Philippines. Here I was given every sort of treatment known to restore health, but I was still coughing when the time came for me to speak at Loma Linda for the Richard Hammill Lectureship. My assigned topic was 'The Forensic theory of Justification.' This was suggested to me because Loma Linda, for decades, has not favoured the traditional Reformation views on Justification, but inclined rather to the Moral Influence view—a teaching which is right in what it affirms but wrong in what it denies. Its teachers were gracious men of God, who had had tremendous influence.

Arriving at Campus Hill Church just before 3:00 p.m. on Sabbath, I was surrounded by many, including friends of other years. Extricated by the call to begin the meeting, I prayed that the Lord would restrain my coughing. There were hundreds present and many had come from long distances away. There were generous introductions and then I spoke for about forty-five minutes—all without coughing. My speech was slower than usual and with less vitality, but people listened well and when I made an invitation for people to stand who prized the gospel I had offered, hundreds responded. This was important in case some should say that my listeners tolerated me, but without accepting the forensic theory of justification taught so clearly by Paul. A large proportion of the congregation responded, and this can probably be seen on the DVDs (which I have not yet seen).

Next I attended a meeting with *Adventist Today* leaders and at 8:00 p.m. was back at Campus Hill Church for the second meeting: 'This I Believe.' Again I spoke about forty minutes and, as with the previous meeting, fielded questions for about an hour. (All of this is on the CDs and the DVDs). Some coughing erupted during the second question corner, but it was not serious.

During the next three days I participated in two TV programs and a meeting with ministers for two
(Continued on page 12)

DANIEL 6:

THE PATTERN FOR THE FUTURE

*Part eight in a series on
Daniel & Revelation*

Angus McPhee

PEACE AT LAST

In 1945, when the Second World War ended, I was a primary school pupil and had a wonderful thought: 'The war is over. There'll be no more wars.'

When Babylon fell, if the Jewish people had been like that eight-year-old they would have been thinking that the future looked good. Tragically, within a short time of the Medo-Persian conquest, the spirit of persecution again reared its head. Babylon had fallen. Belshazzar was dead. There was now a new ruler in the city. In 539 B.C. 'Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two' (Dan. 5:31).

WHO WAS DARIUS?

We know that Cyrus conquered Babylon, but who was Darius? There were three Persian kings called Darius. Darius I (the Great) ruled the Persian Empire from 521 B.C. to 486 B.C. Darius II ruled from 424 B.C. to 404 B.C. Darius III ruled from 336 B.C. to 330 B.C. So, he could not have been any of these.

Attempts to identify the Darius of the Book of Daniel have resulted in three theories. (1) Cambyses, Cyrus' son and successor, who ruled jointly with his father for a time. (2) Gubaru, Cyrus's officer who actually took the city of Babylon, and may have ruled the conquered Babylonian kingdom under Cyrus for a year or so. (3) Cyaxares II, the son of Astyages, who according to the Greek writer, Xenophon, was Cyrus' uncle and father-in-law, and whom Cyrus might have retained

temporarily as a figurehead king to please the Medes.¹

One day we could well discover the real identity of this 'Darius the Mede' from archeological evidence. We can be fairly confident of this, because previous archeological discoveries have all substantiated the historicity of the Bible. For example, until 1882 all historical evidence indicated that the Bible was wrong about Belshazzar. Nabonidus, it was said, was the last king of Babylon. Then the missing evidence—the Nabonidus Chronicle—was translated. It revealed that Belshazzar was regent in the absence of his father. The Bible had been right all along!²

Well, Daniel (6:1-2) tells us, it pleased Darius to appoint one hundred and twenty satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel himself. The one hundred and twenty satraps were made accountable to the three administrators.

In Persian times this title [satrap] was given to officials at the head of the largest divisions of the empire, called 'satrapies.'

BABYLON HAS FALLEN. THERE'S A NEW ORDER

Now Daniel so distinguished himself in his new role, by his exceptional qualities, that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. He was trustworthy and was neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally they agreed, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel, unless it has some-



thing to do with the law of his God' (Dan. 6:3-5).

Have you ever had anyone who was always hostile toward you, who habitually disliked you, who, as we say, 'had a set on you?' It didn't matter what you did, you could never do what pleased them? Daniel was in that kind of situation.

So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: 'O King Darius, live forever!' Notice that they made sure that Daniel wasn't with them. They had consulted together and were quite prepared to speak in his absence. He was unaware of what they were up to.

They continued, 'The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, will be thrown into the lions' den. Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians.'

The proposal appeared to be absolutely watertight. From their perspective there was no way out! King Darius, blind to their motive, put the decree in writing. It is a fact of life that anyone who is *different* from the main group is often the subject of gossip, is ostracized, ridiculed, or, at worst, persecuted.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

DANIEL'S RELIGION WAS HIS WAY OF LIFE

'I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; ... I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken' (Psa. 16:7-8). 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven (Matt. 5:11-14).

When these men found Daniel praying and asking God for help—as they expected him to do—they went to the king and reminded him of the decree, and its details. The king assured them that it was still valid. Then they reported, 'Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.'

At this, the lights came on for the king; he understood their motive in getting this law on the books of Persia. He was so distressed that he sought to rescue Daniel, making every effort until sundown to save him. The delegation returned to the king and

said, 'Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.' So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den.

THIS WAS DANIEL'S 'FIERY FURNACE'

The King's parting words to Daniel were, 'May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!' A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king, with heavy heart, sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. Then the king returned to his palace and spent a sleepless night without eating and without any entertainment.

How like the imprisonment of Daniel was the burial of Jesus? His enemies, including his arch-enemy, Satan, imagined that that would be the end of him. They overlooked, however, the Higher Power in charge of the affairs of men. God is at his best when things are at their worst, when, humanly speaking, there is no way out.

At the crack of dawn, Darius was up and at the den. Near it he called out in anguish to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?' 'O king, live forever!' Daniel called back. 'My God sent his angel, and shut the lions' mouths. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king.' The king was overjoyed and gave orders for Daniel's removal from the den. When Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Has your loyalty to God been tested by others? The God who was with Daniel in his extremity, will be with you in yours, because 'No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it' (1 Cor. 10:13, NRSV).

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO THE FAITHFUL!

'Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour' (1 Pet. 5:8), but 'my God has sent his angel' for 'The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them (Psa. 34:7).

THE GREATEST ANGEL-DELIVERER IS CHRIST

Paul, recounting one of his court appearances wrote: '...the LORD stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known

and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen' (2 Tim. 4:17-18, KJV).

Hear Jesus himself: 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved' (Matthew 10:22, KJV).

When the men, who were responsible for Daniel being cast to the lions, suggested that the lions may not have been hungry, the king decided to test their theory by having them thrown into the pit. Before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions had overpowered them.

THEN KING DARIUS WROTE TO ALL THE PEOPLES, NATIONS AND MEN OF EVERY LANGUAGE THROUGHOUT THE LAND:

'May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the

living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.'

So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

This brings us to the end of the historical section of the Book of Daniel the Prophet. In these words of Darius, a gentile king, the pattern is set for the four great prophecies that will follow:

'... the God of Daniel ... is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves ...'



Endnotes

1. Horn, Siegfried H., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association) 1979.

2. Gaebelien, Frank E. (ed.) *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI., Zondervan) 1985. Pages 15-16.

Dr Desmond Ford Visits the United States and Canada

(Continued from page 9)

hours, and also personal interviews.

On Wednesday morning, at about 7:30 a.m., I left for Canada. Mercifully my coughing had stopped, but back pain from the strenuous lung eruptions plagued me throughout my days and nights in both countries making sleep very difficult.

In Canada I spoke to *Good News Unlimited* audiences on five occasions, including one for a host church, and I also gave the homily for the marriage of the son of dear friends—a young man I greatly admire.


The morning I was due to travel on to Toronto I slipped down a flight of stairs in the dark and barrelled forward hitting my head on furniture. This added a different set of pains to the first lot! I flew to Toronto, where I was placed in a hotel next to the library, which good fortune took my mind off my bodily woes. I spoke in Toronto on several occasions over the Sabbath.

The trip home from Toronto took approximately thirty hours including waiting intervals between planes. Gill met me at Brisbane airport, and I thanked God to be home and for his blessings throughout the trip.

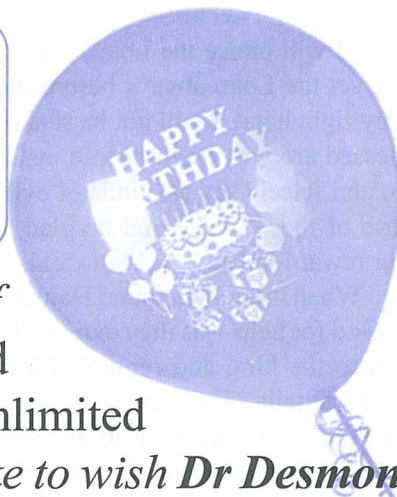
Everywhere I met only with kindness. Even folks with whom I differed theologically at Loma Linda bent over backwards to be courteous and helpful. A former student of decades ago came daily to massage my back and a well-known Loma Linda doctor contacted me to say that he was at my service if he could help in any way.

It was constantly a matter of rejoicing to meet

with gospel friends of other years in both countries. I was deluged with gifts of one kind or another—books, etc. Monetary gifts were pressed upon me in both the United States and Canada. Every provision was made for my wellbeing.

I praise God for his merciful and gracious providences without which the trip would have been a disaster and I could have come home a cot-case. Be sure to watch the DVDs or listen to the CDs and form your own judgement. Romans 8:28-39 rings true in every Christian's experience and this trip reinforced that glorious truth for me. 

**Happy
80th
Birthday**

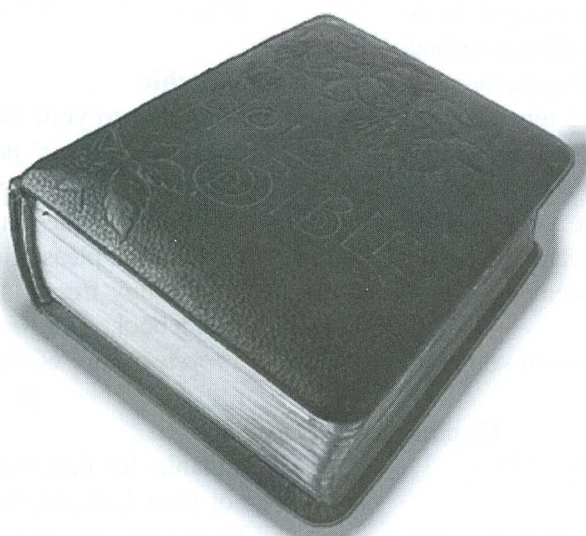


The staff of Good News Unlimited would like to wish Dr Desmond Ford a very happy time with family and friends as he celebrates his 80th birthday on the 2nd of February 2009.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Part 1

The Divinity of Jesus



Ritchie Way

What evidence do we have, outside of the Bible, that the Gospel of John was actually written by the apostle John? I ask this question because some liberal scholars are teaching that the Gospels were written, not by eyewitnesses of Jesus, but by Christians who lived several generations after Christ. These 'pseudo authors', they claim, attributed their exaggerated claims for Christ to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The two witnesses we will call to the stand, in defence of the apostle John being the author of the Fourth Gospel, are Polycarp and his disciple, Irenaeus. In AD155 Polycarp was captured by Roman soldiers, but out of consideration for his great age the Roman irenarch told him, that if he blasphemed Christ he would be released. Polycarp replied, 'I have served Christ eighty-six years and he has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King? I am a Christian.' Polycarp well knew that to confess Christ would be his death warrant. Accordingly, he was burnt at the stake on Saturday 23rd March, at the conclusion of the Games in Smyrna.

Now Polycarp had been a disciple of the apostle John, and Irenaeus (c.136 -195) was a disciple of Polycarp.

Irenaeus wrote: 'John, the disciple of the Lord, the one who leaned back on the Lord's breast, himself published a Gospel while he resided at Ephesus' (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1).

A papyrus fragment of John's Gospel, known as the John Ryland's Papyrus 457, which was written about AD 150, and possibly as early as AD 125, was found in Middle Egypt. Now Middle Egypt is a long way from Ephesus where the Fourth Gospel was written. John's Gospel, therefore, must have been composed much earlier. The early church writers reveal that between AD 175 and AD 200 this Fourth Gospel was known and read as far away as Africa, Asia Minor, Italy, Gaul, and Syria.

JOHN AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

There are four Gospels in the Bible: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are called Gospels (always spelt with a capital G). Gospel, in Greek, means good message, or good news. They all share the good news about God coming to dwell among us to sort out the sin problem.

The first three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are called the synoptic Gospels. The word synoptic (syn = together + optic = to see) means they have the same focal point, which is the kingdom that Jesus will consummate at his second coming. To this end the parables of Jesus point to the time when Jesus will return and reward everyone according to their works. For example:

- * The parable of the net, points to the judgment when the bad fish will be separated from the good.

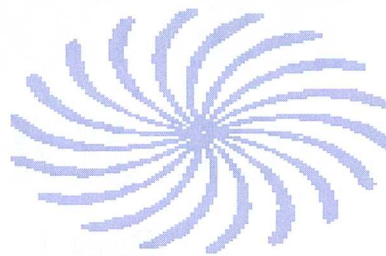
- * The parable of the wise and foolish virgins, points to the time when Jesus will return and the wise will enter the kingdom, but the foolish will be kept out.

- * The parable of the Prodigal Son, points to the time when repentant sinners will be welcomed into

(Continued on page 16)

Discussion Point

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.



ESCAPING DEPRESSING THOUGHTS

Dear Ritchie

A year or so ago I went into depression and planned, several times, to take my life to escape the awfulness of it all. I went to both a Psychiatrist and a Christian Counsellor, but was too low to do anything they asked me. Anyway, over the past few months I have been having more good days than bad days. But occasionally, for no apparent reason, I get depressing flashbacks. They usually invade my consciousness when everything is going well for me.

I understand that you, too, have been through depression. Did you ever have these depressing flashbacks and, if you did, what did you do about them?

Kind regards

Dear P

Flashbacks come with the territory for those who have been through depression; they were certainly a part of my experience. I would get very angry that such negative thoughts would try to spoil my life again, so I did what James said we should: 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'

Just as I need not accept the junk mail that people want to put in my mailbox, so I don't let negative thoughts or emotions into my mind that seek entrance. The Bible says, 'Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life' (Prov. 4:23 NCV). So I say to you, don't let your thoughts control you, rather, you control them. You are the master of your life, not every thought

that is posted in your mind.

Just a warning however: inasmuch as 'nature abhors a vacuum' so your mind cannot be totally empty. Even if you refuse to accept a negative emotion, it will come back instantly unless you replace it with a good thought. So always have some good things to think about tucked away in your memory. Thanking God for ten different things each time some junk thoughts get posted, is one way to replace the negative with the positive. If you do that habitually, it won't be too long before negative emotions cease to plague you.

God speed you on your road to recovery

Ritchie.

THE KORAN AND JESUS

Dear Ritchie

I remember reading, some-time back, where you said you have read the Koran, or Qur'an as it is now spelled. Could you tell me, please, what was Muhammad's teaching about Jesus? I understand that he respected the One he called the Messiah.

Dear M

It is true that Muhammad respected Jesus, but only as a man like himself. The Koran teaches that Jesus was just a human being, born to a virgin called Mary, who was the sister of Aaron (Sura 19:28). While still a virgin (Sura 6:12; 19:19-21), Mary gave birth to Jesus alone in a desolate place under a date palm (Sura 19:22-23). Jesus was not the Son of God (Sura 23:91), nor is he a member of the Trinity (Sura

4:171; 5:17, 72-75). Christ was not killed or crucified. Those who claimed he was crucified lied (Sura 4:157). That's what Muhammad taught.

God bless

Ritchie.

THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS

Dear Ritchie

With reference to your Discussion Point item on Jesus' prediction that he would spend three days and three nights in the grave (October 2008 GNU), please find enclosed a photocopy from Hans K. LaRondelle's book, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (pp. 66-68).

R. D.

Dear R

Many thanks for that material. I've not seen LaRondelle's book, but his comments, summarized below, are quite insightful.

According to LaRondelle, Christ announced, several times, that his resurrection from the dead would take place 'after three days' (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34) or 'on the third day' (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7; 46). He stated that not only his suffering and death but also his resurrection 'on the third day' was predicted in the Old Testament.

LaRondelle says the two Old Testament passages in particular, which were the specific source of Jesus' prediction, were Jonah 1:17 and Hosea 6:2.

Jonah's experience of imprisonment for 'three days and three nights' in the great fish, was a type of Jesus' own stay in the grave. Hosea's prediction, that Israel

would be revived and restored after its second captivity 'on the third day', was also a type of Christ's liberation from the captivity of the grave.

Jewish exegetes understood that a combination of Hosea 6:2 and Jonah 1:17 pointed to Israel's hope for the resurrection of the dead, therefore, Christ's use of these two passages to support his own resurrection from the dead, fitted the common understanding, because Jesus is corporate Israel.

Just as Israel went down into Egypt and was later called out by God, so Jesus went down into Egypt and was later called out by God (Matt. 2:15). In the same way, just as Israel went into Assyrian captivity and was called forth 'on the third day', so was Jesus released from the captivity of the grave 'on the third day.'

Thank you Hans LaRondelle and R. for this contribution to our understanding of the source of Christ's prophecy—that he would rise from the dead on the third day.

Kind regards

Ritchie.

REIGNING ON THE EARTH **Dear Editor**

In Revelation 5:10 it says, 'You have made them [that is, the redeemed] to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.'

I can understand the first part of this verse, but what does 'they will reign on the earth' refer to? I thought Jesus was the One who reigns. Hope you can help.

Sincerely

W. C.

Dear W

The key to your question lies in comprehending what the Hebrews understood by 'reigning.' The one who reigned was the one who judged. The Supreme Court Judge in Old Testament times was the king. He was the one who de-

cided upon all life and death matters. Paul, for example, was taken to Rome to appear before Caesar who would determine whether he would live or die.

With this understanding we can deduce that we, as people redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, have been made rulers upon the earth, because it is given unto us to decide the destiny of people. Those who accept the good news that Jesus has died for them will live; those who reject it will die. It is by proclaiming the gospel that we judge people. If we don't share the gospel with our friends, workmates and neighbours we condemn them to death; if we do share the gospel with them we give them the chance to live. It's a frightening, but undeniable power that Christ has invested us with.

Grace and peace to you

Ritchie.

TO COME OR NOT TO COME

Dear Ritchie

In Matthew 16:27-28 Jesus said, 'For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

*We have to be honest and say that Jesus did **not** come, as and when, he predicted. What's your take on this promise of Jesus'?*

S.C

Dear S

Yep, that's a hard one alright

Overseas Readers

When ordering books, tapes etc., credit cards are a preferred method of payment. However, if paying by cheque please take into account the conversion rate on cheques, which is \$10.00 Australian.

(if all ways can be spelt always, and all ready be spelt already, why can't all right be spelt alright?). The clue to understanding this prophecy is the word *apotelesmatic*, which is a Greek compound word that describes a prophecy that has several fulfilments. The first fulfilment of an *apotelesmatic* prophecy is only a partial fulfilment, the next one is greater in scope, and so forth until the consummative fulfilment, in which the prophecy is fulfilled in every detail.

Daniel 2 is one such prophecy (See Milton Hook's biography of *Desmond Ford*, pp. 352 - 353). It had its first fulfilment in the time of Daniel. Later it had a fulfilment which culminated in the spiritual kingdom that Jesus set up at the cross. And its final fulfilment will be in the literal kingdom that Jesus will establish at his coming.

So with Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 10:23 & 16:27-28. In this prophecy, Jesus predicts his coming in judgement upon the nation of Israel in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was sacked and the temple destroyed. This happened because the Jews rejected the Christ and chose, instead, the anti-Christ, Simon Bar Kochba, as their leader. Some of those standing with Jesus when he uttered these prophetic words, lived to see the first fulfilment of his prophecy.

God be with you

Ritchie.

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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Divinity of Jesus

the Father's house with great rejoicing, while self-righteous religionists will stay outside.

* The parable of the talents, points to the time when all God's people will be rewarded according to their works.

* The parables of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price, point to the time when those who have given up everything for the kingdom, will receive it.

* And the parable of the sheep and goats, points to the time when the whole world will be divided by the judgement into the saved and the lost.

The Gospel of John, however, is quite different because it has no parables—not a single one.

Each of the synoptic Gospels has a prophecy that culminates in the Second Coming of Jesus see Mark 13; Matthew 24, and Luke 21. No such prophecy, however, is found in the Gospel of John.

So what is the major difference between the Gospel of John and the other three Gospels? In essence, the synoptic Gospels focus on the literal kingdom that Jesus will establish at his Second Coming, while the Gospel of John focuses on the spiritual kingdom that Jesus established at his first coming. The first three Gospels look essentially to the kingdom of glory that is to come, while the Gospel of John is essentially about the kingdom of grace that Jesus established by his death and resurrection. We will have more to say on this matter in future articles.

CHAPTER 1

To help me understand the Gospel of John better I decided to write it out by hand from chapter 1, verse 1 to chapter 21, verse 25, so I could focus on every word, phrase, sentence and context. In this series of articles I want to share with you some of the blessings gleaned from my study.

The first phrase in this Gospel begins: 'Ἐν ἄρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος: In the beginning was the Word.' What similar biblical phrase does that remind you of? Of course! 'In the beginning God ...' It is John's intention that we associate his first words with the first words in the Bible, because John is writing about the Creator who existed before anything else—he is writing about God.

He calls God—who revealed himself to us in Jesus—'the Logos,' because in John's day the Logos was regarded by the Greeks as the very expression of God. And that is what Jesus is, as we shall see.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.'

One of the most sacred passages of Scripture among the Jews was the shema of Deuteronomy 6:4, '*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*'

Another Scripture states: '*I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God*' (Isa. 45:5). So you can imagine how difficult it was for the Jews when Jesus declared that he was God. He was not the Father, because he talked freely about his Father, but he was God. He said, on one occasion, '*Before Abraham was I AM*' (John 8:58). He here identified himself as Jehovah, the great I AM of the Old Testament.

On another occasion, when he said to a paralysed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' the Jewish leaders complained, 'You can't forgive his sins. Only God can do that!' To which Jesus replied in essence: 'What is the easier to do, to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Pick up your mattress and walk? I'll prove to you that I am able to forgive his sins, by raising him up.' He then turned to the paralytic and said, 'Come on, get up. Pick up your mattress and off you go.' And, to everyone's amazement he did.

The New Testament reveals that Jesus was God. But John's words in the first verse of his book seem to be contradictory. He wrote there: 'The Word was with God and the Word was God.' How can Jesus possibly be what he is with? Perhaps it would be easier to understand if I rephrased John 1:1 to suit another context: 'In another beginning was the Word, and the Word was with man, and the Word was man.' Has the light come on now?

It is, of course, much more complex than that. In the spiritual realm it is possible for the three members of the Trinity to be one. They are like three matches that are held together when struck. When they light up, how many flames are there? Of course, there are three flames, because if you take one match away it has its own flame, but together they are one. While that is a simplistic explanation, it helps.

Another verse which helps us to understand the unity of the Trinity is John 17:22. Jesus prayed to the Father that 'they [his followers] may be one as we [he and the Father] are one.' Now you are aware that it is impossible for the followers of Christ to be numerically one, therefore the unity of the Trinity should not be understood to be a numerical unity—it is much deeper than that.

There are several passages in the New Testament that teach the divinity of Jesus. Some of these references, from the *New International Version*, are

given below:

John 1:18 Jesus is called 'God the One and Only'.

John 10:30-33 Jesus claimed to be God.

Rom 9:5 Jesus is called 'God over all'.

Philip. 2:6 Jesus is 'in very nature God'. He is equal with God.

Col. 2:9 All the fullness of Deity is found in Jesus.

1 John 5:20 Jesus is 'the true God and eternal life'.

The Hebrew word for Jehovah is called the Tetragrammaton because it has four letters: YHWH. The New Testament, however, was written in Greek, and the Greek language doesn't have any of those Hebrew letters. How do you pronounce a word if your alphabet doesn't have any of its letters? What the Greeks did was to use their name for Lord, which was *Kyrios*, instead. This word, *Kyrios*, is used six hundred and sixty-three times in the New Testament, but the Jehovah's Witnesses, in their New World Translation of the New Testament, translated it as Jehovah only two hundred and thirty-seven times, just thirty-six percent of all occurrences. And, because they believe that Jesus is *not* God, their Bible never once calls Jesus Jehovah—in spite of the fact that Thomas called Jesus God (John 20:28) and the apostle Paul claimed that Jesus is LORD, that is, Jehovah (Philp. 2:11).

THE CREATOR GOD

But is Jesus really Jehovah, the Almighty God of the Old Testament? John wrote of Jesus, 'Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made' (John 1:3). This is supported by Colossians 1:16 which says, 'For by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth ...' And Hebrews 1:2 adds, 'In these last days God has spoken to us by his Son ... through whom he made the universe.'

But when we look back at the Old Testament we discover that the heavens and the earth were made by 'the LORD', i.e. YHWH (Exod. 20:11; Psa. 33:6). We therefore arrive at the inescapable conclusion that if the Creator is YHWH, and if Jesus is the Creator, then Jesus is Jehovah (YHWH).

But what about the Jehovah's Witnesses argument, that Jesus himself stated that the Father was greater than he (John 14:28). There was a time when the Father was greater than Jesus. That time is pictured in Philippians 2:5-11. It begins with these words: 'Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature, God, did not consider equality with God something to be forcibly retained, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.'

The *Message Bible* puts it this way: 'He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that

status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*!'

While Jesus gave up the advantages of equal status with God, he did not give up his divinity. Just as an earthly father is greater than his son, so the heavenly Father was greater than Jesus; but just as the earthly son is just as much human as his father, so Jesus was just as much divine as his Father.

But because Jesus sacrificed himself for us, 'God exalted him to the highest place and gave him a name that is above every name' (Philip. 2:9). So, Jesus has not only been restored to equal status with God; he returned to his equality with great honour and glory.


So is Jesus God? Yes, he is God. But he is not the Father. The Father is YHWH; the Son is YHWH, and the Holy Spirit is YHWH. Remember the three matches with three flames that are one. It's an imperfect illustration, but it helps us to understand the unknown spiritual world.

GOD WITH US

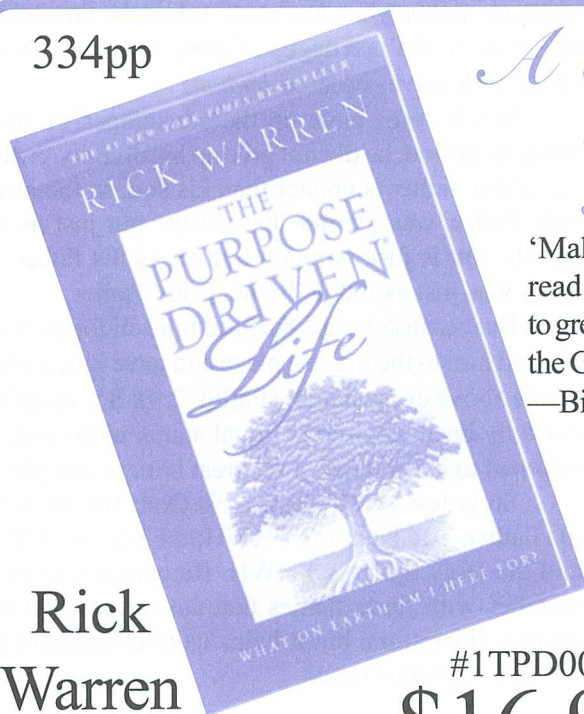
'He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him' (John 1:10-11).

We have here, a dramatic scene change. The scene at the beginning of the chapter is the spiritual world of the Trinity (the unity of the Three). But the scene in verses 10-11, is the land of Israel, and it portrays God the Son in the midst of his people. That's what the best-known Old Testament prophecies foretold would happen. They pointed to the time when Israel's God would dwell among them and walk among them. He would be their God and they would be his people (Lev. 26:11-12; Eze. 37:27).

More than anything else, the Jews looked forward to the time when their God would come and live among them. But when he did, they did not recognise him—in spite of the amazing miracles and teachings which bore testimony to his divinity. We have to ask ourselves how they could overlook Jesus, who was 'Immanuel, God with us.' They refused to acknowledge that Jesus was God because they were looking for a different kind of God, one who would uplift *them* and *their* aspirations, rather than the Father and his aspirations.

And that, dear friends, is the same test which is put before each one of us. If Jesus isn't God, then he can't save us, for Daniel 2 teaches us that the image of man will be totally destroyed, and our only hope will be in the Rock from heaven. Only the Creator can be the Redeemer, for salvation is all of God and nothing of man. 

334pp



Rick
Warren

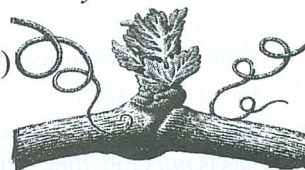
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